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Trade Union Activists, East and West: Comparisons in Multinational Companies by Guglielmo MEARDI, Aldershot: Gower, 2000, 311 pp., ISBN 0-7546-1426-3.

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Republic resulted in the signing of the first collective bargaining agreement in an EPZ. Cohen and Early of the Communications Workers of America show next, in chapter 10, how a transatlantic alliance with the U.K.'s Communications Workers Union can use trade related international labour regulation—in this instance that of the labour side agreement of NAFTA—to open new roads for collaborative action, albeit with modest outcomes, in the rapidly changing global telecommunications industry. Chapter 11 contains an example of a successful international corporate campaign. Zinn describes the United Mine Workers of America campaign against Peabody and the Anglo-American conglomerate Hanson PLC. Moving to the Caribbean Basin, Anner, in chapter 12, employs social movement theory and the cases of Phillips-Van Heusen and Daimi Atlantica in Guatemala and Walt Disney in Haiti, to demonstrate the importance of both local organizing and transnational activism in successful campaigns, as well as the need for a industry-wide strategy by all those involved in the anti-sweat shop movement.

Finally, in chapter 13, Turner and Gordon put forward eight principles for the potential success of transnational co-operation among unions. These include the perception of interdependence, the need for an ideology that promotes labour internationalism, the key character of knowledge and systematic intelligence in corporate campaigns, the necessity for workers to be willing and able to mobilize and take risks, the requirement for altered existing relationships between employers and various external stakeholder groups, new levels

of sophistication in union strategy, the importance of unions in the nation where the offending multinational is headquartered, and placing of a human face on the conflict!

Gordon and Turner have provided a valuable tool for understanding better transnational labour co-operation. Each chapter is well founded and can generate many challenging questions for future research. For example, what position will the U.S. labour movement occupy within the post-Kyoto and post 9/11 unilateralist U.S. foreign policy? Have all its interventionist and “patriotic” expertise—perfected for decades—really disappeared? What are the implications of a network-based corporation (which, as Ramsay suggested, is increasingly the case) for organized labour and its own bureaucratic structures? Should a looser network of activists replace altogether the multi-layered structures of trade unionism (local-national-international-transnational), perhaps in a “cell” type structure? What are the implications of the introduction of the Euro for co-ordinated collective bargaining and trade union co-operation in the Euro-zone? And how significant can trade-related labour standards laws really be for promoting collaborative trade union internationalism?

I have found this book thought-provoking. It equips its reader with a firm knowledge of transnational trade union co-operation and with an advantageous insight into the forces and issues that can shape this field in the future.

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Trade Union Activists, East and West: Comparisons in Multinational Companies

by Guglielmo MEARDI, Aldershot: Gower, 2000, 311 pp., ISBN 0-7546-1426-3.

In the words of Meardi, this book concerns the transformation of class

consciousness. It tries to show how trade union experiences and differences are

not merely the legacy of previous situations and choices but the product of social construction. The book focuses on Italy and Poland. The choice is curious. They are both representative of the east-west binarism. The aim is to see how differences have emerged between them in the context of the changes facing trade unionists along a range of dimensions. However, both unions are seen to share a social movement identity so according to the author any differences identified within this study would need to be amplified for an understanding of the trajectories and changes in trade union and class consciousness in the east and west of Europe. In this respect, the choice made by Meardi is curious and effective. It is also explained and rationalized in a highly transparent and engaging manner. Six factories were the basis of this comparison. A variety of research techniques were used: interviews, documentation, and observation. Meardi provides the reader with an interesting discussion regarding the challenges of using the method of unstructured interviews in such a comparative context. The dilemmas facing researchers, and the devices needed to assure consistency and openness, are a fascinating feature of the narrative.

In terms of the more general ideas guiding the book, Meardi takes the unusual step for industrial relations of utilizing Berger and Luckmann's approach, i.e. *The Social Construction of Reality*. That is not to say that there is no sensitivity to a range of broader discussions on class, e.g. Touraine, Marx and others. However, Meardi argues that if we are to use and salvage the notion of class consciousness in our discussions of class then we need to supplement this with the "social construction" approaches based on phenomenology. The theoretical section of the book therefore locates the discussion on class and industrial relations within a broader set of interests, which are usually the preserve of colleagues in organizational behaviour.

And it is this direction that makes Meardi's work interesting and novel.

The book proceeds in the following manner. The first chapter is dedicated to debates on activism and consciousness. It is a well balanced and argued chapter that leads into a very systematic discussion on methodology in chapter 2. Chapter 3 tackles the challenging issues of class-consciousness in a context of "disintegration." This is seen to be developing in both contexts, albeit for different reasons. Constructing unitary models of class in both contexts is proving to be difficult. This chapter illustrates this contention with a wealth of insightful empirical data that is rare in many other comparative texts. The issue of national difference is discussed in chapter 4 in terms of the way trade unionists experience, mediate and understood change in different contexts. The irony emerges of a western trade union position that mediates and deals with change by referencing the past and working class gains. The Polish context views such change in more "innovative" and realistic terms. Consequently cultures of resistance vary. This has major repercussions for any discussion regarding the impact of globalization on industrial relations. The economic and social shifts in the "eastern" European context appear to be having a major impact on the working class egalitarianism and the broader politics of solidarity. However, the twist in the story comes in chapter 5 regarding the challenge of difference. Here the narrative shows us that Polish unions may indeed be in a much better position to cope with difference and the new "individualization" taking place. This emerges from the nature of previous struggles within Poland that were more than just reactive, class-based struggles. Social agendas and interests seem to be less oriented towards class. The chapter provides some intriguing insights into the diversity and ambiguities of Polish unions when compared to those of Italy. The consequences of this are interesting.

There are some weaknesses in the book, but these are minor. The introductions and conclusions to chapters do not always synthesize and rationalize what is and has emerged. This is a minor point perhaps, but a text like this with such depth and variety could help guide the reader across the strong empirical and theoretical terrain even if it is clearly argued on the whole. In addition, such comparative projects are always coping with the difficult task of trying to explain a variety of social and economic factors that constantly unsettle the research questions. However, Meardi manages to show sensitivity to the different economic contexts and legacies of the trade unions under discussion. He manages to point to the significance of how globalization and change give rise to different types of consciousness. One feels that the "voice," or shall we say "voices," of the participants has been respected and carefully pieced together.

Yet there are always leaps of faith with such research. The importance of this book is that it is a serious insight into the mindset of trade unionists coping with the current challenges of change. There are new agendas and new issues emerging that will provide a role for unions but the book is clear in showing how recent, let alone past, history and experiences may derail any overarching and unifying narratives within and between countries. It is rare to see an industrial relations text engage with such a wide variety of theoretical positions and broad ideological and social questions. This is especially relevant when many of those working from radical perspectives on trade unions in the context of change are ironically located in highly institutionalist and theoretically limited approaches.

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"Heal Thyself:" Managing Health Care Reform

by Pat ARMSTRONG, Hugh ARMSTRONG, Ivy BOURGEAULT, Jacqueline CHOINIERE, Eric MYKHALOVSKIY and Jerry P. WHITE, Aurora: Garamond Press, 2000, 171 pp., ISBN 1-55193-024-2.

It is intriguing and disheartening to review this book at a time when the management of human resources and industrial relations in British Columbia health care has been thrown into utter turmoil by the Gordon Campbell Liberal government. The book, a probing critique of the former NDP government's health care reform policy, has been overtaken by events.

The new government has torn up collective agreements and accords between management and labour, destroying the most advanced labour adjustment program in Canada. And what domain in the work world cries out more for effective adjustment? The government is in the process of sending collective bargaining and labour standards legislation back almost to industrial prehistory. It has closed health care facilities and pro-

poses to privatize others without union successor rights. Prospective private employers have been exposed endeavouring to eliminate the more militant unions from the new labour scene.

Certainly this plays havoc with the lives of health care workers. But it also makes life very difficult for researchers actively studying those lives. Such is the nature of health care reform in Canada that just when you think you have accurately described the situation, everything changes.

Veteran health care scholars Pat and Hugh Armstrong have become well-known for their attempts to investigate health care reform in a novel fashion, a method few others have even cared to employ: they speak directly to the workers delivering the care. In a series of