

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



*The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* by  
Dan CLAWSON, Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003, 256 pp., ISBN  
0-8014-8870-2.

Charles Heckscher

Volume 59, Number 1, Winter 2004

Équité, efficience, éthique ? La régulation sociale de l'entreprise  
mondialisée

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/009135ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/009135ar>

[See table of contents](#)

### Publisher(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

### ISSN

0034-379X (print)

1703-8138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

### Cite this review

Heckscher, C. (2004). Review of [*The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* by Dan CLAWSON, Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003, 256 pp., ISBN 0-8014-8870-2.] *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 59(1), 207–209.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/009135ar>

Tous droits réservés © Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval, 2004

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

**Érudit**

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

égard à la liberté de travail ou encore les difficultés, voire les abus, auxquels a pu parfois donner lieu la mise en œuvre de telles clauses.

De la même façon, le chapitre consacré à l'évaluation des emplois aurait dû débiter par une brève présentation des divers modes d'évaluation des emplois et de quelques problèmes de fond que certains n'ont pas manqué de poser, notamment la difficulté d'éliminer les biais sexistes souvent présents dans les grilles utilisées. Le lecteur non averti est plutôt conduit à découvrir au moyen d'exemples les concepts de base pertinents à cette technique sans que ceux-ci n'aient été autrement définis ou présentés.

Sans mettre en doute la qualité de l'information qui est exposée, il demeure que le chapitre sur la santé et la sécurité au travail se distingue des autres en ce qu'il porte bien davantage sur la législation en vigueur plutôt que sur l'apport de la convention collective

en ce domaine ou sur la capacité de cet instrument juridique de prendre en compte avec efficacité ce type de problème. Par sa facture, il s'inscrit dans une perspective bien différente de celle des autres chapitres.

Malgré quelques lacunes, dont quelques-unes ont été rappelées dans les paragraphes précédents et qui pourront peut-être se voir comblées lors d'une prochaine édition, il demeure que ce collectif d'auteurs met entre les mains des étudiants et des praticiens un ouvrage de grande qualité, à jour et qui présente une vision complète des principales dimensions de la convention collective de travail. Quant aux enseignants, ils disposent d'un ouvrage qui répond largement à ce qu'ils peuvent attendre d'un livre de base et qui peut contribuer de façon adéquate à la formation des étudiants en relations industrielles, en droit ou en gestion.

**JEAN BERNIER**  
Université Laval

***The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements***

by Dan CLAWSON, Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003, 256 pp., ISBN 0-8014-8870-2.

*The Next Upsurge* contributes to the literature of social-movement unionism; it argues that the future of unions depends less on the actions of leaders and organizations than on a re-emergence of grassroots militancy and energy. Central to Dan Clawson's point of view, however, is that it is necessary for labour to reach out to and link with what he calls "1960s" social movements of women, people of colour, and other identity groups. Thus, he tries to update movement concepts and strategies from the 1930s, based on a relatively uniform working class, by incorporating a diverse set of groups that have so far remained on the margins of the labour movement.

The bulk of the book focuses on particular types of (potential) movements. There is a chapter on "gender

styles and union issues," in which Clawson laments organized labour's missed opportunity in its relations with women's groups. There is a chapter on "community and color," examining efforts at local organizing groups largely on ethnic lines. A chapter on "neoliberal globalization" looks at a few cases of spontaneous grassroots international solidarity. Another chapter on "codes of conducts and living wage campaigns" showcases some of the most sustained and largest scale efforts, but ends with an expression of concern that these may be too paternalist, grounded in students and others who are outside the true working class.

The main strength of the book is in its stories. Clawson has gathered together a range of accounts of inspiring activist struggles that go beyond the

“normal” frame of union-management battles, strikes, and so on, moments that have mobilized grassroots energy from diverse sources, uniting unions with community groups, upsetting expectations, disrupting business as usual, and (in a few cases) winning some signal victories. A number of these accounts are enriched by personal interviews, and some of them have not, to my knowledge, been published before. Thus a long section is devoted to the labour-community alliance in Stamford, Connecticut, with many details that were new to me. Clawson is able to provide the colour and feel of critical meetings and actions in this struggle. Other movements will be more familiar to most of his intended audience, though this may be a useful gathering for labour studies courses: the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, the Yale organizing campaign, Justice for Janitors, the 1997 UPS strike. I felt, at times, that I was being told a little too often that these stories were “amazing” and “incredible” examples of courage and dedication, but in truth, they are inspiring and deserve to be publicized and understood by all those who want to advance social justice.

It is much less clear, however, exactly what these stories tell us about the future or about the most fruitful courses of action. It is, of course, as Clawson freely admits, virtually impossible to predict when movements will take off; historically, upsurges such as the Civil Rights movement or the labour organizing wave of the 1930s have caught everyone by surprise, even their participants. Thus, given today’s rather quiescent landscape, Clawson is reduced to arguing that such an unexpected surge *could* happen again as it has before. This is valuable as an expression of optimism and as a way of sustaining hopes for a progressive revival, but does not really help us in looking for it.

There are, however, a number of more specific theoretical claims which

could help in thinking about labour strategies if these were more strongly argued; unfortunately, Clawson too often leaves things either vague or in a state of internal contradiction.

One important dimension, for example, is that of class. Clawson clearly starts from a working-class perspective; he frequently judges the worth of movements, not by their effectiveness, but by whether or not they were led by workers. This seems to lead into some dead ends. On the one hand, Clawson is concerned that several of the most “workerist” efforts he documents have remained encapsulated and have failed to sustain themselves on their own: the Stamford battle, for example—perhaps the purest example of a labour community alliance of the kind Clawson advocates—remains limited and dependent on AFL-CIO support which is already being reduced. On the other hand, he is suspicious of the most objectively successful of the movements he chronicles—the Living Wage campaign—because it includes too many non-worker leaders. In the same way, he left me confused as to his attitude towards union organizations and their leaders; sometimes he sees them as a danger because they stifle spontaneous upsurges, and at others, he sees them as vital to nurturing and supporting incipient movements. His efforts to reconcile the conflicts are too abstract to be helpful: he says that the main problem is for organized labour to find a way to encourage these movements without dominating them, but he does not show what that would actually look like, or how this could be done.

Then there is the question of tactics. Most of the stories, and most of the admiring comments by Clawson, involve open confrontations between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the seemingly-powerless. But in the chapter on gender strategies, he notes that both the Yale and Harvard organizing drives systematically avoided confrontation and lowered the level of tension rather

than raising it. He speculates that this might hold “vital lessons for all workforces”; but if so, what do we make of all the contrary examples that are also cited with approval?

Perhaps Clawson is simply suggesting multiple possibilities rather than trying to narrow down an uncertain future. But he *does* want to narrow things down and rule things out on some dimensions; he would like to argue that the movement of the future will come from the bottom, will be based in working-class and poor communities, and will gain energy from an attack on the wealthy and powerful. As he would say, that is a possibility, but it leads him to ignore or downplay some of the most significant and sustained efforts of the last few decades. While the Living Wage Campaign makes him uncomfortable, he leaves out altogether the disabilities campaign of the 1980s, which culminated in an act which (despite its weaknesses) has had a wider impact on workplace justice than anything else in this period. Parts of that movement fit Clawson’s model : there were sit-ins of disabled people blocking state office buildings and bus stops. Other parts, however, did not: it

had on its side Republican leader Bob Dole as well as a nationwide network of the poor and the militant, and it had virtually no ties to organized labour. The more recent gay rights movement has the same kind of diverse constituency. And, of course, the Civil Rights and the ‘60s women’s movements achieved as much as they did in part because they mobilized some segments of the rich and powerful classes and were able to create cross-class alliances with a range of tactics.

In the end, the strongest argument in Clawson’s book may be the very general point that when new alliances are formed unexpected things may happen. The message that the labour movement needs to look for alliances beyond its traditional boundaries is unquestionably important, and some of the stories Clawson tells may help expand the progressive imagination. But his (not always explicit) framing may still remain too limited to include some of the most energetic and hopeful cases of activism for workplace and social justice.

**CHARLES HECKSCHER**  
Rutgers University

***Building Chaos: An International Comparison of Deregulation in the Construction Industry***

sous la direction de Gerhard BOSCH et Peter PHILLIPS, London : Routledge, 2003, 256 p., ISBN 0-4152-6090-6.

Cet ouvrage est le fruit de la collaboration de plusieurs chercheurs intéressés par l’impact de la déréglementation sur l’organisation de la production et du travail, la formation, les qualifications de la main-d’œuvre et les conditions de travail dans l’industrie de la construction des pays suivants : Pays-Bas, Allemagne, Danemark, Canada (sur le Québec plus essentiellement), Australie, Espagne, États-Unis, Royaume-Uni et République de Corée. De façon générale, les auteurs respectifs de chaque chapitre commencent en situant l’indus-

trie de la construction dans le contexte de l’évolution économique et du marché plus spécifique de la construction. On retrouve également des informations sur les principaux acteurs et leur influence dans la régulation du milieu. Du point de vue strict des relations patronales-syndicales, on retrouve certes des informations sur les structures de négociation, mais très peu de données sur les arrêts de travail.

La séquence des chapitres présente la situation de chaque pays selon un ordre décroissant du degré de réglementation