

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



### *Growing Older, Working Longer: The New Face of Retirement* By Monica Townson. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2006, 254 pp., ISBN 0-886274-73-7 (pbk.).

Richard R. Gordon

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[See table of contents](#)

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modifications récentes qui ont effectivement été apportées au Code criminel canadien.

De façon générale, on ne peut que recommander la lecture de ce livre notamment aux personnes impliquées en santé et sécurité du travail. Il permet au lecteur d'être à même de visualiser les conséquences à long terme sur la santé et la sécurité de certaines décisions prises sans analyse de risque préalables. Par ailleurs il ouvre une fenêtre sur des événements survenus hors du Québec dont on parle très peu sinon jamais dans les cours de formation en santé et sécurité du travail, même si, dans certains cas, certains d'entre eux ont un impact de plus en plus important sur nos façons de faire, comme l'illustre notamment le cas Westray.

**Marc Baril**

Institut de recherche Robert-Sauvé en santé et sécurité du travail

### **Growing Older, Working Longer: The New Face of Retirement**

By Monica Townson. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2006, 254 pp., ISBN 0-886274-73-7 (pbk.).

Perhaps it is because I am a recently retired person of a "certain" age that I found this book to be such a relevant, informative and fascinating read. But I believe that the author, Monica Townson, has put together a well researched publication of such fundamental significance that it should be high on the reading list of anyone seeking to acquire, or enhance, an understanding of its subject matter.

It is written in a mainly commentarial style rather than putting forward a thesis requiring justification. As its title makes clear, the book concerns the increasing longevity of the population and the implications for retirement that flow from that. Whilst the author's primary focus is on Canada, she has cleverly woven a global context into the tapestry of the book. Relevant ongoing experience drawn from various other well-developed, industrialized countries has been incorporated and analyzed, as have authoritative contributions from influential international bodies including the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU).

The book comprises six chapters and its major themes are: the changing nature of retirement; trends in, and the adequacy of, the pension system; the reactions of governments and employers to the perceived challenges posed by the aging population and the baby boomer generation; the need to protect older workers; and the changing role and special needs of women.

In terms of the changing nature of Canadian retirement the author presents a useful historical perspective. At the beginning of the twentieth century, when employment was largely farm-based, retirement was virtually non-existent. Change began with the introduction of the Old Age Pension in 1927, which was later modified in 1951 with the introduction of the Old Age Security Act making the pension universal for the first time. In 1964 the federal government introduced the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) in 1967. In addition, the provision of employer sponsored pensions improved the financial security of those employees who had them, as did the advent of Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSPs).

Partly in response to youth unemployment, early retirement provisions were added to the CPP in the mid-1980s to encourage people to retire early. The marketing slogan "Freedom 55" created by a major insurance company consolidated this approach to retirement in the minds of the public. The author draws on statistics to show that in 1976 the median retirement age for both men and women was 65 with a gentle downward trend thereafter to 1985, falling more steeply from then until about 1997. Since that time it stabilized and increased slightly by 2002. One small problem I had in this connection was the sudden introduction of "average" figures which I couldn't confirm by reference to the relevant table, as all discussion and statistics quoted till then were "medians."

The approach taken with regard to the discussion of challenges facing the pension system was to both review the evolution in Canada and compare and contrast it with what was happening in other countries or the pronouncements of organizations such as the OECD, IMF, WHO, UN and EU. Townson

discusses how the misplaced concern as to the ability of the CPP to cope with the retirement of the baby boomers was played upon by those with a commercial interest in selling allied financial products, but was allayed by the Chief Actuary demonstrating that contribution increases taken earlier for this purpose meant that, even at current contribution levels, the fund would be viable for at least 75 years.

These initial pension-related concerns gave way to a more general economic concern; the need to keep the boomers working longer to ensure the economy's capacity to maintain, or enhance, the requisite standard of living for all. The author describes how thought, influenced by neo-liberal forces, has moved away from the former welfare state model. Instead, "life-course flexibility" and "active aging" have become the new buzz words for policy-makers. Proponents of these approaches, including the OECD, contend more "choice" and "flexibility" would be afforded workers in relation to how, and when, they choose to allocate their life-span time between working, learning, caring and leisure. Townson contends that "choice" and "flexibility" are, in fact, code words for expecting workers to fend for themselves much more than they do now, requiring them—rather than their employers—to assume the market risks associated with their retirement savings investments. Introduced first by Prime Minister Tony Blair in Britain, the "Third Way", also described as the post-welfare state, reinforced the trend, with its emphasis on the individual's responsibility to provide for retirement rather than society as whole.

With debate about the requirement to increase the retirement age and remove mandatory retirement a need to protect older workers is advanced. This involves a wide-ranging review of the attitudinal, social and economic factors determining the timing of workers "retirement", in which the need to recognize the thread that links all of the relevant government policy areas is delineated. Discrimination against the elderly is well covered, pointing to the need for appropriate government policy development. Such policy needs to meet two objectives: to promote workplace practices which are conducive to

the ongoing employment of the elderly; and to alleviate perceptions of coercion among the elderly in the new "active aging" approach.

The special needs of women are also well handled. Townson discusses their increasing participation in the paid work force and, owing to their primary care-giver role both to children and the elderly, their tendency to "retire" earlier, and to take breaks from work or pass up promotional opportunities more frequently than men do. These factors, she contends, must be considered when proposing amendments to retirement policy.

Due to her mastery of the subject matter and her skill as a writer Townson has managed to present a book on such a complex subject, exploring the many diverse factors and the sometimes conflicting needs of individuals, governments, employers and unions, in a manner which is comprehensible to the general reader.

The only minor complaints I have relate to editing of the book. I found several typographical errors, and tables or charts were sometimes too far removed from the initial reference to them. Also, as a non-Canadian reader, I found the use of acronyms before first using the name in full to be somewhat distracting—particularly in the first chapter. In view of this I consider that the book would benefit from the addition of a list of acronyms and their related full titles.

**Richard R. Gordon**  
Brisbane, Australia

### **Recrutement et sélection du personnel**

Par Anne Bourhis. Montréal : G. Morin, 2007, 562 p., ISBN 978-2-891059-89-3.

Cet ouvrage d'Anne Bourhis vient combler un grand vide dans le domaine de la publication, en langue française, d'ouvrages se concentrant sur la dotation. Jusqu'à tout récemment, le lecteur intéressé par ces questions devait se contenter d'ouvrages périphériques ou encore, d'ouvrages marqués par le passage des années ou les travers d'une approche de consultants.

Divisé en cinq parties comprenant au total dix-huit chapitres, la contribution de Bourhis est intéressante à plusieurs niveaux. Tout