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The Future of Worker Representation edited by Geraldine HEALY, Edmund HEERY, Phil TAYLOR, and William BROWN, London: Palgrave, 2004, 325 pp., ISBN 1-4039-1759-0.

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The Future of Worker Representation

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The book is the product of research from the UK's Economic and Social Research Council's large "Future of Work" project directed by Professor Peter Nolan at the University of Leeds. There are 22 projects attached to this initiative. It represents one of the most significant research based initiatives directed at understanding the extent of change within British employment relations. There has been a range of texts produced by Palgrave under the heading, The Future of Work Series. This series represents one of the most significant sets of publications in British employment relations. The projects and the books aim to counter the sometime view that the nature of work is changing beyond recognition and that there has been a major rupture with traditional forms of regulation.

Of the series, this must be one of the most important interventions. It brings together work on the subject of trade union renewal in a national context where trade unions and workers have seen some of the most extensive changes. The editors of this edition are leading figures in the area and have brought together an array of relevant commentators. The book looks at two issues: the new challenges to worker representation and the responses of trade unions to them. The question of how trade unions respond to change at work has been a focus of discussion for some time. However, the book manages to focus on the array of responses and the way in which the form of representation is being developed. So often the question of renewal is seen through the prism of traditional trade union structures and a uni-dimensional workforce. The editors have avoided this by starting with a selection of five chapters that focus on a variety of workers: IT specialists, call centre staff, employees in multi-agency environments, minority ethnic women, and non-standard workers. The chapters argue that there is ample scope for representation within such categories. Hyman et al. argue with regards to IT specialists that there is evidence of unions taking a broader view of the career and needs of workers, whilst the chapter by Bain et al. on call centres manages to outline how there is no singular type of worker or employment emerging from this new sector and that there are a variety of issues and experiences around which organized labour can engage.

Such changes in the nature of work and their implications are discussed by Marchington et al. who see multi-agency environments as providing an organizational challenge to worker voice. This latter point is echoed by Heery et al. on non-standard workers who, whilst outlining novel trade union approaches, do acknowledge that the challenge to unions is a structural one and not just a strategic one. Meanwhile, Healy et al. discuss the collective interests of minority ethnic women and how these relate to the challenge of management and trade unionism. In discussing low-paid work, Wills presents a chapter which argues that the solution may emerge from beyond the workplace such is the nature of the challenge: she argues that the role of alliances and a more social-community approach are vital to any process of renewal.

The second half of the book starts presenting the reader with a range of strategies that have emerged with regards to worker representation. Munro and Rainbird illustrate the role of voice-renewal in terms of how learning strategies may become a significant platform for developing a new relationship between trade unions and worker needs. However, they point to the need for a strong regulatory system of

support to ensure that such a link can be clearly established. This question of unions responding without a strong and committed level of state support, even under the post-1997 New Labour government, is a leitmotiv of the book but it never quite surfaces as an explicit issue in itself. Soft regulatory support appears to be developing, but it has to be underpinned by trade union intervention and resources. Hall and Terry's chapter does outline this new regulatory dimension with its piecemeal approach. However, even they acknowledge that much appears to depend on employers and their attitudes.

The question of trade union responses and employers comes to a head with two key chapters which synthesis the debate on partnership and co-operative relations with employers. Danford et al. see the development of trade union engagement with partnership as a flawed strategy due to its role in legitimating a more exploitative environment in terms of high performance work systems. They are concerned that this aspect of trade union responses may contradict the broader activities of labour and suck unions into the managerial concerns of the firm. Oxenbridge and Brown differ, arguing that there can be benefits to a closer working relationship if trade unions have a clear relation with their members and independent vision of their objectives.

If any reader wanted to understand the state of the labour movement in the United Kingdom in relation to employment change and regulation, then this book is a vital acquisition. The book brings together what can be considered to be the best research in the area. It is structured and introduced in such a way that the multi-dimensional challenge to labour is effectively described, as are the responses to such challenges. In this respect, the last chapters by Druker and Stanworth on agency labour and the Abbott on the Citizens Advice Bureau (a national and free advice body for workers and consumers) raise a new set of developments regarding 'other actors' and their role within the representation of rights. This notion of 'other actors' is becoming a major area of academic development as the question of voice is seen in broader terms: future editions of the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* will become much more engaging with such developments, according to its editor (Ed Heery who is one of the editors of this book as well).

If there was one missing link in the book, it would be the question of the political nature of worker representation, which has become a slightly more problematic issue given the current nature of social democracy in Britain. Yet, this is a minor point in what is otherwise a benchmark intervention on the subject of worker representation and its complexities.

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Managing Employment Change
par Huw BEYNON, Damian GRIMSHAW, Jill RUBERY et Kevin WARD, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2002, 342 p., ISBN 0-19-924869-9.

Cet ouvrage est le produit d'un travail collectif résultant d'une collaboration entre chercheurs universitaires et institutionnels européens. Il s'agit d'une enquête basée sur sept études de cas couvrant, entre 1996 et 1999, vingt-trois espaces de travail, des secteurs public et privé, situés dans le nord du Royaume-Uni. Ce type de recherche reflète une tendance lourde en Europe