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Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response: The Politics of the End of Labourism, By Jason Schulman (2015) Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 167 pages. ISBN 978-1-137-30316-5

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simples « partenaires » contraints à s'adapter à l'idéologie dominante plutôt qu'à en faire la critique. Pour le mouvement syndical, cela impliquerait souvent de mettre de côté la volonté d'être un vecteur d'innovations sociales afin de se concentrer sur des questions financières et économiques. En d'autres termes, le dialogue social aurait aussi contribué à l'affaiblissement des syndicats (voir Lapointe, chap. 6).

On retrouve essentiellement des considérations similaires dans les chapitres 2, 3 et 4, qui portent sur certaines versions européennes du dialogue social. Malgré les différences formelles entre le tripartisme des pays nordiques (chap. 2) et les modèles allemand ou français, les auteurs remarquent qu'à l'aune du conservatisme néolibéral, le dialogue social facilite effectivement la paix industrielle, mais souvent au prix d'une reconfiguration des rapports de pouvoir donnant une plus grande place aux acteurs corporatifs, qui peuvent alors critiquer les acquis sociaux lorsque ceux-ci semblent contredire leurs intérêts. Au chapitre 6, Paul-André Lapointe interroge, lui aussi, les acquis du dialogue social à partir de l'examen des conflits de travail au Québec. La quasi-disparition des grèves ne serait pas la conséquence d'une paix industrielle saine et durable, mais plutôt le symptôme d'une mutation importante des rapports de travail, qui seraient moins déterminés par les cycles économiques que par les velléités des employeurs, porteurs d'une idéologie au cœur de laquelle les forces du marché ont été naturalisées.

Une des contributions les plus intéressantes de l'ouvrage est sans doute de mettre en évidence les limites du dialogue social lorsqu'on le conçoit comme étant un mécanisme encadré par l'État, dont la principale fonction serait d'assurer la neutralité des processus. Pour plusieurs, cette « neutralité » masquerait une normativité conservatrice fondée sur la mythologie néolibérale dont la finalité serait de s'affranchir des contraintes imposées par les acteurs collectifs, notamment par les syndicats. Au contraire, tel que Cantin le souligne au chapitre 6, il est également possible d'envisager le dialogue social comme un mouvement social, ce qu'il appelle un « syndicalisme communautaire » (p. 191), capable d'être un véhicule privilégié d'enjeux collectifs et d'innovations sociales.

Les différentes perspectives par lesquelles on aborde la notion de dialogue social et ses transformations historiques permettent d'en révéler le contenu normatif. À ce titre, *Dialogue social, relations du travail et syndicalisme* s'inscrit dans les recherches portant sur les mutations des rapports sociaux et de travail. L'ouvrage constitue une contribution critique intéressante qui montre que le dialogue social, plus qu'un processus, est aussi le véhicule d'une culture politique ayant une influence profonde sur les identités collectives et les logiques d'action des acteurs sociaux.

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How should scholars respond to the work of other scholars? Should they accept their work on trust or should they be sceptical? The answer is the latter. It is only by relentless testing that scholars can overcome fears that they are not in error when they make prognostications. Theoretical work should be examined in terms of its logic and predictive ability. Various documents and numerical data which underpin empirical accounts should be examined to test whether or not the accounts provided accord with the evidence upon which the analysis is based. There is no substitute

for not examining primary sources, especially in this digital age where, especially government statements, legislation and the decisions of courts and tribunals are readily available. Obscure documents can be obtained through inter-library loans, or by writing/emailing organizations and individuals responsible for their authorship. It is not enough to stand on the shoulders of others; what sometimes appear as shoulders are nothing more than feet of clay.

These fundamental issues of scholarship are relevant to Jason Schulman's analysis of the relationship between Labour governments in Britain, New Zealand and Australia (where the spelling is Labor), and what Schulman calls 'the unions' in the latter decades of the Twentieth Century. Much of his analysis draws on the Australian experience which, dear reader, you are either lucky or unlucky; I was a Johnny on the spot and have extensively commented upon this.[1] Schulman has only one primary source document to what happened in Australia during this period—an Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1997 publication on Labour Statistics. His reference material does not include the eight agreements, Accords, between the Labour government and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), legislation at both the national and state level, decisions of Courts and industrial tribunals and other documents produced by a wide array of interested parties. As a result, his account of Australian experience, in both general terms and specifics, is far from convincing. I doubt if he understand the nuances of Australian industrial relations during this period of continuous change. Here is a sad empirical example. He says that, in 1974, Australia lost more than 30 million working days in industrial disputes (p. 71). An examination of ABS data will show that 6.2 million working days were lost.

Schulman is concerned with examining the relationship between a Labour Party and 'the unions', and the embracing of Neoliberal policies by the former. In both the British and New Zealand cases he maintains that 'the unions' were too fragmented and/or were so committed to keeping Conservative parties out of power that they mounted little resistance to their respective Labour parties adoption of Neoliberalism. The Australian case is seen as being different in that, under the Accord, 'the unions' were able to slow down the adoption of such policies.

The counter argument that will be mounted here is that the adoption of Neoliberal policies in the labour market was speeded up rather than slowed down by unions in Australia. The ACTU was a strong supporter of the need for changes to enhance the growth of the Australian economy. It supported generic reform of the labour market and more specific reforms of work practices to make firms more efficient; reform of the union movement away from a craft/occupational basis to industry unions to make it easier for employers to bargain at the workplace; and most importantly, was in the vanguard of the campaign for a system of enterprise bargaining and of attacks on the Industrial Relations Commission for its 'intransigence' in adopting such an approach. The *Accord Partners*, based on 'new interpretations' of the Australian Constitution, which Schulman doesn't refer to, introduced legislative changes to reduce the powers of the Commission, an institution unions had utilised in the past to defend and advance worker interests.

Unions agreed to reductions in real wages in exchange for tax cuts which flowed to others including the well off, who benefited disproportionately in early incantations of such deals, with an opportunity cost for the government's budget and reductions in welfare benefits for those at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Union rationalisation involved unions devoting time, energy and income to the bureaucratic problem of knowing how to rationalise themselves when employers and

business groups adopted aggressive anti union campaigns. It was akin to unions trying to rearrange the deck chairs as the Titanic sank. Union leaders, like politicians, can find themselves hypnotised by the nostrums of Neoliberalism.

Reference has already been made to Schulman's use of the phrase 'the unions'. He continually uses it throughout the book, not just in the title. An alternative term could be 'unions'. Schulman's usage implies that unions are homogenous, where the alternative does not and lends itself to variability in the goals and behaviour of unions. Or to look at this in another way, Schulman has a class based if not Leninist view of unions. It is not clear that Schulman comprehends the *raison d'être* of unions. On page 85 he makes a reference to 'the union ranks'. Industrial relations scholars have traditionally used the term 'union rank and file'. Scholars, of course, can use whatever terms they like; maybe his term will catch on.

Schulman would be well advised to consult some early seminal works on what are called 'labour movement theories' to enhance his understanding of unions. At a minimum, he could start with the work of Sidney and Beatrice Webb[2] and then move onto the works of Robert Hoxie[3] and Selig Perlman.[4] In different ways, they point to the variability of union behaviour. For work on unions in Britain and Australia in the period covered by his book, Schulman should consult Ed Blissett[5] and Barbara Pocock.[6]

Schulman finishes his book with a quotation pointing to how social democratic organizations, such as Labour parties and unions, are not committed to the overthrow of capitalism and increasingly are abandoning their principles and losing their way (p. 117). It is not clear that Labour parties and unions in Britain, New Zealand and Australia were ever committed to abolishing capitalism. There has been no equivalent of the storming of the Bastille or a Boston tea party. Moreover, is it that startling to reveal that Labour/Labor governments adopt policies which they believe will help maintain themselves in power? This was something that was observed by Robert Michels[7] with his notion of 'the iron law of oligarchy' more than a century ago. In the Australian case, there is a strong tradition of scholarship on how Labour governments do little more than try to civilise capitalism.[8] Schulman's problem is his inability to recognize that, in Australia if not elsewhere, this is an object also of unions.

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Notes

1 For example, Dabscheck, B. (1989) *Australian Industrial Relations in the 1980s*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press; Dabscheck, B. (1995) *The Struggle for Australian Industrial Relations*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press; and Dabscheck, B. (2000) "The Accord: Corporatism Visits Australia", in Wilson, K., Bradford, J. and Fitzpatrick, M. (eds.) *Australia in Accord: An Evaluation of the Prices and Incomes Accord in the Hawke-Keating Years*, Melbourne: South Pacific Publishing, p. 93-103. Schulman has not consulted Wilson, Bradford and Fitzpatrick (eds.), which is unfortunate in that it contains a 125 pages appendix of the eight versions of the *Accord*.

2 Webb, S. and B. (1911, first published 1897) *Industrial Democracy*, London: Longmans.

3 Hoxie, R. F. (1924) *Trade Unionism in the United States*, New York: Appleton.

4 Perlman, S. (1949) first published 1928) *A Theory of the Labor Movement*, New York: Augustus and Kelley.

5 Blissett, E. (2014) *Inside the Unions: A Comparative Analysis of Policy-Making in Australian and British Printing and Telecommunication Trade Unions, Oxford: Peter Lang.*

6 Pocock, B. (1998) "Institutional Sclerosis: Prospects for Trade Union Transformation", *Labour and Industry*, 9 (1), p. 17-36.

7 Michels, R. (1959, first published 1911) *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchic Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. New York: Dover Publications.

8 Nairn, B. (1973) *Civilising Capitalism: The Labor Movement in New South Wales 1870-1900*, Canberra: Australian National University Press; Childe, V. G. (1923) *How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers' Representatives in Australia*, London: Labour Publishing; Sheridan, T. (1973) "Labour v Labor: The Victorian Metal Trades Dispute of 1946-47", in Iremonger, J., Merritt, J. and Osborne, G. (eds.) *Strikes: Studies in Twentieth Century Australian Social History*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, p. 176-224; Sheridan, T. (1989) *Division of Labour: Industrial Relations in the Chifley Years 1945 – 1949*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia; Catley, R. and McFarlane, B. (1974) *From Tweedledum To Tweedledee: The New Labor Government in Australia: A Critique of its Social Model*, Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Company.

Black Labor, White Sugar: Caribbean Braceros and their Struggle for Power in the Cuban Sugar Industry

By Philip A. Howard (2015) Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 324 pages.
ISBN: 978-0-8071-5952-1.

Philip A. Howard, currently Associate Professor of Latin American and Caribbean History at the University of Houston, is a recognized authority on Afro-Cuban history and, more generally, African influence in Latin America and the Caribbean. His first book, *Changing History: The Afro-Cuban Cabildos and Societies of Color in the Nineteenth Century* (1998) discussed Afro-Cuban benevolent societies. *Black Labor, White Sugar* also explores African influences on Cuba and analyzes braceros, or workers, principally from Haiti and Jamaica, who came to Cuba to work in the sugar industry. "From its beginnings in the colonial era," he asserts, "the cultivation of sugarcane in Cuba engendered immeasurable misery for the predominantly black labor force that cut, loaded, and hauled the tropical commodity" (1). That misery increased when, during the U.S. occupation of Cuba, sugar producers and refiners built technologically advanced sugar mills and imported workers from other countries to create an ethnically diverse transnational labour force. Throughout the volume, the author pursues two lines of inquiry. He explores the oppressive organizations that dehumanized workers and the perilous conditions of life they faced in Cuba. However, he also emphasizes the agency of the workers, strategies they used to resist both sugar companies and xenophobic Cubans, and the development of a militant working-class consciousness.

Howard begins by analyzing the workers who moved from their countries to Cuba. Some of these workers remained in Cuba only for the sugar harvest, where others attempted to stay more permanently. Black Haitian and Jamaican workers migrated to Cuba for specific reasons, including to protest against "the structures, policies, and social arrangements that reduced these workers' socioeconomic opportunities and mobility at home" (22). The period the book covers was a moment of profound transformation for Cuba, which had very recently gained independence from Spain. Chronic labour shortages and the need among sugar producers and refiners for workers encouraged violations of the bans on black immigration. Additionally, sugar companies, owned by both Cubans and foreigners, attempted to replace as many black Cuban workers as they could with black Caribbean workers. Sugar company elites believed black Caribbeans were more tractable than black Cubans were. However, the companies never completely eliminated Cuban workers. As Howard notes, sugar companies became adept at using the different ethnicities of their workers to, at once, foster competition and antagonism and narrow the possibility of labour solidarity. He pays very careful attention to this theme throughout the book: how companies continually attempted to drive wedges between different groups of workers.

When Haitian and Jamaican workers arrived in Cuba, they found conditions