

REVIEWS

Bedggood, D. *Rich and poor in New Zealand: a critique of class, politics and ideology*, Auckland, George Allen & Unwin, 1980, pp. 178. Price: \$8.95.

Easton, B. *Social policy and the welfare state in New Zealand*, Auckland, George Allen & Unwin, 1980, pp. 182. Price: \$8.95.

The detailed citations for these two books might suggest a considerable similarity of topic as well as publisher, format and size, but any similarities come to an end after the title pages.

Readers of the first book who have visited the old mission church at Waimate North and noted the Bedggood graves in the little cemetery may be tempted to wonder if the missionary personality is transmitted by biological inheritance. David Bedggood may be preaching a different gospel but apart from this he has a great deal in common with his nineteenth century forebears. He has an evangelistic fervour, a fundamentalist approach to his beliefs, and very early in the piece (p. 10) he makes it clear that he takes off from an act of faith — Marxism is the only *genuine* social science (Bedggood's italics), all else is ideology. "The purpose of this book is to demonstrate its validity in practice".

The book begins with a rather odd act of homage. Bedggood acknowledges that the title of his book comes from a pamphlet written in 1942 by W.T. Doig who had been secretary of the Bureau of Social Science Research during its brief existence (1937-1940) as New Zealand's first official social research organisation. One is left with the impression that Doig was at least something close to a Marxist and that his ill-fated report on standards of life of New Zealand dairy-farmers was intended as a piece of political dynamite. Neither of these views accords with the facts. Doig was a loyal member of the Labour Party, his economic doctrines derived to a considerable extent from the welfare economics of Pigou, and he neither saw, nor intended, his report as primarily "exposing the exploitation of female domestic labour", in the way that Bedggood suggests.

As a missionary Bedggood is faced, again like his ancestors, with a decision on which variety of faith to propagate. Marxist denominations in the 1980s are about as numerous as Christian denominations were in the 1830s. I would guess that in the isolation of the pioneering Bay of Islands the Waimate North missionaries did not feel called upon to go around announcing to their potential converts that they had made this kind of choice and our author is equally reticent. The theologically (Marx-wise) sophisticated will note a number of possibilities that do not fit (the SUP, *pace* the Prime Minister, is a bourgeois organisation — p. 163) but an attempt at final labelling would involve a good deal of guesswork. However, it is clear that Bedggood wants to assert his fundamentalist purity. Nearly all quotations are direct from *Capital*; the dynamics of class conflict, the role of the State in maintaining the capitalist system, and the inherent contradictions of that system are the guiding conceptual stars, though frequent invocations of sexism and racism add a touch of modernity to the otherwise sternly traditional theological vocabulary.

As befits a Marxist Bedggood's approach is historical, but it is a history which derives from, rather than underpins, the theory — things must have been this way because that is what the theory requires. New Zealand society has developed in such a way that it was composed last century of five main groups, first the capitalists, and then the "four productive classes" (p. 52), women, Maoris, peasants and the working class. This seems to have changed, by some not altogether clear process, to the contemporary situation where the working class includes ninety percent of the New Zealand working population. (The remainder are made up of five percent capitalists and five percent petty capitalists.) That ninety percent includes not only the employed women but also "all married women not

otherwise working in employment, i.e. domestic labour", (p. 72) which seemingly takes in any capitalist's wife who hasn't a servant to do the daily chores.

Many New Zealanders may be intrigued to realise that their ancestors were peasants. Bedggood doesn't define this term (he is a little erratic in his decisions about which terms should be defined, and which left in obscurity) but one can deduce that landowners who use family labour and have problems in keeping out of debt are peasants. With rather less confidence one might also deduce that peasants are (usually?) dairy-farmers while sheep farmers are (often?) capitalists. There are, however, poor, middle, and rich, peasants. How one distinguishes the rich peasants from the capitalists, with any degree of precision, is not revealed.

Conceptually the book is, in fact, a mess. If I were a Marxist I would be going around muttering "Who needs enemies . . . ?" and trying to look as if I had nothing to do with the firm next door. Bedggood does not only misunderstand rival theorists (his account of the views of Max Weber would deserve C- at best in a second year student essay), he doesn't even play fair with Marx. If ever there was a case for Karl to rise from his grave shouting his famous denial, "I am not a Marxist", this is it.

If Bedggood is short on effective theory, he is even shorter on facts in the shape of empirical data. A few statistical tables of doubtful relevance, unclear interpretation and (p. 137) uncertain origin make an appearance (no less than three of them labelled "Table 7.4"). Bedggood should, perhaps, refer to the long editorial note incorporated into Chapter 15 of *Capital*, Volume 2 where Engels sadly acknowledges that Marx "did not get the knack of handling figures [and] got so tangled up in his computations of turnovers that besides places left uncompleted a number of things were incorrect and contradictory". In general Bedggood's statistics bear a strong resemblance to those of Marx; that is, they are usually hypothetical and illustrative. A "graph" to which we are referred (p. 120) turns out to be an illustrative diagram; we are told (p. 60) that we can calculate a rate of exploitation, but it appears two pages later that this "calculation" is "based on value theory and not measurable rates of profit".

In spite of occasional denials Bedggood produces a Marxism which is rigidly determinist down to small details. The State, as the agent of the capitalist system, is revealed as a virtually omniscient body (reification?) which operates unfailingly in favour of the capitalists even, apparently, when it is doing things to which the capitalists object. The determinism, as it finally appears, is enormously important, because in no other way can the correct final outcome be assumed. Nowhere does Bedggood even hint at what kind of action he believes a New Zealand government should take. Everything that is done is open to criticism (some of it, to be fair, very effective, — he is at his best in pointing up weaknesses, hypocrisies and — other people's — illogicalities), but in nothing that he has to say is there any apparent policy relevance.

In this he is being strictly logical. There is, according to the particular fundamentalist version of theory which he is propounding, no way out but the revolution, which is inevitable, so presumably the sooner we get there and have done with it the better. The only way to the revolution is via the immiseration of the working class (all ninety percent of us) so let's stop playing around with welfare and other delaying tactics and get it over. Martyrdom, one might suggest, is to be welcomed, for that way lies a swift entry to paradise.

The book by Brian Easton is a very different kind of animal. Unlike Bedggood, Easton has a basically positive attitude to the welfare state. Bedggood takes it for granted that welfare provisions provided by a bourgeois (i.e. non-Marxist) government will operate to benefit capitalism and that, one way or another, the benefits to the poor will really be paid for by the poor. As Easton makes clear there is undoubtedly a real problem here; the extent of actual redistribution of wealth or income by welfare provisions is open to question, and is not easily measured, perhaps is not even susceptible to adequate measurement from the records at present kept. Easton is also prepared to entertain the possibility that an

effective redistribution is unlikely or impossible under the present system and he makes clear that those who debate this question must be careful to define their terms and make clear exactly what they are arguing about. "Some of those who say we cannot afford the welfare state are saying that the economic system is right and the social objectives are wrong . . . that they prefer the economic, social and political privileges implied by the present economic system, and the continuation of those privileges". (p. 176)

Easton is an economist and a social statistician, he is very much concerned with quantification and measurement, his approach is strongly empirical. Faced by a question his tendency is to respond with a demand for clear definitions, a demand for information about the quantities of wealth and income which are being used, produced or transferred in the processes with which the question is concerned, and then to attempt to arrive at an answer. This is not to say that he is unconcerned with values, indeed he makes it very clear that definition, for example, commonly implies some response to questions of value, but he does not assume that there is some, one, position which *must* take priority.

For the empirically minded Easton's approach comes as a breath of fresh air after the tightly enclosed argument of the other book but the work has some defects which arise out of this virtue. Easton is not a philosopher and while at the beginning and the end of the book (and even briefly on odd occasions in between) he raises questions of principle, he does not debate these very profoundly; this is not what the book is about, rather it is about how effectively the welfare state is working, what can be done to make it work more effectively, what are the chances (assessed economically and politically) of achieving this?

On this basis the book is both interesting and disappointing. Interesting, because Easton is knowledgeable and intelligent, and has many things to say that are worth reading. Disappointing, because many of the facts that he really needs in order to write that kind of book, are simply not available. To the extent that they are available this is quite often due to Easton's own work — a high proportion of the references are to recently published or as yet unpublished papers or books by Easton. This is a tribute to his persistence as a researcher in a field that has not hitherto been very attractive to New Zealand economists, but rather unsatisfying to the reader concerned with getting more than an outline of the topic.

Basically the book consists of a series of chapters on such topics as housing, employment, the elderly, disability, the family, medical services, women, etc., which are addressed to questions of what is available in these various fields, how effective the provisions may be, and so on. Many of these areas are complex, the benefit systems are complicated (often for historical reasons), and Easton gives something of an impression of galloping through a maze with considerable equestrian skill but providing his readers little opportunity to make general sense of the detail as the journey proceeds. Inevitably, he makes, in such a brief and rapid review, various errors of omission and commission.

More serious, however, is his failure really to come to grips with questions of how policy is formulated, evaluated and monitored. What are the political and administrative processes which permit, support or hinder the creation of an effective policy? Or the social processes which influence the working of an established policy? There is a whole field of specialisation, commonly referred to in academic terms as the discipline of social administration, which is concerned with these questions, but Easton shows relatively little awareness of this field and its possibilities. He can, of course, respond that he is an economist and he must stick to his last, but while this may be good reason for him not writing a book on social administration, it hardly excuses him from a failure to see (or at any rate to express) the relevance of such work to his theme. And if he was not writing a book of this kind should he have given his volume a somewhat less ambitious title?

Easton could well respond to many of my comments by saying that if he hadn't written his book we would not merely be without a less than perfect contribution, we would be without any contribution at all; "If you don't like what I have written," he might say, "what about trying to do better?" And there would be a good deal of strength in such an argument. In spite of all the claims that are made about New Zealand's pioneering activities

in the area of social welfare, there is remarkably little really analytical, solidly critical writing about these activities. This book may be imperfect, but it is certainly not negligible and if Easton only stimulates more and better work his book will have served a very useful purpose.

Both books lack a unified bibliography, a list of tables and diagrams, and an index. Such defects in books which are explicitly directed to serious students are inexcusable and the publishers should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves.

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Campbell, L. G. *The framework of industrial law in New Zealand*, Resource Material, Industrial Relations Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, 1980, pp. 88. Price: \$2.00.

This Resource booklet, the second issued by the Industrial Relations Centre was prepared by its author when he was employed as a research assistant at the Centre.

Its stated aim is "to provide practitioners and students with an overall view of the field of industrial law". Its introduction also states that in "general terms it should alert them (students and practitioners) to rights and obligations in that field" (i.e. industrial law). The introduction issues the caveat that the material should not be seen as a substitute for recourse to the statute or legal advice.

In endeavouring to fulfil its aim the resource booklet provides us with a brief summary of the main provisions of the principal Acts of Parliament which provide the basis of our industrial relations legislation. The list of statutes referred to is not exhaustive but does contain the major legislation relevant to the private and public sectors. In addition there are brief sections which touch on the formation of the common law contract of employment, the application of the common law to industrial disputes, and the legal status of trade unions.

Unfortunately because of the extensive areas that can only briefly be covered by the material; the need to be selective in what is discussed under any Act; the lack of any attempt to provide an overview of the interaction of different legislation; the speed with which industrial law is changed by our legislators; this Resource Material must be of limited value to the practitioners and students it is aimed at. For practitioners it can do little more than alert them to the existence of legislation covering a particular area of industrial life, something they should already be aware of. Even assuming blissful ignorance, recourse to this material could only send them scurrying to the Act itself and the relevant case law.

Perhaps the material will be of more value to students, although this is questionable. Whilst the author's aim of keeping legal jargon to a minimum is to be commended, regrettably because of this and the brevity of some of the explanations, the material is apt to be misleading in places. This is not intended as a criticism of the understanding of the subject by the author but is merely the inevitable consequence of trying to describe complex, inter-related legislation briefly and simply. Any student should be careful. Whilst he will get an outline of the relevant legislation, he should use the material as no more than a rough guide of where to proceed to next. A bibliography containing the main sources of further reference would therefore have been a useful addition.

The material is also a further reminder of the gap between the "theory" of industrial behaviour (in this case the formal rules of the game) and the "reality" of that behaviour. For example a student reading (on page 62) that it is an "offence to. . . insult any member

of a conciliation council" and later that "contempt of this kind is punishable by being taken into custody" may well be led to expect a different kind of behaviour when the insults start flying at the conciliation table. Certainly a request for any person to be taken into custody would be likely to lead to some unprintable response! This again is an inevitable consequence of simply describing the main "rules" of the game. The material that the practitioner and student needs is one that steps behind the "formality" of the system into how the system actually operates.

Earlier in the material, the comment, in relation to picketing, that "unions have generally learned to do without this form of action" is incorrect. Even before picketing became visible at Mangere and Southdown it was often resorted to as an industrial tactic by trade unions.

There are other statements which are apt to mislead. For example in reviewing the history of *The Remuneration Act* the author repeats government assertions that 1977 saw a "return to free collective bargaining". Most practitioners would assert that it is scarcely possible to return to something that has never existed in New Zealand.

There are factual errors – a reference to the U.K. *Employment Disputes Act 1975* presumably means the *Employment Protection Act*.

In summary perhaps the problem with this material is its ambitiousness. It does not provide an understandable and coherent framework of our industrial law which would be a daunting prospect even to an experienced practitioner. What it does provide is a rough guide to the legislation for the newcomer, covering most aspects of our industrial activity – not so much framework as more a part of the floor.

The author has clearly tried hard to live up to this ambitious exercise, but given that the reader, practitioner or student, will then have to go to a main text on the subject, I am left with the inevitable conclusion that most will probably find it more sensible simply to bypass this Resource Material.

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Scase, R. (Ed) *Industrial society: class cleavage and control*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1977, pp. 221. Price: \$10.50.

Purcell, J. and Smith, R. (Eds) *The control of work*, London, MacMillan, 1979, pp. xiv and 184. Price: \$45.50.

These two volumes deal with the fashionable issue of control in industrial societies but while they share in common this central feature, they are quite different sorts of books. *Industrial society*, the earlier published work is a selection of papers presented to the 1975 Annual Conference of the British Sociological Association. *The control of work* is a collection of original essays all having the notion of "control" as their central theme. *Industrial society* contains 11 papers divided among three sections: "Continuities and change", "Cleavage and control in capitalist society" and "Cleavage and control in socialist society". The other work contains seven essays dealing with: the concept of control in industrial relations, management's control strategy, German codetermination and control, government control of work, power and influence in the TUC, shop-floor control and, finally, a case study of control in a producer cooperative.

Neither volume is completely satisfactory but *The control of work* is the better. Its strength is its having a single theme; its weakness lies in having different authors for each chapter. As inevitably happens in this type of publication, the chapters written by the editors are the best. The other authors seem to be less aware of the editors' aims. Given the

different approaches of the editors and the other authors, the volume would have been improved considerably if the editors had added a concluding chapter to draw the disparate contributions together.

Richard Scase the editor of *Industrial society* has expended considerable effort to tie together the selections in his volume but the majority of the papers in the book are just not satisfactory. They either contain little that is new or are too brief to develop properly the author's argument.

It is impossible in a short review to treat adequately the 18 separate papers which are contained in the two books. However, while neither volume is essential reading, several of the individual efforts can be commended. The best paper overall is John Purcell's "A strategy for management control in industrial relations" (*The control of work*) which lays out the strategy by which management increasingly attempt to maximize achievement of their objectives "not through opposition to unions but by collaboration". The better papers in *Industrial society* are: Kumar's on "Continuities and discontinuities in the development of industrial societies"; Moore's on "Migrants and the class structure of Western Europe" and Winkler's on the "Corporate economy". The latter essay sets out a theory of the fundamentals of a corporatist economy and argues that Britain may well have such an economy within the next ten years. The arguments that Winkler outlines could be applied equally well to New Zealand and anyone concerned with the direction in which New Zealand appears to be heading would do well to look at the Winkler article.

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Showler, B. and Sinfield, A. (Eds), *The workless state: studies in unemployment*, Oxford, Martin Robertson, 1981, pp. xvii and 267. Price: \$15.60.

Perhaps it is difficult for us in New Zealand to grasp the magnitude of the issue of unemployment in Britain. I well remember in 1966 the tingling shock when the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, announced that he was deliberately raising the level of registered unemployment to half a million, or two percent of the labour force, as a part of his economic management. It seems so long ago since the time when first year economics students were set the task of examining the proposition that unemployment would have to rise to all of three percent, in order to prevent inflation. By August 1980 the registered unemployed in Britain had hit the two million mark, and the forecasts of three million unemployed from various reputable economic establishments now seem to be a matter of not "if" but "when". Through 1981 the numbers have crept remorselessly onward under an even less successful economic management – and a higher rate of inflation.

Faced with such a situation an academic may disinterestedly study the unemployed – the statistics churning from the computer, and the surveys providing a rich source of evidence to test old theories and construct new ones. Alternatively a group of academics might write a book, or scholarship and of passion, a book which reviews the available literature in a way which is accessible to the lay person – a book like "The Workless State". The result would be a book produced in haste – with seven chapters written by five authors which do not cohere together precisely. But that is the cost of urgency.

In Chapter 1, "Unemployment and the Unemployed", the editors describe the rise in unemployment, which they claim is due to inadequate demand for labour – that is a Keynesian explanation. They do not believe that the micro-chip has had much effect, although they accept the de-industrialisation thesis, the loss by British manufacturing

industry of its relative share of overseas and domestic markets. A particular cause for de-industrialisation has been Britain's accession to the Common Market. However the bulk of the chapter is centred around the theme of the unequal burden of unemployment.

Focusing on the uneven distribution of unemployment is vital for understanding its social and political consequences. It would be a very different society in which five per cent unemployment meant that five per cent of economists were out of work, five per cent of whites were out of work, five per cent of the middle-aged were out of work, and so on. Instead general labourers who make up two and a half per cent of the British labour force account for over forty per cent of the unemployed. Similarly, the concentration of unemployment appears to be among the young, the old, the racial minorities, the disabled, the sick, certain regions, and – crucially – among the poor.

In Chapter 2, "Political Economy and Unemployment", Brian Showler traces the history of economic theories of unemployment since the middle ages. The main conclusion is that while the monetarists' theory of unemployment is far from universally accepted, it has made major inroads into the Keynesian consensus and has been particularly influential on policy since the mid 1970s (i.e. before Mrs Thatcher). Monetarists argue that there is a "natural" rate of unemployment and that while government and economic management may be able to depress the actual rate to below this natural rate for a while, the consequence will be inflation and an above natural rate of unemployment in the long term.

A disappointing feature of the chapter is a diversion into a "far from exhaustive account of the economic costs of unemployment". The main focus is on the budgetary costs, whereas there are much larger production losses. It is not merely a matter of say, the seven to eight per cent loss of production which is important, but the attempt to shift part of the burden from the unemployed, by government benefits, pushing up the tax burden and costs on the economy as a whole and thereby increasing inflation and reducing productivity thus worsening the economic situation.

Alan Deacon provides a survey of unemployment and politics in Britain since 1945 showing how "blame-the-victim" has re-emerged as the establishment's policies to cope with unemployment have failed. Michael Hill looks at the development of government manpower policies and demonstrates that an active manpower policy has only limited effect in a context of high unemployment – a lesson our own Planning Council could reflect on.

In "Unemployment in an Unequal Society", Adrian Sinfield examines unemployment as a characteristic of the society in which it exists rather than as a phenomenon that happens to a few people. He summarises his position with a Swedish quotation "In a society where unemployment is accepted, great material and social gaps develop, resulting in the mutual isolation and alienation of different groups. Any social order not based on full employment must imply a restriction of living conditions and a squandering of human resources".

Sinfield's account suffers from concentrating upon unemployment and neglecting employment. The status of being employed in a full employment society is fundamentally different from being employed in a society with widespread unemployment. In the first it is having a job, in the second it is not being unemployed. The chapter may well have made more progress if it had been entitled "Employment in an Unequal Society".

Constance Sorrentino's study of the extent of unemployment on a comparative basis in nine countries including Australia, but excluding New Zealand, is a little out of place in an otherwise very British book. But the chapter is valuable nonetheless in that it attempts to correct for differences in definition, and could possibly be the basis for a linking of New Zealand's data into a world study.

The editors conclude by summarising the earlier chapters arguing that returning to full employment is a major challenge for Britain in the 1980s.

This is a valuable, indeed challenging, book which suffers by not having any specific economic contribution. It is not sufficient to argue that monetarism is wrong because it is not concerned about the unemployed. Monetarists would respond that their concerns, or otherwise, are irrelevant, since concern will not change the natural rate of unemployment.

Nor is it sufficient to argue that monetarism is not working. What is required is an account which explains why monetarism will not work in terms of a better alternative. Advocating a return to traditional Keynesianism is not enough. Passion has a role, but so has cool analysis.

Nonetheless, perhaps passion is necessary to drum into some people that an economy well away from full employment makes for a very poor society indeed.

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Mortimer, J. E. and Ellis, V. A. *A professional union: the evolution of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1980, pp. 450. Price: not stated.

The British have, for longer than we and for obvious reasons, been concerned with the history of their institutions, a concern shared by their labour movement. It is consequently becoming the rule for unions in that country to prepare and publish their own histories, a tendency alas which finds few imitators in this country. One thinks of Bollinger's "Against the Wind" and wishes there were more such. Curiously however, in the light of the close association of the labour movement with Oxford University, few of these histories are written in the rapidly developing tradition of the Ruskin College history seminars, i.e. what has been called "people history". Instead, and this book is no exception, they have followed a more conventional path. They are structural and institutional narratives relating personalities and struggles to their immediate contexts.

But while this approach might be less meaningful than that of Ruskin it has nevertheless its own value. Documents of record are an excellent source for those with a broader interest who come behind. Besides, it is of great interest to those operating in a different system of industrial relations to observe in an historical context the solutions found to universal problems in other societies with other preoccupations. The comparisons to be drawn in the field of white-collar unionism are particularly valuable because this is so much more taken for granted in Britain than it is here.

This is not to say of course that white-collar unionism is a new growth here. The principal public sector union here, the New Zealand Public Service Association (NZPSA), is older than the Institution of Professional Civil Servants (IPCS), the subject of this book. And there is something too which stimulates the formation of white-collar unions in public sector contexts prior to their private sector counterparts.

This is the doctrine of public accountability in combination with the periodic need to remove the subject of public sector wage fixing from a political to an administrative context. In contrast to private sector wage agreements which set minima only the agreements in the public sector set actual and universally standard rates. This must be so if public funds are to be adequately accounted for. At the same time some means must be found to ensure that conflicts over remuneration are minimised because of the constitutional notion of civil service neutrality.

In Britain the resolution of this difficulty was found in the creation of consultative machinery immediately after the First World War. The machinery then created is now the cornerstone of public sector industrial relations and has no equivalent in this country — the Whitley Councils. These exist at all levels of the British civil service from the shop floor to the Ministry and supra Ministry, this latter being the National Whitley Council (which in true British fashion is a notional body, existing only in the form of its sub-committees).

So there is a seeming paradox in British public sector industrial relations. The need for consultative machinery led to its creation administratively and this stimulated the growth of trade unions to fill the consultative chairs on the staff side of the table, rather than it happening, as might have been the expectation, the other way around.

It was, as this book makes clear, not accomplished without hiccups. The British class system is all-pervasive and to many but not all of the early members of employee organisations, middle-class mainly, the notion of a union was anathema. The IPCS for example tried to register itself as a company and when they found they could not (the Registrar of Companies tartly pointed out to them that they were a trade union) they drew up a rule book which strictly excluded "working men". And although the more than sixty unions originally to be found in the civil service have been rationalised to nine, they remain class stratified. They range from the Civil Service Union (CSU) (which represents only just white-collar workers, e.g. instructor tradesmen, drivers, technicians and the only just professionals e.g. state foresters) to the First Division Association (FDA) (representing the most senior ranks of undersecretaries and heads of ministries). Clerks, professionally qualified, executives, specialists, all have their own unions although these are large by New Zealand standards. The Civil and Public Service Association (CPSA) for example has 200,000 members. Significantly, blue-collar unions take no part in the Whitley machinery.

It should not be presumed however that the genesis of these various organisations has meant that they are less than independent as unions. All, including the FDA, are members of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and there is very little evidence of that tiresome mythology of white-collar status as reward for individual effort so prevalent in this country. The role of collective action is well understood. It is a sobering experience which has been mine to take part in industrial action in company with a permanent under-secretary.

Coupled with the paradox of the genesis of civil service unions in Britain in administrative need is another. One looks in vain for a legislated basis for industrial relations in the public sector. Instead one finds an agreement, the National Pay Agreement, which keeps the state (except in its role as employer) at arms' length. It is a highly sophisticated document and includes a complex annual pay research system which has in the past worked extremely well and has only ceased to do so when both Callaghan and Thatcher governments were unable to resist the temptation to impose cash limits on the findings of pay research based on private sector comparability. The result has been three years of industrial strife which is by no means yet at an end. Interference by the state is bitterly resented by both sides.

But such difficulties aside the development over sixty years of the Whitley consultative machinery has led in a fascinating direction. It would not be going too far to suggest that within the constraints imposed by the policies of the government of the day the civil service unions and the Whitehall mandarins run the civil service between them. The definition of the scope of matters common for discussion and resolution is exceedingly broad and trespasses far into territory in this country labelled as that of "management prerogative".

For example in my own capacity as a representative at Ministry level in both the Home Office and the Forestry Commission, I was consulted as a matter of course and in a very real way on such matters as the direction of penal policy, the introduction of a new computerised accounting system and whether or not larch or spruce was the more suitable timber to plant in central Scotland. By the same token I was also expected to be aware of the latest developments in computer communications, forestry research and the law on health and safety, and to know in detail the twenty year corporate plan the Commission was following. The British civil service unions demand and obtain a very high level of skill in their permanent officials.

It is by no means a utopian system. Disagreements are common and in the last analysis Whitehall rules. But the number of problems to which solutions cannot be found are statistically insignificant although they vary from Ministry to Ministry. Consultative practices are less advanced (but do exist) for the staff of the royal palaces than they are in the Home

Office. Nevertheless it is not uncommon for unions and civil service management to make common cause against political initiatives they consider to be wrongheaded and more often than not in such a circumstance to prevail.

Thus what we have here is an extremely successful, flexible, widespread consultative machinery at all levels of the civil service which identifies and resolves most problems before they become a source of conflict. Discussion of the Bullock Report of 1977 was, in such a context, barely necessary. The book under review explains in detail and in respect of a single union, the IPCS, how it developed, how it works, and where in its operation practice fails to live up to theory.

I commend it as bedtime reading to many New Zealand managers, union officials and politicians. Some of its implications for their own spheres of operations might frighten them a little. But there would be no harm in that; given the nature of our current industrial relations a few frights might be in order.

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McCord, N. *Strikes*, Comparative Studies in Social and Economic History No. 2, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980, pp. viii and 136. Price: not stated.

Professor McCord has written a very successful short book. It is apparently a straightforward account of a few selected strikes but it skilfully introduces readers of social and economic history to some themes more familiar to specialists in industrial relations while showing the latter how those themes changed over time.

The British strikes with which McCord deals are by seamen engaged in carrying coal from North-east England to London in 1792 and 1815, by engineering workers in 1871, the General Strike of 1926, and at the St. Helens glass-making factory of Pilkingtons in 1970. These are well chosen to illustrate a range of causes of strikes and to demonstrate the counterpoint between continuity in industrial conflict and the changes introduced by the social and economic development of Britain in the last two centuries.

Thus the still familiar issues of wages, redundancy and safety standards were very much to the fore in the coal trade of the Napoleonic War years as was the unity often found in a somewhat isolated group of workers. The engineers' strike of 1871 was essentially about union recognition, but a major explicit issue was hours of work. The General Strike opens up the subject of "political strikes". McCord is at pains to make the point more familiar to industrial relations specialists than to many historians (or to many employers and their public relations managers) that agitators and revolutionaries feed on industrial conflict rather than cause it. And his account of the General Strike is dominated by the theme that trade union leadership soon withdrew from the challenge to the political system to which it had been led by the economic problems of the coalmining industry and the fraternal feelings of unionists in other industries, industries which had become more interrelated with economic growth.

Although McCord does not emphasize it, his study does show a social or political element in other strikes where unions were much more successful than they were in 1926. The earliest strikes with which he deals were a challenge to the power of employers to do what they liked with their capital; the unionists were able to secure minimum manning standards. The engineers of 1871 were able to secure the power to negotiate on wages and on hours of work. The boundaries of the prerogatives of owners (now usually represented by managers) and the rights of workers are still central to much industrial conflict

and constitute a much more important political element than any challenge by extremists to the "system" or "establishment".

The 1970 strike at Pilkingtons introduces the revolt of the shop steward against the union hierarchy, putting special emphasis on the way neglect by the latter can foment local initiatives while experience and skill eventually prevail over enthusiasm. (There is an interesting implied contrast with the importance of local initiative and scepticism of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in 1871.) It also shows how important is continual management attention to industrial relations, Pilkingtons having a long history of the absence of strikes and a well established Joint Industrial Council but allowing it to get out of touch with the factory floor as Pilkingtons expanded markedly, becoming more impersonal and obtaining a "strategic" position in the supply of windscreen glass to automobile manufacturers.

McCord's study is comparative not only across time but also in including somewhat briefer studies of three American strikes, those at the Homestead steelworks in 1892, at U.S. Steel in 1919, and at General Motors in 1936/37. These are somewhat less satisfactory. While McCord succeeds in filling in the necessary historical outline so that the British strikes can be seen in context, he cannot surmount the difficulties of explaining differences between America and Britain and also U.S. economic development in the limited space he takes. The complex question of ethnic distinctions among the American work force and the greater willingness to resort to violence can be little more than alluded to, and only passing reference is made to the much stronger tradition of legal intervention in the United States. The reader is, however, pointed towards some contrasts in the timing of sympathetic government responses to strikes between Britain and the U.S.A. In the latter case, it occurs first in the 1930s whereas in Britain all of the strikes of 1792, 1815 and 1871 received some government understanding, something more than neutrality even if never wholehearted support.

McCord is at pains to stress that Britain is not an especially strike-prone country, and that in a study of strikes, he is necessarily concerned with the unusual. It is, however, surprising that he does not set his study in a wider context of industrial conflict. It is obvious enough why he considers only major strikes, and some of his case studies do show how major strikes can grow out of minor incidents, but it would have been useful to have some comments on trends in the relationship between strikes and industrial conflict, broadly defined.

One turns to history for understanding rather than for instant solutions. But readers of this journal may be especially interested to learn about attempts to define the rights of picketers in the 1870s and to read how magistrates in 1765 described their difficulty when it was obviously unwise to attempt to enforce what was clearly the law.

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