

REVIEWS

Torrington, D, Hitner T and Knights D, *Management and the multi-racial workforce* Gower Press, 1982, vi and 117p. Price: AS\$31.00.

This book consists of case studies of 12 companies in Britain employing a multi-racial workforce. The study was commissioned by the Department of Employment for use by their race relations advisors although the authors also consider that its contents will be used for in-company and tertiary courses concerned with the personnel and industrial relations problems of a racially mixed workforce. The choice of cases was made from a sample of 315 companies judged to "have some interesting and positive achievements" in this field. However, the authors reveal that the responses to an initial survey left only 105 to choose from due to lack of response, unwillingness to co-operate, or lack of ability to supply basic information concerning their workforce. The cases finally selected consist of companies which differ widely in terms of industry, location, size, and proportion of ethnic minorities employed. They include a hotel, foundry, computer subsidiary, supermarket, and various manufacturing plants. The average employment of "blacks" (defined as all those of New Commonwealth or Pakistani origin) was 31 percent with a range from 3 percent to 55 percent.

The phenomenon of a racially mixed urban workforce has been a feature in the history of most industrialised countries. This has typically occurred as a process of migration either from "pull" forces caused by growth in the host economy, or "push" forces of economic decline, population growth, or persecution in the country of origin (Marsh *et al.* 1974). In Britain there have been many immigration waves over the centuries but the main distinguishing feature of the post-1945 immigration was the fact that the people were largely of Asian or African racial origin; to put it plainly they were black in a predominantly white society. Racism refers both to a state of mind which presumes a superiority (albeit often sub-conscious) over a group of people on the basis of their racial difference. It also refers to unfair treatment meted out to people solely because of the colour of their skin or some other manifestation of ethnic or racial difference. The impression conveyed by this book is that the identifying and challenging of racism is far more prevalent in Britain than in New Zealand. This may be because there is less racial discrimination in work in New Zealand or else it could be a reflection of an additional ignorance and fear of confronting the problem. In my experience, over many factory visits and management seminars, comments made, such as "we are all New Zealanders here", and "we don't keep ethnic records, that would be racist" are indicative of racism of a passive form.

The British pattern of employment of the new immigrant groups has some similarities to New Zealand in that these people are recruited often for unskilled jobs which have failed to attract white indigenous labour. These jobs are usually in manufacturing companies characterised by low wages, bad working conditions, physically demanding work, and lack of union protection. Many of the cases in this book show how at this early stage of employment racialism is not perceived as an issue by management or labour. However, a range of problems quickly become manifest based on communication difficulties caused by the immigrants lack of reading and speaking skills in English. As the new immigrant workforce gradually becomes established there are further problems; one possibility is that the black workers will join a different union to the white workers. In one of the case studies a castings company was "forced to recognise 2 unions, the TGWU and the AUEW, the former having a predominantly black membership and the latter a white membership". Over a period of 10 years this caused a combination of racial conflict and inter-union conflict.

Another problem reported in the British cases concerns the desire, particularly of Asian workers, to take extended leave from their jobs in order to fulfill family obligations. In New Zealand the equivalent problem can occur when Maori and Pacific Islanders attend tangis and other family gatherings requiring many days or weeks off work. Unless this is planned for it can cause anger to management and disruptions to production.

The stage at which the charge of racial discrimination is first levelled at management is often when members of the racial minority aspire to promotion (initially to supervisory positions for newly arrived immigrants) and perceive they do not have the same opportunity as white workers. Resentment is initially hidden from management as rumours circulate within the ethnic groups concerned about apparent discrimination and eventually it surfaces often in the form of an industrial dispute which may even be unrelated to promotion. In several of the case studies, a major strike provided the impetus for management to recognise they had a discrimination problem. Of course not all the companies reported on went through this costly process, but this was because of early initiatives by exceptionally aware managers. At this stage the question arises of the need for an equal employment policy and the adoption of remedies to restore trust and commitment from the workforce. As the authors point out it is not sufficient merely to have a policy of non-discrimination, what counts is whether the policy represents a committed view of management or is just an empty gesture for head office or some other outside pressure group. In one supermarket, a manager said "we did it just to please the local Community Council; we're not too sure of its value".

Management and the multi-racial workforce's importance as a book lies in its description of what a number of companies have actually done, in contrast to previous literature which tends to advocate policies and attitudes suited to an ideal world where racial conflict does not exist. It reports the efforts, guided and misguided, of real people whether shop stewards, managers, industrial relations or personnel specialists and others of coping with a problem which is especially difficult because it probes the gap between people's ideals and their actual attitudes and feelings about race. The book does not preach but rather shows in a very practical way how companies in the United Kingdom have changed their policies over the last 20 years. It also indicates that those who failed to adapt suffered endemic industrial conflict leading to financial loss and worse. One of the revelations of the various case studies is that the secret of success in employing a productive and harmonious multi-cultural workforce appears to lie not in complicated policies but rather in the simple characteristics of good management practice. The most significant success indicator seems to be a consistent and fair policy and practice in promotion of staff.

Despite the British focus on the cases I believe this book to be very relevant to those in the field in New Zealand. The internal migration of Maoris from rural areas to the industrial cities and the external migration of Pacific Islanders (especially Samoans, Tongans, and Cook Islanders) has resulted in a multi-cultural workforce. In the mid-1970s the South Pacific Work Research Project at Auckland University resulted in a stream of information becoming available about the attitudes and behaviour of the various ethnic groups and the failures and successes of management and unions in adaptation (Marsh and McDonald (Eds) 1983). Many of the specific measures described in the book have also been successful here. Examples include English language training, translation of notices etc. into Polynesian languages, day care centres provided by the company, fair promotion policies, and seminars for managers and supervisors on Polynesian culture and customs. Much has been achieved but there is still a need for more awareness among professional managers; the Vocational Training Council is shortly to publish a practical guide to good practice in this area which will form a useful adjunct to the British book and it may be possible for someone to repeat the case study approach so well displayed here but providing a wholly New Zealand context.

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Day, G *et al.* (Eds), *Diversity and decomposition in the labour market* Hampshire Gower Publishing Company, 1982, 211p. Price: not stated.

It is always a relief to find a book that attempts to explain the nature of labour markets without its argument being obscured by either a plethora of sociological jargon or the requirements of economic rhetoric. Such a book is *Diversity and decomposition in the labour market*.

Compiled by the British Sociological Association, this book forms volume 16 of their series *Explorations in Sociology*. Each of the eight papers which comprise the book was originally presented at the 1981 Conference of the Association which addressed the theme of inequality. Specifically the papers are directed at explaining segmentation in the British labour market, particularly in regard to those who benefit least from this segmentation. Both theoretical and empirical methods are used to achieve this aim with varying degrees of success.

Obviously the subject is vast and this is reflected in the diversity of topics the papers cover. They include:

- a critical analysis and an empirical test of dual labour market theory.
- an attempt at discovering whether there exists a group who are consistently disadvantaged in the field of employment.
- an examination of the sexual division of labour in a geographical labour market.
- a critique of R C Edwards' work *Contested Terrain*.
- a discussion of "fraternalism" as a possible employer strategy in small firms.
- a theory regarding the "proletarianisation" of clerical work.
- an examination of uneven development in Wales.
- a demonstration of the use of technocratic ideology to justify inequality.

While in its entirety, the book is useful because of the variety of ideas it presents, the individual papers vary in quality from woefully inadequate to extremely worthwhile. The most useful paper is the introduction which furnishes an otherwise disjointed book with some coherence. The introduction not only points out the difficulties associated with ousting segmented labour market theory, but provides a detailed and sometimes critical summary of the papers that are to follow. On its own, it is worth investigation as it gives the reader an indication of the diversity and complexity of the relationships that must be examined if any study of the subject is to be worthwhile.

A second paper which exhibits some merit is "Clerical 'proletarianisation': myth or reality?" by Crompton and Jones. In 1974 Harry Braverman described clerical work as a "growing working class occupation" (Braverman, 1974, p.viii) his views, together with those of others on this subject, are evaluated in the first part of this paper. After pointing out the shortcomings of previous work in this area, the authors argue that clerical work has become proletarianised as is evidenced by the large proportion of women in these occupations and the fact that many managerial jobs "are almost entirely devoid . . . of managerial content" (p.142).

The only dispute I have with the authors' arguments concerns their assertion that changes in the status of women will result in more women filling high grade positions (p.140). The work of Gordon *et al.* (1982) and other writers implies that the employment of women is not determined by their economic status or the women's liberation movement, but rather by the demands of the capitalist economy. Apart from this point Crompton and Jones' arguments are well reasoned and their paper is a useful addition to the existing literature on the subject.

Unfortunately most of the papers are not of the calibre of Crompton and Jones'. The majority are too ambitious for their aims to be achieved in the space available. A common fault is that while the central thesis of a paper has merit, the conclusions drawn are questionable due to incorrect or inadequate analysis.

Morgan and Hooper attempt to assess the usefulness of the dual labour market concept in their paper "*Labour in the woollen and worsted industry : a critical analysis of labour market theory*". While their discussion of dualistic theory reveals many of the difficulties inherent in the theory, their conclusion that the woollen and worsted industry does not exhibit the characteristics of a secondary labour market is based on a poor analysis of the evidence and misrepresentation of the dual theory. For example, they argue that the woollen and worsted industry cannot be considered a secondary labour market since women receive a higher percentage of men's wages than in other manufacturing industries. Since men's wages are very low this evidence does not repute dualistic theory which implies that both sexes employed in the secondary sector will be disadvantaged. (C F Doeringer and Piore, 1971, Chapter 8).

A second difficulty is that the authors have compared the woollen and worsted industry to other manufacturing industries as a whole, be they primary or secondary. This hides the differences between the other industries and renders the comparison worthless. A better analysis would result from the comparison of individual industries and the use of regression analysis instead of averages. Such an approach was successfully used by Osterman (1975) in his study of occupational segmentation.

Misrepresentation and poor analysis is not confined to Morgan and Hooper's paper. Penn's paper "*The Contest Terrain*" : a critique of R C Edwards' theory of working class factions and politics misrepresents Edwards' work on a number of matters.

Penn argues that Edwards' notion of working class factions is not very useful, that he does not capture the real relations between labour market structuration and control and that his mode of explaining political phenomena is unsatisfactory. In criticising Edwards, Penn advances his own theory that working class stratification is based on skill. However, Penn's conclusions are undermined by his poor attention to the details Edwards presents. For example, Penn deduces that Edwards' model cannot be applied to Britain because "trade unions operate in all three categories of manual work, . . . consequently, Edwards' emphasis on the role of trade unions in relation to technical control systems alone is misleading" (p.95). However, Edwards does not deny that trade unions function in all 3 categories of manual work, he merely argues that technical control *encouraged* the formation of unions (Edwards, 1979, p.128).

Penn's own thesis that the working class is stratified according to skill also lacks credibility due to a shortage of empirical evidence. Variables such as race and sex, which are regarded by other writers as being important determinants of stratification, are ignored (Gordon *et al.* 1982, pp.210-211).

Finally, the conclusions reached in some of the papers are based on insufficient detail. For example Smith, in her paper "*Women in the local labour market : a case study with particular reference to the retail trades in Britain 1900-1930*" provides a reasonable demonstration of the formation of sexual divisions in the labour force during the period. It is unfortunate that one of her conclusions that "the material and ideological conditions under which women sell their labour power are clearly influenced by their economic status outside the sphere of wage labour, insofar as they are continuously classified as dependents of men or the state" (p.83) is stated rather than proven and thus an otherwise useful study is marred.

A similar criticism can be applied to Peter Murray and James Wickham's paper "Technocratic ideology and the reproduction of inequality : the case of the electronics industry in the Republic of Ireland". This paper argues that "the expansion of electronics manufacturing in Ireland and state institutions concerned with the industry (can be perceived) as the legitimization of inequality by means of the extension of the technocratic ideology" (p.179). While this paper provides an excellent demonstration of how society is modified to meet the requirements of capitalism, the effects of the development of the electronics industry on inequality are poorly documented, in that neither the types nor the magnitudes of the resulting inequalities are fully explained.

To sum up, this book, for the most part, fails as an attempt at explaining inequality in British labour markets. It is also of limited use to the New Zealand reader to the extent it describes situations characteristic of Britain alone. However, the book should not be discarded. To a limited degree, labour markets worldwide exhibit similar characteristics. Therefore, those involved in either the study of industrial sociology or labour economics could find that the ideas presented form a valuable basis for future empirical research.

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Easton, B (Ed), *Studies in the labour market*, Wellington, NZ Institute of Economic Research (Inc), 1983, 208p. Price: \$18.00.

The dramatic rise in the numbers of unemployed during recent years has served to heighten public awareness of the unemployment dilemma and call forth more research into the reasons behind, what appears to be, a malfunctioning labour market. The six research papers presented within "Studies in the Labour Market" are thus a welcome and timely addition to a fairly limited bibliography of research papers into the New Zealand labour market.

In the first paper, Braae and Gallacher focus on the measurement of labour supply and level of unemployment. The authors develop a time series for potential employment and compare it with actual employment to gauge the true level of unemployment. The differences between estimated and actual unemployment are examined and the reasons why individuals decide not to register as unemployed are discussed and offered as an explanation for increases, through time, in the penetration ratio: that is, the number registered as unemployed divided by the number indicated as unemployed by each census. The major finding by Braae and Gallacher suggests that registered unemployment is a poor

indicator of the true level of unemployment. The author's finding is, nevertheless, highly dependent on the assumptions used to derive a series for the potential labour force. This suggests that if one is not certain about the true level of unemployment, policy may be mis-directed and hence run counter to expectations. As Braae and Gallacher note ". . . accurate information therefore is essential". (P.38).

Bowie discusses the measurement of the peripheral labour force and thus continues the theme set by Braae and Gallacher. Bowie attempts to measure the numbers of people moving in and out of the labour force and to identify key occupational groups which, numerically, contribute significantly to the peripheral labour force. Bowie notes that defining those circumstances which constitute membership in the peripheral labour force can be a complex problem. For this reason, Bowie's estimate of 370,000 people in the peripheral labour force in 1975/76 must be treated with caution.

Of significance is Bowie's conclusion that the peripheral labour force is characterised by those who could be classed as semi or unskilled. The specific occupations identified seem to display ". . . common characteristics including the seasonal availability of jobs, proportionately high numbers of women and youth and relatively structureless labour market conditions with generally looser contracts of tenure between employee and employer." (P.60). Bowie's observation suggests that the labour market is clearly not a homogeneous entity within which all participants share in equal circumstances. Bowie develops this point further in his second paper which considers dual labour market theory and the importance of internal labour markets.

Dual labour markets can be identified by the existence of disadvantaged groups where employment and job characteristics are distinct from those experienced by more advantaged groups. As Bowie notes

. . . The disadvantaged tend to be employed in relatively low wage jobs associated with poor working conditions, insecure job tenure and poor opportunities for on-the-job training and advancement. The work offered is often part-time or intermittent. (P.73).

Advantaged workers on the other hand,

. . . tend to receive relatively high pay, good working conditions, security of job tenure and on-the-job training which leads to advancement and thus higher earnings." (P.73).

A major aspect of Bowie's paper is the consideration he gives to the significance of dual labour market theory in relation to the New Zealand labour market and in particular, the degree to which internal labour markets are a prevalent structure in New Zealand. One would expect that New Zealand's record of relatively full employment and the nature of our industrial legislation have combined to restruct the development of a dual labour market. Nevertheless, Bowie focusses on the opportunities for job movement within blue versus white collar employment, and public versus private employment. In addition, measures such as turnover rates, pay rates, earnings and relative concentrations of women and ethnic minorities are considered.

Bowie concludes that females tend to be concentrated in lower paid occupations and industries suggesting that some element of discrimination, particularly in respect of occupational mobility, may exist. Furthermore, Maoris are concentrated in blue collar occupations or at the lower levels of white collar occupations, again suggesting the possibility of persistent discrimination. Evidence of internal labour markets was found, with respect to both the public and private sectors, where entry into the former, or an institution such as a bank or insurance company, tends to be at junior levels. Once inside such organisations, on-the-job training usually becomes a key determinant of upward mobility.

It could be argued that Bowie's paper forms the essence of the rationale behind "Studies in the Labour Market" for as Easton notes in the preface, "The aim of the project has been to rebuild the foundations of our understanding of the labour market . . ." (P.1).

It is debatable as to whether or not a "rebuilding" is being undertaken since the

institutionalist theories, upon which dual labour market theory is based, were developed in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s. I suggest we are witnessing a renaissance of the institutionalist theories, and in this context one must accept Bowie's contention that more in-depth research, making use of dual labour market theory, is required to better evaluate the New Zealand labour market.

For example, the role of employers' and employee's organisations, industrial legislation, the Arbitration Court and so forth, all require greater recognition as the role of organisations and their rules and customs are critical in the moulding of the structure of the New Zealand labour market. Unfortunately, these additional areas of concern await further research. "Having developed several themes around dual labour market theory "Studies in the Labour Market" alters direction toward a more technical appraisal of labour market issues, somewhat at the expense of continuity." Marks discusses labour productivity growth rates with the objective of quantifying separately the contributions of cyclical demand changes, the capital labour ratio, changes in labour force composition and the sectoral distribution of employment, to explaining the post 1974 decline in labour productivity growth rates. Of particular interest is Marks' assumption about causality which suggests that cyclical downturns in the economy explain labour productivity changes rather than the reverse of this. This contrasts with numerous public statements which contend that low productivity per worker is a key factor in New Zealand's declining standard of living. The issue, it would appear, warrants further investigation. Marks' concludes that a large proportion of changes in labour productivity remains unexplained, although to some extent this may reflect problems with the data used.

To some extent Butcher's discussion concerning employment multipliers, flows on from the sectoral analysis undertaken by Marks. Butcher's aim is to evaluate the employment consequences of changes in industry output, both in the industry experiencing output change, and those industries which supply goods and services to the industry with output change. The analysis is thus only backward looking, although research currently being undertaken at the Institute will result in forward multipliers. The framework for Butcher's research is necessarily that of input-output analysis and as a result suffers from the dual problems of rather outdated data and static "snapshot" views of the economy. Furthermore, Butcher's methodology assumes an increase in the demand for labour will automatically manifest itself as an increase in employment which, given the possibility of underemployment in a depressed economy, may overstate the resulting multipliers. Clearly however, fiscal and monetary policies, if they are broad spectrum in nature, may work more efficiently in reducing unemployment if directed at those sectors with larger employment multipliers.

The final paper presented is a brief summary of the implications for the labour market of Gallacher and Bowie's "Medium Term Review". The conclusion reached suggests that the,

"... analyses provide strong evidence that the level of unemployment will pose an extremely serious problem for economic policy makers." (P.162).

"*Studies in the Labour Market*" has some recurring themes throughout all of the papers. Notably, the need for more comprehensive labour market data, the requirement that the labour market be viewed as an entity within which heterogeneous groups co-exist complete with widely different labour market behaviour, the need to reconsider institutionalist theories of the labour market and finally, the challenge presented to policy makers to identify and satisfy sectional interests and problems. "*Studies in the Labour Market*" is not, as Easton seems to imply, a "rebuilding" of labour economics theory. Rather, the NZIER's work presents to the reader an invitation to further explore issues in the light of alternative theories of the labour market.

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Bain, G S (Ed), *Industrial relations in Britain*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1983, xii and 516p. Price: \$34.95.

This volume, in the Editors words, "provides a comprehensive, systematic, up to date introduction to the study of British industrial relations". It has been prepared mainly for the use of students studying industrial relations at colleges, in universities and polytechnics. The text has seventeen chapters which are arranged in five parts. The first two parts deal with trade unions and management, the third surveys patterns of industrial relations in both private and public sectors, the fourth examines the British labour market, and the final part analyses the role of the state and its agencies (and includes chapters on collective and individual labour law). The contributors are, with one exception, drawn from universities, with a heavy emphasis on the University of Warwick. There are no contributions from trade union and employer organisations, or from the government.

In a text which runs to something over 500 pages, it is clearly not possible to review each and every contribution. In selecting which contributions to comment on, four in particular caught my eye. The first is the discussion on Managerial Strategies and Practices by John Purcell and Keith Sisson. The interesting point which emerges from this discussion is that the pressing need felt by managers to come to terms with the trade union challenge in the work place has all but disappeared in recent years. The recession has considerably weakened trade unions, and international competition is putting much greater pressure on British Management to control labour costs. This has resulted in the emergence of a managerial style which seeks from employees a positive commitment to the companies objectives (i.e. more than simple compliance). Underpinning this strategy is a greater re-course to sub-contracting e.g. of catering services.

These developments dovetail quite nicely with Chris Pond's analysis of the question of low pay. This chapter reviews the various definitions of low pay, concluding that in terms of money they lead to much the same result. It then measures the incidence and distribution of low pay, and reviews the various theories as to its cause. In the case of the former, Pond's definition leads him to a figure of roughly one third of the labour force (including both part-time and full-time). As far as the causes of low pay are concerned, Pond is unimpressed by the orthodox Marginal Productivity Theory of Wages) i.e. wages are low because the workers productivity is low), because of the unrealistic assumptions on which it depends. Nor does he place much stock on the human capital approach, (i.e. wages are low because the workers investment in education and training is low). Rather, he favours the view that various industrial, economic and institutional factors produce sectors, the main characteristics of the latter being small, poorly unionised firms engaged in declining and unstable markets and employing labour intensive technology. Pond agrees that if low pay is caused by essentially institutional, industrial and economic factors, rather than by individual characteristics, then there is scope for intervention. He accordingly reviews possible policy responses to problems of low pay, including the operation of Wage Councils (which establish minimum conditions in unorganised sectors). He concludes that the Wage Councils have not been very effective because of significant under-inspection and under-payment. Nor does he favour using the tax and benefits system as the primary means of redistribution, mainly because of the problem of poverty traps. Rather, he favours the adoption of a national minimum wage. He does not believe that a "realistic minimum" would adversely affect employment. He does, however, concede the possibility that it may inflate the wage structure if wage differentials are not accepted by higher paid workers.

The persistent decline in the British economy has also resulted in major changes in the approach of legislators to industrial relations. These changes are well documented in Roy Lewis's contribution on collective labour law. Up until the mid 1960s, the British followed a strongly *laissez faire* approach to industrial relations. Legislative intervention was limited on the one hand to giving trade unions statutory immunity for civil liabilities via the Trades Disputes Act, and on the other to setting the framework for bargaining

and conflict. For example, there was no general duty on employers to recognise trade unions or to bargain; nor was there any legal protection of the right to organise. In similar vein, collective agreements were not enforceable as legal contracts. These matters were resolved through industrial rather than political and legal action. The Donovan Commission's report broke with the *laissez faire* tradition by suggesting certain statutory measures to promote more efficient industrial relations in the hope of better economic performance. It suggested, *inter alia*, confining civil immunities to registered unions, and the establishment of legally enforceable disputes' procedures in strike prone industries. The Labour Government's white paper, "In Place of Strife" prescribed various legislative measures to both reform and restrict trade unions, and this approach was carried forward by the new Conservative Party government in its Industrial Relations Act. This Act provided, for example, that written collective agreements created legal relations; and instituted a procedure for determining bargaining units and sole bargaining agents. The Act was ineffective for the simple reason that TUC affiliated unions boycotted it by refusing to register. The Industrial Relations Act was repealed by the Labour government in 1974, and replaced by the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act which, *inter alia*, restored the presumption that collective agreements were not legally enforceable, and specified the conditions which had to be satisfied before collectively agreed restrictions on strikes could be incorporated into individual contracts of employment. The Employment Protection Act 1975, as well as re-shaping the institutional framework of collective labour law, introduced many new legal rights for both individual workers and trade unions, the action being designed to give statutory props to collective bargaining (e.g. a procedure for determining recognition disputes; a requirement on employers to disclose information for bargaining etc.). The legislation of the present Conservative government on the other hand, has diluted the collective nature of relations in favour of individual liberties.

The decline in the British economy has also raised questions regarding the level of public expenditure in Britain. During the 1970s and 80s, the view that the public sector was "crowding out" investment in private sector activities gained considerable credence with both the Labour and Conservative governments. The attempts to control public expenditure together with allegations of public sector pay leadership have inevitably put pressure on the public sector pay fixing system. In particular, the principle of fair comparability has increasingly being modified by market forces and financial constraints. This growth in collective bargaining in the public sector has gone hand in hand with rising conflict, with the result that the public sector is currently the major source of instability in industrial relations in Britain. These very interesting developments in public sector pay fixing are well documented by David Winchester in the chapter dealing with public sector industrial relations.

Taking the text as a whole, there is little doubt in my mind that it succeeds in achieving its main objective, namely, that of providing for the use of students, a comprehensive introduction to Industrial Relations in Britain.

My one reservation relates to the nature of the contributions themselves. I feel that the text could have been improved had it been supplemented by contributions from trade unions, employers and the government. What might be lost in terms of the quality and elegance of the analysis would be more than compensated for by a better feel for the differing attitudes of the practitioners.

As far as the New Zealand reader is concerned, the text provides a wealth of material on British industrial relations which can be compared and contrasted with arrangements here. The interesting question is whether the sorts of developments noted in industrial relations in Britain will be seen in this country. Readers might well draw certain parallels already.

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Gill, Tess and Whitty, Larry, *Women's rights in the workplace*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1983, 438 p, Price: \$10.95.

Tess Gill is Legal Officer for, and Larry Whitty head of, the Research Department of the British General Municipal and Boilermakers' Union. Their book aims to be a comprehensive and practical guide to women's rights in the workplace, what changes in their working lives are needed, and how these can be achieved. Unfortunately, it is a British publication, and its practical use for New Zealand women workers is severely limited. The reaction of most local women unionists is likely to be to ask: "When is someone going to write the New Zealand equivalent?"

Women's rights in the workplace begins by outlining the raw deal British women get in their jobs and then deals, chapter by chapter, with the rights of British women in the areas of equal pay, sex discrimination at work, pay-fixing generally, part-time work, maternity rights, working at home, trade unions and several other topics.

Because its authors have deliberately set out to "demystify" the intricacies of British employment law, the book is actually a very good practical introduction to the British industrial relations system. It is also interesting to compare the actual conditions of British workers, for example statutory rights to redundancy pay, to their New Zealand counterparts. Both the differences and similarities in the oppression of women workers in both countries are startling.

Many specific topics covered would be useful for New Zealand worker activists. There is, for example, a fascinating summary in the chapter "Unequal Pay" on the methods used by employers to get around their obligations to pay men and women equal pay, *all* of which are currently in use in New Zealand workplaces. Gill and Whitty have also compiled a detailed guide to persuading your employer to set up workplace childcare, which includes answers to all the excuses an employer is likely to put up.

The chapter on trade unions looks frankly at the history of sexism in British unions and analyses the way in which the structure and operation of unions mitigates against women's participation at all levels of union activity. There are also useful examples of the policies being adopted by the TUC and individual British unions to overcome this discrimination, and make unions more relevant to women, for example, the TUC Code of Practice for home workers, and the Part-timers Charter.

Unfortunately, those parts of *Women's rights in the workplace* which are relevant to New Zealand women workers are only a tiny part of a book crammed with detailed information which is of practical help only to British readers. So while the book may provide ideas and inspiration for keen women trade unionists in New Zealand, *Women's rights in the workplace* will sadly not become in New Zealand the well-thumbed guide it will obviously be for British women.

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Pearson, D and Thorns D, *Eclipse of equality*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1983, x and 287 p. Price: \$17.95.

The prospect of two of New Zealand's leading sociologists undertaking a major study of equality (or more correctly the lack of it) in New Zealand society is initially very appealing. While previous studies have alluded to equality and to stratification in our society, few have made it the central focus of their study. Pearson and Thorns' attempt is to place an analysis of New Zealand stratification within a model of market structures.

The model is unashamedly Marxist/Weberian, concentrating on the role of class in stratification. Such an analysis of New Zealand society is much needed. The often vaunted assumption that New Zealand is an egalitarian, classless society is in need of challenge. Indeed this assumption may be providing a major block to social and economic reforms. A rigorous analysis of stratification and of class may challenge these preconceptions and spark off debate.

Two initial reservations must however be made. Many Marxist texts invariably end up as disappointing. Their authors seem unable to overcome the intense theoretical problem they set both for and among themselves. As a result, the argument often becomes lost in obscure theorising, rhetoric and weak empirical analysis.

The second reservation is identified by Pearson and Thorns themselves in a quote from Spoonley, (1982, p.265).

... The sociological study of race relations in New Zealand is still much in its infancy. The empirical material that has been produced is sketchy in its coverage and there have been few attempts to develop a systematic theoretical framework.

Spoonley's quote is just as applicable to most other areas of social study in New Zealand as well as that of race relations. The success of Pearsons and Thorns' study will thus depend on how well they are able to overcome these two reservations. A sound relevant theoretical framework is needed, supported by appropriate empirical evidence.

Disappointment and a sense of "opportunity lost" are the best ways to sum up one's feelings about this book. Rather than overcome the reservations set out earlier, Pearson and Thorns have, for the most part, fallen into their own traps. Much of their analysis must be regarded as weak. The theoretical structure of the book is unconvincing and disappointing. The book takes chapter by chapter factors leading to stratification in New Zealand society. Little continuity between chapters exists and one is left with only pieces of the puzzle rather than a complete picture locking these factors together.

Pearson and Thorns' attempt to provide an historical background to their analysis. A development of each factor leading to stratification is given at the beginning of the chapter discussing that factor. This background, while often very readable is flawed with over-generalisation, and personal conjecture. Indeed these historical accounts leave one wondering if it really did happen this way, and I think will amuse and bemuse historians. The authors' analysis of the election of the Liberal Government in 1891 provides an example of this. The liberal victory is seen as a result of a conflict between, "an entrenched upper middle class dominated oligarchy of elites and the diverse interests of those who occupied the middle and working class positions below them." Pressure from below prevailed and the Liberals were elected. Certainly this period saw the rise of labour and the small property owner as political entities, however, one must feel uncomfortable generalising this trend to the level Pearson and Thorns have. Many other factors (e.g. the impact of the long depression and widespread alarm expressed about the Maritime Strike of 1890 and the exposures of the Sweating Commission in 1890) must be considered when accounting for the Liberal's victory, not all of which fit easily into the authors' explanation.

The biggest disappointment of the book is the authors' analysis of present New Zealand society and their use of empirical evidence. At best their use of empirical data is weak and at times their analysis is simply incorrect. Pearson and Thorns' conclusions regarding the changes in the distribution of wealth given in Chapter 4 do not hold true with the table from which these conclusions are drawn. The authors' comment that "wealth distribution taking place is . . . largely a redistribution amongst the top quarter of the wealthy population . . ." The table one page earlier, however, shows that from 1915 to 1971 the wealth held top quarter of the population has fallen from 85.0 percent to 69.6 percent.

Problems also emerge when one examines other areas of the study. The section on the role of income from the property market in forming a property class system is

supported with a study of changes in the average price for property in two Christchurch suburbs from 1900-1975. The results show that property prices in the more affluent suburb of Fendalton have risen more rapidly than have those in the largely working class suburb of North Richmond. The results, while interesting, do not really tell us anything about the role of property or of income from the sale of property in determining stratification or class in society. Another study of property is also included, this time comparing land ownership in Auckland and Christchurch. Again the analysis, while interesting, seems somewhat misplaced and one gets the feeling, as in other parts of the book, that the analysis was only included because the data is available.

Another deficiency in the book is the failure to recognise the impact of the Marxist approach to the capitalist labour process (see Braverman, 1974) in determining the structure of the working class. This failure becomes important when Pearson and Thorns turn to look at the class structure of the New Zealand workforce, using an occupational classification which is inadequate. The chapter on Race, Ethnicity, and Stratification is also disappointing. The failure with this chapter is its inability to go beyond already well-worked census data on occupational distribution, employment status, and educational qualifications. Brosnan and Hill (1983) for example, have commented on the limitations of the census approach and have urged the need for researchers to spend more time and effort gathering more relevant data. Pearson and Thorns' inability to do so means that many of the crucial questions regarded race, class and stratification are not covered (e.g. the role of Maoris and Pacific Island Polynesians as New Zealand's reserve army).

The concluding chapter of the book is short and misses the opportunity to tie the study together. Indeed it is almost as if the authors have realised their failures and wish to finish their efforts as quickly as possible.

Structural problems also beset the book, due to bad editing and poor graphics. Spelling and punctuation mistakes and bad grammar are rife. Further, try if you can to decipher Figures 4.1 through to 4.3. If Pearson and Thorns' study is to be regarded as an academic work, pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge, then it must be seen as a failure. It will undoubtedly cause debate but will earn no accolades. Neither will the book create general understanding of New Zealand society for the wider audience. The analysis is too disjointed and confusing. Pearson and Thorns' final sentence, commenting on the need for a study such as theirs, says it all: "Such analysis, we believe, is a necessary precursor of programmatic statements and a vital task for the social scientific enterprise". Now, just what does that mean?

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