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par Alexander J. Matejko

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Work, Employment and Unemployment. Perspectives on Work and Society, by Kenneth Thompson, ed., Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1984, pp. XI + 280
ISBN 03 3510 5947

This book together with a companion reader ed. by C. Littler (*The Experience of Work*, London: Heinemann Educational Books) provides a basis for the course *Work and Society*. Most of the space is devoted to the organization and control of work approached from a class perspective. Conflict of interests between the financial-managerial élite and the workers is much emphasized and exposed. However, several crucial problems of contemporary Britain are not adequately treated: a distinction between the declining member of people creating wealth of the society and an excessive number of people living on expense of others, the negative impact of bureaucratization on work ethic, the disfunction of vested-interest groups promoting their cause on the basis of a far-reaching division of labour, the negative impact of industrial conflict on the economic wellbeing of society, a partial socialization of occupational roles played in the society, etc.

The focus on distribution of goods and services characteristic for this book make sense only when the society is rich enough to provide justice to everybody. However, present day Great Britain is a relatively impoverished country forced by the unfavourable economic circumstances to cut its traditional welfare programmes. According to the editor, the aim of this book is to provide theoretical and analytical guides to the investigation of the causes and effects of changes. The main focus is long-term and fundamental processes, which entails probing beneath the surface of events in an attempt to discern underlying structural factors in the social system that might explain these tendencies» (p. VIII).

However, how to evaluate the fact that lifelong employment is no longer a possibility for many, and does not constitute — as Moorehouse claims — the main source of personally fulfilling and socially productive activity is a dilemma. The ideological 'idolization' of work does not actually seem to be obsolete as long as society may solve its most important issues only by effective work. The thesis of Braverman on deskilling of jobs as serving class-based interests — the point stressed by Garnsey and several other contributors — is a good point but essentially one-sided. The far-reaching division of labour is at least partly overcome through computerization.

Another thing is lacking in this book: the psycho-cultural effect of computerization¹. Technological innovation not only reduces the number of jobs but also influences the level of payment. The long-term instability of employment is a norm and will be so in the future. There is a constant displacement of new job demands. Economic efficiency is identified with the decline of labour demand. Concentration in production goes together with the deconcentration and lack of organization among consumers. The market of services has major fluctuations. Every technological change has an equal capacity for enhancement and degradation of life, depending how it is used².

Countries such as the U.K. badly need to mobilize national resources to improve the economy. The class-oriented approach to the phenomenon of work may be helpful in studying the cases of exploitation and bias dictated by vested interests but it does not go beyond the conflict perspective. The cooperation and mutual trust perspective should not be entirely excluded because this empoverishes our understanding of problems as well as it greatly limits the scope of potential practical solutions. Antagonistic bargaining meets some limits of applicability,

1 See a very insightful study by Michael Shallis, 1984. *The Silicon Idol. The Micro Revolution and Its Social Implications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2 See Barry Jones, 1982. *Sleepers, Wake. Technology and the Future of Work*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, p. 257.

especially in the countries which meet a major challenge coming from outside. the UK is the only industrial democracy which in the period 1950-84 has not improved its real GDP per capita versus the U.S. level (two thirds of it), when, for example, Japan has jumped from the level of 18 percent to the level of 76 percent. It is not just accidental in this respect that industrial relations in Japan are much more of a cooperative nature. Does it mean necessarily that the U.K. should blindly follow the Japanese pattern? Of course not, because the level of individualization is traditionally higher in the U.K. and there is not much place there for an old fashioned paternalism.

On the other hand, the wellbeing of the country depends now as before on the devotion and sense of duty of its citizens. Work makes deeper sense only as a personal contribution offered willingly for the common benefit. It is up to sociologists to study social and organizational circumstances favoring a constructive approach to work. It is up to managers, trade union leaders, local labour activists and civil servants to shape the structures favouring mutual trust and cooperation.

Alexander J. MATEJKO

University of Alberta

Job Satisfaction in Public Administration, par P.B. Beaumont et M. Partridge, Londres, Royal Institute of Public Administration, 1983, 41 pp., ISBN 0-900628-32-4

L'ouvrage de Beaumont et Partridge, une brochure d'une quarantaine de pages, est une étude sur la satisfaction au travail dans l'administration publique en Grande-Bretagne. Dans les années soixante-dix, plusieurs laissent croire à un moral bas des employés du secteur public comparativement aux autres groupes d'employés: plusieurs expériences visant à améliorer la satisfaction au travail sont menées dans l'administration publique, les grèves se multiplient, il y a une baisse relative de salaire comparativement aux autres groupes et le prestige des employés du secteur public est en chute libre. Dans ce contexte, comment évolue la satisfaction au travail dans l'administration publique?

Les enquêtes sur la satisfaction au travail montrent, en général, des taux très élevés de satisfaction et il est généralement admis qu'elles ne produisent pas une mesure valable des niveaux absolus de satisfaction. Aussi, il importe d'utiliser ces mesures en termes relatifs, c'est-à-dire au moyen de comparaisons entre groupes différents de travailleurs (selon le type d'emploi, l'âge, le sexe, etc.). Beaumont et Partridge nous présentent donc une étude où les employés de la fonction publique sont comparés au groupe représenté par l'ensemble des autres travailleurs. À l'intérieur de ces deux groupes, on fait de plus des distinctions selon le sexe.

Les données utilisées proviennent de rapports annuels du *General Household Survey*, une vaste enquête recueillant des informations relatives à la population, l'habitation, l'emploi, l'éducation et la santé. Plusieurs questions de cette enquête s'intéressent à de nombreuses facettes de la satisfaction au travail. Les auteurs analysent les données de l'année 1974 et celles de l'année 1978, puis comparent les résultats de l'année 1974 (les employés de l'administration publique ayant bénéficié d'un gain relatif de salaire entre 1973 et 1974) à ceux de l'année 1978 (une perte relative de salaire ayant été subie entre 1977 et 1978).

Les données de l'enquête de 1974 mènent aux constatations suivantes:

1. Dans la fonction publique, les femmes sont plus satisfaites que les hommes au niveau de la rémunération, des heures de travail et des relations avec les surveillants.