

BOOK REVIEWS

WOMEN AND TRADE UNIONS: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

By Jennifer Curtin. Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999, ix + 189 pp., £35.00 (hardback)

Despite the fact that women now constitute close to half the labour force in most industrialised countries, 'quantitative increases in female labour force participation have not been matched by qualitative improvements; occupational segregation persists; the glass ceiling is cracked but not broken; pay inequity remains' (ILO Survey of Practices in Member Countries in 1999). Noting that the role of trade unions is crucial to changing this universal state of gender disparity, the ILO reports that women throughout the world 'join unions in fewer numbers than do men' and 'do not have proportional representation in union leadership'. In *Women and Trade Unions*, Jennifer Curtin, an Australian scholar, seeks to advance our understanding of various strategies which have been employed to effect a partnership between women workers and trade unions and to assess their effectiveness. She dedicates her book to Professor Alice Cook, an American scholar who pioneered in comparative studies of the struggle to achieve gender equality at work and in trade unions (see *Women and Trade Unions in Eleven Industrialized Countries*, 1984).

For her study, Curtin selected Australia, Austria, Israel and Sweden on the basis of their perceived similarities: (i) ideological linkages between trade unions and left political parties, (ii) strong centralised labour confederations, and (iii) 'corporatist' institutional arrangements which involve trade unions in formulation and implementation of policies. The implicit assumption is that unions with left oriented ideologies are more likely to support gender equality and that those with links to power and policy making roles will be more successful in effecting change.

It turns out that the four countries, despite their progressive social policy orientation, share histories of 'protecting' women from work outside the home, encouraging gender segregation at work, and discouraging female participation in unions. They have pursued separate paths in response to female activism in recent years reflecting distinctive histories and institutional constraints, which in practice, outweigh their perceived similarities. For example, building a Jewish homeland has been the principal focus of all institutions in Israel, including Histadrut, its trade union centre. Class and gender solidarity takes second place. Austria's strong unions and left parties were wiped out during its Nazi period and a conservative post war consensus developed around productivity which eclipsed concern with equality. The Australian industrial and labour system, although coloured by its frontier history with male 'mateship' the predominant value, has placed increasing emphasis on equal treatment in the workplace, a value which has been implemented in recent years through heavy government intervention in its wage structure (see, for instance, a 1998 arbitration decision which

requires a review of all wage awards to eliminate discrimination). That Sweden evolved as a more cooperative society reflected, in part, its homogenous population and relative insulation from events of the twentieth century, which had shaped the other three countries. Swedish cultural emphasis on social and economic equality contributed to gender equality. This book demonstrates the difficulty of comparative analysis even among countries with shared characteristics.

Curtin relies heavily on interviews with key players as her source of research data. Her focus on strategies for social change poses a question of the relative efficacy of programs which rely on class based (women-inclusive) solidarity or those in which women take the lead in organising and representing themselves. While both types of strategies have been utilised to some extent in the four countries studied, differences in priorities and emphasis form the basis of her comparative analysis. Of the countries studied, Australia has the most experience with gender specific action, that is, organisation by and for women, such as women's committees and caucuses, designated women's officers in trade unions and even 'quotas' for representation of women in union leadership. These strategies, according to statistics collected by the author, seems to have paid off in terms of increasing female representation in policy making positions in Australian unions. While women continue to be underrepresented in union leadership positions in all four countries (relative to their proportion of union membership), in Australia, the record for inclusion exceeds that for Austria, Israel and Sweden as well as the other countries reported in the ILO Survey.

On the other hand, Australia has not been as successful as Sweden in narrowing the wage gap between men and women. The Swedish Solidarity Wage movement which compressed wage differences for all workers, while not designed to accomplish gender equality, proved to be of special benefit to women who were heavily grouped at the bottom of the wage scale. Today, Swedish women employed in the private sector earn 90 percent of the male wage as compared with a ratio of 85 percent in Australia and 70 percent in both Austria and Israel. In general, Curtin's study reports that women in Austria and Israel have registered lesser gains in achieving recognition and equal treatment than their counterparts in Australia and Sweden.

In Australia, maternity and family leave has been strengthened through the arbitration system. In the other three countries, advances in working conditions have come about primarily through legislative initiatives rather than collective bargaining. And, to date, legal protections of women against discrimination in employment and sexual harassment, and legislated guarantees of equal pay have been non-existent or ineffective in the countries surveyed.

Based on the study of four countries, *Women and Trade Unions* is unable to conclude which strategies—class or gender—are most effective in moving towards equality. The author does, however, raise important questions for further research. Are women leaders essential to bringing forward economic and social issues of concern to women? With so few examples of women leaders in the world today, the evidence is inconclusive. Do separate organisations for women succeed in focussing attention and/or developing leaders as has been the case in Australia? Or is a general emphasis on equality the best hope as demonstrated by narrowing the wage gap in Sweden?

Curtin's detailed and well-written analysis is a major contribution to our knowledge about what Alice Cook has called 'the most difficult revolution'—the struggle to equalise the treatment of men and women in the workplace and in trade unions. It is to be hoped that studies of experience in other countries under differing sets of institutional arrangements will be inspired by this book.

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LOIS GRAY

AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN A SOUTH EAST ASIAN CONTEXT

By Stanley Petzall, Nils Timo and Keith Abbott. (2000), Eruditions Publishing, Melbourne, 2000, viii + 456 pp., \$64.90 (paperback)

The ideal student textbook should be an exemplar of scholarship. As such, a textbook should therefore be accurate with respect to its material, meticulous in the application of the conventions of academic writing, thorough and consistent in its research foundation, and, if it is a multi-authored text, present a seamless style.

The most recent industrial relations textbook on the market, *Australian Industrial Relations in a South East Asian Context*, exhibits none of these characteristics. On the face of it, this book offers a much-needed framework for teaching industrial relations not only to Australian students, but also to the East Asian and South-east Asian students who often comprise a significant proportion of the student cohort in external business degree courses. The authors opt out of the issues associated with informing the text with theories of comparative industrial relations or a global theory of industrial relations. Where South-east Asian industrial relations is included in a chapter, it is a discrete section on the five selected countries—Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia and Hong Kong. The final chapter of the book, 'Five Selected South East Asian Countries', provides an overview.

From the outset, Petzall *et al.* make two claims: first, that the book is thoroughly referenced and, second, that it contains 'more than the usual exploration of the various theories of industrial relations' (pages vii–viii). Unfortunately, it is neither. Referencing in the text is characterised by frequent errors in authors' names and publication dates and, in some chapters sources are scarce. In the bibliography some references in the text are missing and many journal article references do not have page numbers. These are technical errors which provide a poor example of the academic writing conventions for students.

The chapter introducing industrial relations theories, 'Conceptual and Analytical Tools', contains some glaring inaccuracies as the following two examples illustrate: 'systems theory was developed by an American academic, John Dunlop (1958)' (page 27), and 'Strategic choice theory was developed by Kochan, Katz and McKersie (1986) in an attempt to update Dunlop's systems theory' (page 29). Dunlop has previously acknowledged his debt to Talcott Parsons in adapting systems theory to the analysis of industrial relations. Likewise, Kochan, Katz and McKersie applied strategic choice theory which had been earlier developed by John Child.

In chapter 3, 'Management and Industrial Relations' (pages 70–2), a section on managerial ideology encapsulates the failure of the book to meet the authors' claim of providing more than the usual exploration of theory. Bearing in mind it is designated as an introductory text, Petzall *et al.* nevertheless provide only a cursory account of ideology, which lacks a thorough research of the literature and is focussed only on the standard, short-hand accounts of pluralism and unitarism. Thus, there is a failure to either define or explicate the concept of ideology, which raises issues concerned with, at one level, legitimation, authority, and managerial prerogative and at another level, the exercise of power and control. Managerial ideology is conflated with managerial prerogative. This is then followed by a generalisation that the 'ideological position of most Australian managers for most of the 20th Century would seem to be along [a] pluralistic line of thinking' (pages 70–1), ignoring Wright's finding that 'Australian labour management has been based fundamentally upon a unitarist vision of the firm' (Wright 1995: 22) or the observation that there has been a resurgence of unitarist approaches to management associated with the rise of human resource management, total quality management, customer focus and changing organisational structures. The authors' conclusion, that 'If pluralist notions have long dominated for reasons of necessity, it is no less the case that elements of the unitarist perspective have been long held below the surface', is a fundamentally unsatisfactory explanation of managerial behaviour either in Australia or in South-east Asia. This account contains only three references on ideology, ignoring the basic texts for any discussion of ideology in industrial relations, including Fox's essays, Dunlop's 1958 book, Bendix's *Work and Authority in Industry* and Hyman's work. More recent works on management ideology were likewise overlooked.

The book is unsatisfactory not only in the style of its generalisations but also in its substance. The introductory paragraph to the chapter on employer organisations includes the assertion that 'employer associations have not traditionally been very prominent players in industrial relations' (page 85). On the next page, following a reference to Plowman's essay on the role of employers' associations in opposing aspects of industrial regulation up to 1914 (Plowman 1989), a contradictory account commences of the specific role of employer associations in providing 'a united retaliatory mechanism against union initiatives' (pages 86–7).

Australian Industrial Relations in a South East Asian Context innovatively commences with a case study of the 1997–8 Waterfront dispute, but there is little further reference to it throughout the text. The book covers the main topics required of an introductory undergraduate industrial relations text and the authors do make an attempt to introduce, however sketchily, some of the theoretical explanations for various aspects of industrial relations. Some of these, such as the brief explanations for employer associations, are not usually found in industrial relations texts. Following an introduction to theory, there are chapters on the key industrial relations players and the role of the state, industrial laws, wage fixation, enterprise bargaining and negotiation. A chapter on equity is unusual for introductory texts but welcome, and there is an informative chapter on multinational corporations. However, having raised the issue of union—multinational corporation relations, there is no reference to the growing role of international

unions or, in particular, any cross reference to the Rio-Tinto case study provided and relations between the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions and Rio-Tinto.

On balance, *Australian Industrial Relations in a South East Asian Context* has too many significant faults to stack up against the textbooks currently available.

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WHAT WORKERS WANT

By Richard B. Freeman and Joel Rogers. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1999, xi + 226 pp., US\$17.95 (paperback)

'What do we want?' 'An organisation jointly run by employees and management, to which workers elect their own representatives, and in which disputes between management and labour are resolved through independent arbitration rather than management discretion!' 'When do we want it?' 'Now!'

So roar the workers of America as they march their way through Richard Freeman and Joel Rogers' book, *What Workers Want*. Remember Freeman and James Medoff's exit-voice model of unionism, expressed in *What Do Unions Do?* some 15 years earlier? These days the voice of the American worker is heard, not through unions, but through a series of opinion surveys.

And you've got to hand it to these folks—they did their surveys well. Under the banner of the 'Worker Representation and Participation Survey', Freeman and Rogers conducted a series of focus groups, a half hour telephone survey with 2400 private sector workers, and a mail/telephone follow-up survey of 800 of the original 2400 respondents. They extensively consulted with unions, employers and bureaucrats in devising the instruments. This was partly because they hoped it would influence public policy—and for a brief moment it looked like it would, through Clinton's Dunlop Commission on Worker-Management Relations, until *realpolitik* stepped in. They still hope that one day policy makers in unions, employers and Washington will heed its words.

So what are workers feeling they are missing out on? They want more say at work. They want more say as individuals and as a group. They want cooperative relations with management. They want independence, and protection of that independence, in their dealings with management. They blame management for their not having enough say. Managers themselves oppose greater employee say in final decisions. Unionised workers strongly support their unions, while a third of non-union workers would rather be in a union (a familiar statistic in the United

States). So, if workers were genuinely free to choose whether they belonged to a union and had free access to one, about 44 percent would be unionised (not much less than the comparable figure for Australia). Here, language matters: fewer of them think the ideal representative body for workers would be a 'union' than think the ideal body would be 'an employee organisation that negotiates or bargains' with management.

They want employee involvement (EI) programs and they are more satisfied if their employer has an EI program. If they are a union member, they are more pro-union if they have higher involvement; if they are a non-member, they are more anti-union if they have higher involvement. And, as our opening chant showed, they would prefer a joint representative body to a union (if they don't have a union) or to management-directed consultation.

Now, this reviewer has got nothing against opinion surveys. I use them a lot, write about them, dream about them after a bad night with a demographic cohort. But they are much more useful for describing what people feel about concrete situations in which people are, than in predicting how people would behave in hypothetical situations, or in determining whether they would be better off if they had their druthers. The main reason workers would prefer a joint management-employee body to a union is that most believe their boss would oppose a union, and they think management cooperation is essential for any workplace organisation to succeed. There's more than a kernel of truth in this—as the deunionisation of both United States and Australian workplaces attests. But it does not follow that workers would be happier under joint representation than under union representation, or that public policy should concentrate on encouraging joint representation ahead of redressing the legislative bias against union organising efforts—a proposition which, I must say, might be implied from the book, but which is certainly not argued by the authors. After all, management opposition itself in part reflects (and is reflected in) the current legislative framework.

So I found the most useful part of the book to be that which described how workers felt, rather than the representation models that flowed from it. The key point, as they say, is 'workers want more'. How to give them 'more' is implicit, and so a policy prescription is not carefully set out—but this is probably just as well, as to do so would be to divert attention from the many useful observations the authors make.

This is easily one of the most readable books on industrial relations matters written by academics in recent times. The authors are able simultaneously to engage the reader in an almost folksy manner, while also being quite rigorous in their presentation of data. There should be more such books. And it has good quotes. My favourite was the report of a focus group, in which the focus group leader asks 'can anyone here name a living American union leader?' after which there are a series of long silences. In seeming desperation, the leader says 'Well, has anyone heard of Lane Kirkland?' (then head of the AFL-CIO). At last—recognition! 'E-laine Kirkland? I know her. That's the fat lady who did the grapefruit diet on Oprah Winfrey last week'. I'm sure many of the messages in this book are increasingly relevant to union-deprived Australia. Just watch out when

people start talking about Meg Combet's lemon crumbles on Bert Newton's morning show!

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

DAVID PEETZ

MODELS OF CAPITALISM: GROWTH AND STAGNATION IN THE MODERN ERA

By David Coates. Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, x + 300 pp., \$47.95 (paperback)

Confused by the theoretical proliferation of the past decade within the economic social sciences? Daunted by the new language? Once upon a time the study of the relationship between economics, industrial relations and sociology was straightforward. If you were a market liberal or a neo-classicist, you looked to Smith, Friedman or more recently, Becker. For those not convinced about the apparent socially optimal benefits of the marketplace, you looked to writers influenced by Keynes or Marx. And there were other people to turn to as well; Schumpeter, Weber, Commons and Durkheim were regular authorities on such issues.

Industrial relations sat relatively easily within that broad world of theorising. The neo-classicist mainstream saw 'industrial relations' as an imposition on the operation of the self-regulating market. Occasional laissez faire writers saw a reason to ban trade unions, while left liberals saw a social role for trade unions. For their part the Keynesians saw arbitration as logical and sensible, while Marxist writers (but not the polemicists) accepted arbitration as a temporary class settlement only.

Australian industrial relations research reflects these tendencies. Until quite recently, the disciplinary mainstream involved a study of the behaviour of the dominant institutional parties (the Commission, unions and employers). In the late 1980s, however, the workplace as a site of research became increasingly prominent. The onset of concern about increasing labour market flexibility prompted renewed interest in labour market analysis, an area previously populated exclusively by labour economists.

As the academic industry expanded, as analytical tools developed, and more importantly, as the woes and complexity of industrialised economies increased, new literatures emerged to explain increasingly complicated social patterns. This literature emerged in waves. The late 1960s saw the resurgence of an explicitly theoretical attempt to develop a Marxist political economy of modern capitalism, particularly around the role of the state. Prompted by the collapse of the post-war boom, a literature emerged in the 1970s concerned with understanding the determinants of economic and political management, most notably around the idea of 'corporatism'. A hybrid set of explanatory approaches emerged throughout the 1980s synthesising the concerns of the structuralist and neo-structuralist Marxist writers with the increasingly cogent claims of neo-Weberian writers. By the early 1990s a broad literature had appeared which reconciled macro-political economy with an understanding of the policy formation

process—the so-called ‘new institutionalists’. By the late 1990s, research became increasingly focussed on understanding the implications of the globalisation of the economy. The ongoing integration of the domestic marketplace and the global marketplace had created new economic and political difficulties and opportunities for the industrial parties.

Coates’ book will be useful to those who are interested, challenged or just plain confused by all these debates. The book has a straightforward and clear structure. Beyond the introductory chapter, the following two chapters look at the two conceptual models for statutory regulation of modern capitalism. Chapter 2 examines the modern form of *laissez faire* capitalism—the market liberalism as represented by the United States under Reagan and the United Kingdom under Thatcher, while the next chapter explores the interventionist and trust-based models of state regulation as typified by Germany and Japan. The argument developed in these chapters looks to the historical, economic and political construction of these social processes. *Laissez faire* approaches are merely one configuration of social forces; the trust-based form, merely another. However, Coates’ analysis will not satisfy those wanting unambiguous proof of the chaos of *laissez faire* or of intervention-induced economic sclerosis. The next four chapters are perhaps the most interesting and useful. Here, Coates engages with a number of questions thrown up by modern social democratic thought about the appropriate role of trade unions and the state, education and training, and the regulation of capital.

The conclusions reached by the book, once again, are not going to make market fundamentalists happy, nor will the proponents of social intervention have their world view affirmed. In Coates’ review of the various theoretical strands, modern capitalism is too complicated for such straightforward answers. Trade unions can, but not always, add to economic performance. Education and training can make a contribution, but only in some circumstances. ‘Culture’ does shape the operation of policy process and workplaces but it is not the only variable to do so. The recognition of the non-homogeneity of finance capital undermines simplistic explanations of the operation of the business sector. And yes, the state can help economic growth, but in some situations, can also hinder economic growth.

This book provides a convenient entry point into a range of debates, a detailed guide to the nuances within the literature, as well as a pointer to the broader literature about the relationship between economic regulatory systems and the political economy of industrial relations in a transforming economic marketplace. It is well worth a look.

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GERRY TREUREN

LABORING FOR RIGHTS: UNIONS AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY ACROSS NATIONS

Edited by Gerald Hunt. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1999, viii + 302 pp., US\$27.95 (paperback)

This book seeks to answer the question: how do unions around the world respond to issues raised by sexual minorities? *Laboring for Rights* is an edited collection of thirteen country or regional based chapters, with all essays written especially for the book. There are six chapters on the United States of America and Canada, four on the United Kingdom and Europe; one on South Africa, one on the South Pacific and one on Australia. The chapters focus on the labour movement's response to issues such as benefits for same sex partners, anti-discrimination language in collective agreements, legislative change and education.

The importance of this volume lies in its originality, and the ground it breaks by being one of the first full length books to examine the relationship between labour movements and gays, lesbians, bisexuals and the transgendered. There are very few published monographs that examine gay and lesbian social movement-based activism and the creation of social and political change. Therefore to have a book that looks comparatively at the engagement between recent identity-based activism, with an older movement such as the labour movement, is an important contribution to the study of social movements. This book provides concise historical and empirical information on the shifting, and in most cases strengthening, relationship between gay and lesbian actors and labour movements. It also provides food for thought in a political era where movements often need to act in unison because of the decline in committed memberships; this is particularly the case for labour movements in most developed countries.

The more interesting and notable chapters for this reviewer were often the more unusual, and on cases less often analysed. For example, a chapter on Hawaii, by Jonathon Goldberg-Hiller, looks at the problems unions there have had in creating successful alliances with gay and lesbian groups, particularly those who advocate same-sex marriage. A related chapter on the South Pacific, by Jacqueline Leckie, demonstrates the importance of the persistence of a gendered division of labour in shaping the possibilities of labour movement/gay and lesbian activism. The argument here is that workers rights in general seem to take priority over public debate about gender and sexuality issues. This tension around chosen areas of reform was also evident in the chapter on South Africa, by Mazibuko Jara, Naomi Webster and Gerald Hunt. In this context, the term 'accelerated transformation' was discussed in the post-apartheid period; here, a rise in activism is linked with the shift from uni-racial to multi-racial policies, and the broader goals of ensuring civil rights. This chapter is one of the few that notes the importance of cross movement alliances in creating social change—although the authors do acknowledge that there is still difficulty in sexuality issues being openly discussed, and policy subsequently developed within South Africa.

The excellent Australian chapter by Shane Ostenfeld stresses the importance of the relationship between the federal state (especially when the ALP is in government) and the labour movement, in terms of the implementation of social and political change on sexuality issues. It is noted that there are differences between states, and that the 'right' and 'left' factional divide in the ALP has contributed to the receptivity of the labour movement to claims made by gay and lesbian activists. Notwithstanding this feature, it was still argued that 'winning over the trade union movement was one of the keys to winning the struggle for

equality' (page 181). This tension is explored in some detail throughout the chapter. There are several other chapters of significance such as that by David Rayside on 'New Europe'; Fiona Colgan's chapter on the main public sector union in the United Kingdom; and Gerald Hunt's chapter on Canada.

However, the book could have been improved on two main dimensions. First, it could have included a stronger theoretical framework and focus. That is, what contribution do these nation-based studies make to social movement theory? There is very little mention of social movement theorists of either the resource mobilisation or new social movement variety. And, in terms of theory, do the ideological and historical backgrounds to these movements mean that there is an inevitable clash between social justice (labour movement) and identity politics (gay and lesbian activism)? Or, do these case studies indicate that the 'old' and 'new' social movement distinction is, in practice, irrelevant?

A second, and related, question that the book only implicitly addresses was one concerned with the broader implications for movements acting together in periods where committed memberships in political and social organisations are in decline. Is it thus necessary for sometimes disparate movements to find common ground from which to create social and political change? This important question needs to be explicitly addressed in both the national and global contexts.

These issues aside, students at both the senior undergraduate and postgraduate levels would obtain an important historical overview of activism from this book. It would also be a useful resource for academics starting to construct research in this important area, and for trade unionists seeking to better understand the relationship between the labour movement in particular and social movements in general.

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

ARIADNE VROMEN

UNIONS, EMPLOYERS AND CENTRAL BANKS: MACROECONOMIC CO-ORDINATION AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMIES

Edited by Torben Iversen, Jonas Pontusson and David Soskice. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, xvi + 339 pp., \$44.95 (paperback)

During the 1980s, Calmfors and Driffill argued that there was a U-shaped relationship between the centralisation of bargaining and economic performance. Thus it was argued that where trade union organisations exhibited *encompassingness*, centralised bargaining systems were able to deliver economic outcomes that were equivalent to those of decentralised bargaining systems. This model provided the economic foundations for understanding the dual tendencies in capitalist nations towards what Goldthorpe referred to as dualism and corporatism.

Empirical developments during the 1990s have cast doubts over the validity of the Calmfors and Driffill's model and the dualist/corporatist distinction. Some countries with long traditions of centralisation, most notably Sweden, have experienced increased decentralisation in wage bargaining and declining economic

performance. Countries, such as New Zealand, have experienced radical decentralisation of wage bargaining but have not experienced improved economic performance. Countries with intermediate levels of centralisation, like Germany, have exhibited both institutional stability and relatively good economic performance. These results suggest, in the words of the editors of this collection, that 'Calmfors and Driffill's concept of centralisation fails to capture the features of wage bargaining systems that are crucial to macro-economic outcomes and results in misleading categorisations of countries' (page 10).

This edited anthology brings together an emerging body of literature which rejects the oversimplified notions of the relationship between trade union organisation and economic performance which lies at the heart of Calmfors and Driffill's model and develops new conceptual tools, drawn from Soskice's concept of *coordination*, to explain the relationship between bargaining systems, macro-economic policy settings and economic outcomes. The book consists of ten chapters. The first chapter is an overview, while the second chapter by Soskice provides a relatively accessible review of his attack on neo-classical macro-economic theory and an introduction to the concept of coordination that underpins many of the later chapters. This is then followed by contributions on wage bargaining institutions, macroeconomic regimes and macroeconomic and distributive outcomes, respectively. Rather than review each of the chapters separately, I will concentrate on three chapters only which I think demonstrate the power of the general approach and particularly its relevance to understanding contemporary developments in industrial relations.

To this reviewer the most important contribution in this book is the chapter by Pontusson and Swenson on the employers' offensive and the collapse of centralised bargaining in Sweden in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In what is already a heavily cited contribution, they argue that during the 1980s and 1990s export-oriented engineering sector employers in Sweden led an offensive against centralised bargaining because the 'Swedish model' no longer generated the benefits that it once had to employers. These changes in institutional preferences on the part of employers resulted from both changes within the bargaining system itself (especially the growing tendency towards inter-occupational levelling) and also changes in the broader economic context (growing competition in world markets and changes in production technologies). They also argue that engineering sector employers were aided in their offensive by the growing clash of interests between unions representing skilled export sector workers, on the one hand, and those sheltered from the international market including white collar and public sector workers on the other hand. In Soskice's terms, institutional instability in Sweden reflected the declining coordination delivered by the centralised wage bargaining system.

There are a number of important implications that stem from this argument. First, it suggests that the stability of a particular bargaining system is dependent on the broader context in which it operates. Changes in a number of factors including monetary policy, world market conditions and technology can have significant impacts on even the most firmly entrenched bargaining systems. I will return to this theme below when discussing the chapter by Franseze and Hall.

Second, Pontusson and Swenson's analysis suggests that, even in countries where organised labour is strong, employers play a significant role in determining the shape and structure of wage bargaining. This issue is taken up by Thelen in chapter 5. She notes that many analyses assume that globalisation creates the conditions for decentralisation and deregulation of wage bargaining, by increasing the power of capital vis-à-vis labour. Why then, Thelen asks, have German employers not been able 'to bring themselves to dismantle the German model?' In what appears to be a significant departure from her earlier institutionalist approach to German industrial relations, Thelen stresses the role that employers' interests play in supporting the institutions of wage bargaining. Thelen notes that while many German employers are dissatisfied with industry wide bargaining, the overwhelming majority strongly support the works council system because of the cooperative relationships it engenders at the workplace. She argues that many German employers fear that radical decentralisation of bargaining to the workplace level will undermine the works council system and create higher levels of conflict at this level at a time when world market developments have increased the value of these outcomes. Thus despite a series of significant strains on the German system, in the current context Thelen argues that because significant groups of employers have an interest in the continuation of the German system, it is unlikely that globalisation will produce changes in the institutions of wage bargaining in Germany.

However, one of the key insights of this collection is that interests in particular institutional arrangements are not fixed. This brings me back to the interconnections between wage bargaining institutions and the macroeconomic policy regime. The chapter by Franzeze and Hall looks at the relationship between central bank independence and wage bargaining institutions and outcomes. According to neo-classical economic theory 'having an independent central bank is like having a free lunch'. The postwar performance of the German economy is taken as the paradigmatic example of this free lunch. In a seminal article written more than a decade ago, Hall argued that central bank independence was consistent with the superior economic performance in Germany only because of the coordinating role played by the wage bargaining system. This is because 'coordinated wage bargaining can lend force to the signals sent by the central bank' (page 179) in ways that are not possible in uncoordinated bargaining systems. In the late 1980s and 1990s central bank independence has been almost universally adopted as governments sought to emulate the 'free lunch' effect. This trend has reached its apotheosis in the establishment of an independent European Central Bank (ECB) as part of European Monetary Union (EMU). Following on from Hall's original argument, Franzese and Hall argue that because of the lack of European wide coordination of bargaining, the effect of the EMU and ECB independence is not likely to be as beneficial as neo-classical theory suggests. In particular, while they argue that some countries with traditions of dependent central banks and low levels of coordination in bargaining are likely to benefit from EMU, they suggest that the vast majority of countries in Europe will suffer from declining coordination between monetary policy setting and wage bargaining. Ironically, given the key role it has played in establishing the ECB,

Hall and Franzese argue that Germany is likely to be the most adversely affected by this change. These developments may produce significant shifts in the institutional preferences of German employers towards decentralisation.

The interrelationship between monetary policy settings and industrial relations institutions has received surprisingly little attention in the Australian context. As a consequence of financial market deregulation and floating of the Australian dollar in the 1980s, monetary policy in Australia has become increasingly restrictive and there has been steady progress towards central bank independence. At the same time government policy in the labour market has been directly focussed on decentralising bargaining and reducing the coordination of wage bargaining. Following from Hall and Franzese, it can be argued that low levels of inflation have been produced at higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of output than might otherwise have been the case with a more coordinated wage bargaining system. The chapters reviewed above also suggest that financial market deregulation and abandonment of currency controls have been an important source of industrial relations change in Australia. It might be argued that this is because restrictive monetary policy has played an important role in both undermining the coordinating capacity of the industrial award system and lowering the potential costs of decentralised bargaining to some employers. It can be argued that this has produced significant shifts in the institutional preferences of important groups of employers towards decentralised bargaining. While readers may not find this brief account thoroughly convincing, the point is that this collection of essays provides a set of conceptual tools which can be usefully applied to understanding contemporary developments in industrial relations.

This is not to say that there are no problems with this book. In comparison to the rich detail and theoretical sophistication of the chapters reviewed, the chapters by Wallerstein and Golden and Garrett and Way, with their use of large data sets and heavy reliance on regressions, epitomise the poverty of much contemporary (especially American) political science and do little to advance our understanding of key relationships between policy regimes and wage bargaining institutions and outcomes. It is interesting to note that similar types of analyses, often by the same writers, found strong support for the centralisation thesis which they now reject. I was also personally disappointed with the final chapter by Pontusson in which he outlines the role of labour market institutions in determining patterns of wage distribution. As he has previously done a number of times, he concludes by noting the limitations of an institutionalist perspective and hints at the existence of an alternative which stresses the importance of interests. I would have liked to see him, though, finally spell this alternative out in more detail. This would have provided a more robust conclusion to the book. That said, I am certain this volume would make a valuable addition to the bookshelves of many *JIR* readers and hope that the concepts it introduces are as widely adopted as those of Calmfors and Driffill.

SAME OR DIFFERENT: GENDER POLITICS IN THE WORKPLACE

By Kay M. Fraser. Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999, vii + 250 pp., £37.50 (hardback)

The strike by 300 women sewing machinists at the Ford Motor Company in 1968 in Britain provides a focal point for this book and its analysis of policy debates in the 1960s over strategies to advance sex equality in employment. The central theme is the tension between sameness and difference in policy discourse and action. This theme is illustrated in the Ford case, where the initial demand for the women's jobs to be moved to a higher classification (recognising their different skills) was passed over in favour of awarding them equal pay with men in their existing job classification (an approach based on 'sameness'). Fraser focuses on the 1960s in an attempt to establish why inadequate policies were developed, examining the positions taken by governments, employers and trade union leaders on a range of policy issues. Her analysis shows how both sameness and difference arguments can inform strategies that disadvantage women, and her overall argument is the need to move the discourse beyond this dichotomy.

While the limitations of a sameness/difference dichotomy are well known, and the difficulties of being forced into opting for one or other type of argument have frequently been illustrated (notably in the Sears Roebuck case in the United States in 1986, where arguments about women's different job preferences were successfully used to justify their under-representation in the company's high paying commission sales jobs), this book provides a wealth of new information and analysis. Fraser draws on archival and interview material to provide a detailed analysis of policy discourse and the complex range of influences on policy outcomes.

The book is divided into two sections. Part I focuses on the 1960s debates in Britain over policies relating to women's difference—essentially, policies that seek to accommodate women's greater propensity to be primary carers of children and other family members. The issues discussed in this section include childcare (chapter 2), training (chapter 3) and part-time employment (chapter 4). Part II examines the discourse around development of equal pay legislation in Britain. Chapters 5–8 provide analysis of the inputs from trade unions, governments and employers, with attention to the differences between male and female trade union leaders and divisions among women on various aspects of the debate. In chapter 9, Fraser concludes by arguing that the problems of the 1960s are still evident in the 1990s, and she makes a case for transcending the sameness/difference dichotomy if advances are to be made.

The strengths of the book lie in its examination of the complex range of perspectives that influenced the policy process. Fraser focuses not only on the different arguments put forward by governments, unions and employers, but also uncovers conflicting positions within these groups, for example between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministries of Health and Education over childcare policy. She argues that policy was often 'erratic' because of the range of contending views and the persistence of the view that males were the primary breadwinners. Overall, the chapters in the first section of the book show how little was achieved in gaining concessions to accommodate the different needs of women

in paid employment. This was the case whether the approach was based on 'difference' (as in the case of appeals for childcare assistance), or on 'sameness' (as was the strategy used in relation to training, where gender neutrality concealed women's limited access to industry training). Although some success could be claimed in relation to part-time work, which did become more widely available, concerns still remained over the extent to which this type of employment contract acted to marginalise women within paid employment.

In Part II, the author elaborates the conflicting arguments leading up to the introduction of equal pay legislation in Britain, having noted in Part I how pursuit of some issues based on women's difference (such as childcare) had been seen as incompatible with the equal pay strategy. The Ford case provides an example of an equal pay approach and the limited efficacy of applying a strict 'same as men' comparison. Chapters 6 and 7, focusing on the different views among female trade union leaders (and the traps of both sameness and difference perspectives), and the varied concerns of male trade union leaders (including protection of male jobs and male pay), greatly enrich understanding of the policy process. Also chapter 8, focusing on divisions among women (mostly between 'white blouse' and 'blue blouse' workers), adds considerably to the overall picture of policy development relating to equal pay and protective legislation.

A few minor problems can be noted. First, while many of the complexities of equal pay and equal value measures emerge in the discussion, and the practical limitations of the British policy are made evident, the idea that an equal value approach might contain the possibility to transcend sameness/difference limitations (as some North American writers have suggested) is not directly addressed. Second, discussion of the differences between the 1960s and 1990s could have taken greater account of the markedly changed economic environment in which competitive pressures are creating a more unequal wage distribution, and divisions among women in paid employment are becoming more marked. Hopes about the efficacy of family friendly measures in this environment need to be tempered with the recognition that many such policies are linked to business needs, and thus are likely to be available primarily for the high skilled women businesses are keen to retain. At the other end of the labour market, numerical flexibility is likely to be the alternative to family friendly policies.

Finally, the call for a move beyond a sameness/difference dichotomy is only that, with ideas for future strategies given only limited attention. Still, this is no easy task and detailed prescriptions would be too much to ask in a book which covers so much other ground. Importantly, Fraser's historical analysis highlights many of the ongoing pitfalls of devising strategies to advance women's prospects, and the book makes a very useful contribution to the policy discourse. It will be of great interest to policy makers, activists, students and teachers.