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BOOK REVIEWS

Daniel B. Cornfield (ed.), *Workers, Managers, and Technological Change: Emerging Patterns of Labor Relations*. New York: Plenum Press, 1987. 362 Pp. $37.50 (cloth).

Workers, Managers, and Technological Change is an interdisciplinary examination of fourteen U.S. companies. In these case studies, the authors examine shifts in labor-management relations brought on by changes in technology in the post-WWII era. The book also includes introductory and concluding chapters by the editor.

Each case study analyzes one industry, focusing on the impact of technological change on labor and management, formal or collective bargaining, employment and job security, and labor responses to it. Each study establishes and elaborates the relationships between technological change, labor-management relations and union power. What distinguishes these essays from others in the field is their emphasis on how microelectronics in the workplace affect labor relations and the collective bargaining power of unions.

The technological changes of the post-WWII era have dramatically changed labor-management relations in the industrial market economies. In the early twentieth century violent and antagonistic confrontations between workers and employers seemed to be an integral characteristic of workplace relations. During the post-WWII era, labor-management disputes became institutionalized in many industrial market economies, and collective bargaining was recognized as an acceptable way to negotiate and solve work-related problems.

In recent years, Cornfield suggests, two patterns of labor-management relations have emerged in response to technological change. First, technological change has increased managerial control over the production process and over workers. Essays by Robert Thomas; Arne Kalleberg, et al.; Gordon Betchman and Douglas Rebne; Vern Baxter; Daniel Cornfield, et al.; Kent Peterson; and Arthur Shostak discuss patterns of unilateral managerial control which have emerged in agriculture, the newspaper industry, longshoring on the U.S. West Coast, the postal service, insurance companies, education, and air traffic control, respectively. Second, collective bargaining in some industries has encouraged a new form of labor-management relations, namely "formal cooperation." Richard Couto; Michael Indergaard and Michael Cushion; Dennis Ahlburg, et al.; Gerald Gordon, et al.; Arthur Schwartz, et al.; David Lewin; and Dick Batten and Sara Schoomaker elaborate on the trend toward labor-management cooperation in these industries: coal mining, automobile, steel, construction equipment, commercial aircraft, sanitation service, and telecommunications, respectively.

Cornfield asserts that collective bargaining and "formal cooperation" are two, not only distinct, but opposite concepts. The former is institutionalized conflict between workers and employers over matters of mutual concern, including the sensitive issue of control over the production process and workplace. The latter, however, proposes institutionalized cooperation between the two historically opposed camps.

The heart of Cornfield's argument is that "formal cooperation" has emerged in industries with a strong background in unionization. He argues that "formal cooperation" is built upon the remains of patterns of collective bargaining which failed to meet the challenges of new economic, social, and political conditions. In other words, patterns of collective bargaining in certain industries laid the groundwork for the emergence of the patterns of "formal cooperation."

According to the editor, the past experience of labor disputes has played a significant role in the emergence of "formal cooperation." It has led workers and employers to recognize that "formal cooperation" is the best way to solve such macroeconomic problems as foreign competition and decreasing competitiveness of American goods, a falling U.S. share in the world market, plant shutdowns, and rising unemployment.

In the end, Cornfield fails to present a convincing argument to explain why this significant change in the labor-management relationships took place. He ignores the concept of class and class struggle, and does not adequately explain how workers and employers solved their historical conflicts.

The emergence of "formal cooperation" in some companies is likely due to the fact that the balance of power between labor and management in many of the traditionally unionized firms has shifted to favor management. Since the mid-1950s unions have faced many obstacles, and the percentage of all nonagricultural wage and salary workers belonging to unions declined from its postwar peak of 34.7 percent in 1954 to 19.1 percent in 1984 (Edwards, Garonna, and Todtling, 1986:16). Influenced by a series of social, economic and political events, unions suffered
a sharp decline in their collective bargaining power and have accepted many concessions in their contracts with employers. Cornfield overlooks the possiblity that some previously strong unions might have been forced to choose "cooperation" over "confrontation" due to the current specificities of the labor movement.

If "formal cooperation" is a result of the decline of the bargaining power of unions (226), or is manipulated by managerial control strategies in the shop or office (332), I suggest that "formal cooperation" may equally be termed "formal domination."

Cornfield's discussion of "formal cooperation" is, at best, a simplistic description of what appears to be the dominant pattern of labor-management relationships in some industries. The editor simply fails to unpack the implicit and explicit facts embodied in the existing relationships in U.S. workplaces.

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Sar A. Levitan and Isaac Shapiro, *Working But Poor*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, 160 Pp., $7.95 (paper), $22.50 (cloth)

Perhaps no social problem in American society has provoked so much continuing dialogue since the 1960s as the issue of poverty and related topics such as welfare programs. Dozens of books and hundreds of articles have been written (a large percentage in the 1980s) from various perspectives and ideologies analyzing the consequences, causes, and solutions to poverty in America. Moreover, everyone seems to have a position or opinion, often expressed with emotional fervor, on poverty, the poor, and welfare programs. The success of politicians and political parties is often highly related to their ability to sense the electorate's current views on the poor and social service expenditures and to build on (or pander to) these views for political gain. Ronald Reagan in the 1980s related to a different public than Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s on the issue of the poor and what responsibility the government had in reducing poverty. Over the years, however, public opinion polls measuring attitudes toward poverty and the poor suggest that the American populace consistently divides itself toward opposite ends of a continuum in explaining "causes" of poverty. At one end, the majority of those polled sees poverty as mainly resulting from the unwillingness of the poor to work ("lazy," "rather live off welfare") while at the other end of the continuum a significant number of Americans sees poverty as mostly due to circumstances beyond the individual's control, that is, there is a lack of jobs for the poor because of such factors as continuing automation, relocation of unskilled/semisilled jobs to Third World countries, or because of discrimination in the labor market. What these polls indicate, moreover, is that almost all Americans, no matter what their political or ideological orientation, view poverty from an economic perspective: the poor are poor because, for various reasons, they are unemployed.

In *Working But Poor*, Levitan and Shapiro challenge the prevailing belief that poverty is the result of indolence or lack of employment opportunities. They examine the experiences and hardships encountered by the working poor, some 2 million americans who work full-time year round and another 7 million who work full-time part of the year or in year round part-time jobs. In additon, millions of other Americans live in families just above the offical poverty lines, i.e. the "near poor," where the combined incomes of both husband and wife place them a few thousand dollars over the poverty threshold ($9,690 for a family of three in 1987). The authors show how the sharp cuts in federal anti-poverty programs under the Reagan Administration have contributed to an increase in the number of working poor -- a growth of some forty percent between 1980 and 1987. Levitan and Shapiro raise serious questions about the fairness of the rules that regulate the distribution of economic rewards in American society, and they are expecially critical of current federal efforts to deal with the poor.

They believe that the existence of such a large number of working poor undermines a core American belief: that a commitment to the work ethic will provide a road out of poverty. For individuals who believe in the American ethos that hard work will lead to material rewards and upward mobility, *Working But Poor* could arouse dissonance and a debate about why this malady exists and how the government has failed to address or has contributed to the problem. However,