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**BOOK REVIEWS**


*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 Rehbe; 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 Ingergaard and Michael Cushion; Dennis Ahlburg, et al.; Gerald Gordon, et al.; Arthur Schwartz, et al.; David Levis; and Dick Batten and Sara Schoemaker 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 possibility 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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REFERENCES

Edwards, Richard, Paolo Garonna and Franz Toddling