

Reviews

Management of Industrial Relations, Readings and Cases (2nd Edition), Ed. Pramod Verma, New Delhi, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., 1981, pp 523.

The book under review offers a selection of readings and case-studies on industrial relations. It is divided into two parts. Part-I deals exclusively with the readings and contains 22 pieces of writings, some of which are extracts from well-known reports on the subject while the others are papers written by a number of writers and which are either already published or were prepared specifically for this volume. On the other hand, Part-II describes 20 short case-studies which all relate to Indian industries.

Even though Pramod Verma is only one of the contributors (may be the largest one) to the volume, both the front and back covers of the book as well as its inside title pages give the impression that he is the author and not the *editor* of the volume. However, this is a new, though certainly a disturbing trend, that one observes in the field of Indian publications on management, a point which another reviewer has rightly made recently while reviewing a similar book.¹

Be that as it may, the main thrust of the book, as one would expect from its title, is on the *management* of industrial relations; what possible alternatives could the managers

think of while making decisions on industrial relations issues given the environmental constraints that they face? As the editor of the book says, "Within the particular framework of a changing socio-economic milieu and legal environment, a manager has to develop strategies for dealing with unions, evolve an appropriate Wage and Salary structure, maintain discipline, treat workers as people rather than machines and above all manage conflict within the organization". The book, therefore, attempts first to familiarise the reader through its first two sections on 'Introduction' and 'State Intervention', with the changing socio-economic milieu and the legal environment. It then discusses in the remaining five sections, the issues which confront the managers directly namely the issues relating to trade-unionism, salary and wage, work relations, discipline, grievance and industrial conflict as well as the available strategies and techniques that the managers could use for handling these issues.

Because of its focus on management, it is understandable that the book will pay more attention to what are called the 'nuts and bolts issues' that confront the managers immediately than with the larger socio-economic and political issues which act as constraints in managing these immediate issues. Yet the fact remains that these larger issues deserve more systematic and analytical treatment than what has been done in this book. This is because of the fact that on the one hand the larger environment is becoming

1. Kudchedkar, L.S. in *Indian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. XII, No. 4, 1981 p. 411.

increasingly unfavourable to the effectiveness of many of the management strategies and techniques and on the other, at least partly as a result of this, the state intervention in industrial relations is also rapidly increasing over time. Consequently, such important industrial relations matters as trade-unionism, collective bargaining etc. are becoming more irrelevant in the Indian context. It is no use saying that a more basic change in industrial relations machinery is necessary (p 35) or that management and union should not take rigid postures in conflict resolution (p 237) or that price rise and 'slackening of industrial growth could account for much of the industrial relations disturbances' (p 18). In fact one gets the impression that these are the real causes of deteriorating industrial relations situation in the country. But as shown elsewhere², these are only the symptoms of the basic maladies of our economy which have started surfacing particularly from 1965-66. The reviewer strongly believes that the managers and the students of industrial relations should not only be aware of this relationship between the economy and industrial relations but also of the reasons for the continued stagnation of our economy. Otherwise, it is very likely that they will approach industrial relations questions with a very narrow perspective and, as experience indicates, in their frustration with the prevailing situation, they will seek remedy in such measures as centralisation of power,

curtailment of rights of workers and working class organizations and so on.

In spite of this limitation however, it cannot be denied that the book, especially its sections on work relations, Grievance and Discipline and Conflict Management as well as the cases in part-II, will prove to be useful to its target readers namely, 'the practising managers, potential managers under training and post graduate students of Industrial Relations'.

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Labour Administration : A General Introduction, J. I. Husband, New Delhi, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co, 1980; pp. 88. Rs. 30.

The book under review is the Indian edition of an I. L. O. publication. It intends to give a general overview of the administrative, policy-making and development functions and also various problems involved in labour administration in government. It is conceived as a training material for public officials, mainly the middle and junior level executives as well as clerks with some administrative functions. It has grown out of a large amount of teaching materials, which the author prepared in connection with his responsibilities in I. L. O. in advancement of labour administration.

The first four chapters of the book deal with the role, operations, control mechanisms, structure and staffing of the department of labour in a government. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 describe the extended system which has grown up in the industrialised countries due to the widening of the scope of labour administration and also explains how such

2. See Sethi, K.C., Sen Gupta, A.K., Grozdanic, S. and Stambuk, V. (eds), *Self-Management and Workers' Participation: Indo-Yugoslav Experience*, SCOPE, New Delhi, 1981, particularly its Introductory chapter. See also Khanna, Sushil, Ghose, Saila K. and Sen Gupta, Anil K., *Workers' Participation and Development: The Indian Experience*, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, 1981.