

REVIEWS

Managers and Workers in Engineering Industries. Pramod Verma, Academic Book Centre, Ahmedabad, 1981, pp. 141, Rs. 25.00.

The studies on industrial relations in Indian industries have dealt mainly with the problem of labour-management relations of a static nature. It seems therefore, essential that research should probe more deeply into the 'strategic factors' at the industry level. In order to study the process related issues, it is necessary to understand the behavioural dimensions of both management and labour. In view of the above, a study of industrial relations in five medium sized engineering firms in the Ahmedabad-Baroda region in Gujarat was conducted from the Centre for Regional Management Studies of the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad. The selected firms employed a total of 3000 persons. 10% sample consisting of 286 workers and 88 managers were drawn on the basis of systematic sampling method. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire. In addition to this, an attempt was made to understand the total industrial relations dynamics in a few organizations through a series of case studies.

In order to understand the dynamics of labour-management relations in a given industry it becomes necessary to study the management's approach towards industrial relations, especially how they view their workers, unions and union leaders on certain specific issues. The data suggests that barring a bare minority,

by and large managers have consistently shown favourable attitude towards certain decisive issues in industrial relations. Majority of the managers' readiness to accept workers' participation in all kinds of decision-making, as well as willingness to accommodate workers' representatives in formulating standing orders further confirm their overall constructive approach to some of the key problems of industrial relations. However, in spite of holding a favourable attitude towards union leaders in general, signs of considerable apathy and reservations among managers to accept unions' decisive role in settling disputes are also noted in the study. Managers' preference for personal discussions with workers' representative to solve disputes rather than depending on unions perhaps suggests their greater stress and reliance on quick informal ways of resolving conflict (p. 38).

The viewpoint emerging from workers' responses may be termed as basically cooperative attitude on the part of workers. There seemed to be high degree of job satisfaction among the respondents. But, the data also revealed that in individual matters, the management was perceived as being unsympathetic and exploitative and some of the personnel policies are individualistic and un-systematic. Nevertheless, workers are in general, cooperative with the management in dealing with shop floor issues and resolving problems. Workers' overall attitude toward unions are that the unions are necessary but they are neither interested nor involved in

union activities. They prefer to interact directly with the management rather than through the unions.

It is evident from the study that the industrial relationship in engineering industries in Ahmedabad-Baroda region is characterised by an informal system where both managements and workers are keen in mutual problem solving. By and large, a personalized approach of management and need-based response by workers are exhibited. In this context, unions seem to have a rather limited role to play. Such a situation is largely explained by the size of the engineering units of the region where unions have not yet found interest and support. There is some dissatisfaction among workers on specific issues, there is also management's reluctance to accept the need for trade unionism. It is, however, necessary to note that apart from small size, another significant factor is the regional influence. The Ahmedabad-Baroda region has not been traditionally a strike-prone area. It may, therefore, be concluded that the regional influence is no less important than employee size in shaping industrial relations situation.

The study concludes that there is a congruence of viewpoints between managers and workers. This poses both a challenge and an opportunity to improve industrial relations in engineering industries.

This book will be found useful by the managers and trade unionists in the engineering industries. The students of industrial relations will also find this book interesting.

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Public Enterprises : Policy, Performance and Professionalisation, P. K. Basu, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1982, pp. i—xv and pp. 1—99, Rs. 40.00.

Sri Basu's book consists of two analytically stimulating essays — one bearing on the theme which constitutes the title of this volume, and the other on Education and Training for Public Enterprise Administrators. They flow from the pen of a seasoned Public Administrator-cum-Public Enterprise Administrator, and therefore offer penetrating insights to the reader.

It appears that the major thesis of the first essay is that public enterprise 'Performance' criteria should *precede* the formulation of public enterprise 'Policy' desiderata, and not vice-versa (p. 21). Although theoretically, policy is *ex-ante*, and performance *ex-post* (p. 18), the author appears to argue, and quite justifiably so, that by now enough experience of running PSE' in LDC's has accumulated to enable us to initiate a pragmatic reversal of this traditional sequence. And behind this sensible argument stands the all-too-well-known phenomenon of bureaucratic, procedural, public administration-oriented policy-making by the concerned ministries which are never 'accountable' for public enterprise performance failures — when it comes to the crunch (p. 5). And an inevitable corollary to this thesis is the author's call to the public enterprises to take the *initiative* in setting their respective performance criteria, which might then be discussed with the government for consensus and approval (p. 26/p. 34). Such a line of thought is a departure for instance, from the British experiments where the government itself did not shy away from the task of specifying the