

## BOOK REVIEW

*Not by Bread Alone* by Baldev R. Sharma, Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources, New Delhi, 1987 pp—191.

The book under review is a study of some select aspects of organisational climate as constituted by an organisation's personnel policies and practices and its influence on the employer-employee relations in 51 manufacturing organisations in India. The major conclusion that emerges from the study and which in fact explains the author's choice of the book's title is: while being a biological animal, material "well being is necessary for most, if not all of us, and at all times", "man is also a social animal, a psychological creature and also a spiritual being. Hence the needs of the employees are not confined to their material well-being but include several others". But the latter "continue to remain relatively neglected" and which in fact explains the given state of employer-employee relations in these organisations. It follows from this that if Indian organisations are interested in eliciting willing cooperation of their employees, then they must pay attention not only to the employees' material needs but also to their non-material needs.

This in fact accords well with the theories on human needs as developed by several western humanist scholars in the 1950s and 1960s. But what is more important, this study did not begin with the objective of verifying or testing existing (western) theories or hypotheses but with that of understanding and discovering the existing reality in Indian organisations and of designing an appropriate instrument for the same. In fact, as the author himself admits, he was ignorant of the concept of organisational climate at the earlier stages of the study and therefore did not use this as the basis for designing the study. Its focus was primarily on the dependant variable i.e. employer-employee relations and not on the independent variable of organisational climate. And in his effort to discover the determinants of this dependant variable he ran into "factors that can be collectively

considered as the various dimensions of organisational climate".

The study therefore "started with no preconceived notion, no hypothesis, no conceptual model and in fact no previously developed questionnaire or an interview schedule". In 1980 when the study was initiated, the author had the opportunity of observing at close angle the employer-employee relations in Tata Group of Companies at Jamshedpur. He was struck by the cordiality of employer-employee relations that prevailed in these companies which inspired him to undertake a study that would help in identifying the factors that contributed to industrial peace and harmony there and "with the help of insights so gained, to study the situation as it prevailed in the rest of the country".

The study in fact evolved over time. It began as an unstructured and open-ended enquiry in eight organisations in Jamshedpur in the form of a pilot study which ran for six months. The respondents of the study were the supervisors of these companies and based on their responses, the author identified "a large number of organisational attributes and characteristics which supposedly influenced employer-employee relations". 17 of those factors were selected and then subjected to repeated tests through a number of trial studies that lasted for one complete year. On the basis of these trial studies, the originally selected 17 variables were reduced to nine. The revised questionnaire which was finally administered in his sample organisations was built around these nine factors. They included: scope for advancement, grievance handling, monetary benefits, participative management, objectivity and rationality, recognition and appreciation, safety and security, training and education and welfare facilities.

The study covered employer-employee relations in terms of both supervisory-management relations and labour-management relations. The respondents of the final

study for both these aspects of employer-employee relations were also the first line supervisors. In all 3785 first line supervisors participated in the final study. In analysing the data, the author has made extensive use of such techniques as multiple regression, analysis of variance and other such techniques.

The book is indeed an useful addition to the existing literature on employer-employee relations in India. And the author is certainly right in his claim that the questionnaire designed by him for studying organisational climate is a distinctive contribution of this study and that the study is one of the rare attempts to conduct a comparative study of a large number of organisations. However, one vulnerable aspect of this study seems to be the use of supervisors as the source of data regarding labour-management relations. Though the author provides several justifications for the same, many may not find them to be very convincing.

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*Industrial Relations in Banks—Text and Cases*  
by L. B. Bhide and Anil K. Khandelwal,  
OM-Ameya Prakashan, Bombay p.p. 326,  
Price: Rs. 105 00.

"We must indeed all hang together,  
Or most assuredly, we shall all hang  
separately"  
—Benjamin Franklin

The phenomenal growth of banking industry in India since nationalisation of major banks in 1969 has brought with it the problems of growth. Banking industry being predominantly labour intensive, the pressure of growth, unless handled carefully, acts negatively on human relations and manifest in unmatched goals leading ultimately to alienation of employees. Bank managements in their enthusiasm to respond to the goals of nationalisation sacrificed that personal and family relationship with even the lowest levels of employees, as was prevalent before nationalisation in spite of the latter being already highly unionised and strong.

The first onslaught of growth was borne by

the officers of the banks, whom banks had to find in thousands by fast promotion, for manning newly opened branches in all parts of the country. Previously managers of branches were selected carefully and managerial position was coveted by the officers. But with the mushroom growth of branches this careful selection process had to be abandoned. First, posting of many a Workmen Staff, after being promoted as officers, was directly as managers of rural branches. There was no time to train them in managerial jobs or get them experienced through lower levels of management before making them branch managers. In fact, the training establishments of banks were totally ill-equipped to train this huge number of newly promoted officers. Besides, the banks before nationalisation being highly urban oriented the cadre of workmen also came mostly from urban areas. On promotion they suddenly found themselves uprooted from their "soil" and thrown upon a working land whose socio-economic environment was so different from theirs. As a result, those who accepted the promotion and went to villages regarded it as a 'punishment' for promotion. Working phase of bank nationalisation, therefore, began with a cadre of disgruntled and ill-equipped managers.

Expansion of banking industry also created huge employment in the workmen cadre. Highly educated boys joined the industry attracted by good pay and security of service. The ill-equipped branch managers were unable to lead them properly. Banking jobs being primarily of routine nature these boys soon found no challenge in their work and hence no interest. All attempts for job enrichment met with failures. Like high energy particles they soon found their niche elsewhere away from corporate goals. Unions found their ranks swelling and to contain them they started professing economism. Willy nilly management of banks joined with the unions in this game and personnel management was replaced by personnel administration. Industrial relations were being viewed as administration of various industrial settlements and awards and juridical disciplining of employees. Management and workmen regarded themselves as two parties, even at the branch level, trying always to protect themselves from the inroads of the others. Issues are determined by the leverage