

## REVIEWS

**Managerialism and the Working Class in India.** Mohinder Kumar, Sterling Publishers (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1982, Rs. 60.00.

Professional management has been under constant attack ever since its development. Such criticisms come from different sources. The most popular arguments against management of organizations have always come from the Marxist angle. The book under review is one of such effort. A brief summary of the book runs as follows. In the introductory chapter the author examines the poor economic performance of the country and relates it to 'managerialism' which is adopted by the 'ruling class' as an ideology. Subsequently in this chapter he offers the 'Marxist Model' as an alternative to organizational strategy. The second chapter looks at the initial stages of development of management during industrial revolution. The third chapter, 'On Method of Management Theory', further explores the development of the concept of management from the time of Hawthorne experiment. In this chapter, various management approaches such as advertising and marketing, operations research, cybernetic accounting etc. are briefly examined in the light of Marxist principles. While the fourth chapter examines the origin and growth of business management in India, the fifth chapter deals with the trends of management development efforts in the country. In the concluding chapter the author makes an effort to show how the working class is taken for a ride by 'industrialism' and

'managerialism'. In this chapter the author suggests how trade unions should actively involve themselves in management of organizations through meaningful workers' participation. A brief critical examination of Soviet, Chinese and Yugoslavian management practices is made and presented in the Appendix.

On the whole, the reader gets an impression that the author is passionately arguing for the demolition of management practices to usher in the Marxist model with a view to eliminating exploitation of the working class by providing more 'power' to the actual producers. This, according to the author, would pave the way for long term effectiveness of organizations and the development of the country. This, definitely, is a laudable approach. However, the author fails to clearly indicate as to what are the effective practical dimensions of this Marxist model that can be applied. He does not seem to be in favour of the Chinese experiment which according to him has brought about 'anarchic situations'. It also appears that the Yugoslav self-management system is not suggested as a viable Marxist model by the author because the Yugoslavian system centres around a market-based economy. The author, however, seems to be favouring Lenin's approach to organizational management where, "Lenin relied on development of socialist production to lay the real foundations of workers' management". In clarifying the Marxist model the author further writes: "In fact, socialism is the most scientifically managed system, where the

sub-systems are co-ordinated in such a manner that the interests of the society of human beings are placed above the narrow individual interests" (p. 153). I do not think any one will question this highly laudable objective of giving precedence to social interests. The question, however, remains : what are the practical approaches to implement this objective ? The book under review does not give satisfactory answer to this question.

At one end the author argues that some applications of Marxist models became 'ultra-left' deviations in practice. Probably it is true with management concepts as well. The management concepts by themselves may not be exploitative, but in practice (like the Marxist model) it has deviated, and became exploitative tools in many cases. A little further probing may make it clear.

According to the author, the Marxist model aims at workers' management (p. 132). The newer approaches to management on the other side also emphasise meaningful workers' participation. The Marxian approach to participation is directed at macro level and the management approaches primarily deal with micro level participation. Although the means are different, there seems to be some amount of congruence regarding the end. In practice, however, the management oriented participation has been used as a tool for exploitation. From this point of view it has deviated from the basic philosophy, as has happened in the case of Marxist model. Therefore one cannot conclude that all management concepts are anti-working class in their approaches. If this is true, we are barking at the wrong tree. The real problem may be arising from improper application of the concepts.

The author repeatedly says that industrial

management practices made the worker 'a cog in the capitalist mechanism'. This according to him has come out of the practice of division of labour. Yes, it is true that management approaches based on Taylorism had dehumanization effects. But the newer approaches are trying to overcome these defects. The concepts which were found useful earlier have now become redundant due to environmental changes. Searches for better approaches and concepts are still on and it will be a continuing process.

All through the various chapters, the author tries to build up arguments against management practices and in favour of the "Marxist Model." But it reaches an 'anti-climax' when he prescribes what should be done (p. 131-132). At this point he says : "As an internal safeguard for ensuring democracy, we have to ensure a more meaningful workers' participation in *management*" (emphasis added). Here again the author does not specify what are the forms and contents of this "meaningful participation". The author further writes : "(Trade Unions) have to turn into schools for the *industrial administration* and rise above narrow economism" (p. 133). It is not very clear again how trade unions will come off economism by becoming management schools. These statements seem to contradict the thesis which the author tries to develop in the book.

In general the book does not provide any new idea. Most of the arguments in the book are the same which were voiced by many in the past.

**Jacob Mankidy**  
Member of Faculty  
Indian Institute of Management Calcutta.