considerable popular participation in some programs of the revolution, such as, for example, the campaign against illiteracy, Martinez-Alier finds that in the sugar enterprises “participation by the masses has indeed not been very conspicuous.”

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Multinationals, Unions, and Labor Relations in Industrialized Countries. Edited by Robert F. Banks and Jack Stieber. Ithaca: New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, 1977. viii, 200 pp. $10.00.

This slender volume contains the proceedings of the Conference on Industrial Relations Problems Raised by Multinationals in Advanced Industrial Societies, held at Michigan State University in November 1974 and financed by contributions from the U.S. Department of Labor and the Ford Foundation. According to the book’s editors, who were also the conference coordinators, the conference was designed to bring together practitioners and scholars “to exchange information and ideas on ... industrial relations issues” related to the multinational corporation (MNC). Speakers and discussants were evenly divided among union, corporate, and academic participants, including a United Auto Workers president, a U.S. Chamber of Commerce chairman, several MNC industrial relations heads, various European union leaders and international secretariat representatives, and U.S., European, and Japanese academics.

Three questions were considered. Do MNCs administratively centralize their labor relations decisions? Do MNCs adopt or resist the labor practices of host countries? Do MNCs require countervailing union measures and, if so, what are appropriate and effective measures? Not surprisingly, union spokesmen depicted MNCs as highly mobile and centralized enterprises having aggressively opportunistic and global outlooks toward workers, attributes that give these firms tactical advantage over organized labor and necessitate new union structures and procedures; MNC managers claimed that their overseas subsidiaries have operational autonomy and comply assiduously with host country practices, meaning that they have no particular impact on labor relations and give no cause for special union responses; academics, unable to find overriding evidence one way or the other, for the most part and by implication sided with the MNCs.

Whether MNCs establish centralized authority is largely a matter of conjecture—given the intra-corporate nature of decision-making processes. Our only data are the contradictory statements of management and union participants and the scholarly reports based on available literature and questionnaires completed by MNC executives. If history is any guide in the matter, however, the unionists are probably nearer the mark when they ask us to accept the entrepreneurial logic of centralized policy and control inside the multinational firm. Managers of the horizontal and vertical combinations resulting from the first two great merger waves in American industry—MNCs are part of the third—also publicly claimed autonomy for their subsidiaries while privately practicing centralization. Upon formation of U.S. Steel in 1901, to cite one example, the managers insisted the parent trust could not speak for its subsidiaries in labor matters because it was not one but many distinct and separate companies. Yet when the minutes of the firm’s executive committee meetings were later revealed, they showed its labor policies had been centrally established and executed from the beginning. Today we take for granted the hierarchical quality of these earlier industrial consolidations. Why should MNCs be different?

Much of the labor-MNC controversy at the conference stemmed from differences in the definition of industrial relations. As a Ford Motor Company official put it, “The prevailing and current management position is to consider basic investment and production deployment decisions as outside the scope of industrial relations matters appropriate for consultation or bargaining.” Using this definition, managers can claim, quite logically, that MNC ownership and control have little direct bearing on unions and industrial relations; on this basis, they dismiss union reactions as being unwarranted. Their definition assumes away the MNC problem as it is perceived by unionists, however. The latter claim plant closings and production transfers are the ultimate expression of industrial relations power. The International Food Workers representative reacted against the dominance of the narrow interpretation of legitimate labor relations at the conference: “...it is pointless to avoid the issue and not talk about the power relationships that exist between organized workers and employers.”

There is general consensus among the union and academic papers concerning union responses to MNCs. They agree not much progress has been made by unions toward multinational bargaining due to differences in industrial relations systems, legal environments, labor movement ideologies, short-term national interests, and to the superior communication, financial,
and structural capabilities of the MNCs. Events will force unions eventually to overcome these differences and opposing strengths, they believe, and to fashion some combination of economic and political responses to meet the challenge.

Because the conference occurred some time ago, it is useful to note at least two important trends occurring in the interim. First, the ideological differences that have divided European unions appear to be subsiding, lending credence to a remark made at the conference by an Italian unionist that left and right wing unions on the continent are setting aside their differences in order to find "a more realistic and more pragmatic consideration of problems." Second, foreign-based MNCs are establishing production capabilities in this country, particularly in the South and Southwest, perhaps lessening the popular identification of MNCs with domestic job losses.

The principal value of this book is the opportunity it affords industrial relations practitioners to present their attitudes, objectives, and expectations regarding the multinational phenomenon. While there are few surprises, the exchanges are informative and they indicate the possible dimensions of future policy debates here and abroad. The book will be useful to those with a specialized interest in MNCs and of interest to the more general reader.

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Worker Self-Management in Industry: The West European Experience. Edited by G. David Garson. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977. vii, 230 pp. N.p.

In the last decade, industrial democracy has become central to West European labor relations. Country after country has developed, by means of legislation or national agreement, some type of worker participation mechanism alongside existing trade union and collective bargaining structures. The rapid increase in the number and diversity of these mechanisms has generated interest in a comparative analysis of the nature and operation of each scheme and its labor relations and social consequences. There is thus a great need for these schemes to be delineated and analyzed within the context of a general framework. This collection of essays attempts such a description and analysis.

Each essay examines participatory programs in a specific country and outlines the environmental context within which the programs have developed and now function. Such an approach highlights "subregional diversity" and provides the basis for distinguishing between participatory reforms as conservative, system-maintaining strategies for worker representation, on the one hand, and as meaningful steps toward socialist self-management, on the other. In the West European context, this distinction is very easy to obscure because politics and labor relations policy are closely intertwined and some reforms are necessarily a part of both. It is recognition of this interrelationship that provides the basis for the central question examined here: Is European industrial relations in a transitional stage or do participatory reforms forestall more radical democratization?

In outlining the well-known German system of codetermination, Alfred Diamant contends that participation grew out of the anticapitalist sentiments of German postwar development. He traces the evolution of codetermination legislation and argues that the non-parity form of the 1976 legislation is based on German political conservatism and coalition politics. While Diamant is successful in setting codetermination in its broader social and political context, he only briefly deals with the problems of coordinating participatory efforts at various company levels and of overlapping trade union jurisdictions. Thus his analysis of worker participation as a labor relations institution is limited.

In Sweden, as in Germany, industrial democracy has evolved as both a political and labor relations tool. Dealing with both aspects, Andrew Martin summarizes the development of Swedish industrial relations and reviews the legislation passed in the 1970s as part of a concerted union effort to limit formally managerial prerogatives. He analyzes industrial democracy (in the form of plant committees, codetermination, and employee ownership) as a political rallying point and outlines the wide splits that occurred within and between the trade unions and the Social Democratic party concerning the type and scope of each participatory scheme deserving support. Martin argues, not surprisingly, that the collective profit-sharing proposal for wage-earner funds made by the Trade Union Confederation (LO) has been the most divisive issue.

In Great Britain, worker participation exists in numerous forms ranging from worker cooperatives to worker representatives on company boards. Derek Jones's review and evaluation of these forms is comprehensive and provides an informative analysis of the debate surrounding the Bullock Committee on Industrial Democracy. As his discussion of current events is based on the problem of integrating participation programs with a solidly established trade union structure and tradition of collective bargaining, he deals directly with the industrial relations and