NOTEWORTHY BOOKS IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND LABOR ECONOMICS, 2005*

The Industrial Relations Section is pleased to announce that this year's winners of the Richard A. Lester Award are John B. Knight and Lina Song for *Towards a labor market in China*.

Andersson, Fredrik, Harry J. Holzer, and Julia I. Lane. *Moving up or moving on: who advances in the low-wage labor market?* Ithaca, NY 14851. Russell Sage Foundation (CUP Services, P.O. Box 6525). 2005. 179 pp. $29.95, cloth; $14.95, paper.

The authors follow the labor market experience of a sample of prime-age, low-wage workers (drawn from the Census Bureau's longitudinal LEHD data) from 1996 to 2001 to determine how readily and permanently these workers were able to escape persistent low-earnings employment. They look at the effect of the characteristics of the employing firms, the jobs workers hold, and the behaviors of the workers themselves. Their main findings are: 1) Significant upward job mobility for workers who have been in low-paying jobs for at least three years. 2) Employer characteristics that affect this improvement are high wages (particularly in the industrial sectors), larger size, and lower turnover. 3) Leaving a job early for a better employer is more beneficial than gaining experience by staying with the same, low-wage employer. 4) Early work experience at a temp agency is associated with higher earnings later in the worker's career. 5) Location makes a difference, and greater commuting distances tend to hinder low-wage workers from moving to jobs with higher wages.


Michael R. Botson presents an insightful analysis of the staunchly anti-unionist Hughes Tool Company. Workplace bigotry and Jim Crow unionism were part of the fabric of Houston businesses that relegated many blacks to unskilled and menial jobs. Botson concentrates his analysis on the formation and activities of Hughes Tools from the late nineteenth-century to the twentieth-century, with particular attention to its company unions and to the efforts made by CIO organizers to unionize employees without regard to job skills or racial distinctions. Botson's study succeeds in filling a tremendous gap in the study of civil rights and organized labor history first articulated thirty-two years ago by F. Ray Marshall.

*Items on this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.*

This work blends theory, empirical evidence, and policy to develop a hypothesis of child labor that takes into account links such as fertility, education, nutrition, infant mortality, the position of women, and international trade. Child labor can range from domestic chores to soldiering and prostitution. The authors argue that, with the exception of the worst forms of child labor, most forms provide valuable learning functions. Case studies of various countries are used to help illustrate the many exogenous variables affecting child labor, and the question concerning the value of universally eliminating child labor is raised. The most singular theory presented is that mortality-reducing policies reduce not only fertility but also child labor. In the end, the authors state there is no single remedy for child labor.


The focus of this book is the non-union innovations developed by labor activists to represent workers' interests in a period when American private-sector unionism is declining. The first section examines the activities of human rights activists, living-wage campaigns, and lawyers' groups that help enforce employment rights. The authors in Section II focus on membership-based initiatives: the unionization of professional and technical workers, who have lost the exercise of independent judgment in their work as well as experiencing reduced job security, and the feasibility of workers' lobbies. Section III, "New Union Opportunities and Initiatives," deals with the effect of unions on non-wage aspects of work (using Current Population Survey and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics data), labor-management experiments in strategic participation for unions in the United States, and intermediaries who have created training programs for low-wage workers.


In response to the question of why Thatcherism was so successful in radically reforming labor unions in Britain despite their great power, Howell argues that, contrary to standard wisdom about the independence and decentralization of labor unions, the state had always actively assisted in the construction of industrial relations institutions. In addition to crucial legislation, the state "played a central role in diffusing industrial relations developments, providing forms of support that reduced the cost to industrial actors of adopting new institutions, overcoming collective action problems, and creating a climate in which certain institutions and practices were considered more legitimate than others." Howell traces the development of British industrial relations and the rise and fall of the power of the unions through the collectivization of 1890-1940, the decentralization of 1940-79, and the decollectivization of 1979-97. He concludes that New Labour legislation at the end of the last century merely added legal regulation to the Conservative reforms without challenging their decollectivist tendencies.

Basing their argument primarily upon five survey-based data sets—the 1999 urban household survey and the 1988 and 1995 national household surveys of the Institute of Economics, Chinese Academy of the Social Sciences, and the 1994 national rural labor force survey and the 1995 four-city survey of rural migrants employed in urban enterprises from the Ministry of Labor—the authors study China’s attempt to create a labor market. The study shows the rigidity and inefficiency of the rural and especially the urban labor situation from the 1950s to the 1990s, and analyzes the effects of Chinese attempts to overcome this inefficiency with labor reforms. Knight and Song provide a detailed analysis of wage structures, rural migrants, redundancies, and unemployment in the Chinese urban labor market and of labor allocation in the rural labor market. They conclude with a vision of the imperfect labor market, where the Chinese government will have succeeded in creating economic incentives and a functioning labor market alongside a social safety net like that developed in most Western democracies.


Five distinguished labor economists present their ongoing research projects, which focus on the production process underlying education and the evaluation of school performance for the purpose of guiding policy within the Swedish school system. The authors analyze the dramatic market-oriented reforms made in public education in Sweden during the 1990s, specifically their effects on student achievement and how test scores and grades relate to later success in the labor market. This volume is a more technical and detailed version of a 2003 report (originally in Swedish) prepared for the Welfare Policy Group of the Center for Business and Policy Studies. Background information about the Swedish school system was added for the non-Swedish audience.


According to Morris, there is no historical or legal basis for the common understanding and practice that a union only has the right to represent workers when a majority of workers in a workplace vote to be represented by the union. Prior to the enactment of the NLRA, a union often bargained for its members, even when a majority of workers in that workplace had not voted to be represented. Morris’ close legal analysis of the NLRA and its legislative history reveals no evidence that the statute prohibits or was intended to prohibit this “minority-bargaining” practice. Morris argues that this common understanding is inaccurate and that the labor movement should employ a minority-organizing strategy. However, in a legal system that relies on precedent, overturning 70 years of legal practice is a challenge, even if that practice was not required by law in the first place, and it seems that the United Steelworkers is willing to test Morris’s ideas by attempting a “minority-organization” of a Pennsylvania workplace. Morris provides an historical, legal and activist analysis and blueprint to implement this “new-old” labor organizing strategy.

This work chronicles the political life of David Dubinsky, long time president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Parmet’s depiction of Dubinsky is drawn primarily from Dubinsky’s papers in the archives of the ILGWU, and from other archival sources and personal interviews, and he concentrates on events rather than personal or philosophical issues. Following a brief discussion of Dubinsky’s early life in Poland and Russia, and his emigration to the United States, Parmet chronicles his climb from novice garment cutter to leader of one of the largest trade unions in the country. Dubinsky is portrayed as a consummate political figure, a vehement anti-communist, and a lifelong proponent of progressive social unionism. Parmet touches on Dubinsky’s early recognition of the Nazi threat and the ILGWU’s contribution to the rescue of European refugees, and to the establishment of the state of Israel, as well as his position as a labor leader and a power broker in regional and national politics.


Rebeck offers a unified approach to understanding what took place in the Japanese labor markets and employment system during a decade of slow economic growth (1992-2002). He discusses not only how these institutions were able to adapt to changes during this period but also provides a comprehensive review of an employment system that has not changed in its fundamental arrangements since the 1950s, particularly with respect to job security for regular employees. However, he does underscore a fundamental shift in atypical employment relationships and emphasizes the growing use of part-timers and other components of the labor market. Rebeck tackles a wide range of topics, paying special attention to the changing situation of women, the condition of the self-employed and family workers, challenges faced by older workers, prospects for younger workers, new compensation systems, the labor market impacts of low immigration, and the recent rise in unemployment. He posits that, since the early 2000s, the value of Shunto and the wage increases associated with it have decreased, while civil litigation and court-mediated dispute resolution have increased. This trend erodes the role of unions and contributes to a system of Japanese labor relations that is more individualized.


With almost $50 billion of benefits paid annually to injured workers, the topic of workers’ compensation remains an important focus of labor economics research. The papers in this volume, from the conference, “Workers’ Compensation: Current and Emerging Issues,” held on March 27, 2004, examine important aspects of this subject including the adequacy of workers’ compensation cash benefits, permanent partial disability benefits, structure and incentives of compensation pricing, performance measurement in workers’ compensation systems, health care and workers’ compensation, and the role of behavioral economics in workplace injuries research. The chapter, “Economic Incentives and Workplace Safety,” reprints a book chapter written by the scholar being honored by the collection, the late Terry Thomason.