Labour Relations and Public Policy: Perspectives on the Future

Robert W. Cox

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.schulichlaw.dal.ca/dlj

Part of the Labor and Employment Law Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License.

Recommended Citation
Labour Relations and Public Policy: Perspectives on the Future

Robert W. Cox*

What follows is an attempt to look at salient emerging issues for public policy in the labour relations field using a global framework so as to place the North American situation within the world-wide picture. It is now trite and superficial to speak of global "interdependence" in politics, economics and ecology. The concept "interdependence" implies a spurious equality, which diverts from and tends to obscure the dominancies and dependencies of global power relations. But interconnectedness there is, and labour relations figure in this interconnectedness. They figure in broadly two ways. Firstly, labour relations have in important respects become transnational, that is, a number of direct linkages across national boundaries involving governments, trade unions and employers make an impact on labour relations. Such transnational labour relations as yet affect directly but a small part of the world labour force. The second aspect of the global interconnectedness of labour relations affects the whole world labour force. It arises because labour relations everywhere are part of the environment which shapes world politics. Labour relations are a matrix of social, economic and political change, in socialist and capitalist economies, in rich and poor countries. Thus labour relations in different parts of the world are interconnected through the international political system. Herein lies the interest in finding a global

*This article is based on a speech delivered by the author to the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation meeting at Halifax in July 1972. The author was then Director of the International Institute for Labour Studies, Geneva, Switzerland. He resigned as Director of the Institute as a result of a difference with the Director-General of the International Labour Office (the ILO is the parent organization of the Institute) concerning freedom of expression in publications. He is now a professor at Columbia University, in the Department of Political Science.

1. This aspect is touched upon in Robert W. Cox, "Labor and Transnational Relations" in Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane (eds), Transnational Relations and World Politics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 204-234.
framework which could help foresee potential future developments. It is to this second aspect of the global interconnectedness of labour relations that the present article is addressed.

I. Definitions: labour relations, public policy and the prospective approach

Initially, it will be useful to specify the meanings given here to “labour relations” and “public policy” and also to prospective or future-oriented study. I have used the term relations in preference to the more common “industrial relations” which conventionally applies to formally organized collective bargaining between trade unions and employers within a legal framework provided by the state and using various state services. This concept of industrial relations is historically derived and culturally bound to the societies which evolved this pattern and its variants in Europe and North America. Like many similarly derived concepts and the institutions embodying them, industrial relations have been transplanted to other parts of the world and so have acquired an appearance of universality. But like these other western concepts and institutions such as parliamentary government, their impact outside the culture in which they evolved has not often been profound. After a time, the institutions are either rejected or, if they survive, perform functions in the receiving society very different from those they perform in the society of origin.

A global approach towards a comparative view of labour relations must first try to liberate itself from a culturally restricted viewpoint. Although the concept of industrial relations is so restricted, work relations are universal. In all times and places, societies have evolved patterns of authority and subordination which control the way work is performed, by whom it is performed and how the fruits of production are shared. In this universal sense, we can define labour relations as social relations in production. The definition covers all forms of economic activity, both rural and urban, and is not limited to any conventional notion of “industry.” Moreover, the definition is not limited to formally organized systems like collective bargaining, but includes unorganized systems as well, for example, both those with a strong element of group tradition
such as prevail in peasant economies and those characteristic of people uprooted from traditional relationships as in the urban slums of poor countries. Such an all-encompassing definition incites the development of a taxonomy of patterns of social relations in production which would include but not be limited to the kinds of “industrial relations” with which western societies are most familiar.2

There is value in trying to escape from a culture-bound approach even from the standpoint of the society which gave birth to the approach. The conventional concept “industrial relations” in fact gives a biased picture of social relations in production in North American society. The unorganized remain in the majority of the labour force in North America, but have received negligible attention from industrial relations specialists. The problem of poverty has become salient in North America, but remains outside the intellectual scope of “industrial relations.” Possibly a more universal standpoint might help towards the comprehension of some North American problems. For example, it will reveal structural similarities in the labour markets and in patterns of social relations in production between big cities of North America and cities in poor countries, greater than between either and European cities. New York is the richest underdeveloped city in the world. The attempt to view labour relations in terms valid for poor as well as rich societies should not only lead to better understanding of poor societies but may also offer a fresh perspective upon some problems of the rich.

Like labour relations, public policy is also a broad concept. Public policy is a process mobilizing the energies of society towards the attainment of widely agreed goals. It is thus concerned both with reaching consensus on goals and with the means of achieving goals. Government plays a central but by no means exclusive role in public policy. Political parties, trade unions, employer associations, citizens-groups — to mention

only some of the other organizations which may be involved — also play a part in the process. The more complex the political system, the more likely a number of non-governmental bodies will share with government agencies the elaboration and application of public policy. Certainly, public policy in the labour relations field cannot be limited to those functions at present carried out by labour departments or labour relations boards.

The third concept which requires clarification is implied in the phrase “perspectives on the future,” namely, the prospective approach. Let us take an example. About a decade ago automation was a scare word. Prophets then told us that it would reduce the demand for labour and bring about massive unemployment. This dire prospect seemed to point to certain kinds of remedial policies. There was no point in trying to stop or slow down technological innovation and its applications to production. But people and communities could adapt to the anticipated changes. Individuals could improve their chances through more education, especially in the fields of applied sciences and computer technology. Communities could plan to keep the sophisticated production machinery going by measures to maintain incomes in order to counteract the fall in demand which higher unemployment would otherwise bring. And we would all be well advised to cultivate the opportunities of increased leisure. In this vision it seemed that work might become the burden or the privilege of a minority.

Looking backward, this picture was not entirely false. But in important respects it was incomplete. And in some respects its predictions have turned out to be incorrect. It is true that goods production has become more automated and less labour absorbing. And this tendency has been reinforced by another development which was less clearly seen ten years ago: a shift of goods production from high labour cost to low labour cost areas — out of the United States, for example, and into some countries of Asia or Latin America — a movement accelerated by the expansion of multinational corporations able to locate production where comparative advantage suggests.

On the other hand, this vision of ten years missed the growth which has taken place in service occupations, in research and development and the knowledge industry. The prediction that the demand for labour would fall has not been borne out.
In fact the contrary has been true. The long-term trend has been for hours worked to increase. Unemployment has also grown, to be sure. But contrary to expectations, it has not been confined to the unskilled. University students now face their occupational future with some anxiety, and the phenomenon of the unemployed Ph.D. exists.

It has been said that the shortest period anyone should use for forecasting or prediction should be just slightly longer than one's own life expectancy. This is a rule of prudence, but it misses the point about future-oriented thinking. The point is not just to be right. It is to be relevant — to identify the issues with which people have to deal so they can effectively control and shape their own future. From that point of view, the prophesies touched off by a fear of uncontrolled automation ten years ago did serve the useful purpose of focusing attention on some of the structural problems associated with work and employment. They stimulated a new look at education policy and manpower policy. Even a false prophecy may be quite helpful.

The vision of the future proposed here will be more diversified than that which caught our attention ten years ago. Then, one salient development at the forefront of technology, namely automation, forced a re-thinking of policies. Now at the global level we contemplate a world in which different levels of technology co-exist and are interrelated. Rich countries and poor countries can be defined by their levels of technology. Per capita Gross National Product, which has been the general measure of the status of nations, is also an indicator of technological level. But in addition to technology, the vision should include human values — and the relationship of values to technology. Certain ethical values have historically been implicit in different technologies. The values of rural life contrast with those of the megalopolis. Ethical principles may also guide choices of technology. A concern for the quality of life can lead to the rejection of the SST or of an automobile expressway into the heart of the city. Human values are not inevitably determined by a technological imperative, as it once was fashionable to believe. Indeed, the progress of technology is opening greater discretion for choice in accordance with ethical preferences. Values have become more fully independent of
technology. Freedom to shape the future depends upon this independency.

II. Four patterns of society

It may be helpful in trying to attain the desired global perspective to think of the world today in terms of four different patterns of society. These patterns differ in their characteristic technologies, in their dominant ethical values, and consequently in the directions in which they are changing. Since these different kinds of society co-exist, it is important to be aware of their divergent tendencies and the relative weight of each in thinking about the future. The four patterns can be called, first, the traditional rural society; second, the industrializing or modernizing society; third, the industrial society; and fourth, the post-industrial society.

Traditional rural society: Slightly less than thirty percent of the world's labour force is to be found in the traditional rural society, mainly in parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America.\(^3\) City-bred romantics have portrayed the simple life, pulsating to the cyclical rhythm of the seasons, in which work, leisure, religion and authority together form a total culture, and in which people find their sustenance and their physical and emotional security in the blood bonds of a close community. Analysts with a perception of harsher realism see a different picture, people on the margin of physical existence, threatened by the adversities of nature, and even more threatened by the oppressive domination of governing elites who extract much of the results of their labour and maintain their rule sometimes by fear and violence.

Whatever truth there may be in the romantic view, the fact is that the traditional rural society is everywhere breaking down. It is breaking down as a result of external pressures — by technological innovations like the "green revolution," which

---

3. This estimate and the others which follow are based on labour force data. The proceedings refer to total labour force in sectors which correspond to each of the four patterns of society. They are computed by aggregating estimates of the labour force distribution among relevant sectors in all countries of the world. I am indebted in particular to Hans Günter, senior staff associate, International Institute For Labour Studies, for help in arriving at these estimates.
may have effects in the poor countries of the world today comparable to the effects of the enclosure movement in pre-industrial revolution England. Such technological innovations diminish the amount of labour required to produce increased quantities of food. They tend to favour the medium- and larger-scale producer, to push out unneeded labour, and to transform a peasant economy into an economy of market-oriented farmers. The traditional rural society is also breaking down by revolt from within. The successful strategies of revolution in our time have been peasant-based strategies. Guerilla actions abound in the countryside and villages of the poor continents. The global incidence of violence has shifted remarkably during this century. The wars of the first half of the twentieth century were fought in the industrial heartland of Europe. Those of the second half of the century have been in areas of peasant population.

In one aspect, these have been central issues of international politics, the agenda of summit conferences. This is the view from the top. But they are also the result of a profound transformation in the nature of work and social relations of production affecting the existence of millions of people. This is the view from below. Both views are necessary to an understanding of the problem of world peace. The decay of traditional rural society now underlies violence and the threat of violence in the poorer areas of the world. Those who try to

4. It is now widely recognized that the "green revolution," i.e. the introduction of high-yield varieties of cereals, has benefited the richer peasants in those countries in which it has been introduced and widened the gap between them and poorer peasants. Most other partial reform measures affecting rural areas, e.g. cooperatives, extension services, agricultural credit and community development also benefit mainly the richer peasants and increase inequalities in the countryside. The green revolution, in addition, is increasing the under-utilisation of labour and encouraging expulsion of poorer peasants from the land thus swelling immigration to urban areas. See 1970 Report on The World Social Situation (United Nations: New York, 1971) pp. x, 14; Clifton R. Wharton, "The Green Revolution: Cornucopia or Pandora's Box?" Foreign Affairs, vol. 47, No. 3, (April 1969) pp. 469-476; and Gunnar Myrdal, The Challenge of World Poverty (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970) pp. 116, 132-134, 383-385.

make political settlements in these areas will have to take account of its danger and its opportunity.

The opportunity is to effect agrarian reform such as would spread ownership and incomes and stimulate agricultural production. Until recently, this was an aim to which rich country aid programmes and poor country governments gave lip service. Agrarian reform, however, is not a moderate measure taken by a well-meaning government. It is a revolutionary act striking at social and political power structures in poor countries. Apart from the revolutionary regimes in some Asian countries and in Cuba, thorough agrarian reform has been carried out in recent times only rarely and in exceptional circumstances, as for example in Taiwan where it suited the occupying regime of mainland Chinese both to win favour with the Taiwanese peasants and to strike at the Taiwanese landowning elite. At present, enthusiasm for the technological applications of the "green revolution" — the adverse social consequences of which have been noted — has diverted attention from the issue of agrarian reform. The current political context does not seem propitious for contemplating radical measures, yet without radical measures the potential for violence from the decay of traditional rural society will mount.

Modemizing society: Industrializing or modernizing societies from a second pattern. These are today located in the same developing areas of the world as the traditional rural society, but represent what is emerging rather than what is disappearing. In terms of GNP, the modernizing society is to be found in countries which have passed the threshold of about $200 (U.S.) per capita. Just over forty percent of the world labour force is directly affected by its emergence. The sheer numbers of people involved give importance to the work-related issues of industrialization.

Insecurity is the hallmark of the modernizing society. Whatever security the traditional rural society provided for the individual, through the extended family and local community, ceases to exist in the industrializing society. Since poverty is deep and widespread, the state cannot substitute for the family

and community as a provider of security. The only security for an individual is a job, and steady jobs are scarce.

Insecurity begets social conflict. Both insecurity and conflict arise from massive dislocations in the labour force. The prospect for the next two decades is broadly that a declining proportion of the labour force will be retained in agriculture while during the same period industrialization is unlikely to provide jobs for the natural increase from population growth, as well as those moving out of agriculture. Modern technology is often not of much help here. It can vastly raise production but it creates too few jobs. The result will be a substantial increase in what is sometimes euphemistically called the "marginal" population. These are the urban slum and shantytown dwellers, people who have no regular productive employment and no regular means of sustenance. Their numbers will likely increase to more than a third of the labour force in the industrializing areas of the world during the coming years. Even the harsh authoritarianism which now rules much of the developing world will have trouble containing their explosive discontent.7

In Europe, a comparable restructuring of the labour force took place during the nineteenth century. This was a time of rapidly rising population in Europe just as the present is a time of rapidly rising population in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The dislocations caused by this shift in the labour force in Europe were eased by the exodus to the Americas of some 40 million people during a worldwide expansion of the European economy.8 The same valve is not available to the industrializing countries today. They will have to face the social conflicts of industrialization in their fullest extent, relying essentially upon their own resources.

7. A considerable literature on "political modernization" analyses the relationship of rapid social change to political instability and the proclivity of unstable regimes with a low level of institutionalization to "praetorian" solutions. See especially Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968) and also Mancur Olson Jr., "Rapid Growth as a Destabilizing Force," Journal of Economic History, 23 (Dec. 1963).

Material resources are going to be inadequate, even if supplemented by substantial foreign aid. But moral energies may perhaps achieve what material resources are alone inadequate to accomplish. The successful cases of industrialization have been those which were accompanied by the spread of a powerful work ethic. The so-called Protestant ethic of northern Europe and North America finds its counterpart today in the emotional commitment and determined drive aroused by some popular movements in the poor countries, often nationalist and sometimes revolutionary. The work ethic, whatever the label it carries—religious or secular, radical or tradition-respecting—evokes a dedication to goals beyond the satisfaction of individual wants, a discipline in the service of some larger cause. Through the work ethic, large numbers of people have internalized the will to develop. This may be the indispensable condition for those poor countries making the transition to the industrial society.9

*Industrial society:* The industrial society is the third pattern. It came into existence during the twentieth century in western Europe and North America and extended more recently to Russia and Japan. The figure of US$ 1000 GNP per capita may be taken as a rough threshold beyond which countries generally show the main characteristics of this pattern. A little more than 25 percent of the world labour force works in industrial societies, but their productive capacity is such that they receive about 80 percent of world income.

The industrial society has largely overcome the insecurity and conflict inherent in the modernizing society. Its success is due above all to the ability to create and manage large and complex organizations and inter-organization relationships. The industrial society is an organization society. Large economic organizations—both private corporations and public agencies—provide greater job security. The state’s organizational strength gives supplementary safeguards through social security, welfare and employment supporting measures. Full employment is

---

accepted as a feasible goal, and has become a political imperative.\textsuperscript{10}

Conflict is not eliminated in the industrial society, but it is institutionalized and managed within a broad consensus through elaborate and constantly evolving industrial relations machinery and procedures. These may work well or less well, but their existence and the innovative skills and experience of those who use them give the industrial society a kind of stability which the modernizing society lacked. The industrial society is able to manage and control industrial conflict because it can maintain economic growth. Everyone expects some addition to his material benefits and controversy centres on the sharing of increments rather than on redistribution of wealth.\textsuperscript{11} The moral climate generated by these expectations of material welfare, however, is not propitious to the work ethic of the modernizing phase. Work comes to be regarded as a means to procure security and material satisfactions for individuals and families.

But despite its stability, the industrial society is not eternal. Stresses have appeared within the hitherto stable industrial order which may be the birth pangs of a new pattern of society. Consensus is well able to handle disputes about divergent material interests, but it has run into trouble when trying to cope with issues of conflicting moral values.

\textit{Post-industrial society}: As yet the new pattern cannot be seen as a coherent whole. It has been called the post-industrial society, but where it exists it is as yet only an enclave of the future within the midst of industrial society. We can estimate that somewhere between three and five percent of the world labour force now engage in occupations characteristic of a post-industrial society.

\textsuperscript{10} Two mutually reinforcing studies depicting the modern industrial society are by John Kenneth Galbraith, \textit{The New Industrial State} (Boston: Houghton-Miflin, 1967) and Andrew Shonfield, \textit{Modern Capitalism} London and New York: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1965).

\textsuperscript{11} In countries where class identities and class polarization have continued strong, carrying over from the modernizing into industrial society as in Britain and France, consensus has been more fragile and the issue of redistribution has remained always latent and sometimes (as in the events of May 1968 in France) manifest.
One sign of stress, marking perhaps a transition beyond industrial society, is the emergence of a critical attitude towards economic growth. An ideological pincers attack is now mounted against the symbol of Gross National Product. One thrust comes from a revolt of consumers, the other from defenders of the environment. Where they join, both thrusts would displace production and exalt the quality of life as the measure of social value. Galbraith, Marcuse and Nader each in a different way protest against the power of industrial producers to shape the wants of consumers. This at least is the emotional message of an analysis which argues that the manipulation of consumer demand is the requisite for continuing economic growth within the structures of the industrial state. As yet this message may not have had any major impact on consumer behaviour. But the fact that it is clearly articulated and has aroused a following may be important for the future.

Environmentalists add their challenge to established economic thinking. Studies have recently been published about the limits to growth, and the idea of a "stable-state" or "zero growth" economy is being discussed.\(^\text{12}\) It is, I think, fair to say that the argument about damage to the environment bears more directly upon certain other features of modernizing and industrial societies than upon their economic growth. It bears upon the tolerable limits of world population, of natural resource depletion and of atmospheric and water pollution. Economic growth has been assumed to be related to these things, and in a pre-eminently goods producing industrial society the assumption is probably valid. But this is not an equally sound assumption for a primarily services and knowledge producing post-industrial society. In the modernizing society, economic growth is necessary to overcome poverty. In

the post-industrial society, economic growth can perhaps with care be made comparable with protection of the environment.

But ecology and the consumer revolt have weakened the acceptability of one of the basic ideas of industrial society—that economic growth is a cure to all problems. And any long-term slackening of growth—as advocated by some environmentalists—would challenge the continued viability of existing industrial relations practices. In the extreme case, with no growth there would be no increments to divide and conflicts would tend to focus more directly and more intractably upon increasing the share of labour in national income. And such conflict would shatter the industrial society's consensus.

Another sign of stress in industrial society is the emergence of the concept of "life styles" which suggest the freedom of individuals to choose not only among different modes of dress but among rival ethical codes. Diversity in life styles is a natural consequence of two of the features of industrial society: material abundance and the weakening of the work ethic. And it also seems likely to have an adverse effect on the third characteristic of the industrial society: the consensus factor. The numbers of those who join the "counter-culture" may never become a very large proportion of the population. But the challenge is not only from those who opt out of industrial society. It takes the more pervasive form of a latent revolt against conformity to the norms of big organizations. Within the organization man there now lurks an anti-organization rebel.13

There is little use bemoaning the decline of industrial society and urging a return to the old pre-industrial virtues. Historically, the work ethic has been a dynamic force in the modernizing society, restraining individuals consumption and channeling human efforts unconsciously towards collective

---

13. Diversity in life styles is an assertion of the autonomy of the individual against the alienation imposed upon him by the big organizations of industrial society. Alain Touraine, Post-Industrial Society (New York: Random House, 1971) defines alienation: "A man is alienated when his only relationship to the social and cultural directions of his society is the one the ruling class accords him as compatible with the maintenance of its own dominance. Alienation means cancelling out social conflict by creating dependent participation." (p. 3-9)
ends. But the fully developed industrial society has already abandoned a transcendental for an instrumental view of work. In this text, appeal to the "work ethic" means nothing more than resentment against the notion that consumption values need not be so all-absorbing that instrumentally work may be but a limited necessity. The industrial society thereby seeks to legitimate its continuity through a preindustrial morality which has become purely symbolic.

Much is positive and hopeful in the current signs of stress in industrial society. They signal a new concern with fundamental human values, a questioning about the goals of society and the possibility of a new quality of individual freedom. And these issues are all raised in relation to the future of labour relations. At the same time, the passage from industrial to post-industrial society threatens to be dangerous. The economy and life itself are becoming more and more dependent upon some key services. Society is more vulnerable to an interruption of certain services than to an interruption of goods production. In a giant urban complex, hospital and public health services, sanitation and garbage removal, food distribution, communications and transport are essential to life in a way that uninterrupted production of automobiles and dishwashers is not. And it is possible to imagine disruption of a few computer centres paralysing both goods production and key services.

Technology has thus made vast numbers of people vitally vulnerable to disruption of work by relatively small numbers of people. And this is happening just when attitudes are becoming more critical of the "system," habits of compliance with authority are weaker, and there is less of a consensus about the acceptable procedures for dealing with industrial disputes. To be sure, rebellion tends to be fragmented and channeled in many directions. But this is of little comfort when small groups are in a position to wreak great havoc. It would be cautious wisdom to anticipate that labour relations during the coming years may become more disruptive, and less subject to control by the established structures and institutions of industrial relations. 14 Disaffection towards established institutions —

14. An interesting analysis along these lines is made by Giovanni Sartori in an unpublished paper "The Power of Labor in The Post-Pacified
both political and industrial — is reinforced by a heightened awareness of the persisting unresolved problem of poverty, which affects particularly certain identifiable groups in the population who are largely outside the scope of organized labour relations.

III. Directions of change towards the post-industrial society

The purpose of anticipating dangers is to forestall the worst. And there are several directions in which it would be useful to explore possible changes affecting work and labour relations that might minimize these dangers. In fact, significant exploration and experimentation are now proceeding in five directions.

The first is towards strengthening the consensus factor in industrial relations. Various policies express this tendency which in effect attempts to stabilize the industrial pattern of society by enhancing the power of big organizations. Government, concerned with the impact of wages on employment and

Society. A Surmise," prepared at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford Calif., January 1972. Sartori's emphasis on havoc-creating 'wrecking' tactics in industrial conflict may as yet be more characteristic of European countries, in which there is a higher sense of class polarization, than it is of North America. A recent study on collective bargaining in France by Gérard Adam, Jean-Daniel Reynaud and Jean-Maurice Verdier, La négociation collective en France (Paris: Les éditions ouvrières, 1972) reports: " . . . ce n'est plus la guerre des tranchées comme en 1965-66 ni la bataille en ligne comme en 1968, mais la guérilla et le commando," and asks: "La radicalisation des conflits au niveau de l'entreprise est-elle la compensation à leur institution-nalisation au sommet?" (pp. 28-29) In the North American perspective, technological sophistication has been seen as strengthening the hand of management, since advanced technology implies so high a ratio of management to workers that management may be able to operate facilities alone in the event of a strike (see James L. Stern, "Declining Utility of the Strike," Industrial and Labor Relations Review, October 1964, p. 60-72). This view presupposes a stable consensus concerning the procedures of collectives bargaining, whereas in fact this consensus may be breaking down. A tempered pessimism concerning the prospects for disruption of essential services in North America is expressed in Mark Thompson's, "The Future of Industrial Relations in North America" (Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies, forthcoming; at present, unpublished paper, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of British Columbia, 1972).
inflation, has initiated experiments with incomes policies.\textsuperscript{15} Some union leaders, concerned with the high cost of strikes, have advocated exploring the possibility of voluntary arbitration as an alternative to the strike.\textsuperscript{16} It seems extremely unlikely that there are any institutional or procedural solutions waiting to be discovered which will ensure rapid and orderly settlements in these matters.\textsuperscript{17} More likely, new procedural gadgetry will not work very well, or will succeed only for a time, to be followed by further experiments. Innovations will arise out of crises, as exceptional measures. But the exceptional will be recurrent. The particular forms of new institutional experiments will be much less important than the long-term process of increasing inter-action among top leadership in unions, management and government attempting to resolve central issues of national economic policy. This would be a centralizing trend which contains the risk—particularly within unions—of tension between leadership and rank-and-file. Consensus at the top could become an illusion, when both technology and the evolution of attitudes are conspiring to

\textsuperscript{15} In the Canadian context, see Prices and Incomes Commission \textit{Inflation, Unemployment and Incomes Policy}, Final Report (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1972).

\textsuperscript{16} President of the AFL-CIL George Meany is quoted saying: "There is a growing feeling that strikes of people getting $7,500 a year or more just don't make sense... Now the workers have a little house, they may have a couple of kids going to college. You put them on strike, they're overboard within a week. So, we would like to eliminate strikes just on that basis alone." \textit{U.S. News and World Report}, Febr. 21, 1972, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{17} Various "gimmicks" have been proposed to take the pain out of industrial conflict. A current favourite is the "final offer selection" or "forced choice" form of arbitration, in which the arbitrator is obliged to choose one or other of the final positions of the two parties. The technique is supposed to provide an incentive to reasonableness; but its critics liken it to a game of Russian roulette. Other proposals are the "non-stoppage strike" and the "graduated strike" (see Merton C. Bernstein, "Alternatives to the Strike in Public Labor Relations", \textit{Harvard Law Review}, Vol. 85, No. 2, December 1971). A committee was appointed in November 1970 under the auspices of the American Arbitration Association to explore the possibility of avoiding strikes by using voluntary arbitration. It included the presidents of five major unions; \textit{(New York Times}, Nov. 22, 1970 p. 44).
bring real power in industrial relations down to the workplace.\textsuperscript{18}

The second avenue of exploration arises from this decentralizing counter-trend: from an increasing demand that individuals gain more control over their own work. Management is responding to this demand in various ways: by adopting more participative methods, by experimenting with job enlargement and job enrichment and with autonomous work groups. Workers will want to participate more directly in resolving the issues which concern them at the workplace. Some radical groups of younger workers in western Europe have espoused worker self-management as their Utopia, and we may find some echo of this idea in North America in years to come.

Thirdly, the outcome of the tension between these centralizing and decentralizing trends may be largely determined by the future ideological orientation of trade unions. Are unions likely to become more radical? Or will they continue to evolve as stable negotiating partners sharing power in an industrial establishment?

There are some indications of radicalization. The expansion of union organization into the public sector has generally been accompanied by more aggressive union action. In part this may be explained by the desire to consolidate organizational gains and to give further impetus to the organizing effort. In part perhaps it is due to the lag in conditions of some public sector workers compared with those of earlier organized groups. In Quebec, union radicalism has been more explicit, and not limited to the public sector even though drawing strength there. By defining an ideology in which unions spearhead a movement to transform society, at least one important segment of the Quebec union leadership seeks to broaden the unions' functions beyond the purely industrial into the political field in a situation where political parties and party loyalties are fluid and changing.\textsuperscript{19} In the United States, there is the likelihood that


\textsuperscript{19} Papers prepared by the research staff of both the Fédération des Travailleurs du Québec (FTQ) and the Confédération des Syndicats
blacks will become a larger proportion of the membership of a number of unions; this may broaden union goals to problems of concern to black Americans, although it is more doubtful whether they will radicalize union action.\textsuperscript{20}

Contrary to these signs and speculations, there remains the fact that unions in North America represent a middle-income group which is not the most likely base of support for social revolution. There is little present evidence that opinions among union members are significantly more radical on social issues than those of the population at large.\textsuperscript{21} A generation factor may, however, be at work here. Young people are now spending more years of their lives being educated, and as a result acquire attitudes towards authority in conflict with those until recently current at the workplace. As they move into the labour force, the tactics of confrontation developed on the campus may erupt in industry.\textsuperscript{22} The first challenge would be to the authority of existing union leadership.

Fourthly, the distinction between work and leisure is becoming more blurred. It has been fashionable to think of the future in terms of automation and vastly increased leisure. What I foresee is rather a re-definition of what we mean by work and further change in attitudes towards work. The service economy of the post-industrial society will include both highly technology-intensive and highly skill-intensive jobs. Some people will work with sophisticated technologies, but the wealth of such a society may also, for example, create a larger demand for the work of artists and artisans. Individuals will expect more from

Nationaux (CSN) present a radical analysis of Quebec as a dependent, quasi-colonial society. See CSN, \textit{Ne comptons que sur nos propres moyens} study document presented to the conseil confédéral, Oct. 6, 1971; and FTQ, \textit{L’etat, rouage de notre exploitation}, working papers for the twelfth congress, Montreal, Nov. 30-Dec. 4, 1971. M. Louis Laberge, President of the FTQ, proclaimed: "... notre véritable objectif... de casser le système" \textit{Un seul front}, inaugural speech to the FTQ 12th congress, Montreal. p. 80).


22. Mark Thompson, op. cit.
their work than they have in the past: they will expect the kinds of rewards now sought from leisure. Where work is freely chosen as an activity desirable in itself, the concept of "free time" would lose much of its current escapist meaning. Attitudes in the post-industrial society may thus reject the instrumental view of work which is characteristic of industrial society, the view that work is performed only as a means to income.

Similarly, attitudes would turn against the instrumental view of education. Young people may be less inclined to think of education as an investment, the anticipated return upon which is future income. They would instead look upon education more as a public good — like clean air and national parks — which should be freely available for the enjoyment and enrichment of life. Education would be thought of as a lifetime process, undertaken at intervals during an individual's career through both formal institutions and in informal ways. This continuing educational process, supported by government, would be envisaged as aiming to equip individuals for personal development and for effective participation in community affairs as well as with the skills required in the labour market. Such basic changes in values would affect many aspects of economic behavior.

This leads to my fifth point: a weakening of the link between work and income. The idea first gained a foothold when the industrial state set up welfare and unemployment compensation schemes. But it never made much headway against both the residual appeal of the work ethic and the instrumental values of industrial society. Now it is more freely discussed, in the form of a negative income tax or a guaranteed annual income. These measures have been supported by arguments drawn from the economics of industrial society: notably the need to maintain economic demand for the goods produced by more and more automated processes. Their adoption would, however, signal a considerable change in

accepted values, a transition from an industrial to a post-industrial psychology. It will not come without an acute ideological struggle, which the revival of "work ethic" symbolism now foreshadows.

IV. Institutional structures for public policy

Finally, two questions concerning future institutional structures for public policy are pertinent. One concerns how to achieve coherence among the different instruments of government action. The other concerns the relevancy and usefulness of tripartism, that is, the association of trade union and employer representatives with government in the elaboration and execution of policy.

In years gone by, government involvement in the labour field was quite limited. Governments were concerned mainly with facilitating orderly settlement of disputes, and sometimes with avoiding public inconvenience or damage to third parties from industrial conflict. Beyond the observance of minimum standards, they were not concerned with the terms of settlements. Labour matters were separate and distinct from other spheres of public policy. Now this separateness and distinctness is much less clear. Governments have to be concerned more broadly with social policy rather than just with labour policy, and labour departments are only one among several instruments for achieving national goals of social policy. Governments intervene more actively in industrial relations, attempt to manage incomes and prices, set up active manpower programmes, anti-poverty and income support projects, and measures to clean up the environment — all of which are facets of social policy.24

Separate agencies develop and apply these measures, and this is no doubt wise and necessary. Agencies concerned with mediation or dispute settlement in industrial relations are probably not the right ones to try to apply incomes policies.25

And the attack on poverty requires specialized bodies that can deal directly with particular disadvantaged groups. Nevertheless, these various facets of policy do impinge upon one another. The way in which the industrial relations system functions determines whether incomes policies will succeed or fail. Active manpower policies have sometimes been thought of as a supplement or alternative to incomes policies, as a means of eliminating some inflationary bottlenecks in the labour market. Some training schemes may in fact produce very little impact on manpower mobility or employment, yet be justified because they provide incomes for unemployed people. And anti-poverty programmes may have a bearing upon future industrial relations if, for example, they provide an environment for organizing people.

The institutional responsibility within governments for achieving coherence among these different instruments of social policy often seems as yet to be rather primitive, although the matter does seem to be under study in a number of countries. Attempts are being made to devise social indicators which would provide a better measure of the quality of life to place alongside the available measures of national accounting. Fuller social reporting could help in defining goals of social policy and in monitoring progress towards them. And the development of new tools of policy along these lines could make for more coherence in public policy.

The question of tripartism raises the issue of who influences policy decisions. If the question of policy coherence has so far been discussed primarily in terms of the available techniques, the issue of tripartism is more political. The historical dimension is also helpful in phrasing the tripartism


27. There is greater clarity about the techniques available for achieving coherence than about the political process and institutional locus of decision making. The Economic Council of Canada has published a study reviewing the various techniques available for policy planning, Design for Decision Making: An Application to Human Resources Policy, Eighth Annual Review. September 1971 (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1971). The study does not go into the question of institution responsibility within government for achieving policy coherence.
issue. The earliest approach to labour policy, going back some fifty years, was essentially bipartite. The two active parties were employers and unions, with the state providing a framework for their interaction. Even when the state through legislation encouraged the expansion of labour organization, it was in effect intervening to bring about a more balanced and equitable bipartite system. The transition to tripartism came later, when government began to intervene actively because of its concern with the outcomes of industrial relations. Tripartism emerged when government needed to secure the collaboration of employers and trade unions in order to pursue successfully its economic policies concerning prices and incomes, employment or the balance of payments.

In other current areas of social policy, tripartism seems less relevant and possibly even counterproductive. The poor are largely outside the organized industrial relations system which has been able to accomplish little of benefit to them. Indeed, one of the main tasks of government in poverty programmes is to stimulate organization-building among the disadvantaged groups.28 And on the question of pollution, civic groups are likely to be more effective in securing action than unions and employers. This suggests the need for a critical look at the advantages and limitations of tripartism in public policy making. In a sense, tripartism now represents establishment power, whereas one of the main aims of social policy is to bring unrepresented, hitherto inarticulate social groups into the policy process.29 Participatory democracy is perhaps a more


29. Gunnar Myrdal, reflecting on Swedish experience, has pointed to the limitations of tripartism, because of the tendency for underprivileged groups to remain ineffectively organized and for consumer interests to lag in organization behind producer interests, giving tripartite decision making an inflationary bias. See G. Myrdal, Beyond the Welfare State: Economic Planning and its International Implications (New York: Bantam Books, 1967. First published, 1960) pp. 44, 97, 98. A more typically North American attitude is expressed by George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, who said he did not care if unionization lagged behind increases in the labour force: "Why should we worry about organizing groups of people who do not appear to want to be organized? If they prefer to have others speak for them and make the decisions which affect their lives,
dynamic concept. It can include tripartism for those matters appropriate to it. But it can go beyond tripartism to envisage the participation of a wide variety of representative organizations in addition to trade unions and employer associations in the shaping of public policy.

One conclusion is a common thread running through all the issues of labour relations and public discussed above. These issues are all in essence moral and ideological. They can only be confronted by re-examining accepted values. There is little use in treating them as technical matters amenable to pseudo-scientific problem-solving. We can only begin to answer the questions about future public policy when we can first answer the question — what kind of future society do we want to build?

without effective participation on their part, that is their right.” (U.S. News and World Report, Febr. 21, 1972, p. 27). On the not very successful efforts of U.S. trade unions to work and gain support among disadvantaged inner-city groups, see Bok and Dunlop, op. cit. pp. 438-455.