

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



*Building Global Labor Solidarity in a Time of Accelerating Globalization*, Edited by Kim Scipes (2016) Chicago: Haymarket Books, 277 pages. ISBN: 978-1-60846-599-6

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était particulièrement défensif et soucieux de préserver ses acquis. Cette frilosité a incité la Ligue à se fixer comme objectif à court terme de prendre le pouvoir (aux différents paliers du système). Ses actions ont permis une amélioration réelle de la situation des ouvriers noirs, ainsi qu'un élargissement de la base populaire. À cet effet, une emphase particulière fut accordée aux médias comme instrument d'éducation politique et d'exposition des analyses idéologiques dans un style populaire. Fidèle à son caractère prolétaire, la Ligue a formé une coalition avec des blancs progressistes selon une perspective de classe. Cela dit, ces stratégies différencient la Ligue des autres mouvements de la Contre-Culture qui seraient restés « figer dans le moule de l'opposant » (p. 98). La Ligue, « plutôt que de faire un show dans une salle d'audience » souhaitait « être en position d'influencer cette salle » (p. 101).

Malgré ses qualités, le livre a les défauts de la volonté, ou de la position, de ces auteurs. En effet, le texte datant de 1975 n'a pas été modifié, car « il est l'expression de son époque » (p. 17). Mais, lorsque les auteurs affirment que « l'éthique du travail capitaliste a été discréditée » (p. 27), à quel point cela reflète-t-il l'époque ou l'opinion des auteurs ? Parallèlement, les auteurs notent l'importance du caractère prolétaire de la Ligue, mais lorsqu'il est temps d'examiner ses différentes activités, le lecteur en apprend davantage sur celles du groupe pro-communauté que sur celles du groupe pro-usine. On pourrait regretter qu'un examen plus approfondi des dynamiques existantes à l'intérieur des usines ne soit pas fait. Quoi qu'il en soit, la lecture de l'histoire de la Ligue demeure enrichissante et saura intéresser les spécialistes en relation de travail, tout comme les militants des mouvements sociaux.

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**Building Global Labor Solidarity in a Time of Accelerating Globalization**

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Neo-liberalism has been associated with an assault on labour unions, the wages and working conditions of workers across the globe and increases in equality, both within and across nation states. Different unions have sought to arrest these attacks by reaching out to other unions, workers and like minded groups, domestically and internationally. This book brings together some recent scholarship on such attempts. In an introduction to the volume, editor Kim Scipes says that he hopes "you will read carefully and consider and discuss... [the respective chapters] with co-workers, friends and activists" (p. 1).

A first problem that needs to be considered is how to conceptualise the 'globe', or global forces? Kim Scipes, in a chapter which includes the subtitle "Theorising Global Labor Solidarity", points to the traditional sociologist's distinction between macrosociology, mesosociology and micro-sociology where the focus of analysis moves from the 'big picture' to the 'small'. His focus is on macrosociology (p. 29). An arguably more useful approach would be to employ a general theory where all the macro, meso and micro elements of reality (or all nation states) exist in relation to each other. Such a model could be conceived as being in equilibrium at a certain point in time. This analytical device provides a means with which to examine changes that occur with respect to any issue which may be of interest, such as the phenomenon of *Building Global Solidarity in a Time of Accelerating Globalization*.

This model can be further refined by considering what would lead unions, workers and like-minded groups to form into global organisations, or what might alternatively be thought of as coalitions. An economist would maintain that the formation of such organisations/coalitions would result from calcula-

tions that the benefits outweighed the costs of coalition formation. The benefits could be 'physic' as well as material. The costs would include the demands on resources and time and overcoming opposition from opponents of labor solidarity. Moreover, opponents can also enter into 'antipathetic' global solidarity coalitions to counter, defeat or destroy labor solidarity coalitions.

This volume comprises an introduction and eight chapters. The overwhelming majority, while they provide information on globalization; attacks on union and worker rights, including chilling examples of deaths from factory fires and other forms of occupational hazards, assassinations and torture of activists; and a rejection of business unionism and a championing of 'social movement unionism' are essentially normative or polemical in approach. Individual chapters deal with union/labour activism in Canada, Bangladesh and the Philippines, opposition to 'free trade' agreements in Latin America and Mexican-American cross border activism respectively, and the sorry if not damning but now changing history of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organisations siding with American corporations and American government agencies to put down unions and their leaders in less developed parts of the globe who were tainted with the brush of being socialist or communist.

The best chapter is by Jenny Jungehulsing. She develops the notion of "felt solidarity" (p.79-80) in examining how Mexican and Salvadorian immigrants to America were able to develop and enhance solidarity relationships between Steelworker and Service Worker unions, respectively, in their countries of origin. A further strength of her analysis is how she demonstrates the extensive cost in terms of material and time resources in maintaining such solidarity, and the unique combination of factors which brought this about which are unlikely to be replicated elsewhere.

While the respective contributors to this volume highlight the need for labour soli-

arity to overcome the assault by neo-liberal forces under globalization the overall conclusion is that this has been, and in all likelihood will be a long and exhausting struggle, which, to date, has borne little fruit. There is an example where attempts to build global labour solidarity have been more successful. In the 2003 Winter issue of *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations* (58-1), an article was published on how a confederation of player associations in football/soccer had negotiated a global agreement with the governing body of world football on the guidelines of the employment conditions of players (the transfer and compensation system) across the globe.<sup>1</sup> At that time the International Federation of Professional Footballers' Association had 40 members. It now has 58 members.<sup>2</sup>

There are also confederations of player associations in Cricket (the Federation of International Cricketers' Association, seven members), Rugby (International Rugby Players' Association, nine members) and in Australia (the Australian Athletes' Alliance, eight members, which liaises with player associations in New Zealand).<sup>3</sup> In 2011, UNI Global Union formed a sports branch which includes the above union confederations, plus European Union Athletes (35 members)<sup>4</sup>, and player associations in America and Japan. Its website states that it represents 85,000 athletes in over 60 nations and has over 100 player associations within its fold.<sup>5</sup> Professional sport provides an example of success which should presumably be of interest for those concerned with enhancing global labor solidarity and the various issues raised in this volume edited by Kim Scipes.

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#### **Notes**

- 1 Dabscheck, B. 2003, "International Unionism's Competitive Edge: FIFPro and the European Treaty", *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations*, 58 (1), 85-108.
- 2 [www.fifpro.org/en/](http://www.fifpro.org/en/), accessed 11 October 2016.
- 3 [www.fica.com/](http://www.fica.com/); [irpa-rugby.com/](http://irpa-rugby.com/); [ausathletes.com.au/](http://ausathletes.com.au/), all accessed 11 October 2016.
- 4 [www.euathletes.org/](http://www.euathletes.org/), accessed 11 October 2016.
- 5 [www.globalunion.org/sectors/sport/about-us/](http://www.globalunion.org/sectors/sport/about-us/), accessed 11 October 2016.