

lives (p. 187). While women do occasionally appear in the histories of these towns presented by White, much more attention to company-town women is needed if we are to attain this fuller understanding not only of company towns but also of power, agency and subordination.

## Reference

Summers A (2002 [1975]) *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia*. Melbourne, VIC, Australia: Penguin.

Peter Fairbrother, John O'Brien, Anne Junor, Michael O'Donnell and Glynne Williams, *Unions and Globalisation: Governments, Management and the State at Work*. Routledge: London, 2011; 256 pp.: 9780415416641, RRP \$150.

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Traditional public sector employment relations had distinct characteristics that differentiated it from the broader labour market, including the political sphere in which it operates, the traditions of merit, tenure and political neutrality and a 'good employer' image that often led to reasonable working conditions and a tolerance for unionisation. This traditional model evolved very slowly from the 1850s to the 1980s, but has undergone more significant changes since the 1980s due to economic fluctuations and changing ideology regarding the role and size of the state and hence public employment. Unions opposed these changes, more moderately in relation to managerial changes and more vocally regarding the recent austerity measures.

Against this state of flux, this book is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of public sector employment relations. Most of the authors are well known to scholars in this field, and my high expectations of their contribution were met by this volume. Indeed, the primary title of *Unions and Globalisation* undersells its merit, which includes valuable descriptions and analyses of public sector restructuring, rendering it useful to scholars and policy-makers beyond those interested in unions.

This book begins by establishing the context for state restructuring in recent decades. It identifies the puzzle of restructuring into a managerial state pursued by both sides of the political spectrum, albeit through different paths of marginalising or incorporating unions. It questions whether this is due to economic factors, global forces or a triumph of neo-liberalism. This study of convergence of actions in neo-liberal reforms had me hooked. The central research question is: to what extent were state sector unions able to mitigate the effects of 'reform' or even influence its direction?

The research design is strong. The focus on Australia and Britain provides a useful comparison of countries 'bound together by a colonial past, a financially-linked present and a shared political practice, often look to each other for exemplars as well as contrasts'. The study takes a longitudinal approach from the 1970s, when faith in public administration began to wane, to explore how a 'succession of structural changes to the state resulted in a recasting of relationships among state managers, public employees and

state trade unions'. A further strength is the use of agencies focused on the similar function of employment services – Centrelink in Australia and JobCentre in Britain.

Chapter 2 develops the conceptual framework for the research and provides a comprehensive examination of neo-liberalism and new public management (NPM), including developments over time and their complexities and contradictions. Another key element of this chapter is the discussion of the concept of depoliticisation, used to explain the distancing of decision-making and the indirect governing relationship under NPM. The authors first flag this concept at the end of Chapter 1 and expand it more here, recognising that it is a contested argument. I agree with the authors' analysis of the change of architecture and their conclusion that this is deliberately designed to put matters at arm's length from government, but I am uncomfortable with labelling it as 'depoliticisation', perhaps because it has as many similarities as differences from processes that we call politicisation.

These opening chapters set up an interesting programme of research, and scholars in the field are likely to find this framework valuable in their own writing, beyond its use for the following empirical chapters.

The following chapters (3–7) provide an overview of the pathways to state restructuring and union engagement. Chapter 3 provides a detailed account and analysis of the restructuring of the administrative state in each country. Chapter 4 provides a description and analysis of industrial systems and the development of public service unions in each country, including how this would inform their response to the forthcoming restructuring. These chapters provide valuable descriptions as well as analyses of events that will be of use to other researchers.

Chapters 5–7 identify the shifting relations between the managerial state and unions throughout the period. Chapter 5 explores how new structures and approaches affected the workforce and employment relations. Government strategies to suppress union and workplace industrial activity may have backfired, as they forced public sector unions to abandon their often-placid roles of pursuing gains through consultation and to embark on more militant tactics, as well as encouraging union members to mobilise often in concert with the community.

Chapter 6 delves further into the processes and new relationships under the new state structures. It finds that, despite different industrial and political contexts, there was a convergence in both countries towards a more fragmented and decentralised approach to pay and conditions – this is not really surprising, as devolution and decentralisation are core elements of NPM. This chapter describes and analyses how each country was prepared to use its dual roles as employer and regulator to achieve this change, and how unions attempted to respond and resist.

Chapter 7 focuses on specific examples of union efforts to build collectivity and maintain the standardised employment conditions that had long characterised public employment. Unions that had designed their own structures to respond to the traditional centralisation of employment relations were required to respond to the political, industrial and structural changes in state structures and industrial relations. This chapter considers that unions in each country achieved internal reforms that allowed them to continue to influence and challenge government agenda. I accept this finding based on the evidence presented, although intuitively I have a nagging doubt that this is the perception of

many of the stakeholders involved. This chapter will have great appeal to those who, like me, are interested in pay matters.

These chapters (5–7) contain pertinent information and analysis, but from a reader's perspective, they seem a little less polished than the first four chapters. They are at times a little fragmented in their presentation of information and give the impression that different sections were written by different authors with quite different styles and with little attempt to smooth out those differences. While the structure makes rational sense and is most likely the best way to present such rich detail, switching between the two countries several times within each chapter can at times be confusing and difficult to navigate.

Chapter 8 wraps up this book by providing a good summary of the research. It concludes that unions in each country took different approaches, but both ended up as stronger and more active campaigning unions positioned to actively influence future state restructuring. While I agree with the first part of this conclusion, I think it is optimistic to portray them as active players, as it seems at least in Australia that they are continually trying to catch up to the managerial agenda. Of course, I am making this observation in 2014, when we have a clearer view of the effects of the global financial crisis on the public sector and how governments used the crisis to add a new legitimacy to their desire to restructure, outsource and downsize public services.

This is a thought-provoking book, relevant on many levels for its enduring conceptual framework, good historical record and its contribution to our understanding of the recomposition of state workforces and unions. I recommend it to scholars, policy-makers and unions.