As a teacher of industrial relations I am often asked to offer 'solutions' to labour 'problems'. To many laymen, and indeed to many teachers of the subject, industrial relations is perceived as a set of techniques the study of which will reveal strategies for achieving at least a measure of industrial peace and at most some sort of an ideal, a harmony of group relationships functioning to improve productivity. Often the questioner does not expect to get a satisfactory answer from the expert and is very ready to offer his own solutions, which are some times quite drastic.

In nearly all these cases of 'What can be done?' the focus is on trade unions and trade unionism so that both the organisation and the institution are, in the minds of such inquirers and panacea merchants, almost synonymous with industrial relations. There is nothing wrong in all this: industrial relations as a discipline has only in recent years achieved something of a theoretical respectability. This has largely resulted from the provision of systems models to supply an organised framework for the pursuit of empirical studies and of course, trade unions constitute one of the most important parts of any system of industrial relations, even where they are proscribed. However, for teachers of industrial relations to confine themselves to these perspectives is to oversimplify the phenomena of people at work in paid employment and run into the danger of distortion and, in the long run, lead to the implementation of inappropriate solutions by those whose roles require them to manage or to participate in industrial relations.

There is an argument for regarding industrial relations both as an academic discipline and as an applied technology incorporating those dimensions of man at work which are currently the preserve of economists, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, industrial anthropologists and others. Can industrial relations be the subject of objective study of definable interrelated phenomena? Apart from the difficulties of delineation there are the ideological climates in which its savants develop their theoretical models, subtle and not so subtle pressures to conform and to justify the prevailing orientations.

I do not suggest that industrial relations academics should be producers of theory without concern for the consequences of their theory but fear that the institutionalisation of the subject may lead, may have led, to careerism, expediency and opportunism stifling the development of the subject. However extended the boundaries, the phenomena of industrial relations exist wherever man works in paid employment for another person or organisation of persons. At the same time as the discipline has been developing in the faculties of the industrialised West, it has been institutionalised in teaching, research and development agencies in the so-called developing societies.** So far as I am aware there has not been a published analysis of industrial relations course curricula in the universities and colleges in the developing societies but I suspect that there is a strong influence of Western evolved perspectives

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** I hesitate to use the term 'developing societies', because it is by no means apparent that those referred to as such are with one or two exceptions, developing. However, since it is used in the title of the volume which is the subject of this review, I shall not use any of the other euphemisms for 'backward, and continue with developing', but with reservations.
The Role Trade Unions in Developing Societies

applied either by Western expatriate academ-
ics or by indigenes whose values and perspec-
tives were aquire' on the campuses of Amer-
ica and Western Europe—the Dunlop-Fland-
ers axis in particular.

From articles in international journals on
developing societies one can detect an empha-
sis on empirical analysis of the institutional
arrangements in the particular country. With
so much groundwork to be covered this is
to be expected and is necessary, not as an
alternative to theoretical developments but
as a prerequisite to them. Nevertheless I am
concerned that empiricism, and such theore-
tical developments as there might be, are so
sidebound by Western values that the subject
becomes ritualised in courses which are in-
appropriate for presenting the reality of in-
dustrial relations or, where it is the stated
intention of the courses seminars and con-
ferences to contribute to socio-economic
development, in fact adding very little to the
achievement of that end. An example might
be wher' say, collective bargaining was a to-
pic for presentation or research and the start-
ing point was, implicitly or explicitly, an ideal
model based on British or American expe-
rience so that the state of collective bargain-
ing in the country concerned was assessed
against a yardstick which is not universally
valid and is probably unreliable too.

Studies of industrial relations in develop-
ing countries tend to be confined to single-
country efforts producing data sometimes of
potential comparative value but at other
times not. Others may be addenda to texts on
industrial relations with a universal title but
a parochial content, as if they are an after-
thought. The absence of theoretical consiste-
cy in studies of industrial relations in develo-
ping societies is compounded by the depend-
ence on the industrialised societies being the
sources of frames of reference for indigenous
scholars. It is not difficult to recognise the
influences of American and British mentors
on trade union studies of several Atrican
countries. This influence of the systems per-
spective is orientated towards the achieve-
ment of orderly and well regulated industrial
relations and it may be argued that this is
functional to maintaining the dependence of
the developing country's economy on those
of the industrialised countries when instead
what is required is a stimulus to self-help
and independent economic and social devel-
opment. A productivity conscious labour
movement is not intrinsically a good thing,
indeed who the beneficiaries are. My
view is that industrial relations studies in
and of developing societies must include the
conditions of structured underdevelopment
and the role that trade unions and others
might be playing in the maintenance of those
conditions. A reliable theory of industrial
relations in developing countries would have
to explain the contradicitions as well as iden-
tify the systemess of labour collectively
organised and functioning to make the
economy work.

By publishing in one volume seven essays
on trade unions on seven developing coun-
tries the International Institute for Labour
Studies invites discussion in the role of trade
unions in developing societies. The rationale
behind the selection of Ghana, Singapore,
Greece, Chile, Philippines, Kenya and Korea
is not obvious to me but that does not
detract from the intrinsic interest of the
material in each of the essays and there are
both contrasts and comparisons to be made
between pairs of countries. Africa, Asia,
Europe and South America are represented
but it would be wrong to accept any of these
countries' industrial relations as typical of a
broad region. All of them have governments
which, in order to pursue their own political
and economic objectives, seek to control
trade unions by whatever methods are expedi-
tent but then I can think of no government in
any political system that does not seek greater
control of labour relations; pluralism, for
example, is the product of competing group
interests not a policy of government.

In his introduction Kassabow, a joint editor
of this volume, attempts a comparative evalua-
tion by assessing the validity of the predict-
ions about the state of trade unionism in
developing countries made by Gatesen in
the late 1950's and early 1960's His general
conclusion is that the 'increase in radical trade
union leadership as projected by Galenson has not come about and that trade union leaders in developing countries are more representative of the rank and file than they were a decade or so ago. Well, I suppose if governments harass, persecute, suborn, execute, imprison, incorporate and exile independent-minded trade union leaders who can lead, what is left is the rank and file. Kasalow attributes some of the unforeseen changes to the development of large scale enterprise in developing countries and the consequent enterprise unionism. This is a feature of late development and, according to Kasalow, constitutes a phenomenon which contradicts Sturmhål's explanation of the evolution of trade unionism as reflecting surplus labour markets in the early and advanced stages of development.

Because of his emphasis on the need for more broad studies rather than the reification of one country monographs, Kasalow's introduction is an important pan of the volume. How are the separate studies to be brought together? Inevitably much of the introduction is concerned with trade unions' role vis-à-vis government, the latter being the central force of economic development. Rather than accept Galenson's polarisation of pluralist and corporatist contexts for trade unions, Kasalow points to the many intermediate types and sees the real points at issue as being to preserve the relatively limited status unions enjoy noting the important role of the ILO in this respect. He is something of a proselytizer here, rejoicing in the maintenance of the industrial role of trade unions and rebuking scholars whose work contains sympathy with or nostalgic sentiments for a more radical role. He completely rejects Fanon's conception of trade unions as part of a peasant exploiting aristocracy and concludes: 'Succeeding decades may conceivably see trade unions in the less developed countries able to operate on a broader front, but for the present most of them are best understood within limited horizons, most of them struggling for some sort of independent political survival.'

Chapter 11, The role of the Ghanaian trade unions in the development process is by Kasalow's co-editor Ukandi G. Damachi. This essay is more or less a summary of its author's original analysis of 1974.* Using the accommodation-conflict model Damachi analyses the role of trade unions over the phases of political leadership in Ghana from 1957 to 1970 which he refers to as two party, Nkrumah-supremacy, military, Biafia and military again.

There is not a lot of basis for comparing Ghana along these lines with other countries except perhaps with the Sudan where parliametary government has alternated with military regimes. Nevertheless, the various approaches by Ghana's successive ruling elites to control trade unions are all to be found elsewhere being practised with varying degrees of effectiveness. Damachi reaches the conclusion that trade unions react to all attempts to control them by government, through accommodation when the going is tough and with shows of strength during periods of greater freedom. As a movement the trade unions survive the various regimes. His story only tells us how the trade unions survive not why they should survive in a situation of continual failure to achieve any significant economic development. A better approach might have borne the title 'The role of Ghanaian trade unions in the under-development process.'

Singapore has achieved significant economic development and is now only officially a developing country but its inclusion as Chapter III in this volume is justified on historical grounds, i.e. how did it get where it is so quickly? Cheng and Fong identify stages in the patterns of industrial relations in the city state. From the early anticolonial struggle the labour movement encompassed its own struggles between the radical left and the moderates, a struggle also going on within the People's Action Party (PAP). By 1965, when Singapore left the Malaysian Federation, the established leadership was faced with the task of economic survival. Through incorporation, repression

and restrictive legislation the rulers restored management prerogatives and the authors partly attribute the high rate of economic growth since 1968 to this. In this period the government ruling elite has been the main actor ensuring that the trade unions function is to deal with unfairnesses and to socialize the workforce into an awareness of its role in achieving long term social and political goals. Tripartite "consensus" has been institutionalized at the direction of the rulers to the extent that Cheng and Fong do not forget it breaking down and they expect changes of substantive issues to be made in the light of those rulers' assessments of the economic environment. They expect little change in procedural matters.

Studies such as this one on Singapore, and indeed others in the volume, raise questions about the nature of a trade union. In the industrial West trade unionism came about because of workers' awareness that individually they could not affect the conditions of their employment against the greater power of capital. It became apparent that conflict was inherent in the employment relationship and trade unions as organisations were there to fight for the best they could get for their members. To do this they needed to be independent and though they might seek help from government, they have never voluntarily subordinated themselves to government's will. Where governments imposed their will on the trade unions it was where the political ideology offered a vision of society which only the chosen political elite had the capacity to lead to its achievement. We are faced with this problem when considering trade unions in developing societies. Are organisations of workers which allow government to decide what is in their best interests really trade unions? Is not the essence of trade unionism the awareness that one's own interests are never pursued sincerely by other power groups except as a matter of expediency?

Greece is the only country in Europe to be included in this volume and Chapter IV is on the role of trade unions in the social development of that country. Jenkins tries to explain why Greek trade unions have always been weak and ineffective. At first patronised by radical groups the trade unions suffered from control-seeking governments and from internal faction fights. Through intimidation, control of funds and the promotion of regionalism the governments were able to manipulate the trade union movement and ensure that the Greek General Confederation of Labour was led by conservatives. Beset with factionalism and retarded by occupation, a civil war and the experience of the Junta, the Greek trade unions have been unable to contribute much to social development or to wrest control away from predominately paternalistic government.

Chapter V breaks with the narrative approaches of the other essays and attempts an explanation of one of the many misfortunes which beset the Allende government in Chile and contributed to its eventual overthrow. Landsberger and McDaniel show how the ambitious policies of the Unidad Popular (UP) could not be achieved so long as their success was dependent upon the effective mobilisation of the workers. The policies of the UP backfired, they maintain, because the attempts at mobilisation resulted in the exacerbation of existing divisions and a breakdown in discipline and authority which became manifest in strikes, faction fighting and economism. A history of political rivalry and an inappropriate structure had left the trade union movement weak and, in spite of a high level of political consciousness and numerical strength, it could not give the UP the support it needed to control mobilisation in a situation where the UP also had to maintain long run investment. 'Mobilisation, the authors state, is a double-edged sword' and conclude that the official political leadership miscalculated the capacity of the Chilian labour movement to be capable of the disciplined and united action necessary to bring about revolutionary social change. They suggest that such conditions as accompanied the mobilisation in Chile have negative implications for social change in developing countries.

Trade unionism in the Philippines shares many of the characteristics of trade unionism
in other developing countries. We find in Ratoor Chapter VI the early politicisation of trade unions in a colonial situation as well as the cooperation of indigenes with the colonial authorities. In spite of the radicalisation of trade unions in the inter-War years, post-War labour leaders have largely practised economism. At one stage government sought to encourage the development of independent collective bargaining but the increasing authoritarianism of the present rulers and the imposition of martial law has replaced this policy with that of compulsory arbitration. This is the familiar story of the weakness of the labour movement due to its internal divisions and the fickleness of the ruling elite as its aspirations to power become realised. Expeditiously leads to methods varying from suppression to cooption by government in order to ensure control over a potentially dissident group which grows in size and expectations with the development of the modern economic sector. On this last point Ratoor concludes, with evidence that the rank and file are dissatisfied with their leaders continual accommodation with the political leaders.

In Chapter VII the increasing intervention of government in industrial relations in Kenya is examined over the decade 1963–1973 through changes in the role of the Industrial Court. Trade unions in Kenya, as under Brit- ish colonial administrations elsewhere, had to overcome various constraints imposed by the authorities. What emerged with the political independence of the country was an econom- istic trade unionism with its strength in the well organised but financially weak national trade unions. By 1965 government had strong- er powers to regulate industrial relations where collective bargaining did not produce agreement. Among several alternative actions open to him the Minister of Labour could refer an unresolved dispute to the Industrial Court. The Court had established a good reputation with the trade unions because of its handling of cases on merit and not according to some government derived criteria. How- ever, in 1973 the government added incomes policy guidelines to the Court’s decision making criteria and, as the authors, Muir and Brown conclude: ‘The lot of a trade unionist in Kenya at the moment (1973) is not a happy one.’

Labour relations and the development and survival, in however limited a form, of trade unions is chronicle so far in these essays against a background of political turbulence in which conservative, and in most cases reactionary, elites have imposed their will on potentially radical trade unions. Chapter VII is no exception. In his essay on labour-government-management relations in the Republic of Korea, Ogle emphasises the context of constant political tension of those relations. The experience of Japanese occupation, the war in the 1950s, the ideological and military division of the country and the subsequent fear in the South of the communist North have more than coloured the characteristics of trade unions and industrial relations in the Republic of Korea (South Korea). The coun- try’s constitution enshrines the right of free- dom of association but allows for limitation on or the withdrawal of the right to collective bargaining by workers who exert a strong influence on the nation, government or econ- omy. From government playing a mediating role in the 1960’s, the 1970’s have seen the advent of unilateral control by government over all labour-management disputes and the forbidding of strike action. The ruling class, through the agencies of its political party patronage and the Korean CIA has sought to eliminate overt conflict and to control the federated national industrial trade unions. The justification for this has been the need to attract and retain active foreign investment for economic development. Ogle shows that strike activity in the 1970’s did not affect foreign firms and therefore invalidates the justification for the subsequent restrictions placed on labour. Other than the pressures from government-induced economic development Ogle identifies the patriarchal tradition of authority, the realities of political power, and the centrally controlled economic system to explain the government’s curtailment of trade union freedoms in South Korea.

What can be learned from these studies?
In general they seem to confirm the obvious, that we can expect the state to try and extend its control over industrial relations where it takes a central role in managing the economy and particularly where the economy is a developing one. Successfully managing the economy is critical to the maintenance of legitimate political power and the governments of most developing countries do not have much going for them in this respect. It is hardly surprising that they are at least anxious and at most paranoic at the existence of independent and active trade unionism. To survive as trade unions, not merely as agencies of government policies trade unions require some level of competitiveness in their environment and in trying to preserve, create or revive this they inevitably challenge the ever increasing prerogatives of government to manage the economy in whoever’s interests they effectively represent e.g. middle class, foreign capital, military clique or alliances of these and others. Those developing countries which have achieved a substantial measure of economic growth have usually suppressed opposition including trade unionists and do not look like liberalising their policies Economic growth is often achieved at the expense of those who make it possible e.g. sweated labour is the workshops of Hong Kong and to the benefit of the classes represented by the ruling elite in partnership with the interests of the richer developed nations.

Despite Kassalow’s narrow industrial relations perspective these studies are valuable in that they help lead to an awareness of the need for more comprehensive studies of industrial relations, comprehensive of countries and of perspectives. This is still not an easy task. In the single-country studies the standard of scholarship varies and the authors are constrained by their own value systems, the paucity of data and the difficulties, both technical and political, of carrying out basic research.

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