

## Review

Glenn Adler (ed) (2000) *Public Service Labour Relations in a Democratic South Africa and Business: the labour movement and co-determination in contemporary South Africa*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press in association with the National Labour and Economic Development Institute (NALEDI).

### Malcolm Wallis

These two companion books are of extraordinary value and interest for several reasons. Adler, who is based at Wits, was attached to NALEDI for about two years to carry out this ambitious exercise which appears to demonstrate that solid and serious work on the public sector can be done through collaboration between practitioners and academics.

The first of them is a detailed review of labour in the public service (largely omitting local government and state enterprise for understandable reasons related to the manageability of the project). There is ample coverage of such topics as the historical context, post-1994 developments, collective bargaining, unionism and global trends. The case studies of education (by Garson) and the police (by Marks) are particularly rewarding. Garson, for example, gives a vivid account of the voluntary service package episode in education, in which she does not appear to pull any punches.

As a political scientist working in the area of public administration, it is encouraging for me to discover work of this sort being done by scholars whose disciplinary base is outside those often unduly narrow parameters. A notable strength is the links to sociology but with a good dose of law and some other disciplinary backgrounds thrown into the pot.

The second volume concerns the extent to which organised labour has been able to engage with management in the processes of industrial policy

making in recent years, and in particular since the Labour Relations Act of 1995 (Satgar's chapter on this is excellent, not least because he traces the processes by which this piece of legislation came into being). There are chapters on several topics including national consultation and debate, case studies of the public service, the automobile, and textile and clothing industries, trade union capacity (this is a critical area well analysed by Buhlungu) and management strategies. The tale these authors tell is not a hugely encouraging one if our fledgling democracy is seen as potentially being deepened by the setting up of bodies such as workplace forums. The intentions of the Reconstruction and Development Programme which supposedly informed the Labour Relations Act seem well short of realisation. The RDP's grand use of the term 'industrial democracy' now sounds somewhat hollow. The struggle on this front is not yet won by the working class, to judge from these contributions, notwithstanding some hopeful signs.

The authors have made a valuable contribution. It may appear paradoxical that none of the authors are from the public administration discipline but, as matters stand, this is a strength not a weakness given the pitiful state of that area of study. It is very clearly demonstrated that sociology has far more to offer to those who wish to enhance their understanding of public sector management than is generally realised. Also encouraging is the extent to which comparative analysis is included, using material from Europe, Australasia and Africa. The two volumes contain an account of the literature that will be much appreciated, although I failed to find listed in the references the Wallerstein (1997) publication referred to on page 51 of the second volume. The editorial work has been skilfully done in general. Each chapter is preceded by a useful summary. One gripe is that neither book has an index.

Both volumes are substantial additions to the literature on labour, business and the state in South Africa. Together with other work that is now appearing such as that of Patrick Bond, they point a refreshing way forward for those who wish to see the study of the state and development from a more critical, and less narrowly managerial, perspective.