

ROSS M. MARTIN

TRADE UNIONISM

Purposes and Forms



CLARENDON PRESS

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What are trade unions for? Why do trade union movements vary so? Trade unionism in its various national forms has been the subject of increasing scrutiny during the second half of the twentieth century. Ross Martin's book is concerned with two neglected, but crucial, aspects of trade unionism as a world-wide phenomenon. One is the remarkably diverse purposes which have been attributed to the trade union. The other is the varying forms that trade unionism takes in different countries, and the reasons for those variations.

In the first part of the book, Professor Martin presents a comprehensive account of the wildly conflicting objectives, responsibilities, and functions that have been foisted on the trade union, mainly by outsiders. He brings together a wide range of writings on trade unionism, and his clear and penetrating review of the literature will help students of industrial relations become aware of the far-reaching political debate on the goals of trade unions.

The second half of the book establishes, with particular reference to twenty-seven countries, a typology by which the institutional forms of trade unionism may be ordered and categorized on a transnational basis. It also develops a theory which explains their major differences in terms of political parties and party systems.

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To Elena

PREFACE

Each of the two parts into which this book is divided had its genesis in a methodological problem. In the case of Part I, 'The Purposes of Trade Unions', the problem was a conventional definition of 'trade union' that manifestly excluded many, possibly most, organizations in the world laying claim to the title. The fact that a reference to 'purpose' was the excluding element in the definition led to an investigation of differing ideas about the purposes appropriate to trade unions—and, eventually, to a classification of them; as well as a different definition of 'trade union'.

Part II, 'The Forms of Trade Unionism', originated in a search for a sensible typology of national trade union movements. Once formulated and substantiated, the typology itself prompted an exploration of the reasons for the variations it delineated—and, eventually, a theory explaining them.

The distinction between the two parts may be stated, more crisply, in another way. Part I is concerned with the rhetoric surrounding trade unionism as an object of desire. Part II is concerned with the actual, national circumstances of trade unionism as an object of study.

Thus while both parts focus on trade unionism, they otherwise deal with quite disparate matters. One consequence of this is that they each rely on an almost totally different range of sources. They share, in fact, little more than a dozen references. This explains the separate bibliographies at the end of the book. Moreover, these are not merely separate, but differently organized. The one relating to Part I is a conventional, full list of all sources consulted, whether or not cited. The bibliography relating to Part II (as explained more fully in its own introduction) differs in two ways. In the first place, it is limited to sources either actually cited or, otherwise, of quite specific value to the work. Secondly, it is divided into categories which, while marginally complicating the task of those dedicated to the ultimate pursuit of footnote references, greatly simplify access for readers with broader interests.

This book owes much to others. I had the great advantage of comments on drafts of it from William Brown, Hugh Clegg, Leon Glezer, and Roderick Martin, all of whom read both parts; from

Richard Hyman and Michael James who read Part I; and from Malcolm Rimmer who read Part II. I also had help, mainly in connection with Part II, with sources and/or specific items of information. The assistance of Bruce Jacobs, Robin Jeffrey, and John Miller was especially useful. Others to be acknowledged in this respect include Dennis Altman, Ferenc Feher, Michael Forde, Kevin Hince, Michael James, Mave McDonagh, Angus McIntyre, Richard Mitchell, Christopher Neale, Liam O'Malley, Elliott Perlman, Rudolf Plehwe, Malcolm Rimmer, Hélène Teichmann, Ken Thomas, Claudio Veliz, and Robert Zuzovsky—together with the Canadian New Democratic Party, the Fiji Labour Party, the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation. Two of my undergraduate students, Cameron Lachlan (1987) and David Wales (1985), challenged their lecturer and in each case led me to change my mind on a point of interpretation relating to Part I. Annemarie Flanders devised the index with characteristic care and skill; and gave valued advice. The staff of the Borchardt Library, La Trobe University, Melbourne, worked wonders in the cause of assuaging the book's voracious appetite for references.

Marilu Espacio, as in all our other joint enterprises, once again reduced my flood of ugly, arrowed drafts to order with infinite forbearance and unfailing efficiency. The administrative genius of Talis Polis created a departmental haven that optimized my writing opportunities. A conversation with Leon Glezer, in 1981, first nudged me decisively in the direction of this book. The most profoundly personal debt, specific to the writing of it, is acknowledged in the dedication.

R.M.M.

August 1988

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