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Warwick Studies in Industrial Relations

Social Stratification and Trade Unionism



Warwick Studies in Industrial Relations
General Editors: George Bain, Hugh Clegg,
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[Social Stratification and
Trade Unionism]

A Critique

2
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Editors' Foreword

Warwick University's first undergraduates were admitted in 1965. The teaching of industrial relations began a year later, and in 1967 a one-year graduate course leading to an M.A. in Industrial Relations was introduced. At about the same time a grant from the Clarkson Trustees allowed a beginning to be made on a research project concerned with several aspects of industrial relations in selected Coventry plants.

In 1970 the Social Science Research Council established three Research Units, one of them being the Industrial Relations Research Unit at Warwick. The Unit took over the Coventry project and developed others, including studies of union growth, union organization, occupational labour markets, coloured immigrants in industry, ideologies of 'fairness' in industrial relations and the effects of the Industrial Relations Act.

This monograph series is intended to form the main vehicle for the publication of the results of the Unit's projects, of the research carried out by staff teaching industrial relations in the University, and, where it merits publication, of the work of graduate students. Some of these results will, of course, be published as articles, and some in the end may constitute full-scale volumes. But the monograph is the most apt form for much of our work. Industrial relations research is concerned with assembling and analysing evidence much of which

cannot be succinctly summarized in tables and graphs, so that an adequate presentation of findings can easily take too much space for an article. On the other hand, even with a major project which will in the end lead to one or more books, there is often an advantage in publishing interim results as monographs. This is particularly true where the project deals, as do several of the industrial relations studies at Warwick, with problems of current interest for which employers, trade unionists and governments are anxiously seeking solutions.

The first four titles in the series were based on case studies, although each of them used the cases to develop theory. This study of social stratification and trade unionism, written by the Deputy Director of the Unit and two outside colleagues, is an essay in industrial relations theory based on a critical review of the pertinent literature. It examines the presuppositions about the relationship between class and trade union membership which have shaped a number of studies of trade unions and trade unionists, and which underlie many current notions about the nature and behaviour of trade unions. By revealing the inadequacies of many of these presuppositions, it hopes to clear the way for more fruitful studies in the areas of union growth and behaviour, areas in which the Unit has research projects under way.

George Bain
Hugh Clegg
Allan Flanders

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