

# Capsule Reviews

*compiled by* Book Review/Updates Editor

TERRY THOMASON, TIMOTHY P. SCHMIDLE, AND JOHN F. BURTON, JR., *WORKERS' COMPENSATION: BENEFITS, COSTS, AND SAFETY UNDER ALTERNATIVE INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS*, (W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2001. 457 pp. Cloth: \$43, Paper: \$25).

Thomason, Schmidle, and Burton make use of a unique data set to delve into how insurance arrangements affect several objectives of the workers' compensation (WC) program. They underscore the effects of deregulation and other changes in WC insurance pricing arrangements by performing empirical analyses that use state-specific cost, benefit, and injury data from 48 states for 1975-1995.

This allows them to address the interactive relationships among the four objectives of WC systems adequacy of benefits, affordability of WC insurance, efficiency in the benefits delivery system, and prevention of workplace injuries and diseases and how various public policies adopted by states or the federal government work to achieve them.

Several important contributions result. For instance, the authors quantify the tradeoffs between adequacy and affordability that would result from a federal mandate requiring adequate benefits. They also provide analysis of the possible tradeoffs in using different public policies regarding insurance arrangements, e.g., the expected savings to employers from deregulation of private insurance carriers.

Overall, their results clarify the complicated relationships between insurance arrangements and employers' costs, and the impact of regulation on employers' costs, WC insurance market structure, and workplace health and safety.

PETER P. BUDETTI, RICHARD V. BURKHAUSER, JANICE M. GREGORY, AND H. ALLAN HUNT, EDs., *ENSURING HEALTH AND INCOME SECURITY FOR AN AGING WORKFORCE* (W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2001. 521 pp. Cloth: \$43, Paper: \$25).

During the next two decades, the number of older workers in the U.S.

will nearly double. This bulge, soon to be a conspicuous aspect of the aging baby boom generation, will require a transformation in the way public and private programs are designed to support these individuals at work and in retirement. Responding with rational policies, whether they apply to workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, disability insurance, or private health insurance, is vital for preserving the nation's economic well-being. The first steps toward developing these policies have now been taken.

This volume presents a group of forward-looking papers commissioned by the National Academy of Social Insurance and presented in January 2000. The papers explore implications of an aging workforce for a number of social programs in the coming decades, and point to the critical policy issues we must face when growing numbers of older workers begin to strain the capacity of those programs.

REBECCA JANE WEINSTEIN, *MEDIATION IN THE WORKPLACE: A GUIDE FOR TRAINING, PRACTICE, AND ADMINISTRATION* (Quorum Books, 2000. 232 pp. \$67.50).

A workplace mediation program supplements or replaces institutional grievance processes in order to increase job satisfaction, boost productivity, reduce employee turnover, and decrease the chances of legal action. Weinstein, a social worker and a labor and employment lawyer, provides a powerful administrative, educational, and training tool for human resource professionals, administrators, peer and professional mediators, and students of mediation.

Mediated resolutions to conflict in the workplace are designed to last because they seek to address underlying causes and they rely on the participation of the affected parties. Mediation with an impartial third party is more likely to result in a satisfying solution than are decisions imposed upon the parties from outside sources, whether employers or the legal system. Mediators work to strengthen relationships so that future conflicts can be prevented or minimized. This valuable guide to implementing formal mediation programs can be used by both beginning and experienced mediators in all types of organizations- in schools, social service agencies, government agencies, and private industry. Its practical application of mediation theory will benefit students and teachers of mediation, conflict resolution, business management, public administration, law, social work, counseling, and other related disciplines.

RUTH W. PRYWES, *THE UNITED STATES LABOR FORCE A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS* (Quorum Books, 2000. 408 pp. \$75.00).

The United States labor force is examined in detail in this comprehensive study. The history and current makeup of the workforce is revealed and issues and trends are investigated. Theory and analysis are blended with demographics to provide the reader with a solid overview of the current state of the American worker and his or her environment. Competing views are offered on diverse issues such as unions, welfare, and health care. Where helpful, economic and labor theory is explained and applied to give the book scholarly rigor along with readability and practical information. The viewpoint remains focused on a broad view of manpower. As such, emphasis is not on theoretical analysis but on description, historical trends, statistics on present conditions, and explanations.

The book begins with a discussion of the development of the workforce, the impact of immigration, the rise of nontraditional work arrangements, the underground economy, and demographics. Basic vocabulary and concepts are presented and explained to give the reader the tools necessary to analyze the topics presented in the latter parts of the book. Education is examined in part two. Competing views on the U.S. educational system and the value of education in an economic sense are discussed as are the choices open to non-college graduates. Career choices, unions, wage determination, and women and minority issues are considered in later chapters. Aspects of unemployment are explored in part seven. The book concludes with a look at the government's role in the workforce, including welfare, social insurance, and health care and shows how these programs impact both employer and worker behavior. This book is a great resource for executives, human resource professionals, researchers, policy makers, and students.