

Productivity Bargaining: A Case Study in the Steel Industry.

E. OWEN SMITH.

Pan Books, London, 1971. xvi + 428 pp. 75p.

This long book describes the events that led up to the signing of the Manpower Productivity Plan (the Green Book) at the Steel Company of Wales' Port Talbot works in 1968–69, and the subsequent fate of the attempts to put that agreement into effect during a period in which nationalization and incomes policy were added to the normal problems of implementation. The book reflects, no doubt unintentionally, the confusion of the period and a chronological summary would have been very useful, facilitating the rapid perusal which is all it is likely to receive from readers without some local or specialist interest in the subject.

The book is thought provoking. For instance:

we seem to be entering a period when man productivity can be increased more rapidly than the displaced men can be absorbed. Can what we have learnt about cost/benefit help to evaluate the alternatives? (my money is on a 4-day week, by the way).

features that the author describes, such as the growth of pockets of very highly paid men during a period of change and redundancy, are apparent in other industries. Are enough data available on productivity agreements for useful models to be constructed?

what do we think about the behavioural scientist's approach to resolving conflict? Do we think about it?

The general reader of this book may find, as did the reviewer, that its chief value is to raise some of those hard questions that he ought to think about more often.

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