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**A Guide to Organizing Unions.** (book reviews) *Patrick Macklem.*

**Full Text:** COPYRIGHT Cornell University 1991

A Guide to Organizing Unions offers the reader exactly what its title indicates: a detailed manual for union organizers engaged in organizing workplaces. Although the book is restricted in scope to the laws governing British Columbia workplaces, McGrady has succeeded in providing the Canadian labor movement with a clear and concise description of types of legal hurdles faced by union organizers in the face of a recalcitrant employer. British Columbia labor relations has undergone dramatic changes in recent years, so much so that it is difficult for scholars from other jurisdictions to maintain an up-to-date working knowledge of its labor code. As a result, this book will also be useful to those who wish to keep abreast of legal developments in British Columbia.

The book's primary strength lies in its modest scope. Drawing upon his extensive experience as a labor lawyer and labor law teacher, McGrady describes in detail how British Columbia labor law as it relates to organizing campaigns changed as a result of the 1987 amendments establishing the Industrial Relations Act, 1987 (S.B.C. 1987, c. 24), which replaced the B.C. Labour Code (Labour Code of British Columbia Act, S.B.C. 1973 [2d sess.], c. 122). Those familiar with British Columbia labor politics will be aware of the fact that the B.C. Labour Code of 1973 ushered in a new era of British Columbia labor law, which stood as a model for other jurisdictions in Canada and the United States. Provisions that are now fairly standard in other Canadian jurisdictions, such as automatic certification with 55% card support, certification where the determination of employee support is impossible due to employer unfair labor practices, union access to addresses and telephone numbers of unorganized employees, a reverse onus provision in unfair labor practice complaints, and first contract arbitration, were first tested in British Columbia in the early 1970s.

Yet, British Columbia's leadership in the realm of labor relations was short-lived. In 1977, the first of a series of amendments was introduced in the province curtailing the extent to which the law fosters collective bargaining. The enactment of the 1987 amendments represented the culmination of a major movement away from the legislative commitment to foster collective bargaining so carefully cultivated in the 1970s. By 1987, the legislature had amended the Act to make it more difficult to organize workers by, among other things, raising the percentage requirement for certification to 45%, repealing the requirement that employers provide unions with names and addresses of their employees, and eliminating any prospect of automatic certification. As a result, many unions are currently boycotting aspects of the Act, hoping to pressure the government to pass amendments more in spirit with the 1973 Code.

A Guide to Organizing Unions is one of the first texts outlining British Columbia's new collective bargaining regime. As such, it is useful for those who operate under the new legislation. What it lacks is a systematic comparison of the old and the new and an assessment of why the union movement has reacted so sharply to the new legislative state of affairs.

McGrady details basic principles governing such matters as the status of trade unions, definition of an employee, access to an employer's property, definition of an appropriate bargaining unit, mechanics of certification applications, and range and scope of unfair labor practice provisions. Each chapter carefully outlines the current law, with occasional reference to the state of affairs under the previous legislation. The author thus provides a step-by-step introduction to the relevant law for those involved in union organization.

Readers seeking a detailed account of the politics of and the reasons for British Columbia's retreat from the forefront of Canadian labor relations had best look elsewhere. Those who are more interested in obtaining a basic understanding of the new legal framework, however, are well advised to purchase this book for their library.

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**Subjects** Books - Reviews

**People** McGrady, Leo

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