November 28, 2014

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work&labour news&research Turns Two!

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Fairness Works

"The labour movement is committed to improving the lives of workers and has been for over 100 years. That's our job. Our aim is to improve the lives of all Canadians by working on the issues that matter most to everyone."

See what the movement is doing about:

- retirement security
- good jobs
- child care
- health care
- human rights

Fairness Works [website]

Canadian Labour Congress -- Together FAIRNESS WORKS [website]
Domestic Violence at Work

"The Canadian Labour Congress partnered with researchers at the University of Western Ontario and conducted the first ever Canadian survey on domestic violence in the workplace."

"Canadian employers lose $77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence, and the costs, to individuals, families and society, go far beyond that. However, we know very little about the scope and impacts of this problem in Canada."

Canadian Labour Congress, November 28, 2014: “Domestic Violence at Work"


"Abuse at home follows half of its victims to work, according to a new study which shows the extent to which domestic violence impacts the workplace."

The Toronto Star, November 28, 2014: “Domestic violence follows victims to work, survey finds,” by Sara Mojtehedzadeh

Corporations Guilty of Killing Workers Being Rebated Millions of Dollars by WSIB

"A new report released today by the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) reveals that Ontario’s Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) is rebating millions of dollars each year to companies found guilty of offences that have resulted in workers being killed in work-related accidents."

"Over the three year period between 2011 and 2013, 135 employers who had been convicted of offences under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) were granted rebates on their premiums by the WSIB. Astonishingly, 78 of the 135 (almost 58%) received nearly $15 million in rebates in the very same year they had committed their offences."

"The scandalous rebates were made through the WSIB’s controversial ‘experience rating’ programs, which are intended to provide a financial incentive to employers for improving worker’s health and safety. Instead, the program provides financial incentives for companies to suppress claims."


Quebec's Pension Reform Plan (Bill 3) Protested by Municipal Workers

"Montreal firefighters blocked entry to the Port of Montreal [on November 26, 2014], part of a one-day strike across Quebec by unionized municipal workers who oppose Bill 3 -- the province’s pension reform plan."

"We are one week from having this piece of legislation adopted, so we wanted to show we won’t stop the battle,’ said coalition spokesman Marc Ranger."

“They think that once the [bill to reform pensions] becomes law, everything will be OK and will be back to the way it was before,’ said union president Yves Francoeur. ‘Do you think we’re going to be motivated? Do you think we’re going to want to
give our time to this police department and to this city administration? No."

"Bill 3, introduced in June, would bring employer and employee contributions to a 50/50 split. It could make city employees pay more, and some retirees might also be on the hook for pension shortfalls in order to make up for a provincewide pension plan deficit of $4 billion."

CBC News, November 26, 2014: “Quebec municipal workers in 1-day strike to protest pension reform plan: About 5,500 municipal employees across Quebec on strike today”

Government of Quebec, May 2014: “Bill No. 3: An Act to foster the financial health and sustainability of municipal defined benefit pension plans” (16 pages, PDF)


Most Canadians Actually Enjoy Their Commute

"Canadians actually enjoy their commute and find it relaxing. That’s the conclusion of a study released by Toronto ad agency Bensimon Byrne -- a finding that runs contrary to the popular vision of commuters as harried and fed up, if not enraged."

"‘Even more surprisingly, three quarters of commuters report being in a better mood after their commute,’ according to the survey conducted for Bensimon Byrne by the Gandalf Group.”

"‘The results are an eyeopener and contradict the prevailing narrative of commuting -- which is often conveyed as long and negatively affecting our work-life balance,’ said Max Valiquette, managing director of strategy at Bensimon Byrne. ‘In fact, our findings show that having some time to relax and rest, or a few quiet moments to reflect is what makes commuting so important and desirable.’"

The Globe and Mail, November 26, 2014: “Canadians find commute a time to ‘relax and rest,’ survey says”

"[To] the extent that commuting has any impact on Canadians’ health and work, home, and social lives, it has a resoundingly positive one."


Gandalf Group Consumerology Reports (for Bensimon Byrne advertising) - These reports “[examine] key concerns of Canadians with a focus on consumer trends and interests.”

"Each working day 500 million people across the planet experience the miracle and misery of commuting. Whether undertaken by car, bus, train or bicycle, the practice shapes our days and creates a time and a space for a surprisingly diverse range of activities. In *Rush Hour*, Iain Gately traces the past, present and future of commuting, from the age of Dickens to the potential of the driverless car. He examines the contrasting experiences of commuters in Britain and elsewhere in the world: from the crush-loaded salarymen of the Tokyo metro to the road-rage afflicted middle managers of America. Notwithstanding its occasional traumas, commuting emerges as a positive aspect of modern life. It has dictated the growth of cities; been proving ground for new technologies; and given countless people freedom of movement and the opportunity to improve their lives."

The Guardian Bookstore: *Rush Hour*, by Iain Gately
“From Lewis Carroll’s White Rabbit to Einstein’s theory of relativity, the everyday commute has inspired some extraordinary ideas.”


**A New Health Peril: ’Workplace Telepressure’**

“American researchers have documented a new office health risk: ’Workplace telepressure.’”

“That’s when you just can’t stay away from your work-related e-mail, text messages and voicemail, no matter what you’re doing, who you’re with, etc.”

“’Workers who indicate they feel high levels of telepressure are more likely to report burnout, a feeling of being unfocused, health-related absenteeism and diminished sleep quality,’ [Larissa] Barber, the lead author of the report, says on the university’s website.”

“What to do about it?”

“Employers should urge ‘unplugged time,’ says [other author Alecia] Santuzzi, while ‘managers and workers also could ease telepressure by decreasing the quantity of messages, perhaps holding back information that can wait for future meetings or face-to-face conversations.’”

“Companies can also establish policies, according to the researchers.”


*Youtube, November 11, 2014*: “NIU Researchers Discuss Workplace Telepressure ” [video, 2:18min.]


**Valley Boys**

“A familiar explanation for tech’s gender disparity is the so-called pipeline problem: the percentage of female computer-science graduates has almost halved since the nineteen-eighties. But this doesn’t fully explain why there are so few women in senior management or on company boards (where skills other than programming matter). Nor can it explain the high rate of attrition among women in tech.”

“Tech companies may pride themselves on being meritocracies, but unconscious biases shape the way they hire and promote.”

“Techies have been around a lot less long than police chiefs, but they have an entrenched gender profile, too. Joan Williams, a law professor at the University of California, Hastings, and co-author of ‘What Works for Women at Work,’ told me, ‘Even though it’s a job that basically involves sitting at a typewriter, there’s a real emphasis on the idea that these are jobs that only a real man can do.’ The result is a Catch-22: women need to act ‘masculine’ to fit in, but get labelled as difficult and pushy if they do.”

“Subverting these biases requires more than training. Instead, companies should be looking for what Williams calls ‘bias interrupters’: systems that identify bias and intervene to mitigate it.”

“Promoting diversity isn’t, as many techies think, pure do-gooderism. It’s genuinely good for business, since a large body of evidence suggests that making organizations more diverse can also make them perform better. A worldwide study, published in May, of more than four thousand R. & D. teams found that gender-diverse teams were considerably better at driving ‘radical innovation.’”
Lazy PhDs?

"If the objective of graduate training in top-ranked [economics] departments is to produce successful research economists, then these graduate programmes are largely failing." That’s the startling message from a recent paper published in the *Journal of Economic Perspectives.*

What’s the point in killing yourself to be a productive researcher when finding an academic job is so hard?"

*The Economist, November 12th 2014: “The Productivity of PhDs: Lazy graduate students?”*

"Our evidence shows that only the top 10–20 percent of a typical graduating class of economics PhD students are likely to accumulate a research record that might lead to tenure at a medium-level research university. Perhaps the most striking finding from our data is that graduating from a top department is neither necessary nor sufficient for becoming a successful research economist."


Ten Immigration Studies worth Checking Out

"From White House executive action and Congressional pushback to child migrant increases and varying deportation figures, it can be hard to keep track of the news tick-tick on the immigration issue in the United States."

Likewise, it can be difficult to keep up with the myriad academic journals and reports, as a large network of social science researchers across the country continues to produce volumes of material on these issues."

"Many aspects of U.S. immigration have been studied for decades. Others are just emerging. In any case, many of the latest studies represent the soundest evidence available in an atmosphere of overheated debate."

"Below are 10 relatively recent papers that are worth checking out, either for background or potential story angles:"

- What are the demographic characteristics of unauthorized immigrants versus legal immigrants?
- Political effects of the Spanish language in the United States: Survey experiments and demographic analysis
- Public attitudes toward immigration
- Testing exclusionary attitudes toward immigrants
- "Illegal," "undocumented," "unauthorized": The impact of issue frames on perceptions of immigrants
- Slowdown in the economic assimilation of immigrants
- Crime in immigrant neighborhoods: Evidence from New York City
- The dynamics of immigration opinion in the United States, 1992-2012
- Residential segregation in new Hispanic destinations: Cities, suburbs and rural communities
- Who doesn’t value English? Debunking myths about Mexican immigrants’ attitudes

Paying CEOs More than Uncle Sam

"Of America’s 30 largest corporations, seven paid their CEOs more last year than they paid in federal income taxes, according to a report released [November 18, 2014] by the Institute for Policy Studies and the Center for Effective Government."

"The report, Fleecing Uncle Sam, also looks at the 100 highest-paid CEOs in 2013, finding that 29 received more in pay than their company paid in federal income taxes-up from 25 out of the top 100 in our 2010 and 2011 surveys. These 29 companies operate 237 subsidiaries in tax havens."

"Our corporate tax system is so broken that large, profitable firms can get away without paying their fair share and instead funnel massive funds into the pockets of top executives,’ notes Scott Klinger, Director of Revenue and Spending Policies at the Center for Effective Government and a co-author of the report.”

Institute for Policy Studies, November 18, 2014: “Paying CEOs More than Uncle Sam,” by Sarah Anderson
Institute for Policy Studies, November 18, 2014: “Fleecing Uncle Sam: A growing number of corporations spend more on executive compensation than federal income taxes,” by Sarah Anderson and Scott Klinger (23 pages, PDF)

Report on Sexual Harassment in the Restaurant Industry

"Despite the industry’s growth, restaurant workers occupy seven of the ten lowest-paid occupations reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The economic position of women restaurant workers is particularly precarious. Women restaurant workers experience poverty at nearly one and one third the rate of men restaurant workers. Women’s greater economic insecurity in the industry is largely attributable to their greater likelihood of being employed as tipped workers. While women are 52% of all restaurant employees, they are two-thirds or 66% of all tipped restaurant workers. A majority of these tipped workers are employed in casual, family-style restaurants where tips are meager. The median wage for tipped workers hovers around $9 an hour including tips."

"Since women restaurant workers living off tips are forced to rely on customers for their income rather than their employer, these workers must often tolerate inappropriate behavior from customers, co-workers, and management. This dynamic contributes to the restaurant industry’s status as the single largest source of sexual harassment claims in the U.S. While seven percent of American women work in the restaurant industry, more than a third (an eye-opening 37%) of all sexual harassment claims to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) come from the restaurant industry."


A New Business Strategy: Treating Employees Well

"Welcome to King Arthur Flour, a 225-year-old company that prides itself on treating its employees well. It’s not just lip service: King Arthur is one of a growing number of companies that has incorporated as a new type of business called a benefit corporation, which means its mission is to consider the needs of society and the environment, in addition to profit."

"There are also Certified B-Corporations, a separate process available to companies in every state: The companies pledge to think about people and the planet in addition to profit, and an outside nonprofit inspects them and makes sure they’re doing so."

"We take care of our people -- the whole person that comes into work every day,’ [said Suzanne McDowell, the VP of Human
"...[T]his used to be the standard way American companies treated their employees. In the heady, post-World War II years, companies offered free turkeys at Thanksgiving and gave employees perks, hoping to recruit and retain the most talented workers. But as the pool of available labor grew, companies figured out that they didn’t need to keep employees for life: If one person left, they could hire someone else. And as activist investors pushed companies to downsize and distribute profits back to shareholders, many employers gave up on considering the needs of their employees when deciding how to run their business."

"Now, some economists say there may be a move the other way."


The New Yorker, August 4, 2014: “Companies with Benefits,” by James Surowiecki

Benefit Corporation Information Center [website]

B Corporation [website]

OECD: Social Expenditure Update, Economic Outlook, & the Science, Technology and Industry Outlook

"New OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] data show that in recent years Canada, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland and the United Kingdom have experienced substantial declines in social spending as a percent of GDP, but in most countries social spending remains at historically high levels. Public spending in some emerging economies is below the OECD average, lowest in India and Indonesia but highest in Brazil where -- as in OECD countries -- pensions and health expenditure are important areas of social spending."

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, November 2014: “Social expenditure update: Social spending is falling in some countries, but in many others it remains at historically high levels” (8 pages, PDF)

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, November 2014: Canada - Economic forecast summary

[Interactive tool can compare data from different countries]

Click here for the full Economic Outlook 2014 report.

Also from the OECD this month: Science, Technology and Industry Outlook 2014

Book of the Week


From the publisher: "This innovative book analyses the intersection between the fields of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Human Resource Management (HRM), with a focus on diversity management. The book presents the scope of institutional engagements with CSR and diversity policies in a range of organisations and organisational networks. The editors explore the macro, meso and micro aspects of CSR, answering questions such as: what are the socio-economic, political, legal and cultural influences shaping CSR and diversity management? What are the institutional practices for linking CSR and HRM, and what are the implications of this for employee and organisational well-being? And, how can
the differing needs and expectations of a diverse workforce be fulfilled through CSR? Including both theoretical and empirical chapters, the contributors explore how global organisations and organisational networks can collaborate with stakeholders within their community to leverage their HRM strategies. They share their knowledge of the management process involved in mainstreaming diversity through effective design and implementation of CSR programmes in organisations."

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