

Book Reviews

What Are We Reading?

As we start the new year we would like to repeat our invitation of having readers send us short summaries of the books they read in order to share their impressions with others. This time we have two reviews. One prepared by Professor Malcolm Warner (University of Cambridge, UK) and the other by John P. van Gigch (California State University, USA)

Cooke, F.L., *HRM, Work and Employment in China*, Routledge, London and New York, paperback, 2005, ISBN 0-415-32784-9, 236 pp.

The extraordinary growth of the Chinese economy since Deng Xiaoping's reforms were introduced in the later 1970s, with the "Four Modernizations" (*sige xiandaihua*) and the "Open Door" (*kaifang*) policies set to transform a wide range of hide-bound institutions, was to establish a solid platform for job-creation.

This concise book, written by Dr. Fang Lee Cooke (of the Manchester Business School), entitled "*HRM, Work and Employment in China*" (2005), deals with how China has nurtured human resources over the period and has many merits as a text on how human resource management (*renli ziyuan guanli*) – or HRM for short – evolved, is developing and where it may be going. With no independent trade unions, China has had no Western-style collective bargaining for many years, although this may be slowly changing. Once upon a time, "personnel management" (*renshi guanli*) was the dominant mode in Chinese people management. Now, HRM with "Chinese characteristics", has become more evident in larger firms, both MNC or state-owned, or so it is claimed. Cooke deals with all this in ten crisply written chapters and does it very well indeed.

While the PRC remains relatively downstream in the value-added chain, this is now rapidly changing; it is educating many millions of scientists and technologists in its expanding higher education sector, for instance: "If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people (*shinian shumu*,

bainian shuren)" says an old Chinese proverb (cited in *The Economist*, 30 July 2005: 14).

Even so, the pace of rapid economic growth in the "Middle Kingdom" has been achieved at a weighty human cost vis a vis a deficit of civil rights, labour rights and so on, at least in the view of its critics. Income inequality has now doubled over the last two decades – to a *Gini Coefficient* of 44.7, one of the highest in Asia. Redundancies galore characterize the old state firms that have let go over ten per cent of the urban labour force. Unemployment (*shiye*) has jumped to over 4.5 per cent officially but is probably a multiple of this in reality, mainly due to economic restructuring and consequent downsizing. Some may conclude that this is the price the PRC has to pay for becoming a "global player" but it will not be a painless journey!

Cooke has nonetheless produced a readable text for both undergraduate and graduate readerships. Many MBAs keen to immerse themselves in Chinese management will find the paperback version most affordable.

Malcolm Warner
Judge Business School
University of Cambridge
Cambridge, CB2 1AG, UK
E-mail: m.warner@jbs.cam.ac.uk

Singer Peter, ed., *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, paperback, 2006, ISBN-10: 1-4051-1941-1, 248 pp.

Peter Singer published *Animal Liberation* in 1975 and he has trumpeted the cause of animals ever since.

We also remember Singer for his trailblazing books on Ethics such as *A Companion To Ethics* which was published in 1991 and *A Companion to Bioethics* which was published in 1998 (with Helga Kuhse), both with Blackwell.

In this new text, Singer has gathered the writing of a dozen or more animal activists. The book includes

an enlightening Introduction by Singer in which he debunks the idea of Speciesism – the view that there is something special about humans. In other words, according to the animal Liberation movement, animals – like humans – also deserve to be protected and are also “something special”.

Before the reader decides that these arguments are not worth his attention, It is important to remind him/her that Singer is primarily an ethicist and his views on Ethics – whether applied to animals or people are worthy reading.

Who else than Singer articulates the view of Ethics and Morality as cogently as he does? Singer’s new book is called a “survey of the new wave of philoso-

phy, science and action in the cause of animals”. (From the back cover).

Whereas, Singer has been called “controversial”. this reviewer, finds him cogent, articulate and always well documented. We may not always agree with the views of his collaborators but what is important is to understand how Singer’s arguments are organized and how the subject of ethics is used as a practical tool in actual situations instead of proffering abstract theories which do not always reach the average reader.

John P. van Gigh
Book Review Editor
E-mail: vang@sonic.net