

ADVANCED READING

PASSAGE 1

The Taft-Hartley Act, passed by the United States Congress in 1947, gave states the power to enact “right-to-work” legislation that prohibits union shop agreements. According to such an agreement, a labour union negotiates wages and working conditions for all workers in a business, and all workers are required to belong to the union. Since 1947, 20 states have adopted right-to-work laws. Much of the literature concerning right-to-work laws implies that such legislation has not actually had a significant impact. This point of view, however, has not gone uncriticized. Thomas V Carroll has proposed that the conclusions drawn by previous researchers are attributable to their myopic focus on the premise that, unless right-to-work laws significantly reduce union membership within a state, they have no effect. Carroll argues that the right-to-work laws “do matter” in that such laws generate differences in real wages across states. Specifically, Carroll indicates that while right-to-work laws may not “destroy” unions by reducing the absolute number of unionized workers, they do impede the spread of unions and thereby reduce wages within right-to-work states. Because the countervailing power of unions is weakened in right-to-work states, manufacturers and their suppliers can act cohesively in competitive labour markets, thus lowering wages in the affected industries. Such a finding has important implications regarding the demographics of employment and wages in right-to-work states. Specifically, if right-to-work laws lower wages by weakening union power, minority workers can be expected to suffer a relatively greater economic disadvantage in right-to-work states than in union shop states. This is so because, contrary to what was once thought, unions tend to have a significant positive impact on the economic position of minority workers, especially Black workers, relative to White workers. Most studies concerned with the impact of unionism on the Black worker’s economic position relative to the White worker’s have concentrated on the changes in Black wages due to union membership. That is, they have concentrated on union versus nonunion groups. In a pioneering study, however, Ashenfelter finds that these studies overlook an important fact: although craft unionism increases the differential between the wages of White workers and Black workers due to the traditional exclusion of minority workers from unions in the craft sectors of the labour market, strong positive wage gains are made by Black workers within industrial unions. In fact, Ashenfelter estimates that industrial unionism decreases the differential between the wages of Black workers and White workers by about 3 per cent. If state right-to-work laws weaken the economic power of unions to raise wages, Black workers will experience a disproportionate decline in their relative wage positions. Black workers in right-to-work states would therefore experience a decline in their relative economic positions unless there is strong economic growth in right-to-work states, creating labour shortages and thereby driving up wages.

PASSAGE 2

In the late nineteenth century, the need for women physicians in missionary hospitals in Canton, China, led to expanded opportunities for both Western women and Chinese women. The presence of Western women as medical missionaries in China was made possible by certain changes within the Western missionary movement. Beginning in the 1870s, increasingly large numbers of women were forming women's foreign mission societies dedicated to the support of women's foreign mission work. Beyond giving the women who organized the societies a formal activity outside their home circles, these organizations enabled an increasing number of single women missionaries (as opposed to women who were part of the more typical husband-wife missionary teams) to work abroad. Before the formation of these women's organizations, mission funds had been collected by ministers and other church leaders, most of whom emphasized local parish work. What money was spent on foreign missions was under the control of exclusively male foreign mission boards whose members were uniformly uneasy about the new idea of sending single women out into the mission field. But as women's groups began raising impressive amounts of money donated specifically in support of single women missionaries, the home churches bowed both to women's changing roles at home and to increasing numbers of single professional missionary women abroad. Although the idea of employing a woman physician was a daring one for most Western missionaries in China, the advantages of a well-trained Western woman physician could not be ignored by Canton mission hospital administrators. A woman physician could attend to women patients without offending any of the accepted conventions of female modesty. Eventually, some of these women were able to found and head separate women's medical institutions, thereby gaining access to professional responsibilities far beyond those available to them at home. These developments also led to the attainment of valuable training and status by a significant number of Chinese women. The presence of women physicians in Canton mission hospitals led many Chinese women to avail themselves of Western medicine who might otherwise have failed to do so because of their culture's emphasis on physical modesty. In order to provide enough women physicians for these patients, growing numbers of young Chinese women were given instruction in medicine. This enabled them to earn an independent income, something that was then largely unavailable to women within traditional Chinese society. Many women graduates were eventually able to go out on their own into private practice, freeing themselves of dependence upon the mission community. The most important result of these opportunities was the establishment of clear evidence of women's abilities and strengths, clear reasons for affording women expanded opportunities, and clear role models for how these abilities and responsibilities might be exercised.

PASSAGE 3

In recent years the early music movement, which advocates performing a work as it was performed at the time of its composition, has taken on the character of a crusade, particularly as it has moved beyond the sphere of medieval and baroque music and into music from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by composers such as Mozart and Beethoven. Granted, knowledge about the experience of playing old music on now-obsolete instruments has been of inestimable value to scholars. Nevertheless, the early music approach to performance raises profound and troubling questions. Early music advocates assume that composers write only for the instruments available to them, but evidence suggests that composers of Beethoven's stature imagined extraordinarily high and low notes as part of their compositions, even when they recognized that such notes could not be played on instruments available at the time. In the score of Beethoven's first piano concerto, there is a "wrong" note, a high F-natural where the melody obviously calls for a high F-sharp, but pianos did not have this high an F-sharp when Beethoven composed the concerto. Because Beethoven once expressed a desire to revise his early works to exploit the extended range of pianos that became available to him some years later, it seems likely that he would have played the F-sharp if given the opportunity. To use a piano exactly contemporary with the work's composition would require playing a note that was probably frustrating for Beethoven himself to have had to play. In addition, early music advocates often inadvertently divorce music and its performance from the life of which they were, and are, a part. The discovery that Haydn's and Mozart's symphonies were conducted during their lifetimes by a pianist who played the chords to keep the orchestra together has given rise to early music recordings in which a piano can be heard obtrusively in the foreground, despite evidence indicating that the orchestral piano was virtually inaudible to audiences at eighteenth-century concerts and was dropped as musically unnecessary when a better way to beat time was found. And although in the early nineteenth century the first three movements (sections) of Mozart's and Beethoven's symphonies were often played faster, and the last movement slower than today, this difference can readily be explained by the fact that at that time audiences applauded at the end of each movement, rather than withholding applause until the end of the entire work. As a result, musicians were not forced into extra brilliance in the finale in order to generate applause, as they are now. To restore the original tempo of these symphonies represents an irrational denial of the fact that our concepts of musical intensity and excitement have quite simply, changed.

PASSAGE 4

Although the United States steel industry faces widely publicized economic problems that have eroded its steel production capacity, not all branches of the industry have been equally affected. The steel industry is not monolithic: it includes integrated producers, minimills, and speciality-steel mills. The integrated producers start with iron ore and coal and produce a wide assortment of shaped steels. The minimills reprocess scrap steel into a limited range of low-quality products, such as reinforcing rods for concrete. The speciality-steel mills are similar to minimills in that they tend to be smaller than the integrated producers and are based on scrap, but they manufacture much more expensive products than minimills do and commonly have an active in-house research-and-development effort. Both minimills and speciality-steel mills have succeeded in avoiding the worst of the economic difficulties that are afflicting integrated steel producers, and some of the mills are quite profitable. Both take advantage of new technology for refining and casting steel, such as continuous casting, as soon as it becomes available. The minimills concentrate on producing a narrow range of products for sale in their immediate geographic area, whereas speciality-steel mills preserve flexibility in their operations in order to fulfil a customer's particular specifications. Among the factors that constrain the competitiveness of integrated producers are excessive labour, energy, and capital costs, as well as manufacturing inflexibility. Their equipment is old and less automated and does not incorporate many of the latest refinements in steelmaking technology. (For example, only about half of the United States integrated producers have continuous casters, which combine pouring and rolling into one operation and thus save the cost of separate rolling equipment.) One might conclude that the older labour-intensive machinery still operating in the United States integrated plants is at fault for the poor performance of the United States industry, but this cannot explain why Japanese integrated producers, who produce a higher-quality product using less energy and labour, are also experiencing economic trouble. The fact is that the common technological denominator of integrated producers is an inherently inefficient process that is still rooted in the nineteenth century. Integrated producers have been unable to compete successfully with minimills because the minimills, like speciality-steel mills, have dispensed almost entirely with the archaic energy and capital-intensive front end of integrated steelmaking: the iron-smelting process, including the mining and preparation of the raw materials and the blast-furnace operation. In addition, minimills have found a profitable way to market steel products: as indicated above, they sell their finished products locally, thereby reducing transportation costs, and concentrate on a limited range of shapes and sizes within a narrow group of products that can be manufactured economically. For these reasons, minimills have been able to avoid the economic decline affecting integrated steel producers.