Lead Article

The Dynamic Evolution of Urban Industrial Mission in Korea

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This study analyses urban industrial mission (UIM) as a non-traditional actor in Korean employment relations from the early 1960s to the 2000s. It shows how one church-based organization in Seoul, Yong Dong Po (YDP) - UIM, was able to impact other employment actors (the state and employers) and struggle against the suppression of labour rights and worker voice, particularly in the period upto 1987. As the trend towards greater democracy from the late 1980s gathered momentum, the influence of YDP-UIM in Korean industrial relations began to decline. The case study suggests that in the absence of alliances or coalitions with established actors, new and non-traditional actors which pursue orthodox economic goals will be those most likely to endure and feature significantly in a country's industrial relations system.

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Challenges before Industrial Relations

In recent years, the field of industrial relations has experienced numerous challenges including a greater recognition of global factors influencing national systems of work regulation, more sophisticated employment practices by managements, new work arrangements, and the decline in trade union influence across different countries. Such developments have undoubtedly been a major reason for the shift in attention by some scholars towards evaluating the state and future of industrial relations (e.g. Ackers 2002, Piore & Safford 2006). There has also been increased recognition of, and interest in, the new and non-traditional actors who are playing a more active role in the employment relationship. It is with such new and non-traditional actors that this article seeks to engage.

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The new and non-traditional actors are beginning to occupy the labour market spaces either newly created by various macro-level changes (e.g. Baldacchino 2001) or made vacant by some of the traditional industrial relations actors (e.g. Michelson 2006). There is a small body of literature which seeks to document the emergence of these new employment actors, particularly in the Anglo-American world. For example, there has been research on the Citizens' Advice Bureaux in the U.K. (Abbott 1998, 2004), end-users of services in Canada (Bellemare 2000), community groups and employment agencies in the U.S. (Osterman et al. 2001), the role of multinationals in Finland (Peltonen 2006), and a range of new and hitherto under-researched actors in Australia (Michelson et al 2008). The *British Journal of Industrial Relations* published a special issue on new actors in industrial relations (vol. 44, no. 4, 2006) with four of the six papers in the special issue devoted to developments from the U.S. However, our understanding of the new and non-traditional industrial relations actors in other contexts such as Asia is not well developed.

This article aims to explore non-traditional actors in South Korea (hereafter 'Korea') through an examination of urban industrial mission (UIM). While the progressive wings of a number of different Christian churches in Korea developed such missions to assist and support workers from the early 1960s, this article focuses on one of the largest and best known examples – Yong Dong Po urban industrial mission (YDP-UIM) based in Seoul. The study examines YDP-UIM from this early period to the early 2000s to understand better the role and activities of this church-based actor. Specifically, the research seeks to answer the question: to what extent has YDP-UIM been a significant non-traditional actor in Korean employment relations?

The article shows how YDP-UIM evolved over two different chronological periods: the early 1960s to 1987, and 1987 to the early 2000s. In the former period, the political and economic climate in Korea helped to shape a role for YDP-UIM as trade unions' ability to represent workers was severely restricted. However, with the transition to democracy from 1987, the relative importance of YDP-UIM in Korean industrial relations began to decline as trade union rights and freedoms were strengthened under more liberal industrial laws. Consequently, and assisted by some other factors, YDP-UIM began to shift its orientation including expanding its focus to supporting workers in other countries in Asia. Rather than suggesting consistency in actor influence over time as Dunlop's three-actor model appears to assume, the article concludes that YDP-UIM was a more (and less) significant actor in different time periods. The study therefore presents a more dynamic account of this particular non-traditional employment actor in the Korean context.

Actors' Influence in Industrial Relations

Many theories of industrial relations define actors in terms of their behaviours and their power and influence via-à-vis

other actors. Dunlop's (1958) systems theory, which has been highly influential in shaping the domain of inquiry, argued that there are three well-defined categories of actors: employers (and their representatives), workers (and their representatives) and a range of state-based agencies. While the conventional actor categories have served the field well, they are perhaps unduly limiting as they preclude from the analysis a range of additional actors that can potentially impact the employment relationship. Further, other than needing to consider these three actor groups in their research endeavours, scholars have lacked guidance in terms of precisely how to gauge an actor's influence.

Therefore, in order to evaluate the significance of YDP-UIM in Korean industrial relations, we draw on the important work of Bellemare (2000). He defined an actor as: "an individual, a group or an institution that has the capability, through its action, to directly influence the industrial relations process, including the capability to influence the causal powers deployed by other actors in the IR environment (indirect action)" (Bellemare 2000: 386). Thus, an actor is constituted by its activities and these activities are significant to the extent that they provoke reactions from other employment actors or impact industrial relations more generally in a meaningful way. His framework is particularly important because he proposed an analytical model of employment actors that:

- does not assume *a priori* that any individual, group or organization should be categorized as an actor, including any of the traditional actors of employment relations analysis;
- seeks to discuss the 'significance' of an actor at different levels of analysis; and
- can be adapted to different historical periods and different countries.

The claim that no actor should automatically be privileged in terms of analysis is controversial because it contends that trade unions, employers and the state (and its various agencies) might or might not be classified as an employment actor. The identification of an employment actor is therefore something to be determined empirically. This feature is a major departure from John Dunlop's systems theory. Bellemare (2000: 386) notes that social agency is not a matter of intentions but of consequences (desired and intended). To be a genuine actor, some exercise of action must occur, but in addition there is capacity for other actors to take these actions into consideration and to respond in some way.

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For Bellemare, an employment actor is a continuous rather than a dichotomous variable. In other words, the individual, group or institution is either a more or less significant actor or it is not an actor at all. Further, he does not pro-

vide any limit on the number of possible employment actors in the system and this number can fluctuate according to different temporal and spatial contexts. Therefore, an actor that is currently influential in one country's employment system might not be significant in that same country (or even a different country) in the future (Bellemare 2000: 399). In this sense, the framework establishes the possibility for change in the centrality or otherwise of any actor. To measure the significance or effectiveness of an employment actor, Bellemare operationalized an actor's influence along two dimensions – an instrumental dimension and an outcomes dimension.

The instrumental dimension comprises three different levels of analysis – activities at the workplace level, the organizational level and the institutional (social, economic, legislative) level. An actor is regarded as more significant if it is able to shape developments at all three levels (breadth of involvement) and where this involvement occurs on a continual basis. On the other hand, actions that do not relate to all three levels or that take place more intermittently would lead to the conclusion that the actor is less significant in employment relations.

The outcomes dimension of an action measures the extent to which an actor achieves its objectives or produces wider changes in the regulation of work and employment. Thus, the framework makes central the notions of power and legitimacy. An actor that either has all or part of its goals accepted by other actors or imposes them on others would be characterized as a significant actor, particularly if the ensuing changes are more permanent and enduring (Bellemare 2000: 389). Acceptance of an actor's goals is more likely when there is a higher level of participation in decision-making (which might extend from a simple advisory status through to genuine participation) regarding a wider range of topics (across the workplace, organizational and institutional levels). In summary, his model is depicted in Table 1.

Acceptance of an actor's goals is more likely when there is a higher level of participation in decision-making

Table 1: Determining the Significance of an Employment Actor

Dimension	Evaluation Criteria
1. Instrumental (means)	Involvement at all three levels (work place, organizational and institutional); *and* Continuity of presence
2. Outcomes (ends)	Goals recognized by / impact other actors; *and* Level and breadth of participation in decision making

The framework is less suited to the contemporary analysis of new and non-traditional employment actors because demonstrating an actor's influence can only be established over time (see Abbott 2006). For this reason, the framework is highly amenable to a long-term analysis

of YDP-UIM from the early 1960s. Before the role of YDP-UIM in Korean employment relations is examined, details about how the study was done are presented.

Methodology

Data were collected by way of documentation and semi-structured interviews. Such methods are well-regarded and have been employed in previous studies of urban industrial mission in the United Kingdom and Australia (Bell 2006, Michelson 2006). With the exception of the website for YDP-UIM (http://ydpuim.org) and the 40 year history of YDP-UIM (published in book form in 1998) which were both written in Korean, all documents examined were in English. These English-language sources included, for example, articles on YDP-UIM, internal YDP-UIM documents and memoranda, church letters and materials from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World Council of Churches and the Uniting Church of Australia, correspondence and memoirs from members of YDP-UIM including a book written by a former YDP-UIM activist (see Ogle 1990), various conference proceedings of urban industrial mission in Asia, and newspaper articles about the activities of YDP-UIM from Western newspapers. For the two Korean-language sources noted above, a native Korean speaker was employed to read and then translate substantial sections of these into English.

In addition to the various historical and contemporary documents, data were collected via semi-structured interviews. The interviews lasting between 45 minutes and one hour were conducted between October and December 2007 with seven former YDP-UIM personnel. Four of these interviews were conducted via email and telephone because the respondents were based in a range of geographic locations. In addition, face-to-face interviews were also conducted with two Korean labour activists who had a broad understanding of industrial relations in that country. The content of interviews included questions about the background and motivation of the YDP-UIM personnel, the role of religion in Korean society, the nature of YDP-UIM activities, perceptions regarding the influence of YDP-UIM in Korea, including the impact of the organization on other actors such as employers, the state, trade unions and a range of activist groups, and the various challenges confronting YDP-UIM. There was a written record of interview responses in the case of email correspondence and where face-to-face or telephone interviews were used, substantial notes were taken during the interview with these notes subsequently expounded shortly afterwards.

While the total number of interviews was relatively small (n = 9) and were limited to those who could speak English, they nonetheless represented former YDP-UIM personnel at various stages in the history of the organization. Thus, their collective experiences covered both time periods examined by the study. However, it is acknowledged that interviews with relevant Korean YDP-UIM pastors, employers, government

and other state agencies would have further strengthened the data collected. Access to such groups was not possible due to language barriers.

The documentary data and interviews together were informative in understanding the role of YDP-UIM in Korean employment relations, and the perceived attitudes and practices of the traditional employment actors with whom they interacted. The following sections report on the findings.

Authoritarian Industrialization (1960s to 1987)

This period has generally been described as one in which industrial relations was firmly controlled by the state for the primary purpose of advancing economic development, and the subsequent subordination of labour rights and employee voice (Kuruvilla & Erickson 2002). Following the cessation of World War II, the U.S. military government ruled South Korea from 1945-48. During this time various right-wing groups (with the support of the government) effectively destroyed the more militant trade unions. Some contend that this early experience was crucial as it "marked future efforts to mobilize labour as 'communist agitation'..." with even moderate trade unions treated with suspicion (Lee 2005: 914). Such enduring fears and suspicions were no doubt compounded by the Korean War (1950-53) and the proximity of the communist-based government in North Korea that still remains. Of relevance, and perhaps of little surprise, Korean presidents in the 1960s through to the 1990s were also former army generals.

Since 1961, General Park Chung Hee's government sought to suppress dissent and opposition to the centralized economic policies

Established through the Evangelism Department of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) in 1958, YDP-UIM is located in an industrial and working-class area in the southern part of Seoul. This single largest industrial area in Korea accounts for about 12 per cent of the country's exports (YDP-UIM 1998: 111). Manufacturing industries including textiles and electrical products are concentrated in the area. The development of YDP-UIM was initially intended as a vehicle to evangelize and minister to workers (YDP-UIM 1998: 41). This included organizing churches inside factories known as workers' churches. However, this original objective began to change as the process of rapid industrialization occurred.

Since 1961, General Park Chung Hee's government sought to suppress dissent and opposition to the centralized economic policies through the use of military and police forces. He was to later suspend the constitution, dissolve parliament and introduce martial law (October 1972). During this regime, the country began to experience rapid industrialization and massive urbanization as people moved en masse to the major cities (Leggett 1997). The various social and economic problems that emerged as

a result of the government's export-oriented industrialization (e.g. long work hours, low wages, and minimal working conditions), and its repressive stance towards workers and independent trade unions (Lee 2005: 919), gave impetus to a change in outlook by YDP-UIM.

Government was also suppressing the activities of trade unions in order to ensure its low wage policy was met.

The new factory employees from mainly the rural areas were less aware of their rights and often had very poor employment and living conditions. Such people worked between 12 and 16 hours a day, seven days a week (YDP-UIM 1998: 94). Such harsh labour practices posed a problem for those workers who wanted to attend church on a Sunday. The interests of churches in general and YDP-UIM in particular, began to collide with the emerging realities precipitated by the economic policies of the state and the employment practices of many companies. From the late 1960s YDP-UIM began to take greater responsibility in demanding more socio-economic justice for workers where there was growing evidence of inequality (the urban poor). In addition to maintaining their bible studies, meetings with workers now began to discuss wages, working conditions and employment rights. This was because the government was also suppressing the activities of trade unions in order to ensure its low wage policy was met. The Park government's position was typified by a "growth first, distribution later" approach (former YDP-UIM intern's memoirs). Thus, the organization began to see its Christian role as seeking change in society on behalf of disadvantaged groups. It was unequivocally partisan in perspective as it took the side of workers in their struggles against the state and very powerful chaebol or large scale family-owned conglomerates (Armstrong 1985, Yun-Shik 1998). As a non-traditional actor YDP-UIM, along with other activist groups, was becoming something of a rallying point for protest and employee voice in the country's industrial relations. The growing ascendancy of the organization was also helped by the situation facing the trade union movement.

Company managements controlled many of the enterprise unions

In 1960 the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), had been recognized by the government as the only legal national-level union body. All unions were obliged to affiliate with the FKTU (Markey 2006: 351). Not surprisingly, the FKTU was seen as pro-government and this lack of independence resulted in substantial dissatisfaction with organized labour. Moreover, company managements controlled many of the enterprise unions (Markey 2006). In this environment, YDP-UIM was perceived as one of very few pro-employee actors as it intensified its activities by training leaders through night schools and small-group meetings, publishing books and reports on wages, employment conditions and the violations of labour stan-

dards, offering counselling and guidance, and mobilizing employees to develop a sense of solidarity and collective consciousness (Lee & Lee 2005: 288-9, Minns 2001, Yun-Shik 1998). The organization also ran a Credit Union and a consumer co-operative (YDP-UIM document, 21 June 1978). Although geographically confined to certain cities including Seoul and Inchon, the church-based missions such as YDP-UIM were "responsible for producing a large number of labour activists" (Yun-Shik 1998: 451). In the 1970s, in a number of cases, the organization sent activists disguised as workers into factories to help establish democratic unions (Kim 2004, Nam 1996: 332).

There were many instances of male-dominated FKTU affiliated unions being on the side of management when the firms were in dispute with the female workers (WCC 1987: 108). But women actively participated in YDP-UIM activities and were by no means docile, submissive and uninterested in improving their rights. It was reported that something like 90 per cent of those attending small group meetings organized by YDP-UIM were female (memoirs of YDP Korean pastor, n.d.). Male opposition towards women employees was often based on the country's patriarchal authority structure as well as cultural contempt towards those who performed manual or physical work (Koo 2001).

The activities of YDP-UIM began impacting employers in Seoul and elsewhere. For example, many Korean companies tried to discredit YDP-UIM on a national scale. When business firms discovered they had workers associated with UIM, their employment was often terminated. Hence, involvement with YDP-UIM often required secrecy on the part of employees (interview, 13 December 2007).

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Similar to the case of churches in other countries (Osterman 2006), YDP-UIM also worked closely with a range of other groups including intellectuals and university students to try and advance labour rights, including initiating more spontaneous forms of strike activity (Kwon & O'Donnell 1999: 284). As one former YDP-UIM employee in the early to mid-1980s noted, the reason the organization had to take on these tasks was that the independent and democratic unions had (by the 1980s) all been emasculated or driven underground. But "YDP-UIM sometimes played a servant role, sometimes a leadership role, sometimes a sanctuary. It was a training ground, a meeting point between workers, the student movement and the wider pro-democracy movement" (interview, 20 November 2007).

Such alliances or networks between YDP-UIM and other groups were unlawful and much of the organization's activities necessarily occurred in a clandestine fashion, including meetings conducted at night (Ogle 1990, World Alli-

ance of Reformed Churches 1989: 198). This did not stop the surveillance, arrest and imprisonment of YDP-UIM pastors and workers. Government tactics for such victimization were frequently based on allegations of engaging in communist-related activities and this negative message about YDP-UIM was widely circulated through the mass media (YDP-UIM 1998: 175).

Other tactics employed by the state including expelling foreign clergy and laypersons who had been active in industrial mission (Ogle 1990). One Australian intern at YDP-UIM in the mid to late 1970s was expelled in June 1978 for political activities. The government also ordered a "special audit" of the YDP-UIM Credit Union and while the organization agreed, it refused to disclose the names of its members. YDP-UIM was subsequently fined. The National Textile Union and the National Printing Workers Union took the step of establishing Organization Action Squads (OAS). These were reportedly made up of "professional gangsters" intended to harm the interests of YDP-UIM and other church-based employment actors (National Council of Churches document, 2 May 1978).

YDP-UIM support of the growing democratization movement in the late 1960s, 1970s and beyond was consistent with the original posture of the Christian church to combat political, social and economic injustice. This agenda was further supported by the diffusion of "liberation theology" from Latin America to Korea in the 1960s which was concerned with action and activism in liberating the marginalized sections of society from poverty, inequality and discrimination (Choe 1980, Yun-Shik 1998: 440). The term *minjung* (which stresses the sovereignty of the people) was the local adaptation of liberation theology and remained central to the ideology of YDP-UIM (Koo 2001). This perspective translated into those activities which sought to directly empower workers to take control of their own destiny.

YDP-UIM did not seek to mobilize the entire Christian church in Korea with the concept of *minjung*. In fact, some conservative churches consented to the demands of the authoritarian state at times and labelled the industrial missions as communist entities (interview, 13 December 2007, Choe 1980). This response can partly be explained by the relationship of the state to the church. Many Christian denominations in Korea were controlled by elders and a large number of these elders were also government officials and company owners (internal YDP-UIM documents). This meant that there was even periodic opposition to the pro-worker policies and methods of YDP-UIM from within the Presbyterian Church. At times, therefore, YDP-UIM (and other missions) depended on funding and other support from overseas churches.

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Being a church-based organization, industrial missions such as YDP-UIM were often seen as a more "legitimate" actor for expressing dissent and advocating for democracy and change by a broad range of Korean activists (Choe 1980). Nonetheless, the government was acutely aware that the YDP-UIM represented a challenge to its authority. In 1974, for instance, the government sought the cooperation of different Christian churches and their various organizations regarding industrial relations, arguing that such matters were to be left directly to workers and managers. The government also tried to blame the high-profile withdrawal of U.S. multinational company Control Data Corporation from Korea in 1982 on the activities of UIM, thereby vilifying the actor as extremist, dangerous and as a threat to the country's economic progress (Wall Street Journal, 24 August 1982, YDP-UIM 1998). In reality, the multinational company had been affected by a long-running industrial dispute and had experienced other technical and management difficulties.

Other evidence of government hostility included new industrial laws passed in 1980. Some believed that the principal targets of these laws which prohibited third party involvement in labour organizing, negotiations with businesses, or collective bargaining, were activist groups in general of which YDP-UIM was a leading example. For many analysts the legal changes revealed the sustained influence of these non-traditional actors over time to maintain the struggle against political, social and economic inequality and oppression (interview, 15 November 2007, Armstrong 1985: 8, Yun-Shik 1998: 452).

One might wonder why the government did not simply ban or outlaw YDP-UIM and other activist church-based agencies outright. In part, the Christian church was still an important institution in Korean society and enjoyed considerable power and legitimacy (Kim 2000). To outlaw the organization would be an overt act against religious freedom (Wall Street Journal, 24 August 1982). The police and security agencies seldom entered the YDP-UIM building as it was respected as "sacred ground". Nonetheless, the police would often monitor the movements of people around the YDP-UIM building, including trying to periodically block people from attending meetings (World Alliance of Reformed Churches 1989: 199).

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While General Park was assassinated in 1979, a further military coup occurred and martial law was imposed. In 1980 the new President lifted martial law and introduced a new constitution. However, the authoritarian state and a range of national emergency measures of various kinds still persisted for a further seven years.

Democratic Transition & Beyond (1987 to early 2000s)

This period was marked by the emergence of greater human and employment

rights, triggered in part by a series of nation-wide rallies and strikes during July and August 1987. Democratic rights were strengthened and the government sought to move towards a less regulated and tightly-controlled market economy (Leggett 1997: 71). The state also began to play a less interventionist role in industrial relations although it clearly remained more supportive of the interests of employers (Kwon & O'Donnell 1999). There was liberalization of labour laws provoking something like 2000 new unions in 1988. Korean trade union membership, 12.3 per cent of employment in 1986, increased to 18.6 per cent in 1989 (Kim & Kim 2003: 346). These trends also gave rise to new wage demands, the expansion of collective bargaining and widespread strikes. This change has been depicted by some as the new "labour problem" that faced the country at that time (Wilkinson 1994). In Korea, unions have tended to be organized along enterprise lines although this had limitations for dealing effectively with industrial-level and national-level employment issues (Jeong 1995).

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Many of the earlier struggles still remained. The conservative and pro-government FKTU operated alongside those new unions seeking more democratic control, and arrests of workers and unionists on the charge of "interfering with company business" were still common. The close relationship between YDP-UIM and the independent unions continued. During strikes and street demonstrations the wearing of masks over the mouth would symbolize the silencing of rights, and people would continue to meet at YDP-UIM to eat, relax and discuss strategies for action (interview, 6 November 2007). In addition, self-immolation and threats of self-immolation were a not uncommon form of protest action by some workers. At YDP-UIM "candles were lit and placed next to pictures of workers who had died" (Uniting Church in Australia 1991: 36). YDP-UIM continued to operate its workers' centre with people visiting and gathering informally on a regular basis. There were occasions when striking workers would temporarily live and sleep at YDP-UIM (Uniting Church in Australia 1991: 69). But the *minjung* approach continued. As one former YDP-UIM intern in the early 1990s noted: "Factory workers were not looking for welfare services. They came (to us) for education and support so as to organize themselves and resolve their own problems collectively through union activity. This church has been taking a stand with people who have been struggling for the last 30 years, and has had a significant role in the development of the labour movement in Korea" (interview, 6 November 2007).

Christian churches' UIM programmes began to decline in the mid to late 1980s as independent trade unions began to enjoy a resurgence and an expanding militancy (Cumings 1989: 26, Minns 2001: 185). The YDP-UIM itself underwent something of a transformation in its role. This change did not ap-

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pear to be related to the decline in union membership from the peak of 18.6 per cent in 1989 to 11.8 per cent of workers by 1999. Rather, the circumstances surrounding the earlier focus on social and economic justice by YDP-UIM were now quite different. While struggles surrounding labour rights remained on-going, how this goal was to be achieved in a different institutional and political context had ostensibly shifted. Now, there were many independent or non-government affiliated trade unions (supported by liberal labour laws) pressing for higher demands. The place of YDP-UIM and other activist groups in serving as a rallying point for employees' economic interests was no longer as dominant. In contrast to the earlier period (early 1960s to 1987), the new role for the organization as noted by its general secretary was to "consolidate itself as a firm supporting force" (Christian Conference of Asia-Urban Industrial Mission, October 1990). Rather than being at the forefront of industrial activities as it once was, it was to now provide a more support-oriented role including formation of new trade unions, democratization of existing trade unions, education and leadership training, and raising the political and industrial consciousness of workers. It was not until 1995 that an autonomous national body of democratic unions – the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) – was formed.

However, this period of consolidation was to alter somewhat as the various changes to the socio-political landscape of the early to mid-1990s in Korea had slowed momentum for the wider democratization movement (Lee 2005: 931). The first civilian president was elected in late 1992, who sought to "accelerate the shift to a market economy" (Garran 1998: 58). However, because of new laws designed to dismiss employees more easily and to hire temporary workers, large-scale strikes erupted in December 1996 and January 1997. The threat to job security was used by the independent trade union movement to mobilize workers on a national scale and subsequently increased the trade unions' authority as the government was forced to back-down.

Following an economic crisis in 1997 where a number of large companies (chaebol) collapsed, the won was massively devalued, unemployment increased considerably, and the country required the largest ever paid assistance from the International Monetary Fund (Minns 2001: 191). New challenges thus emerged for the labour movement. The financial crisis had a range of negative effects on workers including widespread unemployment and wage reductions (Koo 2002) although some have argued that these negative consequences actually improved the importance of labour organizations (e.g. Kim & Kim 2003). In this context, YDP-UIM began to move

away from an industrial relations role, and started to address the consequences of economic restructuring. The International Monetary Fund had demanded a number of changes be made, including the widespread restructuring of the economy.

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This period of economic hardship saw YDP-UIM move to help the unemployed and those generally displaced by the wider economic problems facing the country. YDP-UIM assistance included establishing support programs such as legal, employment and life counselling, and providing drop-in shelters with basic clothing and medical facilities (The Korea Herald, 8 November 2002). There was a large influx of foreign or migrant workers, particularly from other parts of Asia. More than half of these migrants were working illegally and therefore experienced inferior employment conditions to those covered by the country's labour laws (Lee & Lee 2003: 511-2). YDP-UIM also sought to assist this group through sharing insights on worker's rights (interview, 18 December 2007).

The broader changes with often underlying global causes also precipitated YDP-UIM to extend its focus beyond Korea. The recognition that neo-liberal economic ideologies were deeply embedded within globalization trends highlighted the need within YDP-UIM to address inequalities in other Asian countries which relied extensively on low labour costs. Therefore, to progress the agenda of cross-border worker representation and voice, the organization established an international training centre in 2001 (Asian URM Diakonia Training Centre). Extending its international solidarity activities, the Centre was designed to spread democracy and build-up the UIM movement throughout Asia. In addition to sharing insights on employee rights more generally in countries such as Burma and Indonesia, the YDP-UIM has also continued to receive short-term visits from socially-conscious activists in other countries. International training has become a particular strength of YDP-UIM in the 2000s (interview, 18 December 2007).

The organization established an international training centre in 2001

Effective employee representation in Korea still faced challenges because in November 2007, the country was still to ratify ILO convention no. 87 "freedom of association and protection of the right to organize" and ILO convention no. 98 "the right to organize and collective bargaining" (ILO documents 2007). Along with other pro-employee actor groups, small organizations such as YDP-UIM still have a role to play in achieving such goals. But it is no longer as prominent in the industrial relations system as it once was. This is further evidenced by the much reduced attention that YDP-UIM receives from government and employer groups.

Discussion & Conclusion

This study has examined YDP-UIM in Korea through the lens of an "employment actors" framework (Bellemare 2000). Since the early 1960s, the government in Korea has played a dominant role in shaping the country's industrial relations. To pursue its various economic policies the government has at times implemented laws and other measures in order to suppress opposition and dissent. This has meant that employee rights and representation through independent trade unionism has been difficult to achieve. In this setting, other actors have emerged to oppose unilateral government and employer actions which appeared inimical to workers' interests. YDP-UIM was one such actor. The article investigated the extent to which YDP-UIM has been a significant non-traditional actor in Korean industrial relations.

Bellemare's framework consists of two dimensions: an instrumental and an outcomes dimension. For the first analytical period (the early 1960s to 1987) YDP-UIM was directly involved at the workplace and organizational levels through a range of activities, and to a less extent at the institutional level through its empowering of activists to pursue greater democratic freedoms. In terms of outcomes, its presence was significant enough to attract opposition from the state, employers, many trade unions supported by the government, and even periodically from within its own and other Christian churches. It thus remained one of several pro-employee actors that sought to improve employment rights during the period of authoritarian industrialization. Thus, its goals and activities did impact the traditional employment actors in Korea. Various political actions designed to obstruct YDP-UIM in this period (e.g. arrests and imprisonments, changes in industrial legislation, the use of the mass media, terminations of employment for YDP-UIM trained activists etc.) reveal just how significant the presence and activities of YDP-UIM were during this time. While the organization was not usually able to directly participate in decision-making processes, it did at times negotiate with management on behalf of workers. It also worked alongside and in close co-operation with other activist groups such as student organizations.

Its goals and activities did impact the traditional employment actors in Korea.

The second analytical period (1987 to the early 2000s), marked a decline in the role of YDP-UIM in industrial relations. Greater democratic freedoms and more liberal industrial legislation allowed many independent trade unions to emerge (which had been suppressed in the earlier period). This concomitantly reduced the importance of YDP-UIM in the national context as trade unions regained their legitimacy to represent employees' economic interests. YDP-UIM adopted a more support-oriented role of assisting workers through their unions. Not surprisingly, YDP-UIM attracted much less direct opposi-

tion than it did in the period prior to 1987.

Its activities were also shaped by broader political and economic changes which saw it provide a range of welfare-type activities to those displaced by the economic policies of the late 1990s. In addition, these same political and economic factors triggered a greater international focus as the influx of often illegal workers highlighted the need for education and training of these workers coming to Korea from other Asian countries. This expanded focus, however, would not warrant YDP-UIM being regarded as an international actor (Gumbrell-McCormick 2008). With the diminution in the actor's focus on economic interests (employment conditions and rights) pursued more rigorously in the earlier period, its subsequent influence in the country's industrial relations system also decreased in importance.

This finding suggests that non-traditional actors who move away from pursuing primarily economic goals will not be as significant as those who do pursue such interests. In this way, it adds some caution to the emerging new identities for worker mobilization based on non-economic imperatives (Piore & Safford 2006). Such a role for new and non-traditional actors is of course still possible, particularly where alliances and coalitions are formed with trade unions since unions do focus on traditional collective bargaining. In those cases where unions and non-union actors inter-relate in the pursuit of employee rights, an economic goal still appears to be a minimum imperative.

In those cases where unions and non-union actors inter-relate in the pursuit of employee rights, an economic goal still appears to be a minimum imperative.

Heckscher and Carré (2006: 617-8) have argued that "A 'new' actor should be something more lasting, capable of taking multiple types of actions and adjusting to changing circumstances". The case of YDP-UIM in Korea is one such example as it has endured for 50 years and has shown some capacity to adapt over time. Rather than revealing a uniformity or consistency of influence in the industrial relations context, the YDP-UIM has been characterized by change in terms of how it has sought to articulate and represent employee interests.

While Bellemare's framework has been helpful in illuminating the fluctuating significance of YDP-UIM as a non-traditional actor over two different periods, it also appears to have some limitations. Abbott (2006), for example, demonstrated in his study of the Citizens' Advice Bureaux (a charity-based organization) in the U.K. that some actors can be significant in spite of them not having a "continuous" workplace or organizational presence. Organizations like the Bureaux do not always have to be participating internally in workplaces and organizations for them to exert in-

fluence, a characteristic also shared by YDP-UIM in Korea. Indeed, YDP-UIM did have an impact on workplaces and organizations even when its pastors and other activists were not physically present in them. This study confirms Abbott's claim that the terms "continuity" and "presence" can also be exerted externally to the workplace and organization (Abbott 2006: 444).

YDP-UIM's involvement also spilled over to the unemployed, the socially disadvantaged and marginalized sections of society.

Bellemare's analytical framework privileges the domain of paid employment for the purpose of evaluating the significance of an industrial relations actor. But what the current study has shown is that some non-traditional actors such as YDP-UIM do not operate exclusively in this realm. The actor's role was also demonstrated, particularly in the latter time period with its concern for both employment and non-employment issues. Because actors are not a homogenous group their influence should be demonstrated according to the specific type, goals, and nature of the actor. YDP-UIM's involvement also spilled over to the unemployed, the socially disadvantaged and marginalized sections of society, including addressing the plight of low-paid migrant workers. The case study of YDP-UIM further highlights the difficulties of trying to quarantine "work" and "non-work" issues in industrial relations analyses. The two areas were not mutually exclusive from the perspective of YDP-UIM.

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