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Abstracts

FIAT AND THE CRISIS IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Giuseppe Berta

The author offers a concise historical overview of the conflict in FIAT, and then goes on to a reconstruction of events which constitutes an apt opening to our series of articles. The reconstruction revolves mainly around the global identity of the company, which at this juncture represents the condition and at the same time the major motivation for facing the most combative union, FIOM-CGIL, and the workers with the alternative of adapting to the company's international parameters or losing all the promised investment. The impact of this approach exceeded expectations, with a disruptive process emerging that have not anticipated the leap ahead taken by Marchionne with the FIAT-Chrysler merger. For example, the results of the referendums held in the factories did not offer the firm total satisfaction; hence a state of affairs that caught by surprise both Confindustria (the Italian Manufacturers' Association), and the unions prepared to grant some credit to FIAT, not to mention the CGIL, which did not want to front opened within the organization directly upon appointment of the Secretary-General Susanna Camusso. With the latest sentences, restoring full legitimacy to the fiom representatives, a new phase of tension opens between the parties in the Italian FIAT factories, and the outcome is anyone's guess.

THE "FIAT CASE" AND THE ITALIAN SYSTEM OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND LAW POLICY

Lorenzo Zoppoli

After a brief introduction, the article seeks to define certain basic principles regarding the system of industrial relations, above all in connection with the importance of clear-cut rules applying to the field in a country characterized by productive fragmentation and the political bickering of present-day Italy. Starting from here, the article deals with the need for new rules for social represen-

tation which, while they cannot but recognize assured rights for the workers and their union representatives, are not to be brought into play in purely antagonistic terms against the firms. The author prefers, rather, to speak of new systems to reconcile interests. In this respect great potential lies in creating scope for new regulatory and relational models with reform of article 19 of the Workers' Statute and enhancement of the juridical system for company negotiation in derogation. In connection with this particular subject, the author dedicates an entire section to defining the significance at the political and union level of the clause on responsibility. He goes on to deal with the role of the collective national contract, still in existence, advocating revision such that would not, however, lead to its marginalization. Finally, the article focuses on the participation of workers in decision-making regarding the firm, deeming the reference to this principle recently made by the FIAT management decidedly restrictive. Rather, the author takes a positive view of measures creating greater scope for contracts in derogation of the national contract in companies with participatory charters.

LABOUR LAW, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND FLEXSECURITY SUBSEQUENT TO THE SEPARATE AGREEMENT OF POMIGLIANO. THE ICHINO-LEONARDI DEBATE

Pietro Ichino e Salvo Leonardi

The text of this article consists of correspondence – published online in the sites www.pietroichino.it and www.ires.it – prompted in turn by an article by Leonardi on the FIAT Pomigliano agreement published in the quarterly “Quaderni di Rassegna Sindacale”. Although the exchange took place some months ago and contains no reference to the more recent developments in the FIAT case (Mirafiori, New.co, ex Bertone, appeals lodged by the fiom union), it remains as relevant as ever and extremely interesting for the clear and deep insights it offers – from the respective points of view – into the more problematic and lasting aspects of the controversies sparked off by the line of behaviour followed by the FIAT management.

THE NEW MODEL OF LABOR ORGANIZATION IN FIAT: THE ERGO-UAS SYSTEM EFFECTS ON HEALTH AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Francesco Tuccino

This article reconstructs the historical origins of the ergo-uas ergonomic productive methodology, above all as developments in approaches to production such as “lean production” and “just-in-time”. Moreover, the place occupied by ergo-uas in the context of the new production strategy and a new pattern of FIAT ownership is defined, as well as the type of industrial relations of thereby configured. The ergo-uas system is also described in detail in terms of its normative, scientific-methodological and experimental aspects. Considerable attention also focuses on the impact of the ergo-uas method on concrete working conditions, especially with respect

to the “rest factor”, reduced despite having been defined with previous agreements. The article closes with some conclusions on working rhythms and, consequently, the risks involved for the health of the workers.

THE WORLD AUTO INDUSTRY PHOENIX

Giuseppe Volpato

The term “phoenix” can aptly be applied to the world auto industry since it has often gone through periods of serious crisis and slump, but always bouncing back to enjoy positive booms. This is largely due to the fact that, especially in the expanding bric countries, the automobile will continue to represent the best way to get about for a few more decades. However, there can be no denying the increasing difficulties which the automotive market is coming in for, ever more differentiated in terms of models, markets, technological solutions and innovations. Mistakes in timing the introduction of innovations, as well as in the innovations themselves, can put an end to major production ventures. In fact, the author shows, for example, how delay in auto research focusing on new consumption and environmental impact contents has plunged the us automotive industry into truly critical conditions. From here the author goes on to consider the motivations and wagers behind the acquisition of Chrysler by FIAT, and to present a complete and detailed overview comparing the innovation strategies and production ranges opted for by the major actors in the sector. The outcome is a set of differentiated decisions, each dealing not just with the former commercial and productive directions chosen by the single companies (or with the supplied markets) but also dealing with the actual decisions taken by the management, depending on the actual productive specialisation, on the degree of competitiveness, and on the resources available in each company of the Automotive sector.

INDUSTRIAL POLICY FOR ITALY'S AUTO INDUSTRY – WHICH WAY NOW?

Enrico Ceccotti

The article maps out a comprehensive and detailed picture of the situation of FIAT, and the historical responsibilities of Italy's policy decision-makers. FIAT is a multinational that cannot compete simply by generalizing its behaviour as followed at Pomigliano and Mirafiori, which has constituted the sole perspective of the Berlusconi government, or by staking everything on finance and the us centres of operations subsequent acquisition of Chrysler. However, Italy should must forge new industrial policies based not on incentives and redundancies, but on local and national planning with a view to innovation in terms of the environment, production and public transport, etc. Industrial policies are once again being taken more seriously everywhere, and it is time that the eu took this into account, too, with plans to coordinate the Automotive industry throughout the continent, countries and regions no longer left alone to cope with them, thereby avoiding fiscal competition, bearishness and social dumping, or useless excess.

DEVELOPMENT PRODUCT STRATEGIES, SKILLS FOR INNOVATION: WHAT IS THE STAKE IN THE DECISION ABOUT THE FIAT-CHRYSLER HEADQUARTERS

Francesco Pirone, Francesco Zirpoli

What are the likely consequences for the Italian industrial system of the acquisition of Chrysler by FIAT? The paper addresses this question by looking how the recent acquisition will affect the division of innovation tasks and top management activities within the FIAT-Chrysler group. The probable migration of executive functions and research and development responsibilities from Turin to Detroit will disadvantage the development of engineering and management competences in Italy not only at FIAT but also within the entire value chain.

THE US AUTO UNION AND ITS CHALLENGES

Bob King

The text consists of a speech delivered by the president of the United Auto Workers, Bob King, on the occasion of a conference held in Detroit, at the Auto Research Center. In his speech, Bob King argues that the UAW of the 21st century will have to be fundamentally and radically different from the UAW of the 20th century. The need is to fit into an entirely new context, and consequently reinvent the union through new strategies. Seventy-five years ago the UAW was constituted as a movement for social justice for all the workers, in the course of time playing an essential role in the construction of the North-American middle-class. Today the union has a vital part to play in achieving similar advancement also in other areas of the globalized economy, while at the same time maintaining high production and social standards in the USA. Thus any attempts to eliminate the union from firms, such as we have witnessed over the last few decades, would be suicidal. Multinationals enjoying *carte blanche*, with no union to verify respect of regulations regarding safety and the environment or express the position of the workers, would end up in a land laid waste for the profit of a privileged few able to dominate not only the markets but also the political processes.

CONDITIONS AND FORMS OF LABOR PRODUCTION AT TOYOTA

Ulrich Jürgens

This text analyzes the structure and form of ownership of the Toyota group, delineating significant and alternative context conditions for the creation of personnel development systems in the firm's core structure. Staff policy as applied in the assembly plants is also taken into account. The idea behind the Toyota method is to apply social control and solidarity at the same time, competition and cooperation, inducing the individual workers to perform at optimal levels. Finally, the article analyzes the flexibility strategies employed

by Toyota so as to work efficiently and profitably despite fluctuations in market demand. The picture emerging from the research is of an integrated, modular system of sharing between a central structure with the emphasis on personnel development and, at the peripheral level, increasingly flexible forms of employment.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN GERMANY AND AT VOLKSWAGEN

Francesco Garippo

Starting out from the historical and productive background of Volkswagen, this article illustrates the peculiar features of the productive system marking it out even in the context of Germany's co-decision procedures. The text also describes how legislative regulation of co-decision procedures has developed, and how the participant representation of the workers has been adjusted to keep up with the growth and internationalization of the Volkswagen group.

WE WHO STAYED AT VOLVO: AN ETHNOLOGICAL STUDY OF SENIOR AUTOMOBILE-INDUSTRY BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS' WORKING-LIVES AND FUTURE PLANS

Björn Ohlsson

The text summarizes a very comprehensive investigation of cultural processes and situations at Volvo's most important production plant (Torslanda, Gothenburg). The investigation concerns many aspects of working life: the self perception of workers as such, the self perception of workers as class, their idea of working conditions and their transformations and so on. The term "culture" in the text is used and encompasses peoples' thoughts, values and actions as well as their economic and social situations. The study can be seen as a part of the long ethnological tradition of depicting workers' working life and blue-collar workers' culture that was particularly prevalent in the 1980's and 1990's. The Ohlsson's basic theoretical approach assumes the existence of a conflict between work and capital, and that economic and sociological conditions between the different classes within society are fundamental to the analysis of societies and cultures.