SAMPLE

Building the Labour Relations and Employment Services Infrastructure of Tomorrow

Anatomy of the Machine That Pays for the Hour

Aiman JoeHanz

Free sample: Introduction & Chapter 1

putrabooks.github.io

Buy the full book:

Carousell carousell.sg/p/building-the-labour-relations-and-employment-services-infrastructure-of-tomorrow-ebook-pdf-1471328889

Ko-fi

Payhip

Contents

Introduction: The Machine That Pays for the HourIntroduction: The Machine That Pays fo
Chapter 1: The Labour Inspectorate — The Visit Nobody AnnouncesChapter 1: The Labo
Chapter 2: The Minimum Wage Board — The Floor Under Every Pay PacketChapter 2: Th
Chapter 3: The Conciliation Desk — The Argument Before the CaseChapter 3: The Conc
Chapter 4: The Industrial Tribunal — The Dismissal Heard in ArithmeticChapter 4: The In
Chapter 5: The Bargaining Chamber — Two Sides, One TableChapter 5: The Bargaining
Chapter 6: The Strike Ballot Room — The Workforce's Own VoteChapter 6: The Strike Ba
Chapter 7: The Works Council — The Shop Floor's HourChapter 7: The Works Council —
Chapter 8: The Job Centre — The Board That Faces the QueueChapter 8: The Job Centre
Chapter 9: The Severance Desk — The Closure Counted HonestlyChapter 9: The Severa
Chapter 10: The Hours Bureau — The Ledger of the Country's HoursChapter 10: The Ho

Introduction: The Machine That Pays for the HourIntroduction: The Machine That Pays for the Hour

A payslip is a small piece of paper, and it can be lied on more easily than almost any document the state prints. The wage relationship is the oldest contract in the country: one person gives an hour of a life, another gives money for it, and every morning the two sides meet without a witness. Where there is no witness, there is machinery. This volume is about the machine that stands between the hour given and the hour short changed: a set of rooms, desks, boards and ledgers, none of them glamorous, all of them load bearing.

The machine has ten organs, and the reader will meet each as a physical thing. An inspectorate whose officers arrive without telephoning first, and read the wage records where they lie. A board that prints the floor wage in figures a baker can check against a slip. A desk where an argument is given a table before it is given a case. A tribunal that hears a dismissal in arithmetic rather than in temper. A chamber that keeps one neutral room where two sides can sit. A ballot room where a workforce votes on its own strike, in secret, with the turnout printed. A council that gives the shop floor one hour a month and answers its minutes in writing. A centre whose vacancy board faces the queue and lists only work that exists. A desk that prints the arithmetic of a closure line by line, per year served, so the envelope is never the only explanation. And a bureau that keeps the ledger of the country's hours, rest days and overtime ceilings, and counts the working year the way the census counts people.

The country is a composite one, drawn for teaching, with a population of ten million and a river plain, a coast, a port and a mill town. It names no real nation and quotes no brand; its numbers exist to be checked, not admired. Its teaching week belongs to Rosnah, who drives the number four crane at the container terminal, whose father worked the same berth, and whose payslip is the spine of this book. On the Monday of the difficult week, the night bakers open slips that are short by the overtime they can prove they worked. By the Saturday, a corrected slip has been issued, a dismissal at the port has been heard and repaired, a strike ballot has been counted and its notice filed, a closure at the mill has been worked out to the last line of its arithmetic, and two agreements have been countersigned in a room neither side owns.

That week is the book's method. Each organ is described the way a maintenance engineer would describe it: what it is, what it does, where it fails

first, what it costs, and how a citizen can test whether it is working. A reader who has worked through these chapters will read a payslip the way an inspector reads one, chair a conciliation with a conciliator's patience, and spot a closure notice that has buried its arithmetic. The chapters that follow take the organs one at a time, in the order the week needs them.

Chapter 1: The Labour Inspectorate — The Visit Nobody AnnouncesChapter 1: The Labour Inspectorate — The Visit Nobody Announces

The inspectorate is the machine's sense of touch. Its officers are few, deliberately: about two hundred of them for the whole country, nine thousand four hundred visits in a working year, and one visit in five arrives without warning. The rest are booked, which sounds like a weakness until you understand the design: the booked visit checks the paperwork, and the unannounced visit checks whether the paperwork is a photograph of the place or a portrait of somebody's wishes.

Every office keeps a wage-records box, and the inspector asks for the box, not for a summary. Time sheets, piece tallies, the overtime book, the deductions ledger: the box is read on the premises, in the presence of the person who keeps it, and the reading is the visit. Where the box and the workers disagree, the worker's evidence is preferred, and the inspector writes that preference into the report without apology, because a box cannot be exploited but a person can.

The inspectorate was founded on a confession. A generation ago, a garment loft above a hardware shop paid eleven workers by the piece at half the floor rate, in a room nobody official had entered for six years. The shelving gave way on a payday. Nobody died, but the country learned the arithmetic anyway: eleven workers, half the floor, six years of visits that were booked and pleasant and useless. The season after, the inspectorate was given its unannounced right of entry, and the first unannounced visits found, in a single month, three more lofts paying the same way.

The inspector's main instrument is the improvement notice: a written order with a date on it, not a fine and not an argument. The notice says what is wrong, what the wage records must show after the date, and what happens if they do not: escalation to the tribunal, publication of the finding, and a follow-up visit that is never booked. In the difficult week, the inspectorate's number four region opens its Monday with the bakery slips, and by the Wednesday it has drafted the back-pay order that the slips will answer.

The Keepers of the Inspectorate

Two hundred officers, a chief and a single founding habit: the inspectorate's chief is called the visiting keeper, and the first of them was a miner's daughter who had watched her father's wage records read aloud in a kitchen, and the

office has been held by people of that temper ever since. The visiting keeper holds the seal and the escalation book, and beneath the keeper the work splits three ways. The visiting bench rides the country: nine thousand four hundred visits a working year, a fifth of them without warning, and its craft is the arrival, the hour chosen, the door taken from the street rather than the yard, the walk to the wage-records box taken before the welcome is finished. The records bench reads what the visiting bench brings and what the booked visits submit: time sheets, piece tallies, overtime books, deduction ledgers, and it keeps the register of findings, indexed by employer, so that a second visit reads a first visit's file before it knocks. The publishing bench is the inspectorate's harshness and its mercy at once: it prints the findings, the improvement notices and the escalations, and it prints the acquittals too, the visits that found the box honest, because an inspectorate that only ever prints guilt teaches the country that inspection is accusation, and the craft dies of it.

The Inspector's Field Guide: Reading a Workplace

The guide teaches the visit as a reading, and the reading has an order. Begin at the clock, not the office: the time recorder or the rota sheet on the wall tells the guide's first story, who came, who stayed, whose name is inked onto the difficult slots. Second, the board: every notice the law requires, the wage schedule pinned at eye level, the rest-day rule, the overtime ceiling, because the board is where compliance performs and its absence is where it hides. Third, the box: time sheets against the rota, the overtime book against the recorder, the deductions ledger against the schedules, and the guide's rule for the reading is the office's oldest sentence: ask for the box, never for a summary, since a summary is a portrait of somebody's wishes and the box is a photograph of the place. Fourth, the people, in private if they ask: three workers chosen by the workers, not by the foreman, the guide says, and the worker's evidence preferred where it disagrees with the box, written into the report without apology.

The Inspectorate's Procedure: One Unannounced Visit

Follow the number four region's Monday from the street to the order. The visit begins before the door: the region's roster assigns the bakery from the complaints register, two slips enclosed, and the hour chosen is the night shift's changeover, when the bakers who worked the disputed hours are handing over to the day. The reading takes ninety minutes, the box on the flour-dusted table, the recorder's printout beside the overtime book, the two short slips beside both, and the discrepancy is not alleged but copied, column by column,

onto the visit's form, which the keeper of the box initials page by page. The finding is drafted in the van, and the improvement notice is served by hand at the door: what is wrong, the wage records must show the true hours by the date given, and the follow-up that will never be booked. The back-pay order is the procedure's second instrument, and the region drafts it Wednesday: the bakery's own figures, the schedule's floor, the difference, per worker, per week, on one page, with the tribunal's seal held in reserve if the page is refused.

The Inspectorate's Arithmetic: The Cost of a Floor That Is Checked

The office's budget is published to the sou, and the teaching line is this: the inspectorate costs the country, per worker protected, less than a payslip's worth of stamps a year, and it recovers, in back pay ordered and underpayment found, several times its own cost each working year. Against the recovered column the office counts the honest arithmetic too: the visits that find the box clean, which cost money and buy the thing money cannot buy, the habit of obedience, and the office's own rule, printed in its annual count, is that it would rather spend a budget on clean boxes than recover a fortune from dirty ones, because a country that pays for inspections pays once and a country that pays for underpayment pays forever, in tribunal time, in striking temper, in the quiet exits of good workers who will not stay where the box lies.

The Inspectorate's Futures

The keepers expect the pressure to arrive wearing new clothes, and the first new coat is already in the region's files. The coming trade times its shifts with an app: the hour is assigned, re-assigned and re-priced in the same afternoon, and the wage records live in a log nobody prints, in a format nobody's box holds. The office's answer is drafted before the trade grows: the box is a rule, not a thing, and where the hours live in a machine, the record the inspector asks for is the machine's own log, printed or on a screen, on the premises, and the app that cannot show its hours at the door of an unannounced visit will be treated as a box that will not open. The bench predicts the season of the argument about exactly that, and the office's preparation is characteristically dull: the roster will learn the new trades, the guide will gain a page, and the visiting keeper will say, in the session that argues it, the office's one sentence about every new economy in the country's history: the floor does not care what the trade is called, and neither does the box.

Doctrine Card: The Box, Not the Summary

The card is printed at the top of every visit form, and the newest officer recites it at the door of the first booked visit of every quarter. The inspector asks for the box, never for a summary, reads the box on the premises in the presence of its keeper, prefers the worker where the box disagrees with the worker, and writes the preference in the report. The card's last line is the office's whole inheritance from the garment loft: a workplace whose records are honest has nothing to fear from an unannounced visit, and a workplace that fears one has already told the inspectorate everything, before the door.

The Inspectorate's Week: Jamil's Ledger

Jamil keeps the region's ledger in the visiting keeper's name, and the difficult week fills it faster than any season before. Monday's line is the bakery, the two slips, the ninety-minute reading, the improvement notice served at the changeover door. Tuesday's line is the port's file opened on the inspectorate's side: no wage dispute, but the dismissal letter without procedure, and the records bench copies the port's own handbook, which promises the procedure the letter skipped, into the file the conciliation desk will read on Wednesday. Wednesday's line is the back-pay order drafted from the bakery's own recorder printout, the schedule's floor, the difference to the sou, the page that goes to the bakery's office with the tribunal's seal in reserve. Thursday's line is the ballot's aftermath, no finding needed, the port's rota read at the gate only because the striking vote asked for the crane lights and the rotas to be minuted somewhere other than a canteen. Friday's line is the mill, the closure notice at the gate read by the records bench within the hour, and the ledger notes the bench's cold craft here: the severance formula in the notice is checked against the office's own copy of the mill's wage records before the envelopes are cut, and one deduction, the training bond, is found in the notice and found nowhere in the records, which the desk is told by teatime. Saturday's line is the last and shortest: the corrected slips countercheck at the bakery, the back pay scheduled onto the next pay run, and the ledger closes with the line Jamil writes every week: the box told the truth, or the truth was carried to it.

Monday Morning: The Inspectorate's Discipline

The week's rota is drawn before the correspondence is opened, and it is drawn blind. The roster's visits are assigned by lot from the register, so that no employer ever learns which week carries its name, and the unannounced fifth of the roster is drawn separately and locked in the visiting keeper's drawer

until the van leaves. The records bench reads last week's findings aloud, one page each, and the publishing bench reads the coming week's print list. The officer whose turn it is reads the doctrine card at the room's door, and the morning's last act is the oldest: the complaint register is read to its foot, because the register is where the country files its knowledge of itself, and the inspectorate's founding belief is that the country usually knows where the boxes lie.

Teaching Exercise: The Two Boxes

Trainees are given a mill's records twice, and the exercise is the difference. The first file is the summary the mill sent to its trade association: clean averages, rounded hours, a note of goodwill. The second is the box the visiting bench carried out on a wet Thursday: the same weeks, unrounded, two names on every difficult slot, an overtime book whose totals disagree with the recorder by a steady fraction. The trainee is asked to find the mill, and the mill exists only in the second file, and the lesson is the card's whole meaning: the summary is what the mill wishes, the box is what the mill does, and the inspectorate exists because a country that reads only summaries will be governed by wishes.

The Interlock: The Inspectorate and the Nine

The inspectorate is the machine's hands, and the other nine sign its work. The board prints the floor the box is measured against, and a schedule without an inspector is a wish, as the office says. The conciliation desk is where the box's findings go while the quarrel is still a quarrel, and the desk's page carries the improvement notice's date. The tribunal is where the refused notice escalates, and the escalation book is the bridge between the two rooms. The chamber's agreements are the wage records' ceiling and floor at once, filed at the registry the records bench reads. The ballot room's notice is inspected for the hours it promises to withhold, and the strike's picket lines are visited like any workplace, the guide gaining a page for the season. The works council's minutes are a visiting officer's map, since the canteen's complaints are the register's best index. The job centre's verified board prints the schedule on every card, so the searcher meets the floor before the employer does. The severance desk's worked example is checked against the office's own copy of the closing employer's records, as the mill's bond was caught. And the hours bureau's overtime ceiling is the number the overtime book is read against, which is why the two rooms share a method: both are ledgers read against a record, and both keep the preference, the worker's.

The Inspectorate's Treaties: The Wage and the Statute

With the audit office the treaty is a boundary the office quotes with pride: the inspector reads the private wage, and the auditor reads the public purse, and the two meet only where public money crosses a payroll, at which point the file is carried across the hall and handed over, whole. With the courts the treaty is the escalation book's own grammar: the notice is not a judgment and the order is not a sentence, and the tribunal is the room that decides; the office finds, the tribunal orders, and neither organ borrows the other's robe. With the ministry of labour the treaty is the office's independence in one sentence: the ministry funds the roster and receives the annual count, and nothing else, since a visiting bench that reports to the employer's regulator stops visiting the employers that matter. With the permit office the treaty is the country's quiet promise to the worker behind the permit: the stamp entitles the worker to the box and the floor the day the stamp is inked, and the inspectorate keeps the promise at every door, whatever the worker's papers say about tomorrow.

The Inspectorate's Case File: The Mill With Two Boxes

The file the office teaches is a mill with two boxes, and the file's lesson is the office's own limits, honestly confessed. The mill kept an honest box for the booked visits, kept by a clerk of conscience, and a second box, in the foreman's drawer, for the truth; the piece tallies in the honest box were copied from the second and inflated, and the workers paid the difference. The fraud was found not by a visit but by a wedding: a machinist's daughter, asked at the celebration how her mother had bought the dress, said her mother had been paid for the hours the foreman's drawer said she had not worked, and the guest she said it to was an off-duty visiting officer. The file's closing note is the teaching: the inspectorate's instruments are the box and the record, and the mill's fraud lived in neither, in the gap between them, which is why the office publishes the case and its own confession, that no machine of visits catches everything, and the country's boxes are finally kept honest by the country's kitchens, where the underpaid tell the truth, and the office's work is to be there when it is told.

The Inspectorate's Dusk Note

The office's lights go out late, and the last thing lit is the van. The dusk discipline is the day's reading filed, the findings drafted while the visit is still in the officer's feet, since a finding written on Tuesday about a Monday visit is already a portrait of a wish. The drawer's blind roster is locked, the complaint

register is left open on the desk deliberately, face up, because the office's founding habit is that anyone who walks past at night may read what the country has filed, and the officer who leaves last initials the register's last page, which is the office's whole dusk philosophy: the box belongs to the employer, but the truth about the box belongs to the country, and the country may read it at any hour the country likes.

The Inspectorate's Objections Answered

The employers ask why the unannounced visit is not an insult to the honest, and the office answers with the publishing bench: the honest are printed clean as often as the guilty are printed caught, and the fifth visit that finds an honest box is the office's cheapest product, a habit confirmed. The economists ask whether floors and their inspectors price the small firm out of existence, and the office answers with the register's arithmetic: the firms that close in the office's findings close for the trade's reasons and not the box's, and the firm whose business plan is an underpaid shift was never a business plan, only a waiting finding. The lawyers ask for notice, always for notice, and the office replies with the founding sentence, worn smooth: notice was tried for a generation, and the lofts paid half the floor for six polite years, and the season notice died is the office's founding season, celebrated every year on the day the shelving fell, with no ceremony at all, only the blind roster drawn, and the van sent out.

The Inspectorate's Season: The Year of the Swept Lofts

The season the office still quotes began the month the unannounced right was granted, and the phrase comes from the first annual count: three lofts found paying half the floor in a single month of unswept, unbooked, untelephoned visiting, and the season's total, read at the ministry in a single sitting, doubled the office's roster in the budget that followed. What the assemblies quote is not the growth but the second season's count, when the same rosters found the lofts swept: the floor paid, the boxes honest, the boards pinned at eye level, not because the trade had grown kinder, the office says, but because the door had learned to open without telephoning first, and the country's employers had learned the lesson every floor needs, that the floor is not a wish printed on a schedule but a number carried up the stairs without warning, and read.

The Desk's Second Reading: What the Box Is For

Read the office twice, and the box changes weight. The first reading sees

enforcement, a bench of orders and findings, and asks whether the office is a policeman of payrolls, which it partly is and does not deny. The second sees the machine's witness, and notices what the box is for: not the fine, which is small, and not the recovery, which is real, but the standing fact that in the oldest contract in the country, the hour given for money promised, somebody now reads the record without being invited, and the reading is the contract's witness. The worker who knows the box may be opened any morning bargains differently in the canteen, the employer who knows it keeps two sets of nothing, and the office's whole craft, the keepers say, is to make honesty cheaper than the alternative, which is not done with orders but with the unbooked door, opening, at the changeover, without a word.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author takes apart the quiet machines that carry a country's daily life, naming their organs one by one until the reader can point at a fault instead of shrugging at a system. The companion volumes of this series have opened the machinery that governs, feeds, trades, polices, heals, remembers, defends and mourns; the present book turns to the machine that governs work itself, and to the craft of the inspectors, registrars, conciliators, chairmen, returning officers, council chairs, board keepers, closure keepers and timekeepers who stand between an hour of work and the money it is supposed to earn, one honestly printed page at a time.