

FOREWORD

This issue of *The International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations* contains a variety of contributions, across a wide spectrum of current issues.

The first article, by Marco Biagi, on the situation facing trade unionism in Italy towards the end of the 20th century complements the group of papers already published in Volume 4 Issue 2 dealing with the same basic theme. Some of the author's observations about the pressing need for adaption on the parts of trade union movements to radically changed economic and political circumstances throughout Western market economies echo the points being made by Antoine Lyon-Caen and Jacques Rojot in that earlier Issue. The author also goes on to draw valuable insights from experience in other non-European contexts; most notably, in Japan and in the United States of America.

Kelvin Widdows' wide-ranging survey of national responses to the problem of AIDS in the employment context provides an important evaluation of one aspect of the pressures to which this disturbing worldwide phenomenon has given rise. As well as offering a helpful overview of the major problems currently perceived in relation to the field of employment, this article indicates some of the widely varying ways in which public legal and social support mechanisms have been mobilised to meet the mixture of fear, prejudice, and disadvantage which the presence of this particular medical condition so often brings out.

Another area in which legal and social support mechanisms can valuably be compared is that of unemployment benefit provisions. In this study of the British, Dutch and West German systems, Frans Pennings provides us with some of the results of a major project under his direction, and highlights the very different values which may be seen to underlie the provision of these supports in the various countries under consideration.

Finally, in his stimulating analysis of industrial relations theory and trade union strategy, Walter Müller-Jentsch has provided us with a revised version of a paper first presented to the European Regional Congress of the *International Industrial Relations Association*, in December 1987. The author puts forward a theoretical framework within which to consider various trade union strategies, providing, in the process, a line of approach which makes particularly interesting comparison with the views expressed earlier in this Volume on the challenge facing the trade union movement during the remainder of this century.

A.C.N.