

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

The celebration of a decade since the achievement of democracy in Spain offers the opportunity to reflect upon a development which has seen dramatic changes from the former Franco regime, in the direction of a potentially highly influential role for the Spanish trade union movement and for its closest political ally, the Socialist ruling party of government. In his presentation of trends during the last decade, Elias Gonzalez-Posada Martinez offers some fascinating insights into the tensions which have plagued relations between the free trade unions and gives some pointers to the difficulties faced by the government of Prime Minister Gonzalez. At the same time, there is consideration of an issue which has become increasingly debated throughout Western Europe countries – the question of what legitimacy does a trade union have to represent citizens in a parliamentary democracy, and to what extent is it helpful to replicate the electoral structures commonly utilised within a party political system for the purposes of determining "representative" status for trade unions operating in the socio-economic ring. The experience of Spain against a difficult economic backdrop leads the author to consider the benefits of a system which encourages the development of autonomous committed trade unions, rather than bodies which depend almost entirely upon the legal provisions permitting their very existence.

Jean-Emmanuel Ray's contribution – a revised version of his paper presented to the 3rd European Regional Congress of the International Society of Labour Law and Social Security – concentrates upon one specific aspect of the labour market changes which have been witnessed throughout market economies during the 1980s. His study of "flexibility" in the context of working hours provides an analysis of the breakdown suffered by traditional work organisation models, and permits the author to consider important shifts in the basic standards which appear to be impacting upon Labour Law as we move into a new decade. In particular, there are dangers perceived for trade unions, while the associated threats of "social dumping" and similar phenomena at a supranational level make developments within the EEC and at ILO level of particular relevance to developments in this area.

Finally, the question of where developments during the 1980s have brought us is also at the heart of Tiziano Treu's paper, which provides a wide-ranging view of perceived trends away from collective industrial action towards forms of collaboration between the industrial relations actors.

A.C.N.