

The International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations: Founding Editor

This issue of *The International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations* is the last with which the Founding Editor and current co-Editor will be closely involved. With effect from Volume 12 (1996), Lammy Betten takes over the task of Managing Editor, and, at the same time, a re-constituted Editorial Board will replace the existing International Advisory Board.

The International Journal was conceived some twelve years ago, by a small group of enthusiasts comprising Gabriel Aubert, Roger Blanpain, Antoine Lyon-Caen, Alan Neal and Manfred Weiss. Its title — a mouthful which has always presented a challenge to anybody citing the publication — emerged under the driving force of Roger Blanpain (and, indeed, reflected the direct input of the Editor-in-Chief of the *International Encyclopaedia for Labour Law and Industrial Relations*), whose perception that there was a pressing need for a scholarly English-language journal in the field of labour law and industrial relations had been largely responsible for the founding group coming together to get the project under way.

Following a preliminary meeting in Madrid, in early 1994, serious planning was put in hand, and a further meeting of willing volunteers was organised in Pontignano, Siena, during the Summer of that year. In the event, the Pontignano meeting demonstrated a broad spectrum of support for the new venture, and confirmed the perceived need for a publication of the kind envisaged by the founding group. The task of turning the project into reality was put into the hands of “the baby of the group”, Alan Neal, who was nominated Editor-in-Chief, and a small Editorial Committee was established, consisting of Gabriel Aubert, Federico Durán López, Brian Napier and Tiziano Treu.

Despite being unable to find commercial funding for the project, the launch of the new *International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations* went ahead on schedule, with the first issue of Volume 1 appearing in the Spring of 1995. Substantial support was provided — both in terms of encouragement and through the authoring of articles for publication in the early issues of *The International Journal* — by an International Advisory Board, whose membership quickly came to resemble a “Who’s Who” of post-War labour law and employment relations scholars. Indeed, the contributions to Volume 1 — including articles by Nikitas Aliprantis, Roger Blanpain, Bob Hepple, Semion Ivanov, Antoine Lyon-Caen, Miguel Rodríguez-Piñero and Tiziano Treu — demonstrated, from the outset, that this new *International Journal* was to be truly blessed with work from the leading names in its field of specialism.

Over the course of its first seven volumes, *The International Journal* attempted to achieve a number of objectives.

First, it was insistent upon the work published in its pages reflecting a “comparative” approach to the study of labour law and industrial relations — something which was fundamental to the project from its inception. This “comparative” approach has manifested itself in various ways — with individual contributions adopting a comparative stance between national systems; with groups of “linked papers” offering the opportunity of addressing similar issues from various national or systemic starting points; and with specially-commissioned groups of papers being prepared around a centrally co-ordinated theme.

Second, a fundamental ambition of the publication was to be truly “worldwide”, and, at the same time, to attempt in some measure to “bridge the gap” between writers in “Western, democratic” countries and scholars in the Socialist countries of (in particular) Central and Eastern Europe. Looking back, it is easy to forget how problematic was the task of co-ordinating work from particular ideological “blocs” — and, indeed, how much controversy was initially stirred by the Editor-in-Chief’s insistence that contributions from Socialist commentators should be included alongside the work of “Western” colleagues. Nevertheless, the hurdles were eventually overcome, and *The International Journal* published contributions dealing with systems as diverse as those of São Paulo, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Japan, Tunisia, and South Africa. So, too, articles looking at the problems of comparing Socialist and Capitalist systems were complemented by groups of papers dealing with “workteams” in the labour law of European Socialist countries, the “right to work” in Socialist and Capitalist systems, and, finally, a set of contributions for Volume 7 addressing “the challenge to labour law” in the wake of German unification in 1990.

The preparation of such “grouped papers” reflected the fulfilment of a third objective underlying the activities of *The International Journal*. This was an attempt to promote specialised seminars and colloquia which could facilitate joint work between comparative scholars, with a publishing outlet through the pages of *The International Journal* itself or in self-contained books produced in collaboration with *The International Journal*. The volume *Comparative Labour Law*, published in 1987 by Gower Press under the editorship of Bill Butler, Bob Hepple and Alan Neal, represented one successful outcome of this process — particularly when a Russian-language version was published by the Soviet Academy of Sciences in the following year. However, the most enduring result of such efforts to promote collaborative comparative research opportunities in the field of labour law and industrial relations has undoubtedly been the establishment, and continuing vivacity, of a “Club” of like-minded journals from around the world. This “Club” — which in addition to *The International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations*, includes *Arbeit und Recht*, the *Comparative Labor Law Journal*, the *Industrial Law Journal*, the *Japan Labor Bulletin*, *Lavoro e Diritto*, *Relaciones Laborales*, the *Revue Internationale de Droit Comparé*, the *Australian Journal of Labour Law*, *Lag och Avtal*, *Das Recht der Arbeit*, the *South African Industrial Law Journal* and *Travail et Emploi* — meets annually for a seminar organised by one of its members, at which technical discussion centres around a chosen topic, while the annual meeting of Journal Editors, held at the same time, provides a forum for discussing problems and opportunities facing scholarly journals such as those constituting the “Club”.

By 1991, with six volumes of *The International Journal* successfully in print and the seventh volume well under way, it was becoming clear that the financial basis upon which the project had been set up was no longer adequate for the range of activities in which the journal was involved. In particular, the absence of a commercial publishing house constituted a severe disadvantage in terms of editorial support, printing facilities, and marketing expertise.

After discussions with Kluwer Law and Taxation Publishers, in the Netherlands, an offer was accepted of secure financial backing for the continued production of *The International Journal*, and, with effect from Volume 8 (1992), responsibility for production was taken over by the present publishers. At the same time, Lammy Betten joined Alan Neal in the editorship of *The International Journal*, and an increase in size was made possible, with a move from 64 to 96 pages quarterly. That enlargement of the available space has made possible the highly successful DOCUMENTATION AND COMMENT section, which now seeks to present original documentation from, in particular, the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the International Labour Organisation.

As the circulation of *The International Journal* has steadily increased, so too has its reputation grown as the specialised scholarly periodical which the founding group had originally envisaged in 1984. Now, with the ending of the Founding Editor's intimate association with "his baby", *The International Journal* can look forward to a new lease of life under the direction of Lammy Betten.

However, before concluding this brief resumé of the early years of *The International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations*, it has also to be borne in mind that there have been some sad losses from the distinguished membership of the original International Advisory Board. Here, we bring to mind Professor Cesarino Jnr. and Professor Szubert, giants in the field which they have now left behind. It is to their memory, and with grateful thanks to all of those who have contributed to establishing *The International Journal* and to making it what it has become today, that this short note is penned.

A.C.N.