

## A DEDICATION TO CRAIG LITTLER

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THE LATE CRAIG LITTLER DIED ON 8 SEPTEMBER LAST YEAR IN TOWNSVILLE, Queensland where, for less than two years, he had been the Head of School of Business at James Cook University, after having returned to Australia from appointments at the Universities of London and St Andrews. To honour the important contribution he made to the study of the social and economic relations of work, this issue of *Labour and Industry* has been dedicated to him.

Craig Littler's career spanned 40 years, with academic appointments in both Australia and the United Kingdom. In Australia he is best remembered as the founding editor of *Labour and Industry* and for his work on the phenomenon of corporate downsizing. His publications on downsizing include the co-authored (with Richard Dunford, Tom Bramble and Andrew Hede) 'The Dynamics of Downsizing in Australia and New Zealand', published in the *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* (Littler et al., 1997) in which opposing trends were discovered between downsizing in the two countries. A subsequent publication (Littler et al., 2003) added author Retha Weisner and country South Africa to the comparative study.

Internationally, Craig Littler is best remembered for his work on labour process theory. His *The Development of the Labour Process in Capitalist Societies* (Littler, 1982) was based on his London School of Economics PhD thesis. In the same year, with Graeme Salaman, 'Bravermania and Beyond: Recent Theories of the Labour Process' (Littler and Salaman, 1982) made a groundbreaking contribution to the debates of the time. He had already published 'Understanding Taylorism' (Littler, 1978) in which he drew attention to the paradox of Taylorism conceptualized as a failed ideology, and the conceptualization that, rather than outmoded, it remains the basis of the organization of work. Craig Littler and Graeme Salaman consolidated their analyses of job control in a subsequent book (Littler and Salaman, 1984).

When he founded *Labour and Industry* in 1987, Craig hoped that the new journal would make advances in two directions: towards the integration of a hitherto fragmented field of study, and towards a comparative approach, directions in which he set an example and others followed. He noted at the time that there were some positive signs pointing towards the integration of the study of work relations, such as the establishment of some multidisciplinary research units in the United Kingdom and Australia, the development of a new institutional economics and the potential within labour process theory. Ideally he wanted some integration

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of the disciplined-based fields of labour economics, industrial sociology, labour law and labour history, and the interdisciplinary fields of organisation theory, labour process theory, political economy and management theory. While he acknowledged that ‘a comprehensive integrated theory of work relations’ could not be immediate, in the meantime he hoped that *Labour and Industry* would help bring together scholars from these disciplines, even if they approached the same problems from different perspectives. He also hoped that it would encourage a comparative approach, particularly of developments in work relations in Australia and those in the Pacific Basin.

Craig Littler’s research and publications were true to his commitment to integration and comparison in the study of work relations. Although grounded in labour process theory, they went beyond its 1970s confines to integrate industrial relations, organisation theory, management theory and organisational psychology, and were applied comparatively to political ideologies and to countries in the Asia Pacific region. Titles that included ‘Power and ideology in work organizations: Britain and Japan’ (Littler, 1981), ‘Trends in Chinese enterprise management, 1978-1982’ (Lockett and Littler, 1983), ‘Technology, innovation and labour-management strategies’ (Littler, 1988), ‘Comparing the downsizing experiences of three countries’ (Littler et al., 2003), and ‘The current global financial crisis as a context for labour and industry in the twenty-first century’ (Littler, 2009) attest to his commitment, as do the varied discipline backgrounds of his research collaborators and co-authors.

The appeal of Craig Littler’s commitment to integration has inspired articles that have been published in *Labour and Industry* over the past quarter of a century. In this issue, those by Peter Ross and Yunis Ali and by Glenda Maconachie and Jennifer Sappey are a direct response to that appeal. ‘Antecedents of ICT Employee Loyalty in an Emerging Economy: A Study on the Malaysian Multimedia Super Corridor’ is a response to Craig Littler’s encouragement of comparative research, while ‘Let’s Get Physical Capital: Idealised Body, Who Cares about Less Than Ideal Employment Conditions?’ is consistent with Craig Littler’s call in the first issue of *Labour and Industry* for an integrated approach to the study and history of work (Littler, 1987, p.1).

Consistent with his own intellectual approach to change, in his last article in *Labour and Industry*, Craig Littler tackled the global financial crisis (GFC). In it he looked back twenty years to a publication with Mark Bray in *Labour and Industry* in which ‘The major themes were the nature of the labour process paradigm, the deskilling debate, managerial strategy and control, and the role of the state (Bray and Littler, 1988, p. 551). Then, in 1988, Craig Littler (and Mark Bray) were concerned with the appropriateness of concepts – in the case of changes in the labour process. Twenty years later, following the GFC, he again saw the need to re-assess what concepts we need now to understand and analyse contemporary transformational developments – that ‘the current global financial crisis should be a major stimulus to provide some serious rethinking about a different set of research themes and concepts’ (Littler, 2009, p.4). We would do well to emulate him.

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