

# Work Life 2000 Yearbook 1 1999

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preparing for the  
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**National Institute for Working Life, Sweden**  
**National Board of Occupational Safety and Health, Sweden**  
**Joint Industrial Safety Council, Sweden**

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# **Work Life 2000 Organising Committee**

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targets, the outcomes are contestable and ambiguous, and claims can be manipulated. She reported work on performance measurement, in particular in the mining industry.

She described a small country meat works, owned by husband and wife. The wife noted the personal impacts on their employees. There were issues of participation and risk management, and organisational issues in the context of change. The workforce joined in and changed the design, which worked, to the surprise of the designer.

On contract management, she saw some cause for hope. Public utilities have been obliged to contract out, and local residents have come together, seeing the case for doing work oneself rather than contracting out. This is possible because of the Health and Safety laws for contracting in Victoria. The issue is power and control, and not just money. She concluded with reflections on the role of the outsider, and worries about the shift from regulation to consulting. The role is to make the contingency of the current arrangements transparent, opening opportunities for dialogue. There are no ready answers, but scope for encouraging people to find their own answers.

## Gerard Zwetsloot

### Reviewing the Debate on International OHS MS Standards

As vice-chairman of the Dutch standardisation committee on OHS management for the last five years, **Gerard Zwetsloot** had practical experience to report. His interests are in knowledge and practice in improvement of the work environment. He prefers to talk of management systems, rather than programmes. His consultancy includes work with small business, and with DG-V of the European Commission.

Governments have promoted self-regulation, and this includes standardisation, with ISO 9000 often seen as a success. Standardisation is based on consensus among stakeholders, producing standards (specifications, meant for certification) and guidelines.

Main topics on international standardisation are:

*Relations with regulation:* how should it affect current legislation? How should it impact on the debate on deregulation and privatisation? What about enforcement strategies, and the impact on social security systems? A number of perspectives are involved.

*The value of certification:* added value diminishes over time; external verification has added value; certification is no objective on its own. When there is a clear market demand, certification cannot be avoided.

*The involvement of workers:* standardisation has never dealt with political processes. There are good and bad examples of worker involvement (the Dutch involved the unions from the start, the Greeks did not involve unions and Australian unions responded negatively). There are enormous differences in the world in industrial relationships.

Unions face new dilemmas.

- *The impact on international trade:* barrier to trade or opportunity. Opposing perspectives for international and local small companies, rich and developing countries.

- *Major incentives for companies:* via governments, advantages for certified companies? Market advantages? Insurers? Financial benefits? Image in the labour market? Is this limited to certified management systems?
- *The limits of standardisation:* OHS is not technical, not collaborative.
- *Limitations of EU policy:* little experience of OHS or MS, little liaison with environmental systems.

Gerard Zwetsloot then presented comments on the ISO 9000:2000 series draft. There has been a shift towards a more process oriented approach, away from Taylorism. He reported on the stakeholders at the ISO process. You have to be there in order to make a difference. There are risks of future conflicts. Standards do not produce uniformly successful results. ISO 9000 was intended for control, and not for improvement. Companies need external confirmation of their performance in order to gain credibility. Standards need to include an assessment of performance, checked by verifiers. Standards can be seen as helpful in terms of the labour market and image.

### **Theme III Comments – Felicity Lamm**

Felicity Lamm identified particular themes:

- Voluntary self-management of OHS: the myth of the management system? Government and management driven, unions in reactive role, where participation is a management prerogative, reliant on good will.
- The integration of OHS into management systems (quality systems) and wider issues (environmental issues). Policy must link with practice.

Issues include competing standards and competing interests. There needs to be a compliant population and a supporting culture (international, national, industrial, organisational and in the workplace). There are differences between employee participation and quality management, involving conflicting paradigms.

She set out to construct a framework, contriving ground rules in an anarchic situation:

- Codify and standardise the process and link it to economic benefits
- Borrow management principles, and apply them to OHS
- Broaden the boundaries of OHS by making linkages
- Adopt participative approaches to managing OHS

The debate concerns power relationships, and the translation of economic and social principles to health and safety. Rhetoric does not always match practice.

## **IV. Implementation of Regulated OHSM for all Employers**

**Neil Gunningham and Richard Johnstone**

### **The Legal Construction of OHS Management Systems**

Neil Gunningham declared that enterprises can be seen either as leaders or laggards. We should be moving more enterprises to the role of leaders. A management