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**Understanding the Process of Change in Occupational Safety
and Health Policy in Advanced Industrialised Democracies:
An Examination of the International Literature, and the
Experience of New Zealand Between 1981 and 1992.**

**A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social
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ABSTRACT

The international literature on change in occupational safety and health policy contains a multiplicity of divergent and opposing disciplinary approaches and theoretical explanations for the various change outcomes that have occurred in advanced industrialised nations. However, commonalities in determining factors and policy debates across all advanced industrialised countries can be discerned. Analysis of the literature also indicates that, when compared to the general literature on public policy, there is an absence of 'process-orientated' theories and theories of the 'middle-range' about change in occupational safety and health policy. Furthermore, the current body of knowledge lacks any discussion or definition of what 'occupational safety and health policy' means. In terms of New Zealand, robust academic discussion of occupational safety and health policy is virtually absent, except for a few analyses in industrial relations textbooks and journals. Furthermore, the New Zealand analyses are also usually descriptive and lack critical analysis. This thesis begins the task of rectifying these criticisms by providing an original contribution in three areas.

The first area of contribution is the provision of a thorough critical review of the current state of international knowledge concerning the process of change in occupational safety and health policy. The second area of contribution is the provision of a detailed analysis that characterises, describes and explains the New Zealand experience of change in occupational safety and health policy between 1981 and 1992. The final area of contribution is the presentation of a theory of the 'middle range' of change in occupational safety and health policy in advanced industrialised nations. In conjunction with the theory,

a set of propositions are formulated concerning the origins and determinants of change, the policy issues that dominate debates, and the relationship between policy and the management of occupational safety and health in the workplace. The initial validity of the propositions is assessed by discussing them in the context of the international literature and the New Zealand experience.

The conclusion is that there is a high degree of convergence between the policy debates in New Zealand and those occurring overseas - irrespective of cultural differences and institutional arrangements. Various comments by observers of the occupational safety and health policy process and debates in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Australia, can be seen to have direct relevance to New Zealand. The clear link between these countries is that they all have inherited the British legal system and ideas about industrial relations and property rights. The comparison highlights the fact that at the core of occupational safety and health policy there is conflict, inherent within the capitalist system of production, over the forms of control of the social relations of health and safety in the workplace. At the centre of this conflict are the representatives of workers and employers. Resolution of the general direction of the debates is ultimately determined by the political party in power. Equally important though, are the views of the representatives of government whose job it is to advise Government, and provide the policy details.

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ABBREVIATIONS COMMONLY USED

ACC	Accident Compensation Corporation (Commission)
ACOSH	Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health
AHBs	Area Health Boards
CoP	Code of Practice
CSU	Combined State Unions
CTU	Council of Trade Unions
DoL	Department of Labour
EF	New Zealand Employers Federation
F and CPB	Factory and Commercial Premises Bill 1980
F and CP	Factory and Commercial Premises Act 1981
FoL	Federation of Labour
HSE Act	Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992
HSE Bill	Health and Safety in Employment Bill
MoE	Ministry of Energy
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoT	Ministry of Transport
OSH Bill	Occupational Safety and Health Bill 1990
OSH Service	Occupational Safety and Health Service of the Department of Labour
PCO	Parliamentary Council Office
SEQ	Cabinet Social Equity Committee
SOP	Supplementary Order Paper
SSC	State Services Commission