

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



*Last Nightshift in Savar: The Story of the Spectrum Sweater Factory Collapse*, by Doug Miller, Alnwick, Northumberland, England: McNidder & Grace, 2012, 264 pp., ISBN: 978-0-85716-039-3.

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le plan d'action et la construction des solutions. Le dernier chapitre apporte, selon nous, une originalité au modèle. Dans la pratique, il est extrêmement fréquent de devoir « retourner » sur les situations de travail alors que le projet a parfois atteint son étape d'élaboration des solutions. Considérer, en y consacrant un chapitre à part entière, que ce travail constitue une dimension de l'intervention, permet de rendre compte du caractère itératif du modèle d'intervention, notamment entre les étapes de compréhension et de transformation.

Enfin, la dernière partie (*La pratique des ergonomes*) s'intéresse aux difficultés concrètes de la mise en œuvre du modèle d'intervention proposé, ainsi qu'aux compétences complémentaires utiles aux praticiens. L'unique chapitre s'attache à décrire la manière dont les professionnels s'y prennent à chacune des étapes de l'intervention. Ce chapitre est fort utile car il est complémentaire aux chapitres de la seconde partie. Néanmoins, on peut regretter de ne pas avoir un développement plus important des aspects stratégiques, de la dimension sociale de l'intervention ou encore de la nécessité et de la difficulté de son pilotage par l'aval. Mais était-ce raisonnablement réalisable dans un seul et même ouvrage ?

De manière générale, ce livre a un fort potentiel pédagogique car il est réellement conçu pour l'apprentissage de l'intervention. Il peut être lu d'un trait, et ainsi le lecteur se construit une représentation aboutie de la structure d'une intervention. Il peut être aussi utilisé comme un outil, en choisissant un chapitre spécifique en fonction des besoins. Il est très bien illustré par ces 30 figures, schémas et photos et ces 29 tableaux. Ensuite, les fiches-outils présentées plus haut participent fortement à ce caractère pédagogique. L'ensemble de l'ouvrage est ponctué de « paroles de praticiens », qui sont des verbatim issus d'entretiens menés par les auteurs auprès de 14 praticiens, et de récits d'interven-

tion qui apportent une substance utile aux contenus théoriques. À chaque début de chapitre, le lecteur peut se repérer grâce à un schéma de la démarche et un encadré résume les idées centrales. Chaque fois que cela est nécessaire, le lecteur est renvoyé vers des références complémentaires dans des rubriques « Pour en savoir plus ». Enfin, un glossaire d'une trentaine de mots s'ajoute à la panoplie des caractéristiques qui valorise l'ouvrage comme outil d'apprentissage de l'intervention en ergonomie.

Cet ouvrage est et restera une importante contribution aux réflexions sur la pratique de l'ergonomie et, plus généralement, à la littérature sur les théories de la pratique. Il y a fort à penser qu'il devienne une référence en la matière.

Pour terminer, les auteurs ont effectué un travail important qui retrace 15 ans de pratique et cette analyse ne peut rendre totalement compte de l'ouvrage. Nous invitons simplement le futur lecteur à ouvrir cet ouvrage : il restera alors certainement un livre de chevet.

**Johann Petit**

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### **Last Nightshift in Savar: The Story of the Spectrum Sweater Factory Collapse**

by Doug Miller, Alnwick, Northumberland,  
England: McNidder & Grace, 2012, 264 pp.,  
ISBN: 978-0-85716-039-3.

On April 11 2005, a factory in Savar, Bangladesh (near Dhaka), making sweaters and T shirts for the European market collapsed during the nightshift resulting in the deaths of 62 workers and injury to another 84. Doug Miller (Emeritus Professor of Worker Rights in Fashion, Northumbria University at Newcastle) has documented this tragedy and the attempts by unions, NGOs and some buyers to improve the derisory compensation scheme in operation and provide relief for the families and

displaced workers at the factory. As the author notes, this was probably the worst disaster in the clothing industry since the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in New York in 1911 and it resulted in a sustained international campaign to make multinationals accountable for labour rights abuses which, because of the woeful state of health and safety in the Ready Made Garments Industry (RMG), continue to this day. The book presents a detailed inside account of that campaign and to my knowledge is the first in depth case study which addresses the problems and complexities of resolving international disputes in outsourced supply chains, and most certainly the first in the apparel sector.

The book places the disaster in its wider context opening with a brief history of sweated labour and of the origins of “sweating” and the RMG industry in Bangladesh. Chapter 2 describes the factory collapse and the third chapter grapples with the issue of cause and culpability, chapter 4 looks at the response and mobilization of groups in Bangladesh and 5 at the international solidarity campaign and the reaction of the buyers. While the international (and local) unions did not have representation at the plant they did seek to represent the workers and win compensation and benefits from government, employers and buyers. The campaign was union and NGO led (most notably the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation, ITGLWF and the Clean Clothes Campaign, CCC) and their pressure resulted in the European buyers taking two quite distinct approaches – a rights based pension scheme versus a relief and income generation initiative. Woven into the account are the thoughts and actions of some of the key protagonists – Javier Chercolés the director of Corporate Social Responsibility at Inditex and, in particular, the late Neil Kearney, General Secretary of ITGLWF made this a personal commitment to win adequate compensation and to use the disaster as a building

block to gain improved health and safety legislation and practices for Bangladesh and other LDCs.

Chapter 6 is focused on the operation of the two emerging (rights based and income generation relief schemes). The chapter also explains some of the difficulties encountered in administering a rights based scheme in the context of the cultural norms prevailing in Bangladesh, particularly in relation to the widows of those sweater operators who perished in the disaster. Chapter 7 attempts to assess the outcomes from the collapse and all the actions and schemes which followed and chapter 8 discusses the limits and possibilities of corporate responsibility in outsourced multi buyer operations.

*Last Nightshift in Savar* is a multi-dimensional detailed study which works on so many levels and could serve both as a core text and as additional reading for undergraduate and postgraduate courses – not just on labour relations, and management but also relating to globalization, sustainability, health and safety, work and learning and many more. The language is not difficult but readers will need to focus on the “story-line” to get full value from the text which has breadth but also a depth in parts in an effort, as the author says in his preface, to do justice to the main characters in this story. To assist on aspects of the account teaching materials have been prepared to accompany the book (for details, contact the publisher [andy@mcnidderandgrace.co.uk](mailto:andy@mcnidderandgrace.co.uk)).

There are some important lessons which can be drawn from Doug Miller’s narrative, particularly about the ways in which NGOs can work with unions (including international federations) in a society where trade union membership is still viewed as anathema and where union density in the RMG remains low. . . . But the account also tells us about the importance of human agency in adversity in what is an unusual story of how a union general secretary and a head of corporate social responsibility in a major

fashion multinational became friends and worked together to improve relief in tragic circumstances.

If I have one quibble it is that the book lacks an index although I am led to believe that this is to be made available on the publisher's website, from which an E-book version can also be downloaded.

The *Last Night Shift in Savar* story is a major contribution to understanding and hopefully addressing the persistent health and safety malaise which continues to dog the RMG in Bangladesh in 2013. Fresh calls for prevention and improved worker compensation have seen the focus now shift to North American brands which have been implicated in a number of recent fires. For these companies their drive to use cheap labour has now come at its true cost. For those US and Canadian students of globalization wishing to put their theory into practice in their efforts to mobilize support for those demands raised by Bangladeshi activists, unions and NGOs in the wake of the Spectrum disaster, this book is an absolute must read.

P.S.: After this review was accepted by *R/IR*, there have been several additional incidents involving loss of life in Bangladesh, making all the issues raised in Doug Miller's book even more urgent.

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### **Making Capitalism Safe: Work Safety and Health Regulation in America, 1880-1940**

by Donald W. Rogers, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009, 296 pp., ISBN: 978-0-252-03482-4.

This book is a comparative analysis of industrial safety and health regulation in six states in the U.S. It starts with the experience in Wisconsin in 1880s and examines how the regulation evolved in this state. The author compares Wisconsin's labour law experience with Ohio, California, New

York, Illinois, and Alabama. Although the author does not explain why these states are selected, early industrialization and strong labour unions in these jurisdictions make them a good choice for the comparative analysis.

In 1910 Wisconsin is looked upon as the Bismarckian Germany of the United States, enacting progressive labour laws that influence the rest of the country. History treats Wisconsin's Industrial Commission as a pioneer in making health and safety regulations in the form of administrative rules, rather than piecemeal laws, and for its national influence in guiding the future State and Federal regulation of occupational safety and health. The Commission is also considered a minion of business interests. The author asks whether other states adopted Wisconsin Industrial Commission model; what their powers were; and whether they equalized business and labour influence in policy proceedings, or succumb to business interests. To answer these questions, the author reappraises progressive safety and health legislation in the U.S. conducting a six-state comparative analysis.

There are nine chapters and an epilogue in this book. Chapter 1 examines state departments' heritage in nineteenth-century common law and factory legislation. Chapter 2 examines their foundation in progressive labour law politics and public utility law reform. This is followed, in Chapters 3-5, by detailed analyses of state labour departments' educational, safety code-making, and enforcement functions in the 1910s, and, in Chapters 6-8, in the 1920s and 1930s. Chapter 9 examines the occupational disease work. The book concludes with the demise of state laws and the ascendancy of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) era.

Nineteenth-century common law rules relegated most accident liability to workers. Historians have long regarded progressive workers' compensation laws as the turning