The Centre for Work, Organisation and Wellbeing invite you to a seminar:

“The Transformation of Industrial Relations: Two Gestalts and Their Implications”
by Professor Bruce Kaufman

When: Thursday 2nd September, 2010 - 10:00am to 11:30am
Where: Room 0.14, Building N06 (Patience Thorns), Nathan campus
Food: Morning tea will be served upon arrival; please RSVP

Abstract: The year 2011 is the 25th anniversary of Kochan, Katz and McKersie’s book The Transformation of American Industrial Relations. They picture IR as a largely union-centered field; the Wagner Act and union uprising in the 1930s as the starting point; the industry-wide collective bargaining of the 1950s-1970s as the field’s mature phase; and the de-unionization after 1980 as the “transformation.” The portrait (gestalt) offered in this paper places the beginning point of American IR and its most fundamental transformation around 1920. The field was centered on the employment relationship and labor problems and had its center of gravity in progressive HRM and welfare capitalism. The Great Depression and New Deal of the 1930s were huge exogenous shocks that mostly displaced the 1920s model with a new collective bargaining centered model; post-1960, however, American IR slowly reverted back to its “default” historical path – a mostly non-union and HRM-led system. KKM’s transformation is thus better seen as a slow regression to the mean with the 1920s as the base-line. Numerous revisionist implications follow.

Speaker: Bruce Kaufman is Professor of Economics at Georgia State University and Senior Associate, W. T. Beebe Institute of Personnel and Employment Relations. Kaufman’s research interests include labor markets, human resource management systems, employee representation, history of economic and management thought, labor and employment law, behavioral economics, and institutional economics. He has published numerous scholarly articles and has edited or written 16 books. Among them are The Origins and Evolution of the Field of Industrial Relations in the United States (winner of the 1992 “Best Book in Labor Economics and Industrial Relations” prize); The Global Evolution of Industrial Relations (selected as among “Best of the Best” by American Library Association); Nonunion Employee Representation: History Contemporary Practice and Policy (with Daphne Taras); What Do Unions Do? A Twenty Year Perspective (with James Bennett); and The Economics of the Labor Market, 7th ed. (with Julie Hotchkiss). His two most recent books are Managing the Human Factor: The Early Years of Human Resource Management in American Industry (nominated for “Best Book in Labor Studies” prize) and Hired Hands or Human Resources? Case Studies of HRM Practices and Programs in Early American Industry.

Kaufman is co-editor of the annual research volume Advances in Industrial and Labor Relations; past president of the University Council of Industrial Relations and Human Resource Programs, past president of the Atlanta chapter of the Industrial Relations Research Association, and co-chair of the IR Theory Study Group of the International Industrial Relations Association. In 2009 he received the “Excellence in Teaching” award from the Andrew Young School; he also received the “Alumni Distinguished Professor” award – the highest honor given each year to a GSU faculty member. Kaufman is also Principal Research Fellow with the Department of Employment Relations and Centre for Work, Organization and Wellbeing, Griffith University (Brisbane, AU); Principal Research Fellow with the Work and Employment Research Unit, Business School, University of Hertsfordshire (Hatfield, UK), and a Visiting Professor with the Business school, Loughborough University (Leicester, UK).

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