

The Character and Circumstance of Canada's Industrialization

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REVIEW ESSAYS/ NOTES CRITIQUES

The Character and Circumstance of Canada's Industrialization

Chad Gaffield

Ian Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario, 1900-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1987).

Craig Heron, *Working in Steel: The Early Years in Canada, 1883-1935* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1988).

IN THE 1960s ROBOTICS appeared to hold such promise for industrialists that observers began predicting the complete replacement of blue-collar workers by a "steel-collar" labour force before the end of the century. Yet the late 1980s find such predictions to have proven rather unrealistic for reasons quite unanticipated twenty years ago. Most surprising to industrialists, perhaps, has been the discovery that replacing humans by robots is often much easier in principle than in practice. After efforts failed to create effective machines for certain tasks, some robotics designers took to filming workers on the job in order to construct almost equally-competent automatons. The unexpectedly slow growth of robotics attests to the basic contradiction between perceptions of mindless, routinized effort and the actual complexity of labour in industrial modes of production.

The meaning of machines for labour has become a major focus of historical attention during the past decade, and the findings of recent studies speak to our understandings of both the past and the present. Two fine examples of such research are the new books by Ian Radforth and Craig Heron. These are significant in that they reflect strengths of the research orientations of the 1970s and 1980s and also

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break ground both conceptually and contextually. At once, however, the studies raise substantive questions about the appropriateness of focusing on work in order to comprehend the lives of workers. In this sense, they offer an opportunity to examine recent historiographical advances, and to explore some of the conceptual difficulties which have come to the fore. From this perspective, the following discussion considers the concepts, sources, and research strategies of the Radforth and Heron studies, and indicates some of the epistemological implications of these books for understanding the relationship between labour and machines.

To begin it should be emphasized that these books are not parallel studies of different industries. Although complementary in various ways, they also are distinct both in form and content. Radforth structures his interpretation of logging in Northern Ontario with regard to two general periods: from 1900 to World War II, and from war-time to 1980. He first offers an overview of forest-industry development in this region, and then describes his earlier period in terms of the labour force, the character of bush work, and early attempts to improve working conditions. The second half of the book traces the emergence of the Lumber and Saw Mill Workers Union, and the consequent managerial responses (including mechanization), following World War II. Radforth closes with his discussion of how bushworkers have dealt with such responses, and how the traditional social relations of the forest economy have withstood much of the impact of the changing modes of production since the war.

This book is addressed explicitly to the literature that has followed Harry Braverman's discussion of monopoly capital and the degradation of work.¹ Braverman's powerful argument, that the traditional dignity and skill of labour were destroyed with the development of monopoly capitalism, captured the imagination of many scholars in the 1970s at least partly because it was consistent with two common perspectives of the time. First, Braverman's interpretation added new dimensions to the view that industrialization was, on balance, a "bad thing" for most of the affected populations. The 'degradation of work' thesis also fit with the view that the concept of social control offers is the best way to understand the changing social and economic organization of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Soon after the publication of Braverman's book, studies began arguing that his perspective was far too one-sided. Scholarly attention did not focus on the view that industrialization was a net loss for workers, but rather on the extent to which employers were able to control the workplace for their own purposes, and to the detriment of the working class.² Richard Edwards depicted the workplace as "contested terrain" in which the distinct ambitions of capital and labour competed for control over modes of production. Edwards and other scholars emphasized the

¹Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York 1974).

²Stephen Wood, ed., *The Degradation of Work? Skill, Deskill and the Labour Process* (London 1982).

extent to which workers were able to resist and influence proposed changes in the labour process.³ In the late 1970s, this perspective became part of a general rejection of the initial formulations of social control which scholars increasingly saw as assuming the ahistorical passivity and powerlessness of workers.

In this context, Radforth recovers the history of bushworkers as well as bosses in Northern Ontario. Several features of his study distinguish it from the general thrust of research undertaken in recent years on labour in Canada. He covers a substantial period of the twentieth century and focuses on workers with quite minimal labour organization. Until World War II, the labour force was composed of seasonal workers who responded to the opportunity to earn wages during the economic down turn of the Canadian winter. These workers included general labourers (often immigrants), agriculturalists seeking seasonally-complementary income, and "professional bushworkers" who combined winters in the forest with summers at the saw mill. In this analysis, the forest workers of the first half of the twentieth century remarkably resembled their nineteenth-century counterparts. Moreover, the pace and nature of work maintained great continuity with the pattern of earlier decades. The cutting by felling gangs, the hauling by teamsters, and the driving by dare-devils occurred in a new region, but drew upon skills honed over the course of more than a century in Canadian forests.

Although Radforth implies that Northern Ontario until World War II was in many ways an extension of the lumber industry of the nineteenth-century Ottawa Valley, he does not perceive the infamous lumber barons such as Booth and the Hamiltons, who supposedly controlled ruthlessly the industry of the previous century, to have had twentieth-century counterparts.⁴ Instead, Radforth details how bushworkers were able to determine their own destinies in ways which extended from decisions about entering (or leaving) the bush, to those concerning the pace and character of the labour process.

For two reasons, Radforth rejects the notion that these workers were "unskilled": the complexity of logging; and the fact that workers had to rely on their own decisions and abilities in the forest. Working conditions were certainly poor (including the frequency of fatal accidents) and the financial reward was not obvious. Radforth says that logging could be quite "lucrative" but that, in the end, "the majority of woodsmen did not fare well in comparison with workers in other Ontario industries." (41-2) Nonetheless, these largely non-unionized bushworkers are not presented as bedraggled labourers easily exploited by the bosses. The study does not want to romanticize their situation, but does seek to focus on the dignity, pride, and substantive role of bushworkers during the first half of the twentieth century.

³Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (New York 1976).

⁴The classic accounts are A.R.M. Lower's *The North American Assault on the Canadian Forest* (Toronto 1938) and *Great Britain's Woodyard: British America and the Timber Trade* (Montreal 1973). For a more recent synthesis, see Sandra Gillis, *The Timber Trade in the Ottawa Valley, 1806-1854* (Ottawa 1985).

While placing greater emphasis on social relations, the study attends to certain aspects of the great ethnic diversity which distinguished the Northern Ontario bushworkers. Only partial data can yet be presented, but it is clear that French Canadians and English Canadians were joined by substantial groups of Scandinavians and Eastern and Central Europeans in the early 1900s. Radforth singles out certain Finns who became militant leftists (after their arrival, interestingly), and led ineffective struggles to improve wages and conditions in the 1920s and 1930s. Immigrant labour subsequently was much less important, however, and ethnicity is not seen as important in understanding the worlds of bosses and bushworkers in recent decades.

The point of departure for the second era of logging in Northern Ontario was the founding of the Lumber and Saw Mill Workers Union which used an industrial-relations approach to confront management, rather than "class-war rhetoric." Unionization benefitted from labour scarcity during World War II, and from the post-war construction and newsprint booms. Lumber and Saw won a key strike victory in 1946, and successfully established a framework of collective bargaining in the industry. Quickly, however, the bosses began responding to this new power of organized workers. First, they attempted to replace these workers by recruiting European displaced persons in 1946-7. The relative failure of this strategy inspired management efforts to co-opt the bushworkers by improving their labour conditions, and to increase productivity by offering them training programmes. But the most important strategy came to be full support for mechanization. Power saws, articulated skidders, and multi-operational equipment redefined the labour process of the forest economy especially by the 1960s.

The mechanization of logging increased productivity by leaps and bounds, and (most significantly for the book's interpretation) depended upon a "skilled" workforce. Moreover, the introduction of new technologies was not simply a top-down process reflecting management's hegemony, but rather involved complex negotiations in which workers were by no means passive victims of new machines. The bushworkers did not blindly resist automation; they viewed each new machine on its own terms. The result was that the essential nature of the traditional social relations of bosses and bushworkers was maintained despite technological innovations. In the end, therefore, Radforth comes down squarely on the side of Edwards's concept of "contested terrain," and of a two-way industrialization process involving "reskilling" as much as (if not more than) deskilling.

Bushworkers and Bosses is based on a wide variety of documentary sources, especially those available through the Faculty of Forestry at the University of Toronto. Radforth drew upon the nearly 3,000 reports of the Woodlands Section of the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association, and the Logging Reports written by forestry students who made annual field trips until the mid-1960s. The observations and attitudes revealed in such evidence were added to other sources such as newspapers and some interviews to reconstruct the character of logging and, thereby, the relationship between bosses and bushworkers.

Among the many strengths of this book is, indeed, its detailed information about the changing labour process in the Northern Ontario forest economy. The analysis of mechanization after World War II is more original than the description of the earlier "traditional" logging activities, but the scope of the work is impressive and benefits greatly from wide reading in diverse secondary sources. The book also is a pleasure to read, and shows the potential of integrating the supposedly "fragmented" fields of social history such as working-class history, the history of technology, and ethnic history. Along with Wynn, Séguin, and others, Radforth has become a central figure within a new generation of scholars who seek to understand the meaning of the forest in Canadian history.⁵

Yet, the question arises: does understanding the labour process really lead to an appreciation of the relationship of management to labour? Is the key issue what workers actually do? The conclusion Radforth reaches is equivocal. In the end, "Bosses remained bosses, and bushworkers remained bushworkers." (245) However, enormous changes had obviously taken place such that one "quarter century after the war, the woodworker of the 1940s would have felt thoroughly lost amid the deafening roar of feller-bunchers, forwarders, and mobile slashers." (239) In what sense, then, is continuity a prime feature of the twentieth century? Or has logging really been so transformed that the character of bushworkers and bosses as individuals truly was different by the 1960s?

In focusing on the labour process, such questions tend to rest on the research periphery. We learn *what* workers were doing but we never really learn *who* they were. This distinction is conceptually crucial to interpretations of the relationship between capital and labour. Radforth quotes (but not approvingly) Marx's argument that, "In acquiring new productive processes, men change their mode of production and in changing their mode of production they change their ways of earning a living they change all their social relations." (244) This argument assumes that one group of workers are passing from one labour process to another. But what if the changed modes of production are associated with a quite different group of workers? More specifically, what if the bushworkers of the pre-World War II era were quite different from those of the later generations? What if this change was related only indirectly to the labour process?

These questions can be pursued in many different ways but one possible approach is demographic. The evidence in *Bushworkers and Bosses* does not systematically reveal the ages and marital status of the men in the woods but various examples suggest the hypothesis that a dramatic shift did, indeed, occur during the course of the twentieth century. In the first period, it seems that many bushworkers fell into one of two categories: young, single men seeking to gain the wherewithal to establish a household which did *not* depend on logging, and married men supplementing a household based on some other economic pursuit (usually agriculture). In both groups, attachments to logging were somewhat tenuous; the

⁵ Graeme Wynn, *Timber Colony: A Historical Geography of Early Nineteenth Century New Brunswick* (Toronto 1981) and Normand Séguin, *La Conquête du sol au 19e siècle* (Sillery, Quebec 1977).

workers hoped, in fact, to be able to move on to other work as soon as possible. Land acquisition was the prime ambition among young single men, while the married men hoped to be able to move beyond reliance on the added income of bushworking.

From the 1930s, however, the demography of the bushworkers appears to have altered considerably. One possibility is that, as a group, they now were older and more often married with families. Rather than seeing the forest industry as a temporary stop on the way to family formation, or as a supplement to other income, these workers may have had a much greater commitment to working in the bush. From this perspective, the ambition of land-based households no longer was reasonable, and thus the pursuit of better wages and working conditions became a much higher priority.

Another way to think about the changing demographic character of the bushworkers would be in terms of recent work in the history of the family.⁶ In the first period of the Northern Ontario forest economy, the bushworkers may have been thinking in terms of a family economy either as future husbands or as established household "heads." For these workers, wages from logging were not expected to support a family; rather, they were part of the preparation for family formation, or were another contribution to a multi-dimensional productive effort (not in the woods) involving as many family members as possible. This possibility makes more understandable the concurrent phenomena of workers 1) who "did not fare well" economically; but 2) who did not enthusiastically support labour organization; and 3) who readily responded to the "lure" of the woods. The judgement concerning the workers' pay is based on the fact that even a maximally-employed bushworker at this time could not have been "the sole support for a family of average size living in urban Ontario." (42) But this criterion may not reflect the perspective of the workers at the time: were they trying to be the sole support of an urban family? Did they have any reason to believe that such an ambition was realistic? Similarly, why would workers who saw themselves as passing through the industry commit much time and energy to building a labour union when this process of construction obviously was going to be very difficult? Finally, the "lure" of logging undoubtedly related in part to the psychological factors which Radforth describes to explain the apparently irrational decision (in terms of income) to become a bushworker. However, it may have been more important that the economic reward was, in fact, reasonably attractive *if* the context were that of a family economy rather than that of a sole breadwinner; in this sense, the decision to log may have been economically quite "rational."

This hypothesis assumes that "bushworkers" only identified themselves as

⁶There is no up-to-date bibliography on the history of the family in Canada. Early works are listed in Gerald L. Soliday, ed., *History of the Family and Kinship: A Select International Bibliography* (Millwood, N.Y. 1980). More recent material can be found in bibliographies on children and women. The work of Neil Sutherland and the Canadian Childhood History Project is particularly helpful: see *A Bibliography of Canadian Childhood: Articles* (Vancouver 1987).

such to a limited extent, and that their sense of self as producers was related primarily to family and kin. Similarly, the determining context would not have been the labour process, but rather the larger economic environment inhabited by their family members (actual or anticipated). Given such a perspective among labouring men, work (meaning productive activity) would not have been seen as limited to employment; moreover, land (and not wage labour) still would have been considered the best route to economic survival and security.

Perhaps by the later 1920s and certainly by the Depression, however, moving on from logging seems to have become increasingly problematic. The average age of the bushworkers appears to have therefore increased; and their family circumstances may have changed considerably. One key result may have been a changed attitude toward the forest industry, involving a much greater commitment both in terms of time and individual identity. In the changed material setting of these years, the concept of family economy (defined in terms of either labour or wages) may have given way to notions of sole breadwinning. The convergence of such forces may help explain the success of labour organization, as well as the continuing willingness of the workers to negotiate about innovations including mechanization. In this period, the men in the woods may have come to identify themselves fully as "bushworkers" (more than as members of family economies), and thus been more ready to promote the collectivity of a union. Politicization after the 1930s therefore could be understood in terms of the bushworkers' changing consciousness of the economic dimensions of family and kin.

Bushworkers and Bosses includes some pieces of evidence which would support this hypothesis, and other details which would appear to refute it. Such speculation calls for individual-level evidence on workers and their incomes as well as on their family circumstances. This kind of evidence is rarely available, especially for the twentieth century, although some studies are now underway regarding other contexts, and the potential release of additional evidence gives some reason for optimism about future research possibilities.⁷ Meanwhile, the relative importance of *what* workers were doing, and *who* they were can be further considered in the context of Craig Heron's sophisticated study of the steel industry before 1935.

Working in Steel is structured around four major chapters which begin with a brief survey of corporations in the evolving steel industry, and lead to discussions of technology and workers, including an extended examination of various forms of resistance. The book concludes with a stimulating summary analysis and some comments on the significance of its findings for current innovation in the workplace. Heron's argument begins with the assumption that "a critically important experience for people who depend on wages for their survival is the nature of their relationship with their employers." This relationship changed significantly in the

⁷For an example of recent work based on individual-level data on workers between the wars, see José Igartua, "La mobilité professionnelle des travailleurs de l'aluminium à Arvida, 1925-1940," *Labour/Le Travail*, 20 (1987), 33-60.

early twentieth century as monopoly capitalism increasingly replaced the "individual entrepreneurs" and their "local businesses" with "powerful new corporations." (9) These corporations brought new ideas and organizations to the question of labour process with the result that workers faced a transforming managerial and technological environment throughout 1900-35. Heron warns that the evolution of the world of mass production must not be understood primarily in terms of machines; rather, the key causal variable was the decisions and ambitions of the corporations. The history of technology is thus a corollary to a redefined business history which must include the active role of workers who struggled to maintain their own priorities in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, unionization. Moreover, and most important, analysis of technological change must attend to the implications of mass production for the changing experience of work. In this way, Heron combines certain established sub-fields of social history, and builds upon concepts drawn from diverse historiographical debates.

The steel industry provides an excellent focus for Heron's interpretation. Unlike almost all recent works of social history, *Working in Steel* examines the national experience. To produce this synthesis, Heron brings together both secondary and primary documentary sources, especially from government reports and periodicals. The evidence shows that, by early in the century, the familiar processes of capitalist consolidation had engendered the "Big Four": Nova Scotia Steel, the Steel Company of Canada, Dominion Iron and Steel, and Algoma Steel. Three of these corporations reigned in company towns (Sydney, New Glasgow/Trenton, and Sault Ste. Marie), while Stelco competed as one of many players in the industrially-diversified city of Hamilton. Heron traces the tremendous growth of the industry with detailed attention to the ways in which mass production redefined the nature of the labour process. Braverman's thesis is rejected outright for the initial decades of mass production in favour of a more complex view, in which working in steel continued to call for considerable "skill" despite the increasing automation. Certain traditional ironmaking skills indeed were rendered obsolete, but the industry's reliance on "persistent skills" and new skills meant that the workers of the 1920s and 1930s cannot be characterized as mindless appendages to smart machines. Moreover, the new experts such as chemists lacked practical knowledge, and the industry still needed the hands-on experience and skill of blue-collar workers. While Heron is careful to specify variation among the different plants, he offers an industry-wide interpretation that applies to workers from Nova Scotia to northern Ontario.

In the end, however, the story is one of ultimate defeat for the dignity of work and the initiative and integrity of workers. Heron devotes the longest chapter of his study to the ways in which workers responded to the changing industry. He traces informal methods of resistance (e.g., simply quitting), as well as formal strategies (such as collective action), and shows the relative importance of these responses in the industry's several plants. Although workers achieved some successes, especially during boom times, they found that managers could combine outright

repression (supported by the state) and paternalistic programmes to pursue their own priorities. By the 1930s, when Heron's study concludes, the solidarity of the steelworkers was minimal; recognizing the implications of mass unemployment, "most steelworkers, like so many other Canadian workers, kept their heads down, tried to stay in the good books of their foremen, and looked to personal strategies of survival." (165)

Working in Steel is thus a fascinating book which addresses a broad range of questions in concise and interpretively-innovative ways. For example, Heron presents a novel picture of the initial relationship between workers and machines by insisting upon the challenge of working in a steel plant undergoing automation. The familiar image of Luddism is replaced by an emphasis on self-confidence and self-respect. Rather than simply fearing new machines and violently rejecting them, these workers sought to collaborate with them, and to integrate them into the labour process in ways consistent with their own experience and skill. Heron would not say that technology is value-free, but he does imply that in the early decades of mechanization, whose "values" the new machines were to serve was not entirely clear; those of managers and workers alike were present. Unfortunately for the workers and the industry as a whole, automation increasingly reflected only corporate ideology, and the possibility of a meaningful collaboration between men and machines faded from the world of steelmaking.

But the question remains: does analyzing the arrival of mass production in terms of what workers do obscure the more important question of who they are? Heron does, in fact, pay some attention to this latter question at least partly because some detailed research has already been undertaken. As in logging, it appears that considerable demographic change did indeed occur within the steel-making labour force between the late 1800s and the 1930s. Although the data are fragmentary, they support the hypothesis that, at the outset, the majority of workers (the less-"skilled") were relatively young, many were single, and most were hoping to leave the industry as soon as possible. In contrast, the workers of the 1930s (at all "skill"-levels) were older, often married, and increasingly identified with the industry.

Obviously, this hypothesis is stated in stylized terms; the steelworkers never were homogeneous. Since Heron is interested in the question of the workers' identities, he does provide various evidence detailing the complex composition of the labour force. And the study repeatedly emphasizes that until the 1930s, many workers hoped to use steelmaking as a stepping-stone to more attractive work, such as farming. In this sense, Heron's perspective is quite nuanced, and his focus on the workplace does not exclude sensitivity to questions of family and kin. The study tends to address such questions, however, only in relation to immigrants, and thus may not go far enough in perceiving fundamental underlying changes in the Canadian social formation for all of its inhabitants during the early 1900s.

At the macro-level, Heron shows that the steelworkers evolved from a mostly foreign (including Newfoundland) group in the early century to a mostly Canadian-

born group by World War II. In addition, this labour force moved from one characterized by high transiency to one characterized by greater stability and a longer-term commitment to the industry. But why? Part of the answer surely lies in the corporate strategies (including recruitment in Europe) Heron outlines, but why were European workers more willing than Canadian-born workers to accept the wages and working conditions offered by the industry? Heron describes the immigrants as "footloose" workers-(164) who "drifted in and out" of plants (173); similarly, he repeats the "birds of passage" (84) label which is considered to have discouraged interest in labour organization. But were Canadian-born workers substantially less "footloose" in the early twentieth century? Were transiency rates among non-immigrant labourers considerably lower than those of new arrivals? Were considerations of family and kin not just as important among both groups? Rather than "drifting" in and out of plants, were not workers responding to the demands, needs, and inherent conflicts of family-based survival strategies?⁸

Such questions cannot be fully answered, but they point to the importance of reconsidering the extent to which groups such as steelworkers defined the world of work before the 1930s as being limited to their own workplace. Given the persistent belief in land as the best means of pursuing survival and security, and given wage levels which required continued collective effort by all able-bodied family members, it seems reasonable to argue that these male workers may have seen themselves as still operating within only one aspect of the larger context of productive possibilities. This context would include the settings of women and children. Certainly, the established discourse of the turn of the century promoted the ideal of single-breadwinners, and raised to new levels the expropriation of the word "work" to mean paid labour (predominantly for males). But did the majority of the population, Canadian-born and immigrant alike, actually think in these terms?

In this sense, studies of the labour process in Canada before the 1930s may attribute to the industrial workplace a consistent importance rather than acknowledging a critical process of change over time from the perspective of the workers. In terms of the history of the family, two key phenomena might be far more important than has been recognized in such studies: the fact that the ambition for land remained strong (for very good material reasons) as late as the interwar years; and the enormous difficulty of maintaining a family on the basis of one income before World War II. In these circumstances, individuals may have continued to identify themselves as workers primarily in terms of the collective arena of family and kin. For specific purposes, identification as part of an industrial labour force did become very important at certain times during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, but the more profound attachment seems to have remained family-based. Male workers might have seen that organizing themselves separately

⁸For a discussion of family strategies as a complex phenomenon reflecting the tension between individual and communal imperatives, see "Family Strategy: A Dialogue," in *Historical Methods*, (Summer 1987), 113-25.

from, and often in opposition to, the labour of women and children was inconsistent with an as-yet largely-rural social formation in which even cities after 1900 called for productive effort from all family members below a relatively thin social layer.⁹ The militant opposition of employers and the state to labour unions obviously helps explain the frequent failures of labour action, but the importance of the inherent tension between the material need to think in terms of family economies and the union call for identification as male industrial workers may not yet be adequately recognized in the research literature. It may be, for example, that the success of the Knights of Labor was based significantly on their partial recognition, at least, that workers were not simply men; in other words, the approach of this union was more consistent with the ideology of working families, and thus the Knights were more easily assimilated into the mentality of late nineteenth-century wage labourers.

The crucial question concerns the timing of the arrival, in worker consciousness and experience, of urban industrialism defined in terms of men as sole-breadwinners and women as working in unpaid labour at home in so-called nurturing capacities. When did adult male workers implicitly begin to limit their sense of the productive labour process to their own toil in factories and plants? The preceding discussion suggests the hypothesis that this transition took place much later than often is assumed, and began hesitantly and unevenly after the mid-1800s, and attained predominant importance only in the interwar years. Although Canada's Industrial Revolution certainly transformed cities such as Hamilton as early as the 1860s, the country's social formation perhaps was reconfigured most dramatically in the 1920s and 1930s. In these years, a convergence of forces may have laid the foundation for the more "stable" and unionized industrial labour force whose socio-demographic profile and mentality became familiar after World War II. Rather than the 1930s being most important as a time when workers turned inward looking for "personal strategies of survival," the Depression might have been critical in inspiring the long-term commitment needed to support industrial labour organization once economic conditions improved. This perspective implies that the physical separation of home and "work" did not necessarily fragment *at the same time* the conceptual "unitary work world"¹⁰ of workers who continued to seek survival and security in the context of family and kin.

Bushworkers and Bosses and *Working in Steel* attest to the continuing maturation of social historical research in Canada. They provide no evidence that research and writing have become fragmented or irrelevant to the Big Questions. Rather, they contribute to a growing literature which is challenging the traditional assumptions about, and definitions of, historical importance, while often exposing

⁹In Hamilton, for example, the workworld of many families in the early twentieth-century extended far beyond the labour process of adult male wage-earners; see Jane Synge, "The Transition from School to Work: Growing Up Working Class in Early Twentieth-Century Hamilton, Ontario," in K. Ishwaran, ed., *Childhood and Adolescence in Canada* (Toronto 1979).

¹⁰Craig Heron and Robert Storey, "On the Job in Canada," in Heron and Storey, *On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston 1986), 26.

their limitations, contradictions, and weak justifications. It should be emphasized that such studies raise fundamental questions not only about the origins of contemporary Canada, but also about the co-existence of humans and robots in the Information Age. Despite this research, technology-driven explanations of change abound as the industrial revolution is left behind in the late-twentieth century. Similarly, ahistorical hysteria about contemporary patterns of family and kin fuel newspapers, television, and film. For such reasons, we should all hope that continued discussion and reflection about the evidence and interpretations of Heron's and Radforth's studies will contribute both to historical understanding and to public policy debate.

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