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## REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

Wayne Roberts, *Cracking The Canadian Formula: The Making of the Energy and Chemical Workers Union* (Toronto: Between The Lines 1990).

A FEW YEARS AGO a student (Bud Book, a pipefitter by trade) told me he thought it strange that workers and unions in one of the most important sectors of the economy — refineries and chemicals — didn't get a mention in histories of the labour movement in Canada. The explanation was, of course, a simple one: very little had been written about workers and unions in these industries. Wayne Roberts' marvelous — "official" — history of the Energy and Chemical Workers Union (ECWU) assures a place in future histories of the labour movement for workers and unions in this sector.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I tracks the transformation of the Oil Workers International Union (OWIU) from its inception in Canada in 1948 as a small union in petroleum refining, into a powerful, national union covering virtually the entire energy and chemical sectors. Roberts tells this story with verve, wit, and great insight. The story hinges on three key events: the 1955 merger of the OWIU and the United Gas, Coke & Chemical Workers to form the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW); the achievement of independence by the OCAW in 1979; and the 1980 merger of the OCAW, the Canadian Chemical Workers and an independent union of textile workers to form the ECWU. The events themselves are anticlimactic. The

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interesting part of the story lies in the personalities, the conflicts and struggles, the political intrigues within and between unions, and the accidents and flukes which combined to generate the union's forward momentum.

The formation of the ECWU was, in large part, the achievement of the OWIU leadership, and, in particular, Neil Reimer, who was promoted from the shop floor to OWIU staff in 1951. In 1954, Reimer was appointed Director for Canada. He brought to the job brilliant organizing and negotiating skills, an uncanny ability to anticipate changing conditions and improvise tactics to deal with them, and a vision of a decent society where workers were treated with respect and dignity.

After the merger in 1955, the union followed a strategy of attracting new members by delivering the goods for existing ones. Key strikes were waged in chemical plants in Sarnia and Edmonton in the 1950s, and in refineries across the country in the 1960s. In all these disputes, the union made important gains. The 1969 refinery strike in British Columbia, which shut down almost the entire industry for five months, was especially significant, because the union finally achieved national bargaining (and national standards) in the industry.

A particular strength of the OCAW leaders was their capacity to devise better ways of performing trade union functions — bargaining, striking and organizing. Reimer was extremely adept at getting issues to the top of the bargaining agenda in the face of employer opposition (job security in 1965, the reduced work week in 1973, and pay for knowledge — a sub-

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terfuge to get around the Anti-Inflation Board — in the mid 1970s). As well, the OCAW advanced the concept of “all-in-the family unionism,” pioneered membership surveys as a means of getting feedback for the rank-and-file, and restructured union practices and policies to accommodate the aspirations of members in Quebec.

The parting of OCAW from its parent organization in 1979 was an amicable one, a result attributable to both the good will built up within the international by OCAW leaders and members in Canada, and a progressive leadership in the United States. Negotiations on the merger which created the ECWU in 1980 recognized Quebec's special situation in the union constitution. Appropriately, Neil Reimer became the ECWU's first president.

A central theme in Roberts' analysis is that the ECWU (and its predecessors) sustained and nurtured the values and vision of early CIO unions. In Part II of the book, Roberts elaborates on this theme, using concrete examples to demonstrate the union's commitment to the praxis of social unionism: the union's fight for health and safety in workplaces; the union's and Reimer's support for the CCF/NDP, reflected both in the battle for Medicare in Saskatchewan and in Reimer's leadership role in the Alberta NDP; and the union's campaign to get osteoporosis onto the national agenda.

The study does have some minor flaws. Roberts presents the ECWU as a paragon for trade unions — a union with a maverick leadership and a unique “culture,” innovating and leading the way for other unions. There is much of this in the history of the ECWU, but there is much of it also in the history of other unions. CUPE, CUPW, and the CAW, are examples of unions which have values and agendas which are as progressive of those of the ECWU. Moreover, these unions have been just as innovative in protecting and advancing the interests of their — quite different — memberships. This is not to deny Roberts' point that some unions are

foundering, but merely to note that the problem is not as pervasive as he implies.

While there is a fine chapter — “Dust To Dust” — on workers and conditions in the Johns-Manville asbestos products plant in Scarborough, there is little else on either the characteristics of ECWU members or on the conditions that confront them on the job. Workers in refineries and chemical plants are relatively well paid and relatively secure in their jobs. Who are these workers? How do these factors affect their needs and aspirations relative, say, to workers in foundries or garment plants; and how do they affect rank-and-file participation in the union?

Finally, Roberts notes that the ECWU and its leaders are, in contrast to other unions and other union leaders, big proponents of QWL programs. There is a discussion of this issue in the third chapter of Part II — “Take This Job And Shape It” — which focuses on a QWL experiment at a Shell chemical plant in Sarnia. The discussion is balanced, but there is not enough of it to provide a basis for understanding how this program differs from similar programs in non-ECWU plants. Nor is it possible to figure out where the leadership of the ECWU sees QWL plans going in the future.

By way of conclusion, I would say that one of the major virtues of Roberts' book is that it reminds us of the useful and important things we can learn from detailed histories of particular unions. The book should stimulate similar studies of other unions — and more studies of the ECWU. An “Afterword” to the book by the ECWU executive explains why it is vital that more such studies are done — vital, both for the labour movement, and for everyone else concerned about Canada's future.

Errol Black  
Brandon University

Michael Earle, ed., *Workers and the State in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia* (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press 1989).

IN THEIR SUCCINCT historiographic introduction Michael Earle and Ian McKay explain that the purpose of this collection of nine essays is to examine the dichotomous legacy of industrial legality, that "complex network of laws, systems, and procedures ... which structures bargaining relations between workers and employers" in 20th century Nova Scotia. The province's fragmented economy, with its "industrial enclaves" and uneven social development, its relatively early sectoral industrialization, and its pioneer efforts to bring industrial relations within the law makes Nova Scotia a fertile field for Canadian labour historians. Here "the elements of industrial legality were first articulated" and dramatically contested, particularly in the province's coal and steel industries. Although the editors are critical of the whiggish assumptions that industrial legality constituted a progressive measure, pointing out how legislation and contracts limited the timing of strikes, stifled spontaneous action and led to the bureaucratization of labour, they realize nonetheless that industrial legality offered other workers protection and with "all its problems, represented the first effective collective challenge to the power of capital." (10, 11, 14, 16)

The book's comprehensive title, however, promises much more than it delivers. As even its editor acknowledges, the book contains little on women and work, the unorganized workforce, or working-class cultural traditions. There is nothing on woods, agricultural or manufacturing workers. Apart from political parties and unions there is nothing on institutions. Moreover, despite the editor's promise to provide a record of "industrial relations outside the coal-fields" two of the nine essays, Michael Earle's "Down With Hitler and Silby Barrett," and Michael Earle and Herbert

Gamberg's "The United Mine Workers and the coming of the CCF to Cape Breton," interesting and useful as they are, fail to take us very far from the coal fields. At least a third of the essays focus on the crucial 1940-50 decade. Few address directly the important question of the character and efficacy of industrial legality raised in the introduction. And at least five of the nine essays have been published recently or contemporaneously in *Acadiensis*.

Nonetheless, all are well researched, informative essays, which extend our knowledge of Nova Scotian labour. Kirby Wood's "Coal Miners and the Law in Nova Scotia From the 1864 Combination of Workman Act to the 1947 Trade Union Act" explains how labour relations in Nova Scotia's coal industry pioneered "the modern framework of collective bargaining law" in Nova Scotia, and elsewhere in Canada, and how its historical development has been viewed from a "pluralist" or "critical" perspective. He thereby provides a useful historical and historiographical overview of the emergence of industrial legality. Suzanne Morton's "The Halifax Relief Commission and Labour Relations during the Reconstruction of Halifax, 1917-19" and Jay White's "Pulling Teeth: Striking for the Check-off in the Halifax Shipyards, 1944," however, concentrate more narrowly on the Halifax building trades. In her essay Morton demonstrates how the state-created Halifax Relief Commission's commitment to "techno-corporatism" clashed with the interests of skilled labour; and White shows how the month long strike of 3,000 shipyard workers in 1944 wrung check-off rights through the courts. The failure of the bitter, thirteen-month strike of 400 Windsor Gypsum workers, dealt with by C.J.H. Gilson and A.M. Wadden "The Windsor Gypsum Strike and the formation of joint Labour/Management Study Committee: Conflict and Accommodation in the Nova Scotia Labour Movement, 1957-79," and labour's willingness to cooperate with

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management's government-sponsored Swedish joint labour/management committees (so enthusiastically promoted by Dalhousie University's Institute for Public Affairs) underlines the pervasive conservatism and defensiveness of the province's post-war labour movement. This point is underscored in Anthony Thomson's "From Civil Servants to Government Employees: The Nova Scotia Government Employees Association 1967-1973," where Tom Shiers, the president of the Nova Scotia Quarry Workers Union, who led his union into the bitter gypsum strike in 1957, re-emerges a decade later as the conservative executive secretary of the Nova Scotia Civil Service Association, who attempts but fails to prevent a younger generation of government workers from moving toward a "union like relationship" with their employers.

Two of the most suggestive essays are Fred Winsor's "Solving a Problem: Privatizing Worker's Compensation for Nova Scotia's Offshore Fishermen, 1920-1928," and E. Jean Nisbet's "Free Enterprise at its Best: The State, National Sea, and the Defeat of the Nova Scotia Fishermen, 1946-47." Not only do these articles get us away from the coal fields, which by default have shaped (and perhaps misshaped) our attitudes toward social relations in Nova Scotia, but they introduce us to another important labour force, and in the process demonstrate the "startling differences between state policies toward miners and fishermen." (18) They also suggest the complexity of social relationships in an important sector of the province's economy. While the Lunenburg 64 system, whereby fishermen held shares in their, and other vessels, might be peculiar to the fisheries, similar co-adventurer arrangements existed among small woodlot owners, or among those who rented crown land for a cutting season. Until we understand these and similar economies, the chameleon character of the state's relationships to

20th-century Nova Scotian workers will elude our view.

The volume concludes with a fourteen page "Afterword" by Craig Heron entitled "Male Wage-Earners and the State in Canada" in which he discusses some of the issues raised in the book's introduction, and places them within the larger context of Canadian labour history.

In general, a fresher, more focused and comprehensive collection of essays may have provided a clearer picture of the state and 20th-century Nova Scotian workers. In this respect the book is less a "map" than a compass.

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Allen Mills, *A Fool for Christ: The Political Thought of J.S. Woodsworth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1991).

CANADA IS BY NO MEANS awash in myths. We have plenty of legends; but in Northrop Frye's sense of a story which effectively explains collective condition, experience, perception, we are deficient. It seems a pity to deconstruct such myths as we do possess. I think that Allen Mills, in this diligent endeavour to analyze Woodsworth's thought systematically, sidesteps the very real problem of Woodsworth as myth.

In Mills' view the myth of Woodsworth is something created by others, by hagiographers, admirers and his own political movement. While Mills does not minimize Woodsworth's courage, and does detect in his subject the almost too-willing martyr, he blurs his analysis by obsessively searching out "contradictions" in Woodsworth's thought and action. Insisting that "the importance of ideas was indeed Woodsworth's own perspective on his life and politics," and declaring that this book is "an intellectual biography," Mills appears to belie the title he chose for the volume. Certainly Woodsworth was profoundly curious

about ideas, particularly if they were 'new'; but to suggest that he can be analyzed as an "intellectual" is about as helpful as trying to analyze Martin Luther or Mahatma Gandhi in terms of the intellectual content and consistency of their political thinking.

The point is that Woodsworth himself created the myth and knew that this was what he was about. And the myth was consistent. It explained to those Canadians who would listen that beyond the hurly-burly of business, the corrupting requirements of politics, the "sin of indifference" to social inequities and suffering, there was an ideal, an impossible goal best summed up in what Woodsworth, to the end of his life, called the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

The terms in which Woodsworth, from time to time, depicted the goal and the steps by which it might be reached, varied. He moved, sometimes erratically, from the formal ministry to the informal ministry of service and from that to lengthy absorption in politics. As Mills points out, Woodsworth was the first to inject into parliamentary debate the ideas of J.A. Hobson, John Meynard Keynes and even F.W. Taussig. He was also ready to canvass any and all notions of social, parliamentary and constitutional reform — from group government to abolition of the Senate to ending appeals to the Privy Council. And, of course, he was a centralist, a firm devotee of economic planning, the welfare state and very wide reaches of public ownership. In the midst of all this (and a host of ancillary issues) it is not difficult to discern some "intellectual" contradictions. The very existence of those contradictions, however, should serve as warning that "the real Woodsworth" is not to be discovered by "putting aside myth."

I suspect that in drawing a pretty sharp line between Woodsworth's early days in the Methodist ministry and the social gospel, on the one hand, and his post-1919 political life on the other, Mills has accepted too readily the interpretative

model put forward by Ramsay Cook in *The Regenerators*. Cook's notion that the essential role of the social gospellers, including Woodsworth, was to convert the protestant churches into some kind of association for the advancement of sociology may be helpful in understanding some of those theological renegades. Mills does not go quite as far as Cook; he does talk of Woodsworth's "fading religious commitment" and argues that "it was as a secular-minded citizen of a modern, cosmopolitan culture that he served in Parliament after 1921." Yet, he adds immediately that "Christianity also provided Woodsworth this his most persistent self-images, those of the crusader and the martyr." Both Mills and Cook imply that Woodsworth wanted to desanctify the church, to secularize it in order to make it relevant. However, when Mills refers to Woodsworth's 1918 letter of resignation from the ministry (without analyzing it) he observes that the reasons advanced were not religious "but rather such obvious political issues as war, pacifism, and the dominance of the church's affairs by a wealthy business elite." Political issues? Surely it is evident that Woodsworth left the church because, in his mind, it was no longer sanctified. He had no wish to secularize the church; he had a consuming desire to sanctify society. To him, the church was already secularized. It seems to me that this conundrum is bound to bedevil any attempt to put into separate compartments his religious and his political thought.

Mills discusses Woodsworth's thinking about money and banking, international affairs, the Canadian constitution and the role of 'co-operation' as integral to this thinking. There are, however, curious gaps. The relationship between the religious and the political (so close, I think, as to be inseparable) in Woodsworth's pacifism is not seriously analyzed; and, although Mills pays almost inordinate attention to Woodsworth's views on soviet communism, he gives but passing attention to



the significance of 'minority government' in Woodsworth's thinking or as part of his political legacy.

Disavowing any intention to provide "another chronology of Woodsworth's political life and of the personal relationships within it," Mills nevertheless presents some interesting personal information which was not previously available. Most of this material concerns the pre-1918 years; much of it has to do with Woodsworth's attitude to immigrants and Canada's British legacy. Mills treats these questions somewhat ahistorically. Demanding present-day positions on race and anglosaxondom from a nascent radical of Woodsworth's lineage in the early years of this century is surely an exercise in futility. But, apart from that, the mixture of biographical re-write and political science analysis is very likely to confuse most readers: at some points Mills presents straight biography, while most of the time assuming intimate knowledge of the biography he doesn't present.

I will close this review (which I probably should not have written) with a single point of defence. I find it somewhat contradictory of Mills to indict *A Prophet of Politics* for underestimating the revolutionary bent in Woodsworth, of depicting him, politically, as a moderate liberal-socialist. Contradictory because Mills' assessment of Woodsworth as parliamentarian is that he was too willing to compromise, afraid to exploit radically the potential for political disruption. Well, I think this returns us to the essential point: attempts to peel away the ambience of mythology serve to obscure rather than reveal the "real Woodsworth." In his brief essay on Woodsworth, Frank Underhill called him an "untypical Canadian." This, too, is a half-truth. As a politician Woodsworth was a very typical Canadian, if more ardent than most. I think it can be argued, however, that he cannot be understood at all in merely political terms; that, as maker of a myth he was in but not of our political life. When he called for the Kingdom here and

now he didn't mean the achievement of any political-economic system. Such things are bound to be fluid, productive of contradiction. He meant, rather, the achievement of true brotherhood — although, if he were with us now he would not use that word, being, politically, very trendy. It was with the goal of brotherhood that he began; with it he brought his career to a close. Untypical in his steadfastness, perhaps. Typical, however, in living a myth whose essential worth brought instant recognition.

Kenneth McNaught  
University of Toronto

Alan F.J. Artibise, ed., *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Canadian Society: A Guide to the Literature* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press 1990).

CANADIAN STUDIES EMERGED as a multidisciplinary movement in academic teaching some two decades ago. Scholars from a variety of backgrounds in the social sciences and humanities began to pool their expertise and offer interdepartmental programs on Canada to undergraduate students. These programs are now firmly established in Canadian universities. The movement has been supported by the Association of Canadian Studies, founded in 1975, and the *Journal of Canadian Studies* provides a lively forum for scholars in the field. In some cases, centers have been created or graduate courses introduced, and these developments have been duplicated in universities abroad. Generally, however, the Canadian studies program is administered by interdepartmental committees and does not have the profile of traditional disciplines. There is also a need for a more coherent, integrated literature. This volume of essays is intended as a first step towards that goal. Dr. Artibise has recruited ten authors, all prominent Canadianists, to survey growth

and trends in the literature in their respective fields.

The book contains five chapters covering the development of native studies in English Canada (Price) and in Quebec (Dominique), with collaborative reviews of the French and English literatures on immigration and ethnicity (Avery and Ramirez), religion (Laperrier and Westfall), and labour studies (Ferland, Kealey and Palmer). In a short introduction on the objectives and philosophy of the volume, Wallace Clement emphasizes the interdisciplinary character of these pieces. Actually they are disciplinary in their approaches, conventional reviews of established fields or subfields, notably archaeology, anthropology, ethnic history, labour history, and religious studies. They are also probably the most insightful appraisals of these important research areas in the literature. Each chapter is accompanied by a lengthy but discerning bibliography, of particular value to the neophyte scholar.

For the general reader, and for scholars outside the specialisms represented here, the collection will be seen as limited in scope. Disciplines regarded as central to Canadian studies — economics, political science, sociology, geography, other branches of history — are not reviewed. If interdisciplinarity is the conceptual cornerstone of Canadian studies, then a chapter on women's studies would be opposite. It is more interdisciplinary in its approach than any of the fields considered here and could serve as a model.

Readers of this journal will be especially interested in the chapters on immigration and labour. These fields are closely linked thematically and do give the book something of a core. Both are concerned primarily with the working-class culture of Canada since around 1850, particularly the urban-industrial milieu in Ontario and Quebec. The academic growth of these specialisms is discussed in some detail and the rich diversity of current scholarship outlined. They are vigorous and exciting subfields,

conceptually sophisticated and highly analytical. One is impressed by the range of these studies and, at the same time, struck by what is considered peripheral, or not considered at all. Little is said, for example, about immigration, ethnicity and labour in Canada prior to 1850, the major exception being the commendable work on early artisans in Quebec. Labour in the fishery, the fur trade, the timber trade, and farming, and the rural society that characterized Canada up to the advent of industry remain marginal in the expanding literature on ethnic and labour studies. In a "primer" such as this, aimed at a general readership, a fuller account of the rationale for the scope of these subfields would be useful. This is expertly done in the chapters on native studies, and on religion.

The volume is essential reading for all researchers in the field. It is an important contribution to the intellectual and cultural history of the country. It brings together the French and English literatures on some key research areas more creatively than has been done before; and it appears at a propitious time in the continuing debate on Canadian identity.

John Mannion

Memorial University of Newfoundland

William N.T. Wylie, *The Blacksmith in Upper Canada, 1784-1850: A Study of Technology, Culture and Power* (Gananoque, Ontario: Langdale Press 1990).

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF the role that various groups of artisans played in the development of Upper Canadian society and its economy is largely unexplored. This is undoubtedly partly a result of the paucity of sources — of diaries, letter books and more importantly, account books, apprenticeship and customs and early census records — which can be used to recreate the world of the skilled labourer and craftsman. Until recently,

however, colonial historians have also tended to limit their attention to the political, intellectual and broad economic aspects of Upper Canadian development, concentrating particularly on the beliefs, actions and attitudes of the political, economic and social elites of the colony. William Wylie's examination of blacksmiths is the first book length attempt to fill this large vacuum — to provide some appreciation and understanding of those thousands of until recently invisible residents who nonetheless formed an integral link in a complex network of work and economic and social cooperation.

Originally written as a report for use by interpreters in the Canadian Parks Service, the bulk of *Blacksmiths in Upper Canada* concentrates on material culture. In Part II, "Material Culture, Tools and Techniques" Wylie examines the blacksmith's shop, his clothes, his traditional hand tools, the methods of production and also the goods he produced. Including an extensive array of hand drawn illustrations, photographs and woodcuts, Wylie explains, among other things, how various types of nails were made, the process of shoeing a horse or oxen and assorted methods of welding and joining metals to make or repair various implements.

What for this historian is of greater interest is Wylie's attempt to place this material culture of the blacksmith into its social, economic and political context of colonial Upper Canada. Section 1, "Of Iron and Steel and Men" examines the world of a young, pre-industrial frontier and predominately agricultural colony where supplies of raw material were limited, and markets for goods and services were restricted by a lack of population, poor transportation and a general lack of capital. As Wylie notes, the general smith "was the mainstay of the iron and steel industry" (46) in the province. Lacking a large manufacturing sector, which would have produced hardware, it was the blacksmith who repaired tools and machinery, performed

other small but essential tasks, like horse-shoeing, and infrequently made new tools and replacement parts. Typically a generalist, the blacksmith worked alone or with one or two others. In the post War of 1812 period, most blacksmiths were located in rural areas of the province, and often combined blacksmithing with running a farm.

Wylie's reliance on the works of E.P. Thompson, Soboul, Dawley and Laslett for his interpretative framework most appropriately places the lives and work of Upper Canadian smiths firmly within a broad context of a preindustrial society. Like their counterparts of the 18th century in Europe, the Upper Canadian blacksmith undoubtedly did draw "on artisanal traditions of self-pride" (57) which were passed from master to apprentice and from father to son. His tools, so painstakingly explained and illustrated in part two, were those which brother artisans had used for hundreds of years in Great Britain, in Quebec, and in the United States. And like those of artisans in other proto-industrial societies, the lives of blacksmiths in Upper Canada probably did recreate, in part at least, traditional artisanal patterns of work and of leisure activity. Unfortunately, however, Wylie presents little and in some cases no direct evidence to support conclusively this interpretation alone; moreover, he often does not really come to grips with the impact that local Upper Canadian circumstances had in shaping blacksmiths' lives.

In part, this is a result of the lack of easily accessible sources, a problem Wylie himself acknowledges. Moreover, less than 30 pages are devoted to a discussion of the role of the blacksmith in the economic, social and political life of the colony, a limitation undoubtedly imposed by the original purpose of the study, but one which means that Wylie is unable to provide any indepth analysis to support his assertions. Perhaps rather more troubling is that Wylie also shows an unwillingness to bring other interpretive tools to

bear on his subject. For example, he asserts that smiths sought journeymen to help in their shops and only when these were unavailable did the proprietors turn to their own families. Given the nature of rural household economies on the frontier, and the important role wives and children played in other business activities, it might well be the case that smiths only looked to journeymen or hired hands when they could not find suitable labour within their own household. In addition, though Wylie recognizes that not only did most smiths live and work in rural Upper Canada, but many were also farmers and small landholders, he presumes that they continued to identify themselves primarily as independent artisans. This may well have been the case; but it may also be that smiths considered themselves part of a much more complex and intricate world, of independent yeomen farmers, with the skills of the craftsmen. Certainly, it seems that most smiths augmented and may indeed have depended primarily on income from working the land; and their relative isolation from other smiths and constant contact with farming neighbours may have created and reinforced a sense of community and lifestyle quite different than that maintained by skilled craftsmen in England or the United States.

Wylie has nonetheless lifted a veil from the life of blacksmiths in Upper Canada. His use of the material culture to help explain and understand the life of the artisan can and should profitably be employed by other studies of the period. And most importantly, his study presents conclusions and raises questions that other labour and social historians of the period must now begin to address and test. Langdale Press must also be congratulated for reprinting this study. Though parts of it could have been more carefully edited, and others quite extensively enlarged and expanded, to transform what was a report intended for in-house use at Parks into an integrated text, the whole is a valuable addition to our

understanding of life in early Upper Canada.

Jane Errington  
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Eric Tucker, *Administering Danger in the Workplace: The Law and Politics of Occupational Health and Safety Regulation in Ontario, 1850-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1990).

ALL OVER the industrializing world states have regulated the workplace. Did the workers' lot improve as a result? Examining the impact of 19th century factory acts in Ontario workplaces, Eric Tucker says "no." In eight occasionally abstract but carefully crafted chapters the author, an Osgoode Hall professor, presents a powerful challenge to traditional views regarding the benefits of factory legislation.

The book is neither a mundane study of legal institutions nor a boring chronicle of statutory details. Arguing instead from the premise that the law reflects and reinforces the social structure, Tucker uses a sophisticated class-based analysis to show how 19th century businessmen controlled both the content and enforcement of protective legislation. Having reduced labour to a commodity, they initially relied upon the courts to maintain traditional labour markets. Even after sympathetic juries and politically conscious workers had forced the state to intervene in the workplace, powerful capitalists readily contained this "damage." While acknowledging the good intentions of Ontario political leaders, Tucker emphasizes the political, economic, and social forces that removed the regulation of occupational risks from judges' hands without benefitting the workers. The legislative consequences, Tucker argues in perhaps the most telling portion of his analysis, reflected an inter-class alliance sharing patriarchal assumptions. Hence factory laws ought to be seen as "an im-

portant step in the transformation of patriarchy from its familial to its social form." (136)

The 19th century workplace posed extraordinary hazards to workers' health. Overcrowded factories, exposed machinery, unsanitary facilities, foul air, and the danger of fire produced appalling bloodshed. Rather than attributing the carnage to the unavoidable consequences of beneficial technologies, Tucker argues that it was directly related to the drive for profits. Then he shows how employers were exonerated from responsibility for workplace deaths by revealing the links between the class relations of four Ontario judges and their ideological devotion to property rights. In this way the author is able to explain why the courts, reinforcing English legal precedents, blamed the workers for their injuries. In short, the criminal law "tended to constitute, reflect, and reinforce the class structure of the capitalist formation." (74)

Nevertheless, popular dissatisfaction with judicial decisions ultimately forced a meliorative political response. In the wake of the Ontario Nine Hours' movement during the 1870s both Grits and Tories vied for the working-class vote. At that time it was uncertain whether Ottawa or the provinces exercised jurisdiction over the factory workplace. Here Tucker successfully resolves a longstanding question in Canadian labour history by showing how this knotty jurisdictional issue was directly related to the lengthy and ultimately successful battle waged by Premier Oliver Mowat against John A. Macdonald over the federal power of disallowance.

As for the actual implementation of the factory acts, Tucker argues that the structure of class and gender power significantly shaped the enforcement process. Starved of resources and overwhelmed by the magnitude of their responsibilities, factory inspectors opted to persuade rather than to prosecute those capitalists who disobeyed the law. It was made easier by the fact that most male and

female inspectors shared both the employers' world-view and their patriarchal values. As a result accident rates escalated, workers continued to bear primary responsibility for their injuries, and reformers took misplaced satisfaction in the displacement of native-born child labour by adult immigrants.

The author draws upon a wide range of sources, including statutes, court cases, factory inspectors' reports, and legislative proceedings. Some of the evidence is taken from case studies similar to those that many researches already will have noticed in early issues of the *Labour Gazette*. In its highly original blend of historical evidence with class/gender analysis and legal scholarship, the book is a *tour de force*. Tucker thus joins Christopher Tomlins and others who have mounted persuasive challenges to increasingly antiquated notions regarding the autonomy and beneficence of the regulatory state.

Robert H. Babcock  
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Aline Charles, *Travail d'ombre et de lumière. Le bénévolat féminin à l'hôpital Sainte-Justine, 1907-1960* (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, Collection Edmond-de-Nevers no. 9 1990).

L'INTERET DE CET OUVRAGE est double: parallèlement à l'évolution du bénévolat féminin dans le milieu hospitalier durant la première moitié du siècle, nous suivons les étapes de la fondation et du développement de l'hôpital Sainte-Justine jusqu'en 1960.

L'auteure dessine d'abord un portrait d'ensemble de la situation du bénévolat féminin et du fonctionnement des hôpitaux au début du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle. A cette époque, le travail des femmes étant confiné à l'intérieur du foyer conformément aux rôles traditionnels qui leur sont attribués: la maternité,

l'éducation des enfants et le bien-être de leur entourage, le bénévolat féminin se développe naturellement dans le domaine de la santé. Dès le début du siècle, divers organismes sont fondés: L'Assistance maternelle, la Ligue des nourrissons, les Gouttes de lait, etc... au sein desquels les femmes bénévoles exercent les mêmes compétences que celles requises par leurs responsabilités dans la sphère domestique. Jusqu'au milieu du siècle, le bénévolat fait également partie intégrante de la bonne marche des hôpitaux. Ces derniers, dans l'ensemble, sont dirigés par des religieuses non rémunérées dont le travail est secondé par des infirmières aux maigres salaires et de nombreuses bénévoles.

Après ce survol historique, les chapitres suivants sont consacrés à une analyse minutieuse de l'univers particulier des bénévoles de Sainte-Justine: le portrait des bénévoles (leur nombre, leur statut civil, leur appartenance sociale), la description du travail qu'elles effectuent, les relations qu'elles entretiennent entre elles, et enfin, les difficultés rencontrées dans leurs rapports avec le corps professionnel (médecins, infirmières, etc...).

En pénétrant dans l'univers de l'hôpital Sainte-Justine, la première caractéristique qui frappe le lecteur, c'est l'omniprésence féminine à tous les échelons du fonctionnement de l'institution: des travaux manuels à la haute direction du conseil d'administration. Et ce phénomène semble unique dans l'histoire des hôpitaux québécois. Car, si dans la majorité des hôpitaux le personnel soignant (médecins exceptés) est féminin et si plusieurs de ces institutions sont administrées par des religieuses, à Sainte-Justine, les fondatrices sont des femmes qui pendant presque un demi-siècle garderont le contrôle entier sur la gestion de l'entreprise. Cet hôpital nous offre donc l'image d'une "communauté de femmes" dévouées à une oeuvre de bienfaisance: les soins prodigués à des enfants malades.

Tâche éminemment féminine qui fait dire à l'auteure que cette vocation particulière de l'hôpital peut avoir influé sur l'attrait qu'il a exercé pour que des centaines de bénévoles y consacrent leurs énergies pendant si longtemps. Cependant, son analyse va plus loin car elle situe le bénévolat à Sainte-Justine "à l'intersection des sphères privée et publique" participant du travail domestique caché et du travail spécialisé reconnu. Jusqu'aux années cinquante, les bénévoles se retrouvent à la frontière de ces deux sphères: certaines d'entre elles accomplissant des tâches issues de leur expérience domestique, d'autres remplissant des fonctions relevant traditionnellement d'une formation professionnelle réservée aux hommes.

Presque infirmières, travailleuses sociales ou institutrices, les bénévoles bousculent la barrière des compétences professionnelles, administratrices et gestionnaires, elles bousculent en outre celle des rôles sexuels. (122)

Au milieu du siècle, dans les années cinquante, la professionnalisation des services sociaux entraîne une réduction du travail bénévole dans la sphère de la santé et du bien-être et surtout dans les hôpitaux où une grande partie des tâches assumées auparavant par les bénévoles sont désormais accomplies par des employés rémunérés. Cette situation fut particulièrement difficile à Sainte-Justine où le bénévolat des femmes s'était exercé avec une telle ampleur pendant plus de quarante ans. Le dernier chapitre du livre fait état de ces années de transition ponctuées de conflits et traversées par les bouleversements dans la redistribution des tâches et dans les relations interpersonnelles, dans un contexte de dévalorisation du travail gratuit.

En conclusion, l'examen des cinquante années d'activités bénévoles à l'hôpital Sainte-Justine nous révèle que l'organisation et l'évolution de ces pratiques sont liées à l'histoire interne de l'hôpital tout en étant tributaires des transformations survenues partout au

Québec dans la gestion des institutions hospitalières et de l'émergence de nouveaux modèles culturels féminins.

Dans cette étude sociohistorique, illustrée d'une quarantaine de photos d'archives, Aline Charles nous convie à une rencontre passionnante avec les fondatrices du premier hôpital francophone pour enfants de Montréal et les milliers de femmes bénévoles qui ont travaillé à son expansion pendant un demi-siècle.

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Sylvie Murray, *A la jonction du mouvement ouvrier et du mouvement des femmes: la Ligue auxiliaire de l'Association internationale des machinistes, Canada, 1903-1980* (Collection RCHTQ, Etudes et Documents 1990).

LES ASSOCIATIONS VOLONTAIRES masculines ont fréquemment, par le passé, engendré des clones féminins, sortes d'annexes aux affaires sérieuses où l'on envoyait les épouses s'investir. L'intention était trouble et les associations auxiliaires féminines vouées à l'ambiguïté.

Sylvie Murray nous offre une étude intéressante et aux accents parfois passionnés sur la section canadienne de la Ligue auxiliaire de l'Association internationale des machinistes. Ce syndicat d'origine américaine (AFL) mit sur pied, comme beaucoup d'autres, son association féminine, laquelle devait succomber au tournant des années quatre-vingt, après une lente agonie, victime de son anachronisme.

Le débat fondamental qui agite aujourd'hui les historiennes consiste bien sûr à donner un sens à ce type d'associations féminines: s'agit-il de lieux émancipateurs d'un point de vue féministe ou de voies de garage sinon de lieux d'inculcation des "devoirs" féminins les plus traditionnels... ou d'un

mélange des deux? Sylvie Murray a choisi la première réponse, et l'on peut regretter qu'elle n'ait pas décidé d'être un peu plus dialectique. C'est sans doute la principale faiblesse de ce livre, qui est en fait son mémoire de maîtrise.

L'auteure a exploré méthodiquement la documentation disponible (1903-1980), de même qu'elle a interviewé quelques survivantes. La formation de la Ligue auxiliaire répondait à cinq objectifs: "assister les pères, les maris et les frères dans leur lutte pour obtenir et maintenir des salaires décents et promouvoir les rencontres sociales entre les "camarades de travail" et leurs familles; encourager les syndiqués en cas de troubles industriels (entendre: grèves); soutenir les familles de machinistes éprouvés par une maladie ou une mortalité; éduquer les mères, les épouses et les soeurs de machinistes en ce qui a trait aux principes du trade-unionisme; encourager la production et la vente des produits de fabrication syndicale." (34) Sylvie Murray, à partir de ses recherches, estime que la Ligue a constitué un mode d'implication des femmes qui en étaient membres à la fois dans le mouvement des femmes et dans le mouvement ouvrier. Cependant, elle identifie une fracture survenue à la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Alors qu'auparavant la Ligue s'impliquait de façon naturelle et sans rencontrer de résistance dans l'action syndicale de l'AIM, l'après-guerre la renvoie au royaume plus traditionnel des femmes; c'est l'époque du retour au foyer, et même la paisible Ligue n'échappe pas au ressac: elle se sent devenue "inutile" (104), plus vraiment valorisée par l'AIM. La fin prochaine est inévitable. Perdant petit à petit sa raison d'être aux yeux mêmes de l'AIM, acquérant un caractère de plus en plus folklorique et désuet à mesure que les femmes envahissaient le marché du travail et même les rangs de l'AIM dont le membership se démocratisait graduellement (Noirs, femmes, travailleurs non qualifiés), la Ligue ne pouvait que se faire ultimement hara-kiri, comme d'ailleurs

toutes les organisations similaires vers la même époque.

Le livre de Sylvie Murray se lit agréablement. On appréciera l'intéressante revue de littérature du début, la bibliographie également, quelques intuitions stimulantes. L'ouvrage est tributaire des faiblesses documentaires: peu de données numériques, absence d'indications sur les circonstances exactes de la création de la Ligue (initiative authentiquement féminine ou idée des hommes de l'AIM?), silence sur les débats (y en-eut-il?) qui ont agité la Ligue ou l'ont opposée à l'AIM. On déplorera aussi quelques raccourcis, quelques conclusions hâtives. Ainsi, que la Ligue réclame des salaires égaux pour les femmes ne manifestait pas nécessairement une conscience aiguë de l'exploitation que ces dernières subissaient: les syndicats les plus "machos" des années 30 et 40 faisaient de même dans l'espoir de voir les employeurs remplacer les femmes par des hommes. De même la présence aux congrès syndicaux des membres de la Ligue ne garantissait ni leur passion pour la chose syndicale non plus que leur crédibilité aux yeux des syndicalistes mâles. Quiconque a assisté à des congrès syndicaux des années 70 et avant, et lu la nomenclature des activités destinées aux "dames" ne peut guère qu'en douter. Enfin, on peut être agacé par le traitement insuffisamment analytique du matériel.

Nulle part ne trouve-t-on de conceptualisation des catégories qui permettent à l'auteur de conclure au "féminisme" ou au "traditionnalisme" de la Ligue. Sylvie Murray est presque trop convaincue de son point de vue: elle parseme son analyse de phrases conclusives (et subjectives) et fait un peu trop flèche de tout bois.

J'eus souhaité pour ma part une approche un peu plus critique, qui fasse davantage de place aux déterminismes proprement AIM (et donc masculins) sur le destin de la Ligue. Même les comités de condition féminine syndicaux qui nous sont contemporains ne sont pas sans

connaître des tiraillements entre les visées féministes de leurs membres, l'allégeance syndicale des mêmes, et les pressions des appareils à dominante masculine. Ne faut-il pas, à plus forte raison, voir les exlignes féminines comme des organisations soumises à des pressions contradictoires, encore moins capables de préserver leur autonomie face au pouvoir syndical masculin? Il n'est que de se remémorer les résultats accablants d'une étude réalisée en 1966 pour le compte de la Commission Bird (Geoffroy, Renée et Paule Sainte-Marie, *Le travailleur syndiqué face au travail rémunéré de la femme*) pour se douter que l'élite syndicale et ouvrière de l'époque ne devait guère priser les velléités féministes des organisations issues de son giron. Reste que le livre de Sylvie Murray est une contribution utile non seulement à l'historiographie syndicale mais aussi à la recherche sur les rapports entre les femmes de la classe ouvrière et le mouvement des femmes.

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Yolande Cohen, *Femmes de parole: L'histoire des Cercles de fermières du Québec 1915-1990* (Le Jour 1990).

TWELVE YEARS AGO, during a year's field work in a small rural parish, I joined the local Cercles de fermières. It proved to be a remarkable group of highly motivated women who clearly recognized, supported, and reinforced the myriad of skills they possessed. Although these skills fell well within the group of activities traditionally assigned to women, they were being, and had been for many years, valorized, promoted, and celebrated in a highly visible public forum. I found little support for these impressions in the literature, however. The research available was negligible and coloured by the assumption that the



Cercles de fermières failed to support women's emancipation.

Yolande Cohen challenges the validity of this charge. She argues that a full understanding of the Cercles must be grounded in the context in which they were operating. *Femmes de parole* is the result of such an exercise and chronicles the evolution of the organization over its 75 year history. It not only fills a lacunae in our historical record, it serves to set the record straight: "les Cercles de fermières ont été à l'origine du mouvement féministe contemporain."

Cohen examines the history of the Cercles de fermières in multiples of three, triangulating a number of different data bases in order to provide a three-dimensional portrait of the organization. Each of the dimensions privileges different sources of information and archival material. By moving back and forth between them, Cohen traces the presence of feminism in a myriad of activities related to the context of the times. She focuses on what the Cercles achieved, rather than on what they failed to do.

Part I is grounded in archival information housed at the Archives Nationales du Québec and the association's head office in Longueuil. It portrays the Cercles' development and struggle for autonomy from church and state. It is a fascinating story told in three stages: its birth, secularization and incorporation. Part II describes the expansion and recruitment strategies adopted throughout the province and examines in detail the work and activities of Cercles in three different regions of the province: Quebec, Abitibi, and Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean. In this section Cohen augments the archival data with information culled from a survey of 517 members, field work based on the records of 22 Cercles, 45 oral histories, a file of 200 biographies, and a preliminary analysis of their publications. By retracing the history of the Cercles through these various data sets, Cohen fleshes out the structural skeleton developed in part one. The Cercles de fermières emerges as

an association dedicated to the promotion and well being of all women, respectful of the autonomy of the local groups, and tolerant of the diversity within its ranks.

Part III builds on this analysis by examining the way they see and talk about themselves through a content analysis of their publications: *La Bonne Fermière*, *La Bonne Fermière et la Bonne Ménagère*, *La Revue des Fermières*, and *Terre et Foyer*. It provides an exposé of the evolution of their ideology and perspective on women and corroborates the portrait of the Cercles as an association with an astonishing capacity to adapt to social and economic change, and to weave together rural and urban modes of life.

The Cercles de fermières is the oldest women's organization in Quebec. It was founded in 1915 at a time when both religious and civil authorities were concerned about the depopulation of rural regions. Both groups were looking for ways to discourage outmigration and the establishment of a women's group looked like it might serve the purpose. It was, however, at the instigation of two agronomists from the Department of Agriculture, and not the Church, that the Cercles de fermières was organized.

The Cercles did not thwart the rural exodus but they did succeed in founding an organization which was regarded in 1937 as being vital to the maintenance and continued legitimation of their chosen agricultural vocation. Their opposition to suffrage and their resistance to employment for women must be seen in conjunction with their belief in the complementarity of roles between men and women, and their rigorous endorsement of their "equal partner" status on the farm.

By 1940 the Cercles de fermières was an influential organization with 30,000 members and a strong provincial network. It succeeded in distancing itself from the provincial government and the local agronomist only to come under the scrutiny of the Church. The political climate in Quebec was changing: women

had obtained the right to vote and the provincial government was introducing educational reforms aimed at secularizing the schools. In seeking to defend itself, the Church sought to decrease the power of all influential groups having links with the state. Its strategy regarding the Cercles de fermières was to encourage the Union des Cultivateurs Catholiques to sponsor a rival women's group. In 1944 the Union Catholique des fermières (UCF) was founded and members of the Cercles were strongly encouraged to join. Most refused, some doing so under threat of excommunication. This was only the first of several attempts to breakup the Cercles de fermières. In the twenty years to follow, the Church launched three more offensive campaigns.

In the early 1950s when the Cercles sought to replace their losses by sponsoring a membership drive in urban areas, the Bishops responded by blessing a rival association — les Cercles d'Economie Domestique (CED). In 1957 when the UCF changed its name to l'Union Catholique des Femmes Rurales (UCFR), brochures were circulated to all parish priests explaining how to transform the Cercles de fermières into UCFR. It was during this period that the relations between the rival groups deteriorated and their positions polarized: the Cercles became more conservative and the others more liberal. With no obvious ecclesiastical support in its camp the Cercles simply defended themselves by endorsing the Church's position regarding the traditional family and the sacred mission of the wife and mother. The final attack by the Church was mounted in 1963 when plans were formed to fuse the three women's organizations under the umbrella of the Association féminine pour l'éducation et l'action sociale (AFEAS). The Cercles began but then abandoned all discussions with the other two groups in order to make plans for their 50th anniversary.

It isn't difficult to understand the accumulated resentment on the part of the Cercles toward the CED and the UCFR

which rendered the union with them under the umbrella of the AFEAS next to impossible. It was a resentment that persisted for a number of years: in 1979, eleven years after the Cercles incorporated, my decision to join both the Cercles de fermières and the AFEAS was looked upon with suspicion and created a tension that, at the time, I found difficult to fathom.

The most recent period in the evolution of the Cercles began with their incorporation in 1968. At that time the rural character of the association was abandoned and a much broader mandate for social action was adopted. Although fully able to confront the changes taking place in the family and to ratify new conceptions regarding the role of women, the Cercles have continued to defend the traditional values of the family. By doing so, they underscore the wide variety of situations in which women operate while taking special care to promote and celebrate the work they do for their families.

*Femmes de parole* has many strengths. It is written in a succinct, well-organized fashion and it is full of important data and information. For the most part, it is also methodologically sound. As mentioned above, Cohen takes great care to validate her interpretation of the story by cross checking a wide variety of data sources including archival records, oral histories, survey data, and an analysis of Cercle publications. The references are meticulously documented and presented in 22 pages of endnotes, an effective way to provide the detail required by the academic scholar without discouraging the lay reader. The book includes a 16 page bibliography and is enlivened with many enchanting photographs of fermières, some taken as early as 1915 and others as recently as 1989.

Despite these strengths, *Femmes de parole* has two flaws. One is related to a problem of information retrieval. Because the story of the Cercles is assembled in layers, the reader is motivated

to trace through the answers to her own set of questions. Unfortunately, the personalized search is too often hindered for want of an historical chronology, or a list of tables and figures. At other times it is hampered by mislabelled maps. The second flaw is related to misgivings I have when Cohen moves from description to hypotheses testing. As a sociologist, I expect inferences and generalizations to be grounded in appropriate comparisons: recruitment strategies, for example, can only be shown to be unique to the Cercles by comparing them to the recruitment strategies of other groups. Similarly, claims regarding the unique opportunity the Cercles provided for women to develop as leaders have to be supported with data showing that women in regions where Cercles were not operating did not have these opportunities. Such comparisons are not made.

Despite these shortcomings, *Femmes de parole* is a valuable book and a welcome addition toward our understanding of women's emancipation in Quebec. As a believer in the important and groundbreaking role the Cercles had in recognizing, valorizing, and promoting women, it was a joy to read this book. Although of general interest to social, economic and political historians, this book is invaluable to anyone interested in pursuing the difference vs equality debate. The lesson here suggests that the political agendas inherent in each position are not necessarily incompatible.

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Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of the World in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star Books 1990).

"THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS of the World has not been treated well by modern historians," Mark Leier contends in the opening line of this short book on

the IWW in British Columbia. The 'direct action' tactics of the IWW and most of the epic battles it engaged in, along with aspects of the egalitarian 'Wobbly' counter-culture, have been subjected to considerable historical scrutiny in North America. But mainstream studies tend to reduce the beliefs that inspired and shaped the IWW to the status of historical curiosity or ideological aberration. "Most historians view the syndicalism of the Wobblies as quixotic," Leier notes. (i)

He sets out to rectify this imbalance. "The book is an attempt to compensate for the liberal and social democratic histories that are too quick to write off the IWW; it tries to treat syndicalism as a powerful and plausible alternative to capitalism and state socialism." (ii)

Leier locates the material roots of revolutionary industrial unionism in the rise of monopoly capitalism at the turn of the century. A new industrial regime premised on an increased division of labour intensified the assault on workers' control. Mechanization and factory work expanded, swelling the ranks of the semi-skilled and unskilled. To enhance 'efficiency' and increase output, techniques of 'scientific management' were imposed. The 'deskilling' process and the routinisation of the job tasks was not confined, Leier demonstrates, to the classical factory setting. Efforts to destroy workers' job control were also undertaken in the mines, logging camps, and railway construction sites of British Columbia's resource-dominated economy, arenas that were IWW "strongholds" in the coastal province.

"The founders of the IWW viewed their North American form of syndicalism as the logical response to the new assaults of capital," Leier suggests. (26) The IWW was formed in 1905 to defend, and extend, workers' control. The syndicalist scheme of industrial organization stood in opposition to the exclusionary craft unionism of the American Federation of Labor, which was too weak to combat monopoly capital's attack on labour.

Boldly proclaiming the 'one big union' and the 'general strike' as the means by which society could be transformed, the IWW reached out to those unable to find comfortable niches in craft union constituencies — immigrants, the de-skilled, the unskilled, women — promising immediate aid and future freedom.

The IWW played an important role in the BC labour movement prior to 1914. Leier recounts the organizing drives conducted, with uneven results, by BC's Wobblies among miners, loggers, and railway construction workers in the hinterland, and among longshoremen, lumber handlers and other labourers in the urban centres. The pinnacle of IWW achievement was reached in 1912 when the syndicalists led strikes of upwards of 8,000 railway navies on the Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific lines. But the end of the railway boom and the pre-World War I economic slump, combined with continued employer hostility and wartime repression, brought about the decline of the IWW in British Columbia. In addition, Leier suggests that political factionalism in the west-coast workers movement also "played a role in the eventual eclipse of the IWW." (53)

He poses the syndicalist ideology and IWW practice as a yardstick against which to measure, and reconsider, "the vaunted radicalism of British Columbia." (ii) By fusing practical labour organizing with a revolutionary critique of capitalist society, the Wobblies, Leier argues, put forward a strategy of working-class resistance which bucked "a growing trend to conservatism and reformism in labour and socialist organisations." In Leier's estimation, the IWW was the cutting edge of labour radicalism in British Columbia prior to World War I.

The Vancouver free speech fights of 1909 and 1912 are used to illustrate the ideological schisms which fragmented the BC left. While the IWW revealed a willingness to confront the state, and to face arrest and imprisonment, in order to defend rights of free speech, the leader-

ship of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council and "the professional politicians" of the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) were reluctant, Leier claims, to maintain a campaign of direct action, preferring instead to negotiate a compromise with the government. "By channelling the protests away from the streets and into government chambers, the trade union leaders and SPC sought to restore peace quickly and deprive the IWW of its leadership role." (78) The emphasis placed on parliamentary politics by labour statesmen and socialist luminaries, Leier concludes, "ensured that the IWW would be weakened and that rank and file militancy would be hampered." (85)

That Leier's sympathies lie with the syndicalist ideology is both a source of strength and weakness in his analysis. He postulates the IWW's vision of workers' control as a realistic alternative to the rise of monopoly capitalism. By taking the IWW seriously he avoids a common tendency in Canadian historiography to treat radical movements flippantly, as fringe formations not suited, so it is said, to the needs of a working class unreceptive to revolutionary ideas. Leier avoids this pitfall, but in doing so he tends to eulogise the IWW, assessing the union in a congratulatory rather than critical manner.

True to syndicalist form, Leier, like the IWW itself, is prone to confuse principles with tactics when assessing the terrain of particular class struggles. In the context of the free speech fights, for example, Wobbly willingness to throw themselves into the arms of the state was certainly a measure of their commitment to the struggle, but it was not necessarily a tactic conducive to building a mass movement in defence of democratic rights, a movement not so easily co-opted, perhaps, by labour bureaucrats and socialist sell-outs. Still, Leier does a fine job of fleshing out the pre-1914 history of the union in British Columbia from the limited sources available. The historical record of the IWW deserves such serious,

if more searching, treatment, for as Leier concludes, "its dream of workers' control, of a world without bosses or masters, is still a powerful one." (124)

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Bruce Magnuson, *The Untold Story of Ontario's Bushworkers* (Toronto: Progress Books 1990).

IN THE FORWARD TO THIS BOOK Ray Stevenson states that Bruce Magnuson "exposes the lies of yesteryear and gives us a history of truth." (xii) Having read the book, I am still not sure what 'lies' Stevenson is referring to, and Magnuson's 'truth' often looks more like myth. Indeed, the 'untold' story remains untold, but therein lies both the lesson and the legacy of the book.

There are eighteen chapters, plus Forward, Preface, and Epilogue; almost all of them are poorly organized. The limitations of the book are evident in the first chapter, in which Magnuson takes five pages to describe the first twenty-four years of his life. Magnuson was born in the Swedish province of Vermland on 21 February 1909. His days working and playing on his parents' farm are dealt with summarily, almost as if Magnuson feels we would not be interested. Included in the five pages are Magnuson's arrival in Canada in the spring of 1928, the work he did on various farms in Saskatchewan, and his fateful trip to the Lakehead in the fall of 1933.

Magnuson arrived at the Lakehead during a bushworkers' strike, and became involved in picketing, publicity, collecting funds, and taking minutes at strike meetings. Shortly after the strike he was seriously hurt in the bush and spent several months in the hospital and on compensation. During this time he read *The Communist Manifesto*, Engels' *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, and Lenin's *State and Revolution*, and made

his decision to join the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). Yet exactly why Magnuson joined the party, when so many other workers with similar experiences did not, remains largely unanswered.

Magnuson's recounting of the history of the Lumber Workers Industrial Union (LWIU) in the mid-1930s adds little, if anything, to our understanding of the union's fate. The LWIU had a long, fighting tradition in its associations with the One Big Union, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the Communist Party (CPC). The affiliation of the LWIU with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners (UBCJ) in March 1936 as the Lumber and Sawmill Workers' Union (LSWU) remains hard to understand. It thus joined one of the most conservative unions in the American Federation of Labor, a union which would pride itself on its anti-Communist activities during the Cold War.

Why did the affiliation occur? In all likelihood it occurred because Magnuson and other Communist leaders were directed by the CPC to go back into the AFL as part of the Communist International's switch from the "left sectarianism" of the Third Period (1929-1935) to the Popular Front. Magnuson, however, fails to advance a single reason for it, and the untold story remains untold.

The decision would bear bitter fruit. In early May 1951 Andrew Cooper and other union figures from the UBCJ, with the aid of an Ontario Supreme Court injunction, ousted the leaders of the LSWU. (109) During the summer of 1951 Bruce Magnuson, Marc Leclerc, Jack Quinn, and other leading Communists in the LSWU tried to make a go of a new union, the Canadian Union of Woodworkers, but the strength of the right-wing forces arrayed against it literally doomed the effort to failure.

Following the section on the destruction of the LSWU Magnuson presents a chapter on a trip he took to the Soviet Union in 1952. In the process *The Untold Story of Ontario's Bushworkers* becomes *The Untold Story of Bruce Magnuson*.

The anecdotes are interesting, but they have little to do with the book. This chapter is followed by a very brief description of the murder of three bushworkers near Kapuskasing in 1963, during a strike against the Spruce Falls Power and Paper Company. The last section of the book involves a critique of Ian Radforth's *Bushworkers and Bosses*. Much of the critique makes little sense, but two points emerge: Radforth is on the side of the companies, and he does not pay enough attention to Bruce Magnuson.

The irony of this book is that some of the more interesting topics have little or nothing to do with northern Ontario or the bushworkers. Magnuson's description of the more than two years he spent incarcerated at Petawawa and Hull for Communist activities is interesting and sometimes stimulating. Magnuson's trip to the Soviet Union in 1952 is another case in point, although even it seems lacking in substance.

When I picked up this book, I hoped that Magnuson would add to our knowledge of the struggle of the bushworkers, the role of the Communist Party in that struggle, his own role in the Communist Party, and something about the other prominent Communist Party members he worked with. Magnuson fails to do any of this. He adds nothing substantial to Ian Radforth's work. In fact, Radforth sometimes tells us more about Magnuson's role than Magnuson himself does. There is nothing new here about the region, the industry, of its workers. There is virtually nothing about the CPC or Magnuson's role in it. It is as if the Communist Party did not even exist.

In terms of the other leading Communists in the LSWU, the book can only be described as mean-spirited. We learn absolutely nothing about Jack Gillbanks, Harry Raketti, Marc Leclerc, Jack Quinn, Tom Hill, or Charles McClure; they are just those people around Bruce Magnuson in the pictures. We learn from Magnuson that 300 bushworkers joined the Mackenzie-Papineau battalion and fought during

the Spanish Civil War. More than half of them did not come back. (38) Here is an important piece of history, and Bruce Magnuson is one of the few people left who can tell their story. So what does he tell us about them? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Another untold story remains untold.

I have missed the point, of course. Bruce Magnuson does not tell their story because he will not, but because he can not. The Cold War has never ended for Bruce Magnuson and the Communists of his generation. It is not just dishonesty or egotism which leads Magnuson to play up his own role, leave key events unexplained, or the lives of fellow Communists cast in shadow. It is the product of living with denial, of merely trying to survive. In crushing the Communists during the Cold War the right took away much more than union positions, it took away the history of an entire generation.

Not quite everything was lost. Bruce Magnuson's 1944 pamphlet, *Ontario's Green Gold*, still stands as a remarkable achievement. Its critique of the greed of multinational corporations, its call for sane treatment of the environment, and its insistence that the workers who fall the trees get their fair share of the profits remains as relevant today as it ever was. The tremendous strike of 1946, which was Bruce Magnuson's finest moment, will go down in Canadian trade union history as one of the great achievements of working-class struggle and ethnic solidarity.

When the short-lived Canadian Union of Woodworkers was formed in the spring/summer of 1951 Bruce Magnuson helped draft the constitution. It called for final control of policy and organization to be in the hands of the rank and file, rejection of all forms of discrimination, national and international working-class solidarity, and the need to abolish hunger and establish a lasting peace. Bruce Magnuson will never be mistaken for a great writer, and this book does not even do justice to his own contribution. But as a

legacy to the left, the constitution of the Canadian Union of Woodworkers will do just fine.

Peter Campbell  
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Pierre Berton, *The Great Depression: 1929-1939* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1990).

ON 8 SEPTEMBER 1939, CCF leader and pacifist, J.S. Woodsworth, rose in the House of Commons to oppose Canada's imminent entry into World War II. In recounting his gripping speech, Pierre Berton's *The Great Depression* lists the social causes which had consumed Woodsworth over the previous decade.

All of his years here in the Commons he had fought for commoners — for the Communists (whom he loathed) driven to prison by an unspeakable law; for the single jobless banished to the slave camps; for the boxcar cowboys riding the freights, beaten by the police; for the helpless victims of the Padlock Law; for the hungry children deprived of proper nutrition by an unheeding government; for the union organizers, the maverick clergymen, the dust-bowl housewives, and all the desperate men and women. (502)

Woodsworth's view of the Depression, as expressed in his passage, is precisely that of Berton's. The book's central characters are the dispossessed of Canada, and the politicians, businessmen, and assorted bigots who kept workers in chains, farmers eating dust, and Jewish refugees out of the country. Reflecting both Berton's eye for a good story and his humanitarian politics, his book approaches the Depression from the perspective of the left-wing populist.

One could do worse. If this is the only account of the Depression that Canadians ever read, it is refreshing to know that they will encounter, probably for the first time, such atypical Canadian heroes as strike leaders, boxcar hoboes, socialist intellectuals, and even communist

revolutionaries. At a historical moment when free enterprise ideology is being deified and reified around the globe, Berton's book is a timely reminder of the social costs of capitalism in collapse. In racy, readable prose, he brings to life the passions and struggles of the system's critics and casualties.

Those already familiar with the history of the period are likely to be less touched or satisfied by *The Great Depression*. Original research in the book is limited. It consists of some nuggets from the Mackenzie King diaries which reveal the ex-prime minister at his most insipid and ridiculous. Berton also provides some moving evidence on horrible working conditions in the retail trades, culled from the 1935 Royal Commission on Price Spreads, and he introduces Charles Sherwin, the "king" of the boxcar cowboys. This material, however, adds colour, not depth to one's understanding of the decade.

The vast majority of the book treads well-worn terrain. Berton draws extensively from published sources (which are readily acknowledged), and focuses on such issues as the founding of the CCF, the On-To-Ottawa Trek, the political victories of Aberhart in Alberta, Hepburn in Ontario, and Duplessis in Quebec, the Oshawa strike, and the country's deplorable immigration and deportation policies.

Depression life is portrayed in extreme terms: the starving vs the millionaires, the brutalized vs the baton wielders, the weak vs the powerful. That oppression and poverty were painfully real in the 1930s is incontestable, but what is missing from this account are nuance and subtlety. By portraying the victims as superhumanly courageous, and the country's leaders as inhumanly heartless, *The Great Depression* takes on the form of a melodramatic morality play. Ordinary life in the 1930s, lived as something other than newspaper headlines, is unexplored in this gallant "popular" history. The book is thus the latest in Berton's long-standing mission to

manufacture Canadian heroes, legends, and myths, an approach to the country's past which generates entertaining journalism and mediocre scholarship. Readers interested in a more sophisticated survey of the thirties will find it in another McClelland and Stewart publication, *Decades of Discord*, by John Thompson and Allen Seager.

There are some other significant omissions in Berton's account. The Maritimes are barely acknowledged, women's experience is given short shrift, and cultural, intellectual and educational developments are all but ignored. Furthermore, Berton's contention that there was no peace movement in the thirties (497) will come as a great surprise to historian Tom Socknat who wrote an entire book (*Witness Against War*) on the subject. I can also testify from my own research on university life that, contrary to Berton's claim, students circulated anti-war petitions and held vigils throughout the decade.

Having said all of this, it is important to look at the positive side of Berton's life's work, and by now pointless to harp on its scholarly limitations. In the twilight of his career, Berton has distinguished himself as the country's foremost popular historian. He is a superb story teller, he has turned many people on to Canadian history, he has made a living as a writer, and he has done so without the benefit of tenure. At the very least, this is a respectable legacy.

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Maryse Souchard, *Le discours de presse — L'image des syndicats au Québec (1982-1983)* (Montréal: Editions du Préambule 1989).

"AU DEVOIR, on ne pardonne rien. [...] c'est le journal qu'on veut vierge et qu'on s'arrange pour rendre martyr," disait la directrice de ce quotidien haut de gamme,

"la tsarine" Lise Bissonnette, lors du lancement d'une série de soupers-bénéfice régionaux à Rouyn, ville natale de Mme Bissonnette, en mai dernier (voir l'hebdomadaire *L'écho de Val D'or*, 14 mai 1991, 15). Quant à lui, *Le discours de presse* que décrit Mme Maryse Souchard dans son livre sur le Front commun de 1982 se dégage d'un ensemble de "mille cinq cents textes, provenant surtout du *Devoir*, de *La Presse* et du *Soleil* ainsi que d'une vingtaine de périodiques". (23) Mais un survol des notes en bas de page ainsi que des citations établit que seul *Le Devoir* est directement en cause.

D'ailleurs, l'auteur de la préface, l'ancien président de la CSN Marcel Pepin, ne s'y est pas trompé lorsqu'il affirme: "Mme Souchard aura eu le mérite de démasquer certains éditorialistes bien connus qui, sous couvert de <neutralité> et d'<objectivité>, sont profondément anti-syndicaux. [...] Elle met surtout en cause certains éditorialistes du journal *Le Devoir*." (8) S'agit-il seulement de Jean-Louis Roy et de Jean Francoeur?

C'est ainsi que se réalise, une nouvelle fois avec le livre de Mme Souchard, la situation que Mme Bissonnette déplorait à Val D'or, tout en y trouvant un motif de fierté. Bien sûr, ceux qui s'acharnent ainsi sur le seul quotidien québécois "indépendant" des chaînes de journaux et autres barons de la presse, c'est l'élite — car *Le Devoir* reste le journal de l'élite canadienne-française — et en particulier, les intellectuels et universitaires dits "de gauche" ou critiques. Chaque fois que l'un d'entre eux choisit de s'attaquer aux médias, il commence par éliminer les médias électroniques parce que c'est beaucoup plus compliqué sur le plan technique d'étudier le contenu des médias électroniques que celui de la presse écrite. Ensuite, généralement, il concentre le tir sur *Le Devoir*, le quotidien qui assume dans son esprit le leadership du concert des médias. (38-9)

Sans doute que cette déformation professionnelle d'un certain milieu universitaire est une donnée que le lecteur



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doit avoir présente à l'esprit quand il entreprend la lecture du livre de Mme Souchard, s'il souhaite profiter de sa lecture. Mais ce lecteur doit aussi être prévenu de plusieurs autres choses. Car autant le discours de la presse en ce qui a trait aux syndicats doit être pris avec des pincettes, autant le texte de Mme Souchard est écrit pour un public très très averti.

### *De la haute voltige*

LE LECTEUR doit par exemple être averti que ce livre de 263 pages est la version grand public d'un exercice scolaire que l'on nomme: thèse de doctorat. Il y trouvera donc inévitablement des ingrédients plutôt indigestes. En premier lieu, une multitude de coups de chapeaux et de genuflexions à des auteurs et à leurs livres: l'étudiant-e doit montrer qu'elle connaît bien les écrits savants sur le sujet et l'école de pensée qu'elle a choisie.

Deuxièmement, dans ce genre de devoir, on trouve un ensemble de mots spécialisés qui servent d'outils intellectuels et qui forment parfois un véritable jargon, pour initiés seulement. Il suffit de parcourir les 11 graphiques et tableaux que contient le livre de Maryse Souchard et de jeter un coup d'oeil sur le petit dictionnaire des pages 257-259 pour se rendre compte rapidement qu'on n'entre pas sans efforts importants dans l'univers des théories et du vocabulaire qu'utilise l'auteure.

Troisièmement, il arrive souvent que ce genre de travail scolaire développe une façon de classer les objets examinés qui s'éloigne de ce qu'en disent et en pensent habituellement ceux qui les ont produit ou ceux qui les consomment dans la vie quotidienne. Ainsi, Mme Souchard fait référence à plusieurs reprises au fait qu'il y a une différence dans la presse écrite entre les textes qui ont pour mission de rapporter les faits et les événements, habituellement désignés par l'expression: les nouvelles, et les textes qui offrent des commentaires et des conseils, que l'on

nomme les éditoriaux ou les commentaires. Par là, elle rejoint ce que pensent les journalistes et les lecteurs ordinaires. Mais la sélection de textes qu'elle étudie est composée indistinctement d'éditoriaux, de reportages, de chroniques et de lettres de lecteurs; son analyse ne tient pas vraiment compte de ces nuances du sens commun entre les genres journalistiques. Déroutant.

Un autre élément dont il faut être averti, c'est que ce livre est le fruit d'un travail "scientifique." Cela veut dire entre autres: 1) que son auteure s'est efforcée de découper dans le réel, un objet limité: 1,500 textes parus dans les journaux à l'occasion de la ronde de négociations du secteur public et parapublic québécois en 1982-83; 2) qu'elle a examiné ce "corpus" à la lumière d'une méthode déjà essayée sur autre chose, méthode qu'il s'agit d'éprouver une autre fois et de développer au besoin; 3) qu'elle a bien identifié les affirmations qui lui ont servi de points de départ sans qu'elle ne les ait démontrées, pour éviter une trop grande contamination du carré de sable scientifique par les opinions de la chercheuse.

### *Les procédés de la séduction intellectuelle*

C'EST POURQUOI, le lecteur est condamné à rester sur sa faim en ce qui concerne certaines propositions très importantes du livre de Mme Souchard. Par exemple, l'analyse à laquelle se livre la docteure ne démontrera pas que le discours de presse est "fondamentalement antisindical." (187) Ce n'est pas son objectif: elle se contente de l'affirmer et de montrer comment il l'est. D'une manière analogue, Mme Souchard va faire comme si la sélection de textes qu'elle examine était représentative de la totalité des messages à propos des syndicats qu'a diffusée l'ensemble des médias écrits et électroniques à cette époque. Ainsi, elle pourra parler du "discours de la presse" alors qu'elle ne scrute vraiment qu'un petit morceau de toute la presse.

Une autre généralisation à surveiller, c'est l'hypothèse que la position du *Devoir* en 1982-83 face aux syndicats du secteur public est plus que circonstancielle, qu'elle révèle une attitude constante de ce journal face à tous les syndicats, ainsi qu'une attitude identique de toute la presse tout le temps, et même le point de vue de la totalité du discours social. Pour un, Marcel Pepin sent nécessaire de souligner "que pendant la célèbre grève de l'amiante en 1949, *Le Devoir* était du côté des grévistes." (8)

A ce propos, ce qui semble faire problème, c'est l'usage que l'auteure fait de l'idée de "crise." Au début du livre (60 et suivantes), celle-ci se présente comme un instrument intellectuel qu'utilisent la partie patronale et les médias pour mieux attaquer les syndicats. A la fin du livre (230 et suivantes), l'auteure écrit comme s'il y avait eu crise véritable, révélatrice d'une orientation habituellement antisynicale quoique moins visible des médias.

Encore une fois, c'est déroutant. En effet, l'hypothèse habituelle, c'est qu'il y a bien eu crise à ce moment-là. Provoquée pour les uns par l'impact de la récession de 1981, de certains gestes du gouvernement fédéral et de la crise mondiale de la dette des Etats sur les finances publiques du Québec. Conséquence pour les autres du virage à droite du gouvernement péquiste au pouvoir qui a ainsi déclenché une rupture avec ses supporteurs socio-démocrates dont de nombreux syndiqués et une partie de la communauté journalistique. Quoiqu'il en soit, comme cette conception de la crise reste marginale par rapport au propos central de l'oeuvre, elle ne sert qu'à mieux identifier les "préjugés" de la chercheuse.

De la même façon, Mme Souchart va considérer que dès lors qu'un texte est publié dans le journal, il représente la pensée de ce journal, qu'il s'agisse d'un texte écrit par un éditorialiste officiel, par un correspondant d'une agence de presse, par un expert invité ou par un lecteur qui se défoule. L'auteure raisonne comme la

Loi de la presse: L'éditeur est responsable de tout ce qui paraît dans le journal.

Bref, il faut lire ce livre avec un esprit bien aiguisé, aussi tranchant que celui de son auteure. Alors, on parvient à identifier un travail raffiné qui cible un certain nombre de textes parus dans le journal et qui les déconstruit à l'aide d'une méthode rigoureuse, qui "les met à plat" pour employer cette expression du français de France qu'utilise l'auteure. Son livre n'est-il pas destiné à tout le marché de la francophonie? Ce qui apparaît alors, ce sont différents mécanismes (suivre les intertitres qui sont d'excellents signes de piste) par lesquels les journaux, les journalistes et les autres qui écrivent dans les journaux, construisent une argumentation visant à convaincre le lecteur, quelquefois en le proclamant souvent en le cachant, que leur vision des choses est la meilleure.

Pour les journalistes et pour tous ceux qui font métier d'écrire, c'est là un travail qui peut servir à améliorer le contrôle de l'écriture et son efficacité. Quant au consommateur des écrits des autres, il pourrait en sortir mieux armé pour débusquer les procédés rhétoriques de la séduction intellectuelle.

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l'Université Laval

Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Noonday Press 1989).

THE LAST TWO YEARS have seen two attempts to assemble the past twenty years of the "new" (American) labour history into a more synthetic form. David Montgomery's *Fall of the House of Labor* sparked much debate with his workplace-centred study; and now Bruce Laurie has followed that up with an effort to focus on the politics of the major events of American labour history. He has set a large agenda for himself. He seeks to "merge the institutional focus of the old labor history with the social and cultural

insights of the new." (13) Not only will he describe organized workers, their politics and their unions, as well as the major labour movements, but he also attempts to set the organized into the context of the unorganized (especially women and blacks), capital, and the state. Finally, he tries "to tell us something of the unfolding of capitalism in the countryside as well as the city," while also describing how this influenced America's history.

The great strength of the book is its tremendous breadth. While the timespan largely limits him to the midwest and the northern and southern east, it is remarkable how well he draws from across the country. Temporally, the work spans one hundred plus years, and, spatially, reaches across half a continent of unevenly developed and dramatically and continually shifting terrain. Laurie deftly runs through the work-centred literature from the pre-industrial household and early manufacture, through the proletarian politics of mid-century, to the Knights of Labor and the AFL in the 1880s and 1890s. He draws in something of the different experiences which characterised class formation for blacks and women, as well as the varying experiences of Catholics, the Irish and later the continental European immigrants. In the process, despite the necessary limitations of a survey, we see many aspects of the tremendous variety of social relations prevalent in 19th century America.

Holding all this together are the (themselves shifting) popular ideologies of free labourism and radicalism. Beginning with that ever-vexing issue of American exceptionalism, Laurie describes how contradictory impulses within American radicalism pulled labour in different directions. And it is the continuing sway between differing conceptions of labour, property, and politics which frames his interpretation. As workers situated their understanding and expectations in varying proportions on the state, other workers, or themselves,

they acted roughly in kind by organising unions or mobilising labour politics. Yet, Laurie's use of ideology seems limited to a socially situated but particular and apparently autonomous realm of ideas, seemingly impervious to other social experiences. Radicalism and free labourism float freely above the narrative providing explanations of unity or fragmentation as needed. While he attempts to ground them in work, their relationship to a more broadly conceived ideology is obscured. And, while we are repeatedly shown the incorporation of workers' language and politics into dominant centres, there is little sense of contestation — of a sense of the role popular discourses played in shaping the language of politics.

More than the glue of ideology, what really holds this work together is the course carved through the 19th century that Laurie adopts as his master narrative. As the title suggests, this book's subject, ultimately, is really organized labour; the unorganized — be they blacks, women, the Irish, or recent migrants from the countryside — seldom rise above their role as problems on the supply side of the labour market. That transformation, from craft production to mass production, remains one of the most important issues for social historians, and, as Marx emphasized, represents a critical turn in the history of social relations in society. But, while the specific course followed by Laurie may be central, it is not universal. By the time we reach the final two chapters, the book has taken on something of a whiggish cast and is almost completely focused on telling the stories of the Knights and the AFL. These are, of course, important stories; histories whose treatment has grown much richer over the past ten years. But by this point, Laurie has completely abandoned a wider context; by this point it is half biographies of Powderly and Gompers. Thus, getting back to exceptionalism, we are told why these major figures moved away from socialist politics, but we don't get the kind of overarching description of the place of a more

broadly conceived class politics that we might hope to find in a synthesis.

This traditional approach is best seen in who acts in this story: for the most part, it is the skilled, the artisans, or anyone who might, however temporarily, organize. But even these actions are fiercely constrained by structure. In the early chapters, agency lies with "the market, transportation, and manufacturing" which bring about the "great transformation." While the same critique could be made of much rural social history, in this book we do not gain a strong sense of what role rural people played in changing rural society. While pointing to the rural basis of early manufacture in places such as Lowell and Lynn, we quickly return to New York and Philadelphia without exploring the relationship between the countryside and the developing labour market (even while noting it was not immigrants but in-migration from the countryside that was the major determinant of growth in these cities in the early century). Clearly if we want to talk about transformation in work and society, then this is as important an issue as the disruption of the "traditional" experience of workplace activity in the artisan's shop.

The central focus on organized workers creates problems for Laurie's handling of issues of gender. If we look at the index, women appear to figure prominently. But this is deceptive. First, the index only points us to where women appear; these passages are thin and there is little development of women's place in organized labour, except by default. Second, there is no sense of the importance gendered notions of social relations had for contemporary understandings of labour and labour organization, much less of how they changed over the course of the century. Laurie is more comfortable discussing "masculine" issues. His explanation of women's lower place in capitalist work settings and continued exclusion from labour organization seems to be only that women were "*still* perceived as keepers of the hearth and home." [em-

phasis added] Undoubtedly this was an important underpinning of women's place. But here it suggests that the household of the 1890s was unchanged since the early 19th century, if not from time immemorial. Many recent writers have demonstrated how gendered and class-based influences co-existed and interacted in different ways in different material and historical contexts. As industrialization proceeded in the 19th century, older familial distinctions were strengthened and new ones created. In the early chapters, Laurie rarely draws our attention outside the male artisanal world, completely ignoring the household or at best utilizing it only as a location. Industrial paternalism was an outgrowth of familial social relations, restructured in particular, capitalist, ways. Here, while the connection to the family is acknowledged, it is treated unproblematically as gender neutral (as if the family could be so) and not in turn altering its own model.

Finally, while heralding a rediscovery of the state, Laurie's employment of the term as an analytical category is seriously underdeveloped. The state played an important role in labour's history, and labour, both organized and unorganized, had important consequences for 19th century state formation. But here, in a surprisingly under-theorized reflection on the place of the state, we get an account of the emergence of labour as a player in political activities. What we see here is politics, in a simplified liberal usage, not the state. We need to look further than obvious demonstrations of the state's coercive capacity to repress class organization. Repression was not an invention of the bourgeois state, but other forms of its organization, equally important to workers, were. The various forces which overdetermined North American social development are extremely complex, and no one could expect a single volume to cover the subject. Yet, a work on the place of labour in American history, especially one that attempts to bring the state back in, could say something

about the broader responses of the state in its struggles with the working class.

In Laurie's history, the American working class is certainly active, but I did not emerge with a better understanding of its role in shaping American history. Here, the American working class appear more to be caught in massive tides than historical agents. If the "new" labour history was, and is, to have any real purpose it was to expose the role of conflict in the grand narratives, and to resist the marginalization of labour history to a role outside that process. If we are to examine labour and class in 19th century America, we must be attentive to class formations across American society, not only that slice that makes for a tight title. Labour history must be attentive to such fundamentals as gender formation, the structure of labour markets, state formation, and the discourses that structured classes' understandings of their worlds. Moreover, these must be understood as interconnected processes. Laurie leaves us with a master narrative that strives for some totalizing impulse by constantly pointing to all the right places — the countryside, the state, race, gender, a labour market, politics, and ideology — and then pulling it into an apparently unified narrative. But too much is missing. Where is the household, urban or rural? Where is an understanding of class that begins with more than the stereotypical representations of artisans and fully proletarianized white, male, and ultimately, organized workers? Something of this is here, but is overwhelmed by the narrative. What's most disappointing about this book is its complete conventionality; its apparently conscious, neutral pluralism; its ability to allow Joyce Appleby, sounding somewhat relieved on the back cover, to call it "a fresh and lucid reinterpretation" — lucid, yes, but not fresh. It is a good synthesis, undoubtedly, but only of one coarsely carved line through a much richer story.

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David M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1989).

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY, to generalize from the author's summary of one of ten thematic chapters, is not to retell the history of Butte, but rather, "to insert the necessary Irish element, as previous accounts have not." (365) Inevitably, though, a substantial revision of received wisdom about Butte, the so-called Gibraltar of western mining unionism, is achieved, and a critical point of interpretation, that "the working class should not be defined solely in relation to capital" (300) is driven neatly home. Especially noteworthy, from the point of view of the methodology of mining history, is Emmons' systematic use of the extraordinary ethnic records of the World Museum of Mining, linked with the manuscript census and other materials that probe beneath the surface of labour-capital relations. Only less satisfactory is a relentlessly political fatalism that underlines the discussion of Irish American nationalism within the book.

Imprisoned by the structures of American politics and even foreign policy — admittedly, the demands of Irish and American nationalism were often at odds, but a comparative study of the Canadian experience might reopen the supposedly "non-debatable" point that "American policy towards England...destroyed what few [radical] options Irish-Americans had" (7) — the Butte Irish seem predestined to play a conservative role. Ironically, the strongest contribution of this local study is to show exactly how and why a pivotal group of Irish American workers surrendered their autonomy to a group of Irish American capitalists, a story set against the backdrop of transatlantic migration and the westward movement, and the peculiar characteristics of industrialization in Butte.

No sooner had famine emigrants congregated in the eastern cities, than there

"began preparations to relocate the Irish in the West." (61) The more romantic colonization schemes, of people like Francis Meagher, exiled revolutionary and 'Irish' governor of Montana territory, came to little or nothing. The rise of the copper kingdom nevertheless offered practical opportunities for more than one class of Irish emigrant. Emmons deserves credit for bringing to light a hitherto undiscovered clan of Celtic hardrock miners, from the doomed mines of West Cork, who shared the customary place of the Cornishmen in 19th century Butte, and for highlighting the Irish ethnicity and/or kinship ties of Butte entrepreneurs like Marcus Daly and Augustus Heinze. "The Irish, of course, did not have the place entirely to themselves"; nevertheless, "Butte belonged to the Irish in almost the same way that Salt Lake City belonged to the Mormons." The majority of the Butte Irish were former unskilled labourers and their families, who found in the copper mines an usual degree of job security and ethnic protection. *Quid pro quo*, the labouring Irish accepted the social leadership of the Irish American elite, including "what to many seemed a witless fidelity to the Democratic party." (41-2, 62-3)

In chronicling the history of this community, Emmons proceeds with a refreshingly clear idea of the differences between the overlapping realms of working-class organization and ethnic associational life. Working-class agency was manifest in Irish-dominated unions which for several decades successfully balanced needs for a conciliatory approach to paternalist capital with miners' demands for improved wages and conditions; his is the first adequate explanation of the comparatively moderate tone of industrial relations in this important corner of the mining frontier. The nationalist or so-called revolutionary organizations, in contrast, were confined to no particular social state. Emmons quite properly rejects the notion that a 'radical' or 'secular' approach to the national question in Ireland

had any intrinsic connection with social attitudes in America. He is perhaps too dismissive of "The Patriot Game" in the more complex environment of 1911-1921, when Larkinism flourished on the margins of Butte society, the Pearse Connolly Irish Independence Club sharing its local headquarters with socialist Finns, the IWW, and the dissident Metal Miners Union. Nevertheless, as Larkin himself remarked, "I love my native land and I love my race, but when I see some of the Irish politicians and place hunters you have in Butte, my face crimson with shame, and I am glad they did not remain in Ireland." (382)

The local balance of forces ensured that the Butte Irish would be, as anti-Larkinite Hugh O'Daly happily remarked, a "balance wheel against communism." (323) By the 1920s, however, the community itself was much in decline, as Irish entrepreneurialism had been submerged into a faceless monopoly capitalism, and technological and market changes destroyed whatever 'options' Irish American miners once possessed. The means of production of low-grade ores, the open-shop drive, and capital's flight to new locales (a quite different ethnic experience would be lived by the Spanish-speaking *mineros* of the US southwest) form, we suspect, a sufficient explanation for the historical coincidence of the crisis of the Butte Irish with the tragedies of the Irish nationalist movement in the era of World War I.

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Lisa M. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1990).

BETWEEN 1870 AND 1930 Lisa Fine describes how office work, originally seen as "men's work," was socially reconstructed into "women's work." Fine

discusses the contours and significance of this shift through an examination both of the outline of clerical work's transformation (how many and who) and of the cultural baggage which accompanied that transformation. In effect, she fleshes out the general picture provided in Margery Davies' *Woman's Place is at the Typewriter*. By focusing on the "second city" in the US Chicago, Illinois, Fine has the opportunity to provide a more nuanced picture of the meaning and experience of office work for women.

Fine divides her study into three chronological sections. Between 1870 and 1890, Chicago's offices were still overwhelmingly filled with men. Fine characterizes the women who entered clerical jobs at this time as "venturing into a masculine world." (17) She argues that both men and women themselves at this time still viewed the world as divided into separate spheres for men and women, a view which clashed for both groups with the concept of women working in offices. As more and more women began to enter offices in the 1880s, these "business women" became more sure of themselves and more accepted by their male co-workers and the larger world.

The heart of Fine's book is her second section, covering the years from 1890 to World War I. During this period women, in Fine's words, "conquered" certain clerical occupations (29), most notably that of stenography and typing. Throughout her book, Fine demonstrates an admirable sense of the women's own agency in entering office jobs. These largely young, white, and native-born women first sought out educational opportunities and then gained employment in the newly "feminized" office occupations. In their persistence in doing so, Fine argues, these women intervened symbolically in the on-going cultural discourse in the US about the propriety of women's new roles in the business world.

Finally, in the book's third section Fine discusses the ways in which clerical work did and did not meet the expecta-

tions of eager young women like those she has described. Arguing that clerical work was firmly established as a stereotype of women's paid employment during the 1920s, Fine finds that becoming "women's work" operated in effect to devalue that work. Fine's clerical workers thus discovered themselves not in the sort of glorious work adventure an earlier generation had hoped for, but rather in prosaic — and underpaid — jobs.

In the course of presenting its overall story, *Souls of the Skyscraper* presents two separate collective portraits of female clerical workers. Both of these groups of clerical workers are atypical of clerical workers in general, and Fine uses that atypicality to make her points. The first group consists of 54 "public stenographers" drawn from advertisements in the 1900 Chicago city directory. These women, a sort of entrepreneurial elite among stenographers, were older than most Chicago clerical workers at the time, and were also more likely to be living on their own or even supporting other family members. The second group consists of 60 clerical workers who resided in the four residences affiliated with the "Eleanor Association" in 1910. This organization was formed specifically to supply respectable housing for Chicago's working women. (Fine notes that a total of 175 women lived in the Eleanor houses in 1910. I kept wondering what jobs the 115 non-clerical workers held. Were they also employed in relatively elite occupations of the female job market? Were any of them factory workers? This information might provide further clues about the office workers among them.)

Fine employs these two collective examples of female clerical workers to stress the agency of the women workers themselves in the process of the feminization of clerical work. These two groups provide examples of self-discipline and self-assertion, as the public stenographers, for example, dared to carve out for themselves a very public — and independent — working existence. The resi-

dents of the Eleanor Association's houses include a few public stenographers, but most of them are a little closer to the typical clerical worker of the time in that they at least are employed in business offices. The intriguing records of the Eleanor Association provide a rare look into the personal lives and rituals of such a group of early 20th-century working women. The kinds of anecdotes provided by these records are especially valuable since they are usually only available through oral histories.

For the labour historian in particular, there are two troubling qualities to Fine's book. While she does include a brief discussion of early attempts at trade unionism among Chicago's office working women, she does not place that discussion in the context of the larger labour movement, either nationally or in Chicago. In her brief discussion of Chicago's clerical worker unions, she never even alludes to the city's reputation at the time as one of the most important centres of trade union and working-class activity in the United States. A more complete understanding of this might provide insight into why Chicago clerical workers formed the organizations they did. (She also begins the discussion of unionism with a reference to clerical workers' professional associations, but she never follows this up or explores the connections and distinctions between professionalism and trade unionism.)

The second difficulty with the book arises from Fine's emphasis on the agency of women clerical workers. This is stressed so strongly that Fine is often in danger of forgetting that the women by themselves could not simply decide to seek office employment. Women could have sought forever, but as long as office employers did not see it as in their interests — whether those interests were financial or cultural — to hire women, the office would not feminize. Fine's relative neglect of the employers' side of the office balance might lead a newcomer to the field to believe that employers played

virtually no role in the job placement of women at the turn of the century. Despite these caveats, Fine's book does add an important emphasis on women workers' own agency to the ongoing debates over the feminization of clerical work and the sex-typing of jobs in general.

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Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press 1990).

AMERICAN LITERATURE on the historical construction of masculinity thus far has concentrated on the urban, educated, middle-class of the Northeast. In *Subduing Satan*, Ted Ownby sets out to explore an alternative model of masculinity through an examination of religion, recreation, and gender in the white rural south in the period between the Civil War and the advent of a continental "mass" culture. Ownby poses the apparent paradox inherent in white protestant masculine culture between "the extremes of masculine aggressiveness and home-centred evangelism that gave Southern culture its emotionally charged nature" (14), and concludes that this delicate balance was only possible as long as evangelical culture and rough masculinity were protected by isolation. "Evangelical culture" is rather vaguely described as the achievement of self-control and the elimination of the animal-like characteristics in man and is contrasted with masculine traits and characteristics such as drinking, hunting, gambling, fighting, and swearing. Interestingly enough, this study virtually ignores the characteristic that others have regarded as the most animal-like characteristic of humans — their sexuality. The argument presented in the book claims that with transportation and cultural changes, such as the automobile, radio, and movie, the rural



South lost its equilibrium and these rough masculine activities were forced to undergo regulation and restriction by the church, women, and the state.

Gender and religion is a fascinating area of study as many scholars including Ownby have pointed to the important links between women and the church. The examination of men and religion has received much less overt attention and as a result Ownby's study offers new insight into this area, particularly into the tension between Christianity and masculinity which existed in late 19th century North America. That this tension was specific to the rural South is doubtful. Traditional Christian theology has portrayed both God and Satan as male — each respectively embodying either the righteous or devilish characteristics associated with masculinity. With such a broad possibility of masculine identities to draw upon the tension was perhaps inherent. The social and cultural historian who examines the practice of religion without any consideration of even the most basic theological underpinnings does so at his or her peril.

In the same way that he looks at religion without theology, Ownby examines recreation without the context of work. Although Ownby touches upon class-based recreations such as the elite's attempt to assume the roles of 11th-century knights through their ring-and-lance tournaments, the reader is left with very little understanding of what the men in the book actually did for a living. Obviously, in light of the rural setting, many were farmers or engaged in various levels of independent commodity production. However, from the evidence presented it appears as if others were wage-earners. Was the responsibility of supporting a family not also an important aspect of manhood endorsed by an evangelical culture? It is impossible to appreciate the meaning and significance of leisure choices without any reciprocal understanding of what was considered work. Most importantly, the lack of emphasis on

work makes it equally impossible for the reader to understand how class was related to the experience of the sacred and the secular and the way in which class therefore interacted with religion, gender, and race.

As recreation only makes sense in relation to work, masculinity also needs some knowledge of femininity to provide meaning. This book actually contains much more about women than one might expect — but the material is rarely explicitly connected to the argument. The compliant, saintly, and pure women who appear in this book cannot help but seem artificial when contrasted to the sinning men. Unfortunately, this simplistic representation of women undermines faith in less familiar evidence around masculine activities.

Race is a constant theme in the book and it is in this area that Ownby provides the material for his most important insights yet ultimately fails to put the pieces in the puzzle together. Ownby links African-Americans (no gender!) to the most dangerous aspects of masculinity — loss of control, alcohol, and sexuality. Yet he stops short of making the connection of what it actually may have meant if white Southern men truly constructed a definition of masculinity in such a way that it was epitomized by African-American men. If white men saw African-American men as more "manly" than themselves, not simply as a sexual threat to white women, racism and gender takes on interesting new meanings.

Finally, this original topic appears to have been undertaken without much consideration to the recent literature on gender. For example, Ownby makes no use of age or marital status and the important impact these variables had in forming ideas of masculinity. In the same way, he conceptualizes the sharp division of time and space (calling it place) between the sacred and the secular in a manner that will strike historians of women as a modified version of "separate spheres" à la Nancy Cott (1977) but without even

some of her preliminary contradictions. In this manner, chapters are organized by physical settings such as Main street, church, fairs, and home. For a book that is supposed to be about place, very little geographical orientation was provided, except for a disclaimer in the foreword of areas that the book would not cover such as the Appalachians and the dominantly Roman Catholic regions of Louisiana, Mississippi, Maryland, and Kentucky.

For all its many problems, this is still a very interesting book. Ownby's discussion of picnics, church suppers, circuses, country fairs, harvest celebrations, cock-fighting, revival meetings, gambling, drinking, and swearing are all fascinating and often imaginative. The book is further enhanced by photographs. Those interested in gender, religion, recreation, and culture, who have some knowledge of the general literature will find the material rich, original, and rewarding. The reader familiar with context will be able to take from the book far more than it actually offers.

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Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1990).

IT WOULD BE A SHAME if Liz Cohen's new book on Chicago workers in the era between the two world wars is seen as "just another community study." In fact, it is a fine example of how a case study framed in terms of "big questions" can provide a new way of looking at a period and at old problems. She successfully bridges analytical barriers between workers' community, workplace, and political experiences and the chronological one between the "quiet" 1920s and the upsurge of the 1930s. With all the thrashing around for a US labour history synthesis lately, Cohen's success should send

some of the synthesizers back to the drawing board.

Cohen begins with an old question: "Why did workers suddenly succeed in the 1930s as both CIO trade unionists and Democratic Party faithfuls?" Her first chapter describes the tragic defeat and fragmentation of an extremely impressive, ethnically-diverse labour movement in Chicago following World War I. What had changed by the 1930s? The usual answers concern the nature and policies of the federal government (New Deal reforms) and changes in the structure and strategy of the labour movement (the CIO). But Cohen argues that "...what matters most" is not these external factors, but "the change in workers' own orientation during the 1920s and 1930s. Working-class Americans underwent a gradual shift in attitudes and behaviour over the intervening decade and a half as a result of a wide range of social and cultural experiences." (5) You cannot understand the big question without looking at how peoples' lives changed. And in the process of describing and analyzing these changes, Cohen confronts several of the key issues for this era: What happened to ethnic identity after the era of mass immigration? How, if at all, did the rise of mass consumption and mass culture effect Black and immigrant working-class communities? How did workers actually experience and react to the rise of welfare capitalism? How did they experience the Great Depression and the New Deal's programs and how did this change their political attitudes? What was the basis of their strong identification with the new CIO?

Elements of 1920s mass culture did penetrate ethnic communities, but the situation in Chicago was fascinatingly mixed. Perhaps the most striking thing is the resiliency of traditional ethnic cultures in the face of the mass market onslaught. Radio stations mushroomed, but they tended to be sponsored by church and other community groups and to specialize in ethnic programming. Immigrant

workers flocked to films, but in small neighborhood theatres, not the movie palaces for which Chicago became famous. These were distant, expensive, and vaguely uncomfortable places for most ethnic workers. (Although Cohen does not mention the fact, they were probably also racially segregated.) The new movie and old ethnic cultures merged in the storefront theatres where crowds shouted in Italian and Polish to the screen stars and the movies were often preceded by short foreign language plays. Chain stores and chain theatres were largely confined to more prosperous neighbourhoods. Most working people still shopped at corner stores run by immigrant small businessmen.

Insulated by their ethnic cultures at home, these workers toiled in some of the world's largest industrial plants and they were facing a new situation in the 1920s. Some Chicago employers pioneered corporate welfare, and virtually all of them had jumped on the bandwagon following the massive turnover problems and labour unrest during the war, "a kind of conversion experience." They instituted complex wage incentive and profit sharing systems; provided vacations, pension, insurance, and loan programs; sponsored sports, music, and other cultural activities; and lent the whole enterprise an aura of democracy with their company unions. Many of these programs never touched the large group of unskilled immigrant and Black workers who drifted in and out of the plants constantly throughout the decade. Even many of those who stayed long enough to take part were wary. Wages, conditions, and treatment by foremen were still generally bad, while unemployment remained a constant worry. But we cannot fathom the upsurge that followed in the 1930s without recognizing that employers were serious about all this and that many workers participated willingly in such programs and indeed came to think of them as entitlements.

Employers erected this elaborate welfare system to undercut ethnic and class solidarity and create a new sense of loyalty to the firm by individualizing the work experience, but the reforms had unforeseen effects. The complicated incentive pay schemes brought resentment and frustration, then stimulated the growth of collective efforts to restrict production and "beat the system." The industrial sports leagues, choral groups, and orchestras, and the company-based thrift, insurance, and pension programs had been designed to compete with ethnic organizations and institutions, but they facilitated the growth of a workplace mass culture and collective identity that cut across ethnic, age, and skill differences. The company unions spawned a small group of indigenous leaders who grew frustrated with their inability to generate real change and responded to early calls for unionization.

When the depression set in, this whole welfare structure collapsed. Facing many of the same problems — layoffs, wage cuts, deteriorating conditions — workers turned first to their families and ethnic communities. But when these traditional sources of support could not cope with the magnitude of the crisis, they relied increasingly on new federal relief programs and on self-organization and protest, first through unemployed councils and later through industrial unionism.

Two key concepts allow Cohen to explain this transition. The first is a variant of the notion of moral economy. She argues that in the course of the 1920s, workers developed the notion that capitalism itself was alright, but that they were entitled to fair treatment and some measure of security. The collapse of welfare capitalism convinced them that reform was essential and turned them toward federal intervention and industrial unionism. Their adherence to both the CIO and the New Deal was based on this notion, which she terms "moral capitalism." The concept remains shadowy, but one comes away with the

impression that something like this was happening.

The second concept Cohen employs to explain the upsurge of the 1930s is the idea of a "culture of unity." This was in part the natural product of demographic and structural changes, in part the creation of the CIO. It represented the experiences and values that more workers shared as they moved through the 1930s. In demographic terms, the end of mass immigration and the decline of Black migration in the course of the 1920s meant a more stable population with a higher proportion of English speakers. In economic terms, the class-based experience of deprivation during the depression brought with it the collapse of ethnic economic institutions and the spread of national chain stores, theatres, and radio programming. "Workers of diverse ethnicities and races succeeded in asserting themselves collectively as Democrats and unionists by the 1930s," Cohen concludes, because "they had more in common from which to forge alliances." (365) On these shared experiences, CIO organizers carefully cultivated a new set of values emphasizing ethnic and racial equality and class solidarity in the midst of social diversity. Give the subsequent history of race relations in the city, Cohen's reading is perhaps a bit too optimistic on this score. Yet the CIO made very real progress in breaking down racial and ethnic barriers between workers, and one must be careful about reading more recent antagonisms back on the depression years.

Throughout, the secret to Cohen's success is deceptively simple. She keeps the everyday lives of common people at the centre of her story but investigates their own roles in the big changes, broadening her scope to the level of political economy. Making this link in concrete terms lends her arguments an impact missing in structural analyses.

The Depression itself is a case in point. This chapter begins with a series of vignettes — the actual depression ex-

periences of several representative Chicago workers. But Cohen goes beyond these individual experiences by asking "how the very structure of peoples' lives, particularly their relationship to basic institutions and authority figures in their ethnic communities, workplaces, and families, was transformed during the crisis." (218) Both ethnic community institutions and welfare capitalists had gone out of their way in the 1920s to claim the responsibility for workers' welfare. If they did not, they reasoned, workers would look beyond them to state-sponsored programs. In the face of massive unemployment, the collapse of the banking and insurance industries and widespread poverty and suffering, however, neither corporate nor ethnic leaders could deliver on their promises. All were eventually overcome by the wave of unprecedented economic distress.

The community and factory-level analysis that allows Cohen to make the link between everyday life and political economy has transformed social history over the past generation, giving us a richer and more realistic view of working-class life. Given its diverse economy and population and its rather compelling history of class struggle, Chicago is a particularly significant case study. I am inclined to agree, at least for large industrial cities, that "The most revealing contrasts were not between one city and another but rather between worker communities and factories within a city like Chicago." (7) At least Chicago's own staggering diversity suggests that this could certainly be the case.

But I am a bit more dubious of Cohen's argument that "Despite minor variations, there was one national story" (7) and that looking at Chicago's history tells it. Working-class life was really quite different in the small coal towns of Illinois, western Pennsylvania, or southern West Virginia, or in the textile mill villages of the Carolina Piedmont, or in small manufacturing cities around the USA. Cohen is undoubtedly right about

the general trends toward mass culture, industrial unionism, and greater reliance on the federal government, but the roots of these trends, how they were experienced, and what they meant to workers probably differed in some working-class communities from the situation in the Black and immigrant neighbourhoods of a big city like Chicago. Far from discrediting the community study approach, however, this simply means that we need to ask Cohen's and other "big questions" about the lives of workers in very different sorts of communities before a credible "national story" can emerge.

*Making a New Deal* is more than a big step in the right direction. What Cohen achieves is a coherent, persuasive explanation, from the bottom, up, for the loyalty of working people to the CIO and the New Deal Democratic Party. In the process, she describes how workers moved from a local, ethnic orientation toward a more cosmopolitan, national outlook suffused with class interests. By refusing to read back a clear trajectory toward integration and conservatism and instead crafting her analysis on the basis of workers' own experiences and values over two crucial decades, she has not only illuminated a whole range of problems and moved us toward a new periodization. She has also restored much of the drama to what is after all a pretty good story.

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Richard J. Altenbaugh, *Education for Struggle: The American Labor Colleges of the 1920 and 1930s* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1990).

THIS IS A CLOSE LOOK at three labour colleges in the United States: Work People's College (1907-1941), Brookwood Labor College (1921-1937), and

Commonwealth College (1923-1940). All three were independent of unions of universities; all aimed to equip adult students with the tools to be effective leaders in the labour movement; and all subscribed to a radical social vision. Altenbaugh argues that independent labour colleges alone succeeded in training workers to lead the movement for radical social change, while other worker education efforts failed. (55) While that argument is weak, the story of the schools is nevertheless worth hearing.

Altenbaugh begins with a context for the study of the independent labour colleges, surveying the range of worker education efforts from university-sponsored programs to trade union classes. He does not make clear, however, how many independent labour colleges actually existed beyond the three under study. His next three chapters trace the origins of the three institutions, their goals and practices, and their student populations (some tables would have helped here), and their teachers. Chapters entitled "harassment" and "fratricide" lead to one on "the end of the labor colleges." A final chapter assesses their achievements.

Work People's College, in Duluth, Minnesota, had its origins in a Finnish religious school whose mission was to train Lutheran ministers for the Finnish community. Finnish Socialists became increasingly influential in the school, until 1907 when they gained control and redefined its purposes: to "preserve Finnish culture, promote literacy and instill socialist ideals." (65) Achieving its greatest strength before the war with upwards of 130 students per year, it was subsequently torn by a struggle in the Finnish left between the Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World. By 1921, Work People's College had split from the Socialists and affiliated with the IWW. The resulting alienation from the mainstream of radical Finnish activity led eventually to weakness and ineffectiveness.

Brookwood Labor College grew out of the short-lived Brookwood School, founded shortly after World War I in a Westchester County, New York mansion by William Finke, a pacifist Yale alumnus, and his wife, Helen. In 1921 the Finkes recruited A.J. Muste, then head of the Amalgamated Textile Workers, to serve as director, a position he maintained until his contentious departure in 1933. Brookwood averaged 40 to 50 students each year, with a total of 600-800 in the life of the institution. Its radical critique of mainstream labour organizations led to an investigation of "radicalism" by the AFL, which formally condemned Brookwood in 1928. While the school continued to function effectively until 1936, it suffered continuous harassment and stress until closing in 1937.

Commonwealth College, the "Brookwood of the South," grew out of the utopian socialist community, Newllano, in Vernon Parish, Louisiana, in 1923. Factional disputes between the colony and the school precipitated the school's independent relocation in Polk County, Arkansas in 1925. Commonwealth comprised students and faculty from outside of the South, and was dependent on wealthy liberal supporters scattered across the rest of the country. Besieged by its fundamentalist neighbours, the Klan, and the state of Arkansas, it folded in the late 1930s, when Northern liberal support waned.

Entrance to the colleges was based largely on experience in and commitment to trade unions. Most of the students lacked formal schooling beyond grade school (Commonwealth students were somewhat more educated, WPC's somewhat less). There were practical courses in organizing and public speaking as well as more theoretical subjects, including economics, labour history, and sociology. The schools attempted to avoid what is now called the "hidden curriculum" of conventional education: aiming for a non-hierarchical, egalitarian relationship between students and teachers, they gave no

grades, tests, nor diplomas. Extracurricular activities and informal contact among the students and teachers were important components of the educational experience.

Brookwood and Commonwealth took active part in current labour struggles, offering support and at times leadership in, for example, the Marion textile strike, the Sacco and Vanzetti demonstrations, and the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union organizing drives. Drama played a vital role in their outreach: Brookwood's drama groups toured the country beginning in the late 1920s, covering 53 cities in 1934, and playing to perhaps 14,500 workers in that year. While there were undoubtedly many inspirational performances, Altenbaugh's account leaves the impression of didactic, one-dimensional melodrama. He gives us "the key phrase" of one Commonwealth play, "When the farmers learn to organize, their problems will be a lot easier for them." (110)

In order to evaluate the impact of the colleges, Altenbaugh asks, "what did students learn and how did they use it?" He answers using case studies of individual students, supplemented by recollections offering generalizations. Successes involved students who went on to positions of leadership in unions, in the labour press, and in other labour education organizations. Brookwood graduates, particularly (among them Roy, Walter, and Victor Reuther), played critical roles in the CIO campaigns of the 1930s. Altenbaugh also provides an example of what he considers a "failure" from Commonwealth: the student who, after four years at the College, "enrolled for graduate work in sociology and labor history at the University of Wisconsin" rather than "selflessly serving workers." (253) This seems an ironic judgement for an assistant professor at Northern Illinois University, in a work directed towards a labour-oriented academic readership.

This anecdotal evidence of students' subsequent careers is insufficient to prove Altenbaugh's claim for the unique and

exclusive success of the small, independent, residential labour colleges. Still, the independent, residential structure of the colleges did make them uniquely vulnerable. Brookwood and Commonwealth differed from most labour and radical organizations in that they had no community base. Participants shared ideological orientation with each other, but not neighbourhood, work, family or community. The mixture contributed to the educational experience: a Midwestern miner was reported to remark upon arrival at Brookwood, "What are these Jewish girls doing here? There ain't no Jews in the labor movement." (141) However, such a structure very likely contributed to the fragility of the colleges.

Acknowledging the lack of hard evidence of the "success" of the labour colleges, Altenbaugh nevertheless offers a summation, "This study has been about that 'militant' minority which made the crucial difference, which persevered against formidable odds to seek radical solutions to economic injustice." (268) That the odds were formidable is clear from this story. That the graduates of the schools made a contribution to the labour struggles of the first half of the 20th century is also clear. Unfortunately, despite Altenbaugh's adulatory tone, what fails to emerge from this work, except in fleeting glimpses, is the sense of excitement and commitment that must have sustained the colleges through the chronic underfunding, the fractional in-fighting and the head-on opposition which they faced throughout their existences.

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Dan La Botz, *Rank-and-File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union* (New York and London: Verso 1990).

IN JUNE, 1991 MEMBERS of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) will, for the first time in the union's his-

tory, have the opportunity to go to their union hall and vote by secret ballot for their officers. This historic occasion is a consequence of a March 1989 out-of-court settlement of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) civil suit filed by the US Department of Justice against the IBT. For 87 years prior to the settlement the union's top officers were elected by the delegates to the IBT's conventions, a practice that originated in the belief that only convention delegates were in a position to watch the actions of the various candidates from across the country and make an informed choice, but evolved into a mechanism to assure the domination of the union by a few. Now, with the rank-and-file voting in a few months, a host of candidates have declared for the presidency, including R.B. Durham, supported by the outgoing president William McCarthy; Ron Carey, president of the 7,000 member Local 804 in New York City; Walter Shea, a former assistant to Jackie Presser; Lou Riga of California; and William Genoese of New York. Adding more drama to the upcoming event, on 21 February 1992 James P. Hoffa, whose infamous father was IBT president from 1957 to 1971, announced that he too was ready to throw his hat into the ring once questions about his eligibility were settled by the court appointed election officer.

Thus, Dan La Botz's *Rank-and-File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union* appears at a very timely moment, particularly considering that the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) endorsed Ron Carey for IBT president at its November 1989 convention. La Botz, himself, was a TDU activist in the 1970s before moving on to a career as a leftist journalist (and authorship of *The Crisis of Mexican Labor*, 1988) and received the "cooperation" (xv) of the TDU International Steering Committee in preparing this account of the organization's history. At one level, then, *Rank-and-File Rebellion* must be read as part of the campaign literature of the upcoming election. The

book lays out the evil doings of the IBT old guard in alliance with the Mafia, government officials, and businessmen; it presents the TDU's stance on a number of key membership concerns including deregulation, pension reform, drug testing, double-breasting, ESOP's, and two-tier wage scales; Ron Carey is hailed as the reform candidate; and TDU is given well-deserved credit for working long-and-hard for the open election of IBT officers. Equally important when considering the book as a "political document" is the way it treats its subject. One learns much about rank-and-file participation in TDU but little of the organization's structure or governance; biographical portraits of numerous grass-roots leaders are featured but background material on national organizer Ken Paff is less highlighted; and, finally, each constituency to which TDU appeals is given coverage — blacks and women, southerners and Californians, steelhaulers and Mexican-American female food packers. This is not to say that these are not appropriate topics, but only to point out that a certain selectivity is going on.

Whatever the contribution of *Rank-and-File Rebellion* in advancing the cause of Teamsters for a Democratic Union, the book's value to labour scholars is mixed. Certain key questions are glossed over such as why a number of reformers in the union, including Carey himself, shied away from joining TDU, and also why a number of people who identified with Hoffa are responsive to TDU. Moreover, La Botz's knowledge of US labour history and his powers of interpretation are faulty. Given space limits, two examples will have to suffice. On the factual front, La Botz informs the reader that "the AFL was at the peak of its power in the 1920s..." (88) when, in actuality, as Irving Bernstein and countless others have documented, these were the "Lean Years" when trade union membership declined. As for interpretation, La Botz superficially explains organized crime's penetration

of the union as simply the natural consequence of "business unionism." (138) He both misuses this well established concept, and fails to point out that most TDUs only want their union to be better at "business unionism."

With all this said, labour scholars will still find much of value in La Botz's treatment of TDU's rise "from a dissident minority into an opposition party." (327) He has mapped out the key benchmarks in TDU's short history: various Teamster locals breaking away from the International in the 1960s; the formation of The Fraternal Association of Steel Haulers (FASH) in 1967 with its dual union strategy; the 1970 Wildcat strikes and the founding of Teamsters United Rank and File (TURF) in July 1971 as the first national reform organization within the IBT; the formation of the Professional Drivers Council, Inc. (PROD) that same year to fight within the union and with various legislatures for better health and safety codes for road drivers; the creation in August of 1975 of Teamsters for a Decent Contract (TDC) to generate rank-and-file pressure on Teamster leaders to stand up to employers during the 1976 contract negotiations; the transformation of TDC into Teamsters for a Democratic Union in 1976; and the TDFU's advancing presence in the union as it fights for democratic bylaws at the local level, advocates both stronger contracts and majority rule on contract acceptance or rejections, campaigns for offices, wins some established local officials to its side, merges with PROD, and takes up causes, like the plight of the Watsonville Canning and Frozen Food employees, which are snubbed by the established leadership. Also of great value are the numerous biographical sketches of TDU activists, often conveyed in their own words, presenting their perceptions of working conditions, IBT leadership, and the struggle to build TDU. When labour scholars commence writing the history of the reformation of the teamster's union, as Paul Clark and George Hopkins have



done for the Mine Workers, La Botz's volume will clearly be an asset.

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James Bradley, *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism: Nonconformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990).

JAMES BRADLEY RECENTLY WROTE a significant monograph on the English domestic reaction to the impending American war. This book is very much its sequel. Whereas the first focused upon the petitions of 1775, showing that perhaps a third of the 'political nation' was opposed to coercion in America, this one explores the nonconformist contribution to that agitation and, more generally, to late 18th-century radicalism. Bradley is not simply interested in the well-known intellectuals of Dissent, men such as Richard Price and Joseph Priestly, whose attitude to reform and America has been quite thoroughly researched. He is interested in the lesser luminaries of the provinces and, above all, in the power of nonconformist congregations in local politics. On these matters he has some important things to say.

In part, Bradley confirms what we already knew. Although Dissent declined numerically during the 18th century, it retained a resilient and substantial presence in the larger towns. In some nonconformists were as well represented in professional, wholesale and retail positions as their Anglican counterparts, and were certainly as economically mobile. Indeed, despite their second-class citizenship and the statutory impediments to political office, nonconformists did obtain aldermanic office in towns such as Bristol, Colchester, Coventry, Norwich and Nottingham and positions of trust elsewhere. At the same time, Bradley shows, echoing John Phillips, that the

Dissenters gravitated decisively to the political opposition in the 1770s, severing their former ties with the government. Hence, Bradley argues, one cannot attribute the political dissidence of Dissent to its marginal social status. Even from a comparative perspective, no correlation can be made between nonconformist radicalism and its exclusion from local power. Rather the new activism was a response to the deteriorating situation in America, to which nonconformists had strong ties, and to the increasingly authoritarian 'Toryism' of church and state. The American crisis, in other words, reactivated the nonconformists' ideology of resistance and social exclusion, held in abeyance during the Whig supremacy of 1714-1760, and propelled them along the path of radicalism.

Bradley is not only interested in explaining the radical orientation of the nonconformists in the 1770s; he is also eager to stress their contribution to popular radicalism. In his view nonconformity was the midwife to radical political behaviour and in a more limited sense to class, mobilizing the artisan against the establishment in ways that anticipated the resurgence of democratic ideals in the 1790s. Bradley elaborates this argument through a series of electoral case studies and a detailed social analysis of the 1776 petitioners. While he admits that the oppositionist stance of the Dissenters was more clearly expressed in the petitions than at the polls, where clientage and venality were sometimes important mediating forces, he none the less emphasizes the crucial role that Dissent played in fostering a critique of the Anglican-dominated social hierarchy and advancing the cause of structural political reform.

There is much to commend this analysis, particularly its measured criticism of the Namierite and neo-conservative dismissal of English radicalism in the age of the American revolution. But it is a little overblown. In invoking the importance of nonconformity, Bradley

downplays other features of the radical movement. As John Brewer has shown, the radicalism of the post-1760 era built upon earlier traditions of political independence, refashioning the Country critique of oligarchy to appeal to men of mobile property smarting from draconian debt laws, heavy taxation, intrusive government and a legal system that privileged the landed elite. These powerful solvents to political deference, particularly attractive to the middling sort of the larger towns, are marginalized in Bradley's account, as are the clubs and societies that helped to sustain them. Radicalism was articulated through the predominately secular medium of journalism as much as through the pulpits of nonconformist congregations, and it took place against a background of rising prices, precarious living standards, and portentous changes in productive relations, challenging conventional notions of both political and economic independence in ways that appealed to a broad, and by no means exclusively propertied audience. In insisting upon the importance of religion to radical endeavour, Bradley ignores too much.

Particularly problematic about Bradley's account is his failure to recognize that successive waves of political reformism in 17th-century England, including those prior to 1760, were synchronized to imperial crises. Issues of national destiny and economic advantage were linked with those of popular political accountability, particularly as the Atlantic economy grew in importance and seemed threatened by forces within Britain and without. How these were played out during the American war remains central to any understanding of the social bases of extra-parliamentary radicalism, yet Bradley's analysis of urban politics tends to sidestep these issues. His electoral analysis, in particular, is vitiated by this neglect of the economy of the towns he chooses to discuss. It is surely important to know which constituencies were towns with an important stake in American trade, and how the

dislocations of war might or might not have affected local economies. Without some attention to these issues, and to the ways in which the politics of ideology and interest intersected, one cannot recapture the social dimensions of city politics during this crisis of empire. Bradley occasionally recognizes this (243 with respect to Bristol) but the methodological strategy he adopts for tackling it scarcely allows for a subtle materialist analysis of urban politics. The result is that his analysis of political behaviour in terms of religious (Dissenting) affiliation, more easily identifiable and measurable, inevitably comes to the fore.

One of the potential ironies of this book is that while Bradley is keen to distance himself from J.C.D. Clark, his interpretation might well be hailed by Clark and his supporters as vindicating the primacy of religion over class in 18th-century politics. Such a conclusion would be crude, for Bradley has disclosed important socio-economic divisions in his analysis of the 1775 petitions as well as demonstrating the ideological purchase of provincial Dissent in strengthening the rights of resistance to constituted authority. Whether this finding merits the claim that Dissent spawned an alternative politics that was radical, popular and class-based remains debatable. Dissent fuelled opposition to the North regime, and was an important inspirational focus for radicalism, at least in those towns where it managed to disengage itself from proprietorial or corporation politics. But the political independence of Dissent, for years the bulwark of Whig oligarchy, was comparatively recent, and largely detached from the rough-and-tumble demotic politics that had characterized earlier opposition movements. That libertarian tradition, sharpened by labour unrest and hostility to impressment, remained a potent force in the American war as the widespread demonstrations of 1779 in favour of Admiral Keppel made clear. Such a volatile, impassioned politics co-existed with the moral, ration-

al politics of Dissent and the sober associations of the disgruntled gentry in the protean, and deeply contradictory, radical movement of the 1770s. Some reassessment of this bewildering constellation seems necessary before the Dissenting contribution to radicalism can be comprehensively contextualized. That said, Bradley has made an important intervention in the historiography of 18th-century popular politics: first, by pointing to the rich connotative language of liberty used by Dissenters during the American crisis, one that proved a tonic to radical endeavour beyond their chapels; and second, by comparing Dissenting activism in important provincial towns, refining in the process our understanding of the social foundations of urban politics. Upon these insights historians will be able to build profitably.

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Theodore Koditschek, *Class formation and urban-industrial society: Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990).

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS of a giant is a time-honoured method of gaining a good view. This book benefits from its author's heightened perspective. Written as a *hommage* to E.P. Thompson, and quite literally traversing much of the ground he surveyed, Koditschek's book is a significant contribution to a long-standing, and often vitriolic scholarly debate — now about to enter its fourth decade — that followed the publication of *The Making of the English Working Class*. It is also, it should be stressed, a quite different book and this difference is a testament to the ways that social history has evolved since 1963. If some of my later remarks are critical I want to make it clear that these relate to minor blemishes and are occasioned by my recognition of

Koditschek's achievement. This is a major scholarly work.

Bradford felt the full shock of the first industrial revolution. It was a small industrial city, not a large factory town. In the second quarter of the 19th century Bradford grew faster than any other urban-industrial city in the world. The key force in its evolution was the switchover from proto-industrial to factory organization in the woollen worsted industry. Unlike the really large industrial cities — Manchester, Birmingham, and Newcastle — Bradford's economy was tied almost completely to this single sector. The multifarious elaborations of the worsted industry notwithstanding, the life of the city's inhabitants was like that of a mouse sleeping next to an elephant whose nocturnal restlessness was a source of perpetual danger. In this sense, Bradford was a crucible in which urbanization and industrialization as well as the formation of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie can be studied in a particularly unalloyed form. Bradford's urban-industrial society grew violently; its passages were the subject of contestation which pitted four different social visions — the gentleman-capitalist, the cottager and his proto-industrial family of primary producers, the parvenu bourgeoisie, and the proletariat — against one another. Not even the victorious, liberal non-Conformists who made up the parvenu bourgeoisie emerged unscathed or unchanged from this confrontation. This, in a nutshell, is Koditschek's project; it is informed by both a Thompsonian concern for 'making' and a quite un-Thompsonian attention to quantitative analysis.

Koditschek covers the period from the rise of cottage industry in the middle 18th century through its protracted death rattle and ultimate demise in the second quarter of the 19th century. He devotes considerable attention to the transformation of the early modern moral economy of the proto-industrial cottagers and its replacement with contending visions of bourgeois and proletarian political

economy. The author's decision to go beyond Thompson's chronology provides his story with a less truncated ending and, in particular, draws the struggles of the first and second quarters of the 19th century into a single field of vision. In addition, Koditschek is also alert to the politicization of personal life and the central role of family in constructing both social identities and reproducing social classes.

In contrast to some other recent writing on this period, Koditschek subordinates gender analysis to a more orthodox form of class analysis in which modes of production and social relations interact on a public stage from which women were largely excluded. But if women were marginalized in the political struggles of 19th-century Bradford, their role in other forums is constantly brought to the readers' attention; indeed, Koditschek is very sensitive to the balance between the public and private struggles for power and the disciplines which energized both. While he nods in the direction of the "technology of the self" — and has a lot of very great interest to say in this regard — Koditschek never allows the Foucauldian line of analysis to overwhelm the public struggles for power, domination and control. Politics on a public stage were essential features of Bradford's history in this period. Although the personal was political; the political was public.

The narrative flow in *Class formation and urban-industrial society* is always informed by attention to the two-edged process of capitalist-industrialization and proletarianization which combined to set Bradford's social system in motion. Koditschek's analysis of the transformation is masterful and it is impossible to do it justice here. Suffice it to say that it is within this dialectical materialism that topics relating to family, gender, and personality are located. If there is a fence here, Koditschek does not choose to sit on it. Furthermore, Koditschek is careful to deconstruct the bourgeoisie: we are not

presented with a monolithic monster of oppression but rather a series of fragmentary groupings which are contending for power amongst themselves as well as against the mushrooming proletariat in their midst. Similarly, the working-class is analyzed in terms of both its commonalities — largely deriving from subjection to wage-labour and subjugation to the most horrific environmental depredation — as well as its diversity which is the product of the labour process quite as much as the life-cycle of family formation.

I was particularly impressed with Koditschek's frank recognition of the immense creative power of capitalist accumulation and, in particular, the way in which the business cycle drives his narrative of historical change. In reading through this story one senses the role of history itself in the creation of contradictions and their resolution. As well, the contingency of the historical present is never forgotten. The reader is not forced to ingest a structural analysis devoid of change and continuity; Koditschek is simply too subtly intelligent to lead us into this trap. His quantitative analysis of census materials is seamlessly incorporated into the story. Moreover, Koditschek has a keen eye for the use and abuse of statistics for which I was grateful.

*Class formation and urban-industrial society* is thus a long, thoroughly researched monograph. It is based on voluminous local archival materials and a seeming plethora of local, unpublished doctoral dissertations which have looked at various aspects of early industrial Bradford's history. The attention to detail and the skill with which Koditschek uses these primary and secondary sources are exemplary; his sensitivity to both the long historiographical heritage and the recent pluralism of historical interest is likewise even-handed and judicious. Moreover, he is at pains to subordinate these concerns to his larger narrative which is structured by his analysis of local events and processes. Indeed, this very localism which is a

great strength of this book is also something of a weakness. In this sense, I think that Robert Colls' *The pitmen of the northern coalfield* is rather more successful in its explication of the many dimensions of the class struggle in the age of Chartism. There is, of course, a trade-off in deciding on either a local or regional or national focus. But, allowing for that, I was rather taken aback that the English state, its policies, and its armed men play such a negligible role in Koditschek's story. I had to pinch myself to remember that it was in this very same West Riding of Yorkshire that vast numbers of troops were barracked to police an insurgent proletariat struggling to define itself both within and against industrial capitalism. The multi-faceted publicity of the political stage is undervalued by the narrow focus on Bradford.

At the risk of suggesting that such a long book could have been made even longer, I found that this resolutely tunnel vision served to dissipate the impact of this meticulously-crafted local study. Coming to the end of this book on page 582, I felt that I had learned a lot about Bradford; however, my knowledge of early industrialization was not challenged but rather enlarged. The individual parts of *Class formation and urban-industrial society* are very, very good; but, taken singly, they are rather better than the whole. In his "introduction" Koditschek is very careful to situate his study in relation to the historiographical swirl around *The Making*, but he does not satisfactorily conclude this discussion by considering Bradford's experience in relation to the growing body of similar studies which have proliferated in the wake of Thompson's magisterial work. To be sure, this would be a substantial undertaking but it would have greatly enhanced this local study of the transition from rural proto-industry to urban factory industry by placing it in a wider context.

The social-scientific turn in historical studies is now well-entrenched and this book is a good example of both its costs

— the foremost of which is the sacrifice of individual experience for that of the group or sub-group to which individuals can be assigned — and its benefits which have made us aware of the need to specify the representativeness of social experience. Yet, perhaps, the pendulum has swung too far in favour of aggregation. My other criticism of this book is that despite its immense length — and the author's massive labours — we never get inside the skin of the historical actors. Is this problem caused by the lack of appropriate evidence? Are there no local autobiographies? I came away wondering about the individual lives of Bradfordians and the ways that they accommodated themselves to the cataclysmic changes that took place in the formation of urban industrial society. If *Class formation and urban-industrial society* does not supply answers to some of these questions, it nonetheless provokes the reader to ask them in order to understand the nature of social life — "painted grey in grey" — at the particular moment when urban industrial society came into being.

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George R. Boyer, *An Economic History of the English Poor Law, 1750-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1990).

THIS BOOK is an examination of the economic role played by poor relief in England during the period of industrialization. In particular, Boyer is concerned to understand and evaluate the contribution of out relief — assistance given to the poor in their own homes rather than the workhouse. He says this form of assistance became widespread in England's rural south-east in the late 1770s, and then declined after 1834 with the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act. As such, its rise and fall constitutes the major trend in poor relief during the early period of industrialization, and consequently merits

examination. The book explores the differences in relief administration between the south-east and the industrial north-west, and analyses the effects poor relief had on birth rates and migration, and on profits and wages.

Boyer says his book is an extension of what he calls the revisionist school — consisting principally of Daniel Baugh, Mark Blaug and Anne Digby. He focuses on the reasons for the adoption and extension of out relief, which he says were not well-developed in their explanations. Boyer believes that rural parishes in the south-east adopted out relief in response to two changes in the economic environment: the decline of allotments of land which agricultural labourers had used to grow food, and the decline of cottage industry. These changes resulted in a serious loss in income for agricultural labourers, and parishes responded by adopting out relief policies.

This kind of relief was preferred over other methods for dealing with this problem because it best suited the needs of labour-hiring farmers. Indeed, according to Boyer, out relief functioned principally as a kind of unemployment insurance: it replaced, but did not increase labourers' wages at certain times of the year. This was especially so in grain growing areas in the south-east since the demand for labour in this kind of farming varied greatly over the crop cycle. Using data from the 1831 census, and from the 1832 Royal Commission's Rural Queries, Boyer found that grain growing farmers could minimize their labour costs best by laying off redundant workers during slow seasons, and offering them out relief. Since not all rate payers were labour-hiring farmers, this meant, in effect, that the rest of the community subsidized the farmers' labour costs. Thus, through the use of out relief, these farmers could retain a labour force sufficient to meet their needs during the busy seasons, while passing part of the cost of maintaining it on to the rest of the rate-paying community. Farmers could do this in the rural

south-east because they were politically dominant in most country parishes, and hence able to impose their will.

Boyer also concludes that the use of out relief — especially child allowances which he says became widespread after 1795 — significantly increased birth rates during the first two decades of the 19th century. In this, he differs sharply from James Huzel, who has claimed that out relief did not increase population, but was associated with low birth rates. With respect to migration, Boyer does not believe that out relief retarded the movement of redundant able-bodied workers to urban centres.

According to Boyer, the New Poor Law of 1834 was imposed on reluctant labour-hiring farmers by a Parliament in which they did not have the dominant voice. The New Poor Law eliminated out relief to the able-bodied and reduced the ability of tenant farmers to control local administration of the system. In the face of these changes, Boyer says labour-hiring farmers had two options in trying to minimize their labour costs. In parishes where they retained political control, the provisions of the new act could be evaded. Where this was impossible, farmers had to offer year-round employment to their laborers in order to retain an adequate workforce during peak seasons. This did not mean, however, that wages for agricultural labourers changed. Rather, Boyer maintains that they remained more or less unchanged (unlike K.D.M. Snell who thinks they fell). Boyer believes this because he says labour was very mobile at this time.

Finally, Boyer looks at out relief practices in northern industrial towns. He concludes that textile manufacturers — like southern grain farmers — used out relief as unemployment insurance. Workers not needed in downturns were put on short-hours or laid off, and the difference in earnings was made up by out relief.

Boyer puts forward some very interesting ideas in this book, especially with respect to labour-hiring farmers. Indeed,

the book is written largely from the point of view of the farmers, and seeks to portray the problem which they faced: how to maximize profits while retaining an adequate workforce. Nevertheless, the argument is not always clear. Boyer insists repeatedly that the main purpose of out relief was unemployment insurance. He also maintains, however, that after 1795 child allowances became very widespread, and that most labourers at some point in their lives received this form of assistance. As he himself says, these allowances were determined by family size, and were given to employed and unemployed alike. Thus, one is left wondering why farmers who were concerned to minimize costs, and who were politically dominant in their parishes, would have supported this kind of assistance when it acted to increase significantly the number of children (for whom there was little work). As a possible justification, Boyer estimates that farmers were able to lower annual wages by almost a pound per labourer where this form of assistance existed. The cost to the parish for each child who qualified for this assistance, however, was usually 31. 18s. a year. Since Boyer estimates that labour-hiring farmers paid on average between three-quarters and four-fifths of the poor rate, it is difficult to see how this policy minimized costs — especially where more than one child in a family qualified. In any case, the very persistence of child allowances would seem to undercut claims that the main function of out relief was unemployment insurance.

It may well be, then, that maximizing profits was not the only motivation in the dispensation of out relief. That the economic role of the poor law merits examination, goes without saying. That changes in the poor law can be understood wholly in terms of its role in the economy does not.

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Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, ed., *New Times, The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s* (London: Verso 1990).

AT A LONDON CONFERENCE entitled "New Times, New Thinking" in the autumn of 1989, *Marxism Today* publicly launched the "New Times" project of socialist renewal. At one of the seminars a story was recounted of single working mother from Sauchiehall street in the heart of the old industrial city of Glasgow, who was asked what she thought of the "New Times." "New times," she answered skeptically, "All I've known is hard times." This was one worker's perception of the changes being wrought in late 20th-century society as capitalism seeks to restructure industry and national states attempt to recast their relationships with civil society to survive in the increasingly competitive atmosphere of world capitalism. But is this a deep-seated transformation requiring a fundamental theoretical and strategic reorientation?

For a decade now, *Marxism Today* (MT), the theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), has been the cutting edge of the Marxist revisionist account of these changes. As Communism is in terminal decline the world over, including the CPGB's brand of Eurocommunism, MT enjoys popularity over a broad spectrum of political opinion. Indeed, it often features interviews with Conservative MPs and its pages are regularly adorned by pieces written by *Financial Times* writers; it even finds itself lining up with the right wing of the Labour Party against those dinosaurs such as Tony Benn who see the working class as central to socialist politics.

After popularizing the concept of "Thatcherism" in the early 1980s, MT set itself the ambitious task of redefining the whole period. The result is the *New Times*, a compilation of 30 short essays by a diverse range of broad left-of-centre political commentators and several excerpts from the CPGB's *Manifesto for New*

*Times*. Most of the articles appeared in *MT* from October 1988 to September 1989. The book includes sections on the general shape of the period, the new politics of identity, globalization, the changing political culture and, in a thoughtful gesture, the response of two critics.

According to New Times' theorists, the world is "increasingly characterized by diversity, differentiation and fragmentation rather than homogeneity, standardization and the economies and organizations of scale which characterized modern mass society." (11) Unlike the Fordist regime of the past where wider social forces including the labour movement and the Labour Party were reflections of the mass production industries, the new post-Fordist times of flexible production systems and the rise of computer-based informational industries and the service sector have produced "new social divisions, new forms of inequality and disempowerment which overlay the old ones." (17)

Central to the post-Fordist argument is the notion that the working class is no longer the principal protagonist of socialist struggle. In the context of the profoundly changing material conditions, a plurality of new social movements and an individualistic consumer culture are social forces which have thrust their way on to the agenda of left politics. The traditional, "male" labour movement based in large industries has become estranged from the emerging "personal politics" of post-modernity (Feminism, the Green movement, consumer groups) and is too narrowly associated with the Left, when such Left-Right distinctions are no longer valid. (450-1) Echoing the 1979 election slogans of Thatcher, the *Manifesto* believes the unions became "increasingly distrusted in the 1970s as unrepresentative, sectional interests, acting for their members against the interests of society as a whole." (366) To mesh with the new consumer age progressives, Frank Mort argues, should come to terms with "the twin issues of consumerism and the

market [which] lie at the heart of the debate over our vision of the future of socialism." (160) This is heady stuff coming from a socialist: consumers replace workers, individualism supplants collective emancipation.

Today, Beatrix Campbell adds, unions are becoming increasingly irrelevant. Since "work is no longer the crucible of class consciousness" (284) the political culture emanating from the shop floor, the shop stewards meeting, the union hall and the picket line is anachronistic. A cursory examination of a few cities with a declining or weak labour movement leads her to believe that the labour movement is on its last legs. In Swindon, militant "self-help groups are replacing the traditional labour movement's social role in the communities; in Basingstoke, vast company welfare schemes preclude a unionized fight for wages, bonuses, and health and safety. (294, 296-7)

As a result of the changing material conditions and the emergence of new social divisions, a supposedly novel approach to left politics is advocated. Interestingly, the political conclusions drawn from the "New Times" are in fact not that new. The bold proclamations of the post-Fordist analysis give way to a decidedly orthodox program of change. In fact, it becomes a solution of Eurocommunism going back to the 1930s. Although the unions and the Labour Party along with the new social movements are considered important components of any progressive change, all constituent elements are to keep their strict autonomy and in order to defeat Thatcherism it is imperative that the Labour Party must form an alliance with the other opposition parties. It is not clear what the role of the Communist Party is in this broad Labour Church.

The main problem with the "New Times" analysis is that it is far from clear that the restructuring taking place under capitalism represents such a decisive break with the past. Numerous commentators have pointed out that an identifica-



tion of a paradigm of post-Fordism is not empirically sustainable. Mass production and mass markets in world capitalism are thriving. There are now proportionately more manufacturing workers in the world than ever before. Even in the advanced capitalist countries where post-Fordism is said to be near ascendant, extensive research has shown that changes in work organization, new technologies and flexible production systems are results of a shift in the balance of class forces and a renewed state offensive against workers' rights. There is no determinate relationship between the technological changes of advanced capitalism and supposedly new forms of social relations.

As the critical contribution by Michael Rustin emphasizes, technological changes should not be seen in isolation from "strategies of capital" and "the resistance presented to its activities." (308) Post-Fordism, flexible specialization and other new forms of manufacturing are strategies of the capitalist class to revive or establish industries susceptible to the vagaries of the world market. But they still co-exist with older forms of mass production. Thus, the modern "industrial districts" of Emilia-Romagna in Italy and Baden-Württemberg in Germany complement the traditional, low-wage, often female, ghettos of the Maquiladora in Mexico, Sao Paulo in Brazil and the garment district in Toronto. The cause célèbre of flexible specialization theorists, Benetton, is international in more ways than one. Besides being a loose supra-national conglomerate of flexible franchising systems, the production side of the business relies on sweated labour from South Asia. Moreover, many of the firms touted as the glaring success stories of the computerised, flexibly specialized 1980s — in Britain, for example, the clothiers Burton, Next and Richard Shops — are now facing financial difficulties.

By characterizing the history of 20th-century capitalism to the 1970s (productive forces and social relations) as quin-

tesentially Fordist is also misleading. There have always been non-manufacturing workers such as transport and building workers essential to capitalist industry whose work was not organized along Fordist lines. And company welfare schemes are not peculiar to the 1980s; they have always been an available strategy of employers and the state to thwart unionization and the politicization of labour. To read off Fordist social relations in the whole social formation from the organization of the auto industry is too simplistic. Like the post-Fordist, post-industrial, post-X,Y,Z theories such an analysis mistakes superficial appearances for deep fundamental change.

"Post-Fordism" as a form of production and a type of society seems more a dream of former socialist intellectuals to resolve the contradictions of capitalism. "Rather than trying to resolve inherent conflicts of interest," as Geoff Mulgan puts it, the future socialist state "would instead try to create a new balance between them." (387) There is more than a whiff of utopian socialism in this formulation. One wonders what all this has to do with Marxism.

Writing off the working class as the agent of socialist change has proven to be extremely dangerous, especially in the face of the concerted class conscious assault of the Thatcher years. A denial of the centrality of the working class in creating socialism led *MT* in 1984-85 to argue against mass pickets by the miners and to try and win "public opinion." It is becoming increasingly clear that the success of Thatcher was in many ways less a result of her authoritarian populist hegemony than the acquiescence of those in opposition to her. Hence, it is not coincidental that Marxist revisionism has proceeded hand-in-hand with the rightward drift of many socialist academics and the social democratic parties.

The Britain of 1991, without Thatcher, without the poll tax, with a deteriorating economy, the "home-owning democracy" collapsing under the

weight of bank foreclosures, widespread discontent ready to erupt around the crumbling health and welfare system and the apparent electability of a Labour government seems a far cry from the politics of the 1990s which this book claims to theorize.

Sean Purdy  
Queen's University

Steven A. Epstein, *Wage Labor & Guilds in Medieval Europe* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press 1991).

STEVEN A. EPSTEIN HAS WRITTEN a very ambitious book. It is ambitious in several ways. The most evident is its temporal and geographical scope: the work covers most of western Europe in the millennium from the Roman empire to the transformations caused by the Black Death, and even includes a brief excursus on Byzantine and Muslim guilds. Both of its chosen themes — medieval labour and guild history — have problematic historiographical traditions that make synthesis difficult; the author wisely chose to incorporate substantial primary research in his quest for synthesis. Finally, it tackles these themes using a "total history" approach that utilizes methodologies current in political, religious and cultural history as well as in social and economic history.

The work consists of five chapters, divided chronologically. The first chapter covers the period to AD 1000. Opposing those who see antecedents of the medieval guild in the Roman world, Epstein argues that Roman institutions and economic developments are best seen as alternate models rather than as direct forerunners. Some wage labour was known, but it was inconsequential in the face of slave labour as a means of production, and in any event it did not survive the barbarian invasions. Likewise the collegium, often viewed as ancestral to the

guild, did group employers with common occupations and economic interests into a common institution, but the motive for such grouping was related more to the political needs of the state than to the economic interests of the organization's members. For Epstein a more substantial continuity was the emphasis Roman law placed on contract. Precisely because the idea of contract was fundamental to the development of wage labour in medieval Europe, Rome provides an engaging foil: so much seems the same yet so much more is different.

Chapter two deals with the 12th-century origin of guilds. The author defines the guild as an association of employers asserting exclusive rights over the production and distribution of commodities. Banding together allowed the members of the guild to enforce the sought-after monopolistic privileges while at the same time offering a means of appropriating power by collective action from feudal and urban authorities. Coalescing with this movement was the rapid development of the idea that labour was a rentable commodity, and that individuals had the right to contract for its disposition. Apprenticeship, created by the guildmasters, fosters a *quid pro quo* mentality of payment for work, even if payment often took the form of food and shelter.

In the following chapter Epstein treats the internal organization of the guilds. Claiming to deal directly with the "re-invention" (Epstein's own term) of wage labour, the chapter is in fact a hodge-podge of material, divided into sections on the special organization of the guild merchant, apprenticeship, wage rates, and the relative status of the various guilds. It is difficult to find a unifying theme to the chapter. The subsections are interesting in and of themselves, but do not provide the clear formulation of the rise of wage labour that the book claims to offer. (191)

How guilds and labour were seen by other members of society is the subject of

chapter four. The church was interested in guilds both because of its own influence on social relations and because the guilds commonly performed religious as well as economic functions. In a stimulating discussion of several influential church thinkers, Epstein points out that contemporary understanding of the situation of guildmasters and wage labourers was surprisingly underdeveloped. Political authorities, the other external body considered, had to deal with these groups in a much more concrete manner. The success of the guilds in asserting political power varied greatly depending on local circumstances. Overall, guild political influence was probably more apparent in the corporate ideology with which it was bound up than in practical affairs.

The final chapter traces the history of labour and guilds through the vicissitudes of the 14th-century economy. Economic difficulties in the early 14th century found expression in stricter guild entrance requirements and in a decline in the standard of living of most wage labourers. The plague had a dramatic effect on both these factors, and the change wrought by rapid depopulation provides insights into the social and political standing of guild-masters and wage labourers. Epstein relates these changes to attitudes to technological change, arguing that guildmasters were the motors rather than the brakes on such change, and to the various expressions of social protest that characterize the later 14th century.

On balance, one must conclude that Epstein's reach exceeds his grasp. Several sections of the book are excellent — notably the descriptions of apprenticeship and ideologies of work — and the entire text makes exemplary use of comparative history. The book fails, however, to make its central point, that one should turn to the guilds to discover the origins of wage labour. All that Epstein really demonstrates is that the two phenomena became prominent at roughly the same time, during the 12th-century commercial revolution with which the pair are in-

timately associated. This is not a novel finding. There are obvious causal relations between these phenomena, but to bind wage labour to guilds as strictly as Epstein advocates requires both more evidence and a more closely-reasoned approach than one finds in the book. Considerably more attention, for example, should be given to agrarian history: Epstein concedes at one point that "the first wages may actually have been paid in the countryside" (258), but pays this crucial fact no other attention. *Wage Labor and Guilds in Medieval Europe* is, in reality, two books, one on labour and one on guilds. As befits the historiography of the two subjects, the book on guilds is more successful than the book on wage labour. Both parts are interesting and well-researched, and both should be quarried in future research, but the book as a whole is less than the sum of its parts.

James Masschaele  
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David Kaiser, *Politics and War: European Conflict from Philip II to Hitler* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1990).

WAR IS A FUNCTION of politics; and, not surprisingly, the rationale of war has changed as politics has changed. As David Kaiser puts it in the introduction to his wide-ranging study, "the sources and consequences of European international conflict differ radically from one era to another" and "can be understood only in the context of contemporary European domestic and international politics." He identifies four distinct periods in European history — 1559-1659, 1661-1713, 1792-1815, and 1914-1945 — in each of which "general war reflects a distinct stage in the political development of modern Europe — a stage in which states fought wars for particular ends, with specific means, and with particular consequences." Most of his book is devoted to

an explication of the distinctiveness of each of these stages. (1-2)

The first phase, between 1559 and 1659, was characterized by conflicts within the aristocracy and between powerful aristocrats and the monarch. The crown was often insecure and its authority contested; mighty subjects fought amongst themselves, resisted the royal will, and sometimes rebelled and brought a ruler down, or at least purged some realm of that ruler's presence. Centralized authority was generally fragile, state machinery weak, and political violence commonplace. Monarchs laid claims to power but great aristocrats challenged this power, repeatedly and bloodily. European social orders were arranged especially to serve these aristocratic interests and war was not only the sport of kings, but also the sport of nobles, geared to their ambitions and made more violent by the 16th century rupture of Christendom. This was a period when making war was partly a matter of private enterprise; war was designed in part to yield personal fortunes, though in practice it often yielded mutiny, desertion, chaos, and financial exhaustion. David Kaiser's interpretation of this century puts little stress on the balance of power, the pursuit of state hegemony, or other such themes of modern international politics. Given the limited reach and efficacy of these monarchies, whose actual sovereignty he downplays, "even the fundamental distinction between internal and international conflict only occasionally applies to the wars of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries." (135)

It was only from the later 17th century that effectively integrated states imposed themselves on many European societies. State power was consolidated and civil wars mostly disappeared; unruly nobles were brought to heel and their class as a whole was disciplined and domesticated; and as the financial resources and domestic clout of monarchs enlarged (this was made manifest in the theatricality of their elaborate courts), so too did their control

of international politics, as expressed through standing armies (France) or great navies (Britain). Beyond Europe wars were fought largely for trade and booty; within Europe they were fought more for prestige and glory. The damages from war were much reduced. The conduct of war ceased to be more or less all-devouring, as it had been during the wars of religion and the Thirty Years War.

Warfare came to be fuelled by larger goals and (to some degree) abstract principles during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, the third stage in Kaiser's account. Traditional political boundaries were erased; feudal vestiges were eliminated; and ambitious parvenus strove for more and more power, of whom Bonaparte was the most celebrated and the most insatiable. With the revolution in France, military careers were more open to talent, or at least to talented adventurers. The almost continual armed conflict during this generation further strengthened the institutions of the central state, not least in plutocratic-oligarchical Britain. "Armed with the ideas of the enlightenment as well as larger armies, European states continued their expansion and their attempts to impose a more uniform, regular authority over their subjects and territories." (264) Kaiser dismisses the importance of nationalism in the struggles of these years, a judgement that would surely be challenged by many historians, including those of both France and Britain.

After the long peace of 1815-1914 (mostly peace for Europe, though not for Africa and parts of Asia), came the enormously destructive wars of our own century, fuelled by popular nationalism (often linked to racism) and economic imperialism. "Man's belief in his ability to reshape his destiny is probably the single most enduring legacy of the eighteenth century," thinks Kaiser, and "the key to an understanding of the two world wars." (267) The ambitions and manoeuvrings of European political elites now had to be broadly compatible

with the yearnings and dispositions of the masses, many of whom were to varying degrees enfranchised. Public opinion had to be managed. Consent or at least acquiescence had to be sought. Promises were made and expectations created, and failure to deliver could be politically costly, as several states learned in 1917-1919. One of the essential beliefs of modern politics is "that governments fight wars on behalf of the whole people, and that the people share an enormous stake in the outcome. But this belief has also made wars extremely difficult to stop, and has in the long run posed insoluble problems for the governments that fight them." (280) War was eventually made in pursuit of unconditional surrender of the enemy; total victory was sought by means of ever more lethal weaponry. The belief in war as a means to a better peace, as a tool of policy, was almost universal in 1914; and it flourished later on the fascist right and (at times) on the stalinist left. Other observers drew different and bleak lessons from the graveyards of Verdun, Leningrad, Dresden, and Hiroshima.

Twentieth-century warfare in Europe has usually weakened the established order, with much more far-reaching consequences than in previous wars. Empires collapsed; indebtedness expanded vastly; trade and commerce unravelled. Germany in 1917 had lost badly enough to feel resentful but not badly enough to feel humbled; and in the 1930s a brutally revitalized and resolutely imperialist Nazi Germany willed a second world war. Hitler's aims were revolutionary and he came close to realizing them. His attempt and failure left Europe in ruins and at the mercy of its American and Soviet liberators. For David Kaiser war has been the great catalyst of modern history. War, he asserts, "rather than the consequences of industrialization, has proven to be the supreme test of modern political systems and the source of almost every major modern European revolution." (411) Nationalist and class-based movements,

he argues, have been less important to the making of modern revolutions.

He is far from celebrating war. Indeed, he stresses its tragic and sterile consequences and the crude passions and irrationality that have driven people into combat. Moreover, war has often not enabled governments to secure their political goals, and its social costs have frequently been severe or even catastrophic, especially before 1660 and after 1900. Kaiser concludes with an apt criticism. "Overall, historical treatments of European war have suffered from an excessive idealization of the state, an overestimation of its powers, and a penchant for exaggerating the wisdom of its acts. This tendency takes the specific form of presuming that every great war involves great stakes ... and that historical outcomes have been in some sense useful and preferable to other possible outcomes." (418) As the 1991 Gulf War demonstrated, such intellectual deference to the military state remains alive and well. *Politics and War* is concerned to reveal the sources, efficacy, and outcomes of political violence. And in doing so, lucidly and informatively, it has a lot to say about the pretensions and ambiguous powers of the sovereign state itself.

Robert Malcolmson  
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William Lazonick, *Competitive Advantage on the Shop Floor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1990).

THIS STUDY is a proving and thought provoking comparative history of industrial relations systems in Great Britain, the United States, and Japan. William Lazonick has covered an enormous amount of geographical and chronological territory in his effort to uncover the reasons why world industrial leadership has passed from Europe to America to Asia over the past two centuries. Along

the way, Lazonick also makes a number of insightful observations about the relationship between history and economics in explaining the past and understanding the present industrial relations systems of the world's most advanced economies.

Lazonick begins his book with an introduction and two chapters devoted to exploring how Marx and Marxian economics both misunderstood the specific ramifications of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain, and yet fashioned a mode of economic and historical analysis which remains far more useful than most classical economic models for explaining the complex interaction of technological change and social power in the industrializing workplace. Lazonick particularly applauds the Marxian efforts to place historical analysis at the centre of their economic theories. He argues that "compared with the deductive and static methodologies currently in vogue among Western economists, historical analysis can provide much more powerful economic theory because it derives its fundamental propositions from the historical records and because it can comprehend the process of change — a process that continually renders static equilibrium theory irrelevant for analyzing real-world phenomena." (10-1). Thus, Lazonick calls forcefully for the return of history back into the work of economic historians.

True to his word, Lazonick devotes the remainder of his book's first part to a meticulous historical reconstruction of industrial relations in the 19th-century British cotton spinning industry. Lazonick is clearly in command of his sources and analysis in these chapters. He develops a rich and highly nuanced portrait of this industry, and carefully uncovers many reasons why British textile managers yielded so much control over the shop floor to their employees — the skilled mule spinners in particular. Lazonick goes far beyond any simple explanations of an all powerful union run-

ning roughshod over management, although the tenacity and solidarity of the spinners' unions was certainly one key factor in shaping labour-management relations. Using a combination of archival records and innovative economic models, Lazonick also demonstrates that other reasons, such as the fragmented nature of the industry and the hierarchical division of labour often enforced by the workers themselves, all contributed to a shop floor environment where managers saw real advantages (at least in the short term) to letting skilled workers essentially run the factories to get the most out of the cheap cotton being spun.

In the second part of his book, Lazonick begins with the British industrial system — organizationally fragmented and technologically outmoded — being surpassed by the mechanical and managerial innovations of the American mass production industries. He concludes with contemporary American firms — themselves trapped in an industrial system based on turn-of-the-century tactics of deskilling and scientific management, post-war job classification systems, and collective bargaining arrangements with large, bureaucratic industrial unions — being outmaneuvered and outproduced by Japanese manufacturers. The Japanese have a more skilled and flexible workforce embedded in an industrial relations system emphasizing the mutual commitments of employees and employers towards each other and the company. Though how much cooperation there is in Japanese industry, and how much power workers actually exercise over the direction of the corporations, is the subject of much more debate than Lazonick acknowledges in his final chapters.

Part two of Lazonick's book thus gives us a more synthetic treatment of comparative economic history — based mostly on secondary sources — and its lessons for contemporary forecasters and planners. But this part lacks many of the original historical findings and insights of

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the first section, which had a more narrow focus on the cotton spinning industry as a case study for the 19th-century British economy. The concluding chapters offer little that is new to scholars in the fields of American or Japanese history, as opposed to Lazonick's earlier chapters which seem to be a real contribution to the scholarly literature.

The one exception may be chapter eight, where Lazonick proposes an intriguing explanation for the decline in labour turnover in the United States during the 1920s. Lazonick disagrees with Sanford Jacoby's hypothesis "that an excess supply of labor available to manufacturers ... made workers reluctant to quit their jobs in search of alternative employment." Lazonick argues for the need to look behind Jacoby's theory of an excess supply of labour, and to see that the "pull" of internal employment practices helped to create that labour surplus "by providing blue-collar operatives with stable and remunerative jobs." Such "effective personnel management increased the incentive of workers to remain attached to firms ... dramatically reduced labor mobility and created discipline on the shop floor." (252) In challenging Jacoby's explanation, Lazonick argues for the real influence of "dominant industrial firms" on both the American economy and on the dissemination of "progressive employment policies in the 1920s." (265) Yet even this chapter — the most original in part two — often reads more like an extended private scholarly argument with Jacoby, rather than a key component of the book's presentation as a whole. (On pages 90-4, Lazonick engages in another seemingly personal debate with Mary Freifeld about the exclusion of women from the mule spinning trade. This argument quickly bypasses any broader discussion of gender and the transformation of work, and devolves into a highly technical discourse on various components of the self-acting mule.)

Lazonick's tendency to get carried away with arguments against individual

scholars, debates which might be better placed in extended footnotes or left to the letters sections of journals, is indicative of the central weakness of the book. Although this study is chock full of very insightful analyses of Marxian economics, the British textile industry, and overall patterns of change in 20th-century industrial relations from an international comparative perspective, it often reads more like a collection of essays (which many chapters started out as) than a coherent scholarly monograph. The reader is often jarred and disconcerted by the disjunctions between the theoretical discussions, the detailed history, and the broad portraits of industrial relations systems. There is not always a clear sense of how all these individual chapter-articles come together to make a single historical study.

Lazonick makes a good effort in the final chapter to bring back a historical and comparative perspective to his discussion of shop floor relations. And he makes a strong case for using historical analysis as an educational tool to teach policymakers about the importance of cooperative industrial relations for maximizing the productivity of technological innovations. His definition of what comprises a cooperative industrial relations systems, however, may not strike everyone as being all that cooperative.) But his arguments for Marxian economics, historical analysis, and cooperative industrial relations all would have been strengthened had he made the connections between each strand of his overall project more explicit and logically developed.

Despite these structural flaws, *Competitive Advantage on the Shop Floor* remains a sophisticated and insightful book which reaffirms that importance of history to the study of economic change. It reestablishes the need to apply the long-range perspective which economic history affords us in order to gain a real understanding of the present situation and

future opportunities — particularly for workers — on the shop floor.

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D.H. Whittaker, *Managing Innovation: A Study of British and Japanese Factories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990).

THIS BOOK ADDRESSES two issues of current interest to industrial sociologists: Japanese employment relations, and the effects of innovation on skills. Whittaker reports research on employment relations and innovation in matched samples of British and Japanese factories using numerically controlled machine tools. The factories varied in size from less than ten employees to almost two thousand.

His research is organized around Dore's concepts of 'organization-oriented' and 'market-oriented' employment relations. The former, common in Japan, involve lifetime employment, pay and promotion tied to seniority, and enterprise unionism. The latter, common in Britain, involve hiring for specific jobs, pay sensitive to the balance of supply and demand for the particular skills involved, and occupation-based unions. Whittaker hypothesizes that the introduction of numerically controlled machined tools is less likely to deskill by narrowing tasks and reducing training where employment relations are 'organization-oriented' than where they are 'market-oriented.' The most important reason for this is that, in 'organization-oriented' factories, workers' security of employment and seniority-based pay reduces the managerial incentive to deskill a particular job.

Before testing the hypothesis directly, Whittaker examines where his 18 factories can be assigned with respect to the two types of employment relations and, in particular, whether the Japanese and British factories cluster at opposite ends of the 'organization/market-oriented'

continuum. It turns out that most of the Japanese factories have more 'organization-oriented' employment relations than their British counterparts, although the pattern is not as clear as the stereotype would suggest. First, the two smallest Japanese factories were clearly 'market-oriented.' Second, the average length of employment was about the same in both countries. Third, in the British firms blue collar workers were more likely to be promoted and managers to have a blue collar background. Fourth, blue collar inter-department mobility was as likely in the British as in the Japanese factory.

However, controlling for size, blue collar pay was less a function of seniority in the British plants. Unions in Japan were enterprise rather than occupation based. And, except for apprentices, blue collar recruitment in the Japanese factories was more systematic and involved a heavier component of orientation meetings designed to socialize the new recruits. Indeed, one of the major differences between the British and Japanese factories was that even where there was little difference in actual employment relations (length of employment) or the British plants were more 'organization-oriented' (promotion, inter-departmental mobility), the larger Japanese factories tended to identify these traits as part of the norms of company policy, whereas the British ones did not. So even if, for example, Japanese managers rarely moved workers between departments they still claimed job rotation as a policy. In contrast, a British manager who often did move workers said "We don't have planned rotation. We don't like window dressing terminology. We move workers where conditions demand it, and we tell them so." (62)

Either in practices or norms, then, the larger Japanese factories were more 'organization-oriented' than their British counterparts. What were the effects of this on the introduction and use of numerically controlled machine tools? Whittaker found no association between



score on the organization-market-orientation scale and training. In fact the British factories did more training than the Japanese ones. Nor was there any association with task range, although the task ranges were generally a bit wider in the Japanese factories. (Remember that organization-/market orientation scores were assigned to factories and were not perfectly correlated with nationality.) In fact the best predictor of both training (positively) and task range (negatively) was size. Whittaker's research hypothesis was not supported.

However he reports a number of interesting things about the implications of numerical control for skill levels in the two countries. In the British factories there was a preference, apparently becoming more pronounced over time, for using skilled workers trained on conventional equipment to operate numerically controlled machines. The familiarity with the machining process of these workers, it was thought, allowed them to identify problems as they started to develop. These workers were not closely supervised and tended to stay with their machines while they were operating. In the Japanese factories there was somewhat less emphasis on craft skills. More workers trained for the machines by reading manuals and textbooks. They were closely supervised, but often left the machines to operate on their own. This made the operation of multiple machines by a single operator feasible and more common in the Japanese factories.

In neither country could these changes be described as deskilling. In the British factories numerical control changed the way traditional skills were used (from setup and operation to use of experience to monitor the machining process), and added some new ones (a certain amount of, often informal, programming). In Japan operators had to be literate and numerate enough to understand manuals and, more often and extensively than in the British cases, to program. Whittaker relates these national

patterns to differences in the kind of labour available in the two countries. In Japan the apprenticeship system largely disappeared after World War II so the kind of skilled machinists sought by British employers were simply not available. But educational levels, particularly at the lower end of the ability distribution, are higher in Japan. So it was more feasible for Japanese employers to hire workers without machining experience and assume that the workers could be taught, or use manuals to teach themselves how to use the new equipment. In both countries, then, numerically controlled machine tools did not reduce the need to find workers with the kinds of abilities that would command a wage premium.

Early in the book Whittaker speculates that 'organization-orientation' may be more likely where the influence of private ownership is restricted. The idea seems to be that it is easier to build a community of interest between employers and managers where the short-term interests of shareholders can be partially disregarded. (43) But he has no data that would allow him to test this. The value of this book is not in grand interpretations of this sort. It is, however, an excellent source of data on Japanese factories and on deskilling, all the more valuable because it goes well beyond the standard stereotypes so prominent in the literature on each subject.

Michael R. Smith  
McGill University

Susan N. Houseman, *Industrial Restructuring with Job Security: The Case of European Steel* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1991).

BETWEEN 1974 AND 1986 the output and capacity (both in tons) of the steel industry in European Community (EC) countries declined by some 30 per cent and its employment halved. The problems

created by this decline were accentuated by the fact that the steel mills were frequently the major employers in their communities and regions and their workers were rather immobile.

Using data at the plant and higher levels of aggregation, the author analyses this process of restructuring with particular emphasis on the job security provisions of the several countries involved (Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, and the UK) and, in the UK and France, changes in these provisions after 1980.

In general, in the continental countries workers enjoyed much stronger rights to their jobs than those in the UK. In consequence, work force reductions on the continent generally avoided mass layoffs and plant closures and relied instead on early retirements, voluntary job buyouts — especially for foreign "guest workers," reassignment of workers to other work (and other employers, including public works). Shorter work weeks and work years were also substituted for reductions in employment as they were not in Britain. Further, some continental workers accepted concessions on wages and other conditions of employment.

Once it was realized that the industry's problems were structural and not merely cyclical — initially firms continued to increase capacity to position themselves for the recovery — the EC so declared (1977) and implemented the Davignon Plan which controlled prices, production, and deliveries within the EC and imports into it. It also assisted capacity limitation and restructuring by permitting (normally prohibited) government subsidies to firms and workers. One consequence of these arrangements was to leave market shares of firms and countries virtually unchanged by the process.

The general results of the study show employment reductions to be negatively related to the strength of job security provisions, as one might expect. The contrast is particularly striking between con-

tinental countries and the UK. In part, this was offset by changes in working hours. But that was not the only result of job guarantees. Another was to prevent the reallocation of production to more efficient (newer and larger) plants and locations and to reduce the pace of technological change. Since there were major differences in the age, size, and transportation costs of raw materials and products between plants, firms, and countries, there were major gains in productivity and cost reductions to be achieved by such reallocation.

As the author points out, although job security thus resulted in losses in technical efficiency, it is not clear that there were necessarily losses in economic or social efficiency of wellbeing. When workers value their existing jobs and locations, as those in European steel apparently did, and not simply their incomes, giving them rights to their jobs and avoiding plant closures is not simply a transfer from firm to worker but preserves something of value. This gain may offset the loss of technical efficiency in whole or in part. Similar arguments have been made with respect to regional locations of production in this country, and, more recently, with respect to industrial restructuring and firm mobility more generally.

In European steel, Houseman reports, firms could not have afforded the solution obtained without government help. This is also the case with regional and some structural allocation in Canada. The problems that such help, in turn, gives rise to are beyond the scope of Dr. Houseman's book and of this review.

S.F. Kaliski  
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Charles Brown, James Hamilton, and James Medoff, *Employers Large and Small* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1990).

ONE OF THE MAJOR ideological features of the 1980s has been the return of the 'cult of small business.' In contrast to the 1960s when the 'techno-structure' of the large corporation was seen to be the backbone of market economies, the New Right has heaped praise on entrepreneurship and the freedom of all members of society to individually exploit the potential of the market. Not just is it claimed that small businesses are technologically and product innovative, they are alleged as well to be the source of employment growth. In one of the most widely cited if extremely dubious statistics, it is claimed that eight out of ten new jobs are created by small business. The implications drawn are simple: create the appropriate incentive structure, roll-back the state, and let the magic of the market decimate unemployment.

These sympathies for small business have not been confined to neo-liberals, however, and in various ways also have found a prominent place on the Left. Notably, the fashionable thesis of flexible specialization, associated in particular with Michael Piore's and Charles Sabel's *The Second Industrial Divide* (1984), has suggested that an ascendant craft production in small, technologically-sophisticated firms is the means to re-establish a vibrant manufacturing sector and to maintain 'good jobs.' A progressive political project to overturn the New Right resides in an attempt to generate regionally-based economies, modeled after the Emilian region of Italy or Route 128 of the 'Massachusetts Miracle,' where employment stability and good wages could be provided by re-building workers' skills and using flexible manufacturing systems to supply specialty goods to market niches. A surprising corollary to the themes of the New Right arises: large corporations, being wedded to dedicated

machines, Taylorism and mass production, are likely to continue along a vicious circle of de-industrialization, employment instability and concessionary bargaining.

The slight monograph by Brown, Hamilton, and Medoff, curtly titled *Employers Large and Small*, is a useful rejoinder to an array of these often superficial assertions on the role of small employers (at least in the US case). Their argument is straightforward: the 'entrepreneurial thesis,' that small firms provide superior employment opportunities, wages and working conditions, does not hold up to careful scrutiny. A series of empirical chapters, ranging widely from the composition of new job growth by firm size to wages and benefits to the political power of small firms, individually assess the claims of small firm efficacy. In the main, the results are predictable: large employers tend to provide better wages and more stable employment than small employers; when total firm size, and not just plant size, are accounted for and short-term jobs eliminated, the contribution of small employers to employment growth is modest compared to claims; working conditions in general tend to be superior in large employers; owners of small firms tend to enjoy income and asset levels well above the American average; and small businesses do possess extensive political resources by any variety of measures. Occasionally the data even reveals some startling insights. For example, the image of small business as a dynamic creator of new jobs and innovations leaves the impression that employment in business of smaller scale is disproportionately increasing. But American data shows, whether calculated for firms with fewer than 100 or 500 employees, that in fact the share of total employment in small business has declined since at least 1958 and the decline continued into the 1980s. The rebuff to conservative policy-making is direct: "There is no evidence that concentrating tax benefits or regulatory relief

on small business rather than concentrating it elsewhere will generate more new jobs." (28)

These are, in their way, useful if not terribly enlightening results. Many of the fragile myths of the 1980s — from the benefits of small firms for new jobs claimed by the New Right to the view that economies of scale are now of little importance argued by the adherents of flexible specialization on the Left — are efficiently de-bunked. It cannot be asserted with such ease that capitalism has somehow changed its stripes, and that smaller units are displacing the importance of economies of scale or historical trends of capital concentration. At least as far as employment data in the US is concerned there is no reason to believe capitalism is becoming more disorganized. As Brown, Hamilton, and Medoff observe: "The prevailing wisdom about large and small firms should be reexamined because in at least two instances, job creation and political power, it is wrong. Perhaps the most widespread misconception about small business in the United States is that they generate the vast majority of jobs and are therefore the key to economic growth.... Overall the economy is not becoming more dependent on smaller firms for employment." (1)

This is a particularly odd text to assess. Its clearly stated evidence sweeps aside much popular rhetoric to present a more adequate assessment of the differences between small firms and large corporations. It returns us, in a sense, to things we knew quite well in the 1970s before fashionable assertions about the wonders of small firms or the return of craft production pushed aside more empirically grounded discussions of changes in contemporary industrial and labour market structures. The small questions being addressed provide useful but equally small answers.

Yet, it is incumbent to conclude that a social science that is serious about analysing present employment conditions has little to gain from this contribution.

Indeed, by posing the issues at hand as it does, between the benefits of small as opposed to large employers, the book is fundamentally misleading. The kinds of attacks launched against workers in North America during the 1980s have been as much a feature of large corporations as of small firms. After all, the dramatic assault on PATCO, or the rollbacks of wages and benefits in the auto industry, or the bitter feuds in the coal fields, have not been led by local shopkeepers! Workers in large firms have been no more isolated from the insecurities and threats from industrial restructuring than workers in small businesses. Answers to fundamental questions about the evolving industrial and employment structures of modern capitalism will have to be found in a quite distinct theoretical position, and, ultimately, a radically different political project. This realization might even penetrate the sheltered confines on either side of the Charles River — the intellectual home of the authors and many of their protagonists — where this narrow debate over small and large employers might be best left.

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Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages: Natural Law, Politics and the Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press 1989).

THIS BOOK IS BOTH encyclopedic, like a *thèse d'état* and tightly argued, like a good English-language monograph. The combination does not make for easy readability. Sonenscher presents an enormous quantity of evidence that he has gathered over decades of painstaking research; but no fact is offered, no event or episode described, without allusion to appropriate dimensions of analysis (and usually there are four or five, rather than two or three, such dimensions at work);

often as not these allusions lead on to further evidence packed into dense footnotes. The scope of the work is truly national; there seems to be hardly a region or city that Sonenscher has not studied sufficiently to be intimate with the details of local trades, although he has concentrated on Paris, Rouen, and one or two other places. Sonenscher endeavors as well to provide a complete picture of the world of work, with innovative statistics on job-turnover rates and career patterns, detailed investigation of complex court cases, careful discussion of technical and economic conditions. The result is a book that will take some time for those in the field to digest, but that will inevitably change the field permanently and decisively.

The argument Sonenscher has built his panoramic presentation around is original and persuasive. His reading of the evidence leaves him impatient with both economic approaches and culturalist ones. The following comment is characteristic:

The dichotomies between morals and markets, or custom and competition that have informed a long historiographical tradition have, to be explicit, little relevance to a world in which transactions between masters and journeymen were both moral and commercial, customary and competitive, exploitative and co-operative, in ways that ensured that questions of domination and subordination were never settled, were always potentially contentious, and were only contingently related to the idiom of class. (256)

In Sonenscher's view, the 18th century French trades were dominated by neither a moral economy nor a market economy. Their structure is likened to that of a bazaar, a concept he derives from some of the lesser known works of Clifford Geertz. These bazaar economies were

an order in which relations between kin, neighbours, patrons and clients were the ground upon which the evanescent arrangements and fleeting transactions of small-scale entrepreneurs were based, for they provided

the two most important elements of the economy of the bazaar: information and workers. (27)

The bazaar was by no means the same thing as the corporate order, which was a legal fiction that only poorly described the social reality. This was already widely suspected from evidence like the rediscovered autobiography of Jacques-Louis Ménétra (*Journal de ma vie*, edited by Daniel Roche [Paris 1982]). But Sonenscher's evidence confirms the suspicion, and with his analysis he provides a new conceptual framework to replace at last the threadbare idea of the "decline of the guilds."

Sonenscher even challenges effectively the notion that corporate language had a hold on the public ideology of political struggle and litigation. Rather than being under the exclusive sway of notions of trade solidarity, of hierarchies of *qualité*, of subordination and custom (although these did exist), Sonenscher's artisans were cognizant of the tradition of natural right, regarded themselves as free individuals contracting as equals with employers. In certain trades of the larger towns, a core of sedentary journeymen did not hesitate to defend their natural liberties in prolonged court battles. Everywhere, workers were quick to denounce anything they regarded as smacking of "slavery," and to insist upon their rights as free individuals. This idiom was at least as prevalent and as influential as that of the privileged *communautés* or the ornate, secret *compagnonnage* brotherhoods.

The final chapter offers a wide-ranging rethinking of the origins of *sans-culotte* ideology. Sonenscher traces the genealogy of specific concepts — derived from boulevard theatre, English law, absolutist political theory, natural-right jurisprudence, religious imagery — that were melded into a single idiom "in a long process of political improvisation" (362) as clubs and politicians sought to appeal to the Paris artisan public. Here, too, Sonenscher is impatient with both Mar-

xist interpretations and revisionist attacks:

There is little reason, therefore, to assume any fundamental division between Parisian Jacobins and Parisian *sans-culottes*. There is equally little reason to characterize the rhetoric and imagery associated with the *sans-culottes* as particular to a restricted circle of wealthy employers, or indeed to any single section of Parisian society. The rhetoric of the year II was no more instrumental than any other political rhetoric. It was addressed to a public made up mainly of men and women associated with the trades. Some of them were very wealthy, others were not. (362)

Altogether a remarkable work that qualifies and rethinks everything that has been done heretofore in the field of 18th-century labour history. Sonenscher's contribution will be a central resource for research and discussion for many years into the future. It will offer many reasons to pause and reconsider, to protagonists on all sides of the "reality vs. discourse" or the "culture vs. class" controversies, no matter what country they work on.

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Chris Ward, *Russia's Cotton Workers And The New Economic Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990).

SUBTITLED SHOP-FLOOR culture and state policy 1921-1929, Chris Ward's book is conceived as a microcosm of the relationship between the cotton industry worker, state policy and technology during the first decade after the Russian Civil War. In the wake of the 10th Communist Party Congress (1921), the young Soviet government adopted the New Economic Policy (NEP) and shifted away from the command principles of War Communism towards reestablishing market ties between the Russian countryside and industry. The idea was to give the peasants an incentive to increase

farm production by satisfying their needs for consumer goods at an affordable price. For NEP to work, there had to be labour harmony and cooperation between agriculture and industry. The problem, however, was that the Bolshevik leaders were impatient with the consequent slow pace of industrialization. Within the cotton mills, as elsewhere, they were disposed to press for higher productivity norms. After experimenting unsuccessfully with alternative means to achieve their goals — such as capital investment from abroad and Taylorist innovations — they turned in desperation to labour intensification. Workers felt betrayed by this turnabout and responded with passive, and not so passive, resistance. This in turn convinced the authorities that more coercive measures were required.

Ward's focus is upon working day life on the shop floor of the Russian cotton mill under NEP. He provides background for the historical connection between the British experience with mechanization of the cotton industry a hundred years earlier and Russia's at the end of the 19th century. We learn that during the relatively brief 30 years or so of its development up to the 1920s, the Russian industry managed to establish a "mill culture" of its own which was quite resistant to state control mechanisms. Thus attempts during the years of NEP to rationalize production, cut costs, and mobilize and discipline the work force met with a variety of obstructions on the shop floor.

Looking in depth at "the diversity of workers' lives" in the cotton mills, Ward provides vivid illustrations of the many ways in which workers deflected and frustrated decrees of management which they found particularly distasteful. Their non-cooperation set important limits upon the power of the Soviet government to control the pace of industrial development. In addition, Moscow's plans were frustrated by a lack of standardization among the mills, local mores more appropriate for the village than the shop

floor, and the relative inexperience and immaturity of the industrial work force.

Ward's depiction of the Russian cotton mill departs from certain aspects of the more familiar Western models: he shows that the Russian experience was not a simple reflection of the equation between industrialization, urbanization and proletarianization; and he downgrades friction and conflict as necessary characteristics of relations between town and country. In addition, he has some interesting things to say about the impact of traditional rural culture upon the mentality of the cotton workers, even if his observations add little to what is already known from the works of T.H. Friedgut, R.E. Johnson, and H. Kuromiya.

According to Ward, by most standards the cotton industry was doing well during NEP, as new recruits flocked to the mills from surrounding villages. But the government's resort to a series of ad-hoc measures, including labour intensification, speed-ups, sudden unplanned increases in workloads, and *uplotnenie* — "tightening up the working day" — deeply alienated the workers. By September 1923, about half the textile labourers were on piece-work schedules, and that trend intensified. Many others were forced to live and work under a three shift schedule which completely upset the accustomed pattern of life in the factory barracks and made it extremely difficult to get adequate rest.

Workers' resistance took many spontaneous forms, but among the most typical were the spinners and weavers in Bogorodsk who deliberately slowed their work rate as a protest against pressures from above. By 1928-29 the Soviet government was facing serious opposition from within large segments of its traditional constituency, the industrial work force, as well as the threat of resurgent capitalism in the villages. This combination was enough to convince the party leadership to abandon NEP in favour of Stalin's brutal revolution from above,

with its coercive agricultural collectivization and massive industrialization.

Ward's narrative keeps to a basic chronological order and contains much useful information and detail. Its chief accomplishment is in providing the reader with a feel for the daily life of the worker in the Russian cotton mill. But Ward's analysis of how policies were designed and their place in the overall priorities of the young Soviet state is inadequate. In addition, the book is poorly written and disorganized. It is a struggle to get through its pages. Valuable observations are obscured by the author's overblown rhetoric and awkward syntax. The work is organized into thirteen chapters, a conclusion, an appendix (that is a glossary of all the trusts and mills covered by the research), a bibliography which lists extensive primary and secondary sources, and a index; there are also nine plates and eleven tables.

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Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter, *Choosing Sides: Unions and the Team Concept* (Boston: South End Press 1988).

IN THE ADVANCED ECONOMIES of the world, the scramble for better positions in the competition for global markets centres increasingly on innovations in labour-management relations at the level of the workplace. No manager can be unimpressed with the productivity advantages enjoyed by Japanese firms that use the "team concept." In this model of workplace organization, small groups of a dozen or so workers do their jobs together as a single production unit. Team members can do several jobs so that work can be easily re-allocated among the group in case of absenteeism, tardiness or speedup. The teams take on many of the functions of first-line supervisors and the workers are expected to make improvements in productivity by constantly cut-

ting out inefficiencies in their work practices.

The team concept is now found in almost every sector in Canada and the US, but it is most highly concentrated in auto assembly plants. This is the focus of Mike Parker's and Jane Slaughter's *Choosing Sides*. The authors present an extensive analysis of the team concept, the concept's origins, its role in Japanese industrial relations, and its implications for unions. They provide fourteen case studies analysing the operation of the team concept in auto assembly plants in the US and one case study of its operation in Mexico. Most significant is the case study of the General Motors-Toyota joint venture at the NUMMI (New United Motors Manufacturing Inc.) auto assembly plant in Fremont, California.

NUMMI's productivity and quality ratings are so high that it has massive advantages over all other North American auto plants. NUMMI attained these advantages in a plant which GM had formerly shut down due to low profits, and, as Parker and Slaughter point out, NUMMI has a "conservative approach to technology" instead of a high-technology approach to obtaining higher productivity. As well, NUMMI employs many of those who worked at the plant before it was shut down. A main source of the plant's high productivity and quality ratings appears to be its use of the team concept and related managerial innovations.

The lowest level of official management at NUMMI, the "group leader," is in charge of two to six teams, each of which has four to eight workers who work together with a "team leader." After consulting the teams, the group leader makes the final decisions about such issues as work methods and standards, the hiring of new workers, and the assessment of probationary employees. The authors argue that it is the team leader, however, who is "key to the functioning of the NUMMI system" since it is the team leader who straddles the union-management divide. The team leaders are union mem-

bers and front-line supervisors at the same time. Team leaders are often also union leaders. The authors maintain that the team leaders act as "an important vehicle for management to convince a key section of the workforce to adopt its goals and implement its programs."

Worker struggles which have taken place recently, after the publication of *Choosing Sides*, indicate that Parker and Slaughter were right to highlight the critical role of team leaders. There are several examples of workers struggling to take away the power of management to appoint team leaders. The demand at the Mazda plant in Michigan and at the GM-Suzuki (CAMI) plant in Ontario is for team leaders who are elected by the workers. This struggle has the potential to heighten the contradiction between the role of the team leader as supervisor and as worker.

The authors argue the NUMMI workers are conditioned by peer pressure to think like managers. Because managers do not provide regular replacements for absent workers, it is the responsibility of the team leader to fill in. As a result, the team leader has less time to help others, so peer pressure against absenteeism is thereby built into the team concept. Team meetings in the plant and athletic and social events outside the plant also reinforce this peer pressure. In addition, management instructs the group leaders and team leaders how to reinforce team cohesion through various "P.T." ("personal touch") techniques. Team members are expected to help each other deal with personal problems.

Parker and Slaughter dub the team concept "management by stress." Managers use speedups to find out which workers can take an increased workload and then "re-balance" jobs so that a high level of work intensity is spread more uniformly across the plant, eliminating the easier jobs. NUMMI also uses "just-in-time" production, another innovation borrowed from Japan. In essence, just-in-time refers to the coordination of each step in the production process so that



there is the least possible excess of labour and capital used. Materials are used and the jobs done just as they are needed. Since workers cannot "bank ahead" and cannot slow down without seriously disrupting production further down the line, they are pressured to make great efforts to attain ever tighter production schedules, irrespective of machinery breakdown and other obstacles. Management makes the assumption that "*kaizen*" (continuous improvement) — defined in management's terms — is always possible.

Contrary to the belief that team-based production provides an alternative to the breakdown of jobs into tiny, meaningless tasks through "scientific management," Parker and Slaughter argue that management-by-stress allows managers to "specify every move a worker makes in far greater detail than ever before." Jobs are not designed by the teams but by engineers, supervisors and team leaders, and it is managers who decide all the "processes, basic production layout, and technologies to be used."

While some worker resistance to management-by-stress exists at NUMMI, it has been ineffective and lacking in union support. The UAW is obligated through the collective agreement to "promote constant improvements in quality and productivity." Strikes are illegal for the duration of the collective agreement, and instead of a grievance procedure, the collective agreement provides for a "problem resolution procedure." A worker with a "problem" first approaches the team leader or the group leader. The next steps are to see the "union coordinator" and then the union's district committeeperson and NUMMI's "human resources representative" who share the same office. Thus far, managers have resolved most of the problems through compromises at early steps in the procedure, and workers blame most of their difficulties with management-by-stress on the groups leaders and union leaders (who are sometimes the same people).

The union is weak and divided at NUMMI. The authors argue that there is "no room in management-by-stress for a union which sees itself as representing the interests of workers and actively organizes its members to achieve their own interests." However, Parker and Slaughter believe that workers can take advantage of the promises of the team concept to forward a "humanized model" of work and they outline strategies for local unions to educate and mobilize their members through the teams. "Given the low level of attendance at most union meetings," they point out, "this is an opportunity for the majority of union members who aren't active to get together in an organized way." They also emphasize the need to build a shop-steward system based on the teams and they recommend the establishment of a "Code of Conduct Becoming to a Union Member."

The authors maintain that in some respects the team concept makes management control more vulnerable. For example, "just-in-time" could be made into a recipe for increasing workers' power through "quickie stoppages" or slowdowns. Since production is so interdependent and buffer stock are lacking under "just-in-time," a few workers have a great deal of disruptive potential. Unions have also been able to win gains using "insider strategies," that is, by remaining on the job after a contract expires and carrying out numerous acts of informal resistance.

One of the many strengths of this book is its examination of plants where workers have been trying to subvert the team concept for their own ends. Unionists will be particularly interested in the account of factional infighting over the team concept at GM's plant in Van Nuys, California. (For more information about this campaign, especially regarding the role of union alliances with community groups in blocking the shutdown of the plant, see Eric Mann's book *Taking on General Motors*, published by the Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Los Angeles.)

Another case study of worker resistance to the team concept focuses on a new Ford plant in Hermosillo, Mexico. Workers found out that their \$138.36 monthly pay was 40 per cent less than what Ford paid workers at two other plants in Mexico, but Ford was not responsive to the pay issue nor to job overload complaints. When they saw through the illusory promises management had made about harmony when introducing the team concept, the workers decided to turn the groups into a vehicle for union organizing. Each of the teams elected a union representative, and the workers insisted on direct membership control of collective bargaining. In response to Ford's defiance of a government order to raise its wages by 20 per cent as a cost-of-living adjustment, the workers went out on a 39-day strike and won a 54 per cent raise. Union members who are being told that militant unionism is incompatible with increasing global competition will find this case study of worker resistance in the Third World especially encouraging.

While this book is primarily about the impact of the team concept on labour in the US, it is relevant to Canada as well. The Canadian Auto Workers has recently signed a contract at the General Motors/Suzuki (CAMI) assembly plant in Ingersoll, Ontario — a plant run according to the team concept. There are three non-union auto plants in Ontario which also use the team concept. Should these plants attain anything approaching the productivity of the NUMMI plant, they will be a model not only for other General Motors plants in Canada but also for other auto producers and for management in other sectors.

*Choosing Sides* is written in a clear, informal style, with short chapters and a lot of funny graphics. It is a very fine educational tool. The Canadian Auto Workers are using *Choosing Sides* to educate members at several locals. This book can also be an important addition to university courses in labour studies, in-

dustrial relations and the sociology of labour. It is a major help in challenging the plethora of management-oriented articles and books which espouse the team concept as a "win-win" solution to problems of international competitiveness.

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Bryan D. Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1990).

IT IS SOMETHING of a historical puzzle why, what Eugene Jolas as long ago as 1929 called 'the revolution of language' (the preoccupation with language as an autonomous self-referential process so characteristic of 20th-century Western Culture), should have taken so long to penetrate the Anglo-American academy. Perhaps it is the belated reception of this cluster of ideas as recently as the 1970s and 1980s which helps explain why themes adumbrated by Nietzsche and by the great Modernists of the beginning of the century should be treated by Anglophone academics as novelties announcing a distinctly 'postmodern' condition.

Anyway, once the revolution of language hit the English-speaking world — mainly in the shape of 'poststructuralism,' the label attached to certain French writings since the 1960s (notably those of Foucault, Deleuze, and Derrida) — it did so in a big way. For one involved primarily in the philosophical and political arguments provoked by this body of work it comes as something of a surprise to discover how far poststructuralist assumptions have penetrated so robustly an empirical discipline as social history. But Bryan Palmer's book, itself a response to this development, leaves one in no doubt of its existence: subjects as old as the social history of the French Revolution,

as new as the exploration of women's history, have been infiltrated by what has come to be known as 'discourse theory.' For many historians, among them some of the ablest and most innovative, the study of the past is no longer the narration of events or the exploration of how social structures and human agency interact but the unravelling of the organizations of symbols which form the inescapable boundaries of experience and action.

Now Palmer is forthright in this opposition to this development: "Much writing that appears under the designer label of poststructuralism/post modernism is, quite bluntly, *crap*." (199) But his own standpoint is not that of a defensive empiricism but of a critical, anti-Stalinist Marxism: "historical materialism remains the foundation upon which studies of the past must be erected." (xiii) And, while following Goethe and Trotsky in the belief that in the beginning was the deed, not the work, Palmer is ready to acknowledge that discourse theory "contains insights and guides capable of opening new doors of understanding to historians committed to a materialism that recognizes the need for a rigorous reading of documents and texts/texts." (189) In line with this general stance, he provides a critical survey of 'the reification of language' which begins with the Russian Formalists, explores the philosophical development culminating in Foucault and Derrida, and traces the vulgarization of their ideas by historians working in the fields of politics, gender, and class.

The results are admirable, a notable addition, focused on, but extending beyond, history, to such philosophical critiques of poststructuralism as Jürgen Habermas's *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* and Peter Dews' *Logics of Disintegration*. The relatively minor character of the disagreements I now wish to express should merely underline the extent of my sympathy with Palmer's overall arguments.

The first point is one of interpretation. Palmer is too willing to fall in line with

the dominant way in which poststructuralism has been received in the English-speaking world — as a sort of linguistic Kantianism, in which the limits of my discourse provide the limits of my world. While there is a fair measure of truth in such a reading of Derrida, it throws little light on the much more robustly Nietzschean strain of poststructuralism practiced by Foucault and Deleuze from the late 1960s onwards. Palmer calls *The Archaeology of Knowledge* "an unashamed statement of authorial immersion in language, conceived as primary and decisive." (25) In fact, it marks the beginning of Foucault's movement away from any treatment of language as autonomous. His preoccupation with the 'rarefaction' of discourses, the limits set on what utterances may actually be made, led Foucault to the analysis of the non-discursive practices on which they are articulated, and thence to the idea of 'power-knowledge,' the assemblage of institutions and utterances forming the domain of the social. By the mid-1970s he could declare that "the history that bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning." Foucault's kinship with Derrida lay in their common anti-realism, the denial that sentences are true or false in virtue of the state of the world, not in a shared "insistence on the structural determinations of language." (28)

Palmer is right, nevertheless, to see an anti-humanism according to which subjects lack any inherent coherence or autonomy as also present in all strains of poststructuralism, and to want to reject this. At one point, however, he goes too far in the other direction. Challenging the reduction by Gareth Stedman Jones *et al.* of class as a discursive construct, Palmer writes: "class relations are, in origin, economic relations rooted in the capitalist process of accumulation, whereby one social stratum expropriates surplus from another." (138) The implication is that "class as an objective economic reality is

not present before the arrival of industrial capitalism." (139) Attached apparently in support of this last statement is a reference to G.E.M. de Ste Croix's great work *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* — surprisingly, since Ste Croix's purpose is to demonstrate that class as an objective relationship reflecting the extraction of surplus-labour is present in pre-capitalist societies characterized by an absence of overt class consciousness. Perhaps, like Edward Thompson before him, Palmer has reacted to the dissolution of agency into structure by underestimating the objective determinants of subjective action. The lapse is all the odder since he takes Thompson and Raymond Williams to task for abandoning the metaphor of base and superstructure. (209-11)

This treatment of class provides the key to Palmer's answer to the question with which this review began — namely, why this *fin-de-siècle* craze for post-structuralism among the English-speaking intelligentsia? "[C]lass," he argues, "takes on its most clear-cut objective presence in the epoch of classical industrial capitalism, stretching from the triumph of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-nineteenth century to the high-water mark of monopoly capitalism just prior to World War II." (138) By contrast, we live now in an epoch where "[t]he socio-economic formation of Western Capitalism reconstitutes itself in ways that seemingly destabilize the values and perspectives of Marxism and historical materialism and supposedly undercut and displace the mobilizations and politics of a 'progressive' past orchestrated by class as both an historical pressure and a pre-eminent category of analysis." (216-7) It is not clear whether Palmer thinks this 'retreat from class' is merely a temporary, conjunctural setback for the left, or represents a profound structural shift, in which case we Marxists are mere Canutes seeking to hold back the tide. But here we move beyond my minor quibbles with a fine book and rejoin the great debate on,

not the end of history, but the present as history.

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Gillian A. Walker, *Family Violence and the Women's Movement: The Conceptual Politics of Struggle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1990).

A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT of contemporary feminism has been to make the 'private,' 'personal' violence that women experience in the domestic, familial realm into a public, political issue. Gains include the establishment of battered women's shelters and shifts in social and legal policies. At the same time as in other movements questions are being raised about the way in which the aims of the grass roots feminists who organized around these experiences of social power, violence and dependence have not been realized in the ways in which professional and state agencies have taken up this issue. Gillian Walker asks a crucial question that also faces those of us involved in other progressive movements and in working-class organizing.

How is it that in the women's movement we seem to get what we want, we achieve some measure of success, we appear to have some impact, yet we find that the process that advances our cause also incorporates it into the very institutions against which we struggle? Control slips away and what we get turns out not be what we wanted after all. (206)

Walkers' *Family Violence and the Women's Movement* is a groundbreaking analysis of what has too often been glossed as 'cooptation' in left discourse. This has been understood as a lack of moral or political commitment and not analyzed as a social process. Asking how this works through a process of institutional regulation in which our own activities are implicated Walker's particular problematic is the transformation of feminist organizing against male violence

and gender inequality as it enters into the terrains of official discourse. She explores how this transformation was accomplished in the 1970s and 1980s in Canada by activists, professionals and state agencies, and how activist concerns have shifted and are transformed as they are increasingly articulated to bureaucratic ruling relations.

Furthering the insightful work of Patricia Morgan ("From Battered Wife to Program Client: The State's Shaping of Social Problems," *Kapitalistate*, 9 [1981], 17-39) and using the method developed by marxist-feminist Dorothy E. Smith, Walker elaborates an ethnographic analysis of the interactions between feminist organizing as it names the issue of women being battered in the home by the men they live with and the various state and professional agencies that feminists try to get to respond to this issue. Rather than viewing 'the state' as an entity or 'thing' she sees the state as a set of social relations with which social movements engage as part of our struggles.

Walker writes as an active participant in these struggles, developing an insider's knowledge of the social relations of feminist organizing as it engages with state and professional relations. She shows through her careful and detailed analysis how the original intent of feminists — locating the violence women face in the home in patriarchal social relations and as a grass roots political question — was depoliticized and diffused into an administrative issue of state and professional provision of services and legal practices. While important gains have been won the social relations which allow for male violence in the domestic, familial realm have not been fundamentally questioned or transformed.

Walker's analysis focuses on the social organization of knowledge and on the textually-mediated character of ruling in this society. She highlights how concepts operate in ruling relations not simply as descriptions that name a phenomenon but as ideological procedures (ideological in

the sense of being removed from actual social experiences and articulated to the relations of ruling) through which social practices and policies actively get organized. These concepts come to organize social relations regarding 'social problems.' Disputes over whether 'family violence' or 'male violence against women' are the best concepts are not simply semantic disagreements. They organize social relations in different ways and participate in defining what the 'social problem' is.

In order initially to be heard and taken seriously, feminists raised their concerns in ways attuned to already existing professional conceptualizations of 'family violence.' This conceptualization coordinates the work of social services in relation to 'problem' or 'dysfunctional' families operating to obscure from view the gendered and 'normal' character of this violence and inequality. Partly in response to these limitations, feminist activists and professionals articulated a different conceptualization defining the problem as male violence against women. They began to define the problem as wife assault. This identified the problem as one of 'assault' which articulated this approach with the criminal justice system. The problem then became not so much 'dysfunctional' families as it became the illegitimate use of violence by individual men against women in the home (as opposed to the 'legitimate' state violence of the police and military). While this conceptualization of the 'problem' had the advantage of being able to more clearly name the gender of the person committing the violence it dealt with the problem as one the existing criminal justice system should deal with, once again obscuring from view the broader social relations organizing these problems for women in patriarchal capitalist societies.

Walker points out that in some government investigations conceptualizations of 'family' and 'male' violence have been merged to provide ways for coordinating the responses of

social work and the criminal justice system. The link is provided through 'violence' as both a social work and a criminal problem. Through these social processes aspects of feminist critique have been lost and feminist rebellion has been accommodated. Men's social power in families is not being challenged and transformed; only their 'abuse' of this power is challenged when it goes too far.

Walker's investigation is part of a new critical concern among activists over how organizing can get accommodated to ruling institutions without really transforming situations for the oppressed. Attempting to recover the original political context and mobilizing capacity of dealing with experiences of this violence raises important questions for all activists about the construction of social 'issues.'

When we organize in this society we are often forced to construct our concerns as 'issues' to be able to get our concerns registered as we articulate them to different bureaucratic ruling institutions in order to demand action. We are forced to fight on a professional and state terrain which is not our own. We often have to use the language that is available to us — what can be described as using the oppressor's language. This means we often participate in uprooting experiences from the social relations in which they are embedded. We draw boundaries around experiences and problems. We work them up as separate single issues in order to get them responded to. We isolate them from other aspects of oppression and exploitation. What this does is produce them as 'issues' already uprooted from the social relations organizing (in this situation) the problems of male violence for women in the home. There are important traps in this process of issue formation which we need to be more aware of. Walker argues that while aspects of the issues do get addressed, the social basis of oppression remains unchallenged.

Walker's book puts on the agenda the crucial question of how to organize to transform social relations without our

struggles being appropriated through our interactions with ruling institutions and our own participation in these relations. These are dilemmas that confront all movement, working class and socialist activists. It poses questions of how we can organize differently so that our struggles do not get transformed and absorbed in this way.

In our existing struggles where we are forced to engage with ruling institutions we cannot completely abandon 'issue' politics or engaging with conceptual organization. Instead we need to become much more aware of how we name 'issues' and how we participate in the construction of 'social problems.' This highlights the importance of struggles over how issues are defined and contextualized and how they are associated with other related struggles. One possible solution is to try to use 'concepts' in our struggles where we can control the interpretation. This would help illuminate the social relations that organize problems in people's lives, much as Marx attempted to develop categories and analyses that expressed and made visible social relations rather than obscuring and mystifying them.

Regarding men's violence against women in the home we also need to address broader questions of the need for economic independence for women, sharing domestic labour, quality and available childcare, and the social construction of sexuality. We also must address class relations and how women's oppression is organized differently along class, race and sexuality lines. Women in shelters can come to be defined as a welfare problem and no matter how much safety shelters provide for women they can almost become new 'poorhouses,' as one of Walker's 'informants' suggests.

Walker also suggests how crucial professional and state relations are to the contemporary social organization of class, especially in pointing us towards the dispersal of class and other social struggles across numerous bureaucratic

state and professional sites of regulation. This is one of the ways in which contemporary class and social struggles are fragmented, de-politicized, and professionalized. Within the feminist movement itself the process of professionalization converts domestic violence against women into a terrain for the construction of careers. Some "women's movement representatives come to be professionalized as experts speaking for and about battered women." (213) This becomes part of the construction of class divisions between women and subverts feminist attempts to empower women who face violence and assault. There is a long history to this professionalization and institutionalization of social and union movements which socialists must continue to devise strategies to resist, subvert and transform.

This book is an important contribution to critical analysis of the social relations of movement organizing and state and professional regulation opening up insights for all movement and working-class activists. It poses crucial questions regarding the conceptual organization of ruling and how we can begin to analyze, resist and transform it. Walker's book does not provide the answers but it poses crucial questions as it "attempts to move our efforts forward by uncovering a feature of how our work come to be organized against us by the processes we engage in." (219)

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Dorinne K. Kondo, *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1990).

DORINNE KONDO PROVIDES a post-modern reading of her experience and observations as an anthropologist in a small family-owned factory in Tokyo. In her evocative accounts of events like the

ethics retreat and the company holiday (both management sponsored), and through her observations of shopfloor routines, conversations, and family relationships, Kondo seeks to elaborate postmodern insights into questions of identity, power, and resistance. Her descriptions of her coworkers, of disciplinary action, or of amusing incidents during her stay, are closely interwoven with explanations of semiotic theory, critiques of humanist and structuralist theoretical approaches, and brief sketches of Japanese history. The overall effect is rich — Kondo has a close feel for her subjects, a sensitivity to the effect of her presence as an anthropologist as well as to the possible imposition of her values and interpretations as a Japanese-American, and brings to her study a well-considered and innovative theoretical approach.

The most serious issue raised by her study, therefore, is the value of the post-modern theoretical approach for her work and for anthropological study, more generally. In legitimating this approach, the book is less steady than it may first appear. Kondo's stated intention is to portray the experience of the various members of the factory in sufficient detail, specificity, and complexity, that one reaches the point where "experience and evocation can become theory." (9) That is, one of the strengths of the postmodern position, in her view, is its capacity to overcome the traditional Western binary opposition between empirical and theoretical work. To make this point, she contrasts her approach with others where theory is marked off from empirical fact-gathering, and where the theoretical model determines in advance the significance of what is examined. My criticisms of this presentation and justification of postmodern theory and of Kondo's work are two fold. First, she misreads much of traditional empirical theory which is often reluctant to admit to any theoretical predetermination of its factual discoveries, frequently claiming

to "let the facts speak for themselves." There is, indeed, a remarkable similarity in this respect between traditional theory and Kondo's desire that the postmodern approach, in evoking a multiplicity of experiential details, will provide an accurate reflection of reality. What Kondo ignores or seriously underestimates is that the admission of a fact/theory dichotomy is often a valuable starting point for self-reflexive critical theory and counter-Enlightenment thought, including much of Marxist and feminist theory.

My second concern is that postmodern theory may not be as innocent of determining the direction and discoveries of its empirical applications as Kondo would wish. Indeed, she seems curiously unaware of the ways in which her study, too, appears to reproduce in its investigation of the Japanese workplace all of the "truisms" of postmodern theory — that power is everywhere, the identities are fragmented and dispersed, that resistance is never pure, that language is productive of its referents. Repeatedly, one finds in the book such statements as "selves are rhetorical assertions, produced by our linguistic conventions, which we narrate and perform for each other" (307) and "no deployment of meaning has a *single* effect, rather any action produces a *multiplicity* of sometimes paradoxical and creative effects." (225) These assertions of postmodern theory are, not surprisingly, then confirmed by Kondo's investigations. Surely, it would be ironic if postmodern theory, with its elaborate critique of representation should resort to implicitly justifying itself on the basis of a superior referentiality.

But there is another justification for the use of the postmodern theoretical approach besides those mentioned above (that is, its claims as an alternative to dualist thinking, or its implicit self-presentation of greater referentiality). If, as the postmodernists assert, knowledge is power, then the knowledge claims and interpretations of postmodernists can be warranted by their effects. Moreover, as

Kondo states it, "what is conventionally considered 'theory' is always already a position in which a positioned subject has 'personal' stakes" (303) — in other words, the writing of theory is always a motivated act. Postmodern theory is thereby justified as strategy. In its displacement of the dominant discourse, its attention to shifting levels of analysis, and its sensitivity to language and meaning, postmodern theory presents its own theoretical work as a site of resistance. Its subversiveness is also related to its linkage with not just the concepts of "marginality" or "otherness," but with real actors (women, people of colour, non-Westerns, workers) who are marginalized and made "other" by the dominant economic, cultural, political, and social practices.

It seems fair, then, to inquire into the value of Kondo's study for questions of social change. And it is in this arena that the limitations of postmodern analysis are perhaps most evident. The strategy of her project, as she outlines it, is as follows:

In its writing strategies and its explicit theoretical message, *Crafting Selves* is an attempt to reconsider definitions of the self, at levels we would call collective and individual. There can be no radical rupture with the fixity and essentialism of our narrative conventions, but emphases on potential conflict, ambiguity, irony, and the workings of power in the very process of constructing identities could yield other insights and other rhetorical strategies to explore. Rather than bounded, essential entities, replete with a unitary substance and consciousness, identities become nodal points repositioned in different contexts. Selves, in this view, can be seen as rhetorical figures and performative assertions enacted in specific situations within fields of power, history, and culture. (304)

Much of the book consists in an elaboration of the discursive production of selves as the site of potential conflict or struggle. For example, Kondo indicates the ambiguity in discourses such as "company as family," which are used both by management to exploit workers and to command their loyalty, and also by



workers to claim privileges and recognition from management. The "artisan as mature human" is a discursive site of other conflicts: the most skilled artisans work inhumanly long hours (up to 22 a day in the busiest seasons), a hierarchy of workers is guaranteed, gender divisions are reinforced (only men are artisans, and the women who work 8-10 hour days are called "part-timers," and considered less than fully human), yet the artisans also benefit from this hierarchy, and the part-timers enjoy greater work flexibility. The problem is that explorations of discursive ambiguities do not themselves reveal why certain discursive uses take precedence over others. Further, Kondo is reticent to make normative judgments about any of the exploitation of workers which she observes, partly because of the relativist implications that all discourses serve everyone somehow. Nor is this method of understanding the equivocacy of discourses or identities particularly helpful in questions of strategy. What are the power implications involved in claiming, or not claiming particular discourses or identities — those of a worker, for instance — for projects of social change? As long as power is perceived as the product of discourse, no strategic questions concerning

choice of discourse can be made; as long as the subject is produced in the creation of his/her identity, then it is not clear how the subject could choose identities strategically. And yet, periodically, Kondo reverts to understanding power as something which has a material basis.

This "politics of classification" shows how different actors can reclaim and redeploy certain idioms in ways they perceive to be just and justifiable. ... But it is also clear that the shacho's (company head and owners') attempts to define the meanings of *uchi* (company as family and centre of emotion attachment) could be effective, for he had the material means at his disposal to enforce those meanings. (206)

In its inability to theorize further around such questions as the "material means" of determining identities and discourses, it is possible to identify the limitations of Kondo's and of postmodern analysis generally. The question which remains, after reading *Crafting Selves*, is whether postmodern theory could incorporate a material understanding of power or whether materialism and postmodernism are necessarily antithetical.

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