Labour/Le Travailleur

Reviews / Comptes Rendus

Volume 18, 1986

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt18rv01

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (imprimé)
1911-4842 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

(1986). Compte rendu de [Reviews / Comptes Rendus]. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, *18*, 223–310.

REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

R.C. Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada: A Geographical Study* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 1984).

THIS WORK, WHICH began as a Ph.D. thesis written in 1962-3, and was first published in 1966, has stood up remarkably well. It deserved to be brought back into print because no other study of the seigneurial system has superseded it. It is a pity, however, that the opportunity was not seized to revise some parts.

The first duty of a reviewer is to review the book the author wrote and not berate him or her for not having written a different book. It has to be pointed out here nonetheless that the author is a geographer, not a historian, and the work is clearly labelled "a geographical study." When Harris deals with the land, the way it was parcelled out and utilized, he is sound. But when he discusses the various roles played by the people as seigneurs and *censitaires*, he occasionally goes astray. One has to bear in mind the old adage: "geography is about maps, history is about chaps." It should come as no surprise, therefore, that one of the better features of the book is the excellent maps.

A weakness of the book is the geographer's penchant for emphasizing the influence of the environment to the exclusion of other, more significant, factors. Thus Harris makes the amazing statement: "There can be little doubt that in 1760 Canada was not an enclave of French civilization." (195) The Turnerian concept of the American frontier is given as the reason. This notion ignores the fact that the basic institutions were brought from France: the language, the *Coutûme de Paris*, the Roman-Gallican religion, the social hierarchy, the military establishment, the mores, the folkways, the cuisine, the very raison d'être of the colony were all part of French culture, policy, and institutions. Some few modifications were imposed by the environment, but they were no more than that. Far more radical reforms and modifications were imposed by the Ministry of Marine.

There is also a failure to realize that there could be other motives than the desire for economic gain in the acquiring of a seigneury. The main reason was that ownership of a seigneury was the best route for social advancement. Canadian society was then stiffly hierarchical and status ordered. The main aim of all who were upwardly mobile was to be ennobled one day, even though in Canada, unlike France, there was no economic advantage to be gained thereby. To become a seigneur was the first step up the ladder. That, and not economics, explains why so many seigneurs granted friends and relatives parts of their seigneuries as *arrière-fiefs*; it was in order to give them a leg up. Jean Baillargeon was undoubtedly a good name but Jean Baillargeon de Grandarpents was much better: the nobiliary particle "de"

Table of Contents for Reviews is on pp. 4 & 5.

was all-important. Harris fails to grasp this vital reality. He is also quite mistaken in his belief that virtually anyone could become a seigneur. (40, 44) It was by no means easy in the seventeenth century, and became very difficult in the eighteenth. More than half the seigneurs were nobles, over a quarter of the seigneuries were held by the clergy, only some 20 per cent were held by members of the third estate. He also errs in stating that with an income of 2,500 to 5,000 *livres* a year a seigneur would not "necessarily have been a person of influence." (27) In fact 3,000 *livres* a year was considered enough for a noble family to live in modest dignity in France or New France; £4,000 to £10,000 a year permitted a life of luxurious ease.

Harris' figures on the number of families grinding their grain at a seigneurial grist mill needed in order for the mill to show a profit seem dubious to this reviewer. (74) His figure is 75 families. Normal consumption of bread was a two-pound loaf per person per day, and the *minot* measure was based on the amount of wheat needed to produce enough flour for a month's supply of bread for one person. Given Harris' figure of an average of six persons per family, then each family would have had to grind some 75 *minots* a year. The miller was entitled to one-fourteenth of the wheat ground, and Harris concludes that 200 *minots* ground would produce a small profit; hence 40 families using a mill, not 75, would make it profitable. The reviewer stands to be corrected.

Unfortunately R.P. Lucien Campeau's *Les Cent-associés et le peuplement de la Nouvelle-France* was not published until 1974. Had Harris been able to consult it, he would not likely have stated that the Company of New France failed to live up to the terms of its charter. It did, in fact, send out more than the stipulated number of settlers: what it failed to do was to persuade them to stay once their term of indenture had expired. Nor is it true to say that the company's primary purpose was the trade in furs. A close reading of its charter would have dispelled that notion. It is also untrue to say that the Canadians were "naturally litigious." (66) Just the reverse was, in fact, the case. Nor was the colony burdened with a top-heavy bureaucracy. (5) When James Murray became the civil governor of Quebec in 1764 he was dismayed to find how few officials had administered the colony under the French regime. He obviously felt that they had set an awkward precedent for him. Finally, Harris' claim that the seigneurs had no influence on the colony's social structure and served no useful purpose completely ignores their dominance of the officers' corps of the colonial regular troops, their dominant role in the eighteenth-century fur trade, and their control of the judiciary. There was far more to life in the colony than the exploitations of the land by subsistence farming. Yet it must also be said that Harris' discussion of agricultural practices is excellent.

Despite its flaws and its datedness, mostly minor, the work remains essential reading for all who seek to discover what life was like in Canada during the French regime.

W.J. Eccles
University of Toronto

Victor L. Russell, ed., *Forging a Consensus: Historical Essays on Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1984).

SPONSORED BY THE Corporation of the City of Toronto on the occasion of its sesquicentennial, *Forging a Consensus: Historical Essays on Toronto* attempts to go beyond the boosterism and hagiography characteristic of the jubilee genre. Without exception, the eleven contributions to this volume are scholarly in form, focused in theme, and often original in terms of evidence presented and/or interpretations

offered. Some, like Kealey on the Orange Order, class, and Toronto politics; Armstrong and Nelles on civic populism and municipal ownership; Fisken on the Toronto Transit Corporation; and Gad and Holdsworth on office building, are distinguished by their explicit attention to conceptual clarity, comparative context, and structural environment. Others, like Dyster's case study of the social underpinnings for municipal political success, Romney on early Toronto politics, Rogers on the nineteenth-century police department, Peterson on the evolution of the Board of Control, and Riendeau on the metropolis as a welfare state in the early twentieth century, contribute useful and at times valuable case studies on aspects of Toronto's past. Lemon, in his wide-ranging and discursive conclusion and, to a degree, Careless in his description of the 1884 semi-centennial, provide insights into Toronto's past and present civic culture and urban distinctiveness. Yet the volume as a whole is less than the sum of its parts. Put together the papers do not present a persuasive demonstration of what Russell, the editor, considers to be the volume's main theme: the "forging" and "triumph" of "consensus."

Appropriately enough in the first section, "Forging the Consensus," the depiction of diversity is front and centre. Romney, in his well written reconstruction of early political conflict, describes a "badly fissured, disintegrated society," a society fragmented along ethnic and religious, rather than primarily class lines. As in Romney's article, Dyster's painstaking (at times too painstaking) reconstruction of the political career of Captain Bob, a Toronto ward politician at mid-century, also holds class apart from matters of ethnicity and religion. For Kealey, this is too narrow a rendering of class. In an argument familiar to readers of this journal, he sets out a notion of class which incorporates, not excludes, the cultural. And by emphasizing class as a relationship, a fluid process of interaction, of constitution and reconstitution, Kealey avoids referring to an emerging "pluralistic consensus" (Romney's phrase) and instead points to the development of "a new bourgeois hegemony," leaving open the possibility for continued conflict and struggle.

A comparison of Kealey's approach and Rogers' is instructive in this regard. In part, diversity is easily spotted before 1850, because a strong hegemony had not yet been instituted. Initially the Tory gentry depended on plebeian political support, and thus this class was accorded a loosely controlled role within the political power structure — a role caught nicely by Kealey's analysis of the social composition and political importance of the Orange Order and, in an overlapping way, of the departments of police and fire. As Kealey points out, the gradual transition to bourgeois control was not simply a matter of imposition: rather, traditional plebeian organizations like the Orange Order began to trim their sails and adapt to change.

Rogers' nuanced elaboration of the police department's role as it moved from being an arm of plebeian culture to an arm of bourgeois reform, with a consequent emphasis on efficiency, respectability, and moral uplift, at first glance seems to extend Kealey's interpretation. Yet for all they have in common, Kealey and Rogers part company at a crucial point: Kealey leaves the door open for the continued interaction and ongoing transformation of both the bourgeois hegemonists and the proletarian under-class; Rogers, albeit somewhat ambivalently, seems to consider the case closed. In what might be termed the pivotal line in this book, Rogers concludes: "No longer a political weapon in the struggle for municipal power, the police could make a significant contribution to the making of Toronto the Good." Yet this is surely off the mark. The point is not that the police ceased to be a weapon in the struggle for political and other types of power. The point is,

and Rogers seems to realize this in other parts of his paper, that the police had become the agents of a differently constituted political power. Put simply, the dialectical notion of change which underlies Kealey's analysis is absent from Rogers': the reality of continuing struggle is, therefore, lost sight of. Rather, the stage is set for the next paper, "The First Hurrah," an analysis of the 1884 jubilee festivities, when, according to Russell, Toronto "celebrated" the forging of a "distinctive civic culture" (a declaration which the essay's author, J.M.S. Careless, to his credit, avoids making). The consensus having been forged, all that remains is to describe and outline its "triumphs."

From this point a serious focus on the cultural and economic determinants of class in "Toronto the Good" is generally eschewed in favour of the celebration of consensus, stability, homogeneity, and growth. Riendeau's informative essays on the municipality as a welfare state pegs its analysis at the macro-level of gross spending by category. Because aggregate expenditure was indeed large, Riendeau feels justified in claiming that "benefits . . . tended to 'trickle down' to the lower echelons of society. . . ." While he admits in a footnote that Michael Piva's work on Toronto's working class presents a different perspective, the fundamental issue — the extent to which the proletariat benefited — is never engaged, and consensus and integration remain triumphant.

More persuasive are the companion pieces by Frisken and the duo of Armstrong and Nelles on municipal ownership and operation of selected utilities. Both papers seek to demonstrate how all classes in Toronto supported and benefited from this unique behaviour. Armstrong and Nelles point to the coalescence of "workingmen, shopkeepers and manufacturers" against the actions of presumed "ruthless monopolists" and show how the municipal/provincial political structure facilitated a greater exercise of municipal control than occurred in most other North American settings.

Frisken, too, underlines the TTC's *skill in orchestrating and maintaining* a favourable consensus for its activities within Toronto during the years under review. Yet even this fine paper would have benefited from an antenna more sensitive to the reality of diversity as evidenced by the different categories of transit users. The TTC prospered in this period when many similar agencies failed, primarily because it lobbied successfully to keep contiguous municipalities separate from Toronto and could thus charge them a disproportionately higher rate. This, coupled with the successful operation of the Grey Coach Lines, an inter-, rather than simply intra-urban transit service, kept it solvent. The point is that some paid more than others, and for those who lived in surrounding suburbs, the consensus over the TTC and its operation was of a far different sort than that celebrated by Frisken.

It is surprising that Gad and Holdsworth, in their excellent account of office construction throughout Toronto's history, found space to include any comment on class diversity. This overview of office building is clearly situated within economic change and symbolizes the evolving role of Toronto within, as the title suggests, city, region, and nation. It is not meant as a criticism of these two authors to note that their references to the 440,000 clerical workers in present-day Toronto are little more than evocative throwaway lines. For a book trying to demonstrate the triumph of consensus to rest content with such meagre references is inexcusable.

Nor does Lemon's freewheeling conclusion redress the balance. He leaves the impression that it is only now that economic and social questions are coming to the fore. Although he concludes that "the material progress of Toronto, and the 'civilization' that developed around it, have, in the end, perpetuated social inequalities," the reader is at a complete

loss to understand how these "inequalities" emerged or of what they consist. Like the book, Lemon's paper certainly had a different agenda: that of demonstrating how, at least in relative terms, Toronto was cleaner, freer from crime, more efficient, and more comfortably homogeneous than other North American metropolitan centres. From this perspective, the existence and persistence of cultural and economic hegemony, of change and class struggle within Toronto is at best underplayed, at worst trivialized. But then this book *was* published on the occasion of Toronto the Good's 150th birthday. . . .

Peter A. Baskerville
University of Victoria

Colin Read and Ronald J. Stagg, eds., *The Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada: A Collection of Documents* (Toronto: The Champlain Society and Carleton University Press 1985).

THERE IS AN AIR of neutrality and objectivity about a documentary collection: pure raw material, it seems to embody no particular interpretation of the past. As William G. Davis, noted authority on historical epistemology, observes in the foreword to this volume of the Champlain Society's Ontario Series, "A documentary approach to the province's history offered the best way to avoid the bias of narrow partisanship." The rebellion of 1837 was an aberration, writes Davis, and its defeat implied "a confirmation of that more moderate, gradualist tradition" which has characterized Ontario's 200-year history.

But of course a compilation of historical evidence can never be interpretatively neutral and uncontroversial, and this collection of primary materials on the rebellion provides a case in point. This is not to say that the editors, Colin Read and Ronald Stagg, are blatant ideologues; far from it. Indeed, their work, clearly based on extensive archival research, is a fine example of the highly professional publications of the Champlain Society: scholarly, meticulous, abundantly annotated, "balanced." The editors present the words of W.L. Mackenzie as well as those of Francis Bond Head, in an honest effort to give readers access to "both sides of the story." And yet, they have to delimit their subject and they have to choose only a certain number of documents out of the thousands of possibilities. It is above all in the area of definition and selection that Read and Stagg leave their interpretative stamp on this volume, although they also set out their views in the notes and in a long introductory essay.

The introduction follows faithfully the orthodox version of the history of the rebellion set out twenty years ago by G.M. Craig. Like the Tories and the moderate Reformers of 1837, the editors take for granted the sacrosanct nature of the law and the state, and accordingly divide the population into the "loyal," who submitted to constituted authority, and the "disloyal," who did not. Not for Read and Stagg the *other* partisan view, the one enunciated by Charles Duncombe: " 'A nation never can rebel' those only are rebels who resist the will of the people; from them [the people] emanates all legitimate, constitutional government." (89) The rising resulted, they clearly believe, not from any basic conflict between the government and a section of "the people," but rather from the criminal actions of William Lyon Mackenzie and a few other rabble-rousers. Thus the editors have to spend a great deal of space tracing Mackenzie's movements and actions in an effort to determine when exactly he decided on insurrection. Even the titles of the central sections of the documentary collection — "The Mackenzie Rising" and "The Duncombe Rising" — make it clear how far they see the conflict as the creation of one or two men. It was indeed Mackenzie who sounded the call to arms in the Toronto region, but why did anyone respond?

Read and Stagg's extensive notes reflect their conviction that an understanding of the events of 1837 requires, above all, an acquaintance with the leaders. Their annotations are mainly biographical. Readers learn, for example, that Jonas Jones was a colonel of militia and a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench, although they will never find out from this book what the militia was or how the judicial system worked. The key to the Upper Canadian rebellion is apparently to be found, not in the political structures, any more than in the social and economic structures or property relations of the province. Rather, the editors seem convinced, it must be sought in the backgrounds, principles, and moral character of the more prominent individuals involved in the event.

Anyone who relies on this collection will get a very narrowly Ontarian view of the rebellion of 1837. In fact, the Upper Canadian rising was only a part — and by no means the most important part — of a general Canadian, not to say North American, crisis. Read and Stagg do include documents indicating that Upper Canadian radicals followed in the wake of the Lower Canadian *patriote* movement, and that events in the upper province were dependent on the more profound conflict in the lower. Otherwise, however, the editors sternly limit their attention to their own province. This requires them not only to ignore everything to the east of the Ottawa River, but also to eliminate all reference to the events of 1838. Though just as threatening to the established order as the Yonge Street rising, the border raids and alarms of the following year were definitely an international phenomenon. Best then to leave them out of our historiographic Fortress Ontario!

For all its limitations, *The Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada* is nonetheless a valuable resource that will be of great interest to students and researchers. Besides assembling well-known documents in one convenient volume, the editors have provided much previously neglected material. One of their sections, "Rebellion Days Around the Province," is indeed an important original contribution to our knowledge of the topic. It consists of material on attitudes and events — neglected in the secondary literature — in the "quiet" regions of Upper Canada, where there was no armed rising, although there does seem to have been a good deal of alarm, mobilization of "loyal" militia, and arrests of Reformers.

Still, I hope no one will try to grasp the Upper Canadian rebellion on the basis of this collection of documents alone. It definitely embodies a particular interpretation of the insurrection, a certain conception of what it was and why it happened. Moreover, it is not an interpretation that everyone will accept, however congenial it might appear to retired premiers.

Allan Greer
University of Toronto

Varpu Lindström-Best and Charles M. Sutyla, eds., *Terveisiä Ruusa-tädiltä: Kanadan suomalaisten ensimmäinen sukupolvi [Greetings from Aunt Rosa: The First Generation of Finnish Canadians]* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura 1984).

THE VENERABLE Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura (Society of Finnish Literature) has, for the first time in its 150-year history, undertaken to publish a translation of a English language manuscript. The subject of this rare and remarkable *prévenance* is an enrapturing and impressive display of thoughtfully assembled photographs and citations from the period in Canadian history extending from the 1890s to the 1930s. The material is supported by fluid writing which oscillates smoothly from a cutting social message to a warm and often touchingly humorous text. While the book is clearly designed for a general readership, it is, nevertheless, a valuable contribution to migration, ethnic, and labour history.

The editors perused over 12,000 photographs in archival and family collections in Canada and Finland before narrowing their selection to 150 for this book. The contents have been arranged topically into sections under the following headings: "To Canada," "Farmers in the Prairies," "Pioneers and 'Stump-Farmers'," "Miners, Loggers, and Lumberjacks," "Fishing and Hunting," "Urban Immigrants: Hired Help," "Businesses," "The Organized Activities of the Finns," "The Newspapers," "The Churches," "There Is More to Life Than Work," and "At a Photographic Studio." Together these sections illuminate the width and breadth of most aspects of life the Finnish immigrants experienced in Canada. The citations amplifying the sections are selected from contemporary accounts in newspapers, literature (both prose and poems), private letters, and from other sources. The original English citation is displayed alongside its translation. The citations often make a telling point, as when there appears, in the description of Jaakko Lindala, one of the Finnish socialist tailors in Toronto, the 1907 quote from *The Globe*, "[How is it] that an unknown Socialist tailor of foreign birth should poll over eight thousand votes for the Mayoralty of Toronto against a barrister of irreproachable personal character." Other quotes describe the reaction, at various times, not only of the native Canadian but also of public opinion, which ran the gamut of feelings towards these immigrants from endorsement to condemnation in Canada and Finland alike.

The authors and editors of *Terveisiä Ruusa-tädiltä* have attempted a politically impartial approach by focusing on the less controversial aspects of the relevant social history. Also, as is already implied in the title of the book, the woman's viewpoint *is emphasized. Varpu Lindström-Best is* presently completing her doctoral dissertation on Finnish immigrant women in Canada while at the same time teaching North American social history at York University in Toronto. Charles M. Sutyla, a graduate in cultural anthropology, has been studying Finnish communities in Canada. He is currently employed as director of cultural programmes for the province of Saskatchewan. In their joint effort, therefore, the authors are able to give a richer view of the dynamic forces dominating immigrant life than is common in treatises of a purely academic nature. Individuals emerge on these pages in all of their pathos, and not as numbers in working-class masses or as standard bearers of opposing political sections, as they have been most often presented in the Canadian ethno-historical commentaries.

By not dwelling on the direct description of the socio-political controversies of the time, however, the authors could not avoid leaving in the dark a part of the strong world view which gave to these Finns the *raison d'être* for continuing their struggle in the New World during the period in question. Nevertheless, the authors have revealed in a brilliant manner the general social landscape which was to give sustenance to the left-wing political theories prevalent among the Finnish immigrants. Their insight into the Finnish psyche is not in question — rather their judgement, in not using all of the colours which the picture needs and that their palette would allow. Any other weaknesses in the book are of a minor nature or in the class of intentional editorial omissions, as in the lack of maps and statistical data on the Finnish settlements in Canada.

Taken *in toto*, this book provides a unique and multifarious portrayal of the Finnish immigrants' life in Canada. Considering the excellence of its pictorial and textual content, and that the research for this book has already been supported by the Canadian taxpayer in the form of a sizable government grant, it would be well *worthwhile to have the original English* language manuscript edited for publication in Canada. The publishing of this book in English would benefit the general public and the social scientist alike. The

book meets the high standards set in the literature depicting the multicultural character of the Canadian nation.

Mauri A. Jalava
Ottawa

John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart 1985).

WHEN W.L. MORTON and D.G. Creighton planned the Canadian Centenary series, they proposed as a general theme "the development of those regional communities which have for the past century made up the Canadian nation." Not a very inspiring credo and one which most authors blithely ignored, especially Creighton. John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager seem to have taken the series mandate to heart, though, devoting considerable space to regional history. The events they chose to write about, national or provincial, are primarily "political struggles," which they argue "had importance for ordinary Canadians, the real subjects of this book."

The focus on political struggles does provide some coherence to this account of the inter-war period and the authors do a fine job of balanced reporting on the monographic literature. The book is written in a lively prose style which was frequently vigorous enough to overcome this reviewer's resistance to reading yet another version of familiar events.

Buried inside this retelling of past politics is the book that John Thompson might have written if he had paid less attention to the series theme. The first chapter, "Counting Noses," is not only first class history, it is a pure delight to read. A similar dissection of Canadian society, using the 1941 census, which is not a bad reflection of the late 1930s, would have been welcome. Chapter eight, "The Conundrum of Culture," ought to be made available in pamphlet form. (Have Canadian publishers taken note of the Macmillan-U.S. offer: "Special editions or book excerpts can be created to specification?") Not everyone will agree that David Milne was more talented than any of the Group of Seven, but the discussion of art, literature, and drama is intelligent and thought-provoking.

Thompson is also fully in command of the recent literature on the "remarkable similarities" between the literary outputs of French and English Canadian intellectuals. This successful integration of the "two solitudes" in culture provides a model for writing about other aspects of the French Canadian experience. Quebec is, in the author's view, part of the Canadian version of North American society and culture. He also reminds us that:

> while the English Canadian intellectuals ignored or misunderstood French Canada, their French-speaking counterparts saw English Canada only through the narrow window of its dominant class as a soulless materialistic monolith bent on French-Canada's destruction.

The section of this chapter which is purest Thompson is devoted to organized sport. In the light of our recent experience of Blue Jay fever, we may be better able to understand the author's statement that "by the mid-twenties baseball's World Series had become Canada's greatest 'national' sporting event." The analysis of the birth of the National Hockey League, and the continentalization of the sport is all too brief. How did Thompson resist developing stories like the rivalry between the Maroons and the Canadiens? Instead, we are pulled back from the cultural transformation of Canada and returned to the straight and narrow. Chapter nine, "The Crisis of Capitalism;" ten, "Orthodoxy on Trial;" eleven, "The Bennett Debacle;" and twelve, "King and Chaos," constitute the core of the book, but are the least satisfactory chapters.

The authors approach the history of the Great Depression with a set of presentist assumptions about economics and politics which make historical analysis very difficult. Consider the following statements: "Bennett was keen to assume con-

stitutional responsibility for law and order but was unwilling to make any commitment to ensure unemployed Canadians a decent standard of living" (214) or, "Bennett and his colleagues could not claim ignorance of Keynes and his heretical theories of how to bring about a recovery. His work had been mentioned in the House for the first time in 1920 and during the budget debate of 1932. . . ." (217) Do Thompson and Seager wish to argue that if Bennett had been willing to assure unemployed Canadians a decent standard of living and to follow the prescriptions of Keynes that it would have made a difference to international demand and price levels, to unemployment levels, or any of the other factors which created and prolonged the Great Depression?

Throughout this account of the 1930s, political leaders are charged with failing to act in accordance with some unspecified interventionist model. For example, the discussion of Social Credit in Alberta ends with the following: "as Chris Pattinson, defeated MLA from Edmonton sadly reflected 'mass movements do not always go in the right direction.' " The "right direction" is always clear to the authors and they pass judgement on everyone. The Pope and *École sociale populaire* are condemned for choosing "to ignore one possible and logical alternative that *was* spoken of in Catholic Quebec in the 1930's: a Christian form of socialism." While wondering whether to laugh or cry at the absurdity of this, one is stunned into silence by the information that Henri Bourassa was "the idea's most prominent advocate." Surely no student of Quebec in the 1930s could take this stuff seriously.

The brief conclusion, "Decades of Discord," summarizes the authors' Whig interpretation of the inter-war period. They insist that "only the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation had a comprehensive program and a national perspective. . . ." They argue that, while "bureaucrats capable of managing a modern, interventionist state had arrived in the national capital, the political will to take their advice had not." The inter-war period for Thompson and Seager is an "unremitting recital of domestic failure," and when war broke out "the soldier knew the truth of what the radicals had long preached: that the federal government could spend money to make war at a rate that King and Bennett had thought immoral to spend for relief of the unemployed."

The Canadian government could begin to spend large sums of money on the war and war industries in the 1940s in the context of the transformation of the world economy. None of the factors present in the early 1940s were there during the previous decade, no matter what Bennett, King, or the others willed. Where does this curious view of the centrality of political will come from? How is it that in Canada of all countries we should so often write our history as if the decisions of politicians were of special importance? Even when describing the history of organized labour in the 1930s, the authors see the solution to conflict in terms of political action in the form of a Canadian Wagner Act — this in a country where structural unemployment had stabilized at 20 per cent of the labour force with the labour force making up less than a quarter of the population.

The history of Canada in the inter-war period must be written as a variant of the history of the North Atlantic community. The marginality, not centrality, of Canadian influence (never mind political decision-making!) must be emphasized. One of the authors who has best understood this and attempted to describe it is the John Thompson who wrote sections of *Decades of Discord* concerned with popular culture. His work should serve as a model to those who write about politics and the economy.

Terry Copp
Wilfrid Laurier University

J. William Brennan, ed., *'Building the Co-operative Commonwealth': Essays on the Democratic Socialist Tradition in Canada* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre 1984).

IN JUNE 1983 THE Canadian Plains Research Centre marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Regina Manifesto by sponsoring a conference on the history of the CCF. Twelve of the papers presented at the conference have now been published. Contributors range from Michiel Horn, Joan Sangster, and Ian MacPherson, to such welcome newcomers to the field as David Walden and Christina J. Nichol.

Most published conference proceedings qualify as "curate's eggs," very very bad in parts. They help reassure non-participants that their time and money were well saved. Professor Brennan and his contributors are in the happy minority. They have served their readers and their topic well. If anything, contributors seem to have shared a mood of cautious empiricism reflective of the mood of the 1980s. Even such passionate topics as pacifism and public ownership are cooled by reason.

The opening paper, by Alan Whitehorn, is deliberately the most spirited and controversial. In a sweeping review of CCF historiography, he takes on and demolishes the "party-movement" dichotomy promoted, among others, by Leo Zakuta and Walter Young. In this, Whitehorn reflects the views of his departed mentor in matters CCF-NDP, the late David Lewis. He also offers some overdue common sense. The notion of a virtuous and idealistic movement degenerating into the sordid compromises and grubby vote-getting of a political party may delight those who wanted the CCF to remain impotent but it was certainly never the goal of J.S. Woodsworth. Whitehorn gets powerful support from David Walden's paper on Woodsworth's political philosophy:

> Having learned his socialism from the workers, immigrants, the poor, and the unemployed, Woodsworth firmly believed that if the Canadian state would only assume greater social responsibility for the welfare of the people, much could be done to overcome the excesses of capitalism. As a political activist he was more concerned with direct action to achieve his goals than he was with polemics or attempts to construct theoretical models of socialism.

One of the common themes of the contributors is the CCF's constant collision with reality. Thomas Socknat, exploring the CCF's embrace of pacifism in the 1930s, notes that the pacifists in the party had no better answer to the rise of the European dictators than isolationism. Christina Nichol, reviewing the British Columbia CCF role in the labour "civil war" of 1945-50 underlines the futility of pretending that the struggle did not matter or that the democratic left could really remain neutral.

Reality was most in evidence when the CCF formed its only government. In one of the most revealing articles in the collection, Jean Larmour underlines how creation of an Economic Advisory and Planning Board in 1946 forced the young government to recognize that its ambitious social programme would only be possible with renewed private investment and technical expertise. On the other hand, Ian MacPherson argues, the CCF was too radical to be a congenial partner to Saskatchewan's powerful cooperative movement. While the government's new Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development is given enormous credit for helping expand and diversify cooperatives in the province, MacPherson concludes, a little sadly:

> For politicians and civil servants caught in the maelstrom of public controversies and immediate needs, the sober, stolid methods of the organized co-operative movement must have seemed to be a strange mixture of glacial speed and arcane debate.

If cooperators were frustrating allies, so were the thousands of municipal notables who, as Lipset discovered, formed

the CCF cadres across Saskatchewan. Renaming welfare as "social aid" did little to reform the province's relief system. The key factor, as Jim Pistula demonstrates, was an infusion of federal money. For all the CCF innovations in health and hospital care, the province's poor kept their low social priority even for a government elected on the slogan "Humanity First." Even if the CCF finally remedied its record in 1959, the delay was a further painful reminder of political realities.

Two articles, by Joan Sangster and Georgina Taylor, are reminders that women, too, faced real obstacles in achieving functional equality within a party dedicated to the principle. Gertrude Telford, defeated in her bid to be a candidate, claimed that even CCF men were "subconsciously unwilling to give up their age-old prerogatives of dominance." Yet even the militant Beatrice Brigden portrayed the new CCF woman in language that underlined the maternal and domestic stereotypes: "She has accepted the co-operative principle, the well-tested recipe for success in her own homemaking: each giving according to her ability and each receiving according to need." Yet, Sangster sensibly argues, Brigden and other CCF women were addressing supporters on their own very real terms.

Professor Brennan and his collaborators have enriched an already bountiful historiography of the democratic left. Alvin Finkel's survey of what befell the CCF in Alberta fills a gap. Michiel Horn's review of the League for Social Reconstruction's role in the Regina Manifesto is a healthy amplification of his own earlier treatment of the subject. If Patrick Smith and Marshall Conley have to stray in to the present and even the future to find much hope for the democratic left in the Atlantic provinces, their concluding essay is at least a reminder that the CCF-NDP is very much alive and that it still has much to learn about its place in the Canadian political culture.

With their mature pragmatism, the essays collected and published by Professor Brennan can make a real contribution to a political organization which is struggling, as ever, to see its way ahead.

Desmond Morton
University of Toronto

Gregory Baum and Duncan Cameron, *Ethics and Economics: Canada's Catholic Bishops on the Economic Crisis* (Toronto: Lorimer 1984).

IN JANUARY 1983 the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops stunned politicians, business, and labour with their "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis." Their declared intention to stimulate a wide-ranging debate on social values and economic visions met with considerable success. This volume carries the debate further. It contains the 1983 New Year's Statement, extended commentaries by Baum and Cameron, suggestions for further reading, and earlier statements by the bishops, reaching back to their 1975 Labour Day Message, "Northern Development: At What Cost?" — the first clear signal that the theology of liberation was taking root in Canada.

The 1983 statement was premised on what the bishops call two fundamental gospel principles: (1) the preferential option for the poor, afflicted, and oppressed; and (2) the special value and dignity of human labour. These principles furnish an ethical basis for criticizing existing economic arrangements and for advocating alternatives that place the "needs of the poor" over the "wants of the rich," and assert the rights of workers and marginalized groups over the impersonal maximization of profits. Only such a fundamental reordering of values and priorities can cure the growing moral disorder which the bishops view as symptomatic of a deeper structural crisis

in world capitalism. The international mobility of capital and the automation of production leave in their wake permanent unemployment and marginalization, state austerity to restore profitability, and political repression to contain unrest, as capital "is reasserted as the dominant organizing principle of economic life." (10) In contrast to the neo-conservative call for international competitiveness at any cost, the bishops argue for an economic model that emphasizes socially useful forms of production, labour-intensive industries to provide full employment, use of appropriate technology, community and worker management and ownership of industries, and self-reliant development.

Baum's commentary uses the 1983 statement as a vehicle for a sympathetic historical and philosophical analysis of the shift in Catholic social teaching. Initiated in the 1960s by grassroots Christian movements in Latin America and by the Vatican Council II, the leftward trend represents a worldwide renovation of Catholic theory and practice. The traditional "organicist" image of society has been replaced with a historicized, "conflictual" perspective; the taboo against socialism has been removed (though opposition to communism remains trenchant); the dualism of the sacred proclamation of the gospel and the secular struggle for social justice has given way to a conception that views God as "graciously present" to human history, and that assigns to the church a single mission uniting faith and justice, salvation and earthly liberation.

These developments are important, and Baum's analysis of the continuity between one ecclesiastic document and the next does much to highlight the cumulative nature of the ideological shift. However, his almost singular focus on the *text* of documents at times leads away from a critical analysis of *actions*. Thus, the progressive theology of John Paul II's encyclical, *Laborem Exercens* (1981), is discussed at some length — without reference to the Pope's interventions in Latin America, which have been politically ambivalent at best.

Baum's main concern in charting the ideological shift, however, is to place the Canadian bishops in a broader context. In addition, he pursues the cultural and political implications of their 1983 statement. The cultural significance lies in desacralizing the present order — including its theoretical reflection in positivistic economics — while legitimating a discourse critical of capitalism. Politically, Baum points to the dialogistical character of the bishops' proposals for economic decentralization and worker control, which may be read merely as humane reforms or as "system-transcending" reforms that, once introduced, may initiate the critical consciousness required for more radical social transformation.

Cameron's commentary considers the broad empirical issue of whether the bishops "make economic sense." In light of the extensive criticisms that the 1983 statement received from economists, the essay takes the form of a political economist's reply to the orthodoxy of liberal economics. Cameron questions many of the basic claims of that orthodoxy: the view of economic activity as productive only if it is monetarized, of the market as neutral and self-correcting, of human beings as either consumers or factors of production. He echoes the bishops in observing that "instead of accepting that the economy is something fashioned to meet human needs, business representatives often use a language that implies that human beings must adapt themselves to the necessities of the marketplace." (130)

But is it practical to call for an economics based in ethical considerations? In the midst of a world recession that limits the efficacy of both Keynesian demand management and supply-side investment incentives, Cameron suggests that the bishops' alternative of self-reliant, community- and worker-controlled devel-

opment can be a viable means of producing and consuming goods and services in quantities sufficient to provide full employment. For change to occur, however, the democratic ideals expressed by the bishops must become part of daily experience, particularly at the workplace. Such economic democratization is a political task which, Cameron concludes, requires that people recognize the rights of capital as politically founded, and therefore subject to change through political action.

The New Year's Statement can be said to have "opened a window." Disavowing the logic of capital, Canada's bishops voiced a radical critique whose ethical premises and unimpeachable source made glib dismissal problematic. This highly accessible book edges the window a touch wider. It should prove useful in a variety of popular educational contexts.

W.K. Carroll
University of Victoria

Jennifer Penney, ed., *Hard Earned Wages* (Toronto: Women's Press 1983).

IN STUDS TERKEL FASHION with a feminist twist, this is a collection of interviews with rank-and-file women involved in a variety of struggles for better work. From their personal accounts we understand the complexities of labour processes that shape women's work experience and the innovative modes of struggle that women adopt to cope with their lives. The women are regionally distributed across English Canada in ghetto jobs and in non-traditional jobs; sisters-in-law Betty and Loretta Burt are squid jiggers from Newfoundland; Williams and Sherwood work as telephone operators at B.C. Telephone; the steel industry is well represented with the "Women into Stelco" campaign and Cathy Mulroy from the mines in Sudbury; Joan Meister is a secretary at a university; Jamie Kass and Penny Lane are employed as daycare workers in Ottawa.

Jennifer Penney uses different interview techniques to elicit women's personal stories including a sensitive oral history of a native woman from western Canada who survived poverty, racism, and wife abuse to become an economically independent woman. Leni Balaban's autobiographical account of learning to be a caterpillar mechanic is both warm and awe-inspiring. "I was operating heavy equipment. We all were. And I've never seen eight women that could stick together like that.... We didn't take shit from anybody." (163)

The use of group interviews provides a very detailed in-depth picture of collective action. The daycare workers, for example, lead the reader step by step through the process of unionization. They explain with personal anecdotes not only what it is like being in a union for the first time but also the complex meanings of contract clauses negotiated with parents. "Seniority was an incredibly thorny issue for both the staff and the parents." (85) From their account of working with parents and the community we get a real sense of alliances unfolding within struggle.

Some stories involve women in direct confrontation with the state, as in the case of squid jiggers who fought for the unemployment insurance they rightfully deserved. Other women, like Cathy Mulroy, were involved in a strike against the multinational giant, Inco. She presents a first-hand account of organizing a union and going on strike, noting: "The strike was the best thing that ever happened to me, really." (180)

We hear about the creative, innovative approaches women adopt to elicit community support, including the five-day occupation of the B.C. Telephone workers, the community campaign for affirmative action, and the role of wives in Sudbury. Even the nitty gritty details of bargaining are told in such depth that we feel that we are actually present in the room sitting across from the employer: "From a very personal sense of outrage I started feeling

a very special solidarity with the other members of our bargaining committee." (138)

A wide spectrum of issues emerges from the stories that are told, including affirmative action, sexual harassment, childcare, and equal pay for work of equal value. Contradictions are understood within the context of concrete experiences. For the most part, these women radicalized as a result of their participation in struggle: "And during this whole process of going to trial after trial after trial, it became clear to me that not only do the bosses lie and not only does the government lie and cheat but the police do too." (149)

This volume is especially successful in presenting women as subjects, thereby counteracting traditional stereotypes of women as timid, passive, conservative workers who are resistant to participating in movements of social change. Most importantly, solidarity with other women workers is portrayed: "During the strike I found out there was a whole different world of friends out there that I had never experienced before." (187)

Omissions in the book leave me wishing for more. First, immigrant women workers are not represented, even though recent events indicate that they are challenging traditional stereotypes, as in the Toronto cleaners' strike in the summer of 1984. Women from Quebec are excluded. The complex interaction of national and gender oppression could be explored. All the women are approximately the same age; interviews with older women could have added an historical dimension and also revealed issues arising from retirement.

In addition, a brief autobiographical account of the author's own methodology would be useful. For example, how were the women chosen? What dilemmas and contradictions emerged from the interview situations? How was the editing done, and what were the criteria for final selection? Penney interviewed 35 more women who were not included in the book. A discussion of methodology would help teachers and students of labour studies who are inspired by this anthology to do similar work.

Charlene Gannagé
McMaster University

Philip Resnick, *Parliament vs. People* (Vancouver: New Star Books 1984).

CANADIAN WRITERS WHO deal as a fundamental task with the philosophy of community and ideas of the good society have not been numerous. Mackenzie King in *Industry and Humanity* would be one. Historians from Stanley Ryerson to Donald Creighton have been philosophical in the bias of their writing, as most serious historians must be. Brebner, Groulx, Grant, Macpherson, Rioux, Innis, Ouellet, and many others this side of conventional history, have tried to see beyond the objective forces towards the formulation of the idea of the good embodied in human community. They become philosophical about the possible good community merely by describing what they believe is destructive in a system they may be tracing with general approval.

Philip Resnick seems to want to make an attempt to reformulate a vision of human community as a critique of what is and as a model of what might be. He finds Canadian parliamentary democracy — "the Queen in parliament" — unjust, obsolete, and ineffective. The British parliamentary tradition transposed to the colonies became

> a formula for obtuseness and colonial-mindedness that long blocked the development of a vital political culture. In a two-nation society such as Canada, with a large infusion of immigrants, British exceptionalism and parliamentary fetishism easily become [became?] impediments to democracy. They excluded the political experience of the United States, France or other European countries as "un-British" and therefore "un-Canadian", and

thus wrote off as illegitimate any concept of popular, as opposed to parliamentary, sovereignty. (9)

Professor Resnick's purpose, as the quotation suggests, is to demystify Canadian parliamentary democracy as we know it, and to erect in its place a model of popular sovereignty. For the author, politics should be practised by the ordinary citizen of "post-scarcity society" in some form of base-level democracy within market socialism. As an "exercise in Utopian thought" he suggests a rough membership of 1,000 adults per base group, making up about 17,000 base units in Canada. The groups would not be sovereign, but would be pressure groups working in relation to provincial and federal legislation. We seem — despite the author's disdain for "the Queen in parliament" — not to have rid ourselves of that dinosaur. If the legislative majority and the popular majority were to confront, according to Professor Resnick, "a law, unless the government put it to a province-wide referendum and it were upheld, [the law] would become null and void."

From there on Professor Resnick builds a ramifying of popular base structures to meet, match, and modify legislative structures in place. Apart from the charge that he has simply created a dual power system — a charge he does not effectively deal with — he is asking for a kind of recall system (of legislation rather than people). Why not, then, use the already existing system of constituencies? Activate them, and make them bounce with political vitality. They are there already, available. Not only does Professor Resnick suggest an enormous system, he even suggests that "the NDP, at least at the provincial level" might be won over to the system he advocates!

The conclusion a reader comes to about *Parliament vs. People* is that the author is serious but the reader cannot be. This is not because of the book's utopian qualities, but because it is unreasonable, illogical, hectoring, and imprecise about simple matters that deserve precision. Although, for instance, the author declares that his particular concern is Canada, and though he mentions Quebec often, there is not a single reference in his bibliography written by a Quebec writer. I say that to underscore the problems of Professor Resnick's refusal to consider Quebeckers more than superficially. If, for instance, in his system, a large majority of Quebec Canadian base units disagreed with a large majority of English Canadian base units on a federal question, what — for the sake of popular democracy and justice — would be done? The author does not face that obvious question. He does not even seem to foresee its possibility!

When he attacks Canadian parliamentary democracy (which has much about it worthy of attack), he hectors and reasons imprecisely. Canadians, he tells us, don't celebrate July 1 with enthusiasm.

> It was not, after all, their decision which united the colonies. Nor were they consulted about the terms or even the date of Confederation. The Proclamation came from London, and did little more than transfer from one Parliament to another, still under the British sovereign, a package of legal and political rights. These were not individual rights, or even collective rights, expressed in popular language. They did not speak of the Rights of Man or of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is hard to get excited about the handiwork of railway buccaneers and their kept lawyers. (16)

Passages of that kind (the book bristles with them) make little sense in a serious discussion. Would Canadians be freer and more celebrative if the BNA Act had mentioned the "Rights of Man" and the pursuit of happiness? Did France and the United States, from whom the phrases come develop freer, more just societies with more vital popular democracies? Many would not say they have done so. Calling the makers of Confederation merely "railway buccaneers and their kept lawyers," moreover, is more foolish than

calling the makers of the American Revolution rebels, regicides, and bandits.

But that is the tone of the book. And its hypothetical cases are equally unacceptable. Just suppose, says Professor Resnick, we "remove from private ownership *all* firms and enterprises which employed over 25 people or had assets in excess of $5 million." One of the results, before we freely organize them into popular democratic units, he says is that we would see "the Americans denounce us and put the CIA on red alert. . . ." Then, I suppose they would leave Canadians to go about their business of building market socialism.

Parliament vs. People is 120 pages long. *The Real World of Democracy* by C.B. Macpherson in comparison, for instance, contains 67 pages. Macpherson shows that precise definition, clear terms, simple language, and serious intention can communicate a great deal in little space. In twice the space, Philip Resnick makes it seem impossible to deal with the subjects of popular democracy and market socialism. The book is a mixture of utopianism and serious suggestion for reform that constantly strains credibility, oversimplifies history, proposes the impossible or the ludicrous, erects incompletely explained structures, and sacrifices a compellingly explained idea of popular democracy to an almost compulsive expression of immoderate distaste for the political system in Canada.

That's too bad. We need elegant thinkers to propose models of society we can aim to achieve or, at least, use to criticize present structures with. The best one can think of for this book is that it will spur some angry reader into a cool, lucid, imaginative, cogent consideration of the faults of parliamentary democracy seen in the light of the possibilities of a more fully developed popular democracy.

Robin Matthews
Carleton University

John A. Willes, *Contemporary Canadian Labour Relations* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, Ryerson 1984).

WILLES HAS PROVIDED a general introductory text on labour relations in Canada. This is an area which has increasingly attracted public attention due to technological changes in the workplace, the government's draconian measures against unions, increasing unemployment, and other elements that constitute part of the existing economic malaise.

The book is well organized, being divided into seven parts encompassing twelve chapters. These are structured thematically and include case studies, a series of questions for discussion, a selected bibliography for each chapter, and a brief glossary of terms. Useful charts are also incorporated into the work. The writing is generally clear and straightforward.

The interpretation of labour relations is highly legalistic and this holds true even for the cursory history of the trade union movement. By the middle of the book, the presentation thus unfolds rather pedantically. Emphasis is placed on the administrative aspect of labour relations. Although the author tries to consider labour relations from a national perspective, as he appears to be a centralist, the myriad different provincial laws make a mockery of an attempt at a national policy in this realm. The interpretation by the courts, however, may change this.

The legal straitjacket placed on unions and labour relations is documented. The provincial and federal governments participated in this although they moved with the speed of a glacier. A neat corrective is included showing that Quebec was not a laggard in labour relations as the myth repeatedly suggests, but indeed introduced a Conciliation Act in 1901. How it was used is another question. The federal government began to act as did the other provinces, yet it was only as recently as the 1940s that governments seriously

began to legislate for collective bargaining for workers. It is stated, however, that legal enactments are political and they can be changed at the whim of governments. Thus unions' and workers' legislative "gains" are not guaranteed.

The antecedents and influences of the British and American labour movement and labour relations on Canada are frequently noted. In the early evolution, British laws and practices prevailed while more recently the impact of the United States' practices has become most important. Continental Europe's input is ignored in the book.

The rights and duties, the requirements, the weaknesses, the processes of workers' organizing, seeking recognition, negotiating contracts, third party involvement, and employees' and employers' grievances are well delineated. Distinctions are made among bargaining, negotiating, conciliation, mediation, and arbitration. Theoretical frameworks and models of bargaining are also discussed. A variety of tactics and strategies are employed in this process. If an impasse is reached, resort can be made to third parties, either individuals or boards, in an attempt to arrive at an agreement. A particular jargon has been developed in collective bargaining and many of these terms are explained. Strikes, as part of the labour relations system, are also given considerable attention, although the different types of strikes are not discussed. The impression is that they are an evil in the collective bargaining process; fortunately others argue the reverse.

Most of the information here pertains to the private sector and there is only one chapter devoted to public sector collective bargaining. This is unfortunate, since governments are the largest single employer and almost two-fifths of the work force is in the public and parapublic sector. Nonetheless, it is a useful chapter pointing out the diversity and variation of provincial and federal collective bargaining. A useful correlation is made between events in labour relations in the public, or private, sector which will frequently influence the situation in the other. For the author, it is the private sector which is plainly the most significant.

A number of difficulties surface in this potential manual. The reference to British and American influence is important, but there is a problem of balance. Most of the chapter on the trade union movement deals with British and American activities (12 pages) rather than the indigenous Canadian movement (3 pages). The Trade Union Act of 1872 was significant for unionization; it did little to encourage it (or encourage collective bargaining) and was in fact a hindrance; even authors as conservative as Desmond Morton have recently underscored the weakness of the act. No such questioning appears in Willes' book. The Wagner Act of the United States was important in the emergence of PC 1003, but why was the order-in-council passed? What fears did labour have? Why did the government wait until 1948 to introduce legislation to replace the order? These must be explained if one is trying to describe the *relations between labour and* management-owners-governments. In this relationship, unions, according to the author, have "power" (126) equal to management in the collective bargaining process. This would be excellent if correct; unfortunately it is not. And one has to seriously question whether employers really "welcome" (111) unionization; there are sufficient cases that demonstrate starkly the reverse of that statement. It is said that strikes are a last resort, that many steps are taken to prevent strikes, and, eventually, that most strikes are peaceful; it does not mention that most of the preventive measures restrict the workers' bargaining power. What leverage exists for workers who have the "right" to strike if it can only be used "theoretically?" Similarly, it is convenient to endorse the presence of police to avoid damages, incidents, and difficulties (233) during strikes, but is this, in fact, what occurs?

What happens in a lock-out? Can workers demand police protection? More information on lockouts would have been appropriate since many classic examples exist of employees' weakness in a lockout. There are other illustrations of the pro-management bias which mars the overall value of the book as a text (it does not bear a union print shop logo).

Willes' book will be employed by a good number since its perspective is consistent with most teaching of labour relations. Students should not have much trouble with it. It will not necessarily replace other texts such as Phillips' work. Additional texts from labour's viewpoint would be a welcome addition to the bibliography of Canadian labour relations.

Foster J.K. Griezic
Carleton University

Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1984).

THIS IS A finely-crafted and significant study of the Massachusetts provincial troops during the Seven Years' War. Fred Anderson's lucidly written *A People's Army*, in my view, is the best available book dealing with war and society in pre-revolutionary British North America. Anderson is not at all interested in the old-fashioned military history — in why battles were won or lost and why and how one general may have outmanoeuvred another. What concerns Anderson is how the war experience, in the 1754 to 1761 period, may have affected what he calls the "common frame of reference" of those thousands of Yankees who were caught up in the often bitter struggle between the French and British for control of North America.

According to Robert Wohl, who has greatly influenced the central thrust of Anderson's thesis, what is particularly essential for "the formation of a generational consciousness is some common frame of reference." And such a "frame of reference" is "always derived from great historical events like wars" which provide the necessary "markers and signposts with which people impose order on their past and link their individual fates with those of the communities in which they live." For Anderson, the "frame of reference" is, of course, the Seven Years' War — in which almost one in three Massachusetts male residents eligible for military service actually participated. The war, it is argued, "caused the young men of the Bay colony, at a crucial point in their lives, to experience their identity as a distinct people." (110) Because of their commitment to "contractual principles," which seemed to be at the heart of Massachusetts military service, as well as to a powerful sense of "providentialism," the members of "A People's Army" found themselves at odds with the British regulars whose military and theological world was radically different from their own. The Massachusetts Army was not a highly disciplined hierarchy of officers and soldiers but rather "a confederation of tiny bands, bound together less by the formal relationships of command than by an organized network of kinship and personal loyalties." (48) And during the war the Yankee perception of what an army should be like was strengthened profoundly by the harsh realities of what the British "lobster backs" were actually like. This realization, which had at its core a growing anti-British sentiment, helped to shape the contours of a provincial sense of identity which, in turn, influenced the transformation of a generation of ardent Anglo-Americans into patriot revolutionaries.

Anderson organizes his book into three major sections. The first "The Contexts of War" deals with how the Seven Years' War generally affected Massachusetts and how and why the people's army was recruited. The second section, the best part of the book, is concerned with the actual experience of war. There is a superb chapter on everyday life in the provincial army as well as an evocative

and discerning discussion of how fighting actually affected the volunteers. In the final section, Anderson discusses the possible meaning of the war by focusing on the importance of contractual principles, as well as Yankee providentialism. There are also a number of very useful appendices which provide, among other things, numerical data buttressing some of the arguments put forward in the book.

Yet despite the obvious strengths of the study, there are at least two major problems. First, Anderson has not been able to support in a persuasive manner his basic thesis that the war actually gave the provincials a special sense of "their identity as a distinct people." (223) This point is asserted a number of times but not convincingly demonstrated. May it not also be argued that the Seven Years' War merely strengthened a sense of provincial identity which had clicked into fragile place during King George's War (1744-8)? This is not to suggest that the Seven Years' War was of no consequence in shaping a Yankee sense of identity. What is being suggested is that the Massachusetts response to the war merely mirrored other earlier responses to war and British regulars. It is noteworthy that each or the basic themes relating to Anglo-American tensions and an evolving Massachusetts sense of identity that Anderson discusses may also be seen during King George's war. The forces of continuity, in other words, may help to explain evolving Massachusetts attitudes in the 1754 to 1761 period and beyond more than the unique Seven Years' War experience. And if continuity and historical memory stretching back to the seventeenth century is stressed rather than events and personalities in the Seven Years' War period, a far more complex and persuasively crafted historical picture is bound to emerge.

The second problem with the book is historiographical focus. Anderson does not seem to be aware of a number of works written by Canadian scholars in Canadian universities about Massachusetts and war in the pre-1776 period. If some of this work had been looked at, Anderson's perspective might have been somewhat different; certainly the texture of his descriptive analysis would have been in a very real sense, richer and fuller. And, moreover, he would have found detailed information about the 2,000 Yankee volunteers who served in Nova Scotia in 1755. The point should be stressed, however, that this information would have strengthened rather than weakened the arguments being put forward by Professor Anderson.

Despite this criticism, *A People's Army* is a landmark study. It is military and social history as it should be written. And it will, I am sure, significantly affect the way in which North American colonial historians write about war and society for many years to come.

G.A. Rawlyk
Queen's University

David Bensman, *The Practice of Solidarity: American Hat Finishers in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1985).

HATTERS OCCUPY A unique place in the history of North American labour. Second only to the much more intensively studied printers, the hat finishers organized one of the first national trade unions during the mid-1850s. Half a century later, hatters stood at the centre of legal and labour history when, in a Supreme Court decision, the United Hatters of North America were the losers in a ruling that subjected organized workers to the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Unions were no longer exempt from prosecution for conspiracy to restrain trade and a key weapon in the labour movement's defensive arsenal, the boycott, was undercut by the law. *Loewe v. Lawlor*, the Supreme Court judgement in favour of the German immigrant hat manufacturer, Dietrich E. Loewe, and against the hatters' union, threatened 240 Connecticut hatters with loss of their

homes, bank accounts, and other property, ordering these workers — many of whom had not approved of or participated in the original 1902 strike against Loewe that initiated the legal assault — to pay the immense sum of $252,130 in damages.

The hatters never paid. American Federation of Labor officials organized a "Hatters' Day" early in 1916 and collected contributions to defray the costs of defeat. But the hatters were crippled and organized labour's turn-of-the-century drive was stopped in its tracks. Between 1902 and 1907 the number of hatters' union shops in the United States declined by 43 per cent, and in those workplaces where the union remained its power was curbed. Along with the Buck Stove and Range decision, and in conjunction with the emergence of scientific management, invigorated employers' associations, mass production techniques, and Americanization programs, *Loewe v. Lawlor* spelled the harsh and abrupt end to an Indian Summer of trade union activism. From 1902 through 1922 North American workers faced a concerted open-shop drive that pitted workers' power against capital and the state; the market and the law proved useful tools in this two-decade long effort to discipline unionists, radicals, and supposedly dangerous aliens. Organized labour had reason to be as mad as a hatter.

David Bensman's *The Practice of Solidarity* is about all of this, about how and why hatters came to occupy the place they did in early twentieth-century class relations and about why, perhaps, the phrase "mad as a hatter" came into popular usage. For these words, like many in our language, reflect the world view of capital. To early employers during the Industrial Revolution, the working hatter's insistence upon autonomy and independent action, alongside of his uncontrollable anger when these badges of respectability were trampled upon by upstart masters, must have indicated a personality beyond economic rationality and the marketplace, a personality as unfathomable as it was irksome. Class hostilities bred early class incomprehension. "As mad as a hatter," might well have been one irate master's response to a set of actions by an employee determined to assert that he was and would remain, masterless. Like Defoe's fictional cloth worker, such men lived under the proclamation, "I am *my own Master*."

Bensman sketches the development of the nineteenth-century hatting industry all too briefly, introducing the reader to the expansion of markets and concentration of production in the Philadelphia-Boston corridor that took place between 1860-80. He touches on the work process and the instabilities characteristic of a trade based on fashion, but his energies are expended most extensively in detailing the hatters' customs, symbolic attachments, rituals, craft identity, convivial drinking, and independence:

> We unto no bosses humble
> When our trade begins to flag
> When they begin to growl and grumble
> We resent and give the bag [quit]

In the pages of this book we have as thorough a presentation of one craft's culture as modern American labour historians have been able to assemble. Bensman's elaborate discussions of hatters' language, tramping, and values lead him toward the formalized structures of trade union regulations that aimed to preserve this culture and control the workplace.

Until the depression of 1893, Bensman claims, hat finishers were able to preserve this way of life; limiting the supply of labour, cherishing their uniqueness and distinctiveness, excluding outsiders, and keeping firmly held trade secrets, theirs was a life of craft solidarity. A national union developed, but not until the 1880s did it even begin to encroach upon the local autonomy that harboured and nourished apprenticeship regulations, work sharing, antagonism to machinery, the travelling system, and shopfloor control.

This outline of a particular practice of solidarity thus extends significantly our knowledge of nineteenth-century American labour. But like other recent studies it is inhibited by its one-sided appreciation of working-class culture and struggle. Dominated by romanticism and voluntarism, the pages of Bensman's book are studded with passages that see only the positive and creative aspects of hatters' experience, only the virtue and not the hard necessity. As hatters acclimatized to the impersonality of wage labour in an industry fluctuating constantly according to shifts in taste, seasonal output, and the erratic nature of the larger economy, for instance, Bensman writes of their capacity to adapt with "amiable flippancy." In what must be one of the most understated accounts of the ways in which a group of workers handled the pressures of the capitalist economy, Bensman suggests that "hatters tended to prefer unsteadiness, variety, and adventure," commenting that, "If unemployment went on for too long, or if credit were stretched past the breaking point, journeymen took to the road, traveling to a hat shop in a nearby district, where they would meet old friends, make new ones, and learn a bit about the world outside their town." (47-9) This kind of reading of the hatters' experience conditions a particular analytic failure in *The Practice of Solidarity*.

While Bensman details the struggles of the 1878-93 years, outlining the battle against prison labour, the failure of an 1885 Orange boycott campaign, the violence of a South Norfolk strike, and the frustrating attempts to secure peace in the hatting trade, he avoids central issues. As the political economy of North America began to dance to the different drummer of monopoly and consequent corporate reorganization, workers in various craft unions and previously unorganized sectors launched a set of challenges that revealed economic, political, and cultural alternatives as well as conflicting programs. Where were the hatters in all of this?

A part of the answer to this question lies in Bensman's treatment of the search for labour-management cooperation and the signing of trade agreements from the mid-1880s on. In return for the closed shop and union label, the hatters "whitewashed" those workers who had never belonged to the union as well as those who had scabbed, honoured price bills for six months, and agreed to compulsory arbitration of future differences between labour and capital. In locals like that of Danbury, treasuries swelled, membership expanded, and labour peace reigned for a few years, until technological change and depressed markets in the 1890s forced abandonment of the strategy of conciliation. Nowhere does Bensman address the extent to which this process, albeit one of class struggle, produced in Richard Price's terms, "a mixed legacy" in which one part of unionism's record was "adoption of a partial responsibility for the preservation of work discipline."

Bensman's account also examines the connection between the hatters' union and the Knights of Labor, but he skirts the fact that hatters came late to the Order, saw it as a means to a narrow defensive end, and contributed no brainworkers in labour's reform cause to compare with other national unions such as the cigarmakers, printers, moulders, or carpenters. Indeed, when the Hat Finishers National Trade Association and, later, the United Hatters, joined first the Knights of Labor and then the American Federation of Labor, it was to promote their label rather than stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their class allies. If such self-serving actions should not be too curtly dichotomized from more substantive forms of solidarity, it is nevertheless clear that in their almost obsessive regard for the union label as a panacea for the craft's problems, hatters limited themselves to the point that they lacked the depth of reform vision of many other Gilded Age workers. During both

the Great Upheaval of the 1880s and the revival of unionism that exploded the American Federation of Labor to prominence in the post-depression years of the late 1890s, the hatters were more marginal than influential, more defeated than defiant.

Throughout all of this the hat finishers clung to a deeply-rooted sectionalism. Not until their union lost 23 shops and a thousand members in the depression of the mid-1890s did craft exclusivism give way to an attempt to unite hat finishers and the less skilled makers in the United Hatters of North America, a centralized business-like union created in 1896. Bensman regards this development as the culmination of the practice of solidarity, the transformation of the hatters from a craft to a class-conscious group. Within six years this invigorated and extended solidarity, reinforced by hatters' boycotts supported by the entire American labour movement, had forced all but twelve firms to accept unionism. "The hatters had preserved their culture of work," concludes Bensman, "not by clinging to archaic customs, but by creating new institutions and new forms of struggle." (208)

And yet by 1902 these new institutions and forms of struggle were driven to defeat by hostile employers and legal challenges. It is possible to see the hatters' history in the year 1896-1915 not, as Bensman sees it, as the logical outcome of a heroic culture, but rather as the last desperate gasp of a dying culture. The hatters' defeat in the *Loewe v. Lawlor* decision was in fact an expression of this, the Supreme Court ruling taking specific legal aim at a weakened and marginalized group of workers to make a larger point in law that more powerful labour elements would then have to contend with. Such labour elements would survive and battle precisely because, unlike the hatters, they had more than the union label behind them. Indeed, some, like Brewery Workers' editor W.E. Trautmann, recognized what the hat finishers' complex and contradictory history revealed: "The union label is practically the manufacturers' label." It is no accident that in the massive class struggles of the 1902-22 years, the hatters were virtually nowhere to be seen. Having created a national union dependent upon the label as both a carrot of conciliation to hand to the employer and a stick to wave militantly in the face of class enemies reluctant to concede the union shop and a trade agreement, the hatters were literally up a creek without a paddle when the *Loewe v. Lawlor* decision outlawed the boycott. Avoiding the organizational and ideological debates that grew out of the 1880s, and having the poor fortune to be situated in a trade where mechanization undercut skill and the importance of the product faded in the face of capital's new capacities, the hatters' eggs were all too precariously placed in the label basket.

The Practice of Solidarity can thus be read against itself. It is possible to see the hatters as pioneers of labour organization and workplace autonomy throughout the nineteenth century whose day had passed by the moment Bensman chooses to argue was their finest hour of solidarity. Where this book depicts the hatters as leading struggles of consequence and forging new strategies in the 1878-1915 period, the historical record may more realistically indicate a set of stands taken when it was too late, of battles fought in ways that were as limited as they were futile. The power of this book, its sensitive and rich explanation of a working-class group's cultural practices and values, is that it provides us with much that we need to know if we are to answer questions about the strengths and limitations of working-class experience. For whether historians regard the hatters as the very foundation of the House of Labour or as a charming antique in its sitting room, they will have to turn to Bensman's book to explain their assessment.

Bryan D. Palmer
Queen's University

Nick Salvatore, ed., *Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography of Samuel Gompers* (Ithaca: New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations Press 1984).

NICK SALVATORE'S first major work, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* was published in 1982. Its argument was that throughout his life Debs was motivated by the ideal of "citizenship" he learned in small town America. In a classic example of Herbert Gutman's thesis, Debs' first steps into unionism — through the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen — were supported by small business people in the community, since they expressed that sense of "citizenship" rather than class conflict. Only gradually, and almost reluctantly, did Debs become aware that the growth of big business had transformed America, and reduced its upstanding worker-citizens to proverbial "cogs in the wheel." A logical process, therefore, drove Debs to the vision of American socialist democracy which he imposed on the Socialist Party of America, and spent his life propagating. American workers, according to Salvatore, saw in Debs the epitome of their own lives and experience. They flocked to hear him and for this reason he was indispensable to all factions of the Socialist Party. But they did not vote for him. Logic may have driven Debs to preserve traditional "manhood" in socialism, but most workers still found their sense of citizenship fulfilled in capitalist America. Thus, although Salvatore often faults Debs for particular aspects of his leadership, this was not the cause of the socialists' failure. Rather it is the old story: "The cultural hegemony that girded [American] society proved more powerful than they had expected."

From Salvatore's *Debs* it is interesting to turn to his interpretation of Samuel Gompers, the other member of the famous duo that dominated American labour history. If Debs, in essence, got it wrong, did Gompers fare any better? In the 30-page essay that introduces this new edition of Gompers' memoirs, Salvatore gives an ambiguous answer. Gompers' immigrant status meant that he escaped the traditional American culture. Experience itself, plus the Marxist milieu of the early New York labour movement, taught that class conflict was a fact. To succeed in the conflict, wage earners had to organize into trade unions — the means of both "immediate improvements" and of "ultimate emancipation." Politics, the traditional vehicle of American protest, were simply divisive of class solidarity. Gompers' economist vision was thus originally quite radical, but faced with the realities of twentieth-century capitalism, it was easily transformable into an idea of organized labour as only one factor in a pluralistic society. In this circuitous fashion and in a personal development that was almost the inverse of Debs', Gompers laid the foundation of the modern American labour movement and his imprint is still recognizable today.

Nevertheless, Gompers was guilty of self-deception. Skilled workers may have had a natural home in trade unions, but Gompers never came to terms with the fact that organizations of skilled workers were less and less relevant in an industrial America increasingly populated by unskilled immigrants. Gompers' "pluralism" also involved cooperation with industrialists through organizations like the National Civic Federation, but he refused to acknowledge that the same capitalists who talked of collective bargaining, and who even gave legal assistance on occasion to AFL unions, remained hostile to unions in their own factories. Meanwhile Gompers joined them in attacking the IWW, an organization that at least tried to address the question of the unskilled. Again, political activity, which was finally forced upon Gompers when the legal basis of trade unionism was being undermined, turned into a hollow victory when the courts squashed what lit-

tle legislative relief had been achieved. Meanwhile, socialists who had hoped for some kind of dialogue with the AFL were left out in the cold. Only World War I saved Gompers' reputation: in return for his cooperation with the government he achieved a kind of respectability and position. In the shadow of this temporary success he wrote his memoirs, but again he scarcely acknowledged that the vision he thought was realized was dissolving in the anti-union aura of the early 1920s.

Salvatore is thus highly critical of aspects of Gompers' leadership, just as he was of Debs'. Had Gompers retained the more flexible attitudes of his youth he might have honestly addressed the problem of industrial unionism and sought a more constructive dialogue with others in the working-class movement. Salvatore reminds us that there was another tradition in America besides that imposed by the capitalists. "Had Samuel Gompers been able to discover the power and vitality of that American tradition, and joined to it his exemplary abilities as an organizer and administrator, his achievement and his *legacy to succeeding generations might* have been even more impressive." This conclusion seems to present a less fatalistic vision of American working-class history than one finds in the biography of Debs.

Salvatore's edited version of Gompers' autobiography is about a quarter of the original length. The parts he has chosen are those that best relate this theme of contrast between the relative openness, experimentation, and even bravura of Gompers' early years on the one hand, and the dogmatism, cringing search for respectability, and empty self-congratulation of his mature years, on the other. Curiously, even the photographs seem to suggest this contrast. Yet, at the same time, he does Gompers justice. The early sections on the post-Civil War working-class world in New York, probably the best part of the original, constitute a very important document in labour history. The later sections reveal a man with narrowing vision, but one who genuinely felt that his options were limited. In his edited text, Salvatore combines chapters and even parts of separate sentences, to make a continuous narrative, omitting what he calls the author's repetitions. He also spares the reader Gompers' views, for instance, on music and drama. He provides no indication in the text of where omissions occur, but he does provide a useful biographical glossary. Whether there is need for a cheap abbreviated version of these memoirs, when the original is easily available, especially since the Kelly reprint of 1967, is a matter of opinion. This reviewer, at any rate, enjoyed rereading the autobiography in this form.

W.M. Dick
University of Toronto

Jonathan Dembo, *Union and Politics in Washington State 1885-1935* (New York and London: Garland Publishing 1983).

THIS BOOK'S TITLE is a fair indication of what the prospective reader faces: a lengthy narrative concentrating on organized labour's political initiatives in Washington State over a 50-year period. Little else is illuminated in the more than 600 page text, and only those readers with a strong interest in the state's history will find the book worth reading carefully.

Dembo suggests past scholars have been pre-occupied with "a few incidents, organizations and issues," and declares his intention "to add continuity and perspective to these scattered efforts." Unfortunately this goal eludes him, and one learns very little about the wider context of the Everett or Centralia massacres, the notable IWW presence in the state, or the 1919 strike — the "few incidents" referred to in the preface. Instead, the book concentrates on the activities and changing political agendas of a seemingly endless parade of acronyms. No less than 99 of these are listed in an appendix.

The book's weaknesses are not the outcome of poor or hasty research. The fastidious may object to the number of typographical errors and the occasionally sloppy annotation, but such minor flaws do not mask Dembo's impressive knowledge of his subject. His scholarship, however, is confined to a very narrow field. The focus on organized labour and its membership in successive political coalitions offers Dembo little scope for fulfilling his aim "to explore and explain the causes of their behaviour." The book's preoccupations lead to the common failing of most institutional labour history: a neglect of the social and industrial lives of working women and men.

Nonetheless, the topic itself can not be blamed for all the book's shortcomings. Dembo's inability to move beyond the chronological narrative mars his detailed study of the state's labour movement. Chapters begin with several paragraphs describing the economic conditions prevailing in the years dealt with in the following pages but, while a useful introduction, this alone can not explain subsequent events. Such implicit economic reductionism is the extent of the analysis given to the reader, resulting in an often frustrating lack of depth.

Dembo's major source is the records of the Washington State Federation of Labor. Too often he gives the impression of having not just consulted these records but also of having adopted the federation's perspective. This is obvious, for example, in his treatment of the radical-conservative fight which raged within the Washington labour movement in the first two decades of the century. Describing the events leading up to Seattle's 1919 general strike, Dembo emphasizes the vacuum left by the attendance of prominent state labour leaders at a conference in Chicago, as well as the distraction of the opening of the state legislature:

> This removed the wisest, most experienced, and most responsible . . . from the scene at the critical moment. In their absence the rank and file . . . became a volatile and leaderless body. . . . In the absence of these moderating forces the radicals accelerated their revolutionary time-table. (185, 187)

The militants successfully convinced the Seattle Central Labor Council to poll their membership on whether to strike in sympathy with the city's metal trades. Dembo admits that "the vast majority of SCLC locals voted to endorse the sympathy strike, some by enormous majorities." (190) The stage was thus set for Seattle's brief (six days) general strike, to which Dembo devotes a whole page. His sympathies clearly lie with the "ablest leaders" (188) who opposed both strike and "revolutionary time-table." Whether this preference is ideologically inspired or, more likely, simply Whiggish approval for the side that ultimately secured control of the labour movement, the consequences make for less than satisfying history.

In his account of the events culminating in the strike and more generally in his treatment of the ongoing division in Washington labour — by turns, radical vs. conservative, industrial unionist vs. craft unionist, new immigrant vs. old immigrant, unskilled vs. skilled, third partyists vs. non-partisan lobbyists — Dembo delineates the two sides in stark terms, with virtually no exploration of the meaning or significance of the opposing positions. His discussion of the trial of Paul Mohr, a 60-year-old activist charged in 1925 with being a Communist Party member typifies this approach. Mohr was tried by a committee of the Seattle Central Labor Council, which recommended "that the charges be 'not sustained.'" Despite this verdict, the leadership of the SCLC expelled Mohr as well as five others who were similarly charged. Dembo concludes that, "The only surprising thing was the narrowness of the vote: seventy-eight to seventy-one. Apparently many delegates still sympathized with Mohr." (385) Incidents like this deserve to be explored in some detail, to uncover

the dynamics of that tension. Simply to be told who won is not enough; the real question, surely, is *why?*

Regional studies can provide a useful perspective on the national scene, detailed close-ups modifying the broader picture. Washington State's labour history is sufficiently at variance with that of the mainstream of the American labour movement to make it an especially appropriate case study. Experiences like the Seattle general strike or the often bloody repression meted out to the Wobblies in Washington fostered ambivalent attitudes — often antagonism — towards the state, the two major political parties, and the conservative policies of the AFL.

Despite this rich past and his clear mastery of the topic, Dembo's book is an uninspiring one. The failure to ask penetrating questions of the mountains of evidence he sifted through results in an often tedious text. Significantly, the major recent contributions to American labour history are conspicuously absent from his bibliography. Dembo also fails to cite the works of Dubofsky, Renshaw, Foner, and Thompson on the IWW, omissions which perhaps explain his superficial analysis of Washington's Wobblies. Labour historians wishing information about organized labour in Washington State now have a useful reference to consult, but those also seeking analysis will be disappointed.

Jeremy Mouat
University of British Columbia

Joan M. Jensen and Sue Davidson, eds., *A Needle, A Bobbin, A Strike: Women Needleworkers in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1984).

IT IS STARTLING to realize that in 1910 "the men's clothing industry was Chicago's largest employer, larger than the much described stockyards," and, by 1911, "62 per cent of all wage earners in New York city were manufacturing women's clothing." (84) Although there have been many studies of the garment industry's famous early twentieth-century organizing strikes, there have been relatively few inquiries which combine descriptions of the immigrant work force with a technological and cultural history of the industry itself. Even fewer studies make any effort to relate those earlier struggles to the present-day situation in American garment shops. The fact that garment workers in general were — and still are — young immigrant women, plus the industry's relative lack of mechanization, seems to have discouraged comprehensive studies such as those on auto, packing-houses, or agricultural implements.

Joan Jensen and Sue Davidson's anthology, *A Needle, A Bobbin, A Strike*, provides a unique view of the garment industry, addressing questions of industrial organization and labour relations as well as the peculiarly female nature of both the work force and the work itself. The volume is refreshing for its attempt to uncover both the process of industrialization in an ancient trade and its new views of some familiar labour struggles. The essays collected here (many are original pieces) trace the history of the sewing industry as a handicraft trade and the effects of mechanization both on the industry and on middle-class consumer culture. The essays also attempt — less successfully — a reevaluation of the major organizing strikes during the early twentieth century and conclude with a sobering view of the industry today.

The most original section of the book is the first, on "Needlework as Art, Craft and Livelihood before 1900." Ava Baron and Susan E. Klepp in a piece entitled, "'If I Didn't Have My Sewing Machine . . .': Women and Sewing-Machine Technology," discuss mechanization in the garment trade much as it has been explored for other industries. In this case, the invention of the sewing machine and the centralization of garment shops triggered the decline of an age-old skill and signaled the workers' loss of control over

conditions of work as well as over the nature of the trade generally. Dressmakers — the élite of the trade — witnessed a decline in status as well as in material conditions by the early nineteenth century. Common seamstresses who never could be described as independent artisans simply saw low prices fall even lower.

"Between 1830 and 1880" the authors argue, "the making of clothing was revolutionized." (25) Standardized measurements and patterns had already been developed by the early nineteenth century, but the invention of the sewing machine in mid-century transformed the trade. The sewing industry did not, however, follow the "textile paradigm." Garment manufacturers did not expand the size of their shops with increased technology. Rather, the limits of the machine itself determined the size of shops and forced manufacturers to seek ever cheaper sources of labour in order to keep costs down. Even modern garment shops remain largely decentralized and dependent on a cadre of "outside" workers. The sewing machine also intensified the division of labour inside garment shops making the work "increasingly routinized and repetitious." (45) While sewing machine operators initially received higher wages than hand seamstresses, the disappearance of hand work and the increase in piecework drove garment wages down by the late nineteenth century. Profit for garment manufacturers came "not by reducing labor requirements but by seeking out cheap labor — poor uneducated women of the American cities of the 19th century, the poor women of Latin America and Asia in the 20th." (52)

The real impetus for expansion in the garment industry came initially from a transformation in the production and marketing of sewing machines, not from changes in clothing manufacture. While poor seamstresses could not provide a large enough market for sewing machines, middle-class housewives during the era of "true womanhood" might. And, indeed, the sewing machine became "one of the first mass-marketed consumer durables." (37) The home sewing machine was neither a practical investment nor a symbol of domestic frugality; in the late nineteenth century rather, it became a "symbol of a family's middle-class respectability." Only families already well off could afford to invest in a sewing machine.

Deborah Warner's essay on J.T. Stewart's Philadelphia department store reinforces this point. Warner reveals the "upstairs-downstairs" quality of consumer life by the 1890's in which the paradise of consumption hid the downstairs sweated sewing rooms. The sewing machine came to symbolize both the sunken-eyed operator and the practical housewife-consumer. As such, therefore, the popularization of the sewing machine (i.e., the "parlor machine") did not so much collapse as reinforce barriers between middle-class housewives and garment workers. The effect of the sewing machine (centralization and the lowering of prices) on garment workers effectively excluded sewing women from middle-class respectability.

The middle section of the book contains several essays on the "Great Uprisings." Detailing the industry's landmark organizing strikes of the early twentieth century, these accounts take the story beyond the Hudson River and discuss the process of unionization, the relationships between women and trade unionists and between working-class women and middle-class allies in Rochester, New York, Chicago, and Cleveland. These essays extend familiar themes to the hinterland, looking at strike strategy, women's role, and the problem of working with middle-class allies outside the New York City context. Although the essays take us beyond the geographic confines of previous studies, they introduce no new issues or themes into the discussion. In fact, they read surprisingly like the "old labour history" in their focus on

organizational strategy and leadership decision-making. The most intriguing essay in the section returns to New York City. Ann Schofield takes another look at the "Uprising of the 20,000" to uncover the "Making of a Labor Legend." She argues that the interests of historians over the years have pulled different and ever deeper layers of meaning out of the garment strikes. Schofield concludes that the "historiography of the 'Uprising of the 20,000' reflects the state of the art of labor history . . . from the institutional historians of the ILGWU to later attempts at workers' history . . . and finally to feminist concerns, one gets a sense of an ever enlarging stage featuring the strike as a social drama." (179)

The book ends with a section called "Inside and Outside the Unions, 1920-1980," which addresses the problems of class and gender loyalty within the garment unions of the twentieth century. The last two essays, on the Farah strike and on Hispanic workers, bring the story up to date. Reading these essays, particularly Elizabeth Weiner and Hardy Green's "A Stitch in Our Time: New York's Hispanic Garment Workers in the 1980s," one in struck by how little conditions have changed. The major difference between the concerns of the early twentieth century workers and those of today reflects the one major change in the nature of the garment work force. Unlike the "working girls" of 1910, garment workers today are older, married, and often have children. In this way garment workers represent a dilemma faced by growing numbers of contemporary working women. While child labour may have disappeared from the industry, children have not. The presence of children in the sweatshops, the authors argue, indicates the burden placed upon garment workers and their children in the absence of day-care facilities." (286) The lack of daycare "is perhaps one of the most stressful aspects of a garment worker's life, both inside and outside the workplace." (287) Just as the early twentieth-century unions generally remained blind to the needs of women workers (for female organizers, for example, or simply for representation in the union), the unions today only rarely address critical issues in women's lives such as daycare.

Contemporary garment workers rely "upon women's traditional sources of support — family, religion, and a sisterhood of coworkers." (294) Indeed, the conclusion to be drawn upon finishing this volume might be the futility and frustration of seeking change in an industry and in unions which have changed so little in the past century. None of the essays provide any positive evaluation of the union's impact on women's work. There is little comparison, for example of union versus non-union wages or of any other specific benefit unionized workers may enjoy. Whatever improvements garment workers experience, it seems they have come in spite of and not because of the union. However, despite the union's weaknesses and blind spots, even the most critical essays recognize the importance of collective organization.

Laurie Coyle, Gail Hershatter, and Emily Honig, for example, in "Women at Farah: an Unfinished Story," point to the meaning of collective action among women. "The Chicanas who comprise the majority of strikers learned that they could speak and act on their own behalf as women and workers, lessons they will not forget." (276) While the issues facing women garment workers may not change dramatically the women themselves have never remained entirely passive cogs in the industrial or in the trade union machine.

Susan Levine
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Valerie Jean Conner, *The National War Labor Board: Stability, Social Justice, and the Voluntary State in World War I* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1983).

WOODROW WILSON created the National War Labor Board in the spring of 1918 to try to stop the quits, strikes, and lockouts that were increasing across the United States and threatening its military performance. The board was organized in a tripartite fashion, with five of its members representing business, five, labour unions, and two, the "public."

As Professor Valerie Jean Conner relates, the business representatives were heads of firms strategic to war production. Two were top officials of the National Industrial Conference Board, an élite business organization, and, as members of the committee which wrote its report to the federal Council of National Defense, had helped plan the Wilson administration's industrial policies. The labour leaders on the board also headed institutions key to military production — the United Mine Workers and the International Association of Machinists, for example — or, like the president of the United Garment Workers, were individuals noted for their support of arbitration and mediation. The NWLB was chaired by former president William Howard Taft and Frank Walsh, an attorney renowned for his championship of working people's (though not necessarily union) causes. Despite immense differences in background and personality, Conner shows that Taft and Walsh developed a good working relationship which enabled them to control the board.

Although it lasted barely a year, the NWLB represents a significant moment in the history of efforts in the United States to use the federal government to manage labour-capital relations, a project usually thought to have begun with Theodore Roosevelt's appointment of a presidential commission to resolve the anthracite coal strike of 1902 (although it might be more accurate to look back to the Freedmen's Bureau). The most interesting aspect of Conner's book is her conception of the NWLB as a manifestation of a "voluntary state." In the early twentieth century, social scientists, some few corporate heads, and moderate union leaders came to believe that the United States needed a new form of representation in government — representation by interest groups, in particular labour and management — to supplement the representation of individual citizens in Congress which had prevailed since the age of Jefferson. Engagement in war increased the desire for representation and cooperation between labour and capital. Such arrangements had to be voluntary, however, Conner stresses. After all, the nation's business people had long thought in laisser faire terms, while the commitment of American trade unionists to "voluntarism" was legendary. What was America fighting for if not "democracy?"

The National War Labor Board reflected this schism. On the one hand, it tackled questions crucial to the economy and polity, covered thousands of firms and millions of workers, was highly prestigious and expertly staffed. On the other hand, its police powers were quite limited, the constitutionality of its work was uncertain, and its jurisdiction was challenged by other federal agencies. What is more, the economic groups appearing before the NWLB often sharply opposed each other — divisions reproduced, if not magnified, within the board itself.

The issues examined by the board included the wages to be paid to the least skilled labourers, the appropriateness of the eight-hour day, the purpose of overtime pay, equal pay for equal work, and the rights of workers to organize in defiance of "yellow-dog" contracts which they had signed with the companies or agreements by corporations and the American Federation of Labor to maintain the status quo for the duration of the war. Conner picks out major examples of conflicts in each area and skillfully describes the board's resolutions. On balance, Conner maintains, the winner was labour. "[T]he NWLB — through awards and publicity — virtually set an unofficial

minimum wage, and in that year [1918], common laborers earned a higher real wage than ever before, . . ." she writes. Regarding workers on publicly-owned institutions like the street-railways, she says: "The joint chairmen's attitude, the frequent increases in fares, and the union's patience combined to facilitate the healthy wage increases that became the *hallmark of the board's work*." The National War Labor Board's union-government majority, Professor Conner concludes, "turned voluntarism . . . into a weapon of semicoercion for liberal ends."

Professor Conner's argument is justifiable as far as it goes, but her perspective is narrow. She generally defines the issues in wartime labour-management battles as monetary. Having done so, it is no wonder that she assumes that labour has won when the NWLB increased union members' wages. But money was not the only question in these matters, for as unions stood before the NWLB they became at least partially dependent on that agency — a dependency on the federal government reestablished and intensified following the creation of the National Labor Relations Board in 1935, the establishment of the second National War Labor Board in 1942, and the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947.

Did the unions not lose something when their leaders bound their organizations to Washington? Consider the shift of the opportunity to resolve labour disputes away from workers toward arbitrators and attorneys, the new insistence that union officials from the top to bottom support — or at least be silent about — United States foreign policy, and the outlawing of secondary boycotts, previously a significant expression of working people's solidarity. These changes were hardly completed in 1918, but they did advance then. Thus if the National War Labor Board "laid the foundation" for the minimum-wage, maximum-hours, and equal-pay laws enacted between the late 1930s and the early 1960s, as Conner quite rightly says, so too did it contribute to unions' loss of vitality during those same years. This shows the need to delve further into the character of the "welfare state," as Conner terms the post-New Deal government.

Beyond that, it would have been useful to place the voluntary state in a comparative perspective. With its labour-*management-government form and its* emphasis on conciliation, the United States' National War Labor Board resembles, at least in a general way, the corporatist institutions created in Germany, France, Italy, and other industrialized nations in the years between the depression of the 1890s and that of the 1930s. Was resistance to state regulation of labour relations much stronger in the United States than elsewhere in these decades, *as we assume? Did regulation of* labour relations take a different, non-governmental, or only partially governmental form in the United States? Conner's insistence that Washington backed off totally from wages, labour relations, and other working-class matters in the 1920s seems questionable, given what we have learned from Ellis Hawley's work on Herbert Hoover as secretary of commerce and president, and economic historians' *new stress on the large size of the federal* budget in those years compared to the pre-war era.

Conner cannot have answered all these questions, but her concept of a "voluntary state" is intriguing. One wishes she had pushed it further.

Ronald W. Schatz
Wesleyan University

David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot, Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1984).

DO HARD TIMES inspire or inhibit social change? Does a deteriorating economy

serve the political cause of conservatives or progressives? While evidence can be mounted on either side of the question, judging from recent experience, the nod would have to go to the forces of the right. Today, Ronald Reagan must contend with Jesse Jackson, and Margaret Thatcher tangles with Arthur Scargill, but ask yourself this: who is winning? The answer is bound to send frustrated radicals on both sides of the Atlantic back to the drawing board.

Public Schools in Hard Times grapples with the impact of a depressed economy on American public schools, and finds that on balance, tradition and continuity prevailed in the contest with innovation and significant change. Despite their grandiose promises, the authors tell the reader very little about public education in recent years, but their account of schooling in the 1930s is sensitive and instructive.

Tyack *et al.* could have "proven" any number of theses. If they had wanted to stress the theme of devastation, they need only have dwelled on the issue of school closings, of which there were 20,000 in the United States by 1934. Had they sought to glorify the tradition of political resistance among American teachers, they could have made a hero out of Professor George Counts and his vigorous band of (socialist) "social reconstructionists." But these important developments capture only a part of the reality.

Public Schools in Hard Times demonstrates the monumental challenge facing scholars attempting to write succinctly and honestly about the social history of a vast nation with enormous regional differences. In this mass of conflicting educational experiences, which was typical? In the end, the reader can only trust that the historian will judge the evidence responsibly and avoid abusing it.

As it did before the Depression, inequality, engendered by race and class, shaped the educational experiences of Americans during the 1930s. Black teachers and students in the rural South bore the greatest burden, while wealthier schools in urban centres, though pinched and squeezed, escaped suffocation. Teachers' salaries were cut, educational "frills" were eliminated, and at a time when Americans were reading more books than ever, library budgets were slashed.

Teachers did not all endure these excisions in silence, but they were not inclined to militant action against largely conservative school boards. The imposition of red-baiting loyalty oaths in 21 states by 1936 kept many potential radicals in line. The professional interests of teachers were represented by organizations like the National Educational Association which chose to defend the cause of education in general, a campaign that could be joined by conservative citizens interested in using schools as agents of social control in hard times. Thus teachers were praised publicly for the sacrifices they made in enduring salary cuts, and attacked with equal intensity if they promoted radical thinking. Security conscious and dedicated to their profession, teachers worked hard, taught larger classes, and made few waves politically, or pedagogically. In these ways, schools of the 1930s reinforced traditional values.

This thesis, at first glance, would be hard to reconcile with an educational historiography hailing the 1930s as an era of progressive change in the classrooms of America. Indeed, there is evidence of child-centred teaching reforms inspired by John Dewey and taken up by groups like the Progressive Educational Association. But the authors find that these experiments were confined largely to affluent school districts, particularly in California, where educators could afford to follow through with innovations initiated before the Depression. In most parts of the country, budget cuts had the effect not of stimulating creativity, but of compelling teachers to retreat to cost-saving, conventional teaching methods. All too often,

"progressive" education was confined to the promotion of efficient management techniques among administrators, and the testing and tracking of students.

American educators even found themselves challenging the progressive educational policies of Roosevelt's New Deal. As part of his national recovery plan, Roosevelt directed federal money to the poorest communities in the country, where training and teaching opportunities were provided to the underprivileged, including unemployed workers. Educators opposed this both because it violated the spirit of "professionalism" by encouraging the "untrained" to teach, and because it kept federal money out of the hands of educators who might have been inclined to raise the salaries of middle-class teachers. Cleverly, then, Roosevelt controlled public spending on education, portrayed the educators as self-serving professionals, and enhanced his reputation as a servant of the poor. Even these reforms, however, were largely smoke and mirrors. For while the New Deal educational package increased the level of literacy and training among the poor, it failed to provide them with enduring employment. That gap was filled more effectively by World War II.

The post-war economic boom gave way in the 1970s and early 1980s to a period of sustained budget cuts in public education, mirroring in important respects the events of the 1930s. Once again, the authors find that wealthier Americans met the challenge more effectively than those in poorer regions. Class and race remain powerful determinants in the provision of educational opportunity.

But this section, covering less than one-sixth of the book, promises far more than it delivers. The authors' discussion is couched in conditional language, and unlike their earlier chapters, the research here appears selective and hurried. Rather shamelessly, the historians and the publishers have sought to exploit the current malaise in American education in order to market a book about the past, a probable consequence of academics finding their own way of coping with market pressures in hard times.

Paul Axelrod
York University

Hugh Rockoff, *Drastic Measures: A History of Wage and Price Controls in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1984).

SOME ECONOMISTS boldly predict North America has entered a long-lasting era of low inflation and declining energy costs. However, the continuing inability of governments in Canada and the United States to devise a strategy to deal with their respective budget deficits suggests inflation, and the concomitant rumblings about the need for price and wage controls to keep a lid on rising living costs may not have receded as far into the past as most might wish.

For that reason, this book merits attention. While the book's analysis of the American experience with controls is not directly transposable to Canada, enough similarities exist to provide a valuable contribution to the study of the effectiveness of controls in both the Canadian and United States economies. The author, a professor of economics at Rutgers University, shuns a detailed econometrics-based approach to controls for a more readable account of the various restraint programmes applied in crisis periods in American history from the revolutionary war to Vietnam. At issue is whether experiences from the past with controls can help shape future attempts to limit any return of the inflation of the past decade.

Not surprisingly, Rockoff concludes that controls may provide limited benefit in the short term, but, as time passes, the value of controls decreases as the web of restraints required to prevent any growth in inflation constantly widens.

Through experience in World War II,

Canada and the United States both discovered that the only effective method of limiting inflation with controls required a much broader programme than just regulating prices. What was needed was a comprehensive system which included wage controls, rationing, regulation of the distribution of goods in short supply, the curtailment of non-essential industries, and government allocation of raw materials between consumer goods manufacturers and munitions producers. Also required was an extensive enforcement administration to insure compliance with regulations and to prevent the growth of black markets that could undermine controlled prices and rationing schemes. As the Canadian and the United States experience demonstrated, this is a programme of economic regimentation acceptable to society only in wartime, and even then the American administration had great difficulty imposing controls, and the results were much less satisfactory than in Canada.

Price restraints were applied during the American Revolution, but only during the limited involvement of the United States in World War I did controls first confront a modern industrial economy. The result, Rockoff concludes, was a slowing of inflation without undue costs to society. Controls broke the inflationary spiral during the two years of war but also led to difficulties over the allocation of supplies and related issues. It would take until World War II before the full scope of this "dark side" to controls became apparent.

In that conflict, a year after Canada rejected selective price controls on key commodities for a universal price freeze in the autumn of 1941, the United States followed suit. Partial price freezes of any sort were doomed to failure because no matter what commodities were controlled, productive resources in the economy would simply be diverted to uncontrolled sectors. As the most important items in the economy usually fell first under selective controls due to public pressure, the diversion of business activity to unregulated sectors of the economy, if allowed to continue unfettered, would soon wreck the nation's war effort.

Although Rockoff barely notes it, Canada provided an excellent example to American administrators of how a total freeze could be implemented successfully. When the United States finally introduced its own programme, the results were identical to those already experienced in Canada. With prices frozen, measurable increases in the cost-of-living index stopped but deterioration occurred in the quality of goods sold to the public as manufacturers fought the squeeze between cost increases for goods often imported and fixed selling prices. Massive evasion of some controls such as gasoline rations ultimately resulted, and further action became necessary to keep a lid on inflation.

Wartime government in Canada and the United States faced a conundrum. To restrain the continually expanding black market required either new controls or increasingly harsh enforcement of existing rules. A decision on the course of action to follow had to be made with the knowledge that at some point enforcement could become so omnipresent that it might generate a revolt among consumers that could endanger the whole price control system and ultimately the wartime economy.

During a war, how much reliance can and must be placed upon patriotic spirit as a substitute for rigid enforcement, to prevent evasion of controls? The two countries had substantially different responses to the question. Canada concluded that it could not afford to divert funds from munitions production for a large scale enforcement effort. As well, the relatively small size of the Canadian economy made a programme of limited enforcement an easier and more successful task than in the United States, where the sheer size of the economy left considerably more room for subtle as well as

much more blatant cheating. The American enforcement response was therefore more comprehensive than in Canada.

Based on that experience, Rockoff concludes that a modern state can control prices only through increasingly widespread regulation and supervision of all facets of economic life — a regimentation considered acceptable in wartime in the name of victory but unlikely to be workable in the normal course of events without the covering logic of a war.

Yet, through his post-war examples, Rockoff does suggest that controls can help in the fight against inflation in some exceptional circumstances such as the Korean and Vietnam war experiences. Of particular interest is the author's linking of monetary policy and money supply growth to price controls. When a conservative approach to money supply growth was applied in the Korean War, controls did help restrain inflation. In the Vietnam era, the government of the United States did not use the opportunity provided by controls to keep a lid on the growth of money supply that might restrict inflation while insuring long-term price stability. The result was the inflation of the 1970s.

As Rockoff has successfully argued, price and related controls can play a valuable role in countering inflation for a time, providing necessary monetary and fiscal restraints are adopted in concert with controls. As experience has shown in both Canada and the United States, controls have a limited lifespan and must be removed as soon as the apparent emergency is over. The alternative is long-term, complete regimentation, a task so costly and complex it would soon cripple the economy.

Christopher Waddell
Toronto

Dudley W. Buffa, *Union Power & American Democracy: The UAW and the Democratic Party 1935-1972* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1984); and Dudley W. Buffa, *Union Power & American Democracy: The UAW and the Democratic Party 1972-1983* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1984).

IN HIS TWO-volume study covering the years 1935-83, Dudley Buffa traces the growing involvement of the United Automobile Workers in the affairs of the Michigan Democratic Party. He concludes that the UAW had "a stranglehold" on the state party by 1972, and thereafter took over its leadership. He relies primarily on interviews with party and labour officials, newspapers, published works, and his experience as administrative assistant to the Michigan speaker of the house, legislative campaign director for the party, and special assistant to Senator Philip Hart, to form his conclusions. The materials on which Buffa relies for his information are the source of both the strengths and weaknesses of his study.

In the first volume (1935-72), the author examines the influence of the UAW in four areas of party activity: the efforts to form and maintain the liberal-labour coalition that took control of the party in 1948 and led Michigan into the ranks of the two-party states; the workings of the state legislature; campaigns and elections in Detroit and several of its surrounding suburbs (an area that was critical to the fortunes of the party); and party reform movements of the late 1960s. In each area, Buffa argues that organized labour, either in the form of the Michigan AFL-CIO, whose majority was comprised of UAW members, or the UAW itself, exerted a decisive influence on the course of events. Its labour pool, financial contributions, and endorsement policies and decisions, were instrumental in ridding the party of the influence of the Teamsters, electing Democrats to statewide offices, and selecting state party chairs. Its views regarding the necessity of tax reform and the form it should take, combined with its influence over a number of Democratic state legislators, resulted in a delay in the

passage of tax reform in the mid-1960s that the party had favoured for several years. Labour participated actively and successfully in mayoralty, state, and national legislative races, particularly in and around Wayne County (Detroit), where many union members lived. Finally, the UAW, which had withdrawn from the AFL-CIO in 1968, successfully threw its support to a candidate for state chairman in 1969 in the hopes that he could steer the party along a more moderate, less divisive, path. In 1972, it reached decisions regarding candidates for various state offices and then forced party elements to reach agreement on the slate. Buffa concludes his first volume by noting, "The UAW had demonstrated that it had the power to take control of the Michigan Democratic Party."

In his second volume (1972-83), Buffa describes how the UAW took and exercised control of the party. The new state chairman, who firmly supported labour and worked in steady consultation with UAW leaders, and the UAW Community Action Program director took the lead in attempting to "win back the allegiance of the white blue-collar workers spread through the metropolitan suburbs in Detroit" who had strayed from the party over such issues as busing and abortion. Focusing on economic issues, traditionally of major concern to those whom they were wooing, they effectively muffled the voices of the left through the formation of the "unity caucus" comprised of "labor, its allies, and those who wanted to remain in its good graces. . . ." The caucus met before each meeting of the state central committee and adopted a position on each item of importance that was to be addressed by it. "With matters already decided, debate [in the state central committee] diminished and open dissent became almost as rare as it was useless." This state of affairs lasted until the late 1970s, when the black caucus from Detroit, including influential union members, broke with the state chairman over the question of affirmative action and Michigan's black representation on the Democratic National Committee. In 1982, with worsened economic conditions, a conservative Republican administration in power in Washington, and a moderate Republican governor, who had good relations with the black Democratic mayor of Detroit, about to retire, Democrats closed ranks in support of James Blanchard for governor. UAW leaders and the state chairman had urged Blanchard's entry into the race at an early date. As he assumed the governorship (the first Democrat to do so in twenty years), the UAW-Democratic Party relationship was as solid as it had ever been during its 35 year existence.

Buffa's study is a good introduction to the role played by organized labour in one of the more important state parties in the country. Secondary literature on the Michigan Democrats is quite limited, and almost non-existent for the 1960s and 1970s, the years to which the author devotes most of his attention. His use of interviews is enlightening, particularly regarding the UAW's role in the party in and around Detroit from 1960 through the mid-1970s, the increasingly important role played by the black Trade Union Leadership Council in the politics of Detroit, and the UAW's difficulty, along with that of the party, in working with a constituency that became increasingly polarized over the issues of race relations and personal freedoms. His discussion of the state chairman's subordination to organized labour leadership in the 1970s is based on a persuasive blend of interviews and correspondence of the principals involved. And Buffa's experience in the Michigan House and Democratic Party has helped him to describe "methods of influence" exercised by the UAW over members of the state legislature.

But this account falls short, however, in adequately assessing the involvement of labour in, and its contributions to, the

state Democratic Party. This is largely because the author makes inadequate use of the abundance of primary materials available on the Michigan AFL-CIO, the UAW, and the state party itself. The papers of the Michigan AFL-CIO at the Walter Reuther Library in Detroit, for example, shed light on that organization's attempts — apparently unsuccessful — to reach some sort of agreement with the liberal-labour coalition governor on gubernatorial appointments; its efforts to establish channels of communication between itself and the governor through a policy committee that included UAW leadership; its crucial contribution to the 1950 and 1952 gubernatorial recounts both in Wayne County and vital outstate areas; its financial difficulties of the early 1950s; its patient involvement in spring elections (*the most difficult of elections* for the liberal-labour coalition to win in its early years); its creation of a 40-person volunteer legislative analysts' committee, composed of academics, to assist with new, existing, and pending legislation; and the work of its legislative representative. The papers of the UAW political arm include correspondence and memos concerning financial contributions to both candidates and the party itself, as well as information on its involvement in voter registration drives and model organizational efforts in outstate counties. The papers of the state party, available at the Michigan Historical Collections in Ann Arbor, raise a number of interesting questions that should be pursued regarding the relationship between the unity caucus, the state chair, and the UAW and their relationship to the large policy committee created after the 1973 convention to develop party policy and the state platform. And party materials related to campaigns would have enhanced the author's discussions, at times rather brief, of labour's contributions to the campaigns of the 1970s. Buffa addresses several of these aspects of labour's political involvement but his sources simply do not allow him to explore matters as intensively as he should.

In the final analysis, the reader finishes Buffa's study longing for more. His work provides an important framework for the study of labour's role in Michigan's Democratic Party and also provides information on the role of labour in the national Democratic Party, a topic of considerable interest. Much more research, however, is required before historians can properly assess and define that role.

Christine Weideman
University of Michigan

David F. Noble, *Forces of Production: A Social History of Industrial Automation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1984).

THE TITLE of this book is misleading. It seems to refer to one of Marx's most complex concepts. Noble's "forces of production," however, are mainly ideological — the power of ideas and of social control. Nor does the book deal with the social process of automation in general but only with its inception. The second part of the study, called "social choices in machine design," is the core of the book. More precisely, its subject is "the ideological choices in programmable machine-tool design." Those interested in the history of technology will want to proceed immediately to this second part.

Noble uses an entertaining, provocative, and journalistic style, often reminiscent of Tom Wolfe, heavily laden with adjectives and connotations. For instance, he describes the post-war technical atmosphere around MIT as a "new computer based ideology of total control . . . [it] was promoted by an army of technical enthusiasts, peddled by vendors of war-born gadgetry, subsidized by the military in the name of performance, command and national security, legitimized as technical necessity and celebrated as progress." (57) The pleasant reading experi-

ence, however, does not detract from the importance of its analysis. Destined to be disputed and controversial, *Forces of Production* should set the agenda for much future inquiry.

Noble reintroduces the notion of social intent in the understanding of technical development, drawing inspiration from historians of architecture and construction, such as Lewis Mumford. In architecture, a technical artifact puts order into space, constraining the relationships of individuals within the space it organizes. Machine technique and process technology also have an architectural configuration, and Noble's inspiration and insight are therefore well founded and fertile. The architectural configuration of the machine will constrain, in time and space, the sequences and contents of interpersonal relations at work. Beyond the investor's economic choice, therefore, there lies with each choice of technique a choice of desired social organization of work processes. Such is the power that lies in the choice of technical systems. Organizations and technical systems will then mutually reinforce each other to achieve a common purpose. According to David Noble, we mistakenly attribute to the technics (i.e., the hardware of the technique) the effects for which its authors had intended them.

Noble is also reintroducing the technical within social history as a legitimate object of inquiry. Most often the technical is seen by social historians as only the object of a separate autonomous evolution — not history proper. Mainstream history seems to consider that the narrative of this technical evolution should be dealt with by the trivial and somewhat tedious pursuits of historians of technical artifacts. By accepting the idea of an autonomous technical evolution — and perhaps, with it, of technological determinism — they deny any historicity to technical change. For Noble, choices of technical systems are clearly historical acts which contribute to social strife and the quest for power. In this he links up with a rich (but much forgotten) legacy of Marc Bloch's brand of history of technical, institutional, political, economic, and social change, necessarily reflecting concern with the unavoidable military-scientific-industrial complex which stands at the crossroads of the major industrial and technological developments in America since World War II.

The core of the book revolves around a paradox: why was a simpler, more reliable, and less expensive technical design for programming machine tools discarded in favor of a much more complex, unreliable, and expensive design? Much of *Forces of Production* details the historical factors culminating in the rejection of the "record playback" system and acceptance of the "numerical control" version of programming machine tools. Noble argues that the specific values and ideological biases of engineers for "formal predictability," those of large corporations for "management control" over the work process, and those of the air force for "total command and control" converged to discard the "record playback" option because "conceptually" it was too reliant on the skills and the learning-by-doing processes of machine operators. The "record playback" version started with the skills of experienced machine operators, "programmed by doing," then memorized this application of the skills and repeated its performance automatically. The "numerical control" version programmed the machine-tool in an office remote from the concrete experiences of the production floor (in what Braverman called the "shadow world" — a bureaucratic "paper world" — which duplicates production processes) translating metal-working operations, in reference to abstract geometrical coordinates, into algorithmic digital codes, to which the machine tender would have no input unless he/she learnt programming.

Noble's history of technology is essentially an intellectual history. Although he learned machine-tool funda-

mentals before writing this book and takes some time to simplify and explain the technical aspects for a lay reader, he does not believe in an "internalist" history of technology. Noble also pays little attention to the strictly economic factors hinted at in his narrative and prefers to dwell more exclusively on the conceptual. His is an ideological history of technological change. Cultural values, ideas, likes and dislikes, visions (for instance the vision of the factory "liberated from the worker") are seen as the forces which shape the design of the technology.

Some of the most brilliant passages of *Forces of Production* are those where Noble criticizes the deterministic axioms of his actors. He links the ideology of technological progress with social Darwinism in social science. The social criticism is obvious. Like many important books of history, the examination of the past enables us to reconsider our present values, perception, and attitudes.

The reader is left with quite a pessimistic view. Noble, like Marx, overemphasizes the degree to which management is able to separate out the intellectual powers from routine manual work, overstates management's capacity to capture workers' practical intelligence and transform it into the "might of capital." Adapting the hardware to a specific application and environment will always require the active intelligence of the workforce. As his own story shows, it appears to be much easier for the work force to master formal skills and regain control of the machine process than for employers to do without the tacit, often idiosyncratic know-how of production workers. Noble pays less attention to the implications of what Ken Kusterer calls "working knowledge" and necessary intelligent consent of workers to "make things [conceived on paper] actually work." As a result, the book does not give very many indications as to how one can control the direction of technical change, reflecting a deep pessimism about the prospects of controlling technology.

Moreover, Noble leaves himself open to criticism. The degree of freedom enjoyed by his actors seems idealistically unconstrained. The narrative often reads like a Manichean tale, where MIT and the air force have taken the place of private industrialists as the major villains of his story. Implicitly, the narrative seems nostalgic of an epoch where labour had more shopfloor control, capitalism was unfettered by defence procurement, and a machine maker could get a patent for a technical concept.

Finally, as a historian situating technological change, Noble is far from persuasive. The opening chapters on the "context" of history are hardly convincing. Although they contain some brilliant journalistic insights (for instance on the birth of operations research), the "context" seems not too closely related to the subsequent events. The analogy between the "Cold War abroad" and the "social war" on the "home front" does not delve beneath the McCarthy rhetorics of anti-communism. Noble seems to infer a lot from the world-political context in the Schenectady General Electric UE strike. The parallel between the American government's Cold War with the Soviet Union, and management's struggle against shopfloor control, takes management propaganda uncritically at its face value. A closer examination of the "context" could have led to a better understanding of what might have been more than an "ideological background," revealing other factors and technological designs.

Noble has thus written another thought-provoking book which stands as a methodological landmark for studying technological change. In a footnote to his preface he promises in a future book to break difficult new ground: the gender influence on technological development. He has habituated us to expect him to tackle only the most socially important topics.

Chris DeBresson
Université de Montréal

Harley Shaiken, *Work Transformed: Automation and Labor in the Computer Age* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1984).

COMPARISONS WITH Harry Braverman's justifiably influential *Labor and Monopoly Capital* are unavoidable for a book with such an ambitious title. Braverman's experiences as a coppersmith and tradesworker clearly enriched his insights and shaped his understanding. Harley Shaiken was a skilled machinist turned activist and is now a Massachusetts Institute of Technology researcher. *Work Transformed*, however, pales in comparison to Braverman's tome in scope, rigour, and insight.

Not until well into the book does the reader realize that Shaiken means to confine "work" and "labour" to industrial production, without comment on automation's impact for administrative, sales, or clerical work. This may be excused as simply mistitling the book. Given its focus upon numerical control, however, the informed reader has the right to ask: what advance does Shaiken make over David Noble's seminal study *America by Design* and especially his article "Social Choice in Machine Design: The Case of Automatically Controlled Machine Tools, and a Challenge for Labor," in a 1978 issue of *Politics and Society*. For unexplained reasons, Noble's name does not appear in the text, references, or index (although it is among a long list of people in the acknowledgements). This is particularly bizarre given Noble's argument — technology is a reflection of current social relations of production and different social relations are required to change technological development — since this is precisely Shaiken's main point. Moreover, the core subject matter of Shaiken's study is virtually identical to Noble's article.

What Shaiken does provide is a series of vignettes largely culled from various trade publications. There is neither systematic research nor a developed theoretical formulation to enrich the analysis. There are familiar discussions of scientific management and human relations; but mainly there is a focus upon craft skill and *pride*, characterized as personal control.

Most interesting is Shaiken's observation that numerical control (which has had its greatest impact on the machine tool industry) tends to de-qualify skilled jobs whereas robotics (which has been most prominent in assembly operations such as automobiles) tends to eliminate unskilled jobs. Little is developed from this observation by the author but it can be concluded that "automation" is uneven in its industrial impact; there is, however, a need to analyze particular applications and conditions.

Skill is quite loosely defined by Shaiken. This is important in light of his core question: "Is the purpose of minimizing skill to increase efficiency or is the central goal to extend managerial control over the process of production?" Should we not ask "whose efficiency?" and are the two purposes mutually exclusive? (The answer is certainly not, for management.) Shaiken seems naively "surprised" by his "discovery" of management rights and management's control over who directs production. He is also somewhat naive about questioning labour's acceptance of automation since for many workers it obviously can reduce heavy, boring, or tedious tasks (while simultaneously de-qualifying craft workers). Shaiken does alert us somewhat to the uneven impact of automation within the factory, especially in terms of the expanded importance of maintenance workers. He identifies automation's limiting factors as "technical flaws, discontent among production management, and shop floor resistance." Each is explored in considerable detail.

Most overwhelming, however, is the indictment (albeit underplayed) of the United States labour movement, which Shaiken refers to as "handicapped" and

lacking in "resources" to effectively address the impact of technological change. In the end, only democratic relations of production can be expected to utilize technology to benefit its users. Such a democratic impulse is not evident in the labour movement, nor does Shaiken give us any explanation for its absence.

While the book does not match the promise of its title, it does address a significant subject and provides important observations from which insights can be developed. Hopefully it will stimulate further analysis.

Wallace Clement
Carleton University

M. Edel, E.D. Sclar, and D. Luria, *Shaky Palaces: Homeownership and Social Mobility in Boston's Suburbanization* (New York: Columbia University Press 1984).

HOME OWNERSHIP is almost always supposed to be a "good thing." From Thernstrom to Katz, most writers have simply assumed that a home offers security to the working class, together with the opportunity to accumulate wealth and to acquire middle-class status. Dissenting voices have always existed, and have lately become more insistent. But *Shaky Palaces* is the first sustained challenge to the conventional wisdom.

The authors' argument is that home ownership and suburbanization have trapped many families on a "down escalator." Far from providing workers with a secure and profitable investment, homes have often become a liability as they have been inexorably devalued by the geographical restructuring of the city. Using evidence from Boston, the authors show that the post-war boom, when property values outpaced inflation by a considerable margin, has not been typical of the past century. In other periods, notably the Depression, home values lagged. Even in periods of boom, because of continuing suburbanization, house prices have sometimes fallen (relative to inflation) in a number of inner city neighbourhoods. Typically, these were areas of immigrant and working-class settlement. Even for the middle class, homes have not performed as well as other types of investments, including stocks and mutual funds. Moreover, when property booms have created the potential to realize capital gains, the group that has profited most has been the investor-developer, not the long-time resident home owner.

Gentrification, which has slowed the suburban trend, has not brough wealth to most inner city home owners. Rather, it has provided investment opportunities for speculators. Owning a home, then, has been a poor way of accumulating wealth or achieving social mobility. Indeed, it may even have been a hindrance. Building upon the sample of households used by Thernstrom, the authors show that in the late nineteenth century owning a home appears to have had a negative effect upon the wealth and occupational position of the sons of families headed by a working-class father. They speculate that this may be because home owners were not able to invest as much as tenants in the education of their children. They also see evidence for this in the present.

The authors deny that low rates of property appreciation, and the devaluation of older housing stock, is in any way a ploy. Indeed, they argue that the "suburban solution" worked out in the late nineteenth century was a compromise between labour and capital in which the former played an active role. On the one hand, in Boston the extension of streetcar lines helped to break a local property monopoly, thereby making housing more affordable. On the other, it helped to secure labour peace after the militancy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The authors do not demonstrate the specific importance of ownership in this regard, but they do provide evidence that the decline of the Socialist Party was

due partly to the suburbanization of the working class into areas where party organization was weak.

The suburban compromise lasted until the late 1960s, when neighbourhood-based resistance to urban restructuring, and chronic recession, created a crisis of affordability. The monopolies challenged by the original suburban solution no longer pose a serious threat. Accordingly, the authors argue that any solution to the present housing crisis must be general: either a new economic boom, which they view as unlikely, or, by implication, socialist reform.

Perhaps inevitably the authors succumb to the temptation of overstating their case. Some of the possible advantages of home ownership, for example the use of the home as a workplace or source of income, are not considered. Others, notably the American government's decision not to tax imputed rent and to allow mortgage interest payments as a deduction from income tax, are grudgingly admitted and inadequately evaluated. When inflation rates are low, these concessions are worth more than capital gains. When they are considered, owning appears as a very much more attractive proposition than renting. In attempting to explain away this fact the authors make valid points about the geographical and temporal variability of value increases, but they do not offer convincing evidence that, in general, owning is more a liability than an asset.

The second important weakness in the authors' argument concerns their cursory treatment of housing production. The home construction industry has resisted innovation, and mainly for this reason house prices have risen relative to most other commodities in the past century. In the long run, this is why we might expect housing to have been a good investment. The authors briefly concede the point, but assert that it is "improbable" that such a trend will continue into the future. As Ball has shown in *Housing Policy and Economic Power*, given the social and technical organization of the industry, nothing is more likely. Edel *et al.*, considering the situation of the existing owner, would presumably find comfort in this. Ball, however, worried more about the affordability of homes to the first-time buyer, views the prospect with great concern. In this respect, two of the most important contributors to recent debates over home ownership are talking past one another.

This book leaves us with an important message and several unanswered questions. It shows that the dream of ownership can become a nightmare, especially for the working class and the poor. But it is still not clear how often the advantages of ownership have been outweighed by the disadvantages. We need to know more about how homes — as opposed to apartments — have been used by families, and in particular, by women. How have production and reproduction in the home affected the equation? Similarly, how often have tax concessions outweighed the disadvantages of being trapped in a declining area? And of course housing is not only an investment. Owning has other rewards, perhaps the greatest being a degree of control over one's environment. This issue goes beyond the immediate concern of the present book, but it must be addressed if we are ever to understand the meaning and significance of home ownership to the working class. The contribution of this book is to show that on the latter questions we should not take anything for granted.

Richard Harris
University of Toronto

J. Dupaquier, A. Fauve-Chamoux, and E. Grebenik, eds., *Malthus Past and Present* (New York: Academic Press 1983).

MARX CLAIMED that he was not a Marxist; Malthus would likewise have been uncomfortable labelled a "Malthusian," even less a "neo-Malthusian." Both Malthus and Marx had a lot to say about the relationship between production and reproduction, both were essentially econ-

omists — Malthus' writing bears the stamp of that moralism which was only slowly shed from the public face of the dismal science — and both were concerned with the obvious dilemmas of capitalism in their own times: Malthus with the problem of "effective demand" and Marx with the succeeding problem of intensified immiseration. As matters fell out they were both wrong. Humans have proved to be adaptable consumers and capitalism has been a remarkably powerful system of production, if not distribution.

One of the great attractions of this wide-ranging collection of essays is that it shows the rippling influence of the Parson's insight into humanity's precarious balancing act, poised as we are between biology and sociology, nature and history. However, it would appear from these 29 (!) essays that not much of Malthus' intellectual framework has withstood the ravages of time. What Anne Digby calls the "abrasive class character" (107) of policy implications derived from his principle of population was central to the debate over the old poor law and the shaping of the new one. As a moral philosopher, "class distinctions came naturally" and in "his dour view of the world" there was a social imperative for "endless labour and painful abstinence." (5) Malthus wrote from the point of view of a moral philosopher cum economic demographer; his analysis of capitalism is based on circuits of exchange not the explosion of production associated with machino-facture. He was thus rather more a child of the Enlightenment than a precursor of the idea of human progress. Indeed, it was because he was essentially an analyst of the pre-industrial economy that his writings were so "conveniently forgotten" by the British public after his death (in 1834) when the burgeoning productivity of machino-facture created a new agenda for social policy and a new attitude to economics and social morality. Even in his own time Malthus was dwarfed by David Ricardo, who understood that the principle of production allied to the Malthusian principle of population was then being radically revised. Still, his influence ran along silent channels. It was only through the selective adaptation of his ideas that he had a "well-attested" influence on Charles Darwin, because, as Richard Keynes argues, in all likelihood Lyell's *Principles of Geology* was of even greater importance to that great Victorian who unravelled the mystery of mysteries in human evolution.

Malthus Past and Present is a disparate collection derived from the 164 papers presented at an international colloquium held in Paris in 1980. The scope of the 29 published here gives some idea of the dissemination of the Malthusian paradigm concerning the contingency of humanity's social and biological nexus. There are, for example, sets of papers on Malthus' influence on demography, economics, ideology, ethnography, religion, and biology. In addition, his influence on nineteenth-century socialism and his contemporary relevance are also considered. Most of the papers are too short — few are more than fifteen pages long. In fact, the most interesting ones are often the summaries provided by the subsection editors. In sum, then, the whole is rather less than the sum of its parts. Most of these essays are more in the nature of puff-pieces than considered statements. They tantalize us with the multiplex and often contradictory character of Malthus' thought and influence, but rarely do they deliver a substantial package. One would do much better to read the Parson himself — his justly famous *Essay*, his rather neglected *Principles of Political Economy*, and his astonishing *Summary View of the Principle of Population* — and then dip into the recent biographies by William Petersen and Patricia James, both published in 1979. After that regimen, I think these essays would be better appreciated. They are, taken together, neither a satisfactory introduction nor a suitable commentary.

So, what are we to make of this pecu-

liar man — an ordained minister of the established church, who emptied God from the operation of the everyday world in seeking to determine "general laws" at work in society, and one who spent most of his adult life as a lecturer in political economy training civil servants for the Empire in India? In my view his greatest influence was his insistence on our connection with the biological imperatives of reproduction, now enshrined in the social science of demography. But, as Étienne Van De Walle writes, historical developments have been in direct contradiction to his principle of population. His theorizing about "general laws" provoked, and continues to provoke, contention; and, of even greater importance, researchers have been given a "null hypothesis" about which to frame their work which has led to quite different findings as most of the articles in this collection suggest.

Malthus, then, provided a kind of milestone in our intellectual history with his understanding that humanity is subject to both social and biological laws. Of course, most of the emphasis in his work was on the biological limits inherent in his principle of population and that explains his inability to understand the interconnection between production and reproduction in the plebeian family during the Indian summer of nascent capitalism. It was just this abstraction which so incensed Karl Marx, causing him to provide his own principle of population which erred in the opposite direction in its complete ignorance of biological imperatives. Like Marx, nineteenth-century radicals generally held Malthus in bad odour; they paid more heed to his arguments for inculcating "moral restraint" through the wage nexus than to the implications to be drawn from the exercise of such restraint. Still, in a curiously ironic way — and completely in line with Malthus' central notion of self-control and sturdy independence — it was only when workers began to take Malthusianism seriously and to restrict their fertility within marriage that they were able to control the labour market, thereby breaking free from the tyranny of their own prolific powers. In contrast to the public demands of most "political" radicals, it was the workers themselves who made the personal truly political. In so doing they turned one of the Parson's "general laws" inside-out: the passion between the sexes could be turned to humanity's advantage when sexuality and reproduction were definitively severed. The very act of control signalled a new relationship between human society and human biology. Thomas Robert Malthus made us aware of this elemental fact. For this reason alone he is of prime importance, not just in the history of ideas, but in the great transformation by which our mastery of the material world holds out the promise of a new moral world.

David Levine
Ontario Institute for
Studies in Education

Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women, 1890-1914* (New York: Blackwell 1984).

DESPITE THE GROWING body of literature on British working-class life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, historians still have many unanswered questions about the lives of working-class women, whose experiences have often been obscured from view by traditional historical sources. Elizabeth Roberts has attempted to help fill this gap with a study based largely on oral histories conducted in three Lancashire towns. To her credit, Roberts treats her oral sources with respect and sensitivity; she tries to place their recollections in the social context of the period, and she describes with sympathy the arduous lives of working-class women, whose main goals, she contends, were family survival and maintenance of working-class "respectability." On the one hand,

Roberts contends that working-class women exercised considerable strength — even power — within the family and the neighbourhood; yet, on the other, she also concludes that they were "inhibited, conformist, and largely passive" to the conditions of their exploitation. In other words, they coped with considerable strength and dignity, but they seldom resisted their impoverished lives.

Though her book is termed an "oral history of working-class women" the author makes good use of other historical sources — local archives, vital statistics, government reports — to help buttress and broaden the discussion of topics from fertility to factory discipline. Roberts is also conscious of the need to locate the oral sources in a local context: she describes the very different economic and social bases of each town (Barrow, for example, had heavier industry, while Preston had more cotton mills and therefore more female labour). Roberts pays attention to the distinctions of Lancashire working-class life, while still trying to relate her conclusions to other histories of British working-class culture. In doing this, she sometimes challenges the earlier findings of historians like Standish Meacham, whom she claims underestimates the influence of religion and Christian teachings on working-class culture. Similarly, she challenges the work of Patricia Knight, who Roberts says "exaggerates" the use of abortion as a method of birth control by working-class women. In other instances, however, Roberts substantiates recent work on working-class women and working-class culture: like John Benson, she notes the overlooked contribution of women "penny capitalists" to the family economy, and like Diana Gittens, she rejects the older "diffusion" idea of birth control technology "trickling down" from middle-class to working-class women, as an explanation for the decline in fertility which was a key change in working-class women's lives in this period.

A Woman's Place is structured primarily around the life cycle of women, with chapters on childhood, adolescence and work, marriage, women as household managers, and finally, a discussion of women and neighbourhood. Substantial sections from Roberts' interviews are used, but because they are well chosen and explained, the interviews do not dominate Roberts' text, but are carefully interwoven into it. The sections on childhood and adolescence emphasize girls' early socialization, particularly their domestic apprenticeship in the family. Like other authors, Roberts shows that adolescence was a more middle-class phenomenon, as the necessity of contributing to the family economy and the threat of poverty determined the life cycle of the working-class youth. Even after adolescent girls went out to work, their lives were intimately interwoven with family needs, and most working girls accepted family authority and moral codes with little question. Still, adolescence, and the period of courtship, was often the most enjoyable and "independent" of a woman's life, and Roberts has included valuable descriptions of working-class leisure, patterns of courtship, and ideals of sexual respectability.

Many of Roberts' conclusions about working women confirm other work on labour history: domestic service, she shows, for instance, underwent a decline in status over this period. Like American historian Louise Tentler, Roberts believes that patterns of obedience learned in the family were carried by women into the factory. Though women may have taken pride in their work lives — if only in their endurance — and sometimes stood up to employer harassment, the vast majority, she claims, were "passive" about their exploitation. Because Roberts did not seek out interviews with past activists, her view of women's resistance to their exploitation is a pessimistic one indeed.

Perhaps Roberts' most interesting arguments are found in her sections on marriage, household management, and neighbourhood. The details she offers on

women's various methods of stretching and balancing the budget are valuable additions to our knowledge of woman's role as household manager. The sections on sexuality and birth control are, as Roberts admits, more disappointing because of the (understandable) reticence of this generation about these topics. The interviewees did make some interesting distinctions on such issues: for example, there was a perceived difference between a self-induced abortion, which was seen more sympathetically than one obtained from an abortionist, and a difference between women with no children, who were viewed with less criticism than those with only one (and were therefore suspected of using contraceptives). Indeed, Roberts maintains that although family limitation was practised, artificial contraceptives were seldom employed by working-class couples, and that women's attitudes towards sexuality and reproduction were characterized by "fatalism and ignorance." Women may have been fatalistic; their ignorance about reproduction was largely socially constructed. As Roberts admits, working-class women had no early sex education, and in government clinics and from local doctors they often encountered indifference or hostility in response to their inquiries about birth control.

Much of Roberts' book is taken up with discussions of women's crucial role in the family: "to the working-class woman, her individual 'good' was directly equal to the 'good' of the family." Over this period, Roberts notes the increasing strength of the ideal of domesticity for working-class women; their notion of liberation had more to do with being able to stay home than it did with going out to work. Unfortunately, Roberts does not go very far with this idea, and because she concentrates largely on what working-class women thought, she offers no analysis of whether this was "a middle-class notion, or one which had always been central to the working-class."

Roberts marshalls impressive evidence to show that working-class women played an essential economic and moral role in the family, managing the budget, and even managing children and husbands' behaviour. Even with its strict division of labour, Roberts sees the working-class family composed of "separate but equal" roles for men and women. (And unlike Gittens, she does not see married women textile workers as having more "power" — or lower fertility rates — because of their wage labour.) Despite lives of incessant toil, women were not "dependent and downtrodden," she argues, but "respected managers and arbiters of moral standards." Indeed, Roberts takes this argument to considerable lengths, claiming that one reason for working-class women's indifference to the suffragist movement was the considerable power they enjoyed in the family. Surely, though, more important reasons for their indifference were the overwhelmingly middle-class character of the movement, and working-class women's arduous and time-consuming household labour which left them little leisure time. Though Roberts says she does not want to adopt either a patriarchal or matriarchal model for the working-class family, she veers closer to the latter. One of her major conclusions is that women were not oppressed by men, but rather felt limited by class relations and poverty. Perhaps Roberts should stress that she is relaying women's feelings and perceptions from the interviews, rather than advance this idea as a theoretical given. She fears the imposition of contemporary "feminist" distortions on the past, but in taking the interviews at face value, she omits any discussion of how her interviewees' world view, and their political views (or lack of them) may have informed their views of the past. More politicized contemporary working-class commentators like Hannah Mitchell — and more recent historians — have noted the existence of patriarchal patterns in working-class households. One

can argue that working-class women played a crucial role in the family, enjoyed some respect as household managers, and understood their class oppression, and yet still claim that working-class women had fewer options, choices, and less power than working-class men. To cite only one example: Roberts notes that although many women disliked sex, they accepted it as a man's decision and prerogative.

Lastly, Roberts' discussion of women, family, and neighbourhood provides some interesting information on working-class life and hints at conclusions which might be explored further. Women, she shows, were extremely important links in the extended family: they often directed borrowing and mutual aid, and they shared news, and oversaw moral rules of conduct. The roles of women in maintaining ties with kin and providing aid to extended kin, she implies, have been underestimated by many historians too often concerned only with demographic facts like co-residency. Roberts also uses oral sources to question Michael Anderson's idea of "exchange values:" instead, she argues that Christian charity, pride, and duty were the motivating forces behind the extended kin network. In the neighbourhood (defined by the street) women also played an important role in directing borrowing and mutual aid, and in enforcing working-class mores — the latter, of course, could also be confining and inhibiting as women often ostracized and criticized non-conformist neighbours.

Roberts' research implies the existence of a distinct working-class women's culture, shared and articulated through *family and neighbourhood ties. Women's* reliance on this "community" was reflected in their attitudes towards childbirth: many working-class women persisted in their desire for local and untrained midwives or mothers to aid them in birth, as they saw these women as more cooperative, friendlier, and more in tune with the family's needs. Perhaps then, working-class women in the home shared "a life apart," as did their class as a whole.

Roberts' book has omissions: by concentrating on the life cycle analogy, Roberts has left out discussion of topics like women's associational life. If women really were influenced by religious ideas, were they also active in church organizations? What about women's role in the co-op guild, or in union auxiliaries? *A Woman's Place* is thus a sensitive and sympathetic treatment of the lives of ordinary working-class women; in revealing women's ignorance about sexuality, their inability to resist exploitation, and the pressures on them to conform, she offers us a picture of acquiescence, endurance, and strength, rather than one of resistance or protest. But her challenge to the idea of sexual oppression and her stress on women's "equal but separate" role in the family, will not, I think, go unchallenged in current historical debates.

Joan Sangster
Trent University

Josée Harris, *Unemployment and Politics: A Study in English Social Policy, 1886-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1984).

THIS BOOK, FIRST published in 1972 and now reissued in paperback, makes fascinating reading. At a time when unemployment insurance systems throughout the world are reeling under the weight of depression levels of joblessness, crushing deficits, and relentless attack from the right, an analysis of how the world's first national programme of unemployment compensation came into existence could not be more timely. Harris does not offer any innovative theoretical perspectives on the welfare state, nor does she place British social policy in a broader comparative perspective. What she does do, splendidly in fact, is to provide us with the most exhaustive and detailed analysis of how

unemployment emerged as an issue in British politics between 1886 and 1914 that we are likely to get.

She begins her book by deftly tracing how the new concept of unemployment and political responses to it emerged out of a growing crisis in British poor law administration on the one hand, and escalating trade depression on the other, in the late nineteenth century. By the early 1890s poor law guardians, blindly obsessed with administrative efficiency, had succeeded in virtually abolishing outdoor relief throughout much of Britain precisely when intensifying trade cycles were creating an ever-widening circle of dependent poor. Out of the conjunction of these two trends emerged a growing public preoccupation with the plight of those without work, and increasing agitation among the jobless themselves for work or maintenance.

During the 1880s public concern was both expressed and fueled by Charles Booth's massive social survey of the London poor, and by the Hyde Park riots of 1886. Out of both developments came a preoccupation with the problem of casual labourers, and the "submerged tenth:" a seemingly self-perpetuating class of dependent poor trapped in overcrowded urban labour markets, reliant upon periodic, seasonal employment, and steadily degenerating, it seemed, both biologically and morally, into a permanent underclass of hard core unemployables. To the extent, then, that unemployment became a political issue in late nineteenth-century Britain, it was the unemployment of the casual labourer, not the skilled worker, which captivated popular imagination.

In one of the book's most intriguing chapters, Harris demonstrates that this new vision of the jobless as victims of circumstance and environment rather than their own character, did not soften public attitudes towards their plight. The feckless mid-Victorian poor were believed capable of moral reformation. "The unemployables" of the 1890s, however, seemed beyond hope. As a consequence, social investigators such as Booth, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb did not so much wish to "save" casual labourers as to "quarantine" them in work colonies far removed from the regular urban labour market. In its earliest manifestation, the state labour exchange was conceived as an institution deemed essential for the task of classifying and sorting out those capable of steady work from those best left to work colonies in the countryside or the Empire.

By the turn of the century, however, the growth of the Independent Labour Party and subsequently the Labour Party itself, working-class political victories in local politics, particularly on poor law unions, and intensified political competition between the Liberal and Conservative parties at the national level, redirected public attention towards the unemployment of skilled and respectable workers. Remedies for this problem were posed in four phases. "Work-sharing" through agitation for the eight-hour day became the first response of the labour movement and the left. Ironically, this reform was embraced by the Liberal Party and business owners only when it could be shown conclusively that reduced hours did not shrink output, or in other words, did not increase employment. Public works financed by local governments became the favoured response to joblessness during the 1890s. This approach, however, foundered on a dilemma which would plague all local responses to unemployment. Regions where the problem was most acute could least afford to provide enough public work to make a dent in the ranks of the jobless.

In the early 1900s, "Back to the Land" work colonies, promoted by both Salvation Army founder William Booth and the utopian socialist George Lansbury enjoyed a brief popularity and received official endorsement through the Unemployed Workmen's Act of 1905. By 1907,

however, the idea was discredited. Local governments found it was simply cheaper to keep families on urban relief and, in any case, high unemployment in Canada and other dominions closed off the Empire as a potential safety-valve for the dispossessed of England.

Unemployment insurance and labour exchanges emerged as the Liberal Party solution by 1908, Harris argues, due to intensified political competition from the right and the left. During the 1907-8 depression, Tories capitalized on high unemployment to argue that tariff protectionism would create jobs and provide the increased state revenues needed to finance public works. The Labour Party, for its part, introduced an unemployed workers' bill demanding "work or maintenance" for the jobless. Pressed for action on both sides, the governing Liberal Party's adherence to laisser faire became untenable. Into this policy vacuum stepped William Beveridge. Working first through the Webbs (at that time members of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws) and through them, Winston Churchill, Beveridge was successful in bringing powerful members of the Asquith government around to the idea that unemployment stemmed principally from disorganization in the labour market which could be remedied through state-administered labour exchanges and compulsory unemployment insurance, conceived as a means of tiding workers over short spells of seasonal or frictional joblessness.

Beveridge's ideas appealed to the Liberal cabinet because they appeared pragmatic, administratively efficient, and because they would allow the government to expand the base of taxation (through compulsory insurance premiums) without alienating working-class support. Equally important, the immediate alternative to overhauling the antiquated poor laws was too intricately involved with the reform of local government and taxation to serve as a practical political response to the 1907-8 industrial crisis. Although the unemployed were not perceived as an immediate political threat, politicians such as Churchill were not unaware of the long-term advantages unemployment insurance provided for reinforcing the existing order. As Churchill noted during the passage of the bill, workers with a "stake in the country" through their insurance payments would "pay no attention to the vague promises of revolutionary socialism." (365)

Harris' study is full of ironies. Although it was the dilemma of unemployables and casual labourers which first brought unemployment into politics during the 1880s, the solution eventually adopted in 1911 excluded them from benefits. Unemployment insurance helped further to segment the British labour market by providing insured benefits as a right to regularly employed skilled and semi-skilled workers while leaving unskilled and casual labourers to the unreformed poor laws. Harris also argues that "in the long run" the Liberal response to unemployment was "a history of almost unmitigated failure," (367) a conclusion even more apparent from the perspective of the 1980s than when it was first penned in 1972. The politicians and administrators of the pre-World War I generation were obsessed with "measures of relief and organization at the expense of measures for stabilizing and increasing labour demand." (367) Harris clearly sees J.A. Hobson rather than William Beveridge as the more prescient liberal thinker of this era. Despite the faith of Beveridge and the Webbs in the organization of the labour market as a panacea for unemployment, by the 1920s, with virtually all workers covered by unemployment insurance and registered at labour exchanges, unemployment on average was three times greater than before 1914. By 1931, with the insurance scheme bankrupt, a new generation of politicians would attempt to throw responsibility for relief works and all but the most regularly employed back on local

authorities, "revers[ing] 45 years of unemployment policy." (368)

In this sense Harris reminds us of two points which, from a 1980s perspective, have become painfully obvious. First, social policy is as likely to move backwards as forward. Second, politicians and reformers rarely comprehend the unemployment of their own time.

James Struthers
Trent University

Eric Hobsbawm, *Workers: Worlds of Labor* (New York: Pantheon Books 1984).

IT IS A RARE treat, one too seldom enjoyed, to review the work of an acknowledged master craftsman, indeed a virtuoso, of the historical guild. In the field of labour, or working-class history, few scholars have wrought products as many-faceted, valuable, and durable as Eric Hobsbawm's essays on the subject. Twenty years ago, his first collection of writings on the topic, *Labouring Men*, explored exciting new aspects of the experiences and practices of ordinary working people in the past. For English-language historians, Hobsbawm's approach served to liberate labour history from the hobbles of mechanical Marxism and positivistic labour economics. He showed the then (1964) emerging cohort of English-speaking labour historians precisely how Marxist methods could be used to write open-ended, contingent history, a type of history in which the economic or material forces remained primary yet operated in a universe also influenced, sometimes decisively, by people's beliefs, cultures, and rituals. In Hobsbawm's skilled hands, labour history became more than fluctuations in wages, prices, and hours, more than biographies of individual trade unions, more than the rise and fall of workers' political parties — though he neglected none of those topics. Instead he extended the dimensions of the field by providing equal space to the popular conventions, customs, and rituals of working people, to the intersection between modes of language and forms of action, and to the riddle of the relationship between social being and human consciousness.

This new collection of essays, most of them originally published elsewhere, continues and reinforces that tradition. Perhaps less innovative and seminal than Hobsbawm's 1964 essays — after all, the last twenty years has experienced an enormous efflorescence in the scholarship about working people, and precisely along the paths Hobsbawm plotted two decades ago the new essays distill in pure and scintillating essence the accumulated wisdom of an even more mature scholar. Once again, the collected essays establish Hobsbawm's mastery of numerous languages and national esperiences which enables him to write the sort of comparative history found in the first seven essays, and also in the seventeenth and last. The remainder of the essays, all largely about the British working-class experience, benefit equally from Hobsbawm's comparative approach to history. All the essays, whether they deal with Irish workers and nationalism, ideology, religion, and class consciousness, ritualism and iconography, the formation of the British working class, the "labour aristocracy," or other miscellaneous themes, suggest the author's heightened interest in linguistic analysis, the transformation of images and icons, and the crystallization and evaporation of labour rituals. And they also persistently probe the treacherous dynamics which link social being, consciousness, and action.

Under Hobsbawm's careful scrutiny, the history of workers, especially the making of the British proletariat, falls into three clearly demarcated chronological periods. The first is the era made famous by Edward P. Thompson, that of the "making of the English working class." In this period, the years from roughly the 1760s through the 1830s, Hobsbawm suggests that market forces began to dom-

inate moral considerations in human relations yet a "modern" property-less, tool-less proletariat had not solidified. This early working class achieved its characteristic consciousness in Chartism in Britain and "utopian" (a Marxian pejorative) socialism on the continent. It was a consciousness that recalled the past as much as it foreshadowed the future and that, in the terminology of Raymond Williams, represented the residual more than the emergent tendencies among working people. The displacement of these workers by a new working class beginning in the 1850s ushered in the age of the modern, or classical proletariat which lasted into the 1950s. And then the classic proletariat began to dissolve before our own eyes in the 1960s as consumer culture spread, suburbs proliferated, industrial labour declined relatively and absolutely, and trade unions and labour parties lost influence and power.

It is the second of these eras that especially interests Hobsbawm, notably the years from the 1870s through World War I, when he contends that the British working class made itself. It was then that workers formed themselves as a class by developing their own language, elaborating their own rituals, incorporating less skilled workers into an inclusive form of general unionism, building a labour party, and creating their own cultural universe of music halls, association football, and local pubs. This was certainly the classical age of the blue-collar, traditional Marxist proletariat tied to its trade unions, worker parties, and the Second International. Hobsbawm's affection for that era's working people probably derives from their solidification as a working class in itself and for itself, yet one incapable of making a revolution. And it is the failure of British workers and their continental brothers and sisters to make a revolution that undoubtedly explains Hobsbawm's fascination with the question of the "labour aristocracy." For those skilled workers who served simultaneously as a working-class vanguard and as intermediaries between the ruling and subaltern classes remain for Hobsbawm key actors in the revolution that never was. Which is why he devotes three new essays to arguing, reconsidering, and further elaborating a debate he initially joined in 1964.

Overall, I find three aspects of Hobsbawm's approach to the past most impressive. First, his aptitude for historical universality and his ability to make valid comparisons across geographical boundaries. Whether it is analyzing the peculiarities of class versus nationalist tendencies in Irish history; the special place of the "labor aristocracy" in Britain's past; the politics of nineteenth-century shoemakers; or the relationship between male and female workers, he deftly describes what is universal and what is provincial (national) in the history of the subjects. Hobsbawm understands, as do few other historians, the "peculiarities of the English" as well as the universality of the working-class experience. Second, we must be grateful to him for providing us with a non-reductionist sort of Marxist history. It is a pleasure to read a historian who always seeks the most economical explanation for historical phenomena, that is, the material or economic, yet approaches the influence of ideas and culture as expressed through language, image, icon, and ritual with equal seriousness. Not for Hobsbawm the deus ex machina of false consciousness. Rather than seek to blame workers for failing to comprehend their true interests, he writes that "The historical as well as practical problem is to discover under what circumstances . . . class unity can come into *being, work, or cease to work.*" (55) Third, and most important, Hobsbawm consistently stresses the centrality of formal organizaiton in struggles by workers to better their lives. Certainly aware of how susceptible institutions and their leaders are to oligarchic and bureaucratic tendencies as well as to "collaborating with the class enemy," he nonetheless insists that, in the

absence of structured trade unions, workers would suffer more. "If industrial workers have the choice between even a corrupt and racketeering union and no union at all," he observes piquantly, "few would hesitate before making their choice." To which he adds the following words from Robert Michels, "democracy is unthinkable without organization. Only organization gives consistency to the masses." (285) Most simply put, Hobsbawm suggests that "an effective movement could not develop without national organization, discipline, leadership and full-time functionaries." (278) He is not one of those historians who romanticizes the culture of working people, extolls the anarchists and syndicalists among them, and damns the "class collaborators" spawned by worker movements. Even that which is best in working-class culture, Hobsbawm realizes, will seldom survive in the absence of effective organization and capable leaders.

Of course, one might carp at the oversights of a master scholar and his publisher. But instead of quibbling about a misreading of the United States experience here, a misprint there, or a garbled reference elsewhere, we should read the essays with a mounting sense of enjoyment and learn as we do so. Those of us seeking to write better labour history and also make a better world should be as grateful to Eric Hobsbawm in 1985 as we were in 1964.

Melvyn Dubofsky
SUNY at Binghamton

Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones, eds., *Culture, Ideology and Politics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1985).

"THERE'S A freshman in King's who knows about everything." . . . Or so it was rumoured about the young Eric Hobsbawm, according to a 1939 "Cambridge Profile" included in this provocative addition to the History Workshop series. The volume originated, the editors tell us, as an international tribute to Hobsbawm's work which took shape "around a unifying preoccupation with the symbolic order and its relationship to political and religious belief." (ix) At issue is a reappraisal of such fundamental questions in Marxist historiography as the relationship between "base" and "superstructure," art and social life, as well as a host of new questions about the significance of "mentalities," dreams, fantasies, the minutiae of everyday life, popular culture, and ideology.

Absent in all of this, however, is any sustained reappraisal of Hobsbawm's own wide-ranging and often ground-breaking work on some of these very questions. With the exception of Keith McClelland's useful bibliography of Hobsbawm's writings, a short essay by Tony Coe on "Hobsbawm and Jazz," and the brief profile cited above, there is little which connects Hobsbawm's work directly to the collection as a whole. All we are given on this account is an extremely sketchy preface wherein the editors indicate how contributions to the volume have been inspired by ideas, questions, and approaches first worked out and then popularized by Eric Hobsbawm.

Two features of Hobsbawm's writing are noted in the preface as providing important points of departure. First is his remarkable ability to bring together the propositions of classical Marxism with the traditional empirical preoccupations of social and economic historians. His rare combination of "theoretical clarity, large generalizing capacity, and an uncanny eye for suggestive detail" enabled him to pull in "seemingly unusable *faits divers* and bric-à-brac to produce imaginatively compelling and wholly unexpected syntheses." What is truly unique here, the editors argue, goes well beyond the subtle marriage between Marxist theory and imaginative historical curiosity about the particular so characteristic of Hobsbawm's work. It is also based on his linguistic fluency and breadth of appreciation for topics and "theoretical idioms" both within and outside the major traditions of English historiography.

The second important feature noted about Hobsbawm's writing is its "brilliantly illuminating but ultimately quite orthodox" (such phrases cry out for additional discussion) approach to understanding the relationships between base and superstructure. Because of the "freshness and unexpectedness" of the components included in Hobsbawm's treatment of the concepts "culture," "ideology," and "politics," the editors argue that his work is "perhaps the best testimony to the strengths of a classical Marxist solution to the relationship between 'social being' and 'social consciousness.' " They go on to claim, however, that this solution has limitations which have prompted major reassessments in recent years — reassessments to which the volume at hand is designed to contribute. (x)

The core of the book is composed of seventeen essays ranging widely over place, time, subject matter, and theoretical perspective, and loosely organized into four subsections: theory, culture, ideology, and politics. Space precludes any thorough discussion of individual papers. Most demonstrate the vitality and craft we have come to expect from History Workshop. Some are truly exceptional, having implications well beyond their particular empirical focus. Others, less compelling in this regard, nonetheless contain fascinating material of more specialized interest.

The breadth and eclectic nature of the papers virtually guarantees that different readers will favour some sections and papers over others. For my part, the first section, focusing upon broad theoretical questions, has the greatest impact. The section opens with an intriguing attempt by Michel Vovelle to reconcile a focus on "mentalities" (a concept uncomfortably similar to Durkheim's notion of "collective representation") with the usual concerns of Marxist historiography. But the theoretical sparks do not really begin to fly until one contrasts Maurice Godelier's critical reappraisal of basic Marxist concepts, and of the Althusserian conception of "levels," with Alf Lüdke's attempt to uncover "the personal and the political" through a thickly textured analysis of the mundane experiences of everyday life. An additional contribution towards exploration of this provocative theoretical conjuncture is provided in Hans Medick's rambling but superb paper on "Plebeian Culture in the Transition to Capitalism."

At first sight, it is tempting to resurrect in these papers the clichéd "structuralist" and "culturalist" designations still favoured by some historians and cultural studies researchers. It is a temptation that should be resisted. All three authors employ theoretical and empirical material to advantage. Each is attuned, albeit in different ways, to the complex relationships between social structures and human agency. Nonetheless, I found the arguments developed by Lüdke and Medick to be the more persuasive. Godelier's paper is full of insightful and useful observations, but his abstractions simply do not have much life in them, and his overall argument merely replaces the Althusserian hierarchy of "levels" with an equally problematic hierarchy of "functions." By contrast, Lüdke's focus on problems of "control" in everyday life and the labour process, his rethinking of the category of "experience," and Medick's concern for a "theory of practice" (adapted from Pierre Bourdieu), strike me as better departures for a critical historiography capable of transcending the limitations of classical Marxism.

I want to emphasize that this brief foray into issues raised in the theory section is not meant to reflect negatively on the more specialized studies which make up the rest of the volume. For example, in the culture section, Deborah Valenze develops a provocative analysis of "Pilgrims and Progress in Nineteenth-century England," and Judith Herrin poses a unique argument in her paper on "Women and the Faith in Icons in Early Christianity" (the only essay

in the book which focuses at all upon gender). Other papers of note include Christopher Hill's sweeping essay on "Science and Magic in Seventeenth Century England," Geoff Eley's paper on "State Formation, Nationalism and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany," and the editors' own essay on "The Labour Party and Social Democracy."

All in all, there is something here for everyone. History Workshop addicts will simply have to own the book. Others will find many of the papers to be a very good read. As a tribute to Eric Hobsbawm more attention might have been given to reappraisals of Hobsbawm's own approach to cultural practice, or political and economic development. Furthermore, it would be fascinating to know Hobsbawm's reaction to certain passages — one thinks in particular of the editors' gratuitous and self-congratulatory references to the "new left critique" of the British labour movement in the 1950s and 60s ("an elegant and polemically brilliant phenomenology of a set of 'enduring reflexes'. ") (325) Yet, minor complaints aside, I believe the former freshman at Kings, who reportedly knew about everything, has been well served.

Richard Gruneau
University of British Columbia

Jay Winter, ed., *The Working Class in Modern British History: Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983).

NINETEEN-SIXTY was the year which showed that British labour history had reached a new station on the journey from the provincial fringe to the metropolitan core of historical studies. In that year, the Society for the Study of Labour History was founded and the first issue of its *Bulletin* published. Moreover, a collection of scholarly essays in the subject was due to be presented to its probable founding father, G.D.H. Cole. Unhappily he died in 1959 so the collection became a memorial volume, edited by Asa Briggs and John Saville; it became the first of three such collections entitled *Essays in Labour History*. More recently *festschrifts* have been presented to John Saville and Eric Hobsbawm, who had two, and there has even been a book of anti-labour history essays. Now comes a further collection on the history of British labour dedicated to one of its most productive practitioners, Henry Pelling, recently retired from his job at Cambridge.

It is interesting to compare the contributors to that first volume in 1960 with those in this latest book. The Cole essay writers came out of the *Burke's Peerage* of British labour history, a real collection of labour aristocrats: Eric Hobsbawm, E.P. Thompson, Royden Harrison, John Saville, Sidney Pollard, Asa Briggs, Peter Brock, and the late Stephen Coltham and Henry Collins. Most of them had been, or were, members of the British Communist Party and all were committed political activists in the labour interest. The essays could be said to be in the communist tradition, popular front variety, as the presence of Asa Briggs in particular shows. Moreover the subject matter was unambiguously about labour as an economic, industrial, and political entity. It was a contribution to the forward march. No truck here with popular pastimes or mentalities; this was activists' history written by activists, but with the same high level of scholarship that distinguished the *English Historical Review*.

Two more volumes of *Essays in Labour History* followed in 1971 and 1977. If the Cole essays were in the communist tradition, the next two were clearly labourist. Most of the contributors were from a new generation whose political experience had not been formed by Communist Party membership. But many of them had sat at the feet of the élite of the subject. They were supporters of the old labour alliance of socialists and trade unionists, and for the majority scholarship

was part of politics and politics part of scholarship. The subjects they chose largely mirrored that fact with the institutions of labour — economic, industrial, and political — the main focus. It was not so much what the working class was that was important but what some had been and more might become.

It is noteworthy that Henry Pelling did not contribute to the Cole essays, although by 1960 he had already published *The Challenge of Socialism* (1953), *Origins of the Labour Party* (1954), *America and the British Left* (1956), and *The British Communist Party* (1958), thereby establishing himself as one of the most versatile and productive operators in the field. Nor did he write anything for the Briggs and Saville volumes which followed.

The essays in honour of Pelling do not fit either the communist or the labourist tradition. Only Fred Reid appears in this book and one of the Briggs and Saville volumes, the second. The volume under review here is more in keeping with what might be termed a social democratic tradition, or rather leans towards the SDP/Liberal alliance, and it is particularly significant therefore that Peter Clarke should discuss the social democratic theory of the class struggle in the first essay. Trade unions are not the leaders of a crusade for social justice but a self-interest group along with the other self-interest groups.

The editor is keen to underline in his introduction that it is the social history of the working class which is being explored here rather than the history of the labour movement and its institutions, although this seems much more true of the second part of the book than the first, entitled "The Working Class in British Politics." Besides the essay by Clarke, it includes Fred Reid looking at the use Keir Hardie made of his control of the *Labour Leader* in the decade after 1893; Paul Addison on Churchill's orientation to the working class in his electoral and ministerial activities before 1914; Christopher Howard on labour's failure to build a mass party in the 1920s; Kenneth Morgan showing how much better it was to be working-class in Wales after World War II than after World War I; and Partha Sarathi Gupta giving only one cheer, and that much muted, for the Labour government's attempt to cope with the British Empire after 1945.

The second part of the book contains seven essays grouped together under the title of "The Working Class in British Society." They range widely and speculate bravely. Ross McKibbin has some interesting things to say about the worker's attitude to work in a piece called "Work and Hobbies in Britain 1880-1950." Paul Johnson then explores working-class saving and borrowing habits from 1870 to 1939. Alastair Reid makes a lively contribution to the labour aristocracy debate in a close look at the writings of that "hero of a thousand footnotes," Thomas Wright. Chushichi Tsuzuki's short essay on the National Council of Labour Colleges might have found a place in the first section, whereas the question posed by Josée Harris, "Did British Workers Want the Welfare State?" takes up some of the issues which the recipient of this volume raised in what was his most provocative work, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (1968). In the final two essays, Arthur Marwick claims that although the working class may not rule, it certainly lives as an economic, social, and cultural entity, in spite of many attempts by sociologists to write it off; and the editor brings the mighty power of statistics and *la longue durée* to demonstrate the "Stubborn Persistence of the Trend Towards Improving Health among the Working Population in the Period of the Interwar Depression and During the Second World War."

What this scholarly collection clearly shows is that labour history is now firmly the business of the professional historian, with a wide range of subject matter and sources. The past, under the historian's scrutiny, has become more complex, increasingly resembling L.P. Hartley's foreign country where they do things differ-

ently. For labour activists who long for power, these essays are not reassuring that history is on their side.

Finally, there is one omission from this *festschrift* compared to most others of the genre. The first volume of *Essays in Labour History* had four biographical contributions about G.D.H. Cole and those presented to John Saville and Eric Hobsbawm have continued that practice. *But we are told nothing here about Henry* Pelling, nothing about what his father did for a living, where he went to school, what he did in the war, or how he came to profess labour history, which is, to say the least, a pity.

Tony Mason
University of Warwick

Lisanne Radice, *Beatrice and Sidney Webb: Fabian Socialists* (London: Macmillan 1984).

IN A SENSE, this is an official history of Fabianism. Lisanne Radice is a member of the International Committee of the Fabian Society and is involved with the society's centenary celebrations. But she has also written about subjects as various as Will Thorne, parliamentary reform, and appeasement in the 1930s. Moreover, while she writes as a democratic socialist, her primary purpose in this book is to depict a unique human partnership and, implicitly, the singular significance of individuals in history. Given this context, together with Radice's extensive use of primary sources, and her disputatious references to Marxist disparagement of Fabianism, her volume is likely to inspire a sharply varied reception.

To admirers of Beatrice Webb's autobiography and diaries, Radice will appeal especially strongly; in some respects her volume is a running analysis and commentary upon Beatrice's own accounts of her Victorian origins and Edwardian-Georgian maturity. One is led, once again, to wonder what the mature Beatrice would have become had her long infatuation with Joseph Chamberlain ended in marriage instead of that surprisingly chilly rejection which it took Beatrice so long to accept. Heaven knows, as it was, the Webbs came close enough to being "imperialists" along the lines of Lord Milner's "kindergarten," and while Beatrice's recording of her own and Sidney's appalling racism, based inexorably *upon the superiority of the English* (Londoners?) makes hair-raising reading even as filtered through the cautious lens of a sophisticated academic such as Radice. But all this is well known to those who have read the shelf full of writings on the Webbs and their friends. What is new about the present work?

I think that Radice's principal contribution is her subtle, recurring stress upon the notion of "process." Just as Sidney's ideas about the inevitability of gradualness derived substantially from Charles Darwin, so the development of the relationship between Beatrice and Sidney — between the outwardly austere and beautiful daughter of a successful railway promoter-investor and the physically repellent progeny of darkest London — evolved into a deep love and intellectual activity quite extraordinary by any measurement other than that of childbearing. Evolution and process lie at the heart of Radice's story as surely as those concepts inform E.P. Thompson's thinking about class. Their perceptions of the roles of trade unions, of democracy, of the state, and of the individual all evolved in response to their indefatigable research and their participatory observation.

Radice makes the case very strongly that the Webbs were among the foremost architects of modern Britain: in their scholarly and propaganda writing, their contribution to the growth and understanding of local government, their founding of the London School of Economics and the *New Statesman*, and their "conversion" of the Labour Party to socialism. She meets head on the criticism that in fact the

Webbs were merely the products of Victorian middle-class attitudes and requirements — Beatrice by heredity, Sidney by adoption. She argues that both of them were consistent in their concept of service and in their total rejection of the profit motive. She also underlines heavily their concern to promote a democracy (including industrial democracy) in which countervailing forces such as trade unions and an open-ended meritocracy would guarantee individual liberty and opportunity. It should be said also that while Radice drew mostly favourable conclusions about the pragmatic socialist thinking and tactics of the Webbs, she is scrupulously even-handed in presenting evidence that could lead to toned-down assessments such as those presented by Miliband or by E.J. Hobsbawm in his essay "The Fabians Reconsidered."

One way of putting the most contentious question about the Webbs is: were they really socialists and if so, why and of what kind? Hobsbawm says the Webbs and other Fabians of their generation were essentially the ideal type of "the liberal professional middle class of Victorian Britain: sufficiently comfortable not to need to pursue money for material reasons, sufficiently secure in an accepted and respected social rank to be genuinely without envy of the idle rich or the business profiteers, sufficiently interested in their work to pursue it for their own sake and sufficiently at one with society to feel themselves to be of social use." That is, they sought a guaranteed role in an evolving, capitalist-humane society. Their unremitting insistence that an effective democratic socialism would require the directing intelligence of experts, specialists, planners, and administrators, Hobsbawm argues, and the "resolutely non-proletarian" composition of the Fabian Society, made Fabianism "unique in the international socialist movement." Radice concedes much of this but denies that the Webbs were unconcerned with wage workers as originators of ideas or as the essential definers of conditions of work. The Webbs' formidable knowledge of the historic condition of the working class simply led them to stress the need for avenues along which individual workers might be enabled to exercise their intellectual and administrative abilities and the concurrent requirement of a national minimum for the class (and society) as a whole.

The Webbs, certainly, never envisaged a classless society. They sought, in fact, a society in which the common good would be advanced by public ownership and/or control of the means of production and in which no one class or interest could rule autocratically. Thus they rejected guild socialism (let alone syndicalism) as giving too much power to producers as such. And yet their constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain was at least as utopian and complicated as was G.D.H. Cole's prescription. Their real influence was as researchers, educators, publicists, and intellectual goads. Radice pays full attention to their immense, often joint, contributions in these respects. But she tends, also, to minimize their political vagaries as, for example, when she calls their influence "decisive" in "the development of the Labour Party as an instrument capable of changing the face of Britain." And she is certainly contentious in arguing that their whole-hearted approval of Stalin's Russia (especially their touching conviction about the independent strength of Soviet trade unions) was simply the result of approaching senility. In fact, assessing the Soviet Union against the backdrop of the apparent collapse of western capitalism in the 1930s, the Webbs saw what they wanted to see, just as they had temporarily put their faith in the Liberal imperialists at the turn of the century.

Yet if Radice exaggerates the political role of the Webbs in defining British socialism, her exaggeration is much less than that of depicting Beatrice, Sidney, and their colleagues as simply "the expression

of a 'new social stratum' " within and necessary to British capitalism.

Kenneth McNaught
University of Toronto

Ken Worpole, *Dockers and Detectives: Popular Reading: Popular Writing* (London: Verso Editions 1983).

ACCORDING TO THE short biography that precedes this study, the only time that Ken Worpole has not lived in East London was when he was born in 1944 in Derbyshire — to which the Hackney Mothers Hospital had been evacuated during the blitz. Having subsequently taught for the Workers' Educational Association and been involved in community publishing ventures he is obviously well situated to discuss British working-class reading and writing. He broaches this enormous subject in five related essays: an introductory chapter on cultural politics, two on working-class men's interest in American thrillers and World War II adventure stories, and two on 1930s London and Liverpool working-class writers.

Worpole's central concern is that books are important to workers, but what they want to read and what the system offers them are two different things. The simplest way out of the quandary is to dismiss all forms of mass culture as tainted by the capitalist system. Real working-class literature, according to this formula, will emerge only after the revolution. Worpole, in contrast, argues that such dismissals of existing popular readings as "escapist" or "diversionary" overlook the oppositional themes often contained in such texts. He shares the belief of Hans Magnus Enzenberger that true imaginative and creative breakthroughs come from the people. If they are not aided and encouraged by the left they will be inevitably coopted by the capitalist entertainment industry.

For the North American reader Worpole's most interesting chapter is that devoted to the great influence American detective fiction had in the 1930s and 1940s in creating in Britain a new urban, male style. Most visitors to London are inevitably struck by the knowledge their English working-class mates have of American music, movies, and books. Richard Hoggart in his classic study *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), which chronicled the beginnings of this cultural invasion, considered it a tragedy that the masses were turning to the sex- and violence-ridden American thrillers of Cain and Spillane. But Worpole points out that working-class readers found them refreshingly realistic. The classic British detective novel, complete with country estate, bumbling bobby, deferential servant, and bourgeois amateur sleuth reeked of middle-class self-satisfaction. Working-class readers turned to the recognizably familiar urban world of Hammett, Hemingway, and Chandler, according to Worpole, because they sensed that the "tough guy" novel often spoke to their concerns. They could agree when a character in *The Long Goodbye* told Marlowe, "That's the difference between crime and business. For business you gotta have capital. Sometimes I think it's the only difference." Although the accent was foreign, the sentiments were shared.

Worpole is incisive in revealing the attractions American fiction held for British readers, but sensitive to the limitations of the genre. He notes for example that, like the popular literature of World War II which he also dissects, the thrillers proved incapable of dealing with women except as obstacles. He has equally pertinent points to make about the strengths and weaknesses of London and Liverpool working-class novelists, but given the number he surveys and the limitations of space he can do little more than sketch out the problems posed when workers try to produce literature in a capitalist system.

The main weakness of the book is that it raises many interesting issues which are not pursued. For example, Worpole states,

"The two major traumas that dominate the twentieth-century novel of working-class life are, not the strike, not the factory accident, but early and unwanted pregnancy and hasty marriage, or the back street abortion." Ironically enough he does not investigate these themes. He devotes most of his attention to the male working-class world of fiction, while lamenting it is one from which working-class women have been traditionally excluded. A good deal more analysis of twentieth-century popular culture is obviously needed.

Angus McLaren
University of Victoria

Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Croom Helm 1984).

WHAT DID WOMEN gain for their service in the productive offensive of World War II? Women in Britain, Penny Summerfield contends, earned the uncertain reward of the "double day." Successful wartime mobilization convinced employers and policy-makers "that women could combine paid and domestic work without damage to industrial productivity and without undermining the concept that their first responsibility was to their homes." (188) This well-researched study of state policies towards women workers makes clear the resilience of the gender identification of work, and the limits to social change in Britain during World War II. Moreover, by its account of public policy-making as a process of negotiation over women's roles at home and at work, it presents an argument for a conception of the state as a site of struggle for both capitalist and patriarchal relations.

State intervention into social life during World War II was once cited by feminist scholars, notably Betty Friedan and Juliet Mitchell, as having created important changes that were beneficial for women in the United States and Great Britain. These gains, they argued, were lost at the end of the war. More recent historical studies suggest that the continuities of pre-war attitudes and practices towards women with those during the war were greater than the changes. Penny Summerfield also makes this assessment. The need for women to work in wartime production, she maintains, did create the possibility that changes might be made in the gender division of work. But, when faced with the decision to assign priority to the demands for women's labour in industrial production over the demands for women's labour in the home, the strength of assumptions that a woman's appropriate condition was marriage, home, and dependency led policy-makers to search instead "for a compromise between the two spheres of activity, domestic and industrial, such that neither would be profoundly changed." (29)

Drawing on material largely from the Public Record Office for Mass-Observation (a private monitor of British public opinion and behaviour), Summerfield shows how the Ministry of Labour and National Service (MOL), which was anxious for women to enter industry, conducted protracted negotiations with other ministries, local authorities, retailers, industrial employers, and trade unionists, all apprehensive over changes in gender relations. The extent to which these groups were willing to change their customary practices to accommodate women working is discussed for five areas of policy: the mobilization of women for wartime production, provisions for child care and shopping, regulation of working hours, and the replacement of men in industry by women (dilution). In all of these areas, Summerfield concludes that patriarchal assumptions about women's role "constrained the provisions made for the changes demanded for the circumstances of war." (4)

Despite the need for labour, compulsory mobilization was extended reluc-

tantly to women only after a voluntary policy brought the disastrous results of both increased unemployment for women in "inessential" industries and labour shortages in war factories. When women were placed under conscription, exemptions were made for those women whose circumstances conformed to very conventional definitions of family and household responsibilities. This policy had mixed consequences for women, Summerfield explains. Exemptions did acknowledge the importance of the labour done by women in the home, but it also reinforced the identification of domestic labour as women's work. Most significantly, once the MOL granted exemptions to some women for household responsibilities, it lost the power to insist on policies for the public and collective provision of domestic needs.

The MOL, for example, strongly favoured public support for collective child care, but was opposed by local authorities who resisted assuming the cost for such facilities and by the Ministry of Health, which insisted that day nurseries were contrary to child welfare. Working women with children were left instead to arrange and pay for private child sitters, as much because of public policy as their own preferences. Shopping was another time-consuming task complicated by the lengthened work hours, rationing, and shortages of wartime. Shopkeepers, however, maintained that it was unprofitable to extend their hours and the Ministry of Food would not interfere with retail freedom. At the same time, employers saw no need to shorten working hours for the convenience of their employees and since working men did not want to lose their overtime pay, they did not protest.

Left with the responsibility for domestic labour, British women coped by taking time off from employment or by quitting their jobs, a response reflected in their rates of absenteeism and turnover. The alternative of part-time work, Summerfield says, was not a significant concession, as frequently claimed, to meet women's needs. Employers gained financial benefits and higher productivity. Since the least desirable work was often consigned on a part-time basis, part-time work reinforced the stereotype of women "as the least skilled workers doing the lowest status jobs at the lowest rates in the workplace." (146)

Having presented a convincing case for the view that the gender division of work in the home was relatively unchanged in World War II, the author proceeds to argue that the same conclusion holds for the workplace. The history of workplace struggles within the engineering industry related here makes clear that the first commitment of trade unions was the protection of the jobs and wages of men. Among workers on the shopfloor, gender differences proved to be more of a barrier to solidarity than differences in skill. In their practices towards women workers, trade unionists and employers revealed their conflicting class interests but also their shared assumption that "women were first and foremost the wives, mothers and dependents of men and women did not therefore have the same rights to remuneration for or access to work as men." (179)

Summerfield thus succeeds in presenting a vivid snapshot of a moment of conflict between the relations of class and gender. Were the points of conflict between capitalism and patriarchy revealed here specific to the particular circumstances of the war or were they ongoing? Although the emphasis in this analysis is placed on the conflict between production, there were also moments of apparent harmony. Is it so clearly that women worked only for capitalism or only for men? Penny Summerfield's portrayal of the conflicting demands on working women with responsibilities for the care of husbands, children, or other family is most convincing. It also raises the question, did single women without these responsibilities experience wartime

employment in the same way? Could wartime employment not also provide some women with the chance to free themselves from family obligations, a choice perhaps not open to them prior to the high demand for their labour? The women who entered industrial employment through wartime dilution, as Summerfield herself shows, were largely drawn from the working class. How much weight do we assign to class in shaping the way women experienced paid employment as portrayed in this book? Women who entered the expanding white collar sectors of female employment during the war might not have been confronted by the trade union strength and hostility shown here for industrial work. These women, with the lifting of the marriage bar during the war, may have had a very different assessment of what wartime offered them for employment. The majority of British women did voluntary work through the war and their experiences also may have been quite different from the women studied by Summerfield. In short, the picture presented of working women in World War II is still only a partial one. The viewpoints of women themselves would be a valuable counterweight to that of the policymakers. One can only hope that as the picture is completed, the efforts made will be as fine as that presented here.

Carol Ferguson
Queen's University

John A. Blyth, *English University Adult Education 1908-1958: A Unique Tradition* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1982).

IN THE WORDS of the author, this book "concerns the way in which working people obtained liberal education from universities through part-time study" and it tells "an English story that is unique because it concerns the rise of a working-class educational movement that mirrored social change." To do this, the book gives us a chronological account of how English university-based adult education was provided between 1908 and 1958, with particular reference to the work of the universities of Liverpool, Manchester, and Leeds.

The account is thorough and comes replete with information on the rising and falling popularity of different subjects of study, with selections from the arguments of various protagonists and participants, and summaries of official and unofficial reports. It is a storehouse of information, particularly for those interested in questions of adult education and university extension. In particular, it has much to say on the questions of the relative priorities of liberal and technical education; whether adult education, especially that directed to the working class, should aim at individual satisfaction or social reconstruction; whether it should provide a ladder by which some can "escape" from their class or should try rather to transform the class basis of society. In England, as elsewhere, these questions were discussed time and again by adult educators and this book provides a good introduction to their discussions, which remain relevant today.

However, the book will be of interest more to students of adult and higher education than of history generally. It tells its chronological story thoroughly but does not succeed in placing it fully in its historical and social context. There are, for example, some interesting references to and summaries of arguments about curriculum but their implications are not teased out. Thus, we are told that "Literature was often treated as a discussion of social problems, and H.M. Inspectors tartly noted that 'Oliver Twist is not a scientific treatise on Poor Law Reform.' " Or again, when criticized by the Central Labour College, "the response of the WEA was that it was concerned with genuine education, not propaganda, and that its liberal tradition was rooted in the humane philosophy of the universities

where truth was one, and differences could be resolved by impartial study and discussion." (84, 87) Neither here nor elsewhere, however, are such arguments and assumptions really analyzed.

The author's approach is heavily descriptive and it concentrates much more upon the provision of education — and the arguments surrounding such provision — than upon the reception of it. It is not so much about how working people sought university education, but rather how the universities offered it. This is history seen through the eyes of extramural lecturers, professors of adult education, and WEA organizers. Rarely do the students themselves appear, not to mention all those who never ever set foot within the walls of the lecture room or tutorial session (the majority of the working class, in fact). It is clear that the attempt to reach the English working class through adult education — whether to entertain, to improve, or to agitate — largely failed, since it was the middle class who benefited.

The book does not, therefore, describe the rise of "a working-class educational movement" as promised in the preface, but rather the failure of a particular attempt to create one — an attempt that was directed largely from outside the working class itself by administrators, reformers, university lecturers, and others. Even Tawney's commitment and charm did not always succeed. When he went to one Derbyshire town to drum up interest, the local brass band paraded for him:

> The band collected all right; and immense crowds of miners, bottle makers and their wives, followed it up to the door [of the lecture hall], for it was Saturday night. But they didn't go inside because the band didn't . . . instead of finishing the band stood at the open door and went on thundering through the strains of "marching through Georgia" long after the meeting was due to begin. So the little half-dozen inside huddled up to the platform, and Tawney did his best to make himself heard. (11)

However, the book says very little about the reasons for this working-class response (or the lack of it) to the efforts of those who tried to bring the university to their door. It is, of course, well known that the Workers' Educational Association itself never attained its high hopes and one of the sub-themes of this book is the uneasy coexistence between the WEA and the universities, as the universities slowly edged their way into adult education.

It would have been interesting to see the author examine the reasons for this development and the overall failure of working-class education. However, this is to verge on criticizing a book for what it never set out to do on the first place. As it stands, this book does give us a useful record of the efforts made by English universities to provide education to adult workers. It fills a gap in our knowledge of English higher education and revives some earlier arguments which are still of interest to those concerned with adult, and especially labour, education.

Ken Osborne
University of Manitoba

William M. Reddy, *The Rise of Market Culture: The Textile Trade and French Society, 1750-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984).

THIS BOOK proposes a grand thesis. The evidence to prove the thesis stems from a study of labour strife in the French textile industry from the middle of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, and the conclusions are intended to apply to other sectors of industry and to other countries. According to Professor Joan Scott (quoted on the dust jacket), "There is no question that the book will be one of those breakthrough contributions, fundamentally altering the way historians have thought about an issue." Reddy contends that the concepts developed by the liberal economists to describe the new industrial economy bore no relation to

actuality, because the free market, governed by supply and demand, simply did not exist for labour. "No market for labor was ever created in either of these countries [England and France]." Reddy's definition of a market economy, it should be noted, is a stringent one: "A market economy does not exist unless entrepreneurs are forced to buy *all* the factors of production in competitive markets and to sell their products in a competitive market. Not just here and there but at every stage of the production process, markets must exist in which supply and demand are balanced by free floating prices — balanced not over decades, in generations, or centuries, but from day to day as in the highly regulated stock or commodity exchanges of our time." (reviewer's emphasis) How many economies, or sectors thereof, have ever attained this theoretical ideal? Since the economy fails to meet Reddy's criteria, it follows that: "Market society was a mirage. Market culture was the social order that emerged when the language of this mirage insinuated its assumptions into the everyday practice of European society." (3,7,1-2)

In Reddy's view, the conception of a "market economy" and a "market society," as elaborated by the classical economists, came to be accepted by employers, government officials, reformers, socialists, including Marx and his followers, labour leaders, and, lacking a more accurate description of their condition, by the labourers themselves. Twentieth-century historians likewise accepted these assumptions, at least until Professor Reddy appeared to set the record straight. Finally, since everyone, including its enemies, wrote and thought in terms of a market economy even though it accorded poorly with reality, life slowly transformed itself to assume the form expounded by theory. The hand of Hegel is indeed heavy here.

It is also a little too pat. Claims of those who argue that everyone else is out of step ought to be regarded with suspicion. Some of Reddy's pretensions to originality are achieved by attributing to other scholars — in a condescending way, it may be added — views that they never held. Many scholars have recognized the reluctance of labourers to be reduced to a commodity, as well as their ability to mount sporadically effective resistance. Imperfections in the labour market likewise have received their due. Labour historians long have recognized the existence, in fact, if not in name, of "segmented" labour markets without the necessity of sociologists and economists encasing them in sanctifying jargon. Many of Reddy's "discoveries" may be found in the pages of J.H. Clapham and Émile Lavasseur. As already noted above, Reddy's procrustean definitions enable him to deny that a "market economy" existed for labour. The fact is that labour was drawn into a market economy, was reduced to a commodity. Marshalling all the exceptions and qualifications to this fact, exceptions and qualifications which previous scholars long have accepted, is not sufficient to deny its existence. Finally, the claim that concepts and language, not economic forces, were responsible for the triumph of market culture is simply nonsense.

But, if one ignores the thesis, there is much to recommend in this well written study of the French textile industry over a century and a half. It is based upon substantial original research in archival records and a comprehensive knowledge of printed sources. Reddy's mastery of the technology of textile manufacture and his ability to relate changes in technology to labour strife is impressive. Leaving aside the conceptual framework he imposes, this is an important study of labour adaptation, or lack thereof, to technological change in the textile industry. There is even the added bonus, only loosely tied to the theme of the book, of an essay on popular culture in the *fin de siècle Nord*. His account of the transformation of textile workers from independent artisans to wage workers is excellent, serving as a reminder both of the slowness of the transformation, and of the dogged resistance of workers to it.

Reddy divides his story into three

phases, bounded, except at the end, by the usual demarcations of political history. In the first part, misleadingly entitled "A World Without Entrepreneurs," he surveys the organization of the textile industry in the last years of the old regime, in which the risks were borne by the artisans, the downfall of the guilds — which Reddy regards as more of a political defeat than one brought about by economic obsolescence — and the introduction of the spinning jenny into France. The reforms of the revolution "helped to stimulate a great shift in the language and perceptions of the ruling élite with respect to commerce . . ." (62), though practices in the textile industry were little affected. Even the new "factories" that appeared during the empire were organized along the lines of the putting-out system, the only difference being that the worker now came to the shop.

During the second phase (1816-51) the industry, racked by periodic depressions and changes in fashion, saw mill owners try to increase their control over labour. New machinery was introduced, and water and steam power replaced the treadmill. Years of intensified labour disturbances coincided with years of depression, when employers tried to squeeze labour costs. Reddy surveys contemporary writers — sources much relied upon by subsequent publicists and by historians — on the effects of industrialization. He concludes that, in general, wages were higher and living conditions better than these writers allowed. Of the various factors determining wages, he finds that the role of the market was less important than other factors, such as custom. The year 1848 is depicted as a real turning point in the transition to wage labour, accompanied by a new perception on the part of workers of their place in society.

The last phase extends from the beginning of the Second Empire to the Armentières strike of 1903. During this period the transition from artisan to wage worker is completed. Employers win control over the shopfloor, though not without resistance. In describing the struggle, as played out in the strike waves at the end of the Second Empire, and in those of 1880, 1890, and 1903 (which do not coincide with downturns in the business cycle), Reddy displays a real gift for narrative history, and, in fact, offers an enlightening account of the textile workers' movement. He quarrels with those labour historians who have seen textile workers as disorganized and rootless because their strikes failed to fit the ideal of a "rational" strike. They were, in effect, struggles to save what remained of old ways, which contemporary observers such as Jaurès, and subsequent historians failed to recognize.

Reddy belongs to the group of new social historians which draws heavily upon the tools of other disciplines, particularly cultural anthropology. They are interested in the use and meaning of language. This can be fruitful. In this book the focus is upon the gulf between market language and the actual conditions of textile workers. There always exists a gulf between reality and the words used to describe it. This gulf is not nearly so wide as Reddy imagines. Indeed, this thesis only serves to widen the gulf further. Far from being a "breakthrough" book, Reddy leads us to a cul de sac.

Charles E. Freedeman
State University of New York
Binghamton

Roger Martelli, *Communisme français. Histoire sincère du PCF, 1920-1984* (Paris: Messidor-Éditions sociales 1984)

FEW COMMUNIST parties in advanced capitalist societies have aroused as much controversy as the Parti communiste français (PCF). On the French right the PCF has always been perceived as the herald of Moscow and the harbinger of bloody revolution. On the ultraleft, small but vocal groups periodically accused the PCF of helping to emasculate the forces fighting for social change by failing to

exploit what were supposed to be splendid opportunities to seize power at the time of the liberation of France (1944) or in the spring of 1968. Abroad, students of the world communist movement presented an equally unflattering picture of the PCF when they compared the record and outlook of its leaders with those of Togliatti and Berlinger. On nearly every occasion, scholars and journalists in the English-speaking world found the Italian Communists more attractive on the ground that they were far less doctrinaire, more inclined to experiment, and not so tied to the USSR as their comrades across the Alps.

The large number of memoirs by Communists and ex-Communists, and the avalanche of books on the history of the PCF, reflect the controversies about the PCF, which in recent years has suffered heavy losses in legislative, municipal, and union elections. Ironically, the output of books on the PCF, is these days in inverse proportion to the ability of the Communists to preserve their standing at the polls.

In their attempts to impose their interpretation of the history of the PCF the anti-communists started with several advantages. To begin with, they were far more numerous and better entrenched in the universities, the research centres, and the publishing world. Second, their ranks were swelled by ex-Communists who, in some instances, threw new light on the Communist phenomenon in France. Annie Kriegel's concept of the Communist "counter society" attracted widespread attention among scholars. François Hincker, a member of the central committee of the PCF in the 1970s, helped to explain in *le Parti communiste au carrefour* (1981) the dilemmas of the Communist leaders in their dealings with Mitterand's Socialist Party. The same cannot be said of Philippe Robrieux's four-volume *Histoire intérieure du Parti communiste* (1980-4), in which innuendo, rumour, and revelations by anonymous Communists and ex-Communists are used to show that the PCF was easily manipulated by the Kremlin and by French individuals who do not figure among the listed members of the political bureau of the PCF.

Until the 1980s the French Communists did not produce a scholarly history of the origins and evolution of the PCF. Party leaders reserved for themselves the monopoly of major pronouncements in the realm of party history. As part of their policy, André Ferrat wrote *Histoire du PCF* (1931) and Jacques Duclos chaperoned the writing of *Manuel d'histoire du PCF* (1964).

The drawbacks to this approach to party history became apparent in the mid-1960s. The central committee of the PCF started to remedy the situation by announcing in 1966 that the party would no longer provide guidance to its members engaged in intellectual pursuits and the creative arts. The *Cahiers de l'institut Maurice Thorez*, launched in 1966, became a historical journal in 1974 and was renamed *Cahiers d'histoire de l'institut de recherches marxistes* in 1980. By the mid-1980s its pages were filled with well-researched articles on various aspects of the French labour movement and valuable insights into the strategy of the PCF, the relations between the Comintern and the PCF, the Communist stand during the "drôle de guerre" (1939-40), and the communist reaction to the German occupation of France before the invasion of the USSR. In 1981 Roger Bourderon and other leading contributors to the *Cahiers* produced *PCF: étapes et problèmes, 1920-1972* in which Martelli called for a "more rigorous approach" to the history of the PCF and urged historians to study the party in the context of the dynamics of French society.

Communisme français is the most recent addition to the resulting literature on the PCF. Elegantly written, profusely illustrated, the book is on the whole a successful attempt to explain what the PCF

stood for and what it tried to do at different times. The constraints under which the Communists operated are also discussed, though more could have been said about the dimensions of anti-communism, the shortage of funds to finance party activities, and the conditions under which the leaders formulated policies and induced the activists to carry them out. The result is history "from above" rather than at the grassroots, a fact that Martelli acknowledged in a lengthy interview in *Révolution* (11 January 1985).

But the reader does get a clear account of the Communist strategy and aspirations in France. What used to look like incoherent zigzags and abrupt turns of the party "line" receive convincing explanations in *Communisme français*. Martelli manages this feat by sticking to official Communist prounouncements, while eschewing conjectures about what party spokespeople were supposed to be trying to convey to their followers, the bane of many a work on the PCF. His careful approach to the documentary evidence does not prevent him from stressing the impact of World War I and of the October Revolution on French left-wingers, the role that the Comintern played in shaping the organizational side of the PCF and in formulating its policies before 1934, and the appeal of the Soviet "model" until well into the 1960s. Nor does Martelli ignore many delicate episodes in the history of the PCF, the very episodes that supplied ammunition to its enemies. On these issues he does not hide his views, though in several instances what he has to say runs counter to explanations put forward by the PCF in the preceding decades. Maurice Thorez, the top party leader for more than 30 years, does not escape close scrutiny and some criticism for his failure to draw proper conclusions from the events in 1956 and for his inability to provide a theoretical framework that would have enabled the French Communists to tackle more successfully the problems facing the French economy and society.

At a time when many commentators wonder whether the Communist movement still has an important contribution to make to French politics, the PCF has found a worthy interpreter in Roger Martelli. No reader is likely to close this sensitive and well argued account of the PCF without gaining at least some new insights into the vicissitudes of a working-class organization buffeted by powerful rival forces.

Ivan Avakumovic
University of British Columbia

Ian Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico: The Case of the Automobile Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984).

ROXBOROUGH'S BOOK is an analysis of Mexican automobile unions during the period of the emergence of a number of new independent unions in the late 1970s. It is based on archival sources and on fieldwork interviews carried out mainly between 1976 and 1978. He criticizes conventional accounts of Mexican labour history which have regarded Mexican unions as more or less passive instruments of an authoritarian state, coopting or repressing the rank and file. Instead, he argues that the picture is far more ambiguous. Unions have often been much more autonomous. Shopfloor level issues have often been as important as the more commonly noted political bargaining about national issues. And what "integration" there has been has often been based on fairly fragile compromises.

His main empirical findings are that, contrary to his initial expectations, the key dividing lines in this period of rapidly changing union politics were not between the new independent and old "official" unions but between what he calls "militant" and "conservative" unions. While all the independent unions can be classified as "militant," many of the older unions affiliated to the *Confederacion de*

Trabajadores de Mexico (CTM) underwent a sea-change and could no longer be classified as "conservative." Particularly notable cases are the CTM-affiliated unions at Ford and at General Motors in Mexico City which were transformed in the late 1970s.

What are the dimensions of these changes and what caused them? Roxborough argues that the nine auto unions that cover the thirteen plants of the seven auto companies in Mexico, divide roughly equally in to the two styles of unionism. The "militant" unions exhibit a higher strike frequency, more concern with shopfloor controls and job security, higher rates of wage growth, and more full-time union officials than the "conservative" unions. All of these factors are related to, and, he suggests, stem from, a fifth factor — a higher degree of internal democracy. Union government is the key determinant: democratic unions will be militant; oligarchic unions will be conservative. The existence of union democracy seems to depend on historical conjunctures in the various plants. Though he denies it, there is an implication here that the author is proposing an "iron law of democracy" in counterposition to Michel's "iron law of oligarchy." His conclusion is that "insurgent" movements have been successful in capturing the leadership of many auto unions. Their internal structures are now "predisposed" towards militancy and their leaders are, as a result, under more or less constant pressure from their rank and file to "deliver the goods."

Roxborough certainly deals some damaging blows to conventional accounts of Mexican unions, what he calls the *charrismo* tradition. But his own analysis and conceptualization are far from satisfactory. Too much time is spent trying to force his data into spuriously distinct categories and too little to the daunting but necessary task of unravelling what is really going on on the ground in the factories and union offices.

Thus several chapters are devoted to trying to prove the existence of the "militant" vs. "conservative" distinction by qualification of statistics on strikes, wages, and job security. But the data will simply not produce convincing results. The attempt to show that "militant" unions have produced faster rates of wage growth than "conservative" unions fails because not only are the data weak but also because other variables pose insuperable problems for the exercise. Variations in wage structures, the impact of government incomes policies, different fringe benefits, and differing occupational structures between companies are such as to swamp the attempted comparisons. Attempts to demonstrate that "militant" unions are more successful in raising the proportion of permanent (*planta*) workers in relation to temporary *eventuales* likewise fail. Month to month variations as *eventuales* are laid off in response to production fluctuations can lead to the proportions of *plantas* in the same plant varying from 50 to 90 per cent over the course of a year, and Roxborough's data are not adequate for him to control for these variations and draw firm conclusions. Data on the increased strike-proneness of "militant" plants are similarly weak.

That is not to say that his general diagnosis is necessarily wrong. Something was clearly going on and he shows in his qualitative evidence that there were distinct variations in union behaviour between plants. But the attempt to quantify it in this way does not work and does not take us any further forward. It is in fact a diversion from developing a properly detailed analysis of the varieties of union behaviour and the causes behind them. For it is clear from Roxborough's own material that there are not two types of Mexican unionism but many, and that a much more sophisticated typology would be necessary to do them justice. Instead the historical analysis is telescoped and we get a bewildering array of details about particular plant/union histories, strikes,

struggles, and faction fights on the one hand, and fairly dichotomous conclusions on the other. The book could have been far more rewarding if Roxborough had devoted more time to exegesis and interpretation of these detailed cases, in particular trying to make sense to the reader of the litany of factions, allegations of corruption, and the comings and goings of charismatic personalities. It is true that this would be a horrendous task, but it is a precondition of a better understanding of the issues. More analytic description and less dubious quantification would have helped.

The book is also seriously marred by bad organization. Much essential context is either scattered through the book or omitted altogether. The background of Mexican labour law, vital to understanding the case studies, comes only after they have been completed and a further section on labour courts which surely belongs with this material is for some reason shunted off into an isolated chapter of its own. Similarly the accounts of union government structures which are essential to the wider picture come late in the book while the statistical data on wages (which are weak and unilluminating) get pride of place. Moreover, nowhere is there a proper description of the CTM, laying out its structures, its relations to constituent unions, its role in other industries, or its relation to the political parties. These are matters for which the editors of the series must share the responsibility.

The discussion of unions and politics is also too narrowly conceived. Apart from one or two tantalizing hints, there is no attempt to relate internal union politics to wider political and social issues. On one occasion we hear in passing of the critical impact of a radical archbishop on a local labour movement; at another of the strategic influence of a union general secretary who was also a PRI senator. But nowhere is there a sustained look at the links between unions and local party machines, at broader patterns of clientelism in the factory and community, or at the impact of Communist and other left-wing parties.

Equally surprisingly, the dimensions of national politics in the late 1970s are almost wholly omitted. Beyond that, it is also surely wrong to categorically exclude managerial strategy as an important variable in different patterns of union development — the Chrysler example strongly suggests to the contrary.

Overall, this is a disappointing book. It begins to raise issues about what really goes on at the grassroots of industrial militancy in Mexico, but does not carry them through to any satisfactory conclusions. The book of the title remains to be written.

Steven Tolliday
Industry Unit
Greater London Council

Norman Long and Bryan Roberts, *Miners, Peasants and Entrepreneurs: Regional Development in the Central Highlands of Peru*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984).

AFTER WORLD WAR II, critics of capitalist development in Latin America coined the term "dependency" and thereby struck conceptual and ideological gold. Whatever the raging debates over the scientificity of the concept, it has truly been one of the outstanding mobilizers of theory and research in contemporary social science. Among the many Latin Americanists who have utilized dependency theory are Norman Long and Bryan Roberts. Their new book carries added pertinence in the current period of the general crisis of capitalism and its severe effects in Latin America.

Long and Roberts are primarily sociologists of development and underdevelopment. And as veterans of the "dependency" school, they are concerned in this book with a number of central theoretical issues in development studies. They go beyond the basic concept, as did the outstanding Brazilian post-

dependency writer, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, to grant capitalism's development of the global periphery. They are concerned to demonstrate the variety of capitalist development in an economy too simply characterized as one of enclaves or of monocultures in the heyday of "vulgar" dependency writings. They are also concerned not to reduce the complexities of capitalism's relationship with other modes of production to the post-Frankian concept of "the articulation of modes of production."

For Long and Roberts, concerned with the regional economy of the mining areas around Huancayo in the central highlands, a theoretical failing of the now classical dependency theory was the focus on exchange and marketing. They make a strong argument in the beginning and in the conclusion for production as the proper focus in the analysis of regional development. Within that rubric they maintain space for the revivified notion of uneven development. Thus they reject the starker "poles of growth, boom and bust" images of early dependency theory while retaining the elasticity and dialectic of uneven capitalist development in their analysis of the central highlands' economy and society.

As the title makes clear, mining, agriculture, and business enterprises coexist and interact in a wide variety of ways in the central highlands, but ultimately in such patterns as to make the highlands a relatively integrated and distinct regional economy. Long and Roberts, along with several Peruvian and British colleagues, are at the peak of their analysis when examining facets of the production systems in the area and in eliciting the character and dynamic of class relationships in the systems. Their long research experience in the area and great familiarity with Peruvian society are highlighted in the many subsections of chapters comparing individuals, neighbourhoods, villages, and social relationships.

Mining in the central highlands, disrupted by the independence struggles and inter-élite disputes, underwent a revival at the end of the nineteenth century. In a dependency vocabulary, the Peruvian economy experienced a new integration into the capitalist world economy. New smelters, foreign capital for rail development, and a demand for copper, in particular, made the central highlands an enclave for the New York-based Cerro De Pasco Corporation. The mines needed labour, services, and inputs, which the local population, agriculture, and entrepreneurs provided. Existing patterns of local production were affected by the external linkage, that is, the mining for export and for the accumulation of superprofits. The most interesting finding, based on thorough research of the data on prices and production levels for local commodities, is that local food production did not boom. Rather, it was commerce, small-scale manufacturing, and transport that grew in Huancayo, the largest town. The real impact of the mines was to integrate, even if only partially, the local population into an international chain of production systems and more capitalist class relations, through wages. The production unit experiencing the impact was the household; there were several aspects to the impact: family reorganization to effect "spatially-dispersed income opportunities," investment in education to secure jobs outside subsistence farming and mining, and the readjustment of community social institutions to include those who migrated from the villages to urban areas. Dualism was entrenched, in that the mines were linked to international capital, as were wages for local labour, but the small enterprises had no links to the external sectors. Peasants who became workers for several years, but who had families tending to plots or herds, straddled the linkages.

Vitality and dynamism may indeed exist in a situation of dualism and that is the point of the fourth chapter on Huan-

cayo. The town grew because of mining and because of the influx of Lima-based finance capital and import houses, yet the real energy of local development occurred in the interstices of foreign and large domestic capitalist undertakings. Though linked through wages to Huancayo, and through petty commercial enterprises and marketing of agricultural products, the surrounding peasant communities maintained non-capitalist relations of production and property: communal pastures, kinship links, family cultivation. The dynamic factor of wages provided the nexus and brought peasants into very small commercial enterprises based on wage savings. However, their investment was not in the rural community, but in market stalls in Huancayo. When mining technology improved productivity and reduced the demand for labour, the high-altitude communities that had formed the labour pool adapted by temporary and permanent migration to Lima.

Industrialization centred in Lima-Callao combined with agrarian productivity stagnation and declining demand for labour in the mines to accelerate the flow of migrants from the highlands in the last two decades. It is this flow which gives Lima its specific character of almost permanent transience, in that the city has a very large number of community associations where affiliation is based on having come from the same highlands area. Thus migrants from Matahuasi or Ongoyo in the Huancayo area tend to settle in the same neighbourhoods of inner-city slums or peripheral "new communities." These neighbourhoods often organize assistance for the highlands home community, for example, water pipes, a church building, a school, materials for a peasant cooperative. Distinctive local dances and music are preserved in the Lima environment in the thousands of social and sports associations with regional origins. Long and Roberts found that contrasting forms of these associations reflected varying class differentiation patterns in the highlands, different processes of migration, and different local processes of highlands economic development. Migrants depend on these extensions to set up life in Lima, develop a variety of survival strategies for urban life, and maintain their culture. The same confederations of households and extended enterprises characterizing life in highlands villages appear in the Lima *barrios*. As in the highlands, there is "the spread of livelihood pursuits across space in an uncertain capitalist economy."

Long and Roberts have put their long and direct experience as sociologists in Peru into this volume and its analytical richness recommends it to almost every variety of reader within the broad rubric of the social sciences. It was not meant to be a textbook and should not be considered as such, but as background reading for advanced undergraduates, graduates, and practising social scientists interested in Latin America or in any of the issues discussed in the book, it is highly recommended. What the book does not do it still provides a background for, and that is a general social and economic history of modern Peru, an investigation of the roots of the current economic crisis in Peru or a study of the origins and project of Sendero Luminoso. Nonetheless, it is a book in the tradition of Mariátegui, who set out to understand the economy and society of Peru in order to be political in the fullest sense of the word. In this book, Peruvian politics are only occasionally mentioned, yet they hover constantly and could not be understood without such analyses.

Fred Judson
University of Alberta

Jeff Crisp, *The Story of an African Working Class: Ghanaian Miners' Struggles, 1870-1980* (London: Zed Press 1984).

JEFF CRISP'S HISTORY of mine workers represents yet another contribution to the study of labour in the so-called modern sector of the Gold Coast or Ghanaian

economy. This work complements several existing accounts of railway and dock workers who, together with the mine workers, comprised most of the limited industrial labour force of colonial and independent Ghana.

Just why historians have devoted so much attention to these few workers seems unclear, although it is undoubtedly easier to reconstruct the history of these elements than that of masses who toiled anonymously in the much more important agricultural sector of the economy. This is not to say that writing the history of Ghanaian mine workers is easy, considering the limited quantity and poor quality of the historical documentation available. The latter problems do not appear to trouble Crisp unduly and he neatly sidesteps them by rendering his history of the Ghanaian mine workers as "the story of an African working class." That title itself poses a problem, however, because Crisp himself readily concedes that Ghanaian mine workers never constituted a working class in anything other than a purely occupational sense, and that their protests could not be construed by any stretch of the historical imagination as those of a self conscious proletariat.

Its title notwithstanding, therefore, this is not a study about the making of a Ghanaian working class over time because no such class ever emerged; nor is it, a detailed descriptive narrative of their collective "struggles" either. What the work actually is, is a study of mining capital and mine labour or, to use Crisp's own terminology, a study of "labour control" and "labour resistance."

The concepts of labour control and, to a lesser degree, labour resistance, have been widely employed by Marxist analysts to delineate the dominant features of the struggle between European capitalism and labour in Africa, and there is nothing original nor innovative in Crisp's application of these constructs to the mining industry in Ghana. According to Crisp, who develops his thesis in a very brief opening chapter entitled "A Conceptual Framework for African Labour History," the introduction of capitalist mining into the Gold Coast in the 1870s created the inevitable confrontation between the forces of labour control (capital and the state), and those of labour resistance: "wage labour, its representatives and allies." (11) The subsequent dynamic of the ensuing historical encounter, Crisp informs the reader, was marked by the ". . . determined struggle [of labour] to resist their exploitation and subordination" against ". . . the relentless efforts of capital and state to control their activities." (179)

The difficulty with Crisp's conceptualization of the relationship between state, capital, and labour in the Ghanaian mining industry is that it is far too simple and one-dimensional to conform to historical reality or, surprisingly enough, to the author's own portrayal of events in the book itself. Consequently, Crisp's simplistic application of the concepts of labour control and especially labour resistance to the historical situation in Ghana only detracts from the work of those Marxist historians who have employed them rigorously and accurately to interpret the radically different conditions that prevailed in the state and mining capital-dominated economies of central and south Africa.

The claim, moreover, that Ghanaian mine workers exhibited a degree of solidarity, autonomy, and militancy "rare amongst Africans" (179) is not only patently misleading, it clearly diminishes the struggles of South African workers against a rigid system of labour control that makes that of colonial or independent Ghana appear positively benign.

To see how utterly irrelevant the conceptual framework and the conclusions that supposedly derive from it actually are, one need only turn to the excellent reconstruction of events in the Gold Coast and Ghana that Crisp has sandwiched between the weak opening and concluding theoretical chapters of this book. What

Crisp's account reveals is that the colonial government (if not its independent successor) was not prepared to assist mining interests directly in coercing or controlling labour for the mines, nor was it willing to allow the industry the leeway to install any such system itself free from government intervention.

Crisp cites example after example from the 1890s right up to the 1950s where the colonial government rejected a variety of schemes whereby the mining industry sought to achieve a system of labour control that was designed to keep wages low and to increase production. Why were the British so indifferent to the idea of labour control and to the interests of mining capital as a whole? Precisely because the industry was tangential to the larger interests of British political economy in the Gold Coast which centred upon merchant capital and cocoa production. Cocoa was in fact the ideal tool for British political economy because, contrary to Crisp's argument, it did not require the direct intervention of the state in the process of labour recruitment or labour control. In this case, the latter functions were carried out entirely by indigenous producers who proved quite successful despite the limited instruments for labour control at their disposal.

When something resembling a form of labour control was finally attempted in the Ghanaian mining industry, it came not as a result of the "relentless efforts of capital and state" as Crisp suggests, but rather as a direct consequence of the state capitalism of the Nkrumah government of the 1960s. This government, confronted with paying increasing operating subsidies to a now largely nationalized gold mining industry, was committed to cutting its losses by holding the line on wages and increasingly poor productivity. When the rank-and-file mine workers resisted, the state, in alliance with the petty bourgeois leadership of the miners' union, simply crushed them. In so doing, the Nkrumah government showed how easy it was for the state that was so inclined to suppress labour resistance and impose labour control even over the mine labour force that Crisp claims had always demonstrated a militancy and solidarity "rare amongst African workers." Paradoxically moreover, and contrary to Crisp's thesis, the state capitalism of the Nkrumah government proved much more destructive to the interests of Ghanaian mine workers than the laisser faire capitalism of its colonial predecessor.

Apart from the overriding implications of its conceptual framework and some very questionable assumptions about the nature of slavery and abolition in the nineteenth-century Gold Coast, the other most obvious shortcoming of this work is the uneven quality of the statistical evidence that is presented and the absence of some pertinent data altogether. There is, for example, little information on the profitability of the various sectors of the mining industry as a whole. What data there are refer almost exclusively to gold mining, and there are no figures on wages and productivity which would allow one to compare them with others from elsewhere in Africa. Were profits excessive and wages inordinately low, or did marginal ore bodies, fixed gold prices, and poor productivity dictate the level of wages, or could it be that ineffective "labour control" and militant "labour resistance" combined to make Ghanaian miners better paid than their counterparts elsewhere in Africa? With the statistical information provided, it is impossible to say.

To sum up, this is a good study that is marred by a simplistic thesis that fails to take into account the complex and shifting nature of the relationship between state, capital, and labour in Ghana over time. The informed reader, therefore, is apt to liken the experience of reading this book to that of a miner on piecework; in both instances, even though the ore body is sufficiently rich to justify the labour in-

volved, one would still wish that the overburden were lighter.

Gerald M. McSheffrey
Etobicoke

Denis MacShane, Martin Plaut, and David Ward, *Power! Black Workers, Their Unions and the Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (Nottingham: Spokesman 1984).

BY 1964 THE non-racial trade union movement in South Africa led by the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) had been crushed by the apartheid state, and the years from 1964 to 1973 were essentially ones of industrial quietude. In the late 1970s and early 1980s unionization increased rapidly, and by 1983 545,000 blacks were organized, 300,000 in non-racial unions. This book focuses on this re-emergence of non-racial trade unionism dating from the Durban strikes of 1973. While many books and articles have been written about the black trade unions in South Africa, most of them are narrowly partisan, expressing specific political perspectives with the intention of scoring political points for particular unions or organizations. To its credit, *Power!* attempts to present a review of all the independent unions without making ideological judgements. The authors' stated intention is to inform workers and unions outside South Africa about "the growth of this black trade union movement, its fight against repression, its successes and its problems." (11) They argue that the role these workers and unions can play in establishing solidarity links with their South African counterparts will be crucial to the outcome of the liberation struggle in that country.

The book's review of the history of black unions prior to the 1970s is schematic but it sets the broad context within which one can understand the recent renewal of black trade unionism in South Africa. The authors stress the peculiarity of the South African situation where "black workers have had to fight not only against a management that was as determined as any in the world to resist their demands, but also against a state uniquely organized along racist lines to deny blacks any say over their own lives." (24) They identify four waves of unionization since the 1920s and chronicle the development and tragic setbacks of the first three. (The South African authorities appear to have moved to crush the present black trade union movement following a declaration of a state of emergency in July 1985, a year after this book's publication.) Three factors — black determination, state/capital repression, and division within the union movement — are cited as the most important determinants of the history of black worker organization.

MacShane, Plaut, and Ward are primarily concerned to trace the post-1973 growth of those unions frequently termed "independent," "black," "non-racial," or "emerging," many of which are organized in two national confederations, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) and the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA). These need to be sharply distinguished from the openly racist (whites only) South African Confederation of Labour (SACOL) and the multiracial (white-led) Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA). Despite state repression in 1974 and 1976, black unions continued to grow and in 1977, following the recommendations of the Wiehann Commission, the government recognized that blacks could form their own unions and legally engage in strike action. The authors make no real attempt to explain this reaction and although they pose the question of how the government will relate to the challenge of black unionization in the future they do not confront it. In the foreword they state that they cannot enter into "the debate around what form of capitalist relationships exist in South Africa," (12) and it is this unwillingness which weakens the analytical strength of the book considerably. Fur-

thermore, in discussing union organization and structure they cite the deep-rooted ideological differences between unions without thoroughly investigating the nature of these differences. FOSATU, we are told, is committed to "pursuing a non-racial policy from the outset" while CUSA is "close to what is commonly termed the 'black consciousness' philosophy that encourages a positive effort to construct an exclusively black leadership." (42) Similarly, when examining different union activities and strategies in the mines and industries, reference is made to "industrial" and "community" unions without any real analysis of the existence and significance of these differences. In their discussion of the unions' search for unity, the authors merely outline the disagreements between the different union groupings and argue that a unified response to the government and employers would be more effective. There is an interesting discussion of black women workers who are, the authors argue, exploited as blacks, as workers, and as women, as well as a rather chilling account of the appalling health and safety conditions in South African mines and factories.

The chapter on the unions' involvement in politics and the liberation movement, while perhaps the most interesting, also clearly exposes the book's analytical weakness. The authors describe SACTU's intimate involvement in politics and the liberation struggle in South Africa, and its close alliance with the opposition Congress movement in the 1950s and early 1960s. They point out that while the new black unions all agree that they have a political role, they differ on the question of how best to exercise their role. This is a crucial question, especially in light of the fact that the geo-politics of the southern African region, and therefore of the liberation struggle, have changed fundamentally within the last few years. South Africa's virtual subjugation of its neighbouring states has made armed struggle increasingly difficult and has largely internalized the fight for liberation, a fight in which the organized black trade union movement will play a decisive role. The authors state the various unions' perceptions of their political roles, particularly with regard to their relationships with the two newly established opposition political groupings in South Africa, the United Democratic Front and the National Forum Committee, but do not fully draw out the implications of these differences. They are satisfied to conclude that the differences will not be "resolved in theory" but rather "in facing the real issues of the day." (129) It is important, given the fragility of the trade union movement and the history of repression in South Africa, that the question of the unions' relationship with other oppressed class forces be confronted now. Questions dealing with working-class participation and class relations in liberation struggles are not simply academic quibbles but vital issues that desperately need to be addressed in the South African context. The old debate of whether or not trade unions are the appropriate form of ensuring working-class hegemony in the wider popular struggle is especially significant because the form the struggle takes will leave an indelible imprint on a liberated South Africa. (The appendices included in the book outlining the various unions' position on politics and liberation deal with these issues more fully than the text.)

While the discussion of unions and politics highlights the book's failings on an analytical level, the final chapter, entitled "International Solidarity," captures its strengths. The authors argue that as the South African economy is integrated with western capitalism it does respond to international pressure and they give examples of instances where pressure by workers outside of South Africa has helped settle labour disputes in favour of the black unions (this is especially the case where the company involved is a multinational). They call for workers to establish solidar-

ity links with their black South African counterparts and assist them in their challenge against apartheid. "Opponents of that 'crime against humanity' must offer their commitment and support to the independent unions." (139) (Addresses are given for the black unions at the back of the book so that contact can be established.) At this practical level the book works well and its call to action is effective precisely because of its simple, concise, and graphic narrative style.

Philip Steenkamp
Queen's University

Richard B. Freeman and James L. Medoff, *What Do Unions Do?* (New York: Basic Books 1984).

THIS RECENT BOOK has already attracted widespread reviews in the American popular press and an extended "review symposium" in an academic journal. It is clearly a work of considerable importance. The authors assemble, analyze, and assess the result of a decade of quantitative research — their own and that of others — on the impact of unions on the American economy. Since union wage differentials are relatively well documented, they stress other aspects of the difference made by unions in such areas as wage inequality, worker satisfaction, turnover, fringe benefits, productivity, and profits.

As one would expect, these results are eclectic, relying on different analytical approaches and bodies of data. In some cases gross comparisons are made between unionized and unorganized sectors, in others multivariate analysis is used to control for the effect of other important variables and isolate the net impact of unionism.

Freeman and Medoff contrast, as they did in their earlier work, "the monopoly and voice/response faces" of trade unionism. The first restricts access to unionized workplaces, the second affects arrangements within them. The first may benefit organized workers at the expense of both the unorganized and overall economic efficiency, the second may benefit workers at the expense of capital and add to total well-being. Although they attempt no formal overall cost-benefit calculation, they conclude that "in most settings the positive elements of the voice/response face of unions offset or dominate the negative elements of the monopoly face." (247)

On wage inequality, the authors find that union influence produces more equal wages both within and between unionized workplaces. It also reduces the gap in earnings between blue-collar and white-collar workers. This, they estimate, more than offsets the "monopoly" impact resulting from union-nonunion wage differentials and from the fact that it is "labour's élite" that tends to be unionized. They also find that senior workers, a minority, are particularly favoured in organized settings, and that fringe benefits which they value more highly, in part because they escalate with seniority, are a larger fraction of total compensation in union plants. It is not entirely clear whether their finding of greater equality applies to total compensation as well as to wages.

As well as being interesting in themselves, and still controversial, the above results can serve to illustrate Freeman and Medoff's general approach. Market forces focus attention on marginal workers — ones whose alternative opportunities are so good, relative to their present situations that they are just on the verge of leaving or staying. It is they whom the profit maximizing firm needs to accommodate. (If it is not too costly to do so, the firm might find it profitable to discriminate between workers according to their alternatives.) The union, in contrast, is a political institution whose leadership must (if democratically elected) seek to please the median workers. They are typically more senior than marginal workers and earn

less than the mean worker (earnings distributions are typically skewed to the right), hence the tendency for unions to favour both seniority and equality. Further, even if all or most workers prefer to take more of their "pay" in the form of fringe benefits and more generally in improved working conditions, and less in wages, they may be unable to attain this collective objective without a formal "voice" institution such as a union. This is so whenever making individual demands for general benefits is costly or risky — the typical "free rider" barrier to satisfying collective wants without an organization. Are union workers then better satisfied with their work situation? The answer depends on whether one asks them or observes what they do. Union workers express more dissatisfaction with their jobs, arguably because it is the unions' role to foment and focus dissatisfaction. They are also less likely to quit, after allowing for wage and other differences, because the union gives them the option of "voice" — formal procedure for avoiding and resolving conflicts — and changing conditions as well as of "exit." Thus, unions benefit the organized firms by reducing their turnover costs.

In what is admittedly their most controversial finding, the authors go on to argue that the voice/response aspect of unionism generally increases labour productivity not only by reducing turnover, but also by union apprenticeship programmes and by inducing "more rational personnel policies and more careful monitoring of work" by management. (164) They admit that this result is not invariant and is more likely in industries characterized by union-management cooperation and a competitive environment. The issue here is not only the factual question of whether or not unionized settings have higher and faster rising productivity but also the causation. If unions increase productivity only by raising wages, thus inducing a substitution of higher quality labour or more capital per worker, that reduces the overall productivity of the economy. It is only if given workers working with given capital are more productive that there is an overall gain.

Having found unions to have on balance a positive effect, Freeman and Medoff are naturally concerned about "the slow strangulation of private-sector unions" in the United States. While the current decline of American unions is quite familiar, they document that that decline began in the mid-1950s: more than a third of private non-agricultural workers were then organized compared to less than a quarter in 1980. Like others, the authors find that structural changes in the demographic, geographic, industrial, and occupational aspects in the labour force could, in principle, account for much of the decline. But they refuse to take these results at face value because similar structural changes have not had similar effects elsewhere, notably in Canada, because unions have typically expanded by organizing new constituencies, and because these changes fail to explain the drop in the support for unions in certification (National Labor Relations Board) elections which was the proximate cause of the decline. Another potentially important factor is the reduction in union organizing effort as measured both by expenditure and inter-union competition. The stress, however, is on management tactics, positive and negative, legal and illegal, aimed at discouraging attempts at organization, delaying and influencing elections, refusal to reach a first agreement, and decertification.

The authors conclude that if present trends continue, the degree of unionization may decline to some 10 per cent of private non-agricultural workers. This, they feel, is less than is desirable for society as a whole. But they also point out that historically such trends have been reversed. They favour labour law reform to speed up certification elections and impose larger penalties for illegal actions by employers. Whether or not one shares

their sympathies, one cannot but think that, in the present political climate in the United States, their recommendation is unlikely to get as far as the rather similar Labor Law Reform Act of 1978. That bill passed the House before dying in the Senate.

S.F. Kaliski
Queen's University

Jack Barbash, *The Elements of Industrial Relations* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1984).

"INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS" is now a well-recognized field of inquiry, with its own scholarly journals, associations, institutes, professorships, and related academic paraphernalia. Yet the field still lacks a precise definition of its boundaries and a commonly accepted analytical framework. This little book (only 136 pages long) is the effort of a distinguished scholar and experienced labour relations practitioner to develop such a framework for the American industrial relations system.

The author certainly has the requisite credentials. He was originally among a small group of scholars (mostly liberal in outlook) who believed that labour problems were an inevitable outcome of industrial society and worthy of study in their own right. He has written numerous articles and books on the labour relations process. He has several times been president of the Industrial Relations Research Association, and has served with the National Labour Relations Board, and the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO. Perhaps because of that, the book has limited pretensions. Barbash is doubtful whether the diverse behaviours involved in the industrial relations process really can be reduced to a rigorous analytical framework with the predictive powers of the physical sciences.

Barbash's goal is much more modest. His objective is a general taxonomy of the American labour relations process — a kind of *Gray's Anatomy* of industrial relations which, like its medical counterpart, can help organize one's thinking and provide a useful pedagogical tool, without being too definite about how the various components of the system actually interact with each other under particular conditions. It is a descriptive overview, useful for an appreciation of how the system works in a general way, but inevitably lacking the precision for definitive prediction or the control of the process, should a third party be inclined to intervene. As Barbash puts it, "this work is mainly a series of propositions, concepts and generalizations about industrial relations put together in a way to present a coherent if not always systematic structure of ideas." He tries to "keep the level of generality close enough to reality, to see some connection between them."

Unfortunately, none of this is easy for a reviewer to discuss, let alone summarize. It involves complex interrelationships between "the work society" (employees who may or may not be organized), technology, the market (however defined), the demand for efficiency (which Barbash calls "cost discipline"), the intrusion of the state, and so on. Indeed, it is the very complexity of these relationships which lies at the heart of Barbash's pessimism about the approaches utilized by other researchers.

None of the ideas in this book are particularly new. The work is largely an expansion and refinement of several of Barbash's earlier articles, beginning with his article, "The Elements of Industrial Relations," which appeared in the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* in 1964. However, to really appreciate what Barbash's approach is, it may be useful to note what it clearly is not. It is not a Marxist analysis in which industrial relations is seen primarily as the relationship between classes, with a "working class" having a pivotal role and, in particular circumstances, more or less self-consciousness or

revolutionary potential. Nor is it the "managerial" approach of Frederick Taylor or Elton Mayo who, from different perspectives, saw management as the critical agent in the process or worker satisfaction as a prerequisite for productivity. And it is certainly not the approach of the new-classical economists, the "labour marketeers," who treat human labour as a commodity to be allocated or rewarded in accordance with the forces of the marketplace. Barbash is an inveterate institutionalist of the "Wisconsin School," writing in the tradition of Commons and Perlman.

For these writers, "free collective" bargaining is an essential part of an American model of industrial democracy, which should be encouraged and protected. The practice of collective bargaining is their principal focus. They reject the more general and abstract formulations of both the labour marketeers and the Marxists, and prefer to proceed from fact to the formulation of theory, rather than the reverse.

These values and approaches, of course, are now regarded as somewhat old-fashioned by the economists who often dominate schools of industrial relations, and currently influence the policy evaluation process in the United States Department of Labor. These free marketeers have mobilized mathematical technique in support of their own normative credo of efficiency, and often seem to assume that precision, however abstract, is equated with truth. Deviations from their theoretical expectations which arise from public policy or institutional constraints are described as "anomalies" or "distortions," while informed judgement based upon experience is denigrated as mere anecdotal evidence or theoretical constructs incapable of rigorous empirical testing. As Barbash observes, these scholars "have no time for ideas that don't model well," and he wryly recalls that it was the same "quantifiers in search of the unquantifiable" who sought in Viet Nam to impose mathematical precision and *rationality on complex social phenomena* which defied such seductively simplistic solutions. Barbash is skeptical, as well he should be. The economists' much vaunted predictive powers are more potent in theory than reality, and their persistent pleas for the elimination of social, political, and institutional (in short, human) constraints on the market, merely underline the narrowness of their vision. It is precisely those institutional constraints which Barbash seeks to incorporate into his own less rigorous, but no less useful model.

A book of this kind must necessarily make some artificial divisions ("the union," "the state," "Management," "industrial conflict") in order to organize the diverse material under review. If the presentation seems a little disjointed, one cannot be unduly critical. But the prose is far from elegant, and there is an apparent obsession with lists, which appear page after page. Phenomenon X is said to be a function of factors a, b, c, d, etc., while phenomenon Y is said to be dependent upon factors 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Even if the analysis is correct — as by and large it is — one can only take this in small doses. It would probably be more profitable to read each chapter at a separate sitting.

More fundamentally, the system Barbash is describing (and clearly supports) has recently been showing distinct signs of wear and tear. In the 1970s we have seen the slow strangulation of private sector trade unionism in the United States, the end of positive public policy towards trade unions, and a distinct redirection of state power against trade union interests. These recent and perhaps significant trends appear in the book only as something of an afterthought, a footnote to the 1964 analysis. This is disappointing.

There are nevertheless a variety of observations, which, if not new, are nonetheless worthy of repetition. I enjoyed in particular Barbash's *ad hominem* (but perhaps accurate) comments about those of his colleagues who

have been critical of the materialism of American "business unions:" "the upper-middle-class prosessionals who do most of the writing in the field of work are themselves ill at ease with pure economic needs and, therefore, tend to undervalue the importance to workers of these basic needs and over value the 'higher order' needs." Those middle-class professionals must be careful lest they project their own values on the workers whose behaviour and institutions are the object of scrutiny. On a broader plane, Barbash pointedly reminds us of the important differences between the craft and industrial models of worker organization, as well as the extent to which the different environments in which they operate can encourage quite different responses. For example, he notes that "because its industries are closer to the 'centre' economy, industrial unionism is more closely associated with wide-ranging political and legislative programmes in ways that the craft unions are not." Industrial unions, if they are to perform their collective bargaining and advocacy roles, are inevitably drawn into politics, regardless of their institutional connections or their leaders' predilections. Such broader generalizations may well be relevant to the Canadian scene when we ponder the formation of the CFL, and consider why international industrial unions, despite their American connection and predominantly "business union" philosophy, nevertheless forged early and lasting links with the CCF/NDP and, in 1976, played a leading roles in perhaps the first political general strike since 1919. One might even be inclined to conclude (as I do) that the organizational base and collective bargaining challenges facing a union are a much better gauge of its behaviour than the international connection which has so preoccupied some Canadian writers in recent years.

In summary, although the book is not without problems, if read carefully it is probably a useful contribution to the industrial relations field, and a necessary counterbalance to the purely economic model which many industrial relations scholars now embrace as their dominant paradigm.

R.O. MacDowell
Toronto

Larry James, *Power in a Trade Union: The Role of the District Committee of the AUEW* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984).

FOR STUDENTS OF industrial relations, the question of trade union democracy is a perennial one. In order to feel adequately conversant in this subject it is necessary to master a considerable bibliography examining the notions of the iron laws of oligarchy, survival of factions, institutionalized oppositions, leadership autonomy versus rank-and-filism, checks and balances, and finally the idea of "polyarchy" to which Larry James' *Power in a Trade Union* belongs.

Yet it must be argued that no matter how many times the deck is shuffled and dealt, the results are rarely illuminating and original. For it has to be said that by and large most trade unions tend to fail any rigorous democratic test. Indeed, for a generation or more, writers have attempted to redefine the concept of internal trade union democracy in an effort to make union behaviour appear more palatable. And it is against this tendency that James' work should be judged.

In stating that "the argument of this book is that control over decision making is distributed among a series of collectivities, usually of a hierarchical kind, so that lower level collectivities possess some degree of autonomy in decision making," (8) James places his work *within the framework of passive democracy*. The category which he employs is that of unit polyarchy — a concept purloined by industrial relations writers from the pluralism of the political scientists in

the late 1950s. Briefly, the argument suggests, as James implies, that trade union leaderships are limited in their autonomy because of the diffusion of power to differential elements within the union. And that it is these sources of collective or group power which provide democratic checks.

The attraction of this argument is twofold. First, using this much limited definition of democracy, almost all institutions and organizations, trade union or otherwise, will have a democratic rationale built into their structure. But this can not be right. Bosses of large corporations constantly face considerable checks and balances but these organizations can hardly be described as democratic. Second, and more important, it serves to deflect attention away from a more fruitful endeavour, which is to develop an analysis of external pressures which constantly undermine active democratic control by union memberships.

For James however, "Power is distributed through the union so that different levels or groups have some scope to make decisions over limited issues" and that "any constraint on the ability of trade union leaders to impose their will on a reluctant membership, even the unofficial strike, may be interpreted as a factor promoting union democracy." (5) In order to pursue this theme, James identifies contingent and non-contingent sources of legitimacy which may buttress existing collectivities within unions and account for new ones. These sources of power include voting, compliance, and retention of membership groups. And these are the circumstances which determine the relative strength or otherwise of the checks and balances faced by union leaderships.

James sets himself the task of testing this polyarchic model against the Manchester District Committee of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers and its relationship to the workplace union and executive council. The results of this case study, he argues, "reinforces the view that conflict in trade unions is the rule rather than the exception." (115) Moreover, such conflict occurs differentially throughout the AUEW. Following other studies, James also inevitably discovers that the power of the Manchester District Committee is less than decisive. This leads James to engineer a remarkable about-face. Despite his earlier assertion that the existence of trade union polyarchies is the most fruitful method we can employ to review trade union government, his case study leads him to admit, along with Hyman, that a polyarchic union such as the AUEW is unlikely to be democratic.

Clearly this is a sharp contrast to his original hypothesis that any checks and balances are de facto evidence of democratic behaviour. Not only does this lead him to abandon his initial criteria, but we are left with an arid description of trade union government, rather than a genuine inquiry into the nature of union democracy. Hence, we are asked to cast aside situations which we feel "ought to be" in favour of "concepts and techniques which are appropriate to describing and analysing the situation as it actually exists." (115)

Thus, by his own admission, the author has produced a piece of research which is to be valued because it is essentially descriptive. It seems fatuous indeed to erect a theoretical model strongly supporting the notion of trade union polyarchy only to abandon it in the final analysis. This is doubly disappointing because his case study of the Manchester district is of itself potentially significant. By a different conceptual route, James might have reviewed the operations of this district not in the descriptive sense, using the notion of polyarchy, but by identifying the internal and external pressures which continually subvert attempts by union members to exert democratic control over their union.

These pressures, mediated through the labour process, drive a wedge between

rank-and-file members and leaders. Rather than unions being genuine instruments of power for working people they tend to become instruments of control over them. This is not to say that the "iron law of oligarchy" is inevitable. As Gouldner has argued, the iron law of oligarchy *can only exist* because the "bridges of democracy" are doggedly rebuilt against almost impossible odds.

A project which took this as its central focus might highlight not only why and how democratic control by union members is continually rendered inoperative, but more importantly, those challenges to autocratic leadership which are successful. By employing the notion of polyarchy, James *theoretically circumscribes* these issues and offers in its place a descriptive treatment only.

G.J.H. Gilson
St. Francis Xavier University

Ralph Miliband, *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1984).

IN THIS RELATIVELY short book (first published in 1982) Ralph Miliband sets out to show that British "democracy" consists fundamentally of a system of mechanisms to prevent the people from exercising political power: "the wish to contain pressure from below . . . provides the key to the nature and spirit of the British political system: all else depends upon it." (3) The principal mechanisms described are parliamentarism (by means of which governments are effectively protected from popular sentiment); trade unions and the Labour Party (both of which are committed to and organized for repressing "left," "socialist," or even "radical" activism); the dominance of conservative values in the media and among most of the British intelligentsia; the conformity, secrecy, and unity of the administrative and coercive branches of the British state; the House of Lords (a systematic brake on reform) and the monarchy (symbol of conservative values and rallying-point for the right in a crisis); and the system of local government, where control by Whitehall combines with the conservatism of local government bureaucrats and vested interests (including those of the Labour Party's national leadership) to defuse the grassroots pressures that do occasionally surface (as in Poplar in the 1920s, Clay Cross in the 1970s, and the GLC in the 1980s). The concluding chapter considers three scenarios for the future: business as usual, a gradual trend towards authoritarianism, and socialism. Miliband doubts if business can continue as usual, given continuing economic failure, and fears that authoritarianism is most likely; socialism, he believes, is out of the question so long as the Labour leadership is, in its majority, opposed to it.

The book's style is as clear as its organization, and in all essentials it is undeniably correct. The British system is exceptionally undemocratic among the capitalist democracies. Élite, bureaucratic, cooptive, and appointive decision-making, and the practical and ideological exclusion of individuals, ideas, and projects concerned with radical change, let alone socialism, are indeed systematic and pervasive. Miliband is surely correct to identify as decisive the decades after 1867, a time when those in power explicitly recognized the need to absorb and neutralize the potential influence of the new working-class electorate. And besides offering many penetrating insights, Miliband has two outstanding strengths as an exponent of this theme. First, he reads history and can illustrate his often iconoclastic points from impeccably orthodox sources. Second, he has an exceptionally good grasp of the establishment mind. Miliband is at his most convincing in spelling out the complicity of civil servants and ministers, judges and police, peers and editors, in protecting themselves and each other from any form

of effective public control. The same skills make his final scenario of the kind of bland yet effective authoritarianism to be expected in Britain chillingly recognizable: this is indeed how it will be.

The book differs from the author's well-known 1969 study, *The State in Capitalist Society*, in seeking to show not that the state is a class state, but how a particular class state is insulated from popular pressure. In this connection two questions may be asked: does this book explain, as well as it describes, the distinctive features of British capitalist democracy; and how has the general analysis stood the test of time?

On the whole the book does not try to explain the distinctiveness of capitalist democracy in Britain, or even indicate precisely how far it is distinctive. This seems a pity, from the point of view of someone who would like to do something about changing it. What accounts for the continued importance of secrecy, for instance, why is it greater in Britain than in, say, the United States or Sweden, and what would need to be changed in order to reduce it? One gets the impression that the system is perfectly closed and self-reinforcing, that none of the changes made in the era of social democracy were significant, and that any serious improvement can only come from a comprehensive socialist transformation; this seems at least debatable.

As for the test of time, most of what has happened since 1982 confirms the analysis: from the press campaigns around the Falklands and the miners' strike to the revelations about M15 surveillance of the the government's radical opponents, and much else. Some developments, however, do not wholly confirm it: examples are civil service resistance to the radical right policies of the incoming Thatcher government, or the opposition of the House of Lords to the abolition of the metropolitan councils. Of course these episodes can be explained away as examples of the relative autonomy of the state or minor differences within the dominant class over tactics, but some of the complexity of the system seems to escape Miliband's model in these and some other instances.

The problem here has to do, I think, with two difficulties with Miliband's model. While he recognizes that there are no "vast forces seething with revolutionary anger" to be contained, he retains his vision of the socialist project emanating from the inherent antagonism between capital and labour and hence carried into effect by the working class.

The first difficulty in this formulation is that the inherent unity of interest of the working class may be questioned, both practically and theoretically. Miliband does not refer to the contemporary debate on this issue; it at least deserves to be considered. Second, in Miliband's final analysis, what ultimately blocks the emergence of the socialist project out of the antagonism between capital and labour is the systematic failure of Labour leaders to foster the socialist potential of the working class; and this is why, in spite of the bankruptcy of the capitalist economy in Britain, capitalists in Britain today anticipate not so much a mass socialist challenge as anomic inner-city protest. To the extent that this is true, at least following the defeat of the miners' strike, it seems to be the pre-emption of potential pressure, rather than the containment of actual pressure, that is critical. This implies the need for a more complex, Gramscian mode of analysis to complement the class-structural model used by Miliband.

These comments are necessarily of a summary nature. They are not meant to detract from the book's exemplary merits, which have already earned it a wide audience. What it says about the British political system is profoundly true and should be read by every student who seeks a critical understanding.

Colin Leys
Queen's University

Gordon L. Clark and Michael Dear, *State Apparatus* (Boston: Allen and Unwin 1984).

THE MODERN STATE is a complex set of institutions shaped by capitalist society. In turn this state and its institutions or apparatuses shape that society. The objective of the authors "is to understand how the state and the state apparatus structure capitalist society, especially the sociospatial processes, which, in a recursive manner envelop everyday life." (12) The goal of understanding the operation of state apparatuses is important, particularly within Marxist analyses which have tended to neglect the relative autonomy of the state.

The authors laudably argue in favour of the development of a "theoretical perspective guided by historical specificity." (6) They argue, too, for a historical-hermeneutic methodology the goal of which is "successful interpretation." (8) Just what "successful" interpretation is exactly is left unclear. Still, the stated concern with history and historical specificity is important although it turns out to be a promise at least somewhat unfulfilled.

The authors provide a cogent review of literature concerned with the state. The role of the state as supplier of goods, as regulator and facilitator, as arbiter of intergroup conflicts, is underscored. The state is seen as multi-dimensional. Beyond this the authors want to understand the state as a power in its own right. They "assume a separation between the political and economic spheres that in practice sustains the capitalist state as a distinct institution." (34) They do not see the mode of production as ultimately constraining state action. (34) It is on these assumptions that the discussion of apparatus is based. The various institutions are seen as competing, as power wielding, and ultimately as having their own dynamic (albeit "relative"). Is there a separation of politics and economy? The separation permeates this work. On the one hand, it is useful as it helps to escape simple-minded economic determinism. On the other, it is bothersome to see categories such as "political" and "economic" as representative of truly separate phenomena when they are inextricably intertwined. The authors criticize mode-of-production analysis because it smacks of simple determinism.

Possibly, but saying that one is going to analyze the social formation instead does not help much. Surely what is needed is a subtle appreciation of production, of human creativity and interaction. Production encompasses social relations and politics and they, in turn, are integral to it.

The authors try to classify the various functions of the state. This section, which outlines functions such as consensus, law, repression, and production, is not without utility although it is shrouded in jargon. Is it necessary to speak of subapparatus and para-apparatus? There is also a need to realize that the functions described are not exclusive. The legal "subapparatus" surely has repression and production functions as well as legal functions.

The remainder of the book is an attempt to analyze the operation of various state apparatuses and their spatial implications. The authors use various historical examples to illustrate such operations and effects. For example, the authors provide an interesting discussion of the state and psychiatry. In much of the book there is a use of history rather than an historical analysis per se. The danger of this is that one may miss important struggles which condition the state. In the chapter on law and the state, for instance, law is seen as furthering the spatial integration of the United States. In their view of law and society, the authors suggest that naturalism and positivism in legal thinking has led to the idea that the judiciary is truly independent and separate from social forces. They argue that this is not so. True, but it is curious that in an

analysis of law, American law in particular, the history of realism is neglected. From the early twentieth century, realists in the United States criticized the social unreality of positivist thinking. They did have an impact on American legal thinking. Why is this line of thought neglected? What was its effect on the judiciary? Could it not have been part of the shift in "spatial" policy?

There is a curious ahistorical aspect to this work. Given the desire to confront history it is interesting that they speak of the state having to do things. For example they speak of the local state as the result of the "need for directed longterm crisis avoidance." (133) Another example occurs in the chapter on legitimacy where it is asserted that the state must maintain two façades — appearing to represent all of society and facilitating the power of certain groups. It is not clear that the state must do anything or that a form of the state must exist. Would not an historical analysis discuss the struggles and actions of the forces which shape the state? There is a movement between political and economic determinism which runs throughout the study.

The chapter on political language is troubling both because of a lack of appreciation of history and because it is disjointed. There is much discussion of the importance of language and its symbolism as well as its constraints on social action. Political language creates "a reality from which counterevidence or dissent is excluded." (94) There is no analysis of the potential for change. Much of the material here seems out of place. Language policy of the state and indeed control of information are different issues from the symbolism and mode of political discourse which are described in the first part of the chapter.

The book raises interesting questions. A fuller appreciation of history, a truly historical method, will ultimately enable us to understand the operations of state apparatuses.

Gregory J. Levine
Kingston

Mark Poster, *Foucault, Marxism and History: Mode of Production versus Mode of Information* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1984).

RECENTLY DECEASED, enormously controversial, Michel Foucault unintentionally fostered an interpretive cottage industry while he lived. Since his death the trend has continued. Explaining it is not easy. In a simplistic sense we seem to have a need for intellectual luminaries to follow, or rail against. With the passing of interest in McLuhan, Sartre, and Lévi-Strauss, Foucault filled a kind of void. His only serious rival has been Habermas, who lacks the personal and stylistic flair Foucault evidenced. Qualities that can bequeath charismatic status to scholars include a set of seemingly revealing but basic ideas couched in texts sufficiently ambiguous to compel further elaboration; a wide disciplinary appeal that can span the humanities and social sciences; and enigmatic marginality. Foucault had these in abundance. However, when all is said and done are there enduring elements in his legacy worth the consideration of subsequent generations? Mark Poster argues in the affirmative.

His case for Foucault, using Marx as a point of departure, recalls what Sartre once said about Marxism being the most revealing perspective of our time because we have not outgrown the conditions that gave rise to it. However, according to Poster, Marxism strains to assess the contemporary scene because we have indeed moved away from the historical conditions on which its initial premises are based. Industry in the developed world has shifted to a situation where the dominance of production/labour has given way to one where information/service orientation

provides the bulk of jobs and income. This new scenario, which relates to a concept Poster calls the "mode of information" requires new tools for its assessment and Foucault looms as a major source.

The book takes us to the door of this new vista of social theory by attempting a thorough but admittedly selective explication of Foucault. What interests Poster most is Foucault after 1968, the point at which his orientation shifted from the rules and properties of discourse to a concern with it as a manifestation of power/knowledge. Poster argues that Foucault represents the most revealing source for contemporary critical theory, a continuation of the spirit of western Marxism by other means. In order to establish this, numerous alternative options, beginning with Marx, are respectfully assessed and found wanting in various way.

It is argued that Marx's concept of historical materialism — a term he never used, as a number of other writers have pointed out — has much in common with liberal historiography: a tendency to totalize from a point of view that sees the present age as a culmination of the past; and an empirical methodology. Although the political orientation and subject matter of the two approaches differ, both have become academically acceptable, and according to Poster increasingly less relevant (but not obsolete) to our present age.

The complex information age we live in cannot be properly understood by seeing it as the result of a continuous development of productive forces and their requisite social relations. Nor do the variants of Marx's view elaborated in twentieth-century critical theory suffice. Poster gives a concise assessment of the limitations of several representatives of this tradition such as the Marx-Freud synthesis of Reich and Marcuse, the semiotic perspective of Baudrillard, the existential Marxism of Sartre, and the communications emphasis of Habermas.

The best available option for Poster is Nietzsche via Foucault. It offers: a separation of the present from the past through discontinuity; abandonment of dialectical necessity based on causes and connections, either material or ideational; an emphasis on discursive practice; the renunciation of a fixed point of view; and the adoption of a fluid approach capable of discerning the way power/knowledge interact in the crucial discourses (and associated institutions) of contemporary life.

One need not follow Poster to these limits to appreciate the thoroughness and clarity of his study. Admirably, it renders plainly visible numerous points that readers may want to challenge. One I had trouble with is his confinement of Marx to an empiricist (Lockean) tradition of economic history. This is an important, but not the only valid aspect of Marx. For Marx the materialist conception of history signifies more than productive circumstance; it includes the organic (bio-psychological) makeup of human beings. Cerebralists like Foucault might call this mere discourse, but as Marxists such as Timpanaro have shown, it is a crucial legacy worth understanding and developing, one too often obscured by the concerns of a narrow political economy or reductive language theory.

The conscientious and sympathetic appraisal of Foucault makes this book one of the best recent interpretations, especially for readers who want to know what the fuss is about and whether Foucault's approach can be separated from his own idiosyncratic usage and applied by others to a wider range of situations. There is also an intriguing but not altogether convincing demonstration of the way Foucault's concept of discontinuity allows for a greater understanding of the historical continuity of certain institutions. A good deal of Poster's enthusiasm comes from the allegedly new methodological framework opened up by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, which it is argued,

can be transposed to situations of electronic surveillance and data keeping in our own time.

As a new critical theory Foucault's work has problems that Poster either glosses over or ignores. For example he experiences no discomfort over the unlocalized omnipresent nature of power in Foucault's writings, where it is deemed to be something that "is everywhere." This concept resembles a mediaeval essence and recalls St. Augustine's characterization of a God whose "presence is everywhere and centre is nowhere." Similarly, to see sexuality, as Foucault does, solely in terms of the discourse that shapes our understanding of it is limiting, unless balanced by a corrective that assumes a universality for at least certain features. Taking discourse analysis to the extreme we could assess modern nuclear physics in this way, without assuming the material universality of its power as physical phenomenon.

Ultimately Poster does a noteworthy job in convincing us of the importance of Foucault, and the "mode of information" as a concept. However, there is a tendency to overstate the Foucauldian case. Other sources not cited by Poster can be brought to bear on the issues in question. For example, aspects of his "mode of information" can be found in Jack Goody's concept of the "mode of communication," which is also an updating of Marx's "mode of production." With respect to the power/knowledge equation in the contemporary technological world, American polymath Lewis Mumford and Canadian political economist Harold Innis, to name just two, have given us rich, if as yet largely unexplored insights. Not all relevant critical theory has emerged from the tradition formally known as critical theory dealt with in this book.

Yes, Foucault should be taken seriously, but not in the singular and definitive sense Poster seems to suggest. Rather, as part of a series of recent attempts at critical social inquiry that constitute unintentionally linked perspectives, which should not be reduced to the dominant vision of any one theorist.

Paul Heyer
Simon Fraser University

Pierre-Louis Lapointe, *Buckingham, ville occupée* (Hull: Éditions Asticou, 1984).

CE LIVRE SE PRÉSENTE sous un titre percutant: *Buckingham, ville occupée*. Mais à mesure que le texte se déroule sous ses yeux, le lecteur se rend compte que ce titre n'est pas du tape-à-l'oeil mais se justifie tout à fait. L'occupation dont il s'agit n'est pas celle d'une armée en territoire conquis, bien sûr, mais les conséquences ne furent pas moins néfastes.

Nous assistons à l'occupation réelle de la ville de Buckingham par l'armée, appelée à protéger les biens de l'entreprise. Mais il y a eu aussi la longue occupation qu'une famille d'industriels écossais, les MacLaren, fit peser sur une ville et une région. Ils mettent la main sur un immense territoire forestier s'étendant sur les deux rives de la Basse-Lièvre. Ils se vouent à l'exploitation intégrale de cette riche prébende, étendant leur «emprise à tous les secteurs de la vie économique, politique et sociale de Buckingham et de la Basse-Lièvre.» (19) Cette mainmise débute dans la dernier tiers du dix-neuvième siècle et se prolonge jusqu'à la décennie 1940.

Dès 1901, les Maclaren tiennent leur fromage de main ferme: ils exercent déjà «un véritable monopole dans l'industrie du bois,» (20) ayant acheté leur concurrent immédiat dans ce coin de pays. Le gouvernement du Québec leur cède par ailleurs à un prix incroyablement bas, soit environ 13 000$, les rives et le lit de la Basse-Lièvre ainsi qu'une partie de son potentiel hydroélectrique. En possession de 2 600 milles carrés de forêt pour alimenter leur pulperie, ils agissent avec la plus grande détermination pour accroître

leur richesse, se montrant intraitables à l'égard des concurrents, des employés et même du gouvernement. Les concurrents se voient privés d'avantage auxquels ils pourraient s'attendre, comme l'usage des eaux de la rivière pour le transport. Le gouvernement du Québec en est réduit à voter une loi spéciale pour empêcher l'entreprise de se livrer au dumping et d'adopter des politiques déloyales envers les concurrents.

Mais c'est surtout à l'égard de leurs employés que les MacLaren manifestent une particulière âpreté au gain. Ces entrepreneurs ont d'ailleurs la partie belle: ils ont l'oreille des politiciens, tant le premier ministre du Canada, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, que le premier ministre du Québec, Sir Lomer Gouin. Ils peuvent donc, tour à *leur aise, presser le citron, exploiter le travailleur* dont la situation est assez semblable à celle des paysans d'ancien régime, c'est-à-dire «corvéable à merci.»

Protégés des gouvernements supérieurs, les MacLaren s'assurent également la complicité du gouvernement local. C'est important en particulier dans le domaine des taxes sur leurs installations et leurs immenses demeures. Ils ont le moyen de faire pression: ils sont membres du conseil municipal en tant que maire ou échevin, et y font pénétrer leurs affidés. De plus quand la ville est à court de liquidité, ils lui avancent de l'argent. Ils lui fournissent aussi l'électricité. Ils sont également employeurs d'une grande partie des travailleurs de la ville et des échevins. On imagine le pouvoir de chantage qu'ils détenaient. Ils ne manqueront pas de s'en servir en particulier au lendemain de la grève. Il est à peine nécessaire de signaler qu'ils étaient en perpétuel conflit d'intérêt.

Rassurés en général du côté des gouvernements, les MacLaren n'avaient pas à craindre la législation ouvrière, plutôt embryonnaire et peu contraignante en ce début du vingtième siècle: ils abusent de la situation. Ils offrent des salaires inférieurs à ceux des autres papeteries de la région où existent des syndicats. Les conditions de travail qu'ils imposent sont dictées par l'arbitraire. Les travailleurs finissent par se syndiquer. Malgré de nombreuses concessions de leur part, ils se butent à un refus de négocier et finalement à un lockout. Un affrontement violent s'en suit. Le sang coule: deux dirigeants du syndicat, dont le président, tombent sous les balles. Un policier meurt également. L'armée occupe la ville.

L'administration de la justice, qui doit en principe demeurer au-dessus de la mêlée, semble s'être rangée du côté des patrons: «La raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure,» écrivait le fabuliste au temps des rois absolus. Les gouvernements, amis des MacLaren, ne semblent pas avoir pensé autrement. Les tribunaux *traitèrent les accusés patronaux avec* ménagement puis les exonérèrent. Les syndiqués payèrent en partie la note. Eux qui avaient particulièrement souffert de la violence de l'affrontement, n'eurent droit à aucun passe-droit et quelques-uns des leurs prirent le chemin de la prison.

Au lendemain de cette affrontement et de ses séquelles immédiates, les relations des MacLaren et de leurs employés furent, plus que jamais, celles de dominants à dominés. Les patrons exigèrent leur «livre de chair» des travailleurs qui avaient osé se syndiquer et affronter la puissance patronale. Les MacLaren établirent une liste noire qu'ils utilisèrent largement et transmirent à d'autres entreprises de la région. (96-7) Les travailleurs concernés, incapables de se faire réembaucher, durent quitter la ville, voire la région. Cette liste noire sera maintenue jusqu'aux années 1940, c'est-à-dire aussi longtemps que les MacLaren seront propriétaires de l'entreprise. C'est seulement vers cette époque que le syndicalisme parviendra à s'implanter à l'usine et à parler au nom des travailleurs.

Cette lutte ouvrière se doublait d'une lutte nationale et religieuse; les patrons étant protestants, et les ouvriers canadiens-français ou irlandais et catholi-

ques. Le personnel dirigeant, les avocats de l'entreprise, les officiers de l'armée venus à leur secours sont anglophones; les avocats du syndicat ainsi que les organismes qui les épaulent ou les encadrent sont francophones. Les procès-verbaux du conseil municipal sont rédigés en anglais même si la très grande majorité de la population est canadienne-française. On imagine bien quelle était la langue de travail à l'intérieur de l'usine.

Pour reconstituer l'histoire de Buckingham et de ses luttes, P.-L. Lapointe a déployé beaucoup d'énergie et d'ingéniosité. Il a eu recours à des entrevues, des journaux, et de nombreux fonds d'archives dont celles de la compagnie, des hommes politiques, du conseil municipal, des paroisses, des ministères. Ces documents sont analysés avec patience et prudence, l'historien présentant ses preuves avec rigueur, bien qu'il arrive mal à oblitérer un certain préjugé favorable aux travailleurs. Il nous épargne cependant, et nous lui en savons gré, même s'il parle des prolétaires, les références aux théoriciens socialistes.

L'historien fournit de nombreuses références à l'appui de ses affirmations. Il y joint des notes explicatives abondantes et souvent très intéressantes. Elles auraient peut-être gagné, en certains cas, à être incorporées au texte.

En montrant l'assujettissement de Buckingham et de ses travailleurs aux MacLaren, Lapointe ne nous dit pas si les conditions socio-économiques de la ville étaient inférieures ou comparables à celles des villes environnantes, des villes de compagnies, aussi appelées villes fermées, qui existaient alors au Québec. Ainsi dans la ville «fermée» d'Arvida, la Cie Alcan avait établi des relations paternalistes, peut-être, avec les citoyens mais les services d'urbanisme, d'hygiène de voirie, de loisirs étaient en général supérieurs à ceux des villes environnantes. Quant à l'organisation de l'enseignement public, elle n'avait d'égale que celle des grandes villes. Mais ce genre de comparaison aurait sans doute demandé un surcroit de travail et débordé le cadre que l'auteur s'était assigné.

P.-L. Lapointe a enrichi son livre de nombreux documents bien identifiés et très pertinents tels que cartes, photos, dessins, graphiques, tableaux. Les photos sont particulièrement utiles pour recréer le contexte de l'époque. L'ensemble de ces documents, loin de faire double emploi avec le texte, le complète et l'éclaire.

En présentant cette histoire de l'occupation de Buckingham par les MacLaren, l'historien fait indirectement le procès du gouvernement du Québec. En fait si les MacLaren ont pu se constituer un empire et s'y conduire en roitelets absolus, c'est que Québec leur a cédé les richesses naturelles à vil prix, leur a accordé un préjugé favorable et a assez peu légiféré, avant la décennie 1940, en matière de relations de travail.

D'autre part, la mentalité de la population à l'époque est aussi responsable de la situation qui a prévalu à Buckingham. Les syndicats étaient mal vus et la grève était considérée comme une abomination au début du vingtième siècle au Québec. Comment un syndicat pouvait-il alors stimuler le militantisme de ses membres et orchestrer des luttes décisives?

Au total voici une recherche particulièrement bien menée. S'il est vrai que les synthèses définitives s'édifient sur les monographies bien construites, cette étude apporte certes une pierre solide à l'édification de l'histoire de l'industrialisation au Québec.

Jean-Guy Genest
Université du Québec
à Chicoutimi