

Book Notes / Références Bibliographiques

Volume 13, 1984

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt13bn01>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)

1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this note

(1984). Book Notes / Références Bibliographiques. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 13, 292–296.

BOOK NOTES/ RÉFÉRENCES BIBLIOGRAPHIQUES

D.A. Muise, ed., *A Reader's Guide to Canadian History 1: Beginnings to Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1982).

J.L. Granatstein and Paul Stevens, eds., *A Reader's Guide to Canadian History 2: Confederation to the Present* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1982).

THESE COLLECTIONS OF historiographical essays reveal as much about the nature of the Canadian historical profession as they do about historical writing, as much about the narrowing of perspective that flows from concentrations of powerful populations of historians in Toronto and Ottawa as they do about the diversity and complexity of debate present in our historical literature. Six of the seven contributors in the pre-Confederation volume are drawn from the Ottawa-based institutions of Carleton, the University of Ottawa, and the National Museum of Man, while York and the University of Toronto provide eight of the twelve essays in the post-Confederation collection. Of the eighteen contributors, one is a woman, one is Québécois, and none are Marxists, a fair reflection of the politics of professionalism. Labour receives cursory treatment in Volume 1. While this reflects the undeveloped state of the study of the producing classes in early Canadian history, a number of studies — some of them of considerable empirical and theoretical importance — go unmentioned. In Volume 2, labour and working-class history is covered by Irving Abella. It also receives treatment in Gilbert Stelter's discussion of urban history, in Carl Berger's

outline of social and intellectual history, and in the various essays on specific provincial/regional literatures. Often, as in the treatment of working-class writing by Abella, Stelter, Berger, and Peter Oliver (on Ontario) a specific view of the historiography is reproduced in an amazing, if unreflective, display of consensus. Tea anyone?

Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F.J. Artibise, eds., *Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press 1982).

ESSAYS OF PARTICULAR note here are: L.D. McCann's "Staples and the New Industrialism in the Growth of Post-Confederation Halifax," originally published in *Acadiensis*; Marc Lafrance and David-Thierry Ruddel, "Physical Expansion and Socio-Cultural Segregation in Quebec City, 1765-1840," an original article that makes some comments on the urban geography and social distinctions of early Quebec; and Michael Doucet's "Politics, Space, and Trolleys: Mass Transit in Early Twentieth-Century Toronto," reprinted from the *Urban History Review* and addressing issues of great importance to working-class people in the past.

Steve Nelson, James R. Barrett, Rob Ruck, *Steve Nelson: American Radical* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press 1981).

IN 1955 HERBERT APTHEKER commented that Steve Nelson, convicted

under the Federal Smith Act and the Pennsylvania Sedition Act, was the victim of a frameup that threatened the very essence of American liberties. Calling for an end to all Sedition Acts, Aptheker urged Americans to read Nelson's *The 13th Juror: The Inside Story of My Trial*, and claimed that "wherever Steve Nelson is secure, you can be sure that there peace and equality and democracy are secure." Twenty-five years later two historians have collaborated with Nelson to produce the biography of an American radical. It takes us into the world of miners and autoworkers, across the Atlantic to the Spanish Civil War and the classrooms of the Lenin School, and through the upper echelons of party life and the frustrations of withdrawal from the CP in the crisis of 1956-57.

Maxine Schwartz Seller, ed., *Immigrant Women* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1981).

A SAMPLING OF DOCUMENTS relating to the experience of women emigrating to the United States between 1820 and 1970. Essentially literary, the documents chosen reflect the diversity of immigrant women's history and are arranged in sections dealing with the reasons for coming to the new world, surviving in a new land, work, family, and community life, education and activism, and the relationship of one generation to another.

James C. Foster, ed., *American Labor in the Southwest: The First One Hundred Years* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press 1982).

ORGANIZED IN FIVE SECTIONS, the essays in this collection focus on the Western Federation of Miners, the Industrial Workers of the World, the development of unionization among farm workers, Mexican labour north and south of the border, and labour and politics. Such an organization of material takes the reader

through the salient episodes in the twentieth-century labour history of the southwest, ending with a personal recollection of Monsignor Charles O. Rice. Once an activist in the liberal anti-communism of the purges of the post-1948 years, Monsignor Rice provides a rare and refreshing assessment of what he now refers to as "the very bad days of the Cold War, The Day of the Toad, and Scoundrel Time." It was then, he implies, that the American trade union movement lost some of its health and vigour.

John T. Cumbler, ed., *The Moral Response to Industrialism: The Lectures of Reverend Cook in Lynn, Massachusetts* (Albany: State University of New York Press 1982).

THIS BOOK REPRODUCES the speeches of the Reverend Joseph Cook in Lynn, Massachusetts, a city that experienced the industrial transformation of its shoe industry in the years leading up to a momentous strike in 1860. As Cumbler notes in the introduction, Cook brought the perspectives and traditions of an older moral order to this setting of change and conflict, searching for a new order amidst a disruptive chaos.

Philip S. Foner, ed., *Wilhelm Liebknecht: Letters to the Chicago Workingman's Advocate, November 26 1870-December 2 1871* (New York: Homes & Meier 1982).

INTRODUCED BY A significant essay on Liebknecht, the *Workingman's Advocate*, and the upsurge of American labour in the 1860s and early 1870s this volume should be read beside David Montgomery's *Beyond Equality*. In the over 120 pages of Liebknecht correspondence to one of the most vital and important working-class journals of the third quarter of the century, we are introduced to European socialism's lack of understanding of class formation and class consciousness in America, as well as its unshakeable support for militancy, organization, and the socialist

future. Liebknecht, ever an opponent of opportunism, wrote to American workers with just such commitments and the publication of these letters will undoubtedly stimulate new interest in the intellectual history of the workers' movement, especially those submerged transatlantic connections of which the "European Correspondent" of the *Workingman's Advocate* was a part.

Jonathan Garlock, *Guide to the Local Assemblies of the Knights of Labor* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1982).

AT \$65 THIS VOLUME will be unaffordable for most working-class historians, but it should be in every research library. It lists vital information (place, date of establishment, membership, race, sex, ethnicity, occupation, and duration) for almost 12,000 local assemblies of the Knights of Labor, although users will find that all of these categories of data are by no means universally available. The bulk of the guide is of course given over to LAs in the United States (organized by state), but there are also sections on Canada (seven provinces) and five other nations.

Gary Kulik, Roger Parks, and Theodore Z. Penn, eds., *The New England Mill Village, 1790-1860* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1982).

AN EXQUISITELY PRODUCED volume containing documents pertinent to an understanding of the formative years of the manufactory in New England. Organized in sections such as cotton textile technology, the character of the mill village, owners and agents, family labour and "mill girls," and labour organization and protest, the documents include census returns, autobiographies, and correspondence from such early industrial notables as Samuel Slater and Zachariah Allen, maps, land records, labour contracts and regulations, and legal cases. The second volume in a series entitled "Documents in Ameri-

can Industrial History," this collection complements nicely the previously published *The Philosophy of Manufactures: Early Debates over Industrialization in the United States*.

Bogdan Denitch, ed., *Democratic Socialism: The Mass Left in Advanced Industrial Societies* (Montclair, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun & Co. 1981).

TEN ARTICLES ON THE recent history and controversy surrounding the democratic left, focusing on: the transformation of European social democracy; the Swedish case; the socialist foreign policy of France; the relations of party, class, and state; and the place of unions in the new corporatism. Of particular interest are Denitch's concluding remarks on the obstacles confronting those who aim to build a mass socialist left in the United States. He provides little in the way of analysis of those historic forces blocking socialism in America, and instead substitutes a rather naive call for that ubiquitous and much sought after "unity" which will bring together communists and social democrats, young and old left, in a defence of democracy and an extension of popular power.

Paul Phillips, *Marx and Engels on Law and Laws* (Oxford: Martin Robertson 1980).

AN ATTEMPT TO EXAMINE how Marx and Engels explained the development of particular laws and their operation in actual historical practice. Situating the founding fathers of historical materialism in the Hegelian age, Phillips then proceeds to explore how they view the law and class interest in the cases of England and France. The book closes with discrete discussions of crime and criminal justice, of the regulation of economic institutions, and of the law's general place in the development of society.

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

TEN ESSAYS PENNED BY British social scientists challenge the Braverman approach to the workplace. Sympathetic to the general orientation of Braverman these authors nevertheless seek to refine his view of deskilling, the sexual division of labour, Taylorism and its impact, clerical work, and the contentious issue of control.

Richard R. Weiner, *Cultural Marxism and Political Sociology* (Beverly Hills: Sage 1981).

A DIFFICULT BOOK THAT attempts to refine sociologically the "theoretical wanderings" of "cultural Marxism" to elaborate a "critical political sociology." Those who relish the possibility of reconciling Habermas, Offe, Giddens, Touraine, Poulantzas, Althusser, Castells, E.P. Thompson, and others should pick up this book. Weiner orchestrates a vast array of writing, directing it toward a theoretical end that embraces an understanding of structured social relations, the possibility and potential of human agency, and the centrality of engaged scholarship. If the message is important the medium, unfortunately, is abstract, often historically schematic, and layered in jargon.

Paul Thompson, ed., *Our Common History: The Transformation of Europe* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press 1982).

THIS VOLUME REPRODUCES a substantial number of papers from the first International European Oral History Conference held at Essex in 1979. Drawing together work on working-class politics, various social and plebeian groups (journeymen, women, peasants), the family, fascism, and the resistance, and the democratic tradition, the articles in this collection attempt to bring together the often isolated strands of a common European experience. Like the short pieces in

Raphael Samuel's *People's History, Socialist Theory* and other History Workshop publications in England, this volume's contributors share a general commitment to an engaged history that attempts to break down barriers between past and present, history and theory, culture and structure, and oral and traditional sources. Prepared for verbal presentation and discussion, the specific essays are less finished and polished studies than provocative and stimulating introductions to processes and problems of interest to social historians.

Samuel Pycatt Menefee, *Wives For Sale: An Ethnographic Study of British Popular Divorce* (Oxford: Blackwell 1981).

A FASCINATING SUBJECT, impressively researched (based on over 375 cases of wife sales between 1073-1901), is nevertheless presented in a disappointing manner. Like all ritualistic practices, wife sales must be situated in particular socio-economic contexts, and related to the class relations of specific epochs. While Menefee piles story upon story — and fascinating and colourful they are — he stops short of analysis. He presents unique incidents of women selling their husbands and argues that the wife sale cannot be seen as a simple reflex reaction to the absence of alternative methods of divorce. Weaving his book around the themes of marriage, divorce, and contract, however, Menefee ignores larger social issues of patriarchal authority and class formation. Regarding wife sales as a traditional and conservative response to individual dilemmas, Menefee understates an experience of collectivity. In taking this approach, *Wives For Sale* manages to skirt a central analytic issue in the history of class-based societies, avoiding an assessment of the possibilities inherent in alternative, if archaic, cultures. For cultures are collective rather than individualistic undertakings, and traditional practices can be transformed in the face of active opposition into something other than conservative phenomena.

Mervyn Jones, *Today the Struggle: A Novel* (London: Quartet 1978).

NOVELIST AND POLITICAL JOURNALIST Mervyn Jones takes us through the history of contemporary England by exploring various family responses to the crises of the generations living through the post-1935 years. Acutely conscious of the class structure and politics of this period, Jones explores the lifestyles, ambivalences, and consciousness of the haute bourgeoisie, the nerveless intelligentsia, and the archetypal proletarian communist family. The commitments of the Spanish Civil War and the Aldermaston marches from the substantive background of the book, which tends to fizzle out, deliberately, in the more personalized context of the politics of the late 1970s. Jones is making an historical comment in the formal construction of a work of fiction. But this book is now in need of a final chapter. For the idealism of the 1930s and early 1960s is being re-established in the peace movements of the 1980s. That final chapter may in fact rest in the dedication to Dorothy and Edward Thompson, two working-class historians whose own life histories intersect with this novel's events and who are now active in the revival of the European demand for disarmament.

Albert S. Lindemann, *A History of European Socialism* (New Haven Yale University Press 1983).

THIS READABLE SYNTHESIS presents a

broad, if hardly innovative, view of European socialism. Probing the relationships among institutions, ideology, and self-activity of the working class, Lindemann orchestrates the chaos and confusion of socialism's history into a sequence of interpretive periods: the first socialists and the origins of theory, 1800-1848; the years of maturation, 1850-1870; socialism as an historical presence, 1870-1914; the birth of communism, 1914-1922; the rise of social democratic alternatives, 1914-1939; the triumph of Stalinism, 1919-1939; the fascist threat, 1923-1939; and the post-war era. In the end, it is a Fabian chronicle. For if the Fabians do not figure prominently in the text it is they who speak loudest in the concluding paragraph: "The world would be a pitiful place if all vision of a more harmonious human condition and a more perfect humanity were abandoned. Knowledge of the history of socialism is a heavy burden for those who persist in cherishing such visions. But, at the same time that we work to assure dignity, comfort, and emancipation for all people through intelligent planning and control of the anti-social tendencies of the market economy, we must recognize that the pursuit of individual gain in the context of liberal economic institutions has proved to be a potent force for the growing productivity of labor and for social vitality in general." (361) The Webbs are smiling.

B.D.P.