

Lynn's particular kind of radicalism in comparison with that which developed in other US factory towns? 3) Why was opposition to the state a foundation of artisan consciousness in Europe and not in the United States? The discussion of "Mentalité" centered on these questions: 1) Was lineal family consciousness necessarily opposed to an entrepreneurial outlook? What was the difference between acquisition and accumulation? What about a Puritan consciousness which opposed family "tribalism" in conflict with community orientation? What about competing interests for land within the lineal family? 2) Was the family the defining unit consciousness? In an agricultural setting, the family was enmeshed in work relations, but in an industrial setting, men and women had a different relationship to work. If occupation was the critical determinant of consciousness, where were the women?

This last question—Is class consciousness being defined as male consciousness in labor history?—was raised at different points during the conference as women participants pressed discussants for analyses informed by an awareness of gender as a category, and by the theoretical concerns of women's history.

The symposium included visual as well as intellectual stimulation in the form of a slide presentation by Al Young on "New England Artisan Culture and the Shaping of the Young Nation," and a special exhibit in the Smith College Museum of Art called "A Song for Occupations: Labor and the Laboring Classes in America." The museum exhibit demonstrated the iconography of America's working men and women in nineteenth and early twentieth century paintings, prints, sculpture and decorative arts.

Immersed in the issues of the "new" labor history, conference participants were reminded of the contributions of an earlier generation of New England labor historians by the presence at the conference of Caroline Ware and Vera Shlakman. Special presentations of merit to these scholars were awarded in an attempt to acknowledge our collective debt to them.

Judith Smith

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WORKING CLASS HISTORY AT THE SOCIETY FOR FRENCH HISTORICAL STUDIES 1979 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The twenty-fifth annual meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies, which met in Pittsburgh March 30-April 1, 1979, included several papers of interest to the readers of ILWCH. Most obvious were those in a session entitled "From Field to Factory: the Role of Work Structure in French Labor History," chaired by Jean Joughin (American U.). J. Harvey Smith (Northern Illinois/U. of North Carolina), "Work Structure and Labor Organization in Rural Languedoc, 1880-1910," stressed that while the great strikes among vine workers

(1903-1911) were rooted in changes in the organization and structure of vineyard labor that threatened the skill and independence of wage-earning vine dressers ("menialization" but not mechanization), they should not be regarded as the actions of proletarianized agricultural laborers. Instead they were rather successful attempts by half-workers half-petty producers to use "new organizations and new collective tactics for the defense and protection of older standards of life." Smith drew parallels between the vine workers' struggle and the larger French labor movement at the time, legitimately emphasizing the significance of skilled worker defensive action against dilution. The difference, however, was the degree of success achieved by his vine dressers in defending their situation. The strike of 1911 died for lack of interest—on the part of old allies, including municipal officials, but also on the part of the vine workers themselves. Smith's work thus draws attention to one of the central issues of labor history today, the reassessment of the concept of the "labor aristocracy" and its place in the European and American labor movements. Joan Scott, Michael Hanagan, John Foster, James Hinton, and David Montgomery, among many others, have all dealt creatively with the problem in recent years. Smith's rural perspective (which invites comparison with work done on the "Revolt of the Fields" in England) underlines the need to broaden our theoretical horizons on this question.

William Reddy (Duke University), "Work Experience in the Patois Literature of Lille during the Second Empire," explores a newer area of labor history research. In analyzing the songs and poems emanating from the Lille working class (though in part the product of bourgeois encouragement), Reddy stressed two intertwining themes. First, the bleeding-heart liberals, such as Villermé, Adophe Blanqui and Hugo, who horrified their middle-class readers with tales of mystery and imagination from the caves and slimy alleyways of Lille, did not view the working class world the same way that working class people who lived there did. The latter, in their expressions of themselves, had the curious habit of disagreeing about their "sub-human" state of existence, instead manifesting an immense capacity for dealing with life in perceptive, nuanced, and wonderfully ironical ways. Secondly, Reddy stresses the *absence* of significant references to work at all in this literature, a remarkable negative discovery. Why? Reddy remained tentative but offered the idea that, despite its real working class origin, this literature nevertheless bore the imprint of its initial bourgeois, folkloristic inspiration. "This is a tragic way for hegemony to work: the very characteristics which attracted middle-class romantics to the laborers were just those which, when transformed into vehicles for self-discovery, turned laborers away from their identity as laborers, suppressed in their self-consciousness the dilemma that human identity in the industrial age is condemned to wrestle with: the dilemma of wage labor." This goes to the heart of the problem of dealing with working class expression (written or oral) as consciousness. Reddy, understanding the history of his literature, recognizes the limitations imposed by that history

William Sewell (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton), a discussant at this session, and Robert Bezucha (Amherst College), a discussant at another,

both stressed the significance of “semiotics” in the exploration of “working class consciousness.” The representations of thought and feeling found in materials that have come down to historians and the sophisticated analysis of the symbols inherent in them are indeed important, although we always run the risk of placing too much trust in the words, rather than the actions, of working people, thereby returning to a sterile, content-analysis or opinion-poll approach to consciousness. This is the very kind of problem that has caused significant numbers of European labor movement theorists to abandon the concept of class consciousness altogether. As with Smith’s, Reddy’s paper addressed a primordial issue in labor studies.

The third paper was my own, “Work, Kin, Neighbors and Class Conflict in Nineteenth Century Lodève,” which sought explanations for the high level of nineteenth century worker militancy in the transformation of work structures and patterns of social interaction that occurred during the second half of the eighteenth century in this small, early-developing woolens city in Languedoc. The paper, while giving considerable attention to the dissolution of guild power, the rise of capitalist authority on the job, and related questions, emphasized the process of working class social integration, particularly the absorption of migrant workers into the Lodève working class. The absence of chain migration, marriage into the Lodève working class, occupationally linked housing patterns, and modest access to dwelling ownership leave one with “a picture of settlement, stability, and integration in a context of mediocre opportunity,” a situation conducive, it would appear, to the later vigor of working class resistance in the city. The paper argued the need to deal with the emergent working class within the context of its total experience. Local study should thus receive continued emphasis, though Sewell took issue with my comment that “most new insights into the problems of class formation and the development of class consciousness will derive from intensive local or industry-specific study. . . .” Although not doubting the value of works such as Forster’s Oldham or Agulhon’s Toulon (one should add Dawley’s Lynn and Wallace’s Rockdale), Sewell spoke for a return to a broader canvas, a wider cultural and intellectual history of working class development. Michael Hanagan, the other discussant in the session, also stressed the larger context—the need for a better understanding of the broader structural changes in developing capitalism and to set such studies as those represented in this session in the framework of “resistance to capital accumulation.”

In general, the session demonstrated the commitment of American historians of French labor to place their work in a broadly comparative framework, an emphasis increasingly shared by their French colleagues, especially Michelle Perrot and her associates at *Le Mouvement Social*.

Only two other sessions produced papers dealing directly with working class history, but both pointed to important new directions of research. Two papers in the first, chaired by David Bien (U. of Michigan), explored aspects of domestic service in the eighteenth century. While the significance of domestic service as part of labor history has not gone unnoticed in nineteenth century France, the

eighteenth century has been virtually untouched. Moreover, it is a field of immense importance not only in labor studies but in understanding social structure and its transmutations on a more general level. The papers presented, "From Public Display to Private Occupation: The Transformation of Domestic Service in Eighteenth Century France" by Sarah Maza (Northwestern U.), and "Some Thoughts on the Feminizing of Domestic Service in Eighteenth Century France" by Cissie Fairchilds (Syracuse U.) placed domestic service in this larger context and treated the transformations indicated in the titles as functions of the changing society and political culture of late eighteenth-century France. The third paper, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's (U. of Rochester) "The Ideological Basis of the Domestic Economy," argued that the emergence of new ideals of household management and sexual division of labor, indeed of "domestic economy as a coherent formulation, took shape in what appears to have been a fairly direct response the formulation of a bourgeois political economy" as the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth. Theresa McBride, in her comment, raised doubts as to whether either paper on domestic service adequately *explained* the phenomenon it was describing. Privatization and feminization were clearly occurring but the specific forces behind them were only vaguely outlined. This entire area of study is one of the important frontiers in labor and social history and again will take on its greatest meaning in an international comparative framework.

Only one paper in the session on "Tensions in Popular Culture . . . in the Nineteenth Century" bore directly on labor history: "Popular Culture, Political Culture: The Case of Lyon 1830-1850" by Mary Lynn McDougall (Simon Fraser U.). While developing no central theme, the paper surveyed the process of politicization of the Lyon working class. The principal points were the rejection of Agulhon's "marriage of politics and folklore" in the case of Lyon and the central role of local, self-educated workers who developed "rational," directly political groupings for the promotion of their ideas. The latter were eclectic, derivative of major socialist propagandists but infused with a peculiar *ouvrieriste*, Lyonnais flavor. Bezucha, in his comment, questioned whether such distance from traditional popular culture in Lyonnais workers' politicization was as clear as the author made it, emphasizing the need for more detailed examination of the actual language and forms of popular expression before making such assertions. A second paper in this session, that of Thomas Kselman (U. of Michigan), "Miracles and Prophecies: Popular Religion and the Church in Nineteenth Century France," focused on the significance of Lourdes in the popular mind. Besides the rather blunt reminder that the hope for miracles remained stronger than overt labor militance ("when Lourdes was drawing an average of 500,000 pilgrims annually, strike activity in France never engaged more than half that number"), Kselman's paper drew a solid line between the organized Church and religion as a part of popular culture. Blatant anti-clericalism need not be anti-Christian at all. The popular response to miracles and prophecies in late nineteenth century France coincided with the height of the Third Republic's drive to destroy the power of the priest. Although this paper did not speak to the

issue, it reminds us that the history of the interrelationship between workers and labor movements on one hand and a whole range of religious impulses on the other in nineteenth century France remains to be explored.

Finally, it might be useful to list several other papers dealing with French social and economic history that I feel might be of some interest to our readers.

“Identifying Bourgeois Elites: Reims and St. Etienne under the July Monarchy and Second Empire,” David Gordon (U. of North Carolina)

“The Elite of France on the Eve of Industrialization,” Thomas Beck (SUNY Albany)

“Professionalization and Modernization: the Case of the French Deputy, 1876-1940,” James Q. Graham, Jr. (Bowling Green U.)

“Professionalization and Gender: Secular Elementary School Teachers in the Belle Epoque,” Peter Meyers (North Carolina A&T State U)

“Education and the Industrial World: French Technical Instruction and the Recruitment of Industrial Elites Under the Third Republic, 1870-1914,” C. Rod Day (Simon Fraser U.)

“Educational Growth, Mobility, and Modernism in Mid-Nineteenth Century France,” Patrick Harrigan (U. of Waterloo)

“The Vendée Revisited: New Evidence on the Civil War,” Alison Patrick (U. of Melbourne)

“Popular Counterrevolution in the West,” Donald Sutherland (Brock U.) and Timothy LeGoff (York U.)

“Learned Societies and Polite Amusement, 1815-1914,” Robert Fox (U. of Lancaster/Princeton U.)

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SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NORTH AMERICAN HISTORY, MILAN

In June 1979, Italian historians of North America hosted a Congress in Milan on radicalism in the United States from the Revolution to the Cold War. It was an impressive affair. Over a hundred scholars gathered from almost a dozen countries for three and a half days of continuous discussion. Even before we arrived at the da Vinci museum, where the Congress was held, we saw, wedged among the wall posters for the European parliamentary elections, posters for the Congress inviting the public to a concert of American labor songs. The daily press and the radio reported on the proceedings.