

management affairs at the U.S. Department of Labor, whose call for greater cooperation and mutual understanding between the miners and the operators resonated about as deeply here as the talks by Green and Mazzocchi might have done at a meeting of Department of Labor bureaucrats.

Discussions following the papers were lively, often charged, indicating the high relevance of historical issues to the current situation of coalfield unionism. A remarkable feature of these discussions was the regular participation of union people, particularly President Trumka, who along with members of the UMWA executive committee remained for the duration of the conference. At times Trumka took the floor to “set the record straight,” but more often to ask incisive questions. The dialogue between labor historians and the labor movement was gratifying, although one could not help but feel wistful that the experience was such an unusual one.

In addition to the conference sessions, participants were shown *Out of Darkness: The Mine Workers' Story*, a new documentary by Barbara Koppel (who directed *Harlan County U.S.A.*). The film nicely intersperses miners' struggles during the early twentieth century with the Pittston strike of 1989–90. Those in attendance were also treated to a rousing performance of coal miners' songs by Tom Juravich and by Hazel Dickens and her band.

Social Science History Association

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The Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the Social Science History Association was held in Minneapolis in October 1990. As usual, it provided a particularly rich opportunity for the discussion of labor history. Of the ninety-nine sessions, eighteen were specifically sponsored by the Labor History Network; many sessions sponsored by other networks also touched on labor history topics. With such a variety of activities, this observer chose to sample rather than attempt complete coverage. Any authoritative summary of the proceeding is thus risky. My report is based on a crude content analysis of session and paper titles, attendance at some sessions, and limited unscientific polling of people who attended other sessions. These “data” lead me to conclude that scholars have moved away from the topics of “traditional labor history”—the history of male blue-collar workers and their unions—and are focusing on a much broader definition of “labor” issues, including: white-collar workers, convict labor, feminist critiques of working-class history, “recentering” African-American history and the Southern political economy, the family wage—from the perspective of female headed households, the “representation” of labor

history, and helping unions to write their own history. Several sessions took up “where we have come from/where we are going” questions and asked “Where have we gone since Shorter and Tilly?” or explored the “problems of comparative labor history.”

There was much discussion throughout of the usefulness of paradigms from older styles of labor history. Did tradition inhibit broadening the discussion to new groups of workers—especially women and racial- or ethnic-minority workers, in the paid economy or in the home? There was a clear sense that those methods and frameworks that have served to limit labor history should be examined and redefined.

Finally, the SSHA meeting also included exciting research in women’s history, family history, the study of migration and immigration, the impact of the state and of welfare policies on populations, and economic history. Overall, the conference was very much a working intellectual group, with almost everyone presenting as well as serving as audience. The 1991 conference will be in New Orleans.

American Studies Association: Internationalism and the U.S. Working Class

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An audience of about twenty joined panel members Joe Trotter, Bruce Levine, Noel Ignatieff, and Donna Gabaccia for a round table discussion of working-class internationalism at the American Studies Association’s November 1990 conference “Rivers of Contrast” in New Orleans. The round table was organized by Marcus Rediker and chaired by Peter Linebaugh. Each panel member presented some thoughts about the meaning, significance, and practice of internationalism for a particular group of American workers—African-Americans, Irish, Germans, and Italians.

Noel Ignatieff reported on the cooperation of Irish and black inmates in a Philadelphia prison, arguing that the prison was a workplace characterized by cross-racial class solidarity of a kind not normally seen among Irish and African-American workers. Bruce Levine explored both the home-country origins of German immigrants’ special activism in the U.S. labor movement and their strong support for the abolition of slavery—something that differentiated them sharply from their Irish counterparts. Joe Trotter and Donna Gabaccia emphasized the striking identity of racial or ethnic concerns with internationalism for African-American and Italian workers respectively. African-Americans were concerned with the anti-colonial struggles of blacks in Africa and elsewhere. The far-flung global migrations of 14 million Italian laborers and political exiles guaranteed circulation of ideas, experience, and ideologies between Italy and “Little Italies” around the globe.