

UMWA were able to capture the union's presidency from Tony Boyle, Lewis's hand-picked successor. The growth of militancy and democracy within the UMWA has forced a reworking of the union's relationship with management, a process marked by conflict in the coal fields.

Seltzer's *Fire in the Hole* is well written and exhaustively documented. Its treatment of the tortuous history of the UMWA since World War II is the best yet published. For students of coal mining, labor relations, or labor history this book should prove valuable.

IOWA CITY

MERLE DAVIS

Worker and Community: Response to Industrialization in a Nineteenth-Century American City, Albany, New York, 1850-1884, by Brian Greenberg. SUNY Series in American Social History. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985. ix, 227 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$34.50 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875-1900, by Richard Jules Oestreicher. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986. xix, 263 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 cloth.

Many of the studies of the "new" labor history in the recent past have focused on the urban working class in nineteenth-century America. These works have immeasurably expanded our knowledge of working-class lifestyles, the degree of involvement in radical movements, the influence of free-labor ideology, and the variety of independent working-class institutions from cooperatives to trade unions. Studies such as Sean Wilentz's *Chants Democratic*, a work on early nineteenth-century New York artisans or Leon Fink's study of the Knights of Labor, *Workingmen's Democracy*, have laid to rest many of the myths of America's "classless" development during the age of rapid industrialization, explosive urban growth, and untrammelled immigration. Both Brian Greenberg's *Worker and Community* and Richard Oestreicher's *Solidarity and Fragmentation* follow the conceptual and methodological framework laid down by the new generation of labor historians. The unstated question of these and other studies of the type is why, despite recurrent radical political movements and the exceptional class turmoil which reigned periodically in American cities, did a class-conscious labor movement and working-class politics never develop in the United States to the extent that they did in Europe's advanced capitalist states.

Greenberg gauges workers' resistance to capitalist industrialization in Albany by propounding a scheme to assess levels of workers' consciousness. Deriving his ideas from the free-labor ideology of the early nineteenth-century urban working class, Greenberg develops the concept "commonwealth consciousness" to describe "the economic and social rights" workers "believed due them as members of the community" (5). "Commonwealth consciousness" led Albany's workers to seek reforms against concentrations of economic and political power, but the attempt fell considerably short of espousing socialism or radical expressions of class consciousness. Conceptually, Greenberg's scheme is inspired by Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony, a revision of the Marxian framework that stresses the transmission of the dominant social class ideology and values to the lower classes.

Gramsci's hegemonic agenda leads Greenberg to pay close attention to the inculcation, or imposition, of bourgeois beliefs on Albany's workers. Indeed much of the study looks at the middle class—its ideology, its institutions, and how its values became the values of the community at large. More than half of the book deals with middle-class institutions that aimed at social control over the working class: the Albany Penitentiary, the Oddfellows and other fraternal groups, churches, schools, and charitable institutions. In these chapters the working class disappears as a historical actor and becomes the group acted upon by the middle class. This focus is, in part, dictated by the available sources—mainly newspapers—and by the absence of original working-class manuscript material. In other words, we see Albany's workers through the eyes of observers who are at best indifferent, at worst hostile to independent working-class initiatives.

The first half of the book, however, presents the working class on its own terms. The iron molders, printers, and laborers of Albany founded a host of producer and consumer cooperatives, engaged in strikes and boycotts, and pressured the political system for reforms, especially the eight-hour day and the destruction of the convict labor system. But the successes of this stage of commonwealth consciousness failed to translate into sustained labor militance. Rather, as the story concludes in the 1880s, workers affiliated with the local Democratic party as an interest group.

Albany's Irish-born citizens led the way toward cementing the working-class alliance with the party of Jackson, but Greenberg fails to examine this critical group closely. Examination of the population schedules from the 1870 or 1880 manuscript censuses, a common technique in recent social history, would have enlightened and strengthened both the ethnic and political dimensions of the study. In an equally serious lapse, Greenberg's work stops just as the Knights of

Labor were gearing up to mount their frontal assault nationwide on the American political and economic system. Why their role in Albany is omitted he never explains. In sum, the book paints a compelling picture of Albany's mainly skilled working class at the peak of its influence in the 1860s and 1870s and details the middle-class campaign to keep that influence within acceptable limits. It seems unclear, however, how useful a conceptual tool hegemony is in sorting this out, or how easily adaptable the notion of commonwealth consciousness will prove in settings other than Albany.

Oestreicher, too, concerns himself with conceptual and theoretical problems in nineteenth-century working-class history, and the results are impressive. Seeking to avoid the simple dualisms of modernization theory (traditional versus modern) and problems with the immiseration theory of classical Marxism as conceptual tools to examine the working class, Oestreicher sets forth the notion of "subculture of opposition." His concept is broad enough to incorporate such manifestations of working-class life as cooperatives, German socialist societies, strikes for the eight-hour day, the radical press, and, most important, the Knights of Labor. While such a broad concept may suffer from loading too much freight on the vehicle, it has the more notable advantage of showing the underlying unity Detroit's working class achieved in the mid-1880s despite divisions along ethnic, religious, and occupational lines. The idea of a subculture of opposition also allows the author to explain the ebb and flow of worker initiatives in response to economic circumstances, employer hostility, and associational factionalism. Greenberg's commonwealth consciousness may or may not receive widespread acceptance among labor historians; Oestreicher's subculture of opposition provides some neat and compelling solutions to problems labor and social historians have faced in attempting to capture the bewildering social and political variety of late nineteenth-century American cities. As work proceeds on working-class communities in ethnically diverse cities, this work and its conceptual framework will become a reference point.

Examining closely the everyday world of Detroit's workers, Oestreicher finds sources of both division and unity in the mix of nationalities and occupations. Immigrant German workers provided some of the key elements in furnishing skilled workers and able leadership, and in importing elements of Social Democratic politics and ideology as well. In the late 1870s Detroit was the home of a vigorous Socialist Labor party with deep roots in Detroit's German neighborhoods. The SLP's successor, the Independent Labor party, broadened the scope of working-class politics to reach native-born, Irish, and Polish workers as well. Oestreicher treats each of the major ethnic com-

ponents as cultural systems with their own values, institutions, and traditions. Ethnic diversity has proven to be a stumbling block for labor historians seeking common threads in the complex weave of the American working-class experience; Oestreicher explains both the diversity and the potential for unity within each separate cultural system.

The Knights of Labor in Detroit forged a synthesis of competing cultural elements and briefly seemed on the verge of transforming the city's political and even economic landscape. The Knights of Labor depicted here will be barely recognizable to readers familiar with the old Commons-Perlman collection of cranks, labor ideologues, middle-class reformers, and worker utopians. The Knights in Detroit in 1886 turned out twelve thousand marchers in a Labor Day parade, achieved the eight-hour day for five thousand strikers, involved thousands in lectures and demonstrations, and supported a vigorous radical press and independent working-class politics. At its peak in 1886 and 1887 the Knights of Labor and the flowering of the subculture of opposition closely resembled the "movement culture" Lawrence Goodwyn has depicted for the People's party in the same era. There are further similarities to a Marxian notion of class consciousness, but Oestreicher's subtle conceptual scheme avoids formulaic or dogmatic application. His explanation is flexible enough to account for the dissolution of the subculture after 1887 and its replacement by a more limited craft union vision in the 1890s. The story of factionalism, employer hostility, ethnic tensions, and ideological disputes provides a persuasive account of both the death of the Knights and their vision of the cooperative commonwealth.

Oestreicher found a variety of sources to document working-class life and benefited from what amounts to a companion study by Olivier Zunz on urban growth and social history in an overlapping time span, *The Changing Face of Inequality*. Both Oestreicher and Zunz consider one important facet of working-class life in Detroit, namely, widespread home ownership, but Oestreicher merely mentions it in passing. The desire to own one's home was especially prominent among German and Polish workers and appealed to skilled craftsmen from all backgrounds. Home ownership, a central component of the American Dream, is often touted among social historians as a central influence discouraging class consciousness. This view would be difficult to square with the evidence Oestreicher presents of a vigorous working-class movement in Detroit. The apparent contradiction deserves further analysis.

Both Greenberg and Oestreicher offer conceptual challenges to other researchers in nineteenth-century labor, urban, and social his-

tory. Although no cities on the scale of Detroit or Albany sprang up in Iowa in the same period, parallel studies of Dubuque, Des Moines, Davenport, and Burlington would benefit from Greenberg's and, especially, Oestreicher's insights. In both rural and urban settings the Knights of Labor achieved a brief prominence in Iowa in the late 1880s. Aside from studies of railroaders and coal miners, the Knights in Iowa have yet to receive the attention they deserve as the pathbreakers of the Iowa labor movement.

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

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Life Behind a Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1930, by George C. Wright. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985. xii, 302 pp. Maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.50 cloth.

Like many black Americans during the half-century after Reconstruction, Louisville's black leaders looked to self-help as a path to individual and collective progress. Typically, the journey was a frustrating one. The inefficacy of self-help, George Wright tells us, represents "an indictment of the racism in America, an irrational racism that relegated blacks to an inferior position and then ignored all of their efforts to improve and their significant accomplishments" (175). This indictment twists through *Life Behind a Veil*, as Wright describes the nature and impact of white racism in a border city.

More southern than northern, Louisville nevertheless developed patterns of race relations that differed from most southern cities, if "only in degree" (76). Louisville's black residents were never disfranchised, had little fear of mob violence, and enjoyed access to public education unmatched in the black South and even in many northern cities. When open conflict emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, both blacks and whites expressed surprise founded on a widely accepted myth that denied the centrality of racial discrimination to the city's history since the Civil War.

The "Louisville Way" defines a framework of race relations shaped by the interaction between "polite racism" and accommodationism. Polite racism, aptly defined by the metaphor of "oil and water—the whites at the top and the Negroes at the bottom" (4)—underpinned order and stability by defining a "place" for the city's black population. As long as they accepted that place blacks could enjoy the formal prerequisites of citizenship and control their own institutions. The arrangement permitted white elites to claim an ideology of tolerance, while avoiding mob violence and maintaining hegemony. At the same time, it induced blacks to accept the security of a paternalistic segregation

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