

Francis Snyder and Douglas Hay, eds. — *Labour, Law, and Crime: An Historical Perspective*. London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1987. Pp. x, 309.

Providing an adequate, brief assessment of a collection of essays is always more difficult than reviewing a monograph, and it is particularly so when the entries in the volume range far afield in chronology, geography, topics and disciplines. Such is the nature of *Labour, Law, and Crime*, a volume containing articles initially presented as papers at a 1983 conference on the History of Law, Labour, and Crime sponsored by the Legal Research Institute of the School of Law at the University of Warwick. The topics covered in this collection range from the English Bridewell prisons in the sixteenth century to working-class radicalism in the Weimar Republic, to prostitution in Nairobi in the mid-1930s, to the transition from coerced to free labor and from authoritarian law to liberal legality in twentieth century Papua New Guinea.

The individual selections in this collection demonstrate high quality scholarship in a range of disciplines. Several of the essays clearly have comparative implications. The articles which seem to have the most in common are those on Kenya and Zanzibar by Frederick Cooper, an African historian, and on Papua New Guinea by Peter Fitzpatrick, a Professor of Law and Social Theory. The central subject in each of these essays is the role that law played in the transition from coerced to wage labor. The insights to be drawn from Cooper and Fitzpatrick can be applied to numerous parallel situations, including the United States in the Reconstruction Era. Likewise, Dick Geary's well crafted essay exploring why the major welfare reforms of the Weimar government failed to win a significant body of German workers to the Republic's support makes direct comparative references to the British experience and carries indirect import for other contexts. Barbara Weinberger focuses on two coal producing regions of Britain in order to use a comparative analysis to illuminate why local police behaved in certain ways toward organized labor in the inter-war period.

Other essays in the volume carry less comparative implications, but are rather good studies of particular issues in specific settings. This is clearly the case with John V. Orth's very well done refutation of M. Dorothy George's argument that the English Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 did not have a significant impact on the development of trade unionism. Similarly, Joanna Innes' rather lengthy but informative survey of the English Bridewell prisons for the poor from 1555 to 1800 demonstrates how the longevity of such an institution was tied to its ability to adjust to local social, economic and political conditions, and changes. Luise White's study of prostitution, housing and casual labor in Nairobi in the 1930s also emphasizes the importance of local context.

Volume editors Francis Snyder and Douglas Hay seek to cement the various articles in this collection together in an opening chapter on the social history of law. This essay has much merit as an overview of the key ideas among scholars on the historical relationship of labor, law, and crime. However, in its other mission of pulling the book together, it is far less successful, for it must either utilize broad based, and obvious, generalizations or fall back on the conclusion that various contexts result in differences. Thus, while the essays in this collection are of value to other specialists in their particular areas, the parts are greater than the whole.

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