

undifferentiated, although very popular, view. An attempt to restore Lassalle's credibility as an economist (iron law of wages) and as socialist strategist (cooperatives) is stimulating, but fails to convince. The piece on Ebert as chancellor is thought-provoking and original, although it is curious that after exposing him as an authoritarian without any trace of socialist principles he should praise him as a far-sighted democrat. This contradiction is to be found in other essays: the failure of the unions to develop a serious alternative political strategy, the inability of the SPD to mobilize youth, the fatalism and short-sightedness of the labour movement in the Weimar Republic are all stressed, and yet instead of drawing the obvious conclusions the author's own recipe is "more of the same", an opening up to a non-existent centre.

That this collection raises many interesting questions of considerable contemporary relevance is a measure of its success. How much better if it had been severely pruned, carefully edited and printed in legible type!

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HOWARD B. ROCK. — *Artisans of the New Republic: The Tradesmen of New York City in the Age of Jefferson*. New York: New York University Press, 1979. Pp. xviii, 340.

The purpose of this book is concisely stated by its author: it is to explore the efforts of New York City mechanics of the Jeffersonian period "to achieve the sense of independence and esteem they so greatly desired" (p. 8). In addressing the question whether New York mechanics reached that ideal condition by the second decade of the nineteenth century, Rock describes in detail artisan attempts to reach more specific and immediate political and economic goals.

Rock divides his topic into three major parts. The first, and the longest, traces the role of mechanics in New York City political life, with particular attention to mechanic involvement in the new political organizations which appeared after 1789. Initially supportive of the Federalist Party, mechanics went over to the Democratic-Republicans by the mid-1790s because the Jeffersonians, unlike the élitist Federalists, recognized the importance of artisans and tradesmen to society. But it was not always a harmonious relationship. A combination of local economic issues and Jeffersonian foreign policy produced large mechanic defections to the Federalists. In the main, however, New York's workingmen remained loyal to the Democratic-Republicans as most compatible with the mechanic notion of Revolutionary republicanism. Local party leadership in turn supported mechanic demands for suffrage reform and greater access to elective offices. By means of their common identity and through concerted action, mechanics won for themselves a greater role in New York politics, a victory that was both a measure and a recognition of their importance in society.

The economic activities and status of New York mechanics, from the Constitution through the War of 1812 and a little beyond, is covered in the remainder of the book. Part Two describes the traditional crafts and trades typically associated with a late eighteenth-century port town. As in political life, mechanics seized

upon the American Revolution to enlarge their individual economic status and independence by exploiting a freer market place. Any attempts at large scale production — whether undertaken by merchant capitalists for profit or by public officials as work relief — were stoutly resisted by mechanics and their organizations, who favoured instead the small, self-sufficient entrepreneur. Government regulation was also condemned as an assault upon the economic independence and well-being of tradesmen, except when licensing and tariffs were needed to protect certain crafts and trades from cheap transient labour or foreign competition. The concluding part of Rock's book focuses on mechanic responses to the rapidly expanding and changing character of the American economy before and after the War of 1812. Some crafts and trades profited from a growing local market, but other mechanic groups did not. Though the American economy was still essentially pre-industrial, the transition from the goods and services produced by highly skilled and individualistic artisans to the greater production of the incipient factory system using poorly trained workers was already underway. The consequences of that transition for mechanics, as Rock describes them, were several: fragmentation of the mechanic community, mechanic organizations to protect individual enterprise, and labour strife between master craftsmen and journeymen — all of which foreshadowed later chapters in American labour history. Rock concludes that while mechanics gained some significant political and economic achievements by the end of the Jeffersonian period, changing economic conditions dampened their optimism about the future.

This book is a worthy addition to the growing scholarship which treats labour history as more than the study of labour leaders and their organizational activities and triumphs. Rock attempts to see the mechanics as they saw themselves — in terms of their multiple interests, values and aspirations — not as a monolith possessed of a class cohesion derived from organizational conflict with a privileged economic aristocracy. In a sense, Rock's book is as much social history as it is economic history, but social history from the bottom-up, from the vantage point of individualistic artisans and tradesmen seeking to define their place in the society of Revolutionary America. To that end Rock explores the moral and social values of mechanics, their cultural and intellectual activities, and their vision of the good life promised by the American Revolution, as well as the changing levels of income, ownership of property, and employer-employee relations during New York City's transition from a reliance on commerce to more diverse and complex economic activities. One element of Rock's approach, however, is bothersome. It is evident from the extended treatment of the subject that he regards the political activities and voting behaviour of his mechanics as best revealing the nature and direction of their social aspirations. Why this should be so requires greater explanation: was it peculiar to the circumstances and changes of Revolutionary America? or does this approach have as one of its broader interpretive implications that labour history is really the political history of a specific economic group in society?

In any case, this book is a good one. The writing is clear, the bibliographic essay is thoughtful, and the index is adequate. Above all, Howard Rock's study represents the sound scholarship and analysis of the new labour history.

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