

classical tradition", to which Gendron almost defiantly adheres, the Revolution was primarily a class conflict. Aspects of that conflict must therefore be established by rigorous research of the type so well demonstrated here. Such investigations, however, are subject to a predetermined limitation: not only the existence of class conflict, but also its adequacy as an explanation of everything, is axiomatic. Thus once Gendron has established the fact that a substantial proportion of the *jeunesse dorée* consisted of minor clerks, "la petite bourgeoisie professionnelle" (pp. 26, 159, etc.), his book follows a predictable path, little light being shed on any factor in the situation except that of class hatred. *La Jeunesse dorée* is consequently a book which is invaluable for what lies within its compass, but which substitutes reiterated assertion for inquiry or caution about anything else. In short, scholarship is here marred by failure to differentiate between proven knowledge and personal conviction.

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E. H. HUNT. — *British Labour History 1815-1914*. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1981. Pp. xii, 428.

Some readers may be misled by the title of this book. It is not a history of the trade-union movement, nor is it even a history of the British labour movement from 1815 to 1914. It deals with these topics but its scope is somewhat broader. This book is an attempt to write a history of British labour as a whole, that is, including organized and unorganized labour, immigrant and native workers, female and child labour, and even the role of labour in the industrial revolution.

In spite of the modest claim made by the author that the book is only an "introductory textbook" (p. xi), it is a major work of synthesis by a leading economic historian of labour. Its engaging and argumentative style will certainly inspire, encourage and, possibly, annoy a generation of students of labour history. Moreover, the author has attempted with some success to provide his readers with examples of the careers of individual workers to illustrate his broad statistical evidence.

Topics such as the role of Irish labour in the industrial revolution, the standard of living debate and the extent of poverty receive a fair-handed treatment that will be of interest to social historians. The author examines, for example, Charles Booth's 1886 survey of poverty in London. He points out that Booth's heavy reliance on school superintendents to collect data resulted in some distortion. On the one hand the extent of poverty was underestimated because the elderly were under-represented in a sample of respondents with schoolage children. On the other hand the superintendents also administered a means test for the remission of school fees. This created an incentive for respondents to under-report the size of the family income.

At the same time many social historians will not be pleased with the treatment accorded to some topics in this book. The working-class role in the reform agitation of 1832 is viewed as "a passive one, assigned to them by middle-class

reformers" (p. 211). The rising at Merthyr Tydfil in 1831 is demoted to the category of a "major riot" (p. 212). Worker agitation for factory reform is relegated to a side show relative to the main event fought out between Whigs and Tories.

Much of the early part of the book is a vigorous critique of E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963, 1969). One of Hunt's major preoccupations is to argue that, contrary to Thompson, there was no serious threat of revolution in Britain in the period 1790 to 1850. This is a conclusion that might well be supported by a variety of approaches and valid arguments. But E. H. Hunt's tactics do not fall into this category. Instead of solid argument he chooses to be dismissive of any evidence of radical or Chartist uprisings that might threaten his conclusion.

The large-scale insurrection in Scotland in 1820 is buried in a footnote (p. 382, n. 60). Meanwhile, co-incident disturbances in Yorkshire go without any mention. In the latter case, a more careful reading of Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* would have provided descriptive details. Given that the drift of the author's argument is to diminish the importance of such violent outbursts, such an error of omission brings him to the edge of a distortion for which there is no necessity.

A major theme of this book is concerned with the existence (or not) of a British working class. After using such terms as "working-class consciousness" (pp. 211, 246), "working-class support" (p. 211), and "working-class welfare" (p. 210) with reference to the period before 1850, the author suddenly announces that it is "probably incorrect to speak of a working class in the first half of the nineteenth century" (p. 248). This is confusing to readers.

A similar analysis is presented for the periods 1850 to 1888 and 1889 to 1914. The increases in trade-union membership, the founding of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party, the organization of the unskilled, the rise of socialism and syndicalism in these eras are seen as evidence of an increase in working-class consciousness but not of the existence of a working class. The author suggests that there was no British working class until the inter-war period which he confesses is beyond the scope of his study. Dare we suggest that the extension of the Huntian analysis of class to any period of British history might produce the same negative results?

Hunt operates in his discussion of class with the assumption that evidence of inter-union rivalry, ethnic conflict, disputes between organized and unorganized labour and the existence of so-called "labour aristocrats" eliminates the possibility of a working class. This might be a strong argument but in this book it is treated as an assumption with little or no supportive discussion. Might it not be the case that a work force, although troubled by internal faction fights, could still display class solidarity with respect to another class in the same society?

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