

To sum up, one can only say that scholars have good cause to be grateful to the Historical Institute of the Society of Jesus. Future volumes in the series will be awaited with keen anticipation.

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L'Histoire sociale : Sources et Méthodes — Colloque de l'École Normale Supérieure de Saint-Cloud (15-16 mai 1965). Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1967. 298 pp.

The French school of history, as Ernest Labrousse remarks in his Introduction to this intensely interesting report of the proceedings at the now famous conference on social history at Saint-Cloud in 1965, is the oldest and most profoundly social of all the historical schools in the world. I very much doubt whether any other school could boast so long a pedigree of eminent practitioners of social history — Lucien Febvre, Georges Lefebvre, Marc Bloch, Henri Sée, Henri Hauser, Fustel de Coulanges, La Blache — or any other country attract to a colloquium on social history *tout court* so large and representative a gathering of contemporary historians from the mainstream of historical studies — Labrousse himself, Mousnier, Goubert, Soboul, Crubellier, Castellan, Lemaire, Crouzet, and the rest.

The reasons for this preoccupation with social history lie deep in French history itself. The primacy of revolution and particularly of the great Revolution in French experience has forced French historians and laymen alike to look beneath the surface of political events to the underlying social forces generated by the conflicts and frictions between the many different varieties of classes and groups of which society is composed, and which burst out at intervals, if not from the 1630's onwards, from 1789 down to 1958 and 1968, in otherwise quite inexplicable eruptions. And, between eruptions, the superb French tradition of efficient professional administration, at least since it took root in the seventeenth century, has preserved a magnificent collection of meticulously-kept records which are not only the envy of other nations but which almost force upon the historical researcher the need and opportunity to study the totality of society and its constituent parts rather than the tiny uppermost stratum which is the exclusive concern of so much political history elsewhere. In conjunction these two historical legacies are a challenge which less brilliant and penetrating historians than the French could hardly ignore, and which in their hands has evoked a response which, to an English social historian acutely aware of the loneliness of his chosen trade, seems little short of the ideal: a pulsating, creative school of social history which is neither an alternative to other kinds of history, political, economic, intellectual, cultural,

and so on, nor a peripheral adjunct to them, but an indispensable foundation on which to build any and every other kind of history, from the most brutal and material sort of military history to the most spiritual and ethereal sort of history of religion or ideas.

Essentially this view of social history as an approach, or rather *the* approach, to general history — a view which this reviewer has long been trying to popularize amongst British historians — is what may be called structural social history, that is, a history which is centred on the structure of society at all levels and in all its manifestations, and on whatever affects that structure either to maintain or to change it. It comprehends therefore demographic history (since the size and growth of society affect every other human activity), the distribution of the population by age, sex and geographical location, the generation and distribution of income and wealth, the allocation of status, prestige and respect, the division of power, influence and responsibility, the study of social mobility between different levels of wealth, status and power, the history of morals in the sense of all the informal controls by which society maintains itself and improves its standards of behaviour and of care and protection of the weak and vulnerable, the history of education in the sense of all the means by which it socializes the next generation and thereby maintains or ameliorates itself over time, the history of ideas notably in the sense of the ideas and ideals of what society is and should be, held not necessarily by society as a whole but held competitively by the various groups and classes struggling for domination and survival within it, the history of the social and political conflicts generated by these economic and ideological struggles, and of the political remedies applied to them, whether of internal reform or revolution or of external aggression or imperialism.

It will be seen immediately, even from so compressed a catalogue, that this immense programme of work, as speaker of speaker at Saint-Cloud pointed out, is not any special branch of historical study but just *history*. As Pierre Goubert put it, "Pour moi, l'histoire sociale a toujours été *l'histoire*. Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait d'histoire qui ne puisse pas prendre appui sur l'ensemble de la société ou une partie de la société... l'histoire sociale est une espèce de convergence, une espèce de centre qui, pour moi, représente *l'histoire* simplement." Or Pierre Vilar of the Sorbonne: "Je n'imagine pas une histoire qui ne serait pas sociale, ni un domaine social qui ne serait pas historique." Yet without a specific commitment, such as most French historians seem to have and most elsewhere do not, to keep society at the centre of the stage, even the most determinedly general history soon degenerates into the fragmented specialisms which are the bane of our overspecialized discipline. The socially oriented historian can talk to everyone, for everything happens in society and the social framework is inescapable; but specialized practitioners of other branches of history run the risk of being able finally to talk only to

each other within the confines of their specialism. This is the justification for social history as the foundation for all other historical studies.

The conference at Saint-Cloud could take all this for granted as far as France was concerned, and concentrate on ulterior and more practical questions. Given that structural social history is the ideal, but that the subject is potentially so vast, what sources are available to the social historian and by what methods and techniques can he best exploit them? As to sources, France is so rich in administrative archives from the time of Louis XIV onwards — it is noteworthy that this volume contains no paper specifically devoted to the middle ages and only one, and that a plea of archival poverty, on the ancient world — that the problems are chiefly those of an *embarras de richesse*. In a crescendo of papers on sources Jean Jacquart on the sixteenth century, Pierre Goubert on the two succeeding ones, and Robert Lemaire on the nineteenth and twentieth, give a mouth-watering menu of the immense larder of French archives as they have built up to the superabundance of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Without reducing it here to a mere catalogue, it is worth mentioning just a few of the richest of them. Pride of place should undoubtedly go to the parish registers, so full and informative from about 1660-80 onwards, which have enabled Fleury and Louis Henry and their disciples to establish a new kind of demographic history based on the reconstitution of particular families over several generations and parallel lines, and, as Goubert notes in another paper, to demonstrate beyond doubt that the peasants in some parts of France — Normandy, le Vexin, Bas-Quercy — must, by comparison with the prolific Bretons of the same period, have been practising birth control *before* the Revolution. The deeds of local notaries are another rich source, full of detail about particular families and their affairs, especially the marriage contracts which give so much information on the wealth, connections, social standing and attitudes of all the parties concerned. Then there are the splendid fiscal records and cadastral registers which enable researchers to plot the distribution of wealth (so far as the canny French allowed their rulers to know the truth about it) and the repartition of the soil. The unique quinquennial censuses with their increasing list of questions are a mine of information on the basic facts of population and its distribution by place, age, sex and occupation. And the judicial records provide an invaluable window not only into the behaviour and attitudes of the otherwise unrecorded lower reaches of society but, through the demands and slogans of rioters in *crises de subsistance* and the like, into the fugitive realities of class-consciousness and the class struggle.

With such splendid and inexhaustible sources at their disposal, by what means can historians best put them to use? Albert Soboul in his paper on Description and Measurement in Social History takes as his text Georges Lefebvre's motto, "Il ne suffit pas de décrire, encore faut-il compter." A large part of the colloquium was devoted to the best and latest methods of counting

and of processing the results : "peek-a-boo" cards (the archaic system of do-it-yourself punched cards with knitting needles to locate the similarly placed holes), mechanical punched cards, magnetized cards (which you can encode yourself with a magnetic pencil for later automatic transfer to machine-punched cards), dictaphones for trebling the speed and improving the accuracy of transcription, and, above all, the ubiquitous and seductive computer. The temptations and difficulties of the new numeracy were squarely faced. Sentou of Toulouse pointed out that the punched card method does not save work, but rather increases it for the sake of a deeper and more extensive knowledge of the subject; Dupeux of Bordeaux that it demands both a detailed plan of research and an extraordinary power of synthesis — the researcher needs to know in advance what he is going to find out; and Mazauriac of Rouen that the question of coding is the key — all the rest is easy, if time-consuming. Sampling and teamwork were the answers suggested by Jacques Dupaquier of the Sorbonne, who did not underestimate the difficulties of finding and financing competent research assistants, of acquiring the technical know-how of the statistician, the electronics expert, the sociologist, the demographer, and the rest, and the moral difficulty of the historian working in isolation from society. Dupaquier and Mlle Daumard of Brest also wrestled with the intractable problem of the *code socio-professionnel*, and the enormous difficulty, if not the impossibility, of finding a practicable set of categories which could be equally applied to the present and to past societies.

To the wider problem of the definition of social groups and classes and its implications for the changing structure of historical societies the conference returned again and again. As Mousnier replied to Soboul, "Compter, il faut compter; mais il faudrait d'abord savoir ce que nous allons compter." In modern societies people are counted according to their class, and in medieval societies according to their caste; but in between there was a third kind of society (which by no means exhausts the list of possible societies), a society of ranks or orders, in which people were placed on a completely different principle from either class or caste. It was always necessary, believed Mousnier, to determine right from the start what was the principle of organization of the particular society, and what basic social groups in the social stratification resulted from this principle. This led to a remarkable three-handed exchange with Soboul, who wanted to distinguish between the "social reality of the class system" and the "juridical structure of orders" which was only a mask, and with Labrousse who attempted a higher synthesis by distinguishing between societies based on orders or on classes, and states based on the same groupings : from the beginning of the eighteenth century French society was in transition from the one to the other, and both co-existed, but the state was based on the old principle of juridical orders; the Revolution overthrew this state, and replaced it by one based on class, but the society continued its

slower transition, still based on both. To both Soboul and Labrousse Mousnier replied that the classification by orders before the eighteenth century was no juridical mask but a social reality, which became an unreal and outmoded mask by the social revolution bringing in the class system which preceded the political Revolution. Perhaps a little more sociology might have persuaded all three that they were dealing with the familiar sociological distinction between class and status, between the objective economic stratification by size and source of income and the subjective stratification by rank, prestige and esteem which is the often belated or outmoded reflection of the first. But Mousnier's point remains, that different societies are, as far as their own conscious ordering of themselves is concerned, based on different principles of stratification, and if the historian treats them on another principle, imported from his own society, he misleads himself and fails to understand his subject. It is here that social history scores over sociology, in the extended experience of diverse societies different from his own which it offers to the scholar. What do they know of England who only England — or France, or Canada — know ?

Yet a reading of the proceedings of a conference of this kind, however successful, raises a wicked thought of how sociology may score over social history, or any other scholastic discipline. For every discipline, not to say the university profession itself, has its sociology. Indeed, a university "subject", viewed sociologically, is a group of interacting people with a determinate ordering of rank, prestige and influence. Viewed from the outside, as one inevitably views a foreign national group, however close the subject, one recognizes all the familiar types of academic personality and modes of behaviour : the arrogant dogmatism of the *doyens* of the profession, the competitive sycophancy of the middle ranks, the apologetic timidity of the juniors. For all their virtuosity and brilliance, the conceit and condescension of French academics towards their assumed inferiors has to be read to be believed. One need look little further for the causes of the recent student unrest in French universities.

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W. L. MORTON (ed.). *The Shield of Achilles : Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age*. Toronto : McClelland and Stewart, 1968. 333 pp.

Professor Morton explains in his preface that the publication of this collection of thirteen essays was undertaken at the suggestion of one of the contributors, Mr. Lawrence S. Fallis, Jr. It might be expected therefore that Mr. Fallis' paper, which promises "a scholarly reconnaissance in force into the vast *terra incognita* of nineteenth-century Canadian thought", should set the