EDGAR J. MCMANUS. — *Black Bondage in the North.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1973.

In *Black Bondage in the North* Edgar McManus describes slavery in the Northern American colonies from its beginnings in the seventeenth century to its gradual demise at the beginning of the national period. He shows how slaves accommodated themselves to their condition, illustrates how their special skills as artisans and craftsmen won for them privileges and lessened the inherent harshness of their lot, examines the slave codes which not only controlled slaves but established their legal status, relates slave status to "Socio-racial prejudice," details the character and pattern of black resistance, and delineates the various methods used to end slavery.

In this undertaking he has succeeded well. Although he has used personal correspondence, the records of church and missionary groups, and a wide spectrum of secondary studies, McManus has drawn his evidence most extensively from newspapers, court records, statutes, and the records and correspondence of businessmen, especially slave owners and traders. As both notes and bibliography attest, he has used both the older standard studies of slavery in the North and recent monographic literature about slavery by writers like Winthrop Jordan, Darold Wax, Robert Starobin, and Richard Wade.

Still there is a very old-fashioned quality about *Black Bondage in the North.* It is almost uninterruptedly descriptive history; and designedly so, for McManus has rigorously eschewed "generalization or interpretation" and a "conceptual framework." The results will frustrate readers of this journal, for not only does he avoid more traditional historical interpretation, he also by-passes questions of especial interest to social historians.

Central to American slavery is the fact that first and foremost it was a labour system. McManus clearly recognizes this and is at pains to describe the system in the North. In the characteristic task system slaves completed a set job and were then free to use the rest of their time as they wished. In addition, Northern economic patterns generated a high degree of skilled labour among slaves. These two facts combined made of Northern slavery a particularly flexible system. Masters, for example, frequently hired out their slaves and gained economic advantage by income rather than directly by labour. Slaves in their free time often hired out their own labour for their own advantage. The pattern, McManus notes, resembled both apprentice and indentured labour. But why stop there? How significant are the apparent parallels? What were the parameters of freedom of action for those three types of labour? What were the similarities and differences, legally and customarily, among them? Marcus Jernegen began the investigation years ago. McManus might have enlarged our understanding had he posed such questions.

In other areas as well *Black Bondage in the North* stops on the threshold of analysis. McManus points out how frequently freeman and slave were subject to the same restrictions of law and usage. What, then, set them apart? Was the quality of their existence really different one from another? Again, blacks, North and South, resisted slavery. North and South, they established family patterns and households. But did the societies in which they developed generate significant differences of style, of stability, of dislocation, of unrest? Turning from comparative study, there is equally ample room for further analysis of Northern slave institutions. What role, for example, did the black church play for Northern slaves? We have standard histories of that church, but we lack a close look at the place of the slave as slave within it. Was its impact upon him notable? Was it a central institution for his as for his free brother? Did slaves support it in substantial numbers?

It may be true, as McManus contends, that Northern slaves eloped because freedom was their most ardent desire. Surely the records, which he mentions, left in Southern slave narratives suggest that this was an important factor. Was it equally so for Northern slaves? Did Northern slaves flee in larger numbers and with greater regularity than their Southern

counterparts? Were the regional differences more or less significant than urban or rural location? Did slaves hired out flee more or less often than slaves hiring their own time? Was it true for Northern slaves, as Douglass once argued for Southern slaves, that those least oppressed were most likely to flee? Was the quality of treatment a significant factor? Did that quality vary from place to place in any measurable way? Northern slaves, McManus contends, were on the whole adequately fed, clothed, housed, and medically cared for. But how does that divide out, by region, by class of master, by the économic levels of their particular universes? If indeed their lot in many ways was similar to that of apprentices and indentured servants, did these latter flee their conditions as frequently as black bondsmen?

As one reads the text and scans both notes and bibliography one concludes inescapably that McManus' forte lies in mining governmental records. But again his self-imposed limits deny that expertise its broad analytic scope. Did laws and court treatment vary through time? Was there an evolutionary development of slave codes? How different were Northern from Southern codes? How closely did legal codes reflect both social values and/or economic interests? Did they lag behind or anticipate such values and interests? At what point did competing lines of economic interest and humanitarian concern intersect? If economic interest really determined the presence and character of slavery in the North (a contention with which McManus opens his study, p. 17, and closes it, p. 197), what were the factors which ultimately made it inutile?

Reviewers are always challenged for ordering books they would have written and being dissatisfied with the books that were in fact written. But the point is not what McManus should have written. He made it perfectly clear at the outset exactly what he intended to do—and he did it well. *Black Bondage in the North* provides an abundance of data; and it will likely remain a standard source for many years to come. But it is unfortunate that McManus so rigidly restricted himself. Fearful of being caught in the trap of present-mindedness, of inadvertantly using his book as a vehicle for private causes, he has stripped it of analytic and intellectual content. Enough has slipped in to tell us that he has insights, that he does see meaning and importance in his material. By keeping it so well from us, however, he has left us the poorer.

William H. Pease,
University of Maine, Orono.

Québec au XIX^e siècle

Jean Hamelin et Yves Roby. — *Histoire économique du Québec, 1851-1896.* Montréal, Fides, 1971.

Albert Faucher et Jacques Letarte. — *Atlas d'histoire économique et sociale du Québec, 1851-1901.* Montréal, Fides, 1971.

Notre représentation du XIX^e siècle économique québécois s'enrichit rapidement depuis quelques années et, en même temps, elle est poussée en profondeur. Dans un premier temps, les travaux de Jean Hamelin et Fernand Ouellet ont fourni une réponse à l'école néo-nationaliste: l'évolution économique et sociale du Québec montrait que l'infériorité économique des Canadiens français ne s'expliquait pas par la Conquête. A certains égards, cette infériorité était antérieure à 1760 et elle tenait surtout à une inadaptation de la société canadienne-française aux transformations économiques de la première moitié du XIX^e siècle; notamment à la crise agricole et au passage du commerce des fourrures à celui du bois. A l'heure actuelle on assiste à un vaste approfondissement, surtout au niveau économique peut-être, mais de caractère de plus en plus global; et ici l'influence de Ouellet n'est sans doute pas négligeable. En quoi consiste la crise agricole et quel fut le rôle de l'agriculture? Comment s'est fait le passage du commerce des fourrures