

past politicians and some later historians perceive far more clearly than intellectuals, clerics and newspaper editors. But is it not at least possible that the ideological assumptions of *les clercs* were so deeply imbedded and widely accepted that politicians found no need to debate subjects on which there was common agreement? There is, of course, no question that some writers have too readily assumed that ideology conforms directly to reality. It is now obvious that the "agriculturisme et anti-étatisme" of the intellectuals was not the opiate of the politicians, at least not directly. But the problem of the relationship between "ideology" and "reality" is not solved by the mere assertion of the primacy of "material" interests. Not even Marx believed that.

Professor Hamelin's book then, is a doubly important one. It contains a good deal of new, carefully analysed, information, and, it is a substantial contribution to the discussion of the relationship of "ideology" to "everyday life" in Quebec. As long as that discussion remains open a good deal of valuable research and interpretation will result. But if Hamelin's book is taken to mean that the debate has been resolved, a conclusion which he surely would not wish to see drawn, then it will have damaged a good cause.

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MICHAEL BLISS. — *A Living Profit: Studies in the Social History of Canadian Business, 1883-1911*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974.

Readers of this journal may wonder why a study in business history appeared as an inaugural volume in the Canadian Social History Series. The answer is two-fold. First, the Series' editors, Michael Cross and S.F. Wise, define social history broadly and simply as being "about people." Second, unlike most previous historical studies of business in Canada, *A Living Profit* is neither a company biography nor a study of a particular industry. Through an examination of business and trade magazines, government reports, the minutes of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association and papers of some individual businessmen and politicians, Michael Bliss has broken important new ground. In six essays on businessmen's ideas, he presents a fresh and challenging approach to such traditional subjects as the tariff, labour questions and the relationship of business and government.

Drawing on regional as well as national sources, French as well as English publications, Bliss offers a tantalizing picture of businessmen between 1883 and 1911. He argues that, with certain exceptions, not only was there continuity in business thought during this period but "the fact that a man was a businessman was more important in the formation of his attitudes" (p. 10) than his location, the kind or size of his business or his religious, linguistic or educational background. Bliss provides considerable evidence to support this stimulating idea but, regrettably, does not undertake a detailed analysis of it. He effectively demonstrates, however, the common desire of businessmen for "a living profit" or a fair wage for themselves though they would not have agreed on what this might be. To achieve their "living profit," businessmen fled from open competition, their insecurity often leading them into inconsistent positions. Though "deeply individualistic," (p. 138) believing in self-help and self-discipline, many staunchly defended such protective devices as the tariff and price-fixing combines against "unfair" foreign and domestic competitors respectively. The inconsistency of business thought is clearly shown by W.K. McNaught, a Toronto jeweller, who, while bitterly objecting to railway and private power monopolies, lobbied the

federal government for restrictions on competition in the jewellery trade and belonged to a wholesale jewellers' combine which sought to prevent price-cutting among its members (pp. 40-41).

Not only were individual businessmen inconsistent in their own thought but they often disagreed with one another. Vivid illustrations of this appear in the two chapters dealing with labour questions. Most businessmen believed the well-being of their employees was improving and many were outraged by reports of inhuman working conditions. Manufacturers did not oppose safety regulations (provided they were also imposed on competitors) and many businessmen recognized that "high wages and good working conditions produced contented workers" (p. 69). On the other hand, the idea that they might have any responsibility for their employees' welfare shocked many businessmen. They blamed parents for child labour, they believed accidents were the consequence of the workers' negligence, they stereotyped workers as lazy and undisciplined people who would abuse shorter hours, they argued cheap labour was essential to continued operation in a highly competitive world and they almost universally opposed workingmen organizing to secure for themselves a living wage. This last point, observes the author, is "the glaring contradiction in business thought about competition and its consequences" (p. 140) and reveals the businessmen's failure to consider the possibility of labour and capital working together.

The most provocative chapter is plainly titled, "Success." It gives many examples indicating the "success ethic" had "little or nothing to do with making money [but] everything to do with the cultivation of moral character" (p. 32). Condemning such vices as speculation (in most cases), greed, extravagance and the desire to get rich quick, as undercutting "the bases of economic success — hard work and plain living," (p. 32) business spokesmen stressed the importance of industry, integrity and frugality. But, were business editors and businessmen preaching, so to speak, to the converted, or were they circulating these maxims for success as propaganda to secure a favourable image or to inspire employees? The evidence in this, and in other chapters, points to the latter purpose as being more likely but the question cannot be completely answered.

Bliss is fully aware that business thought did not necessarily reflect business reality. His self-conscious anticipation of criticism from those hostile to business, especially in the academic community, suggests he may not have resolved to his own satisfaction the complex problem of the sincerity of businessmen. Nevertheless, by focusing on the similarities in their ideas, he has paradoxically highlighted the differences in their thoughts. He has convincingly shown the folly of categorizing all businessmen either as heroes or as plutocrats. If this volume is representative, the Canadian Social History series will be an exciting and significant contribution to the study of Canadian history.

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TERRY COPP. — *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal 1897-1929*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974.

The Anatomy of Poverty is an important book which deserves the attention of all those who are interested in the evolution of society in Quebec. Terry Copp has produced a thought-provoking study of the working class in Montreal in the early years of the 20th century, but the book has a wider significance. He ack-