

printing and Protestantism (p. 205), to list only the first four examples discovered in a rapid perusal of the book. But although we remember such coupled nouns, are they sufficiently subtle or precise to convey what Natalie Davis really wishes to say about sixteenth-century people? In the otherwise moving essay called 'City Women and Religious Change' appear the statements that the activities of city women in the sixteenth century 'ranged from marching to martyrdom' (p. 85) and that the Calvinist assimilation of women into men's roles brought certain losses. 'By destroying the female saints as exemplars for both sexes, it [Calvinism] cut off a wide range of affect and activity' (p. 94). Surely if we are to respect her subjects' ways, we must ask Professor Davis some questions about these statements. Did sixteenth-century women judge marching and martyrdom to be quite such parallel experiences as this phrasing suggests? Why allude to cutting off a wide range of 'affect and activity' instead of explaining that in the sixteenth century it became impossible for Protestants to love God and their neighbour or to engage in good works in the manner of medieval women saints? Such cleverly worded shorthand expressions are so alien to the sixteenth century that they must stand in the way of our understanding the activities and thoughts of the people who are the subjects of these essays. Professor Davis has avoided these kinds of constructions in her later essays and hopefully they will be avoided in her book on Lyon during the Reformation.

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WALTER J. SHELTON. — *English Hunger and Industrial Disorders: A study of social conflict during the first decade of George III's reign.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973.

What is most interesting about this reminder that George III's first ten years should be as much as *locus classicus* for the social historian as they have long been for his political counterpart is not the novelty of the subject: as Dr. Shelton acknowledges, his work rests firmly on that of others, notably Dorothy George, George Rudé and Edward Thompson. It is rather the way in which the subject has been handled. Instead of treating the rioters of 1766 and the strikers of 1768 simply as manifestations of a general phenomenon, 'the historic crowd', Dr. Shelton has used a synoptic approach. This enables him to place each part of this particular set of disturbances within its individual historical context. It also means that he is able to show that the disturbances as a whole were the product of an interaction between several different sections of society, not just an expression of discontent on the part of one group alone which can be studied in isolation.

The results are most striking in the case of the provision riots which spread across most of southern and central England in the early autumn of 1766. Dr. Shelton has much to say about the changes in the composition of rural society caused by the development of a more specialized commercial agriculture during the first half of the eighteenth century, and about the reasons why the middlemen who undertook the necessary traffic in grain and other provisions found themselves the victims of a double standard in public attitudes. He is also stimulating on the role of the Seven Years' War as an agent of social change. But his two most important contributions are his discussion of the role of the authorities, both central and local, in the precipitation and direction of the riots, and the relationship which he suggests between the disturbances of 1766 and the militia riots ten years earlier. Reluctant to risk England's position in European grain markets, and anxious to shore up its support among the Independent Members at Westminster, the newly formed Chatham ministry acted out of a combination of misinformation and wishful thinking. It did everything wrong. By lifting the embargo which had been prudently imposed on grain exports earlier in the year when an August heatwave raised false expectations of plenty after all, and then by proclaiming the Edwardian Statutes against Forestalling and Regrating, it not only allowed existing grain reserves to pour out through the ports in search of famine prices

elsewhere, but also gave the poor *carte blanche* to regulate markets for themselves by implying that any scarcity which might ensue would be artificial. Even more crucial was the behaviour of the local authorities, who in many cases gave the mob at least tacit encouragement by standing aside during the initial stages of the riots. Dr. Shelton seeks the main explanation of this uncharacteristic lapse in the desire of country magistrates to avoid at all costs a repetition of the situation which had menaced some parts of the country in 1756 and 1757, when militia riots had coalesced with provision protests in a way which threatened to leave the landowners isolated in the face of a rising by both the lower and the middling orders of rural society. To forestall this danger in 1766, the justices chose the lesser of two evils by allowing the energies of protest to spend themselves on the mills and storehouses of the unfortunate middlemen, who had been virtually singled out for such treatment beforehand by the actions of the government. When it became clear that the country was in fact facing serious natural scarcity, there was no alternative left but to hope that the War Office, which was nearly as nervous of the militia as it was of the rioters, and for many of the same reasons, could recall its regular mounted regiments from grass before the violence found other victims as well.

On the London industrial disputes of 1768-9, Dr. Shelton has less to say. He agrees with Rudé that their relationship to the Wilkite movement was never more than coincidental, and corroborates the conclusions of earlier studies of the coalheavers, the seamen and the silkweavers, the three main groups involved. Nevertheless, he is once again able to show how government confusion helped significantly to exacerbate the issues involved. It is not surprising, after all that had happened since 1766, that an increasing number of people began to wonder whether government could, let alone should, try to regulate economic relationships. It would be far too simple to say that the riots caused the abandonment of the old "moral economy", but the circumstances in which they took place certainly epitomized its collapse.

There are problems. Though Dr. Shelton's approach requires his reader to keep several considerations in mind at the same time, his narrative is interrupted by recapitulation more frequently than it need have been. In fact, a sceptic might wonder what such insistent reminders were intended to make him forget. As they actually happened, did things really fall into place quite as neatly as this account of them suggests, especially with regard to the way in which the local authorities behaved in 1766? Dr. Shelton is probably right about the militia riots: they obviously need their own full scale investigation, but J.R. Western's evidence, which is the main source here, is pretty convincing. However, the proposed connection between them and the situation in the mid-60s depends on the acceptance of a tripartite division in rural society, whose clarity Dr. Shelton is himself at pains to qualify by explaining that the trend, though evident, was not complete, and that there was "as much difference within interests as between them", especially between the greater and lesser landowners (p. 65). This does not mean that the connection between 1756 and 1766 must be rejected. It does, however, suggest that Dr. Shelton is nearer to reality when he writes of the sheer bewilderment of the parish gentry, caught as they were between their fears of general insurrection and their resentment of the great families with their metropolitan connections, than he is when he talks of the consolidation of propertied reaction. This may have been in the wind in the 1760's, but its full force was still some way off, and in many parts of the country, the lesser gentry's resentment of aristocratic domination remained sufficiently alive, despite the riots, to cause important countercurrents during the next decade. When Dr. Shelton writes in his introduction of the emergence of "a new polarisation of class attitudes in the 1760's" (p. 7), and ends by saying that of all the aspects of the riots, "perhaps the closing of ranks among the landowners, farmers and industrialists against the threat of future insurrection was of greatest significance" (p. 202), many of the qualifications introduced in between seem to have been outflanked.

The same tendency also shows itself in a penchant for exaggerated effects in the writing. Many readers, for example, will receive rather a jolt when they learn that "the

industrious poor were in no sense homogeneous in the manner of the nineteenth century factory proletariat" (p. 17): a huge piece of question-begging about the subsequent nature of English society made even more startling by the fact that it occurs in the middle of a discussion of social terminology which otherwise commands complete assent. Another difficulty is raised by the examination of the rioters themselves. Dr. Shelton's picture of the provincial mobs as comprised of war veterans, militiamen with scores to settle, unemployed manufacturers, seasonal workers drawn from the more unstable elements in the London out-parishes, delinquent servants, Irish harvest workers and, to be sure, an admixture of "authentic" farm labourers, raises a whole series of fascinating and important questions about the ways in which popular understanding of "moral economy" was articulated and communicated, but it is a bit hard to square with references to rural "self-help" (p. 161). Also, it is hard to see what essential purpose is served by the suggestion (p. 112) that the danger of general insurrection was greater in 1766 than at any other time before or after, Jacobitism at one extreme, Luddism and Chartism at the other included. In terms of Dr. Shelton's own analysis, this may seem true, but by the same token the prize should surely go to the situation in 1756-7, even though this is to be regarded only "potentially" as "much more dangerous" (p. 99). All this may reflect the fact, which is also suggested by some of its footnote references, that this book was written under the shadow of more recent events. Its subject is an arresting one, especially in the days of Watts, Cleveland and the Falls Road, but it is a pity that drama should at times have been allowed to intrude on judgement in a work which otherwise points out so effectively the considerable agenda which confronts the social historian in mid-eighteenth century England.

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PHILIP N. BACKSTROM. — *Christian Socialism and Co-operation in Victorian England*. London: Croom Helm, 1974.

The British co-operative movement has not attracted much attention recently from historians. Most of the standard references for the movement are now decades old and associated with the Webbs, Tawney, or G.D.H. Cole. Only a handful of British academics — notably Sidney Pollard, R.G. Garnett, J.F.C. Harrison, S.R. Marshall, and Thomas Carberry — retain the interest that was once commonplace in British universities. One reason for this decline in interest — and it is of course a vicious circle — is that many of the old interpretations are now trite and many of the old debates apparently unfathomable. In the midst of this mostly barren landscape, Philip Backstrom's efforts are refreshingly welcome.

Backstrom has explored with empathy and perception Edward Vansittart Neale, a major figure in the British movement during its halcyon days of the late nineteenth century. He has not produced a biography so much as he has written a study of Neale's struggles on behalf of Christian socialism. In the process, Backstrom's greatest accomplishment has been to dissect Neale's "libertarian socialism", a body of thought badly treated by the state socialists who dominated the historiography of the movement. Specifically, Backstrom has demonstrated the superficiality and distortions of Beatrice Webb's work, an accomplishment that should stimulate co-operative studies by helping to reopen many of the debates that enriched the co-operative gatherings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Neale is portrayed by Backstrom as a devoted ideologue of rare dedication, a man who, more than any other, stimulated the fruitful combination of co-operative organizations in late Victorian Britain. Not only did Neale devote much of his inherited wealth to the