

# EDITOR'S REMARKS

## Beyond Industrial Relations

A basic feature of twentieth-century social life has been the development of diverse networks of business, trade union, and governmental practices, designed to regulate the irrepressible conflict at the point of production. Explaining the origins and national peculiarities of these industrial relations systems has been an important, and perhaps the best known task of labor historians. All the review essays in this issue of *ILWCH*, however, seek not to isolate the regulation of workplace conflict for historical treatment, but rather to explore the connections between that confrontation and the dynamics of social loyalties, antagonisms, ideologies, and change. Peter Linebaugh takes us to eighteenth-century England, where the very notion of "industrial relations systems" is as anachronistic as a ration book in a bread riot. Class conflict then revolved as much around definitions of crime and units of measurement as it did around wages and output. Nevertheless, he insists, revealing descriptions of customs, poverty, and social control lose their explanatory force, if they are divorced from the guiding concept of the mode of production.

Adrian Shubert pursues the social and political ramifications of productive relations through the increasingly abundant literature on the Spanish workers' movement. He stresses the decisive historical importance of rural Spain, evident alike in the class wars of Andalusia, the Catholic conservatism of Castille's peasantry, and the formative experiences of Asturian miners. He also notes how the anarcho-syndicalism of urban workers shaped the artistic and cultural life of modern Spain, as well as its politics. The last theme is echoed by Paul Buhle, in his analysis of the anarchist influence on American labor. From the famous German-American movement of the 1880s through the unheralded Jewish and Italian anarchist presence of the 1920s, the libertarian communist impulse imparted not so much a program as an ethical tone (or an attitude toward life) to portions of the workers' movement. That tone was even evident in the origins, if not the outcome, of the Communist Party's Right Opposition, he concludes on the basis of recent studies of the Lovestoneites.

Alan Dawley reunites class conflict and industrial relations in his review of the books on twentieth-century American labor by James Green and David Brody. These widely-read surveys have placed the workers at the center of modern American experience, in contrast to conventional schools of both political and labor history. They raise for Dawley the theoretical question of the role of working people in creating "their own world" in the evolving context of business, governmental, and union systems. Precisely because both books reject Sombart's "Why is there no socialism in America?" question as a point of departure, Dawley finds in them new insights into the decisive role of class, beyond the confines of the American workplace, as well as within them.

I do wish to call the reader's attention to the report on the ILWCH business meeting in December. Comments and suggestions concerning the issues raised there will be warmly welcomed. Above all, ILWCH is indebted to the Robert F. Wheeler Memorial Fund at the University of Southern California, and to its trustee Gordon Berger, for making the entire fund available to ILWCH, so that it might survive its financial difficulties and continue publication. Thanks to the contributions made by many ILWCH readers and others to that fund in Bob Wheeler's memory, the journal which he founded will continue its work.

D. M.