

resist their own incorporation? In pursuit of these themes and questions, Zunz surveys the personnel records, and the oral and local histories of managerial employees of Ford, Metropolitan Life, DuPont, McCormick/International Harvester, and Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad (C. B. & Q.) for signs of both personal and corporate transformation.

Pennsylvania's small-town hardware merchants, for example, managed to maintain some of their autonomy and authority while becoming DuPont's agents late in the nineteenth century. But as the corporation reorganized, they faced absorption or irrelevance. Even so important a DuPont agent as the Chicagoan Elliot S. Rice fell to grumbling and bitterness as the growing corporation's professional sales department made him redundant. Mid-level railroad executives such as C. B. & Q.'s W. S. Perry, on the other hand, enjoyed the coincidence of two vast projects: the construction of both a national rail system and economy, which made them co-authors of a continental drama. Tinkerers from modest backgrounds with little formal education built Ford, while Metropolitan Life's pursuit of social responsibility offered members of the ethnic middle classes new opportunities for community service and assimilation. And far from being mere representatives of distant monopolies, Zunz finds McCormick/International Harvester agents like R. B. Swift and E. C. Beardsley linked to farmers in a complex dance of reciprocal influence.

An absorbing study, *Making America Corporate* is filled with odd turns and flashing insights. Zunz suggests, for example, that the big corporations emphasized the unity of city and country in their construction of a national marketplace, although doing so flew in the face of both the isolating effects of rural mechanization and the growing rural/urban split epitomized by H. L. Mencken's burlesque of rural backwardness. More important still is the way the book complicates the idea of "managerial revolution" by putting a human face upon it: neither Thorstein Veblen's engineers nor Harry Braverman's agents of capital can ever again appear simply as bloodless minions of larger forces. Nonetheless, only occasionally do the oral histories and personnel files upon which Zunz relies allow him to get inside his characters, to comprehend their "motivation and commitment." Often he makes inferences, creative and compelling to be sure, from sketchy information. This, after all, is the nature of the best historiography, but given the power of some of his revelations, one wishes Zunz had gone further in tracking down the personal papers, diaries, and descendants of his managers in order to move more deeply into their interior lives. Short of such personal records, Zunz wisely and implicitly reminds us that still the best insights into these people remain those of Willa Cather, Hamlin Garland, and Theodore Dreiser. For the rest of us not so gifted, this important book makes an eloquent, if unintended, plea for the rehabilitation of biography among political and social historians.

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The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950. By Joy Parr. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990. Pp. xiii, 314. \$45.00, cloth; \$19.95, paper.

A few years ago, I attended a meeting at which a paper detailing women's economic status in a specific historical context was discussed. A male member of the group asked a question about where the men were in this story, to which the feminist author replied, who cares? Her point was that the vast majority of scholarship to date has been quite literally on economic man, so that a focus on economic woman is hardly something to apologize for and in fact is necessary to get the story right. My reaction to this was an internal "yes, but. . . ." Surely, the interactions *between* economic men and economic women are of crucial significance!

Historian Joy Parr's new book *The Gender of Breadwinners* makes this point beautifully with its complex account of the interactions between (and among) male and female workers in the Canadian towns of Paris and Hanover. Parr seeks to shed light on how the gender of breadwinners is related to the totality of social and economic life in a community. She successfully uses the history of two small, industrial towns in southwestern Ontario as a vehicle for exploring broader questions about the connections between gender, class, ethnicity, technology, economic power, and community values. Parr's sources are many and varied, including newspapers, government documents, firm-level personnel and payroll records, municipal assessment rolls, photographs, and in-depth interviews with former workers. She lived and worked in each town during the course of her research, and her closeness to her sources shows. Parts 1 and 2 of the book deal with Paris and Hanover, respectively, with each containing chapters on labor recruitment, management policies/tariff issues, the firm's division of labor by gender, work and family, and the role of the union.

Paris was a company town dominated by Penmans Limited, which produced knit goods using mostly women workers, many of whom were assisted emigrants from the textile-producing east midlands of England. Hanover's economy centered on the furniture-making industry (Parr's data base focuses on Knechtel Furniture Co., the largest of several in town), which employed a virtually all-male work force consisting largely of second- and third-generation German artisans. There is thus a clear "women's town" vs. "men's town" contrast present in the study. We learn, for example, that the traditional economic arrangements in Hanover strengthened male workers' feelings of manliness, while the unconventionality of the work force in Paris caused many contemporaries to question the womanliness of these female workers. The women workers of Paris often emigrated to avoid or escape marriage, even as the women of Hanover saw marriage as the essence of women's work. Paris workers lived in fluid households where mothers and sisters shared the tasks of child care, housework, and mill work, while Hanover men counted on their wives to be full-time mothers and housekeepers. While Parr does not neglect these kinds of simple contrasts, she also goes beyond them. Her chapter titled "When is knitting women's work?" (previously published as an article that won the 1988 Berkshire prize for the best article in women's history) is a fascinating analysis of how a firm's decisions about specific job content are affected by technology, social ideas about women, and local labor market conditions.

A distinctive feature of the book is its extensive exploration of gender issues of male workers in both Paris and Hanover. For example, Parr finds that the men of Paris were not much in demand in the town's labor market and thus became irregularly employed, secondary wage earners in their households. These men often took on more domestic responsibilities, such as cooking and housework, but they largely rejected tasks related to child care and laundry as too feminine. These services were purchased in the market when female kin were not available to help. The men of Hanover encountered other kinds of challenges to their masculinity. During World War I, they found that their newly suspect German backgrounds conflicted with "the external mainstream demands that manliness be proved by military service" (p. 238). In 1919, when Knechtel began implementing scientific management schemes, Hanover workers resisted, feeling that their manliness was being compromised by this assault on their craft.

The economic historian will look in vain for a basic quantitative summary of work force data such as number of workers, wages, and occupations by gender, age, and marital status. From Parr's note on method, it would seem that such data are readily available to her, at least for certain years, and a few simple tables would have helped readers see the workplace context more clearly. Instead, Parr intersperses some select summary statistics in the text and offers us tables that, as a whole, seem focused on rather minor points. One hopes that more quantitative work will be done with the computer data base Parr has so painstakingly assembled.

Stylistically, Parr's prose sometimes walks a fine line between the poetic and the obscure, so that the reader is alternately inspired and frustrated. In the end, however, inspiration exceeds frustration, and Parr's complex language is a relief from the dry bones scholars so often serve up.

The *Gender of Breadwinners* is well worth a careful reading for anyone interested in gender and work issues. Parr's case studies of Paris and Hanover leave the reader with a feeling of having seen some of the stuff of real life, no mean feat for an historian. She wrestles with "the ways in which social identities are simultaneously formed from a multiplicity of elements" and shows us "that the meanings of these galloping pairs—class/gender, male/female, market/nonmarket, public/private—behind which our thinking has trailed, are moot; that these meanings . . . are multiple and mutable" (p. 9). Her work clearly shows that the topic of gender and work is not strictly a "women's issue" but is truly a social issue.

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American Commercial Banking: A History. By Benjamin J. Klebaner. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990. Pp. xi, 283. \$26.95.

Benjamin Klebaner has set for himself an herculean task—covering 300 years of American commercial banking in less than 250 pages. Less ambitious writers have required more than twice that space to cover half the period. Klebaner is able to achieve this remarkable brevity by focusing strictly on the changing structure of American commercial banking, the sources and uses of funds during different historical periods, and the transitory nature of government regulation. His stated objective is simply to trace "the evolution of commercial banking in the United States."

When judged against this objective, Klebaner's book is an apparent success. He has done a commendable job of presenting, in a short space, a great deal of important information on the changing nature of American banking. It is a departure from the many volumes that focus on the political economy of banking, offering instead a concise description of changes in banking markets, bank behavior, and regulation from the era of colonial land banks to the present. Klebaner's greatest success is in his showing that the pace of change in the banking system has not slowed in the post-World War II era; if anything, it has accelerated since 1945. Given the tumultuous events in the financial services sector, it would be well to know where we have been to know where we may be headed.

Despite Klebaner's successes, the book has several shortcomings. Many of his predecessors have presented American banking and monetary history by focusing on a clearly defined reform agenda. Gouge, writing in the wake of the Bank War, reviled the existing banks of issue and advocated a return to specie currency. Sumner wrote in the Greenback era and suspension and, being influenced by Parliament's Bullion Report of 1810, advocated a return to sound banking and sound money. Other writers have organized their histories in terms of some well-defined thesis. Redlich, for example, emphasized the role of banker as entrepreneur; Hammond focused on the political economy of banking. Klebaner's volume lacks such a unifying scheme. It simply provides an array (sometimes bewildering) of facts, with little interpretation and few definite conclusions. His volume is certainly not cluttered with competing hypotheses.

The book is divided into four chronological sections (1690–1862, 1863–1913, 1913–1945, 1945–present); for each period bank market structure, lending and investment policies, and government regulation are discussed. This structure works reasonably well as an organizational method but leads to a considerable repetition. The predominance of unit banking, for example, is discussed in each of the four sections, as is the growth of deposits and the rise (and fall) of deposit insurance. Each section also includes a chapter