

Returning to the problem of explaining the extent of organized criminal activity in the Netherlands, more attention should be given to the social and legal contexts in which crime occurred. In many cases Egmond notes that bands depended on local connections: gypsy bands, for example, were "heavily dependent on indigenous innkeepers, informants, and fences" (p. 104), despite the fact they continually plundered local inhabitants. Indeed, a general theme running through the book is the fact that professional criminals did not inhabit a separate "counter-culture", but instead lived on the fringes of the dominant culture, and indeed spent much of their lives in legitimate (if casual) employments. Local inhabitants must have known about the illegal activities of their neighbours. Why did they tolerate them? We need to know more about the social structure and social dynamics of these communities, and their relations with law enforcement officials, in order to understand the conditions which allowed such crime to flourish. Did gangs have such a hold on local communities that inhabitants were too intimidated to complain? Or were victims and informers discouraged from reporting crimes due to distrust and social distance between communities and judicial officials? The problems caused by the considerable fragmentation of Dutch criminal justice in the period (there were over 200 separate jurisdictions in the area covered) also need to be considered. Indeed, it is remarkable how quickly organized crime declined once judicial centralization occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Having done so much to document the extensive range of criminal bands in operation in this period, it is to be hoped that the author will now turn to address some of the questions about social relations and the nature of law enforcement which allowed organized crime to flourish.

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KIRK, NEVILLE. *Labor and Society in Britain and the USA*. Vol. 1. *Capitalism, Custom and Protest, 1780–1850*. Vol. 2. *Challenge and Accommodation, 1850–1939*. Scholar Press, Aldershot 1994. viii, 226 pp.; ix, 424 pp. £39.50; £49.50.

More than ten years have passed since the Open University first presented its innovative and immensely successful thematic course on comparative British and American History. Taking a set of historical phenomena – industrialization, concepts of constitutionalism and democracy, citizenship and social class, nationality and the nation state, urbanization and economic development – the course sought to explore the responses of the two societies to these phenomena and the changes resulting from their exposure to them. In it labour history loomed large. We were concerned to identify the salient characteristics of organized labour in Britain and America and to consider some features peculiar to each country. Industrialization came earlier in Britain, enfranchisement later. Both affected labour's prospects. The social and cultural environment within which industrial society was born in America was significantly different from that of Britain before and during its industrial revolution. Britain entered the Industrial Revolution as an hierarchical society within which a landed aristocracy exercised social and cultural hegemony and paternalist supervision over a pyramid of ranks. The United States, by contrast, entered its industrial revolution with an

open and egalitarian model of the social order. We were interested in identifying the relative importance of differences in experience as well as those of time, place, scale and technical sophistication. Changes in the structure of work as rural societies gave way to expanding urban communities and the political and cultural reverberations arising therefrom figured prominently as did worker response to growing social inequality.

Workers in Britain and America responded to the loss of control of their work and environment in rather different ways. Working-class consciousness developed strongly in Britain and less so in America. British workers became increasingly convinced that class-based action was necessary to achieve their goals. Class solidarity in the United States was never quite so pronounced. These differences became more marked over the course of the nineteenth century. In Britain, as in America, labour organization in the earlier stages of industrialization was dominated by the "respectable" trades. Craft unions concentrated upon achieving limited objectives of improved wages and working conditions and accepted the need to accommodate existing power relations. American craft unions, like their British counterparts, were wary of political activity. Unlike the British, they made no provision for formal affiliation with a political branch. Ethnic and religious groupings, not labour organization, dictated worker participation in politics in American cities. So that, although all adult white male Americans were enfranchised long before their compeers in Britain, the possibilities for labour politics were no greater in the US than in Britain, and were perhaps even more limited. Other observable differences also called for explanation. Workers in Britain, it has often been noted, were more prone to join trade unions than their counterparts in the United States. Ever since the 1880s, when reliable statistics began to be collected, organized workers in the United States have constituted a smaller proportion of the workforce than in Britain. Nevertheless, Americans have at times suffered acutely from "the English disease". Strikes in the United States, moreover, have tended to be longer and more violent than on this side of the Atlantic. The curious combination of industrial militancy and political conservatism also runs counter to the experience and traditions of the British labour movement. The British Labour Party, in Bevin's expressive phrase, emerged out of the bowels of the trade union movement. Organized labour in the United States, by contrast, has eschewed any permanent connection with a political party. In trying to account for these divergent characteristics we explored patterns of industrial conflict to see how it was that the strike came to be elevated to such a pre-eminent position in the repertoire of popular activity in the years between the Civil War and the First World War in order to pinpoint how the transformation of the workplace and changes in the spatial relations between classes served to increase the breadth of the labour movement in Britain while at the same time strengthening the power of employers in the United States. We looked, too, at the character of the labour force, the legal status of trade unions and the attitudes of employers. The latter seemed of special importance. Unlike Britain, where strikes have in the main been confined to economic issues, American disputes have more frequently involved the very right to organize. The existence of the union has too often been at stake. Not so in Britain where collective bargaining and procedures for regulating disputes came to be more readily accepted. As early as 1889 employer recognition covered most of the craft unions, cotton,

iron and steel and parts of the coalfields, and, moreover, it was spreading fast. American employers, by contrast, tended to regard collective bargaining as a threat to the "right to manage". Employer opposition, together with the decentralized system of government, left little scope for engaging in political activity; until the future of the union was secured such engagements were luxuries. Until 1932, moreover, both of the parties to the conflict were left to fight it out among themselves. The reforms of the New Deal period provided the secure legal status which British trade unions had enjoyed for more than fifty years. By then the status of American socialism was comparable with that of the dodo. The trade union movement was so committed to the Democratic Party that it was too late to create an independent labour party similar to that of the British. Naturally, we examined the relative importance of ethnicity, social mobility, town-country divisions, war and the greater resistance of the American political system to the rise of third parties, the writings of Selig Perlman and so on, in order to account for this aspect of American "exceptionalism". With respect to the changing relationship between capital and labour we also looked at the nature of the state and class conflict, at the perspective of classical Marxism and beyond, in order to explore alternative explanations and assess their comparative merits.

All of this, as I say, was a long time ago. In the early 1980s when we first put pen to paper David Montgomery's seminal study *The Fall of the House of Labor* had not been published; the critical studies of Laurie and Wilentz were not available nor were important monographs like Ross on Cincinnati, Cohen on Chicago or Oestreicher on Detroit. Leon Fink's "new labor history" had yet to suggest itself and gender was still a word known to the cognoscenti rather than a readily accepted aspect of mainstream historical enquiry. Labour history may have become less fashionable since the Thatcher-Reagan years of conservative hegemony, but even so, the output of books and articles on both sides of the Atlantic has been extraordinary. The need for a fresh synthesis that will give us our bearings and point the way forward is now pressing. Neville Kirk's two-volume survey satisfies the first of these requirements. A no-nonsense historical materialist, with little taste for faddist "turns", linguistic or otherwise, he sets out to summarize the enormous secondary literature on British and American labour history in an accessible prose that is refreshing and rewarding. The first volume is concerned to explore the centrality of class in popular movements on both sides of the Atlantic before the Civil War. Its companion considers the impact of corporate capitalism on popular and working-class protest movements from the 1890s down to the outbreak of the Second World War. His reading is extensive and his judgements sound. As a comprehensive, up-to-date text, *Labour and Society in Britain and the USA* is without a peer. I shall have no hesitation in drawing upon its scholarship or in recommending it to students. My one reservation, apart from the excessive length, concerns the author's conclusions, which are safe but unexciting. The argument that class was rather more important as an organizing experience than has sometimes been imagined, and consequently that American "exceptionalism" has been overdone, is, I think, perfectly reasonable. The reaffirmation of the centrality of class in so cogent a manner is well worth having. What is missing is a follow-through in the form of an exciting research agenda. It is the author's scholarly caution at this point which most limits the work's usefulness. We at the Open University

are currently preparing *Understanding Comparative History: Britain and America since 1760* as a replacement for the now-defunct course mentioned earlier and are looking for new perspectives and fresh directions on familiar themes. We look here in vain. No distinct viewpoint emerges. All the new work seems merely to confirm the sorts of conclusions that OU undergraduates could have reached at any point in the past ten years. After having read these volumes I feel as though I have been shown the promised land but denied the right of entry. Perhaps, though, I ask for too much? Certainly, it would be churlish to end the review on a critical note. Neville Kirk's study represents a welcome contribution to the study of working-class movements. It is a valuable teaching and scholarly resource for which those interested in labour studies and comparative history will long be grateful.

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AUGUSTINE, DOLORES L. *Patricians and Parvenus. Wealth and High Society in Wilhelmine Germany*. Berg, Oxford [etc.] 1994. xii, 383 pp. £44.95.

Dr Augustine's work is a particularly interesting study of the 502 businessmen who appeared in the *Yearbook of Millionaires of Germany (Jahrbuch der Millionaire Deutschlands)* in 1910–1914. The *Yearbook* presented comprehensive biographical information on Germany's wealthiest men and families, derived from the data of the government wealth and income tax statistics levied throughout most of Germany. These statistics were collated by Rudolf Martin, a civil servant who had access to confidential information concerning them; he corrected inaccurate taxation claims, especially the under-reporting of assets. The *Yearbook* was a widely popular work at the time which has in recent years been rediscovered as a primary and most important source in German social and economic history of the Wilhelmine period. Its objective and comprehensive nature potentially allows the historian empirically to test the validity of many widely held historical and sociological theories about the nature of the pre-1914 German elite and it has been exploited in a number of works, most notably in W.E. Mosse's *Jews in the German Economy: The German-Jewish Economic Elite, 1820–1935* (Oxford, 1987), and in a number of studies by Dr Augustine. Her present work is, essentially, a study of the social and economic characteristics of the 502 wealthiest German businessmen, those assessed as worth 6 million marks or more. This work, it should be noted, apparently concerns only the wealthiest businessmen, and – unless I have missed something – not the wealthiest among the non-business elite (who are discussed by Mosse) from the Kaiser on down. This is perhaps somewhat unfortunate, as information on the non-business wealth sector would have provided excellent comparative data.

Nevertheless, in most respects this is a model study of its kind, wide-ranging, original and very sensible in its conclusions, questioning, for example, the factual basis of the "refeudalization" thesis which heavily relies on a basic dichotomy in social behaviour between the business elite in Prussia and in more "liberal" parts of the Reich. Dr Augustine's study, originally a 1991 doctoral dissertation at the Free University of Berlin, contained 117 statistical tables, only five of which make it to the book. Many social historians would, I am sure, wish to