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Science at the Borders: Immigrant Medical Inspection and the Shaping of the Modern Industrial Labor Force

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governments and the EU allow cheap imports and maintain an over-valued Euro. I suspect that Europe's unemployment problem could be solved by an expansionary monetary and fiscal policy combined with some targeted relief aimed at pockets of high unemployment. European social democracy did not fail; it was abandoned.

Robert Castel takes no joy in seeing modern democracy struggle to reintegrate "a growing number of its members whose only crime is to be 'unemployable'" (p. 406). I suspect he would be delighted if we could return to the "glorious 30" years when growth helped conceal the conflicts and strains inherent in a wage-earning society. Whether we can return to those years of high employment and rising wages remains an open question. But this challenging study shows clearly how important it is that we try.

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Science at the Borders: Immigrant Medical Inspection and the Shaping of the Modern Industrial Labor Force. By Amy L. Fairchild. xiii, 385 pp. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-8018-7080-1, $48.00 (cloth).

From 1891 (when the federal government finally assumed exclusive responsibility for the design and implementation of the nation's immigration policies) until 1924 (when the Immigration Act of 1924 shifted the issuance of all entry visas abroad to U.S. Consular offices), a medical inspection was required of all would-be immigrants to the United States at the time of entry. During these years, 70% of all entries occurred at Ellis Island, N.Y. (which opened in 1892). There was no annual ceiling on immigration over this time span, but there were a number of exclusions that prohibited designated categories of immigrants from entering. The relevant mandatory exclusions applied to any person with dangerous diseases (for example, trachoma or tuberculosis) or loathsome diseases (for example, fovas, syphilis, or leprosy), as well as to "insane persons" and "idiots." There were also discretionary exclusions that pertained to conditions that might affect the ability to work (for example, heart disease, poor physique, varicose veins, or senility). In *Science at the Borders,* Amy Fairchild analyzes the role that this mandatory medical examination played both as a negative screening device and as a positive "socializing tool" to foster the assimilation of the immigrants into the American labor force.

It fell upon the U.S. Public Health Service to conduct the examinations and the Immigration Service (the name of which changed several times during this period) to render the enforcement decision as to whether any certified medical condition rose to the level of requiring exclusion. Given the massive scale of immigration during this period (over 25 million persons), most of these procedures had to be conducted in a perfunctory manner. Most immigrants at all ports of entry received little more than "a medical gaze" lasting less than 40 seconds. Some were moved aside for more thorough examinations; some were treated for their conditions and held in detention until they could pass. All of this occurred at a time when the science of identifying and assessing the significance of physical and mental disabilities was in its infancy. The facilities where the initial inspections were conducted—especially those performed along the Mexican-U.S. border, the Gulf Coast, and the West Coast—were typically spartan. Inadequate funding and the lack of political clout of the two agencies—problems that bedevil immigration enforcement to this day—made the actual deportation of immigrants difficult. To the immigrants themselves, however, who had little or no knowledge of the Immigration Service's limitations and feared the consequences of a negative decision, passing was of vital concern.

The major contribution of this study, however, is not its disclosure of the immigrants' medical status, or of inspectors' differential treatment of different immigrant groups (although such information is provided). It is, rather, the author's case for her contention that the medical inspection was intended "to control rather than to exclude" (p.106) immigrants. The inspection, she argues, was meant to focus the attention of would-be immigrants—most of whom were from rural peasant backgrounds—on the primacy of good health and hygiene practices if one was to become an efficient and self-sustaining worker in an urban industrial economy.

Despite the severe wording of the laws, therefore, the medical examination was not centered on ascertaining the general health of the immigrants. Rather, it concentrated on detecting those diseases that might disable the body and, therefore, impair the ability of the individual to

work, as well as on identifying senility that might lead to dependency. Economic vitality dominated health considerations *per se* as the rationale for the whole process.

To be sure, the author does find and document that there were class and race as well as geographic differences associated with the administration of these entry criteria. But the most startling finding of this comprehensive study is how few immigrants were ever actually excluded despite all of the legal prohibitions. Only 79,000 persons were denied entry for medical reasons over this entire period, and only 11% of these were actually deported. Moreover, at no time was disease the basis for more than a minority of rejections. Most commonly cited, instead, was the prospect of dependency ("likely to become a public charge").

The study is extraordinarily well-documented (the endnotes alone run to 100 pages) and it is concisely written. It is a thoughtful discussion of a crucial period in the development of the American labor force and the effort of immigration policy to influence its composition when the level of immigration itself was uncontrolled.

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Reforming the Chicago Teamsters: The Story of Local 705. By Robert Bruno. DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003. 213 pp. ISBN 0-87580-596-5, $24.00 (paper).

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters has long occupied a central place in industrial relations research and in labor history, and the Teamsters have always provided instructive and colorful illustrations of the best and the worst that unions do to represent their members. Generally perceived as aggressive organizers and strong bargainers, their reputation has tended to shadow their role in the labor movement. Because of the Teamsters' ability to control the supply and distribution process, workers and leaders in other unions often consider Teamster support to be critical to the success of their own labor-management disputes.

Robert Bruno's study of Chicago's Local 705 takes its place among books on the Teamsters written by scholars such as Walter Galenson (*The CIO Challenge to AFL: A History of the American Labor Movement, 1935–1941;* Harvard University Press, 1960), Donald Garnel (*The Rise of Teamster Power in the West;* University of California Press, 1972), and Ralph and Estelle James (*Hoffa and the Teamsters: A Study of Union Power;* D. Van Nostrand, 1965), and by participant-activists such as Farrel Dobbs (*Teamster Rebellion;* Monad, 1972) and Dan LaBotz (*Rank-and-File Rebellion;* Verso, 1990). This book is a bit of a hybrid, however, lying somewhere between the scholarly and the activist—providing an engaging and interesting story that emphasizes the narrative of events with a point of view, but without the rigor used by researchers such as Galenson, Garnel, and the Jameses.

While Bruno briefly discusses the extended period of rank-and-file activism that provided the necessary preconditions for local union reform, the central focus of the book is the period of institutional reform following the U.S. Justice Department's successful 1988 lawsuit against the Teamsters under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations provision of the Organized Crime Act of 1970. To be fair, it is important to note here that I have a personal interest in this research because during a substantial period of this time preceding the RICO suit and subsequent trusteeship of Local 705, I drove a tank truck over-the-road out of Chicago for Transport Service Company (not Transport Services, as Bruno refers to it) and I was a leader of both PROD (the Professional Drivers Council, a truck driver public interest group for improving job safety in the trucking industry) and Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU, the Teamsters reform caucus), nationally and in Chicago; I ran in 1984 against the Principal Officer of Local 705, Louis Peick. I thus have an insider's point of view as well as an insider's interest in the interpretation of this history.

Bruno's central hypothesis is that democratic unions are more "effective" than undemocratic unions and not only energize workers for activism and organizing, but produce superior collective bargaining outcomes. While he argues that "the case for democratic unions is not a difficult one to make" (p. 8), he concedes that "the concept of union democracy has not been an easy one to authoritatively address" (p. 12). The ultimate test of his hypothesis, therefore, is whether the democratized union is stronger and more able to deliver superior collective bargaining outcomes to union members. Unfortunately, his theoretical exposition is restricted to a few pages in the introduction and