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[Review of the book *Labour History and the Labour Movement in Britain*]

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[Review of the book *Labour History and the Labour Movement in Britain*]

Abstract

[Excerpt] While this volume contains some important pieces, it is uneven in quality, and several of the papers, in my opinion, should have been omitted. Given the very high price of the book, the fact that it omits Pollard's important papers on factory discipline and his chapter from the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, and the ready availability in journals of the best papers, I cannot recommend it to anyone but librarians who happen to have unlimited sources of money. One can only hope that in the future Ashgate or another publisher will reprint, at reasonable prices, Sidney Pollard's excellent monographs, *A History of Labour in Sheffield* and *The Genesis of Modern Management*.

Keywords

Britain, labor history, labor movement, management, working conditions, wages

Disciplines

International and Comparative Labor Relations | Labor History | Labor Relations | Unions

Comments

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Labour History and the Labour Movement in Britain. By Sidney Pollard. Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 1999. xx, 313 pp. ISBN 0-86078-793-1, \$97.95 (cloth).

This book is a collection of fifteen previously published essays by the late Sidney Pollard, one

of the leading economic historians of the post-war era. Pollard's work spanned much more than labor history, but he made several major contributions to our understanding of British labor history in the period 1750-1950. *A History of Labour in Sheffield* (1959) provided an in-depth analysis of workers' wages, health, living conditions, and working conditions in a major industrial city in 1850-1939, and has served as a model for historical studies of local labor markets. *The Genesis of Modern Management* (1965), while not strictly a work of labor history, is a classic study that contains much information on early industrial relations. In particular, the chapter on the adaptation of the labor force to factory work provides an excellent discussion of the problems of labor recruitment for early factories and the need to create a "new work discipline." Much of the material in this chapter had previously been published in two important articles: "Factory Discipline in the Industrial Revolution," *Economic History Review* (December 1963); and "The Factory Village in the Industrial Revolution," *English Historical Review* (July 1964). Finally, Pollard's "Labour in Great Britain," his outstanding chapter in Volume 7 of *the Cambridge Economic History of Europe* (1978), while a bit dated, remains one of the best available introductions to the development of labor markets in nineteenth-century Britain.

I mention these works because the most conspicuous aspect of this collection of essays is the absence from it of Pollard's two papers on factory discipline and his chapter from the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*. Thus, the reader should be warned that this collection by no means represents Pollard's "greatest hits."

The fifteen papers included are grouped into three sections. The first section, entitled "Wages and Working Conditions," contains an interesting essay, "Management and Labor in Britain during the Period of Industrialization," originally written for a conference in Japan in the late 1970s, and four papers relating to labor in Sheffield. Two of these, both originally published in the *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research* in the mid-1950s, examine movements in real earnings in Sheffield from 1851 to 1914. Some of the wage and cost of living time series for workers in various trades reported here are not included in Pollard's monograph on labor in Sheffield, which makes these papers especially useful.

The second section, "Robert Owen and the Co-operative Movement," includes an interesting paper on the attempt by Robert Owen—successful businessman, philanthropist, and fac-

tory reformer—to reduce working hours in British industry, two papers on the co-operative movement in the nineteenth century, and one on the founding of the Co-operative Party in the early twentieth century. The third section contains six essays on "Modern Trade Unions and the Labour Party." Two of these papers deal with trade unions in the late nineteenth century, three with British and German trade unions' reactions to the Great Depression, and one with socialist proposals to nationalize the British banking system. By far the best paper in this section is "Trade Unions and the Labour Market, 1870-1914," originally published in the *Yorkshire Bulletin* in 1965.

While this volume contains some important pieces, it is uneven in quality, and several of the papers, in my opinion, should have been omitted. Given the very high price of the book, the fact that it omits Pollard's important papers on factory discipline and his chapter from the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, and the ready availability in journals of the best papers, I cannot recommend it to anyone but librarians who happen to have unlimited sources of money. One can only hope that in the future Ashgate or another publisher will reprint, at reasonable prices, Sidney Pollard's excellent monographs, *A History of Labour in Sheffield* and *The Genesis of Modern Management*.

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