

their highest positions while still in their thirties, worked long hours, earned high but uncertain wages, chafed at managerial directives and restraints, and often suffered death or disability in the performance of their duties. In short, Licht concludes that railroad workers worked and lived much like most other nineteenth-century industrial workers, despite the distinctive character of the railroad industry. While much room remains for additional studies, Licht's research will be a benchmark for all subsequent explorations of railroad labor in the nineteenth century.

Of his many conclusions, Licht is most intrigued with the discovery that local superintendents and foremen exercised virtually complete control over subordinate employees. They hired and fired and disciplined at will. In effect, the corporate bureaucracies of the nineteenth century operated at the lowest level, just as did the small factories and mines of the period. In his last chapter Licht exploits this insight to explain the rise and success of trade unionism among railroad employees in the years after the great strikes of 1877. He is fascinated by the phenomenon of workers demanding the extension of bureaucratic procedures to the base of the corporate hierarchy. His analysis is persuasive as far as it goes, but it is also incomplete and perplexing. It disregards several relevant inquiries, most notably why corporate managers did not realize the disadvantages of unsystematic, decentralized supervisory practices before the workers did. Licht seems to be arguing that railroad executives were far less astute than manufacturing executives, a point that deserves more thorough and detailed development. The last chapter therefore should be read as an invitation to additional research, rather than an extension of the earlier material. The rest of the volume will stand alone, a valuable examination of an important but little-known group that occupied center stage in the drama of American industrial expansion.

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German Workers in Industrial Chicago, 1850-1910: A Comparative Perspective. Edited by Hartmut Keil and John B. Jentz. (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1983. Pp. viii, 252. Illustrations, maps, notes, tables, figures. \$22.50.)

A happy juxtaposition of the three-hundredth anniversary of German emigration to North America and the growing influence of labor history is found in this collection of thirteen essays that endeavors to discover the reality of immigrant German working-class experience in ethnic Chicago's golden age. In earlier form

these essays were presented at a 1981 Newberry Library conference on "Working-Class Immigrants in Industrializing Chicago, 1850-1920," which in turn was the product of the "Chicago Project" at the American Institute of the University of Munich, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. Five of the papers represent the work of young German scholars, eight are the product of recent doctoral students in the United States, and all show the influence of Herbert Gutman and David Brody.

No single thesis emerges to unite this baker's dozen, but a respect for German immigrant workers and the radical political culture that emerged among some during this period informs most essays. Hartmut Keil provides a useful introduction that seeks to unify the various studies and place them within recent historiography. The papers are arranged in four major groupings: the place of German immigrant workers in American urban society, the changing character of industrial work and worker adaptation, working-class neighborhoods and their everyday life, and radical politics and culture. Most of the essays utilize local German-language press, census and enumeration district material, and extant union and political records. Most impressive is the section dealing with industrialization and the transformation of work. James R. Barrett's study of the rival conceptions of economic rationalization held by management and by butcher workmen and the consequent conflict waged on the shop floor for control of the work process is a gem. Similarly insightful is John B. Jentz's study of German-American generational movement away from furniture making, which was losing its craft basis, into the metal trades where new skilled work was surging. While based on a narrow 1882 New York sample of German working-class family budgets, Dorothee Schneider's essay comes closest to capturing the reality of immigrant working-class life: wives were desperate to make ends meet, half of family income went for the most basic food, spouses fought over husbands' claims to beer money, sickness was economically fatal, and running out from under accumulated rent was a survival skill.

This collection will be required reading for those interested in working-class culture, the dynamics of industrialization, German-Americans, and Chicago. An index would be useful, however, as would information on the contributors. The language issue merits greater attention, and one may also question the exclusion of religion from consideration given the ritualistic behavior of many ethnic neighborhoods and organizations and the millennial expectations of the radical faiths.

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