

en vigueur d'un partenariat entre les deux parties risque d'être longue et tumultueuse. D'une façon générale, ils prescrivent une entente touchant des éléments peu controversés, cherchant surtout un retour à la stabilité politique et économique.

*The Referendum Papers* apparaît à ce moment-ci comme un premier jet de ce qui est devenu la *Loi sur la clarté* du gouvernement fédéral. En demandant les avis d'experts sur des éléments très précis qui seraient en litige à la suite de la décision d'une majorité de la population d'une province de faire sécession, la C. D. Howe Institute a probablement devancé l'avis de la Cour suprême du Canada dans sa réflexion sur le rôle et l'importance de chacune des parties dans un éventuel référendum au Québec. Bien que certaines questions posées dans l'ouvrage aient maintenant été répondues (ou à tout le moins abordées) par Stéphane Dion, le ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales du Gouvernement du Canada, les réflexions qui agrémentent le questionnement apparaissent plus pertinentes que jamais. Devant le désir manifeste du gouvernement fédéral et du gouvernement du Québec de s'impliquer à fond dans le débat sur les règles d'un éventuel référendum sur la souveraineté, nous accordons encore plus d'importance au message du directeur de l'ouvrage, David R. Cameron. Selon lui, la population du Canada hors Québec doit s'intéresser davantage, voire s'impliquer dans le débat entre les souverainistes et les fédéralistes au Québec. Ce livre est un pas important dans cette direction.

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Stanley L. Engerman, ed. — *Terms of Labor: Slavery, Serfdom, and Free Labor*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp. ix, 350.

This volume could have been subtitled, "Everything You Need to Know About Free Labour — But Never Dreamed of Asking". It grew out of two conferences, held by the Center for the History of Freedom at Washington University in St. Louis, which gathered a distinguished group of labour historians. Virtually all the contributors to this volume have written important books on the topics they cover. In some instances, the authors summarize their existing work rather than explore new terrain, but the papers often enough surprise and delight. The best of the essays take familiar periods and concepts and set them in a new light.

We can examine the nine essays under three headings. Two chapters look at the rise and fall of New World slavery, with an emphasis on the Caribbean. David Eltis explores why "the Europeans with the most advanced capitalist culture, the Dutch and the English", who had "moved domestically furthest toward the modern conception of the labor force", were also the countries "with the harshest and most closed systems of exploiting enslaved non-Europeans" (p. 43). What explains this paradox? Eltis argues that freer labour in the Old World and harsh slavery in the New were two sides of the same coin. They both reflected the shift in property rights toward the individual and away from the community. Free labourers and slave owners were now able to pursue their self-interest without oppressive regulation.

Seymour Drescher looks at the economic arguments set forth by the British abolitionists. He shows they relied on Adam Smith and particularly on Smith's contention that free labour was more productive than forced labour. This reasoning, Drescher notes, was flawed. Hence it was no surprise that sugar production in the British West Indies plummeted after emancipation in 1833. East Asian indentured servants had to be transported to the Caribbean to revive cane cultivation. Britain did receive an unexpected benefit from emancipation. West Indian purchases of cloth soared, and abolitionists developed a "consumerist" argument for the benefits of freedom.

Four essays examine the American labour movement and the impact of the idea of free labour. Robert J. Steinfeld uses court cases to explore the uncertain line between "free" and "coerced" labour. Slavery was obviously forced work and was declared illegal, but what was the status of a needy immigrant who entered a multi-year contract for minimal pay? Should the courts allow that individual to break an oppressive contract, or did the "voluntary" nature of the agreement suggest it must be honoured? Nineteenth-century court cases were on both sides of the issue, although twentieth-century courts now protect such workers.

David Brody also focuses on courts and legislation in his exploration of the tension between free labour ideology and unionism. In *Commonwealth v. Hunt* (1842), the chief justice of Massachusetts, Lemuel Shaw, defended unions, but after the Civil War several cases rolled back these rights. Brody recounts the familiar story of labour's shifting fortunes in the twentieth century. The *Wagner Act* of 1935 gave workers new rights. However, the *Taft-Hartley Act* of 1947 set in "motion in the name of individual rights and free choice the corrosive forces that ate away at the law and rendered it in our own time an empty bulwark of labor's collective rights" (p. 239).

Leon Fink describes the shift in American labour ideology from "producerism" to "consumerism". During much of the nineteenth century workers were dissatisfied with their place in society. Many criticized capitalism and suggested alternatives, but even before 1900 workers had begun to redefine their goals. Along with liberal politicians, "they set the stage for a modern-day reconciliation of democratic culture with an ever expanding private marketplace" (p. 133). However, recent attacks on trade unions threaten this accord.

David Roediger looks at the interaction among the antebellum labour movement, abolitionism, and the campaign for women's rights. He contends that while labour reformers used "slavery" as a metaphor, black leaders, such as Frederick Douglass, did not. African-American leaders knew that bondage was far harsher than the conditions free workers experienced. Roediger also suggests that black abolitionists were more tolerant of the metaphorical use of slavery by women's rights leaders, but his evidence on this point is not convincing.

Finally, three chapters explore free labour with widely ranging approaches. Peter Kolchin compares the end of serfdom in Russia with emancipation in the United States. The differences are greater than the similarities. In both societies an oppressive form of coerced labour was ended, but the result was a peasant society in Russia, with widespread land ownership among the former serfs, while in the American

South relatively few blacks became freehold farmers. The commune became a dominant institution in rural Russia; peasants gained considerable autonomy, both legal and economic. The situation was far different in the American South. However, in both societies, Kolchin suggests, the reforms raised expectations, and widespread disillusionment eventually set in.

Amy Dru Stanley looks at the changing role of black women in the South and white women in the North after the Civil War. She notes that the freed people, male and female, fought for the right of women to stay home and do housework. Northern and southern whites wanted black women to continue to work in the fields. "But in the eyes of former bondsmen," Stanley observes, "the right to be sole owners of their wives' labor was fundamental to freedom" (p. 202). The same outlook characterized the poorly paid male workers of the North. They wanted higher wages so their wives could stay at home. Working men and women throughout the North, and increasingly legislatures, agreed with this logic.

Clayne Pope contends that free labour, and the social and geographical mobility that has been its counterpart, has produced "increasing levels of economic well-being and a narrowing of some aspects of the distributions of material rewards of society" (p. 257). Pope sets his argument in an international framework, including data for several European countries and Canada, but the essay is unconvincing. The international comparisons are facile, and there is no attempt to weigh the impact of mobility against other factors such as resource endowment, capital flows, or culture, which also contributed to growth.

Although not all the essays are of the same quality, this collection broadens our horizons. The editor, Stanley Engerman, provides a thoughtful overview. A full set of notes points the reader to additional sources. The volume is an excellent introduction to a concept — free labour — that is often mentioned but rarely explored in depth. The collection not only provides answers, but will lead you to ask new questions about the lives of working people.

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Lorraine Gadoury — *La famille dans son intimité. Échanges épistolaires au sein de l'élite canadienne du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Montréal, Éditions Hurtubise HMH, 1998, 186 p.

Lorraine Gadoury, dans ce livre issu d'une recherche post-doctorale menée de 1988 à 1990, « entend lever le voile sur les sentiments, les attitudes et les valeurs des membres de l'élite canadienne, à l'intérieur de leur famille, pour la période précédant l'industrialisation » (p. 16). Pour remplir cet ambitieux programme, elle utilise un corpus de lettres familiales échangées entre les membres de l'élite noble et bourgeoise de 1700 à 1800, dates rondes, correspondance qui est conservée dans l'intéressante et sous-exploitée Collection Baby de l'Université de Montréal.

Après avoir dressé un portrait sommaire de l'élite canadienne du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, directement inspiré de sa précédente monographie (*La Noblesse en Nouvelle-*