

labor history and feminist studies, and by self-consciously applying the imagination of a committed scholar engaged with the problems of the left in twentieth-century America. In so doing he has restored the “fragile bridge” of the Paterson strike that fused art and class consciousness, and he has constructed new bridges between the scholarly domains of social and cultural history and between the “moment” of 1913, so filled with revolutionary promise, and our own time.

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JENNINGS, JEREMY. *Syndicalism in France. A Study of Ideas*. [St Antony's/ Macmillan Series.] Macmillan, Basingstoke, London 1990; in assoc. with St Antony's College, Oxford. viii, 276 pp. £ 45.00.

In *Syndicalism in France: A Study of Ideas*, Jeremy Jennings examines syndicalist theory from the late nineteenth century through the 1950s. Happily he avoids the trap of presuming that only intellectuals such as the Sorelian syndicalists spoke exclusively for the movement and informed its philosophy. Instead he devotes a generous portion of his study to examining the thought of numerous working-class leaders who organized the syndicalist movement into the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT) in 1895. What Professor Jennings' work elucidates is that although there was wide divergency of opinion among militants and intellectuals, there remained a consistency in syndicalist theory that needs to be identified. That unity of thought has been labeled *ouvriériste* and anarchist, but it was an intellectual system that remained flexible enough to adapt its tactics to changing circumstances, and yet consistent in its anti-Jacobin stance and its reliance on working-class autonomy and direct action.

It is the ability to expose the consistencies that existed among such a variety of disparate thinkers that adds to the genius of the exposition. In his early chapters Jennings explores the thought of Fernand Pelloutier and other anarchosyndicalist militants, the theories of the Sorelian syndicalists, and those of the venerable champion of reformist syndicalism, Auguste Keufer.

The “father of revolutionary syndicalism”, Jennings agrees was Fernand Pelloutier. What Pelloutier sought was the establishment of a new moral and rational order based on associations of producers. The route to this future society was not to be found in parliamentary government nor through anarchist violence. Instead the workers would deliver themselves from social and economic bondage by direct action, which for Pelloutier meant education through the *bourses du travail*-sponsored programs and action in the form of a general strike.

Although Pelloutier's philosophy regarding the general strike has been dealt with before, most notably in the work of Jacques Julliard, Jennings' exposition of this generally misunderstood tactic, which became the bastion of syndicalist theory, is clear and particularly useful for an English-speaking audience. He shows how Pelloutier's thinking on the subject moved from a rather naive belief that the general strike would consist of a workers' sitout, to a more realistic definition of the general strike as workers striking in strategically placed major industries, carrying on a kind

of industrial “Great Fear” against which the military power of the state would be impotent.

Jennings also explores the anarchist connection to syndicalism. He correctly notes that syndicalism became the point of convergence between anarchism and unionism. The disillusionment with the government, he tells us, led unionists to develop a unique perception of syndicalism, one in which the *syndicats*, teaching a new morality of proletarian solidarity, would battle against bourgeois corruption and serve as the nucleus for future social and political organization.

It was the uniqueness of syndicalism, with its emphasis on direct action and morality, which Georges Sorel believed could rescue Marxism from its Guesdist intellectual straightjacket and from the “official” Marxist view which held that ethics was a mere reflection of the economic base. Jennings, who has devoted a previous work to Sorelian thought, is perhaps his most brilliant when analyzing the thinking of Sorel and his disciples of the *Nouvelle Ecole*. Sorel’s ideas regarding syndicalism, Jennings tells us, were an amalgam of Proudhonian moralism, Nietzschean heroism, and Bersonian’s theories regarding the value of myth as a non-rational source of human motivation. The synthesis of these ideas provided Sorel with the means to elevate the general strike to epic proportions.

If Jennings’ discussion of the Sorelians is the most perceptive, his inclusion of a chapter on the theories of Auguste Keufer is the most welcomed, for although Keufer was a major presence in the syndicalist movement for over four decades, he is virtually invisible in most treatments of French unionism. The importance of Jennings’ discussion lies in the fact that he traces the relationship of Positivist philosophy to Keufer’s thinking, and in so doing, establishes a firm basis for encouraging a wider study of the Comptian strains that exist in syndicalism, a study that is yet to be undertaken.

Jennings is at his best in those first chapters dealing with syndicalist theory in the years preceding World War I. His attention to philosophy strays slightly in the later chapters, as he tracks the course of syndicalism through the murky decades of organizational crises, war, and eventual schism. Here Jennings’ hitherto analysis of theory is overtaken by an exposition of events and what seems to be an overlong discussion of Pierre Monatte’s reaction to those events.

It is apparent that Jennings’ goal in this part of his study is to explain the CGT leadership’s support of the *Union Sacrée*. He sees a drift toward reformism in the election of Léon Jouhaux as General Secretary of the CGT in 1909, whom Jennings claims was really a reformist masquerading in revolutionary rhetoric. Jennings also finds proof of a latent reformism in Alphonse Merrheim’s advocacy of industrial unionism and the eight-hour day. He implies that such thoughts explain why Merrheim, a Zimmerwaldian during the war, became a *majoritaire* and antibolshevik thereafter.

But even as Merrheim was sliding into the reformist camp, as Jennings notes, a new revolutionary syndicalism emerged. The aim of this group, led by Monatte, was to force the CGT leadership to adopt its anti-war platform. Subsequently this revolutionary faction, augmented in numbers by the length of the war and by the example of the Russian Revolution, provided the impetus for the waves of strikes carried on in the last year of the war outside the CGT’s purview. After the war the group supported membership in the Third International and formed a parallel

organization akin to Soviet cells within the CGT. This move resulted in the 1921 schism and the creation of three syndicalisms.

Jennings' tracking of syndicalist leaders goes the furthest with Monatte, whose private and public utterances span sixty years. Jennings points out that throughout these decades Monatte's views underwent a 360 degree shift – from anarchist, to *minoritaire*, to communist, to post-World War II critic of Stalin, de Gaulle, and Roosevelt – all the while remaining a consistent champion of direct action and workers' autonomy. Perhaps the reason for such attention to Monatte stems from the fact that Monatte's archives and his newspaper articles are readily accessible. However, it seems ironic that so much space is afforded to Monatte's reflections when the leader of the CGT during those same decades of upheaval, Léon Jouhaux, is barely mentioned. Jouhaux also wrote copiously, and his public discourses are readily available.

Indeed, I feel that Jennings' tendency to dismiss Jouhaux as a reformist is the weakest part of this otherwise fine study. In the course of syndicalism's evolution, the term reformism came to encompass a variety of definitions. Some reformists, such as Keufer, preferred education to agitation, and government reform rather than abolition. Others called for détente with the party socialists in order to achieve labor reforms. The most dangerous wanted to turn the unions into the recruiting arm of the socialist party. In other words, a reformist was one who would have redirected the syndicalist movement away from reliance on *ouvriérisme* and direct action. Jouhaux was never one of these.

While Jennings adequately defines reformist theory, he misses the basic point. If the commitment to direct action was the means by which to separate revolutionary sheep from reformist goats, it is necessary to understand what constituted direct action. For syndicalists of all persuasions, direct action was consistently defined as action carried on by the workers in the economic rather than the political realm. It might be the general strike or the *grève militaire*, but it always included whatever activity would lead to increased material benefits for the workers, gained at the expense of capitalist profits and the power of the bourgeois state. The goals for syndicalists was the overthrow of the capitalist system, but that revolution, they believed, might be achieved incrementally by enhancing the workers' well-being.

During the First World War these terms were redefined. Direct action became narrowly associated with anarchist propaganda by the deed. Within that context a revolutionary syndicalist was one who sought cataclysmic change through violent means. Reformists, on the other hand, were not just gradualists; they were tagged as being pro-war and pro-government lackies. These labels were popularized first by the *minoritaires* in their drive to discredit the Confederal leadership. Later, it was the Bolshevik example alone which became the yardstick by which to measure all syndicalist activity, even though Russia was not and would never be France. Upon that basis, Jouhaux and the others who had supported the *Union Sacrée* out of a felt necessity and only as a temporary expedient came to be regarded as the personification of reformism. More importantly, it is this definition, having passed into the literature, that has tended – at least until recently – to dampen interest in a movement, critics have always charged, was a failure even within its own time.

Aside from this oversight, Jennings' book presents an interesting look at the philosophical grounding of French syndicalist theory while at the same time exam-

ining how the theorists themselves responded pragmatically to world-shattering events. He also throws down the gauntlet to those who would impose new burdens on the study of the movement by claiming that syndicalism was a nascent form of working-class fascism. In one of his last chapters, entitled “Diverging Paths”, Jennings demonstrates that militant leaders and intellectuals alike subsequently came to position themselves in squares all over the political map. That this was so should lay to rest the “bad seed” theory of syndicalism and allow us to regard the movement for what it was: a viable alternative to statism and political control and an effective vehicle for the expression of French working-class demands.

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SINCLAIR, LOUIS. *Trotsky: A Bibliography*. Scholar Press, Aldershot 1989. xix, 1350 pp. (in 2 vols.) £ 85.00.

At first sight this book appears to be a revised edition of Sinclair’s *Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography* (1972). This had dealt only with Trotsky’s *published* writings – inevitably, since Trotsky had sold his voluminous political correspondence to the University of Harvard shortly before his death with the condition that an embargo be placed on the material until 1980. In the meantime Sinclair’s survey of Trotsky’s published works continued to meet the needs not just of students of international Trotskyism, but also the broader circles of Sovietologists. If the presentation of bibliographic data was perhaps not entirely conventional (books, papers, articles in periodicals, newspaper articles, interviews were not arranged separately), the strict chronological summary of Trotsky’s publications has proved to be extremely useful, especially because the indexes, which are arranged according to subject and translation, are cross referenced, and because there are concordances to periodicals, books and suchlike.

When the embargo on the Trotsky papers held at Harvard expired in 1980 Sinclair at last had the opportunity to make a complete summary of *all* of Trotsky’s writings. Half-way through this work he was astonished to hear that the Hoover Institute and the International Institute of Social History held part of the archives of Trotsky’s son, as well as incomplete files relating to the International (Trotskyite) Secretariat of the 1930s which contained hundreds of hitherto unknown letters and papers by Trotsky. Additional writings were also found among the papers of thirteen militants (among them J. P. Cannon, M. Eastman, and G. Vereeken).

While the chronological summary of Trotsky’s works in the 1972 bibliography contained around 4625 items published before his murder in August 1940, the 1989 survey contains another 600. It also lists a further 7475 unpublished items covering the same period; almost all of these are letters (from Trotsky).<sup>1</sup> Because of this the unpublished writings form the major bulk of the 1989 summary and the description of the work as a bibliography is perhaps too narrow a description of its contents.

On the other hand the chronological survey of material dating from between

<sup>1</sup> All these figures are approximate because Sinclair – perhaps understandably – did not number the bibliographical entries.