

power and gain control of a majority of delegate positions in the TUC. In analyzing independent trade unionists' shift away from labor strategies grounded in parliamentary democracy and conventional relations between unions and political parties, Gopaul highlighted the precipitative role played by a series of unsuccessful Guyanese court battles over antilabor government policies, during which initially favorable Court of Appeal decisions were revoked by act of parliament. Inés Murillo (Honduras, International Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Honduras) built on this discussion by affirming the need to incorporate the national experiences of the popular classes into critiques of conventional understandings of democracy. In a brief discussion of the political economy of Honduras under both democratic and dictatorial governments, Murillo noted that the problem of widespread poverty has remained a constant. On the basis of escalating human rights violations and the growing militarization of Honduras since the reestablishment of formal democracy in 1980, Murillo further argued for a significant recasting of the democracy/dictatorship dichotomy. Alejandro Rojas (Canada, York University) further extended the reconceptualization of democracy by calling into question the model of socialist democracy advocated by trade union movements throughout Latin America. He noted that the goals of modernization, widespread urbanization, and technological progress that permeate the vision of future society articulated by the region's labor movements do not depart radically from the character of postindustrial capitalist society. While differences exist in class relations and in the exploitation of labor, consumptive and appropriative relations with nature are common to both projects. Summarizing his position, Rojas underscored the need to incorporate the struggle against private property relations with struggles against centralism, racism, sexism, and other modes of domination.

The conference closed with a comparative session addressing the key issues raised in previous sessions from a cross-national perspective. Beyond this, the linking of academic and trade union approaches throughout the entire conference helped move toward a more complete analysis and practice of social change. Information on conference publications can be obtained by writing to CERLAC, 204 Founders College, York University, 4700 Keele St., North York, Ontario, Canada, M3J 1P3.

“People at Work”: Lowell Conference on Industrial History

Robert Weible

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

Every year since 1980, the Lowell Conference on Industrial History has addressed a new topic in a loosely defined study of industrialization. Conference programs are organized to promote dialogue, among not only historians and scholars from

related fields, but also museum professionals, teachers, historic preservationists, history buffs, urban planners, the business community, labor leaders, government officials, and, frankly, anyone the sponsors can attract to Lowell and northern Massachusetts each fall (generally a few weeks after the peak foliage season has passed).

The conference owes its existence to the late-1960s initiative to turn the city of Lowell into a cultural park. Educators were able to convince local, state, and federal authorities that Lowell's existing working-class, ethnic culture, the product of over a century and a half of the industrialization process, was itself an artifact worthy of preservation and study. The "cultural park" idea was intended to encourage Lowell's citizens to assert some control over their own future by taking pride in their past and understanding its relationship to their present circumstances. With the creation of Lowell National Historical Park and the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission in 1978, local aspirations became more fully realized, as these two federal agencies joined forces with the University of Lowell and the Museum of American Textile History to sponsor the Lowell Conference. Together, they hoped that the conference would make scholars aware of the activity taking place in Lowell while also making available the most recent professional literature. In subsequent years, the Lowell Conference has sought to broaden its audience as much as possible, particularly in the museum and education fields. At the same time, the conference has grown increasingly oriented toward building connections between public historical awareness and policy formulation.

In 1988 these new directions were evident as the Conference of 26–29 October turned its attention to the broad theme of "People at Work." Those who arrived early were able to attend an evening showing and discussion of the John Sayles film *Matewan*. The meeting began in earnest the next day, with a panel discussion on the current scholars-in-residence program, "Shifting Gears: The Changing Meaning of Work in Massachusetts, 1920–1980." This program, sponsored by the Massachusetts Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy and other state agencies, has enabled humanities scholars to work with people in older industrial communities with hopes of understanding the impact of the changing state economy on individuals, the workplace, the family, and the community. The discussion was led by Stephen Nissenbaum (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), and it included project director Alexander Harvey and resident scholars Christine Howard Bailey (the scholar-in-residence in Holyoke), Yildiray Erdener (Lawrence), and Catherine Lugar (Fall River). In addition to presenting many of its findings, the panel also raised some of the issues facing scholars and the lay public when they decide to work together.

The Lowell Conference continued with a session on images of labor in art and literature, beginning with Andrew Sverdlow (Mulvane Art Center, Topeka), discussing his museum's recent exhibit entitled, appropriately, "People at Work." The exhibit featured WPA works from the museum's own collection. Harry Rubenstein (National Museum of American History) followed with a presentation

of symbols and images of American labor from the eighteenth century to the present. Jeffrey Halprin (University of Massachusetts, Boston) spoke on related topics surrounding the creation of images, symbols, stories, and myths used to represent work and workers in American literature. Afternoon sessions began with an examination of recent and prospective museum interpretations of work-related themes. Bart Roselli (Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania) discussed the exciting but—given the scale of the industry and its artifacts—potentially overwhelming task of preserving the history of Pittsburgh's steel industry. Roselli's organization is nevertheless making substantial progress in this regard. Stephan Lubar (National Museum of American History) provided a behind-the-scenes look at labor issues in the Smithsonian's impressive exhibition on the Industrial Revolution, "Engines of Change," for which he was a curator. William Pretzer discussed the changes in labor history interpretation that have recently occurred at the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village (Pretzer's own institution near Detroit and one of the best known industry-related museums in the country). Gail Mohanty (Charles River Museum of Industry, Waltham) commented.

Another session addressed the possibilities of incorporating labor history into school curricula through role-playing techniques. Joan Perry (Marshall Middle School) discussed her experiences teaching local labor history using these techniques at her school in Billerica, Massachusetts; and O'Brien Locke and Judith Miller (Mt. Greylock Regional School, Williamstown, Massachusetts) led a reenactment of the 1912 Lawrence "Bread and Roses" strike, which inspired the enthusiastic participation of the entire audience. The evening session concluding the day's activities featured the presentation of "The Global Assembly Line," a documentary film by Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly and others, which described the exodus of American industrial jobs to Mexico, the Philippines, and elsewhere.

The next day began with two papers examining the relationship between industrial work speeds and collective bargaining in the mid-twentieth century. Robert Asher (University of Connecticut) dealt with the electrical industry, and Douglas Reynolds (SUNY-Binghamton) the automobile industry. Mark McColloch (University of Pittsburgh) provided the session's commentary. This was followed by a session that addressed some of the political implications of American labor-management relations. Economist Gerald Friedman (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) contrasted American and European development, arguing that, in the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century U.S., labor policies were almost always repressive due to the "extraordinary unity" of the country's economic and political elites. Stephen Meyer (University of Wisconsin, Parkside) then presented a case study of the 1946–47 Allis-Chalmers strike and assessed its meaning in light of local and state politics, with special emphasis on the rise of Joseph McCarthy. Elizabeth Fones-Wolf (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) followed with a description of post-World War II corporate initiatives to build a positive sense of corporate consciousness among workers and so undermine unions and their

political allies. Former Secretary of Labor John T. Dunlop (Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University) concluded the session with comments enlivened by accounts of his own government experience.

Following up on the previous evening's film, Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly (Institute for Policy Studies, Johns Hopkins University) presented a luncheon address that dealt with policy issues surrounding the export of American industrial jobs to the Third World and the exploitation of workers there. After lunch, Daniel Letwin (Yale University) and Eric Arnesen (Harvard University) focused discussion on the work experiences of southern blacks in the early twentieth century. Letwin examined the relationships of race, ideology, and labor among coal miners near Birmingham, while Arnesen addressed labor relations among New Orleans longshore workers. Joe Trotter (Carnegie-Mellon University) commented. The afternoon's final session featured a panel, chaired by John Beck (Director of Research and Education, United Paperworkers International Union), which brought paperworkers from Holyoke—Ray Beaudry and John Connolly—together with Larry Lankton (Michigan Tech University) and Paul Rivard (Maine State Museum) to discuss issues surrounding the introduction of technologies into the papermaking industry. Later that evening, Howard Green (New Jersey Historical Commission) presented previously lost film footage of the 1926 textile strike in Passaic. The film had been made by the strikers themselves, and it provided the basis for Green's informed analysis, as well as a lively discussion with the audience.

The final day began with a session cosponsored by Women in Technological History, a focus group of the Society for the History of Technology. The session, entitled "Learning Their Place: Educating Women in Work," featured papers by Cara Sutherland (Chemung County Historical Society), on the rehabilitation of prostitutes and others in Elmira, New York; Deborah Douglas (University of Pennsylvania), on the training of women aircraft pilots during World War II; and commentary by Madelyn Holmes (Harvard University). The final session of the conference addressed work-related issues outside the factory. Papers were offered by Sarah Malino (Guilford College) on turn-of-the-century women department store workers; Tracy Wilson (Conrad High School, West Hartford) on women workers at the Travelers Insurance Company; and Andre Millard (Bentley College) on workers in Thomas Edison's New Jersey Laboratories. Brian Greenberg (University of Delaware) ended the conference with his thoughts on the three papers.

The 1988 Lowell Conference owes its success to the organizational skills of conference chairman Edward Jay Pershey (Director, Tsongas Industrial History Center. The Tsongas Center, created in 1987 and managed through the University of Lowell's College of Education in cooperation with Lowell National Historical Park, encourages the teaching of industrial history in elementary and secondary schools). Questions about the Lowell Conference can be addressed to Dr. Pershey at Tsongas Industrial History Center, Boott Mill #8, Foot of John Street, Lowell,

MA 01852. Proceedings from the 1988 conference are available from the Museum of American Textile History, 800 Massachusetts Ave., N. Andover, MA 01845. Previous proceedings are also available from the Museum.

Labor History at the American Historical Association

Andrew August

Columbia University

In the midst of its bicentennial celebration, the city of Cincinnati played host to the American Historical Association convention, 27–30 December 1988. The number of potentially interesting sessions was more than any single person could attend; I managed to participate in four sessions on working-class life in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and North America. While these sessions reflected the centrality of class as the key analytic category in understanding the lives of workers, the presenters, commentators, and audiences seemed to agree that class affects people's lives in complex ways. In particular, a number of factors—including race, gender, ethnicity, and skill, as well as political and legal influences—mediate the impact of material conditions. Only by considering these other factors and the ways in which they interact with economic conditions can we understand workers' experiences, political activity, patterns of protest, or consciousness. Adequate understanding of working-class life requires a sensitivity to these “mediating” factors, and a willingness to borrow from fields such as women's history, Afro-American history, cultural history, and political history.

A beginning session chaired by Leonard Rosenband (Utah State University) considered “Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns.” Gary Freeze (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) presented his research on the Odell Cotton Mills of North Carolina, 1877–1907, and the role of Methodism in the company town of Forest Hill. The Odells were able to impose their own “assumed reality” in the town by linking active Methodist proselytizing with paternalist policies. The employers relied on the preindustrial values offered in their Methodist church to ease the dislocation of new migrants to the mills. This system helped young male workers adapt to the loss of the patriarchal authority of the countryside, and religious piety offered them an opportunity for advancement in the church and mill. William E. French (Utah State University) then discussed miners in the Hidalgo District, Chihuahua, Mexico. In this case, middle-class reformers attempted to mold a group of transient, uncooperative workers into a reliable, disciplined labor force. The state cooperated by passing laws to control prostitution and gambling. Alongside this state activity, reformers launched a cultural offensive, encouraging middle-class family values as an alternative to the working-