

EDITORIAL

As was announced in our last issue, there is a new Editorial Committee. The membership of this board will change regularly. An international Advisory Board is also in the making. Although the new committee will largely continue the old editorial policy of the journal it also intends to make certain changes.

In 1956 Professor Rüter introduced the *International Review of Social History* with the following description of the field of study to be covered:

Social history is taken to mean the history of estates, classes, social groupings regardless of name, seen both as separate and as mutually dependent units. No distinction is made between countries or periods. Studies on the history of antiquity, the middle ages or the modern period are given equal consideration as regards publication, though it is natural to expect that the last mentioned period will receive more preponderance.

In view of the nature of the collections kept at the Institute, as well as the fields in which the IISG has specialized in the past, it is not surprising to find its main attention focused on European labour history from the late 18th century onwards. Indeed, it has played a prominent role in the study of this subject and the articles in the journal have reflected this emphasis.

Insofar as the great interest in labour history in past years resulted from a need to catch up in post-war Europe, this gap has by now been largely filled. Within the discipline of “established history”, labour history has acquired a permanent place as a part of the much wider field of “social history”. The latter has undergone a stormy development, both in the nature of the questions debated, as well as in the formulation of new theories. In these circumstances it does not seem reasonable for a journal to limit its field of interest to labour history in the narrow sense. On the other hand it seems no more sensible to return to Rüter’s definition, since articles in that sense are published in many other journals.

So, while not neglecting modern labour history, we have decided to cover a broader area of social history, as well as a longer period. More particularly, we want to pay attention to pre-industrial relations and non-Euro-

pean countries with their specific problems as well. In this we are thinking of the following themes:

- (i) Labour, labour market and labour relations; labour to be interpreted in a broad sense, including the work of women, slaves, artisans and peasants;
- (ii) Personal, institutional and cultural aspects of power relations and social functions;
- (iii) Social and political movements (emancipatory as well as repressive), including the ideas that played a part in these movements;
- (iv) Theoretical and methodological aspects of the above-mentioned subjects.

Our main aim is explanation; hence we think the development and improvement of the methods applied to social history are more important than adding new fields of interest. By its very nature the discipline of history is concerned with analysing processes. In the first place this means comparing historical facts at different points in time. The historian who expands this comparison to different series of events (concerning different periods, regions, cultures or aspects of social life) goes one step further. If this were to become the normal method of work for social historians their craft would have a better chance of becoming a cumulative social science. For this reason we prefer contributions that strive to attain the above goal.

We also want to establish closer touch with contemporary scholarly debate. In the past the *International Review of Social History* contained, beside the major articles, short descriptions of sources ("Documents") and a concise annotated bibliography. More recently the section "Suggestions and Debates" has been added. In future we want to provide space for survey articles about new research on certain aspects of social history, for book reviews and for a chronicle of important scholarly events ("News of the Profession"). In order to make the journal accessible to a broad international public, we intend to publish only articles written in English (with summaries in English, French and German). However, important contributions in other languages can be translated at our expense.

The Editorial Committee