

If *Complicity* succeeds at any thing it succeeds in reminding us that slavery was a horrendous economic institution that involved all parts of Britain's New World empire and that the abolition of slavery in the North following the Revolution did not change the North's fundamental economic relationship with human bondage. While academic historians and other well-read Americans may very well know about this "complicity," perhaps the broader reading public will gain a better appreciation of that complicity, as well as of its complexity, for not only did Northerners "promote, prolong, and profit" from slavery, there were other northerners, black and white – many who were not New Englanders – who colluded to help fugitive slaves escape their bondage and worked to bring about the ultimate end of the institution.

ANDREW LEE FEIGHT  
*Shawnee State University*

Jerome P. Bjelopera. *City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870, 1920*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005. Pp. 208. Photographs, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, Cloth \$45.00).

Histories of working people in America infrequently consider, analyze, and evaluate the experiences of white collar workers, especially those that are socially and economically situated between blue collar industrial workers and middle class professionals. Particularly in industrializing America, however, a growing cadre of such workers—including clerks, salespeople, and office workers—played important roles in retail establishments, banks, insurance companies, railroad affiliated entities, and other service and consumer product-oriented businesses. Such workers were vital to the daily functions of numerous business enterprises. Not surprisingly urban areas were highly populated with individuals with such jobs as “. . . clerical employment provided an often-traversed bridge between an immigrant world dominated by manual work and a world of less physical labor.” (p. 21). Philadelphia, as author Jerome Bjelopera illustrates, was home to tens of thousands of such workers from 1870 to 1920.

Among Bjelopera's primary sources are the archives of retailer Strawbridge and Clothier and Peirce College—a Philadelphia-based business academy—as well as data from the federal census and the Pennsylvania Bureau of

Industrial Statistics, a pre-cursor to the Department of Labor and Industry. Written in a thought-provoking style, *City of Clerks* analyzes ways in which individuals entered their profession, sought-out work-related education, engaged in leisure activities that included bicycling, bowling, basketball, and cultural entertainment and interacted socially in their communities and in the work environment. The analysis clearly delineates occupational rankings and provides data on the composition of white collar workers as well as the remarkable growth in this workforce from 1870 to 1920.

Blejopera also explores sensitive issues. These include workplace rebellions perhaps best exemplified through office thievery and embezzlement by employees. For instance, a bookkeeper named William P. Pierson “teamed with his assistant to bleed about thirty thousand dollars out of the American Baptists Publication Society in Philadelphia” (p. 127). Race is addressed in the analysis as—perhaps not surprisingly—racial discrimination was common among the largely white composition of this Philadelphia workforce. For example “clerks and salespeople, male and female, smeared themselves with burnt cork and acted racist parts for their fellow workers’ entertainment” in minstrels (p. 129). Moreover, racist humor appears to have been common. Photographs and illustrations add to the richness of this analysis.

The research could have been enhanced by more closely analyzing the impact these workers had on the Philadelphia economy through their consumption and saving patterns and habits. For example, the author notes that “they rented their lodgings, ate at restaurants or saloons, washed their clothes at laundries and entertained themselves in the institutions of the new leisure economy” (p. 161). He also hints at leisure activities beyond their economic reach in that “most clerical workers did not regularly attend operas or serious dramatic theater. It was too expensive” (p. 106). Apparently, moreover, most did not own their own residence presumably because it was beyond their economic ability. It would be interesting, though perhaps difficult, to determine how consumption habits sustained and buttressed Philadelphia businesses, whether this class of workers had the economic stability or thriftiness to save for retirement in an era when pensions and Social Security were non-existent and, finally, whether such workers relied upon any type of formal or informal credit to meet day-to-day living expenses. Indeed, a contemporary analogy may well be found in American retail and service workers who are compensated at the lower-end of the wage scale, enjoy few if any benefits (i.e. health insurance), have limited upward mobility in the job market, and often survive by carrying large amounts of credit

card debt (see, for example, Brett Williams, *Debt for Sale: A Social History of the Credit Trap*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

In sum, *City of Clerks* adds an important contribution to The Working Class in America History series edited by James R. Barrett, Alice Kessler-Harris, Nelson Lichtenstein, and David Montgomery. The book is also an important addition and a rare contribution to a growing body of literature on American white collar workers and their experiences, particularly in the twentieth century. The reader comes away with a clear understanding of the workplace and leisure life of office and sales workers in a time period of rapid economic expansion in the United States. Finally, Bjelopera provides important interdisciplinary contributions to history, urban studies, economics, sociology, and the study of the human condition in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century America.

KENNETH C. WOLENSKY

*Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission*

Steve Golin. *The Newark Teacher Strikes: Hopes on the Line*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002. Pp. x, 288, photographs, appendix, notes, index. Cloth \$30.00).

With this intensive study of the 1970 and 1971 teacher strikes in Newark, New Jersey, Steve Golin joins the handful of historians who are beginning to redress the long neglect of the rise and significance of public employee unionism in the 1960s and 1970s. The activists in the Newark Teachers Union (NTU) profiled here formed part of a large wave of teachers nationwide who struck and won collective bargaining agreements in these years. Along with sanitation workers, welfare workers, postal workers, and other government employees, teachers provided the labor movement with its largest membership boost since World War II, and their unions play an increasingly important role in today's labor movement. Golin's elegantly written book, which is based on extensive interviews with over fifty strike participants, as well as archival and newspaper sources, should help to reorient the focus of recent labor history.

This book also deepens our understanding of the interconnections between social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Golin shows that demands for change extended beyond the familiar student, antiwar, civil rights, and fem-