content overcome its frustrating structure?

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As an exponent of the new labor history, Herbert G. Gutman in this series of essays does more than describe an institutional history of labor. He comes to grips with time-honored preconceptions about work, workers, and the labor movement. Writing from a behavioral perspective, Gutman seeks to examine the persistence of powerful cultural continuities throughout the course of the labor movement.

The initial chapter, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," reexamines the traditional viewpoint that the "work ethic" predominated as a driving force in the behavioral pattern of Americans during this nation's period of industrialization. Among numerous citations refuting the traditional viewpoint, the most telling is a sarcastic jibe from the Crockery and Glass Journal, which asserted that the factories "should be run to please the crowd."

The book is divided into four parts, "An Overview," "Black Coal Miners and the American Labor Movement," "The Industrial City," and "Local Behavior and Patterns of Labor Discontent in the Gilded Age." These treat American labor history in three industrial periods: the premodern period before 1843, the period from 1843 to 1893, when a tension existed between the older American preindustrial social structure and the development of industrial capitalism, and the period after 1893 when the United States had achieved the status of a mature industrial society. Due to the basic economic-social cohesion of the period 1843-1893 within the context of an emergent industrial society, Gutman casts American history within the framework of a different periodization than the usual political time spans stressed by traditional historians.

Gutman's essays are in the mainstream of the new labor history, whose aim, as noted by Thomas A. Kruger in the Journal of Social History is "to see whether class as an independent variable can be positively correlated with a wide range of dependent social and
cultural variables . . . and why the correlations have changed through four centuries."

In the introduction, Gutman attempts to present essentially diverse essays written over a period of fifteen years within a framework which would "explain the beliefs and behavior of American working people in the several decades that saw this nation transformed into a powerful industrial capitalist society" (p. xi).

Gutman notes that the old labor history stressed how the "coming of American capitalism transformed generations of working people." He expresses a desire to see how the "behavior of working people affected the development of the larger culture and society in which they lived." The crux of Gutman's studies is an effort to examine the interplay among the "recurrent tension between work, culture, and society."

Intellectual historians will be attracted by the extent to which Gutman discounts the traditional Social Darwinian emphasis which finds its way into so many textbooks. Gutman commented (p. 84) that a preindustrial social order had nurtured particular religious beliefs that did not disappear with the coming of industrialism and did not easily or quickly conform to the Protestantism of a Henry Ward Beecher or a Dwight Moody and the secular optimism of an Andrew Carnegie or a Horatio Alger. The material conditions of life changed radically for these workers after 1850, but not the world of their mind and spirit. They saw the nation transformed, but were not themselves abruptly alienated from the past.

The varied nature of these essays sketches ideas for a larger work which would probe the psyche of the American working class within the framework of a noninstitutional, nondogmatic, non-Marxian construct. The extent to which ethnic, religious, and cultural factors engaged in interaction with the organization and objectives of the labor movement would be a fascinating story.

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BOOK NOTE


The title of this book is misleading, for the work is by no means