

As far as the impact of health improvement (1841–1960) on per capita GDP growth (1881–2000) is concerned, Floud *et al.* conclude that health improvement in western Europe explains between 12 per cent (The Netherlands) and 49 per cent (England and Wales) of per capita GDP growth. They fail to notice that their result is somewhat surprising given the dramatic height increase of Dutch boys (and girls!) since the 1840s: Dutch males and females are now the world's tallest people, whereas Dutch boys in the 1840s were smaller than their English peers.

Chapter 6 discusses the American experience of technophysio evolution and compares it with British and continental European experiences. Floud *et al.* underline the advantageous ecological environment of colonial America, with its abundant farmland and lower risk of infectious diseases. Americans were better nourished, healthier, and taller than European populations at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Americans consumed about 2,950 kcal daily in 1800. Adult heights of native-born Americans then decreased from 1830 onwards until the 1880s, while per capita calorific availability decreased to 2,585 kcal daily in 1850, but went on to recover from the 1870s onwards. According to Floud *et al.*, that was caused by the rapid growth of immigration and population relative to domestic food production. A worsening epidemiological environment too, caused by increasing urbanization and reflected in high levels of infant mortality, contributed to the decline in average height. Just as in European countries, American height increased during the twentieth century and BMI rose to reach its optimum for males in the 1970s at 25.58 kg/m<sup>2</sup> with respect to minimal morbidity and economic productivity. The recent obesity epidemic, reflected by male BMIs well above 27 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (ages over thirty), are a threat to health and economic productivity alike.

In their final chapter Floud *et al.* conclude “that technophysio evolution has benefited, and will continue to benefit the human condition and that further significant gains in height, infant mortality, and life expectancy are likely to be possible”. Such gains would relate not only to developing countries but also to Europe and the US. Meanwhile they play down the increasing prevalence of obesity by saying that it still affects just a small proportion (fewer than 10 per cent) of the population of most developed countries. However, the most recent figures from the World Health Organization's Global Database on Body Mass Index indicate a median prevalence of 16 per cent worldwide. Taking into account the global financial, economic, and political crises as well, I think the conclusion of Floud *et al.* is over-optimistic.

Nevertheless, the book as a whole is a must-read for anyone interested in the insights that anthropometric history has produced in recent decades.

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BOHSTEDT, JOHN. *The Politics of Provisions. Food Riots, Moral Economy, and Market Transition in England, c.1550–1850.* Ashgate, Farnham [etc.] 2010. Maps. 312 pp. £65.00; doi:10.1017/S0020859011000587

I have long admired the work of John Bohstedt, and this book, itself partly a retrospective of his own contribution to the field, does not disappoint. The book sets out to explore the nature of food supply and the different, sequential and co-terminus, socio-political phases within which issues of supply were inscribed over the best part of three centuries from the

sixteenth to the start of the twentieth. Defining the politics of provisions as “physical struggle over bread and breadstuffs”, Bohstedt traces the rise of concerted collective action (principally food riots) in the period from 1500–1820 and argues that an integrated market economy undermined such activity in the medium term. For Bohstedt, the stages that characterized the food riot – collective action, remedy, punishment, and a shared understanding of obligation and duty – was essential to the evolution of England’s political system and a society’s understanding of itself, at least up to the early nineteenth century.

Chapter 1 sets out the theoretical basis for the book, engaging particularly strongly with suggestions that food riots and responses were centrally inscribed in models of moral economy. Finding this conventional explanation lacking, Bohstedt sets out his stall to investigate “a whole ecology of provision politics” set against the “intertwined praxis of paternalism and the law of necessity”. This is an extraordinarily effective chapter, ranging widely over a considerable theoretical range.

Chapter 2 deals with the setting down of the roots, between the late sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries, of provision politics. Identifying the tipping point as 1586 and the riots against food exports, the chapter argues that a combination of proletarianization, urbanization, and commercialization opened up the socio-political space for the hungry to assert agency. This long chapter is richly interwoven with detailed anatomies of riots as Bohstedt seeks to explore the motivations and attitudes of both rioters and individual and collective figures of authority at the same time as outlining the complex consequences of rioting. Protestors, he concludes “aimed not at transforming the economic system, but rather at bending the system of power relations to cope in practical fashion with emergency conditions”.

Chapter 3, the shortest in the book, deals with the period 1650–1739, and explores the contention that relative demographic and price stability reduced incentives to riot at the same time as the development of a political system orientated towards the needs of producers made the elite less open to a slate of imposed obligations to the lower orders. This was a period, Bohstedt argues, when both riots and responses to them became more violent than had been the case before. Such riots were still orientated towards shipments of foods out of the area, rather than marketplaces, but they were overwhelmingly concentrated in the crises of the 1690s and late 1720s.

Chapter 4 deals with the much-neglected period between 1740 and the demographic take off in the late 1770s. In this period food riots became “commonplace” as need, increased proletarianization, real wage stagnation, and “exports, war and policy blunders” intertwined to create a febrile environment in which the attention of rioters turned to producers and markets rather than simply middlemen. We once again find a rich landscape of riot anatomies to underpin Bohstedt’s contention that the rioters were not restrained in the moral economy mode, but were orientated towards violence, a reflection of the central driving importance of the politics of necessity. In this period, he argues, rioters and magistrates learned the politics of provisions. They “deposited experiences of its working in a social memory-bank”.

Chapter 5, covering the demographic take-off of the later eighteenth century and the Napoleonic wars, again deploys rich stories of riots and rioters, part of an argument that in this period provision politics became “nationalized” and that the sheer number, size and composition of food riots (many of them driven by what Bohstedt calls “alien tribes” such as navvies or miners who did not hesitate to invade market towns) in this period meant that they “contained the seeds of their own demise”. Case studies of Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield and some of the corporate towns such as Bristol are deployed to investigate urban responses to rioting.

More widely, Bohstedt suggests that a combination of the changing location and nature of justice (less retaliatory than the eighteenth century), better organized military responses, better planned and more sustained philanthropic safety nets, and changes to the nature of poor relief, undermined the logic of provision politics by the early nineteenth century. The scale of this undermining, he suggests, is to be found reflected in responses to the crisis of 1810–1812 when “the main tradition of provision politics had been driven to the margins”, and small and more spontaneous instances of disorder and rioting came to be seen as something to be managed and reduced rather than actions by people who needed to be “mollified”. The final substantive chapter in turn deals with the death throes of provision politics in the period up to 1867, a period marked by the fact that “community politics gave way to class, and reciprocity now took shape in bitter battles rather than pragmatic bargaining”.

Of course, this brief review does not do justice either to the complexity of the arguments deployed or to the sheer scale of evidence assembled for this book. While I might disagree with the assertion that the period from 1812 marks such a clean break in the history of provision politics in particular, and such a sea change in the way that the poor negotiated in general, this is nonetheless an outstanding book. And as Bohstedt reminds us in his conclusion to the volume, the politics of provision is firmly set to become a very hot socio-political topic in the future. At a time when food-price inflation for the aged in Britain is running at close to 10 per cent per year, how long, we might wonder, until the language of necessity drives a new political radicalism when it comes to “provision”?

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*Intimate Labors. Cultures, Technologies, and the Politics of Care.* Ed. by Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas. Stanford University Press, Stanford (Cal.) 2010. xiv, 340 pp. £61.47; \$70.00. (Paper: \$24.95; E-book \$24.95.); doi:10.1017/S0020859011000599

The arrest of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the former Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, accused of sexually harassing a chambermaid in a hotel in New York in May 2011, brought into the limelight a group of workers who rarely receive any attention in journalism or academic literature. Hotel housekeepers, or chambermaids, are a typical example of “intimate labourers”, people whose work “revolves around the intimate and the bodily, belonging to those intimate labors associated with unpaid tasks done for the household and its members by wives, mothers, daughters, and previously slaves” (p. 3). This type of worker, but also forms of unpaid labour involving intimacy, are the focus of the volume “Intimate Labors: Cultures, Technologies, and the Politics of Care”, edited by Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas.

Intimacy and labour are often considered as having hardly anything in common, intimacy belonging to the private sphere and labour to the public sphere. Whereas historically there has always been a close relationship between labour and intimacy, as the existence of the age-old professions of prostitution and domestic work show, contemporary societies, and in particular those that are affected by global capitalism, are characterized by an intensification of the commodification and proliferation of intimate labour. Home health aides, hotel housekeepers, hostesses, escorts, manicurists, and massage therapists are examples of a large variety of workers who are involved in intimate labour.