

union executives. These and other errors are symptomatic of Haydu's perfunctory research on the British side and his limited command of even those secondary works which do appear in the book's bibliography.

Perhaps the most striking contrast between the British and American metalworking industries, as Haydu acknowledges, lies not on the side of the workers but on that of the employers. At the turn of the century, industrial relations in the two countries seemed set on similar paths, with the 1898 Terms of Settlement between the ASE and the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) echoed by the 1900 Murray Hill Agreement between the IAM and the National Metal Trades Association (NMTA). But whereas the EEF stuck with collective bargaining despite the resurgence of craft militancy within the ASE during the 1900s, the NMTA soon rejected national agreements in favour of the open shop, and its members successfully refused to deal with union officials in most areas before the 1930s. Haydu's explanation, which he has developed more fully in this journal, turns on the structural contrast between the metalworking industry in the two countries: American employers' larger average size and commitment to mass production gave them both greater power and greater incentives than their British counterparts to break free of the constraints placed by craft unionism on their freedom to transform the labour process.

Despite the evident force of this argument, it remains radically incomplete. For as Howell Harris has shown, American employers were able to impose the open shop even in cities like Philadelphia where as in Britain the local metal industry was dominated by fragmented family firms and skill-intensive production processes right through the interwar period. Hence a convincing explanation of Anglo-American divergence would also need to look more closely at the impact of legal and political differences between the two countries which encouraged employer unilateralism in the United States but constrained it in Britain. State intervention, contrary to what Haydu appears to suppose, was no less important even if less visible an influence before as during the First World War in shaping the contrasting trajectories of industrial relations in the two countries.

The Anglo-American metalworking trades, as the preceding discussion suggests, present a fascinating pattern of similarities and differences during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But this book's combination of malposed questions and misleading answers regrettably means that a satisfactory comparative analysis of these cases largely remains to be written.

*Jonathan Zeitlin*

**BEHAGG, CLIVE.** *Politics and Production in the Early Nineteenth Century.* Routledge, London, New York 1990. x, 273 pp. £ 30.00.

Clive Behagg's book presents a forceful challenge to the conventional wisdom that early-nineteenth century centres of small production were far more conducive to class harmony and overall stability rather than class conflict. Behagg also demon-

strates that changes within production greatly influenced the character and style of politics, giving rise to two largely class-based and increasingly incompatible radical political ideals: the participatory democracy of the independent artisan; and the representative democracy of the radical bourgeoisie.

A revised version of his Birmingham Ph.D. thesis, Behagg's study focuses upon Birmingham in the pre-1850 decades. Long recognised as a classic centre of small-scale production during the nineteenth century, Birmingham has also traditionally been associated with degrees of political unity and workplace harmony (enshrined in the notion of the "producing classes") largely absent in the more sharply polarised factory districts of Lancashire and elsewhere. Thus George Allen and Asa Briggs have highlighted, according to Behagg, "the workshop closeness between masters and men forged by a combination of close physical proximity in the workplace, the indispensability of skilled labour [...] and the acknowledged possibility of upward social mobility from employee to employer status". And, according to Briggs, the workplace created a degree of social cohesion which manifested itself politically in the high degree of unity between working- and middle-class radicals in the Birmingham Political Union of the 1830s.

It is the Allen–Briggs interpretation, argues Behagg, which has constituted the standard orthodoxy (informing the more recent works of Tholfsen and Reid), and the simplicity of which "has never been confronted or challenged directly". It is a major purpose of *Politics and Production* to offer such a challenge.

Behagg begins his challenge by questioning the orthodox view's emphasis upon "the continued predominance of the workshop" within Birmingham's economy. Careful attention to both quantitative and literary evidence (including probate records and a series of articles in *Household Words*) reveals that the continued typicality of the small unit of production has traditionally camouflaged the changed *relationship* between small and larger units of production. The author demonstrates that competitive production for a mass market changed the face of Birmingham's economy during the 1830s and 1840s, crucially establishing the dominance of the larger manufacturer in all trades in the town, whether in the "traditional" sectors of tailoring and shoemaking or in the new and highly mechanised areas of steel-toymaking and metal-button-making.

This important finding constitutes the foundation upon which Behagg builds his revisionist case. For the large employers not only eagerly adopted the 'dishonourable' practices of the new capitalist political economy ("buying cheap and selling dear", and rejecting the mutualist ethic of the older 'moral economy'), but also exerted tremendous and restrictive control over the small producers' freedom of action. Increasingly dependent upon the large firm in terms of both credit and market facilities, facing increased price competition and lacking the advantages of economies of scale, some small employers adopted the 'dishonourable' tactics of the large employers (especially in relation to labour costs, work discipline and workshop practices). The upshot was an escalation of worker complaints concerning dependence, insecurity, immiseration and proletarianisation, and a sharp increase in workplace conflict during the 1830s.

It is true, notes Behagg, that not all small producers were transformed into petit-bourgeois manufacturers, economically and socially tied to large-scale capital and ideologically committed to unbridled individualism and, increasingly, ratepayer

populism. Some, such as those in the gun-making and building trades, retained their artisan-small-master status and continued to operate in the artisanal world of the 'industrial moral economy'. In general terms, however, the small 'honourable' master had been marginalised by the late 1830s, and the upsurge in class-based economic and ideological conflicts meant that the notion of the "producing classes", so favoured by Attwood and his middle-class reforms, was increasingly at odds with workplace reality.

Growing tensions within the workplace had important political effects. Behagg shows that the alliance of classes within the Birmingham Political Union was far more volatile than the conventional wisdom would allow. Thus the alliance "founded in 1834 because it could not survive the contest for workplace authority inherent in a growing trade union and Owenite movement"; and it collapsed in 1839 when the middle-class radicals, unable to accept the working-class notion of political equality and full participatory democracy, "turned on the Chartists with appalling ferocity". As admirably detailed by the author, the early Chartist experience in Birmingham revealed the growing force of class-based political independence.

The strengths of *Politics and Production* are considerable. In highlighting the importance of class-based conflicts in Birmingham, Behagg has provided an important corrective to the exaggerated consensus of the conventional wisdom. And in looking beyond and beneath the rhetoric of the seemingly harmonious "producing classes", the author has offered the timely reminders that words and language cannot simply be accepted by historians at face value; that the meanings attached to common words may vary and conflict according to context and social class; and that we must be vigilant in our attention to the distinction between self-serving ideological rhetoric and objective reality. Advocates of the fully autonomous or 'non-referential' nature of language would be well-advised to heed the above cautions; as they would Behagg's clear demonstration that the nature of Birmingham's politics and ideologies were profoundly influenced by developments at work. Finally, Behagg clearly demonstrates that size of firm does not constitute a sufficient guarantee of the character of workplace relations. Rather size and structure of firms have to be set into engagement with historical context and wider process in order to determine patterns of harmony and conflict between workers and employers.

There also exist, however, a number of weaknesses. Firstly, the author's impressive body of empirical research could usefully have been situated within a much more clearly defined and rigorously articulated theoretical framework. *By implication*, Behagg operates within the framework offered by the theory of combined and uneven capitalist development. The latter would suggest that accelerated industrial capitalist development during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (as expressed in the mushrooming of full-blown commodity production and its associated values and practices – unfettered profit maximisation, individualism, competition and so on – at the expense of the 'customary' thoughts and actions of petty producers – limited involvement in and approval for the market mechanism, and the right to regulate markets in the interests of 'fair' wages, 'just' prices, and 'honourable' practices) became the dominant feature of British economy and society, yet simultaneously operated in varied and uneven ways.

Thus, far from being confined to the factories of Lancashire and Cheshire, capitalist development extended its reach into centres of 'artisan' production and

into the fields and homes of Britain. Such influences varied both in character and extent. But the very fact of *combined* capitalist transformation provided a common point of reference for all manner of labouring people. Artisans', factory operatives', outworkers' and others' shared, if varied, commitment to 'custom' and the disruption of the old morality by the new capitalist system served to provide a crucial common context in which class could develop. As Behagg himself reminds us, the failure of a long line of 'compartmentalist' historians to ignore this common context of capitalist process in favour of static divisions (skilled versus unskilled, artisan versus factory operative and so forth) has led to a great underestimation of the extent to which class took root within working-class communities.

I would suggest, therefore, that the theory of combined and uneven capitalist development offers a fruitful means by which we can begin to interrogate and order, rather than straitjacket, the historical evidence. Behagg employs some of the tenets of the theory, but in a seemingly unconscious, or at best, implicit manner. Explicit theoretical exposition and elaboration would greatly add to the substance and rigour of the book. Secondly, *Politics and Production* would have benefited from an expanded geographical focus. The adoption of a more *detailed* comparative approach (with, for example, the cotton factory districts of Lancashire, the workshops of Sheffield and London, or more ambitiously, with the 'artisan' centres of New York City and Philadelphia) would have permitted Behagg to more firmly situate the experience of Birmingham within the much wider process of capitalist development. More precisely, Behagg could then have examined the hypothesis that radical class consciousness was most likely to arise in those communities in which attachment to the 'moral economy' was extremely strong, and in which capitalist transformation was beginning to bite hard.

At this point the author might begin to throw up his arms in despair: another reviewer advising an author to write a different book rather than properly concentrating upon the strengths and weaknesses of the stated framework of reference. In defence, I would argue that the substance of Behagg's important arguments have already appeared in published articles, and that the book could have provided an opportunity to develop new and expanded areas of interest.

Thirdly, whilst firmly re-establishing the important links between politics and economics, Behagg's arguments perhaps merit further qualification and refinement. As noted earlier, the present reviewer welcomes Behagg's rehabilitation of the importance of economics to politics. But we must also be careful not to draw this relationship in too narrow and deterministic a manner. Prothero, Stedman Jones and others have rightly suggested that the development of industrial capitalism in the early nineteenth century did not *necessarily* entail the decline of 'producerism' and the triumph of class: much depended upon the outcome of political, cultural and ideological processes and interactions, as well as upon purely economic factors. And, as American labour historians are quick to remind us, class was not given in any final way. In New York City, for example, having suffered major defeats at the hands of class in the 1830s, 'producerism', largely under the influences of religion and immigration, was to make a major comeback during the 1850s. Politics in Birmingham may have been more markedly influenced by non-economic factors than the author suggests.

In sum, *Politics and Production* is a useful and well-researched book which could, nevertheless, have been strengthened by the adoption of a more ambitious comparative approach and a more rigorous analytical framework.

Neville Kirk

CAHM, CAROLINE. *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism 1872–1886*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, Port Chester 1989. xii, 372 pp. £ 35.00.

It would be difficult to find a book on anarchism in which the work of Peter Kropotkin is not dealt with, or at least referred to. Seventy years after his death historical research on this most widely read of all anarchists, one who, more than anyone else, shaped anarchist ideas, is still very limited. Caroline Cahm, who has already published some work on Kropotkin, has researched in great detail the development of Kropotkin's ideas in the crucial period 1872 to 1886.

This period is crucial because Kropotkin was at that time an organizer and agitator in the revolutionary movements in Russia and Europe and not yet the theorist and writer he was later to become. Cahm's study is based on an extensive reading of the literature and the sources in nineteen archives in western and north-western Europe, Russia and the United States. The footnotes and notes take up eighty-six pages, but they are unfortunately not incorporated into the index, nor are the names of the authors who are the subject of Cahm's polemics (Fleming, d'Agostino). In addition to a short introduction and a closing chapter which summarizes her conclusions, the book is divided into three parts. The first considers the development of the theory of anarchist communism and the part played in that by Kropotkin. The second focuses on the development of anarchist ideas of revolutionary action by individuals and small groups. The third part of the book concerns the development of anarchist views of collective action.

In the first section Cahm concludes that Kropotkin did play an "important part" in this development, but that communist anarchism developed in various countries "largely independently of each other" and "spontaneously" (p. 64). This conclusion supports that of Max Nettlau. "Propaganda by deed" (a term with which Kropotkin himself appears to have been unhappy) plays a central role in the second part of Cahm's book which contains chapters on the London Congress (1881) and the Lyon trial (1883). In the third part Cahm considers the meaning which Kropotkin gave to syndicalism. She rightly emphasizes that by "action" – individual as well as collective – Kropotkin meant *social* action, never political.

Although Cahm does unearth much important information, her study is not entirely satisfactory. "I have attempted", she writes in her Preface (p. x), "to supplement the general biographical works with a more searching study of Kropotkin's development situated firmly in the historical context of the development of the European anarchist movement". Her "historical context" is not so much the development of the movement, as the reaction to events in the anarchist press. It would have been useful to have a chapter giving an overall view of the movement