Social History in Canada: A Report on the "State of the Art"

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It is impossible to do justice to the recent historiography of Canadian social history if one accepts as "social" history everything that, whether for convenience or through misrepresentation, is claimed to be social history. Consequently, this review is highly selective in two ways. It embraces only scholarship which falls within parameters of a rather arbitrary definition of social history. Within this context, subsequently, our review attempts to identify the central thrust of that scholarship within the last ten years. If, in so doing, our intent has been to scale down the task assigned to us, it has also been to cut away the overburden of "history with the politics left out" in order to reveal the richest veins of societal history which lie beneath.

Several historians have developed extended, and fruitful, definitions of social history. We will not rehearse their arguments or those of their critics here. For our purposes, social history is the study of the historical processes which prompted change and continuity in those social relationships that, taken altogether, describe and explain a whole way of life. Social history, in short, is the stuff of societal history if, by societal history, we mean the total human order in a given era, age or epoch. Finally, by "social history" we mean also history that treats society not as a museum of artifacts to be described, but as a constantly changing archive of public and private experience awaiting both empirical investigation and theoretical speculation aimed at delineating the historical meaning of social reality.

Internationally, in the last decade or so social history has interested itself in a broadly defined catalogue of "groups": women, children, adolescents, the elderly; family and household; voluntary associations, political factions, professional and vocational groups, "crowds" and "movements"; social classes; local populations and civilizations. At the centre of all of these inquiries, however, there appear to be three related themes or issues common, and crucial, to societal history—the timing, the sources, and the effects of social discontinuity. Similarly, recent social history has been organized, generally, around a fairly narrow range of investigative approaches and theoretical perceptions such as demography, material life, mentalities (collective consciousness or cultural cohesiveness), prosopography

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* The extensive citations to this article, which are of a bibliographic nature, are printed at the end of the text.
(collective biography stressing interest group dynamics), and social structure analysis. The life-cycle and social transformation ("reformation" might be a better word) have provided the essential reference points for much recent social history. The conceptual frameworks are narrower still. Industrialization, urbanization, "modernization" and, in a variety of formulations, economic determinism, have provided the theoretical anchors for most current analyses of social discontinuity.

**English-Canadian Historiography**

In the last decade or so Canadian historians have been no less preoccupied with social history than have their counterparts in Britain, Europe and the United States. The annual registers of dissertations in progress swells with entries under social, economic and cultural history; a learned journal devoted exclusively to social history is a thriving enterprise; at least two series provide outlets for major contributions to the field; and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada now specifically encourages mission-oriented research in three areas of interest to social historians—population aging, the family and the socialization of children, and women in the labour force. In short, social history as a field for both teaching and research has become a major industry among Canadian historians. But after a decade of production it is nevertheless an industry with a very limited inventory. English-Canadian social history in particular has been preoccupied with three subjects: women, the working class, and social reformation.

Indeed, it is easy enough to conclude that movements of social reform are in fact the singular focus of historians of English-Canadian society because so many other areas of research can be subsumed under this heading. Women's history is a case in point. In spite of the rapid advancement, and growing diversification, of this field, and in spite of the appearance of some truly seminal exceptions to the rule, women's history remains for the moment essentially the history of the "woman question" as it was debated by both sexes in late Victorian and Edwardian Canada. More generally, women's history is the history of women's public experience, singly or in groups, as the promoters of "social" or "maternal" feminism, alternately object and agent of the social reform movement in Canada, 1890-1930. Some of the best writing in this vein conveniently appears in a single volume, *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada 1880's-1920's.* The central theme of this historiography is the failure of the "first generation of women's activists in Canadian history" to trade on their moral and social responsibility for the quality of domestic life—the seed bed of social transformation—for a "package deal leading to extended social responsibilities and rights" in the public sphere. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this historiography is the stridency of the judgments which attend the evidence of failure among these early "feminists". Their inability to rise above, or to develop an adequate critique of the "cult of domesticity" which kept them in thrall and thwarted the advent of a feminist revolution, is evidently a source of deep consternation to modern women's historians. But like the "cult of youth" which promoted the denigration of old age in the era of "young Canada" and again in this century, the cult of true womanhood 1880-1920 was an idea whose time, in the popular imagination, had come. The early feminists' failure to run against the tide of society's collective consciousness is only disappointing in the harsh light of ideological imperatives as foreign to their value systems as courtly love is to ours.
To the extent that this activism was motivated by the changing experience of women in education and employment during the two or three decades preceding the advent of the "woman question", women's history has necessarily turned as well to the problems of women in the workplace, women in the professions and the education of women. Happily, the recent work of academic historians in these aspects of women's history has been, on balance, less phlegmatic and more solidly rooted in historical evidence than, for example, some of the superficial essays that appeared in *Women at Work, Ontario, 1850-1930*. Nevertheless, research and writing in this area has tended to be rather narrowly focussed on the effects of industrialization on the life-cycle experiences of girls and women newly freed from "homework" as their single preoccupation by the opportunity, or the necessity, of participating in the workforce. Here, women's history rubs shoulders with working class history, labour history, historical demography and the history of education since the propensity, after mid-century, to educate girls for careers other than marriage, the nature of vocational opportunities available to educated and uneducated women, the conditions of work, and the effects of working outside the home on the family and on life-cycle patterns (age at marriage, childbearing, mortality) are all intimately interconnected. Extant research has scarcely probed the enormous complexity of these interrelated themes, leaving us, for the moment, with an incomplete landscape. At one extreme it is populated primarily by professional women whose experience in the marketplace made them the spokeswomen and torchbearers for the early feminist movement. At the other extreme, the experience of poor working women has been brought into sharper relief as the history of a docile, exploited, insecure pool of cheap labour caught between the competing disciplines of home and factory. In this respect, two noteworthy recent studies attempt to recreate the whole way of life of a particular group of "working" women, those who participated in the Canadian fur trade. Here, the whole woman—wife, mother, labourer, diplomat, chattel, entrepreneur—is revealed within the context of the complex social and economic infrastructures of fur-trade society in which working women, unlike their counterparts in the era of industrialization, achieved a status coincident with their contribution to the fur-trade economy.

Modern Canadian society, on the other hand, has clung to the belief, well into this century, that women derived their status from the domestic imperatives associated with the cult of true womanhood. Thus, even when Canada's war effort 1939-1945 required the mobilization of women for industrial employment, it was regarded by the authorities as very irregular, the fulfilment by women of a patriotic obligation not to be condoned as a "right" when the emergency passed and women were expected to return to their normal *regime*. Given the duration of this attitude, and the existence of compelling evidence that elsewhere the "emancipation" of women from unrelieved domesticity took place first within the confines of the family in the form of birth control, of the redefinition of marital relationships, of the discovery of the pleasures of sorority and of intellectual "networking", it is rather surprising that more women's historians have not attempted to probe the experience of Canadian women in marriage and within the family. Such Canadian evidence as there is on the subject (most of it derived from the work of historical demographers) suggests that new patterns of family formation and marital fertility which foreshortened periods of child rearing, higher rates of school attendance among
children and new residency patterns among adolescents, the advent of knowledge about methods of family limitation, the widespread availability of domestic help, greater longevity and, with the spread of urbanization, the gradual segregation of the home from the workplace, conspired, in the last third of the nineteenth century, to create a new domestic regime common to more and more women. Amid these conditions, women might have expected to undergo, in increasing numbers, a "normal" (i.e. "modern") life-cycle pattern which at least created the potential for a feminist revolution, albeit a quiet one, within the so-called "proper sphere", the family. Until we know more about women's experience in this private sphere, at any rate, the reasons for the success or failure of their cause in the public arena of sexual politics will continue to evade us.

The history of the family is another of those areas of English-Canadian social history which seems to proceed along two parallel lines of inquiry. One is firmly rooted, as the foregoing discussion suggests, in the literature of social reform. The other reflects the more recent discovery, by social historians, of the family as the lowest common denominator of demographic and social structural analysis, in effect a laboratory for the study of the sources, the timing and the effects of social discontinuity in larger populations. Research on the side of family-centred reform is inseparable from two other areas of social history research, childhood and education, more generally the socialization of children. In fact, it is probably correct to say that interest in the family as a subject of historical study in English-Canadian historiography arose out of the more broadly based enquiries of educational historians into the history of school reform in Canadian society. Consequently, much of the family-centred historical research now in print, including such major studies as Michael Katz's *People of Hamilton*, reflect at least an initial interest in the social processes which promoted state intervention through public school systems and compulsory education legislation and in the family's traditional responsibilities for the education and socialization of children. The burden of this research leans toward the thesis that families generally resisted this intrusion into their customary sphere of authority. The greatest resistance came from those families (the poorest and least skilled) whose children might have benefitted most from compulsory formal schooling, albeit schooling with a hidden agenda (social control and the creation of a more skilled labour force in an era of rapid industrialization).

The socialization of children is, similarly, the thrust of family-centred research associated with the movements of social reform at the end of the nineteenth century. Here, concern lies with the reformers' perception of children as the agents of social transformation, tender seedlings whose place in and contribution to a socially progressive, morally upright and politically just society seemed to depend on the quality of the social and domestic environments in which they were raised. Much of the literature on "maternal feminism" cited above bears directly on this question as does the recent, but limited, research in such areas as public health, social welfare policy and crime. The consensus seems to be that, if the forces of social change "made a new sort of growing up inevitable, they did not prescribe its shape and form. What the reform movement did...was to draw the plans for and rough in many of the dimensions of a transformed childhood" through programs of social regeneration directed at the quality of family life and, more fundamentally, at the role of women in the family.
What does not emerge from this family-centred research, however, is a very clear picture of the material conditions of life among the families and their children who were the objects of these reform movements. Katz's book is a singular exception for the mid-nineteenth century. Another is Joy Parr's *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924* (London, 1980). Another subject closely related to family history suffers from the same bias to an even greater degree. Adolescence and youth is a subject virtually neglected in all of its aspects by Canadian social historians.15 At least a partial remedy for this tendency to visualize women, children, adolescents and the family only through the eyes, and with the perceptions, of social reformers is to be found in that other stream of family-centred societal analysis, demographic and social structural history, in which the realities of individual social experience at various stages in the cycle of life are exposed to light.

Research on this side of the history of the family tends to be less well-developed among English-Canadian historians than it is among their European, British and American counterparts or their colleagues in Quebec. In part this is a problem of sources insofar as effective research depends upon the existence of long runs of family-centred records—usually parish registers, census returns, birth, death and marriage registers, assessment and other property records largely generated by churches and local government whose archival services have only recently begun to develop. It also depends on the mastery of the techniques of historical demography (family reconstitution in particular) and, depending on the size of the population under study, more or less familiarity with quantitative methods and even the application of computers to historical research.16 For all of these reasons, family-centred demographic and social structural research in English Canada has been limited in two ways. Problems of sources have confined the research to mid-Victorian Ontario, for the most part, while the development of evidence on a broadly-based, comparative level awaits the maturation of a younger generation of scholars trained in the theory and methods of quantitative analysis, subjects relatively new to graduate study in history in Canada.

Nevertheless, the few historians who have been active in the field have generated a complex picture of the effects of social change on the structure, function and culture of family life, of the adaptative strategies employed, historically, by Canadian families to promote continuity in the face of change, of the cycle of family life and of life-styles within the family. Moreover, sufficient work has been done now to expose the startling variety of familial experience that abounded in the past. Rural/urban differences, social structural variants, ethnic variations and patterns which differ between new and old areas of agricultural settlement, and between commercial and industrial cities, have been discovered in the timing of family formation, in rates of reproduction within marriage, in the size and composition of households, in relationships between parents and children, and in familiar economic strategies related to the making of livings (especially the widespread phenomenon of geographical mobility as the panacea for social immobility).17 Indeed, the central concern of these studies is the larger framework of local, regional and national economics which determined the nature of economic opportunity in the past and, therefore, the sources and the timing of social discon-
tinuity which is revealed, at the microcosmic level of family life, as a process of adaptation to quantum shifts in the material bases of life.\textsuperscript{18}

To borrow a phrase from the French social historian Fernand Braudel, capitalism (commercial, industrial, agrarian) and material life form the elementary nexus of this historiography in which the historical face of social inequality in Canada is associated with the unequal distribution of economic opportunity and its rewards. In sum, family-centred social structural analysis attempts, however imperfectly, to understand the dimensions of social "class" in Canadian society. By sorting among a variety of individual characteristics—sex, ethnicity, occupation, stage of life, literacy and religious affiliation—in relation to the distribution of wealth, it is possible to identify both the boundaries of social rank and the common attributes of the personnel of each rank.\textsuperscript{19} This is an enormously fruitful and vastly underworked field of historical endeavour. In spite of the pitfalls inherent in the tendency to generalize on the basis of rather limited evidence and, at least so far, chronologically restricted frames of reference, it is the only history of social classes which takes the nature of relationships between (or among) classes as a subject of empirical investigation rather than as \textit{a priori} assumptions. This is not the case with the great bulk of the historiography of social classes in English-Canadian society. In baseball parlance, the infield is shaded to the left, there's a vast hole down the right field line and no one in the dugout is likely to pull one to the right side. In other words, working class history dominates the field, its spokesmen are committed to the recovery and celebration of the long-neglected cultural alternative to the way of life of the entrepreneurial classes who dominated the Laurentian economy, and there seems to be little interest among Canadian historians in \textit{Clite} prosopography in spite of the fact that what we know about the shared attributes of Canada's upper classes is in fact slim and dated.\textsuperscript{20}

The result, at any rate, has been an outpouring, in the last decade, of published research on the history of the labouring classes in English-Canadian society. With it has come a sometimes bitter debate between the so-called "new" social historians who claim to have redefined "labour history" as the history of "working class culture", and the "old" guard who resent the implication that their history ("a category of political economy, a canon of saintly working class leaders, a chronicle of union locals or a chronology of militant strike actions")\textsuperscript{21} is now irrelevant. One of their number has in turn accused the "new" boys of wilfully misrepresenting the labour movement and its leadership as the products and defenders of "an Archie Bunker-charivari culture" which may not, in fact, have existed, and in any case not as autonomously as its modern proponents contend.\textsuperscript{22} The "cultural conflict" school dismisses these criticisms as the product of political, not intellectual positions, yet claims to have distanced itself from both the romanticism of the old left and the pragmatism of the neutral school of labour history precisely by virtue of its superior ideological purity.\textsuperscript{23} And so the debate goes on while both sides continue to add measurably to our knowledge of labour and/or working-class history.

For the social historian, however, the historiography (on both sides) which deals with the social condition of the working class from time to time is inevitably more attractive, not because of its ideological persuasiveness but because it establishes reference points for the study of social structural relationships and the comparative
study of social classes. By definition, much of the “cultural conflict” literature focusses on the era of industrialization when the advent of new modes of production forced working men to adapt their traditional way of life to the processes of social discontinuity and, in the end, to defend their “culture” against the alternative posed by the triumph of industrialism. A few scholars continue to be interested in the pre-industrial working man, the farm labourer and the tramping artisan;24 but there is considerable room still for analyses, particularly prosopographical studies, of the labouring classes “before the fall”, especially with reference to the much touted openness of Canadian society in the first half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps more to the point, the devastation wrought by industrial capitalism on working-class culture is comprehensible only in the light of evidence about the “traditional” character of working-class culture in pre-industrial society.

For the time being, however, the burden of working-class history has fallen upon those who toil in the shadows of the dark satanic mills. Their object, generally, is to illuminate a whole way of life, to identify and to explain the existence of an autonomous culture set apart from the main currents of social development in Canada by the special attributes of working-class life and the mentality or consciousness they sustained. Two major treatments of working-class culture in crisis in the age of industrialization are in print.25 They illustrate both the strengths and weaknesses of the genre. The reader is introduced not only to the concepts of working-class “culture” and “consciousness” in their theoretical ramifications, but is exposed to the complex and subtle ways in which consciousness and culture were reinforced by working experience in the workplace, in community and neighbourhood, in leisure activity, in the labour temples, and in the political back-rooms. In this respect the research is thorough, imaginative, and challenging. On the other hand, this scholarship is preoccupied with the fate of the aristocracy of labour rather than with the masses of working poor; it dwells excessively on the activities of the great white hope of the skilled artisans, the Knights of Labour; and it has produced little in the way of theoretical inventiveness or methodological improvements which might have added new dimensions to our perception of Canada’s Victorian working-class society. This may be too hasty a judgment on an area of relatively recent activity; but even a cursory review of the table of contents of the field’s journal, Labour/Le Travailleur suggests that working-class history is, for the moment at least, rooted firmly in the empirical investigation of strikes, worker control in the workplace, labour in politics and worker ideology. Theory, methods and problématique are scarce commodities.

It will come as no surprise, then, that most of the best article-length reporting on working-class matters falls into the same mold.26 However, at one remove from the “cultural” school of working-class history stands the work of a small but growing band of scholars who have taken up the question of the quality of working-class life with particular reference to the material condition of the labouring poor. It is useful to read them in conjunction with the “cultural” historians because of the light they shed on the relative “autonomy” of working-class culture. Here the emphasis is on incomes, housing standards, public health, welfare and, in the end, the painful poverty which pricked the conscience of middle-class Christian social activists and compelled them to act.27
The record of their activities in the temperance and prohibition movements, in the field of public health and welfare, in child and youth-centred programmes, in woman and family-centred reforms, in urban politics, planning and beautification, and in the cleansing of the human spirit with the new light of a social "gospel" accounts for a high percentage of the last decade's output of the history of English-Canadian society. Surprisingly, no scholar has attempted a synthesis in spite of the fact that both the now well-developed historiography and the interests of Canadian social history cry out for a comprehensive treatment of social reform in which these disparate elements are bonded together by a central, organizing thesis. This idea in no way diminishes the seminal contribution of Richard Allen's *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28* (Toronto, 1973) and its insistence on the thesis that the successes and failures of the reform movement can only be assessed when the movement is seen as a religious manifestation, as a social gospel concerned with the quality of earthly human relations. But the jury is still out on the extent to which the reforming impulse was also, for example, a "controlling" impulse with motives more attuned to the realities of secular social relationships forged in the mounting heat of class confrontation, and to a "total way of life" increasingly buffeted by winds of dissent as the processes of social discontinuity accelerated their pace and as the map of social discontinuity accelerated their pace and as the map of social transformation was rapidly enlarged.

In the last analysis, what strikes the reviewer about the historiography of English-Canadian social history is the narrowness of its focus, its methodological conservatism and the relative absence of theoretical and conceptual creativity. English-Canadian social history in the last decade has been solidly entrenched in the period 1850-1914; much of the activity has centred on developments in central Canada and, within that context, on a handful of related subjects. The 1920's and the 1940's have been steadfastly ignored. Studies of rural society are out of fashion. Private experience remains closetted; and the rich are still Canadian history's least visible minority. Quantitative history has gained few converts, social science methodology remains suspect, and theory—begged, borrowed or invented—is steadfastly ignored in the interests of narration untrammelled by either speculation about or commitment to a systematic theory of social discontinuity. For all of these reasons, English-Canadian social history, alive and vigorous as it is, is still a long way from maturity. With a bit of luck, Canadian historians will not rediscover political history while social history still requires their continued support and ministrations.

**French-Canadian Historiography**

The methods and approaches of social historians have had a considerable impact upon the writing of the history of Quebec. In the last twenty years or so scores of books and articles have been produced there that reflect the theoretical and methodological apparatus of social history. There are many reasons for that. One of the most obvious concerns sources. Quebec historians have access to a very rich mine of material, particularly demographic and legal records, well-suited to quantitative exploitation. Another reason arises from a coincidence: just as the perspectives and tools of social history were being developed in Europe, French Canadians were becoming dissatisfied with the image of the society as it was presented through the
works of the clerico-nationalist historians. The history of Quebec, that is to say, would have been rewritten in any event. The availability and success of the new approaches made it inevitable that they would be used.

On the other hand, it is clear also that they have been used unevenly with some areas of historical studies receiving far more attention than others. Historical demography, for example, is highly developed in Quebec. Considerable work has been also done on class and ideology. But women's studies remain largely unexploited, especially by francophone historians. Similarly, and perhaps surprisingly, not very much social history has been written involving the Roman Catholic Church. Most of the effort of Quebec historians has been concentrated on investigating the years before 1900. Since that is the case, and also for reasons of space, this survey will concentrate upon those years, and have very little to say about the 20th century.

Demographic studies are basic to social history as it is written everywhere: "l'histoire d'un peuple, c'est d'abord la triomphe de la vie sur la mort, des naissances sur les décès." In Quebec, however, they have been given even more importance because of the nature of the development of the francophone population. By the early 1970s, historians had revealed the main characteristics of its demographic behaviour. There was a stable population base in the St. Lawrence valley which had been growing rapidly since the early 17th century and which in the 19th and 20th centuries was affected by two major factors—emigration to the United States and movement from rural to urban milieus. But neither of these phenomena was significant before about 1850 and, therefore, in the population pool that existed before that time demographers had what one of them has called a "magnifique laboratoire" in which to work. In the last few years they have begun to take full advantage of the resource.

French Canadians, of course, have long displayed a keen interest in geneology and in the general area of population studies. In fact, some recent work has been based upon information gathered by earlier researchers. There is, for example, a study of the characteristics—origins, family connections, age at the time of marriage, number of children—of a sample of the voyageurs extracted from the mass of geneological data collected by Archange Godbout and published in the 1950s. More important, however, is the work completed and in progress using archival sources as its raw material. Among the many publications of Marcel Trudel there are two of pure demography that must be mentioned. There is, first, his astonishingly detailed cross-section of New France in 1663 which contains information on every individual who is recorded as being in the colony at that time. Also there is his report of the high degree of population mobility in the first half of the 17th century. Although he offered no general explanation for it, Trudel revealed an unexpected propensity by the early settlers to move from holding to holding. More ambitious is Louis Dechêne's Habitants et Marchands de Montreal au XVIIe siècle. This book, which is surely social history at its best—a carefully constructed picture of a whole society in motion built largely from quantified data upon a strong base of demographic information—contains many illuminating insights about the early population of New France. Her findings go far beyond demography and among the most interesting of them is her contention that there
were in effect two economies in the St. Lawrence valley—the family-centred habitant agricultural economy and the urban mercantile economy—with few connections existing between them. In this connection and parenthetically, one might draw attention to some other works on New France of a generally non-demographic nature. There are the studies of merchants and commerce: Christopher Moore on the cod economy of Ile Royale; Louis Michel on the enterprises of a rural merchant; and J.F. Bossher on the French protestant families trading with the colony. Peter Moogk's interesting attempt to investigate social ranking in New France deserves mention as well as G.A. Dickenson's revisionist look at the reality of seigneurial justice. Finally, there are two attempts to get at the very difficult area of mentalités. Contrary to what Jules Michelet found in France, François Rousseau, through an examination of the Hôtel-Dieu in Quebec, discovered no particular fear of hospitals in the society of New France. And André Lachance has drawn some interesting conclusions about social values from an analysis of insults which led to court action by the victims.

But to return to the subject of population studies, it seems unlikely that future research will seriously challenge all the demographic conclusions arrived at by Trudel, Dechêne and the other researchers into the 17th century. But there seems no doubt that there will be some changes and that all work done up to now will be modified—even if only by a changing perspective. This is because whereas demographic studies up to the mid 1970s were done, so to speak, "by hand," since then demographers in Quebec have turned to the computer. The strength of the expectations awakened by the new technology can be seen in Hubert Charbonneau's prediction that his book on the population of New France, which was published in 1975, would be the last one utilizing traditional techniques. Charbonneau is well-qualified to speak, heading, as he does in tandem with Jacques Légaré, the ambitious project taken on by the Département de démographie of the université de Montréal. This Programme de Recherche en Démographie Historique (PROH) has as its objective the reconstruction of the whole population of Quebec from 1608 to 1850. Relying primarily upon parish registers and upon what nominal census data is available, the Montreal team hopes eventually to be able to produce a biographical dossier on every individual "qui ont mis le pied sur la territoire québécois" up to mid-19th century.

Equally impressive is the task undertaken by Gerard Bouchard and his associates in the Société de Recherche sur les Populations (SOREP) of the Université de Québec at Chicoutimi. Since 1972 this team of demographers has been engaged in building a comprehensive data bank of the population of the Saguenay-Lake St. John area from 1838 until at least 1931. The relative geographical isolation of the area as well as the abundance of documentation make the Saguenay region another excellent laboratory for demographic investigation. Moreover, the nature of the regional economy—a colonization area in which employment in the timber-lumber industry was possible in conjunction with agriculture—gave it added importance. Because so many French Canadians have divided their energies between agriculture and another economic activity, it seems at least plausible that significant findings by the SOREP team could be applied to other areas and other times.

Both Bouchard and Charbonneau bubble with optimism over the prospects of their respective projects. In the long term, Bouchard tells us, perhaps there will be
the possibility of an "histoire globale" achieved through the use of computers; at the
very least we can expect to learn a great deal about the precise configurations and
operations of social structures. But none of that will be possible, and both groups
realized it from the beginning, without impeccable methodology. A great deal of
effort, therefore, has been expended in the last few years in solving procedural
problems. Much preliminary work has been done, for example, in checking the
reliability of the documentary base, the parish registers of baptisms, marriages and
deaths, the various nominal censuses of New France as well as those of 1851, 1861
and 1871. Moreover, since township and parish boundaries change over time, a
method had to be developed to assure that the same geographical area was
considered in successive nominal censuses. Otherwise, an observed population
movement might not really have occurred but would be an illusion traceable simply
to variations in the size of the basic census unit. Finally, there is the problem of
changes in the way individual names were recorded in the documents and the
desirability of eliminating errors resulting from orthographic and other similar
variations.

These problems seem to have been dealt with—a test conducted by the Saguenay
group has traced 97.5% of the married couples mentioned in a sample of baptism,
mariage and death records—and some preliminary results have begun to appear. The
population of the Saguenay region, for example, was characterized by high
growth rates, a surplus of men over women and a high proportion of young
people. There was, moreover, so much population movement that the research
group claims to have destroyed the myth of "l'immobilisme des Canadiens
français". Between 1851 and 1871 more than 60% of the population of the area
moved, and of these transients about one-half left the region completely while the
remainder re-located within it. Although the team is not yet ready with a complete
and tested hypothesis, they appear to explain this mobility in the same way as was
done in the Peel County project. That involves succession practices for agricultural
land which maintain the integrity of the family farm at the price of forcing most of
the children to move elsewhere.

There are two other final points to be made. First, it seems clear that the rate of
transience in the Saguenay region, while high, was nevertheless considerably
lower than that found by David Gagan in Peel County, Ontario. It may be that the
two areas are not comparable, although at least one observer thinks they are. It
may also be that the disparity is not real but is the result of a methodological
difference. It is a small problem but it does invite resolution.

The other point is more important with large implications for the socio-economic
history of Quebec. In a book published in 1977 on the agro-forestière economy of
the Saguenay area, Norman Sèguin treated the region as a hinterland of the
Quebec-Montreal metropolitan centre and argued that the timber-lumber industry,
controlled from outside, and agriculture, did not exist in a complementary relation-
ship but were in basic conflict. Sèguin contended, in fact, that the demands of the
timber-lumber component were directly responsible for keeping agriculture in an
undeveloped state and of retarding the urbanization of the region. Gérard Bouchard
has disagreed with Sèguin's analysis. Bouchard concedes that Sèguin's argument
may have some relevance on the question of urbanization. But he claims that the
undeveloped agriculture of the area was a result, primarily, of its isolation from urban markets. The inhabitants of the region led by their traditional elites clamoured for connection with the outside world. The forest industry, however, could exist using only natural means of transportation, and it may bear some responsibility for the long delay in joining the Saguenay by road and rail to Quebec and Montreal. But, Bouchard says, that was the extent of its responsibility.61

The debate, however, does not appear to be over.62 The same conflictual relationship has been found in another socio-economic area. Allan Greer has just published his study of the voyageurs from the Sorel area and has argued that employment in the fur trade also resulted in underdeveloped agriculture.63 In their recent synthesis of the history of post-confederation Quebec, moreover, Linteau, Robert and Durocher seem slightly to favour Séguin's position.64 If the analysis carries the day in those two places and activities, then work on similar structures in other places will have to be reconsidered and the world of the colon may be viewed quite differently.

Many social historians in Quebec have concentrated their efforts upon investigating one large question and its many ramifications: What was the nature of the society that existed in Quebec from the Conquest until the end of the 19th century, how was it formed and how did it change? Involved in that basic question are considerations concerning the economic base, social groups and social classes and their interrelationships, religion, ideology and so on. To begin discussing some features of its current state, one starts with the work of Jean Hamelin and Fernand Ouellet. Hamelin's description, based largely upon quantitative analysis and published about twenty years ago, of the dependent nature of the economy and of the mercantile community of New France is well known.65 Taking up where Hamelin left off, using a Laurentian model of geographic-economic space and the familiar approach and devices of the Annales school, Fernand Ouellet has spent the last twenty years attempting to write the histoire globale of almost the whole of the succeeding century.66 It is simply impossible here to do anything like justice to the results. All that can be done is to draw attention, in summary form, to some of his more important findings:

(a) the central position of wheat farming and the commercialization of agriculture as explanatory factors accounting for social change in Lower Canada;
(b) the agricultural crisis, beginning around the turn of the 19th century, which was a consequence of rapid population growth, a shortage of arable land and poor agricultural techniques;
(c) the definition of and the interplay among the various social classes: the seigneurial aristocracy, the merchants of both languages and particularly the emergent petite-bourgeoisie based, primarily, in the liberal professions;
(d) the integration of class and ideology, especially the articulation of the concept of la nation canadienne-française by spokesmen for the petite-bourgeoisie around the turn of the century; and finally
(e) the way in which the interests of the habitants were subordinated to the class interests of the petite-bourgeoisie acting, ostensibly, in the name of the nation.

Ouellet's integrated portrait of Quebec society from 1760 to 1850 is unquestionably the outstanding historical work of recent years. Not only has it promoted
interest in social history as a whole, but also, obviously, his somewhat iconoclastic perspective has stimulated further research into the history of the early 19th century. And not all of the results confirm his findings. There is, for example, the reassessment of Quebec agriculture offered by John McCallum. By comparing the development of French Canadian agriculture to that of other regions of North America, McCallum is able to argue that the decline of wheat farming in the St. Lawrence valley was owing more to its marginal competitive position than to the deficient agricultural techniques of the habitant farmer. Then there is the extensive production of Gilles Paquet and Jean-Pierre Wallot. Much of their work is too theoretical and abstract to be dealt with in detail here, but one or two points can be made. Drawing extensively upon concepts developed in the social sciences, Paquet and Wallot would see Lower Canada as part of a broad Atlantic community in which social change (modernization) was impelled by the exigencies of a developing capitalist market economy. To Jean-Pierre Wallot, the petite-bourgeoisie of Lower Canada seem to be a much more progressive force than Ouellet is willing to concede.

The suggestions made and points raised by Paquet and Wallot may yet force reconsideration and revision of Ouellet's presentation. But at the moment their more concrete and specific historical studies of aspects of the early 19th century deserve attention. First there is the early work in which they urge the overwhelming importance of the division of patronage in the social and political struggles of the period. But of more importance to the question of the nature and mechanics of society in early 19th century Quebec is the challenge Paquet and Wallot have offered to Fernand Ouellet's crise agricole of the years after 1802. The debate over the timing, extent, even the existence of the crisis, seems to have subsided but may not yet be over.

Several studies on other specific matters which can be classed as part of the social history of early 19th century Quebec have appeared over the past few years. What must be mentioned separately, however, is P.A. Linteau's and J.-C. Robert's research on Montreal in the 1820s. Fernand Ouellet has shown that, unwilling or unable to adjust to technological and organizational change, French Canadian merchants dropped out of the fur trade toward the end of the 18th century. In their place and in place of the seigneurial group, leadership of the French Canadian community then passed to the petite-bourgeoisie. Linteau and Robert set out to determine if there was a material basis which allowed this emergent group to maintain its ascendency in francophone society even though the large economic concerns were controlled by English-Canadians. In Montreal in 1825 the answer they found was ownership of real estate, something that Paquet and Wallot suggest may have begun as early as 1800 and which Linteau's own work on Maisonneuve extends on to the 20th century.

Late in the 19th century J.D. Borthwick published his History and Biographical Gazetteer of Montreal to the Year 1892 which contains information on hundreds of "notables" of the city. J.-C. Robert has analyzed this data and concluded that, among the men included, there was a high proportion of immigrants from Great Britain and that the French Canadian middle class component was very small. Not long ago the latter finding would have been accepted without question. But recent research indicates that it is probably a distortion traceable to Borthwick's method of
selection because it seems increasingly likely that there was an economically active French Canadian bourgeoisie in 19th century Montreal. There is, for example, the well-documented case of E.-R. Fabre who owned and operated a very successful libraire for many years in the first half of the century. G. Tulchinsky has also demonstrated French Canadian participation in mid-19th century commercial life—La Compagnie du Richelieu, a small water transport concern operated by a group of francophones of Montreal, was successful in a highly competitive area. Similarly, Paul-André Linteau has argued forcefully for a significant French Canadian presence in the middle ranks of commerce and business between 1850 and 1914. Subsequently, he suggests, for economic rather than cultural reasons, French Canadian businessmen like Alphonse Desjardins were “marginalized” in the period of consolidation after World War I.

These attempts to delineate the French Canadian bourgeoisie are promising. But given the aim of comprehending the social whole, it is evident that much more research has yet to be done, not only in the urban centres but also in the towns and villages. And it might also be said, parenthetically, that the same is true of the English-Canadian middle class who, despite some exceptions, remain an undifferentiated, nameless and faceless group in so much of the writing about Quebec.

Laymen of the lower middle class shared social leadership of francophone Quebec through much of the nineteenth century with the men and women of the Roman Catholic Church. Given the massive importance of the Church as an institution and the numbers, variety and clarity of definition of the clergy, it is somewhat disappointing that they have not been the subject of much more research by social historians. The traditional picture of the Church, first defined by the priest historians of mid-19th century and refined and perpetuated by clerico-nationalists since then, has, of course, been recognized as inadequate for at least twenty-five years. And historians have gone some distance in providing a new overview. Its outlines can be seen through the periodization adopted by the most recent summary—it was a Church that was successively “naissante” (1608-1760), “soumise” (1760-1838), “de plus en plus romaine” (1840-1846), “thriompfliste” (1896-1940) and “incertaine” (1940-1970). But much remains to be done as the material for a more extensive treatment is accumulating so slowly. For the very early period there are important sections on the Church and religious life in the work of Marcel Trudel and Louise Dechêne. Trudel provides us with probably all the demographic information that will ever be available for the 37 men and 41 women of the Church who were in New France in 1663. As to Dechêne the conclusion of her carefully considered chapter on the subject is that the Church in New France was orthodox, slightly Jansenist, and that the religious atmosphere was not particularly devot but was “très ordinaire”. On this subject also, one might mention the attempt by Marie-Andrée Cliche to determine the degree of religiosity of the people of New France by statistical analysis of the contents of some 800 clauses testamentaires. M.-A. Bedard, similarly, has looked at the French Protestants who came to New France, while Jean Blain’s survey of the literature on the question of the morality of the colony is very useful.
For the post-Conquest years, there are, of course, the findings of Fernand Ouellet on the position of the Church in society. In a recent study Ouellet has tried to establish some approximation of the standard of living of the curés of the early 19th century compared to the members of their parishes. The subject of the financial position of one diocese has also been examined by Réal Boucher. In addition, two other works need mention. One is Jean-Pierre Wallot's account of the very delicate legal and political position of the Church in the early 19th century and the sometimes unruly behaviour of the French Canadian congregations of the time. The other is Richard Chabot's fascinating exploration of the positions taken by local curés vis à vis lay elites on the contentious issues of the pre-rebellion years.

Pertaining to the middle part of the century there is a noteworthy essay by Serge Gagnon which analyzes religious life in the Diocese of Montreal from a series of pastoral reports produced between 1853 and 1868. But more important is Gagnon's extensive analysis of the way in which the history of New France was written in the 19th century. Treating written history as an ideological weapon, Gagnon illustrates how conceptions of the past and volumes of hagiography were used to buttress the ultramontane claims for predominance in Quebec made by so many 19th century churchmen. There are, in addition, many other studies of ideologies, particularly ultramontanism, for the years after 1850. And, in a different vein, is Jean Ray's statistical analysis of "le clergé nicolétain".

Finally, there exist some studies of the Church's exposure to industrial capitalism in the late 19th century. William Ryan's investigation of the attitude of the clergy to industry in La Mauricie is an older work that is still useful. Among the newer productions Gérard Bouchard's examination of priests, capitalists and workers at Chicoutimi is outstanding. Bouchard argues that the morality taught to workers by the priests and the modes of behaviour approved by them were the same as those necessary for employment in industry. Rather than conflicts, that is, Bouchard found "une étoile alliance de classes entre clercs et industriels" in the Saguenay area.

Bouchard's essay serves to introduce the area of working class history. The broad lines of development of the group are well-enough known—there was a movement over time from a society characterized by a miniscule non-agricultural work force with manufacturing in the hands of artisans and apprentices to a recognizably modern proletarianized society. Generally speaking, the development of the working class in Quebec fits that pattern. The implied exception are the voyageurs, part of the work force of the fur trade and semi-proletariat of the early years of Canadian history. There has been some research on the voyageurs recently. Hubert Charbonneau's previously mentioned article on their geographic distribution and demographic behaviour is one piece. There is also information on the voyageurs integrated into Fernand Ouellet's synthesis. And finally, there is the revisionist study published by Allen Greer which was previously mentioned. As to the world of the artisans and apprentices, there is an older study by Peter Moogk as well as two more recent efforts—Marise Thivierge on the Quebec leather workers (1660-1760) and the work on the apprentice artisans (1660-1815) by Jean-Pierre Hardy and David Thierry-Rudd.
While the creation of a large urban proletariat waited upon the process of industrialization that began in earnest in the 1880s, there was a work force living in the cities long before that. This "classe ouvrière" in Montreal in the years from 1790 to 1820 is the subject of an excellent piece recently published by Robert Tremblay. Working from a sample of actes d'engagements and conventions de marché and utilizing quantitative methodology, Tremblay has uncovered a great deal of information on the makeup, organization, division of labour and remuneration of this pre-industrial working class. By the early 19th century, it is clear that the artisanal system was rapidly disintegrating. That is the conclusion arrived at also by Joanne Burgess. Her investigation of the boot and shoe industry in Montreal reveals large organizational changes taking place long before the advent of mechanization. The increasing demands of the market led to a division of labour as early as the 1820s which was simply accelerated when machinery began to be used extensively after 1850. By the 1860s the boot and shoe industry was organized in factories with unskilled or semi-skilled labour operating steam-driven machines. In the same decade the Knights of St. Crispin called the first strike.

But the end of the artisanat, if it came slowly in some occupations, could also come with dramatic suddenness in others. That is the burden on Margaret Heap's study of the strike of the Montreal charretiers. She argues that since they owned their own means of production, their horses and carriages, these men were in the same position as artisans. Their continued independence was at issue in the strike of 1864 and when they were defeated—basically by the Grand Trunk Railway—they were reduced immediately to proletarian status.

Another group that has recently received attention is the railway construction workers. Because of their transient nature, information about these men is particularly scanty. But some of them happened to be working in the Sherbrooke area just as the census of 1851 was being conducted and Jean-Paul Kestemen's article is based on the information gathered from a sample of about 1,600 names. His findings about the national origins (few French Canadians and many Roman Catholic Irish) are not surprising. What is new is his conclusion that most of them were married and lived with their families in the shanties, the single men being integrated into the various households as boarders.

By the 1880s there was a large and growing urban working class, especially in Montreal. Indeed, if John McCallum is right, these underpaid proletarians were the major asset which allowed Montreal industrialists to compete, particularly in the Ontario market. In any case, this was the group to which the Knights of Labor made its appeal in the years after 1882. Fernand Harvey's fine study of that organization reveals that, for reasons which he explains, it was more successful in Quebec than anywhere else in North America. And that was despite the fact that the Knights' incursion into the province was met by the intransigent hostility of the local elites, especially the clergy. Conscious of class, reformist and utopian, the Knights of Labor provided a preliminary focus for the social discontent accompanying industrialization. Its eventual demise cleared the way for the continentalist business unionism of the American Federation of Labour and the nationalist confessional unions of the Roman Catholic Church.
While not much of a concrete nature is known about working class culture during the late 19th century, there is some information accumulating on the material conditions of the lives of the workers. Fernand Harvey has concluded from his examination of the testimony before the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labour and Capital (1887) that the world of the artisan was by that time only a fading memory and that the social problems of “capitalisme sauvage” had already begun to appear.\textsuperscript{110} J. De Bonville has also contributed through his examination of the writings of Jean-Baptiste Gagnepetit. That was the pen-name of Jules Helbronner, one of the reformist members of the Royal Commission of 1887 and a journalist whose observations of the social conditions of the Montreal working class were published in \textit{La Presse} from 1884 to 1894.\textsuperscript{111} Finally, because of its familiarity, only mention need be made of Terry Copp’s \textit{Anatomy of Poverty}.\textsuperscript{112}

For the years of Canadian history before the last half of the 19th century, very little has recently appeared in the area of women’s studies.\textsuperscript{113} There is Louise Plamondon’s examination of the life of Marie-Anne Berbel, who upon her husband’s death inherited his business and ran it successfully through mid-18th century. Other women like her, the author tells us, were not uncommon.\textsuperscript{114} Then there is Sylvia Van Kirk’s study of the marriages between fur traders and Indian and \textit{metis} women which, she argues, generations of scandalized references notwithstanding, were crucial to the establishment of early western society.\textsuperscript{115} But, with only a few exceptions, the field remains untouched. Consider, for example, the female religious communities. A few years ago Micheline Dumont-Johnson pointed out how important the religieuses had been in Quebec society since 1640.\textsuperscript{116} But with the exception of Sr. Marguerite Jean’s book\textsuperscript{117} nothing seems to have resulted for the period before 1850. Perhaps we will have to wait until the results of the demographic studies currently underway have stimulated interest before more research is done.

The last half of the 19th century is only a little better served. Susan Cross’s older study of the distribution of working women in Montreal and their employment opportunities (domestic service then industry on the whole) deserves mention.\textsuperscript{118} So also does Bettina Bradbury’s later examination of “the family economy”.\textsuperscript{119} Susan Mann-Trofimenko has pillaged the testimony of the witnesses before the Royal Commission of 1887 in an attempt to define the perceptions of female labour of the time.\textsuperscript{120} And finally, Micheline Dumont-Johnson’s examination of day-care facilities provided in Montreal and elsewhere by the Grey Nuns deserves attention. First established around 1860 their institutions cared for thousands of children of working class mothers between that time and the end of the century. One can echo the author’s conclusion: that they were needed and used is clear evidence of the disintegration of the family unit which accompanied industrialization.\textsuperscript{121}

\section*{Conclusion}

That social history is a vigorous, diversified and increasingly high-powered branch plant of Canadian historiography in the 1980s is an inescapable fact. Its vigour arises not only from the zeal of the youngest generation of Canadian historians who wield the cutting edge of recent scholarship, but equally from a general weaning of the historical profession away from more traditional concerns into areas of investigation once considered intellectually inferior to the cut and thrust of national politics.
The diversity of the enterprise is, perhaps, less astonishing, and in any case may be more apparent than real. Working class history, movements of social reform, and women's history continue to pre-occupy anglophone social historians; demography, the history of the family, social structural history and, to a lesser extent, working class history, francophone historians. It is probably the case as well that among anglophone historians urban society has proved to be a more attractive milieu than rural society has been for their colleagues in Quebec. But these qualifications do not detract from the fact that within each of these areas of investigation the research is multi-faceted and increasingly inventive.

It is nevertheless clear that if, by inventiveness, we mean the bringing together of theory, method and evidence in a convincing evocation of the historical imagination, francophone historians have been somewhat more successful than their English-Canadian counterparts. Whatever other reasons may be cited for this disparity, the central fact is the nature of social history itself. Social history is, by definition, an exercise in comparative history. Civilizations emerge, as Fernand Brandel has pointed out, from the historical experiences of many limited populations resolving, in common ways, common problems associated with the material regularities of life. For social history to succeed as an informative intellectual exercise, it is necessary that social historians, each working in his own little world of historical experience, ask common questions about common phenomena employing similar hypotheses and data in order to comprehend the nature of social reality in this limited sphere. Only in this way will the universality of certain themes in our past, and the uniqueness of others, especially the sources and the consequences of social discontinuity, become comprehensible. Francophone historians seem to be much more solidly rooted in this internationally comparative context than the social historians of English Canada who have much to gain from paying more attention to the work of their counterparts in Europe, Britain and the United States.

Meanwhile, Canadian social history is alive and well, its practitioners are engaged in a variety of heated but healthy debates, and some subjects have been developed to the point where they now await an ambitious synthesizer. Others—medicine and public health, adolescence, the professions, elite prosopography—await the attention they richly deserve.
Notes


2 This is Hobsbawn’s point; and see also Raymond-Williams, Culture and Society (New York, 1960), p. xviii.

3 Hobsbawn, “From Social History to the History of Society”, organizes social historical inquiry around demography and kinship, urban studies, social classes, mentalities, social transformation, and movements of social protest. Perkin, “Social History” employs the concepts of the ecology, anatomy (social structure), physiology (material life), pathology (social problems) and psychology of societies.


5 Wayne Roberts, “‘Rocking the Cradle’”, p. 45.


10 See note 17 below.

12 Note 4, above, especially Terry Morrison, "'Their Proper Sphere': Feminism, the Family and Child-Centred Social Reform in Ontario, 1875-1900," Ontario History, LXVIII (1976): 45-64 and 65-74.


We have also made no attempt to be comprehensive.


For a discussion and a sampling of earlier population studies see Hubert Charbonneau, La population du Québec: études rétrospectives (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1973).

ibid., 13.


Charbonneau, Vie et mort . . . is based in part on the same data.


Charbonneau, Vie et mort, 8.


Ibid., 40-41.


Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.


N. Séguin, La conquête du sol au XIXe siècle (Trois Rivières: Buréal Express, 1977).


67 J. McCallum, Unequal Beginnings: Agriculture and Economic Development in Ontario and Quebec until 1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

68 Ibid., Chapters 1-3.


75 F. Ouellet, "Dualité économique."


81 There is, of course, an enormous bulk of material about the Church in Quebec that was written in the past. And historians working in a traditional manner continue to add to it.


83 Trudel, Le Population, pp. 120, 260-12, 289, 319-20.

84 Dechène, Habituants, pp. 450-476.

85 Marie-Aimée Cliche, "Les attitudes devant la mort d'après les clauses testamentaires dans le gouvernement de Quebec sous le régime français," RHAF (June, 1978): 57-94.
References are scattered through his works but see especially Social Change and Nationalism.


This survey does not attempt to move past 1900. For the working class in the 20th century see: F. Harvey (ed.), Le mouvement ouvrier au Québec (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1980) and especially the editor's excellent historiographical introduction: F. Harvey (ed.), Aspects historiques du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1973); G. Hamelin et F. Harvey (ed.), Les travailleurs québécois, 1941-1971 (Québec: Université de Laval, 1976).

See note 6.


See note 34.


McCallum, Unequal Beginnings, Chapter 7.


F. Harvey, Révolution industrielle et travailleurs (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1978).
113 As in the case of working class studies, there is some (but not much) material for the 20th century which this essay does not deal with. See R. Pierson and B. Light, "Women in the Teaching and Writing and Canadian History," The History and Social Science Teacher, Winer, 1982, 83-96.
115 S. Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada, 1700-1850 (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980).