

as Duncan Tanner's important book, merit further attention. Some engagement with important post-Thatcher era works on miners, their unions and politics in Britain is also lacking, although this book admittedly appeared just prior to the publication of Alan Campbell's second volume on the history of the Scottish miners. Finally, especially considering the rightwards turn of contemporary Labour politics, an evaluation of recent work on the persistence of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century "popular radicalism," the term coined by Eugenio Biagini and Alastair Reid to indicate the shared ideological heritage of both Liberals and Labour, would also seem to be in order.

Such reservations aside, Professor Laslett has written a unique book. Few historians are willing to tackle the logistical and historiographic morass of systematic comparative history and even fewer are able to directly confront major interpretive puzzles. This book succeeds on both counts.

James Jaffe

University of Wisconsin at Whitewater

Pamela Pilbeam, *French Socialists Before Marx: Workers, Women and the Social Question in France* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

Pamela Pilbeam asks "was Cabet the Barbara Cartland of the 1840s?" In other words, did his book, *Voyage en Icarie*, merely offer artisan readers "a dream world in which to escape"?

This provocative question, in addition to numerous allusions to contemporary figures such as Jospin and Blair, discloses the author's interest in showing how early French nineteenth century socialism is relevant to our times.

This is a very difficult undertaking, in view of the great changes in the meaning of socialism over time. Pilbeam is aware of this, of course, and in a brilliant introduction she presents a review of how contemporary historians have modified their approach of that period.

Her study offers a new line of attack by focusing on a thematic investigation of theories and actions, strategies and solutions, rather than on individual biographical studies or philosophical analysis. As the work progresses, this approach succeeds in uncovering continuities within a movement that has changed its discourse markedly as it has grown from a repressed minority to a important locus of political power.

The author's analysis shows very clearly the important fact that all socialist writers concentrated on concrete economic issues, even when

their critics called them utopians. Although ideological issues such as the ideal of fraternity, and political and cultural issues, such as universal suffrage and education, are also discussed, the questions that receive the most attention are the socio-economic ones. These include topics such as private property, the collectivization of production and distribution, the abolition of money and competition, economic equality, and so on. The book discusses a wide range of practical activities, including the role of women, worker-run newspapers, mutual aid associations, producer and consumer co-ops, and political clubs. Indeed, the author argues that the economic concerns of socialism have great continuity in the long run.

Yet, for many historians, the economic dimension was only part of a more global philosophy. The socialists of the period presented radically different answers, but these were only the devices to achieve what all considered to be the primary meaning of socialism: to build a world view in response to new social challenges.

The work is very clearly written and is accompanied by a useful bibliography. It would have perhaps been more accessible to the student and the general public if references to the movement's historical predecessors (Rousseau, Condorcet and so on), as well as to events of the period, had been presented in a first chapter, rather than throughout the text.

There are a number of issues that deserve further consideration. The bourgeois or middle-class origin of almost all early socialist writers, as well as the Marxists of a later period, deserves discussion. There are also important issues concerning the meaning of the term "socialist" and its theoretical content: can one include in this category people as different as Cabet and Proudhon, not to mention Fourier?

One may also hope that, in some not too distant future, the study of French socialism includes those members who were deported or exiled in Europe and in America and their publications that contributed to the debate within the movement and to its propaganda. This is not simply a matter of comprehensiveness but also one of explanation, because the diffusion of socialism is not a simple consequence of deprivation and class relations, but also the result of a transatlantic network, that deliberately disseminated its ideas even in non-industrial countries of Europe and in both Americas.

Ronald Creagh
Université Paul Valéry