

1889. Thorne's slow and steady effort is contrasted to Tillet's impulsiveness and Burns's flamboyance. He benefitted from eight years of cooperation, and even of friendship, with Eleanor Marx, who on her part relished "her union" of gasworkers and allowed her ties with it to channel her activity. She founded a women's section of the Gasworkers' Union and served as its Secretary. Together with Engels, she was eager to win these new unions over to socialism.

Thorne's originality, then, lay in his refusal to dissociate trade union and political activity. His constituency of West Ham holds the distinction of being home to the "new unionism" (with the establishment of the Gasworkers in 1889), of electing one of the two first socialist MPs (Kier Hardie in 1892; John Burns, representing Battersea in the same year, was the other), and of being the first municipality in the United Kingdom to be governed by an all-socialist administration. Perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book is that providing a portrait of a "proletarian town," with its attendant health problems, its lack of religion, and its pubs as "center(s) of working class culture." But the meager gains derived by workers from these successes and the return of higher unemployment guaranteed the beginnings of opposition to Thorne from his political left.

Resentment, too, was expressed when Thorne gave unflinching support to Britain's role in World War I and to his demand, over objections of pacifists in the Independent Labour Party, that Russia remain in the War (although he condemned British intervention in the civil wars that followed). Also resented was his condemnation of the proposed international socialist congress in Stockholm, and later, his support of Ramsay MacDonald's National Union government (however short-lived that support) and his curious friendship with Lady Astor, all of which opened him to charges of holding a "chair in the Establishment." His Union, too, had shifted considerably to the right. But he had earlier opposed revolutionary syndicalism, had hated strikes however often he had led them, was to refuse a title, and hence his moderation was, and was to remain, of long standing. All things considered, Thorne is an admirable choice to embody the reformism of British labor.

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J. F. Boshier — *The Canada Merchants, 1713-1763*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. Pp. xiv, 234.

Twenty-five years ago we were all hunting for the bourgeoisie of New France: if we could find it, we thought that would mean New France had been a normal society, the development of which was blighted by the British Conquest of 1763. If it was nowhere to be found, that, we believed, would signify New France had been an Ancien Regime society incapable of change and destined for backwardness in the twentieth century. In those days, most eighteenth century merchants were to us still mysterious names in official correspondence. Little by little, the traders in the documents reclaimed their forgotten identities. The *dictionary of Canadian Biography* project spurred on this effort and is in part the fruit of it.

Meanwhile, J.F. Boshier, a Canadian historian of France, was pursuing an entirely different line of inquiry that would one day converge with the inquiries of we earnest seekers-out of the Canadian bourgeoisie. In his book, *French Finances, 1770-1795: From Business to Bureaucracy* (1970), he investigated the human "inside" of an important part of Ancien Regime French government. While he found that by 1795 French finances were run by something that we would recognize right off as a civil service, what he found in 1770 was a crowd of private men with money, well-connected relatives, and often with purchased offices, doing the King's business. On one level this enabled him to turn Ancien Regime historiography on its head by showing that the dead hand of the State did not blight private enterprise but rather that the State was in the altogether lively hands of businessmen. More important in the context of this review, the study revealed the existence of a vast network of

individuals and families, its myriad and bewildering ramifications connecting government men to money men to humbler kin. To trace out these connections was an obvious methodological directive.

Canadianists had become aware of Boshier through his celebrated article, "Government and Private Interest in New France," which appeared in the unlikely journal *Canadian Public Administration* in 1967. It posed in the Canadian context the kind of questions that the larger 1970 study would pose in the French context and pointed to the same methodology of following the ramifications of networks. Since 1970 Boshier has written numerous articles on those whom in the present work he calls "Canada merchants," the businessmen of Rouen, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, and so on who traded to Canada as well as their agents at Quebec, usually younger and poorer relatives. These studies envisage trade history as an analysis of transatlantic connections of friends, cousins, fathers, sons, redoubtable widows, merchants, and officials. Boshier has explored first one family connection and then another in these exhaustively detailed studies drawn painstakingly from the archives of *état civil*, courts of commercial jurisdiction, business records and correspondence, and the treasure troves left by eighteenth century notaries. These have been positivistic articles, based on mountains of evidence but with only the plainest and most guarded conclusions. The patient elaboration continues in the present volume. Many of us would never have guessed that so much was retrievable: "The Merchant and his Family" is a beautiful chapter. Those on the Roman Catholic traders, the Huguenot minority, and on naval officers and financiers in trade are, like it, gems of research and synthesis.

But like those of us who once sought the bourgeoisie, Boshier too has been in search of society. He tells us that there was an "Official Bourbon Society" of Catholic bureaucrats, financiers, and traders, who were by definition insiders. The colony of Canada existed as part of the outreach of this privileged world. But the outcast Huguenots belonged to an "Atlantic Trading Society" of Protestant business families, a world that encompassed their communities in the French Atlantic ports as well as the great communities of traders in Great Britain, Holland, and Northern Europe, countries where Protestant business views dominated government policy. The worlds of Huguenots and Catholics are portrayed as initially quite effectively sealed off from each other by Catholic solidarity, insularity, prejudice, and persecution. But this isolation was not to last. For example, beginning in the 1730s, the Huguenot traders (together with some significant Jews) made greater and greater inroads into the Canada trade, which they eventually came to dominate. This was but one instance of the French government's and the French economy's increasing dependence upon them.

Boshier's delineation of these two, contrasting worlds provides a wonderful sense of clarity and organization to our knowledge of eighteenth century French government and society. It underscores certain realities of the time. But I cannot think that it gives us a complete and balanced picture or that these two worlds were quite so separate as here portrayed. Persecution was sporadic and on the wane. For many, religion itself was on the wane. And the outward conformity of the *nouveau converti* generally provided good protective colouration for the Huguenot who did not wear his Protestantism on his sleeve.

In these pages the France of the Bourbons is portrayed as an eighteenth-century "Evil Empire." Having let down its guard in the 1730s, it began to crumble around the 1760s: 1757, the beginning of the end of persecution; 1762-63, the suppression of the *Jésuits*, the *affaire du Canada*, and the abandonment of Canada, the Empire's outpost of proselytism. The light and reason of the Atlantic Trading Society began then to flood in. It seems to me an inescapable conclusion that, just as was the case with research on the Canadian bourgeoisie in the 1950s and 1960s, some first-rate history is here embedded quite unnecessarily in the Manichean mythstory. But I can handle the mythstory in order to retrieve the history, which I would not for a moment want to be without.

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