SYMPOSIUM: IN HONOR OF DAVID GORDON

Social Stratification, Endogenous Contradictions, and Institutional Change	David Fairris
Technical and Social Determinants of Productivity Growth in Bituminous Coal Mining, 1955-1980	Michele I. Naples
Skill-Biased Demand Shifts and the Wage Collapse in the United States: A Critical Perspective on the Conventional Wisdom	David R. Howell and Susan S. Wieler

Introduction

David Fairris
University of California, Riverside

David Gordon died in the spring of 1996 at the age of 51. One of the leading radical political economists of his generation, David's most important contributions were to the study of segmented labor markets theory, social structures of accumulation theory, a radical analysis of the postwar productivity slowdown in the U.S., and, in his last book, an institutional account of the determinants of rising domestic wage inequality. David combined technical competence in both economic theory and econometrics with careful attention to institutional and historical forces in his critical analyses of U.S. capitalism. He was also an activist with a progressive commitment to social change. David was as much at home in meetings with workers on the crisis of the labor movement as he was in seminars at the New School for Social Research or in front of television cameras on the "McNeil/Lehrer News Hour." This symposium honors his many contributions.

In the first paper of the symposium, David Fairris uses the basic tenets of social structures of accumulation theory to elaborate on David's theory of institutional change based on endogenous contradictions. In the second paper, Michele Naples extends David's work on the productivity slowdown in the U.S. by focussing on one industry — mining — in an attempt to draw out the specific historical and institutional roots precipitating the productivity crisis in that sector. In the third and final paper in the symposium, David Howell and Susan Wieler present new empirical evidence challenging the conventional skill-biased technological change explanation for rising wage inequality, and argue in support of David Gordon's contention that the rising wage inequality in the United States was driven primarily by shifts in bargaining power between employers and workers.