

# EDITOR'S REMARKS

## Modernity and Class

Much current debate about history and theory hinges around the meaning and the interrelationship of "modernity" and "class formation." Two essays in the last issue of ILWCH (no. 16) indicated how important recent studies in the history of women have been to the efforts of labor historians to come to grips with these concepts. The discussion continues in this issue. Pam Graves and Joseph White, reviewing a vast array of books and articles dealing with working-class women in Britain, conclude that "a feminine counterpart of the famous Standard of Living Debate" has pit "optimists" (mostly devotees of modernization theory) against "pessimists" (mostly influenced by Marxist thought) in fundamental conflicts over the manner in which women's experience in the modern industrial world is depicted. Out of the debate, they conclude, have emerged some widely accepted views of women's family and work roles in the 19th century, coupled with conceptions of the role of movements and the nature of "progress" that diverge sharply, one from another. On the basis of this assessment they offer a provocative agenda for future historical research.

The hearts and minds of workers the world over went out to embattled Spain in the 1930s. The dramatic birth, life and death of the Second Spanish Republic has understandably evoked an historiography as contentious as its career. In George Esenwein's analysis of recent books on the republic, the political meanings of modernity and class take the center of the stage. He concentrates his attention on the relationship between the socialists and the parliamentary republic in the years before Franco's rebellion.

Two developments of special importance to ILWCH itself are evident in this issue, but deserve emphasis. One is the restoration of closer ties with historical scholarship in Germany. Hermann-Joseph Rupieper of the Free University of Berlin has been especially helpful in this development, and the fruits of his efforts should become increasingly apparent in future issues. The second is the creation of a formal regional structure for the Study Group on International Labor and Working Class History. Dale Newman of the University of Pittsburgh has accepted the post of Coordinator for 1980, and John Laslett, Sean Wilentz, Nicholas Salvatore, Gary Fink, and Michael Hanagan have taken up the five regional positions on the Coordinating Committee. Their news and reports from will appear in forthcoming numbers of ILWCH.

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