

Hart Cantelon and Bob Hollands (eds.), *Leisure, Sport and Working Class Cultures: Theory and History*. Centre for Sports and Leisure Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada K7L 3N6, 1984. Bibliog. pp. 157. \$Can. 15 plus postage.

This is the fourth volume of collected papers to emanate from the Centre of Sports and Leisure Studies and another three volumes on 'Sport, Gender and Culture', 'Popular Culture' and 'Olympic Games and the Media' are planned. The Centre's multi-disciplinary 'workshop' papers feature prominent scholars of North America and Britain - Hart Cantelon, Richard Gruneau, Robert Hollands, Alan Ingham, Alan Metcalfe, Alan Tomlinson - whose aim is to explore sport (and for that matter leisure and popular culture) from a more theoretical perspective. The starting point for Metcalfe, and presumably all the Centre writers, lies in 'readings in the works of Karl Marx'.

Not all the papers in this volume are strictly on sport. In fact the initial offering of Hollands fits rather more under the heading of leisure; he is critical of the tendency of Stan Parker

and Alan Roberts to equate leisure with 'free' and 'voluntary' activity; there is no room here for leisure which emerges within the work situation, such as shopfloor games.

The other three offerings are more directly on sport. Particularly illuminating is Alan Tomlinson's discussion of sport in the working-class Lancashire town of Colne. As a left historian Tomlinson is interested in the broader question of why many thousands chose to watch a game of football or cricket rather than demand bread or social justice in the 1930s. Avoiding the simplistic perspective of Paul Hoch and Jean-Marie Brohm that sport is repressive and the opiate of the masses, Tomlinson suggests rather more subtle ways in which sport blurs class divisions and blunts economic tensions. There is, he argues, no unitary working-class ready to attack the inadequacies of the capitalist system. Some of the less respectable sections were involved in 'rough games', such as throwing stones, which was outlawed in Colne in the 1920s, whereas other sections found the sense of local community and inter-class activity in the Colne League Cricket team an attractive proposition. Many, Tomlinson concludes, chose to reconstitute themselves as 'Colners', rather than 'to mount an offensive against the social order'. While Tomlinson is not entirely in sympathy with this 'essentially conservative' stance of the Colne working class and while he also mourns with Stuart Hall about the lack of a 'mature culture of the working-class', he at least avoids the simplistic conspiratorial notion that sport was dreamed up by the state to oppress the workers.

Focussing on two communities, the miners of South Northumberland (England) and the Montreal working class, Metcalfe explores the emergence of a 'thriving sport culture' in the 1870s and 1880s, a crucial interface moment in history when middle class team games intruded upon traditional games. The triumph of the former was an uneven, complex and subtle process.

Ambiguities also abounded in the *Proletkul't* movement (1917-32) in the Soviet Union, a movement designed to promote proletarian art, literature, music and sport. Cantelon demonstrates that sport and culture was a problem area for Soviet ideologists and there were many discrepancies between official policies and the responses of workers and peasants.

Not everyone in sports history will want to pursue the questions and perspectives of the authors of this collection. However, all researchers will gain something from the questions raised, the theoretical issues mooted and the attempts to link sport with class and community. Now that writing on the history of sport is reaching a more mature level series writers will need to follow the example of this school of sports history and to explore and to justify their theoretical assumptions.

Richard Cashman  
School of History  
University of New South Wales