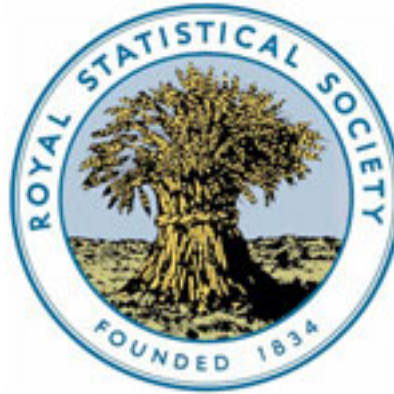


WILEY



British Labour Conditions and Legislation during the War by M. B. Hammond

Review by: L. L. P.

Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Vol. 83, No. 2 (Mar., 1920), pp. 309-311

Published by: [Wiley](#) for the [Royal Statistical Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2341092>

Accessed: 28/06/2014 15:49

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Wiley and Royal Statistical Society are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

unsuccessful in the main, against the novel situation thrust upon them. In a succeeding chapter on the Spitalfields Silkweavers, the fact is pressed that they "alone of textile workers" "obtained an "act for regulating their wages"; and their good fortune, and the maintenance, a rare exception in those troublous days, of "industrial peace," were, it is contended, tied closely to that Act. They became, in consequence, an "aristocracy amongst wage-earners," although, Mr. and Mrs. Hammond characteristically add, to discount too cheering an estimate, "it cannot be said that the price "paid for their orderly behaviour was very high." After the repeal of the Act, which remained in force for over fifty years from 1773 to 1824, their later history became melancholy reading, and their wages were "reduced to starvation level or below it." The "stress of "foreign competition," acknowledged as one factor, was not, we are reminded, the main cause of their wretched final destiny.

A chapter on the frame-work knitters, provoked, as our authors urge, to riotous frame-breaking by the failure of other law-abiding methods of seeking redress for clamorous grievances, leads to the concluding chapters on the Luddites. In them, we think, Mr. and Mrs. Hammond have made the most considerable addition in this instalment of their work to previous histories. They discuss in turn the action taken by and against the Nottingham, the Lancashire, and the Yorkshire Luddites; and they append to these descriptions a graphic, if a sordid, tale of the adventures of one of the odious tribe of *agents provocateurs* who were employed, to their deserved discredit, by the authorities. "Oliver the Spy" seems to have resembled the preparers of "cinema" films. The crimes, like the criminals, were the creatures of his own suggestion as much as, or more than, they were the spontaneous acts, or even the vague ideas of those whom he accused. The evidence of such informers was, of course, tainted; but it needed a firm just judge, not always found, to rescue the innocent from the snares set by the prejudiced ardour of inferior officials willing to accuse and eager to convict. It is, too, to be feared that in more exalted quarters ready use was made of, and large reliance placed on, such shady agents and dirty instruments. This dark corner at least deserved the unsparing light shed here upon it; and we are grateful for the pains and skill brought to this illumination. It has been, we imagine, no unwelcome duty which Mr. and Mrs. Hammond have thus discharged, with a triumphant gusto as frankly shown as their damning exposure is effective.

L.L.P.

10.—*British Labour Conditions and Legislation during the War.* By M. B. Hammond. v + 335 pp., large 8vo. New York: Oxford University Press, 1919.

If there be advantage in economic, as in many affairs, in "seeing "ourselves as others see us," then the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace is rendering Englishmen a service by including in its "preliminary economic studies of the war" such books as that

before us. It is not the sole example of frank and full accounts, written lately by American economists, of the measures taken, the experience undergone, and the results achieved by our statesmen and our public in the past few years. In that enormous struggle it is allowed that we have played a foremost part, and, before the United States came in, we bore the chief burden of finance. Unlike our position a hundred years ago in the Napoleonic contest we added to the strain on our resources the onus of a huge army recruited from ourselves. As of old we kept the seas open to our friends and closed to our enemies, and we replenished the impoverished revenues of our allies by large advances. This combined heavy weight did not make the handling of industrial matters at home less troublesome; and we can read the Ohio Professor's lucid and exact summary with the more satisfaction as we realise vividly with his help that hard knots, sometimes, it would seem, gratuitously tightened, were unloosed, and good sense removed, or passed round, many obstacles that appeared, and were, formidable. We may even seek congratulation on the maintenance of our wonted compromise between extremes in legislation and administration. Mistakes, of course, were made and jars occurred which could not be hid from so acute and informed an observer as the author of this book. But national unity baffled class-selfishness. We think that the Editor is right in discovering that the "aim of the individual system of economic philosophy" is "precisely the same as that of the system of so-called social solidarity," and that the "improvement of the economic life of the individual human being," sought equally by both, may sometimes need the enforcement, by greater intervention, of the principle that "private property is a public trust," or the fuller embodiment in practice of the idea that "the welfare of each is in a true sense the business of all," without justifying "many proposals of social reconstruction, not well thought out and not logically coherent," which are now being "foisted on the public attention." We flatter ourselves that the *via media* so conceived has been recently trod again by us as of yore.

Professor Hammond, indeed, lays stress on the epithet "preliminary"; and his account was prepared while the war was "still in progress." His "foreword" is dated the 1st of November, 1918. He has, he tells us, sought to give the character of a "narration" rather than that of an "interpretation" to his book; and he argues that a critical review of the "labour situation and administration in Great Britain during the war" should necessarily be postponed. But he has used "official material wherever possible," and, where that has failed, he has had recourse to the "best information available." He has, for example, employed freely the reports of committees of the British Association, written in a moderate spirit from a detached standpoint, as well as the absolute censure of the authorities proceeding from so confident a partizan as Mr. Cole. And, as Professor Kinley says, "his years of study of labor questions, and his familiarity with innovations in Australia and else-

"where," are high qualifications for this particular undertaking. We offer our grateful congratulations on its achievement. It was discreetly prepared and has been successfully discharged.

In successive chapters he has set in clear order the course of events from "English Industry and Labor at the outbreak of the "War" to the "Industrial Reconstruction" contemplated as its sequel. He has shown how quickly "industrial panic" was dispelled, and the fear of unemployment, for which grandiose plans were made, vanished soon with men, and more slowly with women, before the large call for recruits and the huge absorption of capital and labour of all kinds in meeting military and naval needs. He has reviewed the dealings of the Government with the Trade Unions, culminating in the Munitions of War Acts, to which he devotes appropriately a whole chapter. He assigns two more to the vexed but grappled questions of the supply and distribution of labour, and the so-called "dilution" which, imperatively required, was not easily accomplished. Wages, Cost of Living, Hours of Labour, Welfare Work and Unemployment are treated together in a further chapter, and another is concerned with Industrial Unrest. That increases of wages have lagged behind, or been overtaken by, rising costs of living, and that too long hours of work were soon discovered to be mistaken policy, defeating its own expectations, are, of course, known facts, to which our author attributes here the significance that is due. The causes to which "unrest" has been ascribed by competent investigators, both official and unofficial, and the directions traced by knowledge and authority as likely to be followed in "reconstruction," are set forth in these pages in a lucid convenient summary.

In his "narration" Professor Hammond has here and there introduced, dropping hints by the way rather than intruding comment, some interesting and instructive "interpretation." He lays what he admits may seem exaggerated stress on the Report of the Poor Law Commission, which, however, he argues, revealed the conditions existing among the poorer classes in the United Kingdom in 1909, and he thinks that the programme of social legislation enacted by the British Parliament in the years before the war, from the Trades Disputes Act of 1906 to the National Health Insurance Act of 1911, eased appreciably the subsequent situation. But he holds, nevertheless, that "industrial conscription," thoroughly disliked and stubbornly opposed as it was by working-men and their leaders, was, in fact, imposed on those of military age by such provisions as the clauses and the powers of the Munitions of War Acts. These are shrewd and apposite remarks; and, far from deprecating their occasional utterance, we could have wished that they were less sparse. Yet their rarity justifies our author's claim to be trusted as faithful narrator rather than be heeded or dismissed as an interpreter. He has, we do not doubt, chosen the wiser, if not the better, part.

L.L.P.