

Rhoda Howard concludes her book on "Ghana's integration into the world [capitalist] economic system" with the view that "as the past effects the present, so the future can render the past irrelevant; it is to be hoped that ongoing change in the world system, combined with continued analysis and internal change in Ghana, will remove its colonial heritage and re-orient it on the path to integrated economic, social and political development."

As this review is written (May 1979) conditions in Ghana are the worst in her post-independence history. At the same time, in Manila, the rich and the poor nations once again confront each other. The former, now more firmly than ever, have declared their unwillingness to offer further massive aid. Perhaps for the first time, at least publicly, the donor nations have pointed to the massive corruption prevailing among the leadership in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The masses of the poor stay largely silent bearing the burden of exploitation from within as well as the consequences of their "dependence" on the rich nations.

Both these books are important; both authors have a tight grip on realities and tell their stories without obfuscations and in clear and exact language; and both authors, leaning in the marxist direction, get at the grassroots and at the colonial and neocolonial structures which help, in part, to explain one of the tragedies of the century—the plight of the new nations (including the oil rich nations, if they did but understand the folly of their development plans)—while also giving us hope, as is revealed in Jeffries' really exciting account of the political behaviour and objectives of Ghana's militant (at times) railway workers and their union. Both authors add substantially to our understanding not only of Ghana but also of the structure of "oppositional activity".

While Howard takes us up to the period of independence, tracing the determined but uneven penetration of capitalism, Jeffries deals extensively with the post-independence period and how the railway workers and their union attempted to influence both the trade union movement as a whole and the structure of the Ghanaian State, the CPP and PP.

Howard applies, not too critically it seems to me, dependency theory, world system theory, and the concept of peripheral capitalism. Like Jeffries, and equally effective, she lays bare the foundations of class formation (in both rural and urban areas), while the former also explores the relationship between class, power and ideology as fashioned by wage workers. Jeffries' is a case study which concentrates on the complex issues of the evolution and manifestations of worker political and class consciousness, radicalism, reformism and the debate (now, mercifully, drawing to a close?) on the labour aristocracy theme—which he condemnns. Because the railway workers did show their mettle on numerous occasion, Jeffries concludes, I think fairly, that the "proletariat alone" might well have the organisational skills to act as a spearhead; yet he also observes that "in all realism, such a prospect [of a powerful and sustaining radical movement] must be considered extremely distant." A fair observation perhaps, but political forces can, quite unexpectedly, transform the internal power structure, particularly under the highly fluid conditions in Africa. African workers are in some respect situated to know "What Is To Be Done" than their western brothers.
although Jeffries generally casts the railway workers in a "defensive position" unlike Howard whose account of Ghanaian protest on issues of land, entrepreneurship and the cocoa hold-ups, reveals anything but defensiveness.

Jeffries uses a model of "political unionism" which allows for an explication of rank and file perceptions of the economic and social order. Howard on the other hand hammers home the theme of external oligopolisation of the Ghanaian economy and the evolution of formal structures (marketing mechanisms, investment, credit, the banking system, mineral extraction and external trade) which were eventually taken over by a small group of Ghanaians against whom workers have directed both hostile and emulative attitudes. Howard shows that over time incipient bourgeois elements took over the state which they turned to their particular advantage, with the result that the degree of integration of Ghana's economy into the world system has barely changed—although her trading partners are now more diverse. African entrepreneurship was needed but its initiative and latitude has always been limited and contained. Resource control, then as now, is beyond their reach and local manufacturing is controlled by foreign investors.

Jeffries is cautious to portray the railway workers as a homogeneous group. Internal factionalisation along lines of skills has (at various times if not consistently) dominated union policies and activities despite "an impressively high level of job commitment and stability." The engine drivers, a high status group, seems to have enjoyed an aloof position vis-à-vis others, a condition which rested in the "sectionalist tendencies of militant craft unionism." Hence it was this group who showed their consciousness and militancy which they expressed by forming their own Railway Enginemen's Union. Even the great hero of the railwaymen, Pobee Biney, could not heal this division to any extent.

Both authors reach beyond their immediate interests. We have here social history with depth. Although the railwaymen must be seen in their own (and often noble) light, their attitudes and actions are, as expected, cooperative with or in opposition to party objectives and ideologies. But neither the CPP nor the PP managed to bring the railway workers under close state control—a healthy sign had these workers used their clout more often to somewhat better advantage (and supported more energetically socialist goals) vis-à-vis the nation as a whole. In this they failed as they were often trapped in their own turbulent history which is perhaps a measure of their evolving class and political consciousness. Yet they did not seek power for its own sake, although the contrary assertion was often made by the state functionaries. Their concerns were for better wages and benefits. Thus, so it would seem, they were more often reformist than radical in their demands. They used the strike weapon (and the farmers withheld their cocoa) with generally effective results. They opposed the CPP and TUC elites and sometimes fought national budget measures, but then went their own way because, we are told, "the railway workers have long possessed a keen awareness of common class interest." On the whole they acted in a democratic fashion, often in the face of provocation and state repression both by the CPP and PP as the workers watched ever larger slices of the national cake appropriated by the top elite (including wealthy cocoa farmers). It is this which contributed to class formation which had began at an earlier stage and is discussed by Howard.

Both these books are first class studies and significant contributions to the political and economic history of Ghana. The documentation is detailed and the sequences flow in an orderly manner. Grim realities are exposed, but hope is also offered. Yet we also learn why Ghana, as other peripheral economies, cannot compete with Euro-American