

Virginia Yans-McLaughlin. *Family and Community, Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977, 286 pp., \$12.50.

Virginia Yans-McLaughlin has made a major contribution to the study of ethnic immigration history, in general, and to the existing knowledge of the Italian Americans, in particular. In *Family and Community, Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930*, she explores the relationship between the social and economic roots of the contadini from the Italian mezzogiorno and their life in urban industrial America.

Here is a revisionist interpretation consistent with recent studies of black families in the works of Alex Haley and Herbert Gutman. Professor Yans-McLaughlin agrees with Rudolph J. Vecoli's standard essay, "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of the *The Uprooted*," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 51 (1964), and she disputes Oscar Handlin's view that there was a "dichotomy" with abrupt "discontinuities between folk and urban societies" (p. 18). Her research has led her to conclude that the Italian American families from the south of Italy adjusted smoothly to the new environment in Buffalo, New York. To be sure, problems did exist, but the strong cohesive family tradition survived and even aided the transition.

This link between the Old World and the New World must be underscored. For example, underemployment was a common feature of the Italian peasant in the nineteenth century, and he learned to adjust to it by seeking alternative work experiences. In Buffalo, a leading industrial and transportation center in the early twentieth century, the Italians adapted to underemployment resulting from seasonal work, especially outdoor occupations. Cooperation among relatives and friends provided flexibility and opportunities for them. In addition, Italian women refused to accept jobs as domestics because this occupation conflicted with the concept that such work weakened the family as a noble and sacred institution.

Italian Americans have expressed concern over the ever-growing dissolution of contemporary family and community life. Professor Yans-McLaughlin provides an important underpinning for such concern. She constructs models of family and community as providing the stable reference points for the initial immigration shock waves. Her data reflect low rates of divorce, illegitimacy, and desertion resulting from the assertion of traditional Italian values regarding marriage, women, and sex.

It is refreshing to note the author's criticism aimed at recent social historians; she emphasizes what she considers the limits of quantitative data. Historical explanation based solely on quantification is inadequate. The author does utilize census data, church records, and other statistical evidence, but she also includes literary evidence and oral interviews to stress cultural

aspects. "Emotional bonds, sexual controls, affection, and charitable impulses do not countenance quantification" (p. 264).

The literature of the Italian Americans has been enriched by this carefully researched study of the Italians of Buffalo in the fifty-year period. Perhaps this research model and its conclusions will be analyzed in the future with other comparative studies of urban centers to provide a more comprehensive dimension of this important ethnic group.

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Ernesto Galarza. *Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, 405 pp., \$3.95.

The reader who is already familiar with Galarza's work will not find it surprising that once again he has done a painstaking job of writing this account of the history of agricultural workers in California during the years 1947 to 1960. Contrary to Galarza's own fears that the academically minded might find his book "insufficient" and the list of suggested readings "too thin," *Farm Workers and Agri-business in California, 1947-1960* provides the reader with a wealth of information based on careful research and on Galarza's own recollections of his experiences as a farm worker and union organizer during that period.

The author's engaging style captures the interest of the reader, be he a scholar or from the general reading public. The reader whose knowledge of the plight of the farm worker is minimal will find the first section of the book, entitled "Agri-businessland," particularly beneficial in that it gives basic background information on the land, water, labor, family farms, mechanization, state and federal agencies, legislation, etc. Galarza carefully ties in all these elements showing how they affected the farm worker before he moves the reader on to the actual encounters faced by the National Farm Labor Union during the years 1947 to 1952.

Starting with the DiGiorgio strike in 1947 by Local 218 of the NFLU in Kern County, there begins to unfold a series of strikes aimed at obtaining fair wages, better overall working conditions, and general correction of the more obvious abuses. Their success was very limited. In each case, the flame of unionism was being applied to the frozen structures of power, yet, as Galarza points out, "it was like trying to melt an iceberg with a candle."

With the enactment of Public Law 78 in 1952, which gave bracero hiring the sanction of federal law, the main target of the NFLU