Jacob names the most influential lobbyists and offers a rough typology: "the industrialists/financier merchant, the premium lobbyist, the middling lobbyist, the two-bit claims agent" (107). She notes two additional types who became influential only after the Civil War, women and reporters. She also makes a cautious defense of the lobby. In the years after the Civil War, she argues, the lobby had some corrupt members but "its emerging new style was more subtle, more focused on providing information than bribes, and more social" (5). It served an important function by helping the people influence what had become a far more powerful federal government. Its own reputation resulted from its being a handy "scapegoat" in explaining government corruption (130). In both her account of Ward's life and the history of lobbying, Jacob's observations are judicious, although some readers may think that, like Ward, Jacob has a generous spirit. Anyone interested in Washington and Congress during the years of the Civil War and Reconstruction or the history of lobbying will benefit from, and enjoy, *King of the Lobby*.

Gaines M. Foster
Louisiana State University

The Politics and Desires of Wage-Earning Women

VAPNEK, LARA. *Breadwinners: Working Women and Economic Independence, 1865–1920*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009. x + 216 pp. $70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-252-03471-8; $25.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-525-07661-9.
doi:10.1017/S1537781411000338

Labor leader and suffragist Leonora O'Reilly never fully embraced the reform politics of either elite women or working-class men in her long and vibrant career as a public intellectual and activist. Neither did many of the other wage-earning women's rights advocates brought to life by Lara Vapnek in her remarkable new study of workingwomen's political thought and practice between 1865 and 1920.

Breadwinners: Working Women and Economic Independence, 1865–1920 is impressive on many levels. Vapnek's prose is lively and her narrative well-paced. Her archival sleuthing is also comprehensive and imaginative.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537781411000338 Published online by Cambridge University Press

She relies on an array of historical sources—newspapers, letters, and speeches—which she mines with insight, producing magnificent in-depth portraits of numerous women reformers, elite and non-elite, familiar and obscure. Prominent middle-class figures such as feminist historian Mary Beard and New York Consumer League founder Maud Nathan are revealed from new and not necessarily flattering angles. Through telling detail and revealing quotes, lesser-known but influential working-class activists such as Jennie Collins, Aurora Phelps, and Leonora O'Reilly are introduced. As Vapnek intends, we are left wondering why these savvy and far-seeing wage-earning women reformers have remained on the sidelines of historical scholarship for so long.

Vapnek's book is not merely a project of biographical recovery, however, as worthy an effort as that is. She aims to show "how working women pursued equality by claiming new identities as citizens and breadwinners" and "how women's social class shaped their ideas of independence and their strategies for political transformation"(2). After the Civil War, Vapnek claims, working women developed new identities as "breadwinners," and she traces how, over the next half century, they agitated for economic and political rights not as mothers or consumers but as "worker citizens." Significantly, it was their status as wage earners that undergirded their sense of entitlement, not their work in the household, paid or unpaid. Indeed, one of the more interesting themes Vapnek pursues throughout the book is how workingwomen demonstrated their desire for economic independence by refusing household employment. Their antipathy to domestic service put them at odds with elite women reformers, as did their rejection of "charity in favor of self-support" and their insistence "on their right to speak for themselves"(7).

In the 1980s, Joanne Meyerowitz and Kathy Peiss cast wage-earning women in subversive roles, noting how their labor, living arrangements, and dating practices posed challenges to the gender status quo in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.[1] Vapnek extends this theme backward into the nineteenth century, making a full-throated case for wage-earning women as pioneer feminists in thought and deed. As Vapnek points out, the inclusion of working-class women's campaigns for economic rights upends the conventional narrative of feminist history: The Gilded Age, for example, becomes an epoch of flourishing activism, not of decline,

[1]Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage-Earners in Chicago, 1880–1930* (Chicago, 1988); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia, 1986).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537781411000338 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and the mass suffrage movement of the Progressive Era comes through as more continuous with the preceding decades, as working-class women join their elite sisters in seeking political, legal, and civil rights.

At the same time, Vapnek is keenly sensitive to the class nuances of women's reform politics. Each of her five chapters explores a "moment in which a group of wage-earning women demanded independence, bringing them into conflicts and alliances with elite advocates of women's labor reform" (7). In that sense, her book is as much about "classing" feminism as gendering labor history. She opens with an eloquent account of the Reconstruction-era reform efforts of Jennie Collins and Aurora Phelps, founders in 1869 of the Boston Working Women's League. I know of no other research that renders so fully laboring women's advocacy for inclusion as homesteaders and independent landowners and for access to skilled, higher-paying jobs. The elite New England Women's Club, formed in Boston immediately after the Civil War, urged instead that more workingwomen take up jobs as domestic servants. Those who had other options—mainly white, native-born women—soundly rejected this advice. Vapnek elaborates on these class tensions in chapter 4 where she offers a sustained and convincing analysis of the flawed efforts of elite women in the Progressive Era Domestic Reform League to solve the "domestic servant problem." Vapnek suggests that the strategies of elite women, which included upgrading the work through training and employment agencies, failed in part because elite women, despite their good intentions, refused to listen to what their own servants told them about the job.

In chapter 2, Vapnek analyzes four prominent "social investigations" of the "working woman" from the 1880s, including that by Leonora Barry, the leading female member of the Knights of Labor. All of the reports, Vapnek notes, ignored domestic service, the largest occupation for women aside from agriculture, thus laying the groundwork for later social policy excluding domestic workers. I would have welcomed a more extended discussion of how her depiction of the aspirations of female Knights compared with Susan Levine's classic description, especially given Vapnek's overarching theme of workingwomen's desire for independence through market work and Levine's contrasting emphasis on the value accorded domestic labor and domesticity by women and men in the Knights.[2]

[2]Susan Levine, *Labor's True Woman: Carpet Weavers, Industrialization, and Labor Reform in the Gilded Age* (Philadelphia, 1984).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537781411000338 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Vapnek's rendering of Leonora O'Reilly's life and politics in Chapters 3 and 5, based on liberal use of O Reilly's papers at the Schlesinger Library supplemented by painstaking research in a multitude of other sources, was eye-opening and moving. Despite her poverty, her sex, and her lack of formal education, O'Reilly held her own in reform circles. She founded the Working Women's Society in 1886, convincing Josephine Shaw Lowell and other well-to-do women to provide financial support for her campaign for trade unions and labor legislation. She also was a prime mover behind working-class women's suffrage organizing in this era, setting up a wage-earning women's suffrage league in New York modeled on a similar organization on the West Coast. Moreover, as was true for many labor feminists in this period, she tried her luck organizing alongside her fellow male trade unionists. She and New York City Central Labor Council head Edward King formed social reform clubs in the 1890s, where working-class men and women could read and debate political economy. All ideas were welcome except those that claimed universality, referred to as "general theories" (93).

This is one of the most revealing studies that I have read recently. At the same time, and as would be expected in so ambitious a project, Vapnek opens as many questions as she resolves. If workingwomen, as Vapnek explains in her introduction, defined "independence" as including the "ability to care for dependent family members"—in contrast with middle-class women who "conceptualized independence as full intellectual and professional development unhindered by the family claim"—then are working-women's desires and identities fully captured by positing them as "breadwinners" who claimed rights based on their market labor (2)? Or were workingwomen's reform impulses animated by multiple and overlapping identities, resting on, among other sentiments, the desire to be a good caretaker and family provider as well as pride in one's wage-earning capacities? Leonora O'Reilly suggested as much in her 1917 call for a movement premised on "social motherhood" where "care for others rather than the profit principle" would predominate (160). Perhaps just as there were multiple feminisms in the past, tied in part to the differing class experiences of women, there were also multiple labor feminisms, linked to family status, race, age, and other factors. The task then becomes capturing the complexities of laboring women's politics and tracing how these various impulses changed over time.

Dorothy Sue Cobble
Rutgers University

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537781411000338 Published online by Cambridge University Press