
NOTES

*Late-Comer or Early- Starter? New Views on French Economic History**

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Historians have traditionally pictured the French economy down to 1945 as a still life. Demographic and economic growth are seen to occur only very slowly when at all; the persistence of artisanal industry, polycultural farms, and a fragile financial system are major themes; miserly landlords, hesitant entrepreneurs, careless politicians, or infertile couples are held responsible for the greyness of the pictures. Some of these characteristics (such as the stagnation of the size of the population) are irrefutable, but others imply a moral judgement. It is often assumed — when not explicitly stated — that France is backward, retarded, behind the times, or old-fashioned, and that this is bad.

A simple listing of titles proves the point: there is Shepherd Clough's "Retardative Factors in French Economic Development in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" and his "Retardative Factors in French Economic Growth at the End of the Ancien Régime and During the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Periods", Rondo Cameron's "Economic Growth and Stagnation in Modern France, 1815-1914", and Tom Kemp's "Structural Factors in the Retardation of French Economic Growth".¹ J.H. Clapham said point blank: "It

* Since this article was prepared in 1982, a number of publications on Modern French economic history have appeared. In some, the stereotypes of retardation persist. Most, however, confirm the revisionist view of French economic vitality presented in this paper.

¹ S.B. CLOUGH, "Retardative Factors in French Economic Development in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", *Journal of Economic History*, 6 (1946), Supp., 91-210, and "Retardative Factors in French Economic Growth at the end of the Ancien

might be said that France never went through an industrial revolution".² David Landes wrote several influential articles castigating French entrepreneurs for lack of initiative.³ Herbert Heaton, in his economic history of Europe, concentrated on the "impediments" to French development and added his voice to the judgement of entrepreneurs: "France was slow in finding such energetic captains of industry as those who were driving British enterprise along new paths".⁴ A.L. Dunham could say simply: "The slowness of progress of the Industrial Revolution in France between 1815 and 1848 is well known".⁵ And this attitude seeped down into textbooks and popular versions of history. One example, chosen at random, will suffice: from C.R. Fay's book on the Crystal Palace comes the statement: "France, we say, never had an industrial revolution: only in her politics did she break violently from her past".⁶ Even historians who take a more balanced view — such as Tom Kemp, Charles Kindleberger and François Crouzet — tend sometimes to accentuate the negative.⁷

Historians unfavourably compare growth rates for France with those for England in the early nineteenth century, with those for Germany in the late nineteenth century, and with those for the United States in the twentieth

Régime and During the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Periods", in M. KOEY (ed.) *Studies in Economics and Economic History: Essays in Honor of Harold F. Williamson* (Durham, N.C., 1972); DAVID S. LANDES, "New Model Entrepreneurship in France and Problems of Historical Explanations", *Explorations in Entrepreneurial History*, 1 (1963) 56-75; R.E. CAMERON, "Profit, croissance et stagnation en France au XIXe siècle", *Economie appliquée*, 10 (1957) 409-444, and "Economic Growth and Stagnation in Modern France, 1815-1914", *Journal of Modern History*, 20 (1958) 1-13; TOM KEMP, "Structural Factors in the Retardation of French Economic Growth", *Kyklos*, 15 (1962) 325-350. (I have borrowed this list from WILLIAM H. SEWELL JR, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Régime to 1848* (Cambridge, 1980) p. 302, note 6; Sewell is among those who take a different, more positive view, of French economic history).

² J.H. CLAPHAM, *Economic Development of France and Germany, 1815-1914* (London, fourth edition, 1936) p. 53; the first edition was published in 1921.

³ DAVID LANDES, "French Entrepreneurship and Industrial Growth in the 19th Century", *Journal of Economic History*, 9 (1949) 45-61 and "French Business and the Businessman: A Social and Cultural Analysis", in E.M. EARLE (ed.) *Modern France: Problems of the Third and Fourth Republics* (Princeton, N.J., 1951).

⁴ HERBERT HEATON, *Economic History of Europe* (New York, 1936).

⁵ ARTHUR LOUIS DUNHAM, *The Industrial Revolution in France* (N.Y., 1955) p. 420.

⁶ C.R. FAY, *Palace of Industry, 1851: A Study of the Great Exhibition and its Fruits* (Cambridge, 1951) p. 87.

⁷ C.P. KINDLEBERGER, *The Economic Growth of France and Britain, 1851-1950* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964) and his essay, "The Postwar Resurgence of the French Economy", in STANLEY HOFFMAN (ed.) *In Search of France* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963) pp. 118-158; the section on France in TOM KEMP, *Industrialization in Nineteenth Century Europe* (London, 1969) pp. 52-80 and *Economic Forces in French History* (London, 1971) and the works of François Crouzet (see footnotes 8 and 20 below).

century; they refer to the *bas de laine* mentality or unwillingness to innovate. Some inexplicably compare so-called unmodernised, but pretty, cities such as Angers or Dijon with unlovely Victorian Manchester or Bochum. These attitudes have led to a peculiar obsession with negative questions. Why did France *not* modernise? Why did industry *not* develop more rapidly? Why did agricultural productivity remain so low? Why were entrepreneurs timid, workers lazy, and farmers stupid? Why did France not measure up to the standards set by other nations, and why were Frenchmen so opposed to "progress"? In short, explanations seem to centre around French failure to do this or that.

But research on both sides of the Atlantic has attacked this view of French economic development, just as contemporary world affairs have called into question the assumptions on which such judgements rest. These revisionist arguments suggest that our view of French economic history be recast in a more positive mould.

Legends about France's economy centre on three problems. First, there is the question of periodisation. Economic historians have searched in vain for a Rostovian "take-off"; unable to pinpoint a date, they assume France never entered a period of sustained growth. Yet many have argued that French economic history is marked by great breaks — for example, between the old regime and the nineteenth century, or in the twentieth century, between the inter-war years of stagnation and the post-World War II period of growth. Others have emphasised a feeble continuity. For them, the French economy was wounded during the Revolution, limped along during the first half of the nineteenth century, recovered only during the Second Empire, but did not regain enough strength to weather the war of 1870 and the depression of 1873. Then the sick man had a spell of good health from the 1890s to World War I, returned to the sick-bed after the Great War, and did not get onto his feet again until the 1950s. Secondly, there is the idea that France was backward *tout court*. Simply stated, this implies that France has always lagged behind in modernisation and has never lived up to its potential, because of both external challenges and domestic weaknesses. A third problem, a corollary, is that France lagged behind England in particular. Since Great Britain is the prototype of industrial change, it is inevitable (and proper) that other nations be measured against the British standard. In doing so, most historians have judged France to come up short. Yet in the past few years, various writers have come forward to revise these conceptual assumptions.

On the question of timing, we have known for quite a while that the French economy was healthy in the eighteenth century. François Crouzet's well-known *Annales* article of 1966 and his other studies point up the strength of France in the old regime. Crouzet's work, as he himself states, "has tried to play down the 'sharp contrasts' between the French and English economies dear to the textbooks". Not only was France as strong as England, Crouzet maintains, but because of earlier French advances, there was no need for such technical and economic innovations as took place in late eighteenth century England. "France

was not disastrously behind", he concludes.⁸ Even if this is so, many would contend, the Revolution would intervene to halt economic development.

The Revolutionary experiment and the Napoleonic regime did rein in French development, and the disorientation that resulted undoubtedly limited growth. But it is unfair to view the revolutionary decades as either wholly aberrant to the course of French economic history or as totally destructive. Capital was drained away in wars, and blood was drained away in fighting. But the sale of *biens nationaux* did redistribute property and break up large estates, even if to a lesser degree than once thought. The new law code, generally blamed for the parcelisation of holdings, did provide for a distribution of land which responded to many needs. Neither measure condemned agriculture to inefficiency. The loss of France's overseas empire, by war and sale, limited possibilities for colonial investment, but it has been shown in different contexts that empires are not always profitable. Finally, although Waterloo was an economic as well as a political defeat, as Tom Kemp and others have pointed out, that did not end French overseas commerce or destroy ship-building. On balance, however, the Revolutionary epoch was unfortunate for France's economy. (It was not an unqualified bounty for the British, it should be added).

What about the poor, belaboured Restoration? Here there was a very important development in agriculture, still the chief sector of the economy. William H. Newell charts per capita agricultural production, overall production, yield, and the size of the labour force for these years.⁹ He concludes: "The agricultural revolution in France is seen to start in 1815-24, not after mid-century as most of the literature asserts". French agricultural output grew at approximately 1.2 per cent per year from 1820 to 1870, which is not far behind England's rate of 1.45 per cent annual growth. The reason for the growth was the increase of productivity in land and labour, which Newell credits to the spread of mixed farms, "characterized by decline in fallow, growth of planted meadows, and use of manure fertilizers". Yields were higher in the north than in the south of France, but the new farming methods were being widely and steadily disseminated. Agriculture was being transformed, and "it is even possible that agriculture has been a leading sector, rather than a retardative force in French economic development". Newell appears correct in saying: "The French agricultural revolution is more a product of the first half of the nineteenth century than the second half". The Restoration years and the July Monarchy are, therefore, not so lean as generally thought.

The Second Empire need not detain us, as most historians have recognised the economic growth of that period, most notably in the construction of

⁸ FRANÇOIS CROUZET, "England and France in the Eighteenth Century: A Comparative Analysis of Two Economic Growths" in R.M. HARTWELL, *The Causes of the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1967) pp. 139-174. Cf. DENIS RICHET, "Croissance et blocages en France du XVe au XVIIIe siècle", *Annales*, 23 (1968).

railways.¹⁰ Almost all indices show that the last years of the July Monarchy and most of the Second Empire were a boom period. If the French economy ever experienced a take-off — a debatable proposition — then it happened around the mid-nineteenth century. The agricultural growth chronicled by Newell prepared the way for the industrial and transport revolutions of Napoleon III's reign. The next period, the Third Republic, is a mixed bag of economic results. Just as did the rest of Europe, France experienced a great economic upheaval in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, what used to be referred to — probably rightly — as the Great Depression. Falling prices, the phylloxera, the Méline tariff, and increased migrations are familiar characteristics of the years from 1873 to 1896, but it is important to remember that the French economy continued to grow during this period.

Speeding through the century, we arrive at the year 1896, the date of a major spurt in the French economy. (Most historians now prefer this date to 1906 as the start of an up-turn). The economic growth from 1896 to the beginning of World War I is well known. The point to make here is that some works see this as the genesis of post-1945 economic development. A lengthy analysis of post-World War II growth by J.-J. Carré, Paul Dubois and Edmond Malinvaud compares the pre-World War I and post-World War II periods and finds the origin of post-war trends in the *fin de siècle*.¹¹ Rising educational levels and greater migrations to cities are two of them, but capital formation and increasing productivity also go back to the end of the 1800s. (So do declining birth rates; the fertility rate dropped more rapidly in the twenty years preceding the First World War than at any other time). It was during the *fin de siècle* and Belle Époque that France made up for most of the "retardation" in economic development, if retardation there was. Carré, Dubois, and Malinvaud conclude: "The historian trying to find the beginning of a long acceleration in the rhythm of French growth could without a doubt situate it as validly in 1900 as in 1950". They point to the continuity between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, just as Crouzet points to the connections between the eighteenth and nineteenth.

Carré, Dubois, and Malinvaud do not undertake a revision of views on the boom of the 1920s and the bust of the 1930s.¹² But they do remind us of a couple

⁹ WILLIAM H. NEWELL, "The Agricultural Revolution in Nineteenth Century France", *Journal of Economic History*, 33 (1973); see also his *Population Change and Agricultural Development in Nineteenth Century France* (New York, 1977).

¹⁰ See, for example, ADRIEN DANSET, *Naissance de la France moderne* (Paris, 1976); the Second Empire is now undergoing something of a rehabilitation in general.

¹¹ J.-J. CARRÉ, R. DUBOIS and E. MALINVAUD, *La Croissance française: Un essai d'analyse économique causale de l'après-guerre* (Paris, 1972).

¹² DEREK ALDCROFT, *The French Economy, 1919-1939* (London, 1972) is the best account in English. The standard French work is ALFRED SAUVY, *Histoire économique de la France entre les deux guerres* (Paris, 3 vols, 1965-1972); a perceptive shorter work is CLAUDE FOHLEN, *La France de l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris, 1966).

of valuable points: "If French production stagnated between 1930 and 1940, productivity continued to grow in a quite noticeable way". Looking at long-term evolutions in various branches of industry, they find that "the progress realized by production and productivity do not appear exceptional because they lead one to find levels comparable to those which would have been attained if the great crisis and the war had not interrupted the tendencies which prevailed from the beginning of the century". Thus, like the Restoration, the inter-war years are not entirely a trough, as very important developments did occur. Carré and company dwell on the maintenance of the length of worktime as a feature of the post-World War II world as an example of a trend which can be traced to this earlier period. Even the increase in population — which Carré discounts as a factor in post-war growth — began in 1942, not after the war. Finally, the authors minimise the efficiency of post-war developments in stimulating economic growth; as one instance, they maintain that the workforce was not expanding but was practically stagnant down to 1962. The result, for them, is that the end of the war did not mark a watershed in French economic history. Richard Kuisel has shown another connection between the pre- and post-war periods: the genesis of post-war planning (the hallmark of the contemporary French economy) lay in the war years in the plans of both Vichyites and Résistants.¹³ And the rapid growth of the Fifth Republic's economy, from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, is closely tied to the trends of the previous years.¹⁴

The point of all this is that there exists a great continuity in French economic development: old and new regimes are not separated by a great divide, as it would be easy to imagine, and there are also profound and precise connections between the inter-war years and the post-1945 period. Stops and starts there were, but the forward movement of French economic development did proceed, and it started back at the time of the Bourbon monarchs, perhaps even earlier. As Jan Marczewski concluded twenty-five years ago: "Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the economic growth of France has been following a continuously rising curve".¹⁵ Trying to choose a specific date between old and new economic regimes or locate a take-off appears more difficult and unnecessary than ever.

Richard Roehl in a 1976 study agrees with these views.¹⁶ "I wish... to

¹³ RICHARD F. KUISEL, "The Second World War and the Economic Renovation of France", paper presented to the Society for French Historical Studies, Bloomington, Indiana, March 1981; see his *Capitalism and the State in Modern France* (Cambridge, 1982).

¹⁴ BELA BALASSA, "The French Economy under the Fifth Republic, 1958-1978", in WILLIAM G. ANDREWS and STANLEY HOFFMAN (eds) *The Impact of the Fifth Republic on France* (Albany, N.Y., 1981) pp. 117-135.

¹⁵ JAN MARCZEWSKI, "Some Aspects of the Economic Growth of France, 1660-1958", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 9 (1961) p. 386.

¹⁶ RICHARD ROEHL, "French Industrialization: A Reconsideration", *Explorations in Economic History*, 13 (1976) 233-281.

maintain", he says, "that something different is occurring in eighteenth-century France [from what was happening in England] — specifically, that modern economic growth in France has its beginning there. The nineteenth century then ceases to be paradoxical and becomes fully explicable; it represents the continuation of a long-term trend of economic growth." Roehl treats the second major misconception of French economic history that I mentioned, the idea that France was purely and simply backward. To show that France was not really backward, Roehl takes Alexander Gerschenkron's well-known characteristics of economic backwardness and applies them to France. According to Gerschenkron, latecomers to industrialisation will see a rapid and intense growth in output, an emphasis on producers' goods, large businesses, technological and capital borrowing, an important role for banks and the state, virulent ideologies, a passive role for agriculture, and considerable pressure on consumption levels.

According to Roehl, France does not fit any of these situations. There was gradual, non-intense growth; a relatively high proportion of light, consumer goods; lack of concentration; an ability to obtain technology and capital largely from native sources; minor roles for banks and the state; no virulent ideologies; a positive participation from agriculture; and a tendency for material standards of living to advance more or less in pace with economic growth. Thus, *reductio ad absurdum*, Gerschenkron's thesis must be wrong (if France is backward) or France must not be backward. Of course, Gerschenkron is not the issue, France is. So Roehl concludes: "French industrialization exhibits very well the features likely to be associated with relative advancement and early industrialization". For good measure, he repeats that the origins of this are anterior to 1789. Bringing out his big gun, he then adds that France "was the first country, of those which we would generally agree to designate as industrialized, to commence upon the path toward that end". With a wide view of industrialisation — seeing not just factories, but a whole host of developments, such as market strategy, incentives, and allocations, private property and capital markets — then France emerges as the paradigm.

That hypothesis obviously replaces England with France as the prototype, no mean feat. This brings us to the third point, the specific comparison between France and England. Historians have traditionally asked, "Why was England first?" and assumed that England was the model. N.F.R. Crafts argues that such a question is misconceived and should be discarded.¹⁷ This rejection should take place not only because the question is misconceived, but (I would add) because the value judgements underlying it may be suspect. Crafts joins Crouzet and Roehl in linking two centuries of French economic development and placing the results alongside the English record. "When the achievements of the French economy in the eighteenth century are taken into account, it no longer seems

¹⁷ N.F.R. CRAFTS, "Industrial Revolution in England and France: Some Thoughts on the Question, 'Why was England First?'" *Economic History Review*, 30 (1977) 429-441.

obvious that taking the long view should imply seeking reasons for French inferiority."

With that in mind, we can look at the performance of the French and British economies in the nineteenth century. Here the major evidence is a brilliant study by Patrick O'Brien and Caglar Keyder, *Economic Growth in Britain and France, 1780-1914*.¹⁸ O'Brien and Keyder undertake a sophisticated analysis of income and real wages, labour productivity, and capital resources. Then they match these up with population figures — a simple enough thing to do, it would seem, but a correlation which many scholars avoided. The traditional equation has been that slow population growth plus slow economic growth equal retardation. Not so, say these authors; in fact, quite the opposite.

The slower increase in France's population meant that economic growth could take place at a lower level and maintain significant per capita increases in all sectors. O'Brien and Keyder write: "On the simplistic and false assumption that rates of change in commodity output were independent of the rate of growth of population, if the population of France had grown at the British rate, it is possible to calculate that by the end of the century French commodity output per capita would have fallen to one-third of the British level". But this is contrafactual. The population of Great Britain stood at 9.4 million in 1770 and 36.5 million a century later, meaning a four-fold increase; by contrast, France had 26.5 million people at the end of the eighteenth century and 39 million at the end of the nineteenth, only a one-third increase. If production and population are correlated there is no significant difference between British and French growth rates. That is the thrust of O'Brien and Keyder's argument.

Although their book is rich in statistics and charts, O'Brien and Keyder do not stop with cliometric explanations. They venture into a wide-ranging comparison of British and French social and economic structures and conclude that the two nations are almost entirely different. Take agriculture, for example. Traditional historians have emphasised the fertility of the French soil. O'Brien and Keyder, on the other hand, calculate that "the French farmed within a physical environment that (hectare for hectare) was inferior to the natural endowment available to British agricultural workers". Some specifics back up the contention: only 42 per cent of the land surface of France was land of prime quality, versus 47 per cent of Great Britain; 19 per cent of French land was unfit for agriculture as against only 7 per cent of Great Britain's territory. Animal products were much more important in Great Britain than in France; Britain carried on an animal-intensive pastoralism, while France concentrated on crop-

¹⁸ Published in London in 1978. See the summary of their arguments: PATRICK O'BRIEN and CAGLAR KEYDER, "Les Voies de passage vers la société industrielle en Grande-Bretagne et en France, 1780-1914", *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 34, November-December 1979, pp. 1284-1303; as well as an earlier but still incisive article by O'BRIEN, KEYDER and D. HEATH, "Agriculture in Britain and France, 1815-1914", *Journal of European Economic History*, 6 (1977).

raising. The animal power per worker employed in agriculture was at a ratio of 1:1.6 in Great Britain, at 1:2.6 in France. In productivity, France did fall behind Great Britain in some sectors. But in the important field of cereal production, if French farmers had used land equal in quality to Britain's, their yields would have been comparable or higher. Furthermore, attitudes in the two countries differed. Frenchmen were more adamant than Britons about remaining on the land; the migration rate was consequently lower in France than in Britain. This meant more pressure on the land, particularly on land of inferior quality, which accounts for some of the unfavourable statistical results. Thus, it is wrong to condemn French agriculture as inefficient, since natural resources, social structures, and attitudes were different from those in England.¹⁹

The same holds true for industry. In brief, O'Brien and Keyder say that British industrial superiority was limited to mining, iron, steel and copper smelting, shipbuilding, production of construction materials, the printing industry, and the manufacture of wooden articles. That is certainly not an inconsiderable set of industries. But the authors also show that "by the early twentieth century French labour produced more per head than British labour throughout most sections of the massive textile and clothing industry". In industry, as in agriculture, France's different evolution can best be explained by structural variations: slower urbanisation, emphasis on specialised products, the use of family labour in small units of production, and the system of land tenure. These differences do not (and should not) wipe out the disparities between industrial production in the two nations. But the conclusion is "that the techniques of production and the scale and form of industrial organisation found operating in French industry for much of the nineteenth century were in most cases well adapted to the demands that confronted industrialists in that country". The French were doing what was appropriate for the French, in short.

O'Brien and Keyder do not study the service sector in the two economies, which is unfortunate. Admittedly, it would be a hard task, but one wonders what the results would be — might they not also show parity or at least a parallel development between France and England? Neither do the two authors emphasise different standards of living, the "quality of life", although at one point they intimate: "In contrast to their counterparts in France... more of the British lower classes lived in the penumbra of a factory system which spread too slowly

¹⁹ For other revisionist views of French agriculture, see NICOLE SOUBEYROUX-SELEFORTRIE, "Changes in French Agriculture between 1862 and 1962", *Journal of European Economic History*, 9 (1980) pp. 351-400; COLIN HEYWOOD, "The Role of the Peasantry in French Industrialization, 1815-80", *Economic History Review*, 34 (1981) pp. 359-376; VERNON W. RUTTAN, "Structural Retardation and the Modernization of French Agriculture: A Sceptical View", *Journal of Economic History*, 38 (1978) pp. 714-728; PAUL HOHENBERG, "Change in Rural France in the Period of Industrialization, 1830-1914", *Journal of Economic History* (1972) pp. 219-240. For a revisionist view of the peasant economy, see PETER MCPHEE, "A Reconsideration of the 'Peasantry' in Nineteenth Century France", *Peasant Studies*, 9 (1981) pp. 5-25.

to raise productivity and to really improve their hard lives". At the beginning of the twentieth century, inequalities in land ownership were much less marked in France than in Britain, and the landless formed a far smaller proportion of the rural population in France than in England. The fact speaks for itself.

But their main point can be proved without recourse to evaluation of the quality of life. "French industrial output and the productivity of labour grew over the long run at rates that compare favourably with standards set by British industry." O'Brien and Keyder thus see a *different*, not a *retarded* development — the subtitle to their book sums it up: "Two Paths to the Twentieth Century". They echo what Newell, Roehl, Crouzet and others have been saying. Back in 1974, François Crouzet wrote in *History*: "The pattern and process of industrialization were different from those England had followed". Focusing on entrepreneurs, often the target of charges of backwardness, Crouzet argues that French manufacturers "were innovators, but in a different way from the British, because they depended upon a different constellation of factors: they invented new products and new fashions rather than new machinery". But Crouzet is still willing to say that the industrial revolution in France "was not only belated but incomplete".²⁰ O'Brien and Keyder, as well as Roehl, are willing to go beyond it; their work *fait le point*: France was not backward, either qualitatively or quantitatively. Sewell sums it up: "It now appears that the French experience must be seen as one of the earliest and most successful cases of sustained modern industrial and economic growth and not as the anemic and imitative efforts of a late-starting 'follower' of Britain. ...The French pattern of economic growth, which combined substantial industrialization with the continued expansion of handicrafts and of peasant agriculture, should therefore not be seen as a failed effort to imitate British achievements but as an entirely appropriate response to the French situation."²¹

So where does that leave us? The revisionists show that France's agricultural and industrial development generally represented an appropriate response to her geographical and demographic situation and to the ambitions of her population. In the race with Great Britain, France was not a runner-up — either she was neck-in-neck or she was running a different race. The wider implications of that can be summed up with a quotation from O'Brien and Keyder: "Our figures seem to threaten the whole paradigm of a first industrial revolution and its diffusion to backward 'follower countries' on the European mainland".²² They

²⁰ FRANÇOIS CROUZET, "French Economic Growth in the Nineteenth Century Reconsidered", *History*, 59 (1974) 167-179. Cf M. LÉVY-LEBOYER, "La Croissance économique en France au XIXe siècle", *Annales*, 23 (1968); Lévy-Leboyer was one of the first to reassess traditional opinions on French economic growth.

²¹ SEWELL, *op.cit.*, pp. 147, 153.

²² This obviously attacks the traditional models of industrialisation and modernisation, and that attack also can focus on England. See, for example, E.A. WRIGLEY, "The Process of Modernization and the Industrial Revolution in England", *The Journal of*

thus agree with Roehl. Although they do not mention the reference, the contention of Bernard Brown that France may provide the best model of economic development for Third World countries comes to mind.²³

Much of what is involved is value judgement. It used to be assumed that bigger cities, bigger factories, and so on were signs of advance. Since England achieved those things first, England was not just the first, but the best. Many developments have suggested that, historically and morally, such might not be the case. O'Brien and Keyder sum up their *Annales* article this way: if you consider the amount of English production serving the urban economy, the inequalities of wealth, and the working conditions and living conditions in nineteenth century England, "It is possible to consider the long term development of France as a more humane transition and perhaps a not less effective one in the transition to industrial society". It would be a mistake to reverse others' prejudices to vaunt France's path as the proper one. But certainly the French path is as valid a route.

Finally, what directions does this suggest for French economic history? One is the need for economic historians to be concerned with human experience and the quality of life; not only should these enter into their calculations about productivity and growth, but they should bring back economic history to its real purpose of studying human lives. Historians should also stop apologising for French backwardness and stop expending all of their energy trying to account for some sort of retardation. What is needed is a study of specific areas of the French economy, regional studies to chart the varieties of development, and some first-class monographs. (Why do so many village studies stop at World War I, if not at the Revolution?).

Some of the ones already available point to the great variety in patterns of economic development, some of which are unexpected. For example, a study of economic development and political attitudes in Provence has proved that socialism could and did take root among a peasant population and that their support for the left was a conscious and rational choice.²⁴ Other studies provide critiques of facile theories of modernisation and the misapprehension that modernisation and industrialisation are synonymous.²⁵

We also need new views of such economic subjects as sharecropping — one article shows that in the Allier the usually denigrated share-cropping was not as

Interdisciplinary History, 3 (1972) 225-259. For me to criticise modernisation theory and the political attitudes which underpinned it — although these were the bases of retardationist views of France — would be flogging a dead horse.

²³ BERNARD E. BROWN, "The French Experience of Modernization", *World Politics*, 21 (1969) pp. 366-391; TIHOMIR J. MARKOVITCH, "La Révolution Industrielle: Le cas de la France", *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, 52 (1974) pp. 115-125.

²⁴ TONY JUDT, *Socialism in Provence, 1871-1914: A Study in the Origins of the Modern French Left* (Cambridge, 1979).

²⁵ For an example from Burgundy, see my *Economy and Society in Burgundy since 1850* (London, 1984).

economically irrational or unprofitable as has generally been thought.²⁶ One would like to see more work on the connections between periods of French economic history previously thought to be discrete, as well as more studies of some slighted periods (and regions). And despite several recent works,²⁷ a concise but thorough text on French economic history remains to be written. It is to be hoped that when such studies do appear, they will look at French economic history from a French perspective and not a biased or incorrect foreign one.

²⁶ S. SOKOLOFF, "Land Tenure and Political Tendency in Rural France: The Case of Sharecropping", *European Studies Review*, 10 (1980) pp. 357-382.

²⁷ PETER COFFEY, *The Social Economy of France* (London, 1973) is a rather confused general account, while François Caron, *An Economic History of Modern France* (New York, 1979) is highly technical. Both take account of the revisionist views but do not totally accept them. ROGER PRICE, *The Economic Modernization of France* (London, 1975) has been revised (to cover a longer period) as *An Economic History of Modern France, 1730-1914* (London, 1982) and is a thorough thematic treatment. Mention should also be made of the ambitious and excellent *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, edited by FERNAND BRAUDEL and ERNEST LABROUSSE (Paris, four volumes in seven parts, 1970-77).