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Charles Patrick Neimeyer. *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army.* New York: New York University Press, 1996. xvi + 244 pp.p. ISBN 978-0-8147-5782-6; ISBN 978-0-8147-5780-2.

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In *America Goes to War* Charles Patrick Neimeyer debunks the myth of the virtuous yeomen citizen-soldier who won the Revolutionary War. Instead, he argues that the Continental Army filled its ranks with "African Americans, ethnic minorities, and 'free white men on the move."' These groups proved "least able to resist the blandishments of a recruiting party and most willing to part temporarily with their civil liberties in exchange for a steady wage" (p. xiv).

Neimeyer develops his thesis by examining the social composition of Continental troops who enlisted in each region of Colonial America and finds a majority from the lower class. He also devotes chapters to Irish, German, Black, and Indian participation. Each of these groups had their own experiences. White immigrants learned of the social and economic possibilities that America offered and thus participated in the growing sense of nationalism which occurred in the years after the Revolution. Blacks found that the war gave them opportunities to obtain freedom through military service or escape, while it further deteriorated the conditions of Native Americans. Settlers dispossessed them of their lands at an accelerated rate because of the Revolution. This even proved true for groups such as the Tuscaroras and Catawbas who had assisted the colonists in their efforts against the British Empire.

Perhaps this book's most thought-provoking theme involves the 'rank and files' perception of themselves as "freedmen" and "volunteers." Such a status entitled them to their "customary due" or "social wage." Neimeyer asserts that the soldiers' belief in such ideals explains the unrest that plagued the Continental Army, especially in the war's later stages. Rather than mere reactions to sporadic pay and inadequate provisions, mutinies, and desertions represented attempts by the rank and file to defend their legitimate rights. The soldiers had enlisted for a set period of time and for specific compensation and expected these to be honored. When Congress attempted to extend terms of service for the duration of the war and proved unable to provide for the army, soldiers reacted with a variety of individual and collective actions. Neimeyer notes that such responses parallel American resistance to the seemingly arbitrary acts of Parliament which sparked the Revolution. He also believes that these actions were consistent with a larger pattern of resistance to authority that existed in the eighteenth-century Atlantic community.

America Goes to War provides an interesting overview of the Continental Army very much in keeping with the "new military history." Neimeyer neatly expands upon the work of historians such as Fred Anderson, James Titus, John Shy, and Charles Royster who have examined colonial and Revolutionary troops. The book's extensive bibliography, filled with numerous primary sources, is an added benefit to both students and scholars. Several typos and gratuitous remarks in the endnotes, however, suggest that more time should have been spent converting this 1993 Georgetown University dissertation into a book. There is also the carelessly mislabelled painting on the dust-jacket. Still, *America Goes to War* is a useful book which adds to our knowledge of Revolutionary America.

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