H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

David Monod. *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. viii + 438 pp. $25.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8020-7604-5; $58.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8020-0650-9.

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Published on EH.Net (September, 1997)

More than thirty years ago, Ellis W. Hawley's *New Deal and the Problem of Monopoly* (1966) depicted contradictory efforts to strengthen retail competition and consolidate the market position of independent merchants. David Monod's *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939* goes a long way toward explaining this anomaly. Monod's provocative study also offers fresh conceptual tools for dealing with much-maligned subjects such as small business, traditional economic values, the consumer revolution, and the lower middle class.

Using individual business records, bankruptcy court proceedings, and trade journals, David Monod has compiled a rich account of small businessÎÒ adjustment to the emerging mass market in early twentieth-century Canada. Monod acknowledges that "main street" retailers unified behind a "folkloric rhetoric" that portrayed shopkeepers as small, independent, competitive, ethical, community-based, service-oriented, and content with fair and honest profits. Yet the mercantile "collective memory" excluded poorer, "back-street" competitors, ethnic traders, and female merchants, who remained outside normal credit and commercial ties.

Monod demonstrates how the mass merchandising of the department and chain stores was first perceived as a threat to the perpetuation of traditional shopkeeper virtues. By providing public access to stock, for example, department stores threatened the moral authority and autonomy of the old-fashioned merchant. In turn, advertising eliminated the selling functions of individual dealers. The new economy also compelled suppliers to tighten credit, forcing merchants to abandon consumer credit services and concentrate on lower prices. As early twentieth-century manufacturers turned to mass-produced, prepackaged goods and brand-name advertising to meet the demand for cheaper products of uniform quality, independent retailers found themselves increasingly dependent on producers, suppliers, and consumers.

Groups like Canada's Retail Merchants' Association (RMA) responded to the chains and department stores with predictable criticism. Yet survival in the modern economy depended upon adjustment to big business norms. *Store Wars* blazes conceptual territory by outlining the complex and contradictory response of retailers to the increased competition of the consumer revolution and mass merchandising. Adopting a professional ethic of "progressive retailing," mid-sized and larger enterprises in the RMA pushed for licensing, trade, health, and safety regulations to discourage "illegitimate" competition by back-street traders. Conflicts between advocates of inflationary price-fixing and deflationary mass production, however, divided the independent retail lobby.

The heart of Monod's story concerns the 1920s and 1930s, when shopkeepers were more motivated by the desire for economic security and increased profits than by fears of modernization. As department and chain stores faced mounting rental, maintenance, and advertising costs, trade associations like the RMA sought competitive advantages for members by promoting cooperative purchasing and the elimination of credit services. Grocery trade groups and some wholesalers embraced modernization through resale price maintenance (RPM) agreements, which the author equates with the systematization of retail-manufacturing relations. Meanwhile, independent Canadian pharmacists organized against traditional "jobbers" and the smallest retailers, portrayed as the agents of "backwardness" in distribution.

During the economic depression of the 1930s, independent trade activists pictured the crusade against chain stores as "a struggle for the soul of humanity." Yet Monod points out that modernizing shopkeepers focused their ire on perceived distribution abuses such as bulk buying discounts and advertising allowances, not mass merchandising itself. Although Depression populists such as Reconstruction Party leader H. H. Stevens promised a social order based on small property and decentralized au-

thority, the impact of retail activism on Canadian politics was mainly symbolic. Dismissing Stevens's rhetoric as "retail folklore purged of its content," Monod suggests that shopkeepers embraced dissident politics as a means of addressing the emotional agony of the economic disaster. Meanwhile, independent merchants joined trade groups to gain access to politicians. Once legislators enacted minor reforms such as the prohibition of secret rebates, retailer organizations outlived their usefulness. Predictably, almost all the decadêÒs discriminatory legislation had been repealed or seriously amended by 1939.

Store Wars's account of independent merchants and the consumer economy provides a model for integrating business history with the study of social structure and political movements. Monod reminds us that economic modernization was a plastic process in which independent retailers and consumers actively participated. The authorÎÒs clever use of semiotics explains how shopkeepers "vitalized the folkloric structures" of traditional values while embracing modernization. Casting aside conventional notions of "small business" unity and the "reactionary" character of the "lower-middle class," *Store Wars* deserves scrutiny by social and business historians.

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Citation: David A. Horowitz. Review of Monod, David, *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939.* EH.Net, H-Net Reviews. September, 1997.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=1267

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