in relation to the aim of rebuilding the reciprocal obligations of civil society. There is the abiding suspicion that this really means new ways of exploiting the unpaid caring and nurturing work of women. This suspicion will remain until there is greater clarity about the proposed new institutional forms of civil society and the way in which paid and unpaid work is to be distributed.

More specificity is also requiried in relation to the ways in which decisions about resource allocation would actually be made. This is particularly true of decisions which have an impact on 'distant obligations', either in time (for future generations) or place (at the national and international level).

Such detail can only arise from an effort to relate broad debates about morality, rights and obligations to specific historical circumstances. Wolfe does this in relation to the distributional aspects of the welfare state. To move further similar questions need to be raised in relation to decisions about the division of labour and capital at regional, national and international levels.

Central to this issue is the role and impact of developments in communication and information technology on social and economic relations. Such developments have the potential to either open up or close off avenues for reciprocal support and decision-making. On the one hand we can think of the Soviet State's aversion to the introduction of photocopiers, fax machines and modems. On the other there is the likelihood that market forces will lead to a dualised society in terms of access to information content and communications technology. But what does it actually mean to talk of a role for non-state, non-market mechanisms in decisions about the production and development of technology? Who should be making these decisions and how?

Whose Keeper does not address these questions in detail. But it does raise them in a way which challenges the pseudo objective and technocratic assumptions which dominate far too much of the current debate about technological change and the future of social and economic relations. By placing moral dilemmas at the centre of this debate Wolfe has made a valuable contribution which I am sure will come to be seen as a classic as we wrestle with the theoretical and practical challenges of making history in the post-industrial period.

John Wiseman
Phillip Institute of Technology, Melbourne

Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day *by David R. Roediger and Philip S. Foner*
(Greenwood Press, New York, 1989), pp. xii + 380, $US39.95, ISBN 0-313-26062-1.

At the start of their final chapter, entitled 'The Hours Stalemate since 1939', Roediger and Foner observe that historical evidence now suggests that until the late Middle Ages an eight-hour working day was the norm in Europe. The working day was progressively lengthened by industrial capitalist forces, necessitating — in the United States — about 150 years of unremitting struggle before it was rolled back to eight hours. In the last half century there has been no further progress towards reducing hours of work, despite tremendous increases in the productivity of labour and the ubiquitous presence of labour-saving technologies.

This book is essentially a chronological account of the struggles by trade unions, socialists and reformers to establish shorter working hours, in industry after industry, from the early 19th century to the present. Of the book's 380 pages a quarter are devoted to footnotes — a testimony to the authors' extraordinary historical knowledge of American labour history. The historical detail iteslf, with its seemingly endless repetition of accounts of strikes in different industries and different states only adds to the general reader's sense of inordinately slow progress, even though this is not the authors' intention. For them, the history of the struggle over working hours is, in many ways, a history of what has been best in the American labour movement.

Central to Roediger and Foner's view of the shorter hours movement as synonymous with all that has been progressive in American labour history are three assertions: that compaigns to reduce working hours have had a unique ability to unite workers across lines of craft, race, sex, skill, age and ethnicity; that they have linked political and trade union struggles; and that they are intimately linked to workers' desires for control over the 'fruits of their labour', and over their non-working lives — in other words, that they manifest workers' commitment to their own emancipation in the fullest sense.

The first two assertions are firmly supported by the historical analysis, at least until World War II. The third, however, remains less well established. While socialist leaders may have been campaigning for shorter hours so that their comrades could spend more time in workers' colleges, or campaigning on broader political issues, it is far from clear that this is what striking employees had in mind for their increased leisure time. And without a more sustained consideration of the role of gender in the organisation of time outside the workplace — in both domestic labour and the consumption of leisure time — the analysis remains startlingly one-sided. (Later, the authors illustrate the need for increased wages to indulge new leisure interests with the desire to purchase "cabins, fishing boats, outboards, and skis" (p.262), as though these were 'family' preferences).

The authors are well aware, however, that the demand for reduced hours took on a different political complexion at different moments, depending on which interest groups were most active in defining the demand. Thus at certain times it was the liberal reformers who kept up the pressure out of a concern for the health and efficiency of the workforce rather than out of any interest in extending workers' control. The other familiar theme here, is, of course, the linking of shorter working hours to campaigns to ensure women were able to maintain their primary duties of being wives, housekeepers and mothers.

It is perhaps the authors' lack of sustained sociological focus which prevents them from coming to any real conclusions about the lack of activity around hours since 1939. Their hopes for renewed labour movement activity hinge on the weakest of straws — the interests of family farmers who have to take second jobs, the interests of young and minority workers who face little prospect of employment, and indicators of some generalised preference for leisure over marginal earnings. They do not seriously ask why, for some sections of the workforce, the working day seems to be about the right length. Why should eight hours a day and 40 hours a week seem to constitute a natural floor below which there is no generalised pressure for further reductions?

In Britain and Australia, at least, one of the loudest voices in contemporary campaigns for shorter working hours has been that of the women's movement. For women in the paid workforce a shorter working day is of prime importance,

both to allow them to cope with the needs of their children and elderly dependants, and also to allow *men* time for such responsibilities. Yet in Australia campaigns for shorter working hours, which have had much less success than in Germany, are still campaigns for increased leisure — for the nine day fortnight, or extra holidays, 'lumps of leisure' which enable better use to be made of cabins, fishing boats, outboards etc. This directly echoes Barry Jones' views about the natural logic of the eight hour day. He argued that "many employees prefer, once they have arrived at office or factory to stay there for eight hours or so and accumulate the benefits of overall work reduction in the form of usable slabs of time — a shorter working year, or a shorter working lifetime".[4] However, these demands are not simply demands for increase family leisure, but for increased *male* leisure. A six hour working day might well increase female leisure. For many men the eight hour day might not require reducing because any such reduction in paid labour would simply lead to increased involvement in unpaid domestic labour.

The trade union movement in America, as elsewhere, is still overwhelmingly a man's movement. Roediger and Foner finally (on the last two pages) acknowledge the importance of women's interests in shorter working hours but nowhere recognise the possibility that men's and women's interests might be opposed in this matter, or that the trade union movement may be an obstacle to certain forms of radicalism.

REFERENCES

1. B. Jones, *Sleepers Wake! Technology and the Future of Work,* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1982, p. 208

Belinda Probert
CIRCIT.

Electronic Highways for World Trade: Issues in Telecommunication and Data Services *edited by Peter Robinson, Karl P. Sauvant and Vishwas P. Govitrikar* (Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado 1989), pp. xiii + 367, $AUS55.00, ISBN 0-8133-7764-1.

It is generally acknowledged that the modern global economy is becoming more service-oriented. This general shift has been attributed to a number of factors, the most important of which is the growth of international services industries associated with the worldwide spread and deployment of communication and information technologies. These services industries are invariably organised around the manipulation and generation of information. These information-based services are significant, not only because they contribute directly to the volume of international trade flows, they also enhance the tradeability of other services.

The relationship between telecommunications and trade has never been more explicit in the history of international trade. Telecommunication policies, shaped primarily by technical and administrative concerns for network interconnection, will not only affect the operation of telecommunications systems but also the international flow of information and trade in services. The trade policy dimension of telecommunications was not formally recognised until the GATT Declaration on Trade in Services in 1986. Nevertheless most trade negotiators and policy-makers are hazy about the treatment of services within a formal trade regime.