The Development of the Mechanics’ Institute Movement in Britain and Beyond

Supporting further education for the adult working classes

Martyn Walker, University of Huddersfield, UK

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This book questions the generally accepted view that mechanics’ institutes made little contribution to adult working-class education from their foundation in the 1820s to 1890. The book traces the historical development of several mechanics’ institutes across Britain, establishing that many supported both male and female working-class membership before state intervention at the end of the nineteenth century resulted in the development of further education for all. Chapters of the book draw on historical accounts in supporting the claim that the movement, until now seen as of little national significance, was a success, and particularly for the working classes for whom they were established.

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