



The **INDUSTRIOUS** **REVOLUTION**

**CONSUMER
BEHAVIOR
and the
HOUSEHOLD
ECONOMY,
1650 to the
PRESENT**

JAN de VRIES

THE INDUSTRIOUS REVOLUTION

In the long eighteenth century, new consumer aspirations combined with a new industrious behavior to alter fundamentally the material cultures of northwestern Europe and North America. This "industrious revolution" is the context in which the economic acceleration associated with the Industrial Revolution took shape. This study explores the intellectual understanding of the new importance of consumer goods as well as the actual consumer behavior of households of all income levels.

Jan de Vries examines how the activation and evolution of consumer demand shaped the course of economic development, situating consumer behavior in the context of the household economy. He considers the changing consumption goals of households from the seventeenth century to the present and analyzes how household decisions have mediated between macro-level economic growth and actual human betterment. Ultimately, de Vries's research reveals key strengths and weaknesses of existing consumer theory, suggesting revisions that add historical realism to economic abstractions.

Jan de Vries has been a professor of history and economics at the University of California at Berkeley since 1973. At Berkeley he holds the Sidney Hellman Ehrman endowed chair in European history. De Vries has also served as chair of the History Department, dean of Social Sciences, and vice provost for Academic Affairs. He has written five books, 65 published articles and book chapters, and 45 book reviews. In addition, he is co-editor of three books. He is the recipient of the Woodrow Wilson and Guggenheim fellowships, among others; has held grants from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health; and has held visiting fellowships to the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, and All Souls College, Oxford. He has been elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the British Academy, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society. He is the 2000 recipient of the A. H. Heineken Prize in History.

The Industrious Revolution

*Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy,
1650 to the Present*

JAN DE VRIES

University of California at Berkeley



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"Combining an encyclopedic knowledge of early modern northwestern Europe with a vigorous determination to use recent theory to unlock its meaning, Jan de Vries' *The Industrious Revolution* is fascinating, provocative, and illuminating. No student of history or economist, can afford to ignore it."

– JOHN BREWER,

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"This is an important book. The appearance of 'new consumer goods' elicited a growing work effort and provided a spur to economic growth even more important than the industrial revolution itself. A similar profusion in the last few decades (and the rise of education) has driven women out of the home again and back to work. De Vries is a masterly and imaginative historian, who demonstrates enduring regularities behind the craving for goods over the last three centuries."

– AVNER OFFER, *All Souls College, University of Oxford*

"One of the most accomplished and influential economic historians of our age has produced a magisterial work that will force the entire profession to rethink the history of the household, work, leisure, and consumption in Europe over three centuries. Based on a wide and deep knowledge of his subject, de Vries has taken a novel and original approach to the joint determination of income and consumption by households. The 'Industrious Revolution' will be discussed and taught for many years."

– JOEL MOKYR, *Northwestern University*

In the long eighteenth century, new consumer aspirations combined with a new industrious behavior to alter fundamentally the material cultures of northwestern Europe and North America. This "industrious revolution" is the context in which the economic acceleration associated with the Industrial Revolution took shape. This study explores the intellectual understanding of the new importance of consumer goods as well as the actual consumer behavior of households of all income levels.

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