

Book Reviews

Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St Paul

MARY LETHERT WINGERD, 2001

Ithaca: Cornell University Press

pp. xiii + 326, \$29.95 (cloth)

In *Claiming the City*, Mary Lethert Wingerd has written an important book that bridges the fields of labor, ethnic, religious, and urban history. Her main focus is St Paul, Minnesota, and the remarkable civic compact that undergirded a long era of social peace and union power in the state's capital city. Wingerd is well aware that this civic compact was an unusual achievement. She continually contrasts it with the class conflict and union weakness that characterized Minneapolis, St Paul's "twin city" on the other side of the Mississippi River. This contrast leads her to an exploration of political economy, ethnicity, and religion in shaping the trajectory of labor relations in the two cities. It also leads her to emphasize "the importance of place in the formation of identity and political culture." "In the minds of workers in St Paul," she concludes, "Minneapolis was another world" (2).

St Paul was, by reputation, an "Irish town" (39), and therefore a Catholic town, too. At the center of Wingerd's story are the Catholic Archbishop John Ireland, an Irish immigrant, and the railroad magnate James J. Hill, a Scotch-Irish Canadian who, improbably, married an Irish Catholic, became the leading benefactor of the city's rapidly expanding Catholic infrastructure, and hired large numbers of Irishmen to work for his Great Northern Railroad. It was the parallel "empires" of Ireland and Hill that, figuratively speaking, put St Paul on the map; and it was their leadership that played the key role in brokering the era of social peace that characterized the city from the mid-1890s until World War I.

Wingerd points out that by the early 20th century, when Minneapolis employers were hailing their city as the "Open Shop Capital of America," 31% of St Paul's labor force was organized, the city's Trades and Labor Assembly included 76 local unions, and many St Paul employers were committed to maintaining closed-shop agreements with their unionized employees. Part of the impetus came from the railroads and the model of "responsible unionism" that prevailed there. Part of it came from the kinds of employment that differentiated St Paul from Minneapolis: "commercial versus industrial capitalism, trade versus manufacture, independent enterprise versus corporate combination" (32). Moreover, St Paul's production was geared toward the local market. The Trades and Labor Assembly encouraged its members to "buy in our home town" (92), and the city's employers recognized the need to maintain a level of wages high enough to facilitate the consumption of local products.

Wingerd believes that the relative absence of class conflict in St Paul, especially in comparison to Minneapolis, with its famous teamsters' strike of 1934, has led historians to "speculate that some sort of inherent conservatism stunted worker activism" in the capital city, "probably due to the influence of the Catholic Church on its heavily Irish-Catholic working class" (2). Her goal is to challenge those assumptions by taking religion seriously as a component of working people's experience and by "taking St Paul workers seriously on their own terms" (2). To do so, she argues, "calls into question the prevailing models of labor history and class politics and demands a more nuanced inclusion of religion into the mix of social history" (2). She spends a good deal of time elaborating the vitally important role of the Catholic Church in mediating labor relations in the city. Here the key figure was

Archbishop Ireland, who supported workers' right to organize while insisting that "the Church must be kept before the American people as the great prop of social order and law" (102). The archbishop "remained enormously popular with the city's [predominantly Catholic] working people" (103), all the more so because his "right hand" in the field of labor was the brilliant and outspoken Father John A. Ryan, whose ideas "were more radical than the program of a good many moderate, dues-paying socialists" (105). Minneapolis elected a socialist mayor in 1916, but in St Paul the business unionism of the AFL, the active guardianship of the Catholic Church, and the willingness of the city's employers to "deliver the goods" made socialism seem "both unnecessary and irrelevant" (145).

All of this changed during World War I, when new economic and ideological pressures destabilized the civic compact and brought class conflict to the forefront in industrial relations. Riots swept the city during a bitter streetcar strike in the fall of 1917. In December, the Trades and Labor Assembly called a general strike. Soon St Paul "went from a model of closed-shop unionism to an almost entirely open-shop city" (229). It took years to repair the damage. But by 1934, when Minneapolis became a major crucible of worker insurgency, St Paul had reestablished its civic compact and the support its organized workers offered to their "twin city" brothers and sisters was merely perfunctory.

Wingerd tells this long and complex story with consummate skill. Ironically, however, workers and even unions remain largely faceless in this study of labor history. We hear the voice of the labor press and follow the careers of labor activists such as Cornelius Guiney and William Mahoney. But apparently the sources did not allow for a substantial engagement with the lives of ordinary working people. And then there is the question of place. This is a book that privileges the local and argues that a sense of place is every bit as important as class, ethnicity, gender, and race in the shaping of identity. But does the rootedness and continuity that characterize St Paul's history also characterize the nation's history? The U.S. is not only a nation of immigrants, but a nation of migrants, of people on the move—from countryside to city, from south to north, and, more recently, from the city to the suburbs and the rustbelt to the sunbelt. Perhaps this frenetic mobility requires the imagining of place as a source of equilibrium in otherwise unsettled lives. But the imagining of place and the continuous reality of place are by no means synonymous. Nonetheless, at a time when historiographical trends have highlighted the epic of migration in transnational settings, Wingerd boldly goes against the grain and insists that we not lose sight of the local as a vital focal point of historical investigation.

Ultimately, *Claiming the City* is compellingly written and laden with insights about the complexities of class experience in an American city. In addition, the author's treatment of ethnicity, especially Irish ethnicity, is superb and merits a long discussion in its own right. Suffice it to say here that *Claiming the City* will endure as an impressive study of the dynamics of ethnic identity as well as an elaboration of class and an evocation of place.

BRUCE NELSON, *Dartmouth College*

Coercion, Contract, and Free Labor in the Nineteenth Century

ROBERT J. STEINFELD, 2001

Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

pp. 329, \$60.00 (cloth); \$23.00 (paper)

Labor historians have traditionally imagined "free labor" as a product of the emerging free market societies of the late 18th and 19th centuries, a condition that enabled both workers and employers to terminate their relationships at will. In this persuasively argued volume, Robert Steinfeld argues that this was not at all the case. The legal record demonstrates that both in Britain and the U.S., workers remained unfree until late into the 19th century. They won their freedom in both places only after the protracted agitation of organized labor. If

this is the case, and Steinfeld offers a powerful argument on its behalf, we will need to re-think the nature of labor relationships, and particularly to re-evaluate the sharp analytic division between slave and free labor.

Steinfeld's close study of the Master and Servant Acts in British law, and of the application of common law in the U.S., demonstrates that most labor on both sides of the Atlantic was subject to continuing patterns of coercive regulation. In Britain, the law at first imposed reciprocal obligations on employers and their employees: the one to provide work, the other to perform it. But even as employers slowly divested themselves of their obligation to offer regular employment in the 1840s and 1850s, Parliament continued to hold workers criminally liable if they walked out on their jobs. Through most of the 19th century, British courts imposed criminal sanctions on workers who violated their contracts to seek steadier work or higher pay. Despite the protests of workers' organizations, Steinfeld calculates, at least 11,000 workers were prosecuted, and hundreds put to hard labor for three or even six months when they refused to fulfill contracts. Parliamentary efforts to drop criminal sanctions against non-performing workers did not begin seriously until 1863, and not until the 1870s did efforts to provide workers with equal treatment under the law take shape.

The American colonies rarely used penal sanctions against native-born white people after the mid-18th century; and the U.S. ceased to impose corporal punishment on indentured servants soon after, making enslaved African-Americans the largest group of workers subject to physical punishment. But, Steinfeld argues, white Americans found themselves subject to equally restrictive financial coercion. Employers paid wages at lengthy intervals (sometimes only yearly), and refused to pay back wages to workers who did not fulfill their contracts. Courts enforced these wage forfeitures as legitimate penalties, forcing workers to choose between giving up their pay or staying in unwanted jobs, effectively eroding the distinction between slave and free labor. Organized workers ultimately overturned these practices by demanding legislation to force employers to pay wages regularly and at shorter intervals.

Particularly in Britain, where the focus of the book lies, Steinfeld makes his case by tracing a complex path through the parliamentary debates and court decisions of more than a century. This is legal history at its best, following the development of law through its interpretive twists and turns. But it is not social history—it will not satisfy those who seek explanations for the process of change in the economic influences operating on employers or workers or in the ideological and political compulsions that moved them. On the U.S. side, where the narrative proceeds more deliberately through cases decided before state courts, Steinfeld pays little attention even to the legislative debates.

This renders some questions inevitable. Race emerges as the unexamined and often invisible question mark. For example, while the courts in northern states like Indiana and Massachusetts early on refused to uphold the validity of sanctions for those who violated long contracts, those in racially divided states like South Carolina and Hawaii enforced continuing "involuntary servitude" in the form of long, irrevocable contracts into the early 20th century. Steinfeld describes the legal differences, noting their coercive potential, without deploying race as an explanatory variable. Skill remains only a subtext though it was clearly a key item in employers' decisions as to whether to contract for a term of labor or not. Nor does gender enter into the analysis. Though we are told that women and children were excluded from at least one crucial revision of the labor law (219), we never learn how or why this matters. Women appear rarely in the British cases cited, yet when the scene changes to the U.S., they are the subject of a good deal of the legal history. But just as we never learn how much of the coercive enforcement was inspired by racialized sensibilities in the U.S., so we don't know how much of it was constrained by marital status, or motherhood. Steinfeld tells us that regulating "free labor" was of a piece with maximum hour and minimum wage legislation without noting how much of that struggle was fought by and through the agency of women.

These objections are not meant to detract from the crucial achievement of this book. *Coercion, Contract, and Free Labor in the Nineteenth Century* effectively destroys the notion

that “free labor” was a product of market forces, positioning it, instead, as a successful achievement of workers’ struggles. To be sure, Steinfeld offers evidence that only several hundred workers, over the course of a century, were subject to criminal sanction in Britain, and to wage forfeiture in the U.S. But the coercive nature of law is measured by the constraints it imposes, rather than by numbers, and by those standards “free labor” remained more an ideal than a reality for most of the 19th century. British workers understood the illusion: even as the law nullified contracts of slavery, British workers identified those who agreed to irrevocable multi-year contracts as “slaves” (237). U.S. workers equally understood that a person could be prevented from leaving employment by financial coercion, and that this, too, constituted involuntary servitude.

ALICE KESSLER-HARRIS, *Columbia University*

Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader

YEVETTE RICHARDS, 2000

Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press

pp. xv + 366, \$29.95 (cloth)

This is what we know about Maida Springer: she was a pioneering African American woman in the U.S. labor movement who first came to prominence in the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU) in New York in the 1930s, then went on to become one of the AFL-CIO’s key organizers in Africa from the 1950s through the 1970s. We can now appreciate her thanks to Yvette Richards’s rich new biography, which brings Springer to center stage with tremendous originality. It’s a relief to read about African Americans in the labor movement and labor’s international affairs from a refreshing new angle. Richards, in recounting Springer’s story and, especially, her activism in East Africa, explores in fascinating detail the world of AFL/AFL-CIO international affairs and the very specific, often excruciating role of African Americans within it.

This is what we still don’t know about Springer: first, who exactly she was at a personal level. In order to have access to interviews with Springer and her private records, Richards had to agree to only examine her public life. So we’re unfortunately left guessing about what made Springer tick, and the personal price she paid for such a pioneering life—though we get a few clues, and Richards does an admirable job within her parameters. Second, we are left guessing about the big political mystery lurking behind her African affairs: the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). We enter here a big open door onto the AFL-CIO’s activities in Africa, only to discover, almost as in a Harry Potter novel, there’s another brightly lit door deep inside, sealed shut.

Springer was born in 1910 in Panama, the daughter of a British-identified Barbadian father and Spanish-speaking Panamanian mother. In 1917 her mother moved Maida to Harlem, where the mother soon became a Garveyite, the key to Springer’s later commitment to Africa and Pan-Africanism. Maida was a reticent child, reserved and formal. In response to repeated racist incidents her mother transferred her from one white-dominated school to another, until she finally got Springer admitted to Bordentown Manual and Industrial School, an all-black boarding school in New Jersey. Modeled on Tuskegee, Bordentown only educated students up through the 10th grade. But its teachers worked hard to teach their students the self-esteem and perseverance they’d need to make their way in the white world, whatever their aspirations. And they brought in the best of African American leaders and intellectuals to speak before them.

Springer graduated in 1926 into the bleak employment world facing all African American women. She worked in a laundry, as a cook, tried hairdressing, and then landed in the garment industry. In 1927 she married Owen Springer, who had a good niche repairing dental instruments, and they had a son. In 1933, in part influenced by A. Philip Randolph,

Maida joined ILGWU Local 22 and launched into the rich world of its educational activities, which offered her a second education—in trade unionism and into a broader world of labor and social activism she never left.

In following Springer's activities, Richards provides a wealth of insights into the role of African Americans in the ILGWU, particularly in the 1930s. On the one hand, the union provided education, a rhetoric of equality, respect for an African American woman, and a career. On the other hand it was full of racism and tokenism. Some of the stories involve tiny incremental struggles against white attitudes. Other are of grudging accommodation—and in rare, revealing glimpses, of Springer's illusionless understanding of exactly what was up. "I never misunderstood" (60), she said of one white co-worker's partial acceptance of her. The racial story of the ILGWU is all mixed in with its gender dynamics, as a group of Jewish and Italian men never relinquished control of "their" 95% female union. Springer carefully pushed the limits while eventually refusing an overtly tokenist vice presidency of the international.

Local 22 was a hotbed of followers of Jay Lovestone, the former head of the Communist Party, U.S.A. who had been purged for opposing Stalin—and who would go on to become a chilling anti-Communist and, with Irving Brown, head of the AFL-CIO's international affairs in the 1950s and 1960s. Charles Zimmerman, a leading Lovestoneite, mentored Springer in the local and eventually promoted her to educational director. While Springer evidently never joined the Lovestoneites, she found them more appealing than the Communists who, she says "patronized" her. "They loved me too much" (49).

In 1945 the AFL leadership selected Springer as a delegate to investigate women's employment in wartime Britain. There she met George Padmore, who introduced her to the vibrant world of African, Caribbean, and Afro-British activists in town for the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester. From then on Springer gave her life to the cause of African trade unionism. While still working loyally for the ILGWU, throughout the rest of the 1940s and the 1950s she opened her home in the U.S. as a generous center for visiting African labor leaders. Beginning in 1955 she herself traveled to Africa for great lengths of time, by 1961 as representative of the AFL-CIO International Affairs Division.

For the bulk of her book Richards examines the world of sub-Saharan African labor that Springer thereafter swam in, largely in Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana. There's a great deal here about splits between different individuals and their organizations. Richards spends much of her time on the question of whether these unionists would disaffiliate from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), based in Europe, and formed in Cold War rejection of cooperation with the World Federation of Trade Unions, which included Soviet affiliates. She paints a portrait of arrogant, racist, patronizing colonial labor officials in the ICFTU, of whom the Africans wanted to rid themselves—but with whom the AFL-CIO leadership was in a complicated dance for domination, and didn't want to offend.

Which brings us to the \$64,000 question: what *was* the AFL-CIO doing in Africa, and what exactly was Springer's role? We know, and Richards acknowledges, that both Brown and Lovestone were working with the CIA in Africa in this period. We know that they were Springer's supervisors, and that she had come of age, politically, among Lovestoneites. It's also clear that Springer obviously isn't going to talk about the CIA with Richards. Richards, in turn, accepts Springer's point of view on her activities, and in her text essentially denies any connection, while stressing Springer's lack of enthusiasm for anti-Communism, citing her letters to Lovestone, for example.

In Richards's eyes, the big difference between Springer and Lovestone is that Springer was African American and, along with George McCray (another key AFL-CIO activist in Africa) or A. Philip Randolph, always kept her eyes on the prize of anticolonialism. She demonstrates that all three were more committed to independence and more sympathetic to its real challenges than were white AFL-CIO officials. For Springer, labor solidarity work was a form of Pan-Africanism through which she was able to dedicate her life to helping

African labor emerge under the worst conditions of repression and poverty. At the same time she was clearly also a careful, savvy ILGWU and AFL-CIO loyalist.

Who was using whom here? Zimmerman, the Lovestoneites, and the ILGWU leadership were using Springer to prove their commitment to African Americans and women. Lovestone and Brown were using Springer to promote anti-Communism in Africa—they knew how valuable an African American woman could be. Various African labor leaders, in turn, were using her to get funding, training, and free trips to the U.S. But on the other hand, Springer was herself using Lovestone, Brown, and the AFL-CIO to funnel resources to African labor and support independence. She was deeply enthusiastic about all the labor projects she aided in Africa. Perhaps her most important contribution was the publicity she achieved in the U.S. for the cause of African labor. She was always committed to women workers, and used her powers to divert resources to their training and leadership development.

On the biggest level, though, the CIA was using the AFL-CIO throughout this period to promote U.S. imperialism. Much of the money to support Springer's activities came from the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) and the State Department. I only wish Richards had pulled back to a larger discussion of AFL-CIO objectives in Africa. In the end, the question is less whether Springer knew of CIA involvement, than how, or if, her activities might have served larger U.S. imperial interests.

Richards' book raises big questions about international labor solidarity. How do sincere U.S. trade unionists, who want to work for transnational class solidarity, avoid replicating relations of imperial domination? The issues are all the more complicated when they involve solidarity of African Americans with other African peoples.

Richards has done a compelling job here of showing how important Springer was, and of exploring the ways in which Springer navigated the upper worlds of the AFL and AFL-CIO as an African American woman. She provides tantalizing information about AFL-CIO activities in Africa, garnered for the first time from Lovestone's and Springer's papers and from the records of the AFL-CIO International Affairs Division, in the George Meany Archives. How exactly a visionary, dynamic, and savvy woman like Springer served or subverted U.S. imperialism still lies behind another door.

DANA FRANK, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

Capital Moves: RCA's 70-Year Quest for Cheap Labor

JEFFERSON COWIE, 1999

Ithaca: Cornell University Press

pp. 304, \$29.95 (cloth); \$16.95 (paper)

The paradigm is falling.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, labor historians constructed a powerful framework for explaining organized labor's fate in the post-World War II era. During the 1930s and early 1940s, they said, the militant wing of the labor movement fought to make American capitalism more democratic. With the onset of the Cold War, progressive unions reached an accord with their one-time corporate adversaries. For their part, unions abandoned their social democratic agenda and acknowledged corporations' right to control the American economy. In exchange, business leaders accepted unions as a permanent part of the economic landscape and agreed to negotiate in good faith over wages, hours, and fringe benefits.

Labor certainly gained something from the accord, according to the standard interpretation: in the 1950s and 1960s, union members won ever-more generous contracts and enjoyed a higher level of security than anyone thought possible just a decade earlier. By

surrendering any right to directing the national economy, however, unions also left themselves dangerously vulnerable. They suffered the consequences during the economic crisis of the 1970s, when corporations shed industrial jobs at an extraordinary rate, demanded unions roll back their hard-won gains, and even drove unions out of their plants. Organized labor never recovered from the assault; it remains a marginal force in American life, a victim not only of corporate fury but its own folly.

For a while, this paradigm established the interpretive boundaries for postwar labor history. Textbook authors incorporated it into their narratives. And a number of historians used it to frame their monographs, even when, as in the case of James Gross's fine study of the postwar NLRB, their evidence suggested a more complex reading of postwar labor relations. To be sure, there was some sniping at the edges. Several historians argued that postwar unions did not completely abandon their social democratic agendas in the late 1940s, and a few others pointed out that the labor-management accord rarely extended beyond the core industries that unions had organized in the 1930s. But it was not until the publication of Thomas Sugrue's extraordinary book, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, that the paradigm suffered a hammer blow. Sugrue did not challenge the argument that organized labor accepted corporate domination of the economy; in fact, he endorsed it. But he demonstrated that the most brutal strike against union power—massive de-industrialization—began not in the 1970s but in the 1950s, precisely the moment when labor and management were supposed to be settling into the comfortable relationship that would last for 20 years.

Jefferson Cowie builds on that insight in his powerful study, *Capital Moves*. The book is an ideal companion to *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*. Like Sugrue, Cowie tells an edifying tale of corporate flight and economic devastation. Sugrue is less interested in exploring the reasons for de-industrialization, however, than he is in examining its consequences for Detroit, the quintessential rust belt city. Cowie reverses the balance, tracing how one major corporation, RCA, repeatedly shifted production in hopes of finding a less expensive, more acquiescent labor force.

RCA established its first great production facility in Camden, New Jersey, in 1929. The company filled its plant with ethnic women, the daughters of the eastern and southern European immigrants who flooded the cities of the east coast early in the 20th century. When those supposedly docile workers rejected a company union for the United Electrical Workers (UE) in the late 1930s, RCA decided that the cost of doing business in Camden had become too high. In the 1940s, the corporation shifted much of its household electronics production to a new plant in Bloomington, Indiana. It seemed an ideal location. Unemployment in the area was high, wages were low, and local workers were thrilled to take any job that offered steady work. Again, RCA hired a largely female workforce, assuming that they would make the most malleable employees. It even signed a union shop contract with the conservative International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which it saw as a much more palliative alternative to the militant UE. The company's strategy worked for almost two decades. But the demands of industrial labor gradually eroded the workers' deference to authority. The Bloomington plant was hit by a series of strikes in the mid-1960s. As the conflicts mounted, RCA prepared to pull up stakes once more.

RCA planned to move production to Memphis, where company officials expected to find the same conditions that had made Bloomington so attractive in the 1940s. But the deep south of the mid-1960s was not quite as quiescent as corporate executives had hoped. After a few tumultuous years, RCA began its latest shift, to Ciudad Juarez, across the Mexican border from El Paso. The corporation followed the pattern it had set in Camden half a century before. It hired the daughters of migrants from the hinterlands, provided them with a veneer of unionization, and waited for the profits to roll in. The workers in Juarez likewise followed the pattern of their American counterparts. They gradually began to challenge RCA's authority, most dramatically by staging a sit-down strike inside one of the plants in 1995. It is too soon to say whether RCA will respond to the workers' actions. But if the

company remains true to its past, Juarez may one day become like Camden, a ghost town of gutted factories and broken dreams.

In an insightful conclusion, Cowie attributes the vulnerability of RCA's workers to a spatial mismatch. Workers build solidarity on a sense of community, he argues, which binds them to a particular region and divides them from other workers they see as outsiders. Corporations have no such constraints; they shift their resources from place to place as they see fit. RCA exploited this advantage from the moment mass unionization came to the electrical industry. Company officials never had any interest in building an equitable relationship with their workers, not in 1930s New Jersey, not in modern day northern Mexico.

So *Capital Moves* provides the most compelling evidence yet that the current paradigm simply does not work. If RCA's experience is in the least bit typical, capital never forged an accord with labor. Throughout the 20th century, corporations pursued power and profit on their own terms, workers—and their unions—be damned.

KEVIN BOYLE, *Ohio State University*

Buy American: The Untold Story of Economic Nationalism

DANA FRANK, 1999

Boston: Beacon Press

pp. 352, \$26.00 (cloth); \$17.50 (paper)

With *Buy American*, Dana Frank has written a somewhat unusual but very significant volume that benefits not only from first-rate scholarship, but also from a prescriptive attitude that takes the analysis beyond the boundaries of traditional historical research.

The author's extensive investigations yield several in-depth stories—involving trade, labor, class relations, nationalism, immigration, race relations, social movements, and de-industrialization among them—all woven together around numerous campaigns, beginning in the 1760s and continuing to the 1990s, that urged American consumers to buy homemade products. The main theme is that the movements have been misguided exercises in grass-roots mobilization that have not bolstered the domestic economy or saved jobs as intended, but rather have mainly benefited economic elites, foreign policy strategists, or others with narrow interests. Indeed, the campaigns have distracted workers and, more recently, unions from important domestic issues related to standard of living, social welfare, and work stability. In reality, the movements have exacted high social and economic costs from the very people they were supposed to help.

The prescriptive attitude stems from the author's desire to influence trade policies, class and race relations, and, indeed, the viability of American democracy. *Buy American* is a good example of historical sociology in that it details not only the key events and individuals associated with Buy American campaigns, but also scrutinizes the movements in their broader social, political, and cultural contexts. But Frank is not satisfied with just that: she seeks to criticize and educate in order to improve democratic processes and further economic justice. She even ends the book with a six-point plan of action to enhance economic democracy at home.

To borrow from Tocqueville, therefore, if the "frame" of the book is "Buy American," then the "picture" is a constructive critique of American political economics (including labor union politics) and social affairs (including class, race, and work relations). In both endeavors—analytical and prescriptive—Frank succeeds remarkably well.

For those concerned with labor relations and history, Chapter 6 deals with the "look for the union label" campaign of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) in the 1970s; and Chapter 7 details the United Auto Workers' (UAW's) drive around the same time urging loyal citizens to buy American-made cars. The mistaken nature of these

crusades is explored in the familiar context of misguided union leaders and deceptive companies, but Frank also demonstrates the narrow racist, military, and ideological underpinnings of the efforts. The discussion of economically grounded racism toward Asians beginning in the 1930s and continuing to the present is very disturbing. So is the analysis of the post-war AFL-CIO agenda that blindly adopted the dominant anti-Communist agenda that sought, in part, to support American interests (and markets) in developing countries by building their economies through exports (mainly to the U.S.); in the rush to economic nationalism, the unions sold out their own workers and helped create millions of unemployed. Meanwhile, corporate profits, stockholder returns, and chief executive officer (CEO) salaries were soaring. The real enemy, according to Frank, was not the foreign or immigrant worker (the object of misguided racism), but the politician who sought to protect American capitalist interests, as well as the corporate executive who needed to report ridiculously high returns to stockholders.

Thus it has been with all Buy American ventures: average people get hurt while elites simultaneously foster the campaigns while engaging in and prospering from the very foreign trade they claim to abhor. Frank wants the reader to understand this pattern in terms of class conflicts, false ideologies, and powerful but highly deceptive individuals and organizations. In the process she goes after the likes of Washington, Jefferson, McKinley, Cleveland, the AFL-CIO, the UAW, the ILGWU, the North American Free Trade Agreement, Sam Walton and Wal-Mart, and Roger Milliken and “Crafted With Pride,” among others. Jim Hightower or Molly Ivins or Ralph Nader would recognize and appreciate this book!

In the first sentence I referred to the book as unusual. By this I meant two things: its invigoratingly critical perspective, and its engaging but sometimes quirky style. Frank is a hard-hitting historian whose approach is reminiscent of muckrakers like Ida Tarbell (cited in Chapter 2 in the discussion on the 19th century tariff). On the other hand, her style of presentation, which the author herself refers to as “offbeat,” is a unique blend of popular phraseology, sarcastic dissection, and solid erudition. Thus, although the book contains no visual images, the writing is so visionary and the argument so persistently on-track that the reader becomes fully engaged and the pages turn very quickly.

Yet I could understand why some readers might not cotton to the use of colloquial words and phrases like “smoke and mirrors,” “flash in the pan,” “whopping,” “belly-up,” “flurry of inactivity,” and “oops.” They might also find some statements too cute or acerbic such as Frank’s description of garment manufacturers in recent years: “[they] went global, like a heat-seeking missile flying at the speed of international capital toward the lowest wages anywhere on earth” (159); or the UAW finding itself trapped by its own positions, “like deer in the auto companies’ headlights” (177); or, as a final example, her characterization of various domestic and foreign suppliers who displayed an “eagerness to pole-vault when Wal-Mart merely said jump” (202). I personally liked the style because it was integral to the author’s effective story-telling skills. Clearly Dana Frank enjoyed relating this “untold story,” and I appreciated her enthusiasm.

Democratic theory has been revised more than once over the past 200 years and Frank’s book is, ultimately, a statement about the viability of American democracy. Given the manipulation and raw self-interest associated with Buy American campaigns what kind of democratic decision making have we had? What does it mean when powerful persons—presidents, union leaders, CEOs—use whatever means necessary to attain their goals? Why are grass-roots movements so easily distracted toward racist interpretations? Why do ideology and racism always trump social class? Alas, in the final analysis it is a familiar American tale.

In sum, while the author poked fun at hypocritical elites, debunked some cherished myths, exposed several common deceptions, and used some engaging language, she also produced an important piece of scholarship while pointing to what could have been (and what could be) a better way.

Democracy in America

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE, translated, edited, and with an introduction by HARVEY C. MANSFIELD and DELBA WINTHROP, 2000

Chicago: University of Chicago Press

pp. xciii + 722, \$35.00 (cloth)

The Political Economy of American Industrialization, 1877–1900

RICHARD FRANKLIN BENSEL, 2000

Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

pp. xxiii + 549, \$70.00 (cloth); \$25.00 (paper)

Reviewing the new edition and translation of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* by Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop together with Richard Bense's book seems like throwback history. Their combined 1300 plus pages recalled my experiences as a history student during the 1950s when Tocqueville's aphorisms were cited nearly as often as scripture. His paeans to democracy and equality in the U.S. resonated in three other widely read books: Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition*, David Potter's *People of Plenty*, and Richard Hofstadter's *American Political Tradition*. Tocqueville's observations about Americans' predilection to join voluntary associations and migrate ceaselessly presaged a raft of historical essays about "voluntarism" and spatial mobility. Bense's interpretation of the political economy of industrialization, focused on Republicans and the tariff, politicians and the gold standard, and the Supreme Court's legitimation of *laissez-faire*, reminded me of 1950s-style political histories. Have we regressed in our understanding of the past, or is it simply time to give old masters their due?

To be sure, none of the three editors and authors are historians by training or departmental association. Mansfield's and Winthrop's long introduction to *Democracy in America* provides little historical context for the French visitor's voluminous writings about the young republic, and their list of suggested readings incorporates few historians. Their introduction is also suffused with triumphalism, hailing *Democracy in America* as "at once the best book ever written on democracy and the best book ever written on America" (xvii), a book that must be read "in an era when democracy has defeated the totalitarians and is no longer under challenge to its existence" (xxiv–xxv). More than a man for all seasons, their Tocqueville is a model for contemporary Republicans and moderates drawn to the Democratic Leadership Council.

As I reread Tocqueville, I wondered why he merited a newly translated, unabridged, and lavish edition. In the first half of the 19th century, perhaps, Tocqueville's perspective on the new republic appeared fresh and exciting. A century and a half later, however, his interpretations seemed based on an exaggerated polarity between aristocracy and democracy, the old world and the old regime exemplifying aristocracy, the new world and the young republic personifying democracy, two ideal-types floating freely within the author's head. Little sustained analysis buttresses Tocqueville's interpretations. Even more remarkable is his failure to describe quotidian experiences. Apparently, Tocqueville's vision of democracy in America formed before he sailed west and traveled in the states.

Let me give you the flavor of his observations. "[Puritans] now exert their influence ... over the whole American world" (32). "I see the whole destiny of America contained in the first Puritan who landed on its shores, like the whole human race in the first man" (267). Listen closely to him on democracy and class relations. "The social state of Americans is eminently democratic. It has had this character since the birth of the colonies" (46). Here "public officials have no class interest to make prevail, the general and continuous course of government is beneficent" (224). "In America there are no proletarians" (22). "In the U.S., where the poor man governs, the rich always have to fear lest he abuse his power against them" (230). Rich and poor may exist but "there are, so to speak, no longer any classes ... in a country where citizens, having become nearly the same, all see

each other from very close" (403–404). His rich citizens have risen from poverty (507) yet conveniently some 21 pages later all his rich men vanish. His farmers never remain fixed in place, forever improving new acreage to sell at a profit, and all of them owning the fields that they cultivate (553). His wage workers exercise independence and autonomy because "almost all have some secure resources that permit them to refuse their services" when masters exploit or underpay them. Consequently, workers grow less dependent on their masters and more able to raise their wages and better their circumstances (556).

Perhaps even more jarring are Tocqueville's references to race and gender. However prescient he may have been about slavery as a pernicious influence in the democratic republic, his observations about slaves reek of paternalistic racism: "The Negro hardly feels his misfortune; violence had placed him in slavery, the habit of servitude has given him the thoughts and ambitions of a slave; he ... finds his joy and pride in servile imitation of those who impress him. His intellect has been debased to the level of his soul ... He peacefully enjoys all the privileges of his baseness. If he becomes free, independence ... appears to him as a heavier chain than slavery itself" (304). And his ladies live in a paradise of strictly separate spheres in which women conduct no business, engage in no paid labor, escape politics and public space, and neither plow fields nor attempt any activity that requires physical exertion. Not even the poorest family offers an exception. Like slaves to their masters, women gladly subject themselves to conjugal authority and "glory for themselves out of the voluntary abandonment of their wills ... they found their greatness in submitting on their own to the yoke and not escaping from it" (574–575). That, asserts Tocqueville, is how women find their superiority (576). So in a nation of willing slaves, subjugated, happy wives, few rich people, and no poor people, "habits are orderly, violence rare, cruelty almost unknown ... life ... easy ... and peaceful" (674). Did Tocqueville actually observe Jacksonian America closely?

Bensel's book portrays an entirely different nation, one in which the North exploits the South, capital oppresses labor, rich dominate poor, and politicians and judges ably serve the ruling classes. In a variation on the usual case for "American exceptionalism," Bensel argues that the U.S., unlike any other major capitalist economic power, harmonized democracy and rapid industrialization. He insists that political leaders and voters acted rationally in pursuing their material economic interests and that judges, especially, created the legal preconditions for the development of a national market and corporate domination. Seeking to revitalize the tariff and monetary policy (the gold standard) as core political issues, he hypothesizes that Republicans built their political dominance on a triad of tariff protection for industry, an international gold standard (for financiers), and an unregulated national market for labor and production (xviii).

How does Bensel validate his hypothesis? In six long chapters replete with tables, charts, and electoral maps, he attempts to make his case. Little there is likely to strike historians as particularly new although some of his interpretations might cause surprise if not consternation. Most disturbing to historians may be Bensel's lack of archival research and his use of older histories to substantiate conclusions at variance with the interpretations of more contemporary historians. In a long chapter about the behavior of political party leaders and voters, Bensel builds a case for rational behavior on the basis of printed party platforms and roll-call votes. He never examines the private correspondence of his political leaders even when he concedes that on the key issue—the tariff—"most of [its] ... management occurred out of view, in private correspondence and conversations that were not intended to see the light of day" (488).

Bensel's interpretation of the past appears as dated as some of the histories on which he relies. To cite John Hicks on the marketing of small grains instead of Morton Rothstein is odd; to ignore Lee Benson and Austin Kerr in treating the origins of railroad rate regulation and its implementation is odder yet; to describe western farmers as "yeomen" is to reinvigorate the agrarian myth that Richard Hofstadter shattered nearly 50 years ago; to assert that the vast majority of "yeoman farmers" inhabited the Plains states is to put the

larger numbers of farmer-operators in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa out of mind and to ignore the rising tenantry across the actual Plains states; to say that northern labor failed to make its presence and voice felt in national politics is to erase from history a large part of the politics of the late 19th century. Bensel's treatment of labor and politics strikes other discordant notes. Can one actually write in the year 2000 "that many employers actually preferred to deal with union representatives rather than unorganized workers" (210), or that the industrial combinations that most benefited from tariff protection and dominated the domestic market were at worst neutral toward unions and at best favored them, for example Carnegie Steel and International Harvester (491)? Will many readers in the 21st century agree that the national Democratic party led by its southern wing was a "progressive factor" in national politics after Reconstruction (287)? Or that it was only after the Civil War that the Supreme Court established through judicial edict an unregulated national market in which states were denied the right to regulate interstate commerce? After three decades of scholarship in legal history that has revised substantially our conventional knowledge about *laissez-faire* constitutionalism, how can a scholar still write baldly "that the Supreme Court unified the national marketplace in order to protect capital accumulation from claims arising within and forwarded by the states" (347)? Finally, does it make sense to allege that Republicans kept labor largely content on the basis of tariffs that guaranteed both an American standard of living and Civil War pensions? Bensel adds that labor also received residual material benefits from Republican economic policies that "radically redistributed wealth from agriculture to industry and from the South to the North" (524). Indeed, he asserts that perhaps the most striking feature of the American experience in the late 19th century was "the massive redistribution of wealth from southern agriculture to northern industry" (527), after observing five pages earlier that the South "was extremely poor and already marginalized within the national political economy" (522).

Bensel, the professional, credentialed social scientist, and Tocqueville, the aristocratic amateur, allow their theories to govern their conclusions. In one case, a foreign observer seldom peeked beneath the surface of the society that he examined; in the other, a well-established senior scholar draws historical conclusions without the archival evidence to substantiate them, while he disregards the scholarship amassed by historians that undermines his theories.

MELVYN DUBOFSKY, *Binghamton University*

Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration

HASIA R. DINER, 2001

Cambridge: Harvard University Press

pp. xvii + 292, \$39.95 (cloth)

Historians have only recently begun to explore the power of food in shaping cultures and identities. Hasia Diner's new contribution to immigration history, *Hungering for America*, suggests that the foodways of Italian, Irish, and Jewish immigrants can reveal patterns of ethnic identities and explain the contours of 20th-century American culture. "Food practices," she argues, particularly hunger, the memory of hunger, and the desire for "better food," shaped ethnic group identities. "How people experienced hunger in one place and then recalled its pangs in another," Diner says, "had everything to do with who they were, where they came from, and where they went" (1).

The central experience of hunger and deprivation marked the three immigrant groups in Diner's study. Indeed, she observes, "Had they eaten so well in the old country, they might

not have needed to come to the United States" (xvi). But, of course, hunger is "relative," and food deprivation was a social as well as a physical experience. Italian peasants, for example, experienced hunger as a class issue when wealthy landowners ceased their traditional practice of regularly distributing corn, rice, flour, and oil. As an Italian state emerged, poor peasants were left landless, watching the wealthy consume things they could only dream of eating. European Jews, on the other hand, viewed hunger in the context of communal obligations and gendered rituals of daily life in which wealthier people were required to take care of the poor. The Irish were the only ones who truly starved in the old country. Unlike the Italians who, Diner argues, aspired to the foods consumed by wealthy landowners, the Irish developed a deep class and ethnic hatred fueled by colonial politics. The result was a total rejection of any food or cultural practices associated with the British. They were basically left with potatoes and alcohol.

Different experiences of food and hunger in the old country, Diner argues, shaped the development of ethnic cultures and identities in the U.S. "Hungry people," she writes, "embraced plenty in a new setting and played out the injuries of class remembered from back home" (226). Immigrants experienced America as a land of abundance but at the same time developed new foodways based on "memory and scarcity." Italians, for example, invented new dishes that used ingredients they had always associated with the wealthy. Italian food in America became "richer and more complicated" than ordinary meals had been in the old country. "Pizza, osso buco, veal scaloppini," and, most particularly, macaroni, came to embody "Italian food for the masses in America" (55). Italians used these new "traditional" foodways to forge an ethnic identity based on "canonical meals" and insular community ties. Noting that Italian immigrant memoirs rarely mention going to other people's houses for visits or meals, Diner concludes that Italian-Americans "expressed little interest in transcending the food boundaries of their families and communities" (80). (One wonders if this was peculiar to Italians and, indeed, how widespread the habit of entering neighbors' homes is even today.)

If American abundance strengthened Italian communalism, it did just the opposite for Jewish immigrants. Diner suggests that the Jews who emigrated were the least observant and happily left many of the ritual-based food practices behind. Most Jewish immigrants, she says, "wanted to be Jewish and eat Jewish food without too much fretting over the details" of the rules (181). While the Jews may have eagerly sought to assimilate into American culture, they nostalgically held on to certain food preferences. Jewish housewives thus became early targets for food advertising campaigns aiming to place traditional foods in an American context. One of the most fascinating of these was the 1912 Proctor and Gamble campaign to market Crisco as an alternative to lard.

The Irish, in Diner's scheme, represent a truly tragic case. Coming from a culture in which the only food-associated memories were extremely painful, the Irish, she argues, had no interest in using food as a vehicle for creating new ethnic identities. Only alcohol, she says, "linked the Irish to their past and provided emotional memory." Lacking "a positive memory of people who ate well whom they wanted to emulate," Irish women in America went to work as servants and simply picked up middle-class American eating habits (112). The question, of course, is what exactly constituted "American" food, even during the early part of the 20th century? Following her own logic, Diner might suggest that as early as the 1920s an amalgam of ethnic preferences began to define popular food tastes. Indeed, James Barrett and David Roediger have recently suggested that it was the Irish who became models for ethnic assimilation, acting as teachers, policemen, politicians, and priests for other ethnic groups. If this is the case, perhaps American diets were as influenced by Irish attitudes as by Anglo-Saxon preferences. American attitudes toward eating and nutrition have always been characterized by utilitarianism as much as by pleasure.

Ethnic food-based identities, Diner argues, also influenced class politics in America. She suggests that the Italians, because of some deeply held desire to emulate feudal landlords who distributed food, themselves became grocers, bakers, and restaurant owners. Further,

she argues, because of the significance of food in Italian-American communities there was “little worker–employer conflict” (69). Citing one strike among New York bakers in which an observer noted that “few Italians joined,” Diner concludes that “Italian workers did not threaten the supply of food to their own communities” (70). Considering the militance of Italian workers in other arenas, this claim probably warrants further investigation. At the same time, her chronicle of Jewish militance—whether by housewives protesting the high price of kosher meat or food workers striking against employers—fits too easily into the stereotypes of immigration history. All parties, she says, “knew food to be sacred,” and all associated food with an American standard of living (209).

Ultimately, *Hungering for America* might be read as a confirmation of Werner Sombart’s observation that class conflict foundered upon reefs of roast beef and apple pie. Abundance and the desire to wipe out memories of hunger, Diner concludes, shaped ethnic identities in the U.S. and, ultimately, shaped class relations as well. To the degree this is true, one might conclude that food represents a fundamentally conservatizing influence. Yet, as Diner points out, community militance often revolved around food. In addition, she notes, immigrant housewives—and families—generally eschewed “American” cooking and immigrant communities were notoriously slow in changing their food preferences. While this might be read as conservative behavior, it might also be read as cultural resistance.

Diner’s study points to the need to look beyond the menu in an effort to understand the social significance of food in history. In particular, her material calls for a closer study of food politics in understanding class and ethnic relations during the 20th century. While she paints an evocative picture of immigrant foodways, the book generally avoids any discussion of food systems. Thus, while we learn what immigrants remembered about hunger and what they ate in their new homes, we learn less about how foods were produced, marketed, and distributed. What choices did immigrant communities have? This is particularly significant as the supermarket overpowered the local Italian or Jewish grocer and large manufacturing companies monopolized food production. Food policy—government support for certain commodities and public support for nutrition research and education, among other things—may also be important factors in shaping the context in which ethnic identities take shape. The role of food in foreign policy—from the first international food aid campaigns aimed at the Irish to contemporary humanitarian efforts—might likewise contribute to the meaning of identity in America. If this was the land of abundance for turn-of-the-20th-century immigrants, consumer prosperity surely influences the identities of contemporary immigrants as well.

Finally, it is worth noting that, through no fault of the author, this book suffers from one of the worst indexes I have come across. Central topics like “kosher” are entirely missing, as are “meat boycott,” “macaroni,” “Crisco,” “Proctor and Gamble.” Despite this small annoyance, the book is a thoroughly enjoyable read and points to the fruitful ways both labor and immigration historians might expand their boundaries.

SUSAN LEVINE, *University of Illinois at Chicago*

American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century

GARY GERSTLE, 2001

Princeton: Princeton University Press

pp. xv + 454, \$29.95 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper)

The rise, complexity, and collapse of the “Rooseveltian nation” is a key subject of Gary Gerstle’s intriguing study of American nationalism in the 20th century. Roosevelt—Theodore, that is—sought to dissolve fractious regional, class, and ethnic affiliations to forge a common American identity and allegiance. His means was a strong federal government that promoted political and social equality, and, through business regulatory

measures, economic opportunity and security. The notion of linking Americans civically, however, vied with another way of defining the nation, namely along ethnic and racial lines. The tension and interplay between “civic nationalism” and “racial nationalism” is a major theme of Gerstle’s broad history of modern America.

Theodore Roosevelt occupies center stage in Gerstle’s opening chapters, and he receives notably subtle treatment. Roosevelt’s speeches and writings provide researchers and survey course teachers with ample examples of his jingoism, elitism, racism, and sexism. Gerstle deals with Roosevelt’s fears of effeminacy and belief in the superiority of Teutonic peoples, but that, he demonstrates, is only part of the story. Roosevelt delighted in the ethnic mix of his hearty Rough Riders and the teeming street life of New York City. He had qualified views of immigration restriction in contrast to such blueblood nativists as Henry Cabot Lodge. He made important overtures to the African-American community. Roosevelt even averred that educated, respectable black men should have their political rights protected, evidence for Gerstle that Roosevelt’s biases remained more class than racially based. Not a pluralist to be sure, Roosevelt held that worthy people, regardless of their backgrounds, could be assimilated into a presumed upright American way of life.

Civic nationalism came to fruition in the Progressive Party campaign of 1912. Roosevelt’s platform championed various social reform measures, including a plank for women’s suffrage that spoke to an inclusive citizenry. Yet, the decision to deny seating to African-American delegates at the party’s convention qualified the ideal. Liberalism thus foundered on the shoals of racism. World War I further did little to eradicate racial and ethnic definitions of national identity. War represents for Gerstle a decisive moment when a common civic cause—such as saving the world for democracy—makes disparate peoples equally American. The virulent anti-German hysteria of the war years alone kept ethnic differences at the fore. Gerstle does not treat this aspect, but rather elaborates on heightened wartime calls for immigration restriction—civic nationalism, again, stilled.

The 1920s saw no suspension of ethnic and racial categorizing. Anxiety over the mix and mixing of people led to the establishment of immigration quotas and the outlawing of interracial marriages in the south. The total exclusion of Japanese in the new quota system particularly exemplifies for Gerstle the sustained strength of racial discourse. The limited government and pro-business views and policies of Republican Party presidents during the decade also contributed undoubtedly to an ebbing of civic nationalism, a point not made by the author.

The Rooseveltian nation ascended in the 1930s during the Great Depression and the New Deal, but under the aegis of a different Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, “a kinder and gentler nation builder” (136) in Gerstle’s estimation. Gerstle does not analyze the economic and social reforms of the New Deal. Their advancing of civic nationalism is assumed. Rather, the focus is on cultural and protest activity during that era that diluted ascriptive differences and “strengthened the hand of American nationhood” (140). The Popular Front and the left’s embrace of American populist traditions (echoed in the left influence on film and literature of the period) and the CIO organizing that built worker solidarity across ethnic divides are treated.

Wars, hot and cold, government welfare programs, and post-World War II prosperity sustained the Roosevelt ideal. In the trenches (and new suburbs) old prejudices, most notably anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism, dissipated. The pendulum, however, did not totally swing toward civic nationalism as racial and certain ethnic exclusions remained. African Americans had limited access to many New Deal programs and were mobilized in segregated battalions during World War II; Japanese Americans were interred during the war and the specter of un-American immigrants continued to be raised during the Red hunts of the period.

The Rooseveltian nation collapsed, but racial nationalism would not triumph until much later. Gerstle points to the dissension unleashed by the Vietnam War and the emergence of racial, ethnic, and gender identity politics culminating in the celebration of diversity and

multiculturalism as fatally fragmenting the country. In the aftermath, Gerstle asserts, Americans “no longer imagined that they belonged to the same national community or that they shared a common set of ideas” (345). The author, it should be noted, does not cite public opinion polls to back his contention. Conservative attacks on government programs and corporate globalization are also afforded weight by Gerstle in accounting for the demise of civic nationalism, but he places his greatest emphasis on the consequences of racial and ethnocultural splintering.

This brief overview does little justice to the rich and engaging narrative and argumentation of the book. Gerstle insightfully draws on the commentary of civic leaders, reformers, activists, and public intellectuals as well as the literature, film, art, and even comic books of the periods covered. Every chapter provides food for thought and debate. Some of the issues for discussion include the following. The book has a slippery quality—perhaps deliberately so—as civic and racial nationalism slide by and through each other. The “Rooseveltian nation” is a troublesome term; whether it ever existed and which Roosevelt it more aptly refers to is open to question. Moreover, Gerstle does not provide an underlying social analysis to the developments that he describes. For example, how the construction of a national market and corporate system allowed for the nation building attempted by Theodore Roosevelt and how shifting demographics and the growing minority status of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants contributed to the fading of old racial notions are ignored.

Gerstle’s study also has the form of a textbook with standard chapter coverage: the Progressive Era, World War I, the Twenties, the New Deal, etc. The book suggests that 20th-century U.S. history should be re-read as an ongoing tension between civic and racial nationalism. Yet, too much is lost with this thematic. Where do corporate growth, bureaucratization, consumerism, the South, and women fit in his specific dialectic? Have other tensions, in fact, been more salient—over public and private power, localism and centralization, and managerialism and democracy? Finally, Gerstle certainly prefers civic to racial nationalism. Yet, the book is oddly silent about the chauvinism and dangers of the touting of American ideals, an extolling that often stifles dissent and leaves Americans blind to failures within the society and the history, needs and perspectives of peoples of other countries. Gerstle’s engaging and challenging book will generate serious discussion and is deserving of a wide audience.

WALTER LICHT, *University of Pennsylvania*

Labors Appropriate to Their Sex: Gender, Labor, and Politics in Urban Chile, 1900–1930

ELIZABETH QUAY HUTCHISON, 2001

Durham: Duke University Press

pp. xvii + 342, \$64.50 (cloth); \$21.95 (paper)

Several cutting edge studies of gender, labor, and the left in 20th-century Chile have appeared in recent years; most notable in English are Thomas Miller Klubock’s study of the El Teniente copper mine and Karen Alejandra Roseblatt’s of Popular Front politics. Joining this group is Elizabeth Quay Hutchison’s fine study of “debates on women’s urban work in Chile ... [and] how these debates influenced broader developments in labor politics, women’s activism, and state formation” (3). Hutchison organizes her analysis into two arenas—that of labor politics and that of elite concern with the “social question.” In both she argues convincingly that the prevalence of women’s urban wage labor, and competing representations of it, were central to the construction of labor, left, and elite politics in a period of rapid industrialization and urban growth.

The first chapter establishes the demographic and geographic parameters of that growth, demonstrating the emergence of a publicly visible and impoverished female urban labor force. Hutchison's analysis here is logically focused on Santiago, but could benefit from a more explicit discussion of "urban" Chile more broadly. Chapter two effectively overturns the assumption that women's wage labor declined in early 20th-century Santiago. Hutchison thus shows that women were not only symbolically central to labor politics and the labor press, as analyzed in the next two chapters. Representations of and debates about "*la mujer obrera*" revealed contradictory assessments of women's capacity for work and radical political agency, including sharp disagreements between anarchists and socialists, but also a consensus that the revolutionary goal was the male breadwinner-headed nuclear family. Hutchison's pathbreaking chapter on worker feminists in the first decade of the century concludes that they shared the gender traditionalism of organized labor, adopting a stance of "cross-gender [class] solidarity" (122). Her reference to labor's mockery of worker feminism thus requires further explanation; could it have prompted those rare critiques of working-class patriarchy that Hutchison located in the worker feminist press? Though Hutchison "intentionally circumvents [the] narrative of liberal feminism" (8) dominant in Latin American women's history, her portrayal of a vibrant working-class feminism also raises new questions about the weakness of liberal feminism in Chile in the early 20th century.

The second half of the book examines three sets of elite actors and their anxieties about female urban labor: private and state forces concerned with industrial education, Catholic feminists, and parliamentary legislators. Hutchison clearly shows that each group understood social and economic change in gendered terms, and that their reform efforts focused on urban working women. Those efforts included a state-run vocational education network, Catholic workshops and female unions designed to compete with leftist organizations, and protective legislation. Hutchison recognizes the limits of these projects, both in scope and in their strong tendency to reinforce the existing sexual division of labor that so disadvantaged women. These projects, as she concludes, laid the groundwork for post-1930 conflicts and negotiations among feminists, the labor movement, and the state. For example, Hutchison details the work of Elena Caffarena, one of the first female Labor Inspectors of the 1920s, who in 1935 founded the *Movimiento Pro-Emancipación de la Mujer* (Women's Pro-Emancipation Movement), which was one of the strongest cross-class feminist organizations in Latin American history.

Hutchison marshals an impressive array of sources in her portrayal of working women's lives and others' debates about them. Though her prose tends to understate the significance of her findings, it is refreshingly lucid. The introduction makes a particularly clear, compelling case for the relevance of gender to the histories of class formation, labor organization, left politics, and state reform. Valuable to students of Latin American history and to specialists on labor and gender in the region, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex* will also contribute much to comparative discussion and scholarship as gender analysis continues to transform and enrich labor historiography.

ANNE S. MACPHERSON, *SUNY College at Brockport*

Afogados em Leis: A CLT e a Cultura Política dos Trabalhadores Brasileiros

JOHN D. FRENCH, 2001

São Paulo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo
pp. 127, R\$18.00 (paper)

In 1919, the writer João do Rio published "The Man with a Cardboard Head" (in his

collection titled *Rosario da Ilusão*), a satirical short story in which the protagonist, Antenor, was a young man who put his own ideas into practice, violating the norms of his fellow citizens. Since this irritated everyone, his family asked him to be like other people. His uncle advised him to graduate from law school. Studying was unnecessary. It was enough to ingratiate himself with an important politician, and then become a member of congress or a cabinet minister. Tired of having his own thoughts, Antenor took the advice, began to lie and pretend he was somebody different, and ended up as one of the most illustrious people in the country.

João do Rio satirized Brazilian political culture for its loquacity, cult of formalism, verbal pretentiousness, cynical opportunism, and eagerness to take appearances for reality. This same political culture, according to John French, gave rise to the “Consolidation of the Labor Laws” (*Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho* or CLT), in force in Brazil since 1943.

Created in the first government of Getúlio Vargas (1930–1945), the CLT is a law code designed to regulate the world of labor in great detail. With 922 articles embracing most occupational categories, this code establishes rules governing working conditions as well as individual and collective disputes between employees and employers. Because of its scope, the CLT was much celebrated, both in Brazil and abroad, as the most advanced social legislation in the world. Its drafters argued that it originated in the government’s sincere desire to improve the living conditions of the working class. But French does not glorify the CLT. He sees the law code as the work of cynical and ambitious men involved in a legalistic, conservative, and paternalistic policy.

One might also interpret the code as a populist demagogy and sheer ideological reality-concealing discourse. French’s analysis avoids this kind of simplification. The cynical legislative fever is only a part of the CLT’s history. After all, other actors intervened in order for the legal code to make justice possible. Although “drowning in laws,” the workers also starved for justice. This hunger was increased by the employers’ disrespect for the law. They considered the workplace the domain of private and not public law. Corruption, precarious inspection by the Labor Ministry, the political influence of the employers, the lack of union representatives in the factories, and the partiality of the judiciary led many workers to regard the CLT as a mystification, a legalism lacking normative power.

It is in this sense that the distance between law and reality illuminates the subjective dimensions of the CLT as evaluated by workers, who had two visions of the law: as fraud and as hope. According to one trade-union leader, “the worker is surrounded by law on all sides and is dying of hunger” (7). A bricklayer, who always carried the CLT under his arm, said “this is my Bible” (11). French explores the “legal consciousness” of the Brazilian working class, that is, the way workers conceived of the law and the way their ideas were transformed when they interacted with it. He sees both the rejection and the idealization of the labor laws as central to this consciousness.

Thus French argues that labor legislation was a powerful formative element of working-class culture in Brazil. Analyses centered on the ideological and institutional aspects of the CLT have considered the law a simple instrument of class domination, which invariably lessened the workers’ capacity for organization and mobilization. French, on the contrary, argues that the CLT’s normative ideal had real effects only in the context of workers’ actions which sought to convert legal discourse into a weapon against the employers. Thus, labor laws have become real insofar as the workers fought to transform them from “an imaginary ideal into a possible future reality” (10).

By assuming that “law equals reality” (81), many scholars concluded that populist ideology, strongly embedded in workers’ culture, created a working class with a populist consciousness, which would express itself in terms of paternalistic legalism. However, in the pages of *Afogados em Leis*, workers emerge without cardboard heads.

The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: The Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement

O. NIGEL BOLLAND, 2001

Kingston, Oxford, and Princeton: Marcus Wiener Publishers

pp. xxii + 696, \$49.95 (cloth); \$22.95 (paper)

This recent study by historical sociologist O. Nigel Bolland surveys the development of post-emancipation labor movements in the British Caribbean and their relationships to changing meanings of political power over the course of two principal transitions: (1) from the era of slave emancipation in the mid-1830s through the dramatic strike actions in the 1930s that challenged reconstituted structures of employment and empire; and (2) from the institutionalization of formal labor organizations during an era of imperial reforms in the second quarter of the 20th century through movements toward political independence underway by the mid-1950s. Such a long-term perspective is central to the author's intent to view slave emancipation and colonial liberation from the vantage of historically specific changes in "systems of domination" and forms of resistance (24). Partly a work of interpretive synthesis, partly grounded in manuscript research and oral interviews, the study joins a growing scholarly literature that seeks to understand how slavery, colonialism, and race have helped shape modern meanings of freedom and self-determination during the emergence and reconstitution of global capitalism.

Bolland explores a new "pattern of labour politics" that emerged as "economic crisis in the 1930s intensified the social changes that had been developing since Emancipation and provoked a political crisis when the series of labour rebellions brought an increasingly conscious working class on to the stage" (xv). The emancipatory potential of this emerging labor movement was constrained, he concludes, when the international "circumstances in which democracy was achieved in these colonies, including the context of the Second World War, the Cold War, and the increasing hegemony of the United States in the region precluded the development of a really socialist labour movement" and facilitated frameworks of state government in which "middle-class politicians, having come to power on the basis of the labour movement, used the state to control this movement, and even the unions that they led" (xv).

Much of the analysis delineates the ways in which the Caribbean's "peculiarly prolonged and pervasive" colonial experience simultaneously shaped economic and political linkages with the wider world and socio-political institutions within the region (4). "The dominance of the plantation economy, which involved a particular form of exploitation by and dependence on the metropole," Bolland judges, "was responsible for the distorted economic development of the British Caribbean" (114). In the early 20th century, dependent agricultural and industrial economies—including corporate sugar plantations, oil, mining, and other largely extractive industries—typically combined advanced technology with "anachronistic and repressive masters and servants laws" (147). A combination of low wages and high incidences of sporadic hiring, casual work, and unemployment led to extensive labor migrations, most often to "zones of expanding U.S. investment" in the Panama Canal project, Central America, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic (160). In this way, workers in the British West Indies came, before 1930, to constitute "a floating labour force, or pool of reserve labour, for the global capitalist system" (160).

Bolland's analysis of the constitution of global power relations does not preclude nuanced exploration of the concrete dynamics of political practice. Structures of authority embedded in daily life, the give-and-take of trade union negotiations, and political realignments are treated in vivid, meaningful detail. Perhaps nowhere does the theoretical and empirical significance of the local and particular receive more impressive attention than in his reassessment of the strike actions in the British West Indies during the 1930s. A memorable analysis shows how, between 1934 and 1938, unprecedented mobilizations of sugar workers, increasingly proletarianized small peasants, and urban wage earners around issues

of wages, unemployment, and evictions pressed the limits of colonial authority. The “increasingly obvious inability of the colonial governments to satisfy the people’s demands fed the seeds of nationalism within the labour movement in the 1930s and the anticolonial and independence movements that followed” (365).

Bolland breaks new ground in his comparative analysis of political crisis in the late colonial societies of the British West Indies, arguing that an “embryonic aspiration to West Indian nationhood that was encouraged by the labour movement in the 1930s and 1940s subsequently became fragmented and frustrated in the 1950s and 1960s” (357). Constitutional models of decolonization, nationalist ideologies, and relationships between organizing labor movements and emerging nationalist party politics are analyzed in relationship to a rich reconstruction of the historical conditions under which self-government came to be achieved. His examination of decolonization has implications for power relations within the “free world” as well. For example, Bolland’s judgment that “[p]olitical reforms created formal competitions which precluded more fundamental and substantial social change” reaches from the historically specific context in which the labor and nationalist movements divided along party lines in Jamaica in 1943 to raise questions about the potentially authoritarian nature of a political practice assumed to be inherently democratic (465). This work illuminates not only the complexity but also the unfinished nature of the emancipatory projects set in motion by the abolition of slavery.

JULIE SAVILLE, *University of Chicago*

Socialism or Barbarism: From the “American Century” to the Crossroads

ISTVAN MESZAROS, 2001

New York: Monthly Review Press

pp. 128, \$15.95 (paper)

Marxists often claim that the best friend of Marxism is capitalism. The latter’s contradictions produce that singular critique aimed at awakening individuals to capitalism’s class exploitation and economic chaos. In this sense, *Socialism or Barbarism* is in part a product of capitalism today, even as its analysis aims fundamentally to alter that capitalism by persuading readers of its inequities and dangers. Istvan Meszaros theorizes why the contradictions of capitalism today pose a risk to continued human survival; why Keynesian or neoliberal policies and former Soviet-style revolutions cannot in any way resolve them; and why a new kind of socialist alternative provides the only hope for human kind. But he also warns that time is running out on us. This *tour de force* is presented in about 80 pages of dense and at times convoluted text. A less compelling second part of the book provides answers to questions—ranging from the relevancy of Marxian value theory to the nature of post-capitalist societies—posed to Meszaros in an interview. Of those, his thoughts on the nature of Soviet-style socialisms in the 20th century are particularly interesting and help to explain his vision of what is now needed as an alternative society.

The book begins with a brief recasting of the traditional Marxian story of how and why contradictions and their associated economic anarchy arise from interacting capitalist relations and forces of production. For him, the result today is one of a “structural crisis” manifested in a ubiquitous capitalist strategy of waste and destruction. Indications of this crisis and its consequences include capitalism’s inability to counter its ever-present realization (demand) problem, save for a growing and dangerous military-industrial complex; to absorb a growing mass of sellers of labor power, resulting in expanding unemployment across the world; and to manage the various tensions and conflicts resulting from international capital still operating in a world of nation states. Whatever historically was the progressive side of capitalism in overcoming these and other crises has been overwhelmed in recent decades by its destructive side. Therefore, to continue in this kind of economic

arrangement is to open the door widely to “barbarism.” “Socialism”—the other half of the book’s title—is the only feasible alternative.

While some readers may be put off by what appears to be a kind of essentialist reasoning in which some governing economic contradiction, ever lurking in the mode of production, inevitably manifests its dire consequences, the analysis of why a capitalist economy is inherently contradictory and unstable is a good one. Many competing capitals operate both within and across different nation states to produce the gross unevenness that characterizes all national economies. The argument also connects this competition of different capitals to the related competition of labor within and across different nations. Additionally, Meszaros’s criticism of the failure of Keynesian and neoliberal attempts to bring stability and growth to national and global capitalism is alone worth reading. It reminds us that reformist policies, once instituted as integral parts of the capitalist economy, produce their own contradictory effects that serve simultaneously to stabilize and destabilize that same economy.

Perhaps one of the most interesting parts of the book concerns Meszaros’s notion of what were post-capitalist societies and hence what is socialism, the only feasible alternative to the barbarism of a continued capitalism. While it was difficult for this reader to determine precise answers to these tantalizing questions, the following seems pertinent. The USSR and by extension other Soviet-style economies were not in any meaningful sense of the term socialist. In them, workers produced surpluses that were appropriated, not by those same workers, but rather by a different set of people, presumably those located within the state. Hence class exploitation, in the sense of a difference between a class of producers and a class of appropriators of surplus labor, remained in these countries, despite their state-imposed revolutionary abolition of private ownership of the means of production and private markets. If the new economy of the new socialism he asks for is to save us from the consequences of capitalism (including the possible destruction of humanity), this post-capitalist class failure of the 20th century would have to be addressed in the current century. A new politics both would reflect and help to locate “associated producers” as the immediate appropriators of the surpluses they collectively produce. Meszaros offers his readers a profound critique of and warning about today’s capitalism and yesterday’s socialism.

STEPHEN RESNICK, *University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

Workers after Workers’ States: Labor and Politics in Postcommunist Eastern Europe

STEPHEN CROWLEY and DAVID OST (eds.), 2001

Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield

pp. ix + 241, \$75.00 (cloth); \$26.95 (paper)

A few years back, an anecdote about workers in contemporary Russia going as long as eight months without pay sparked stimulating discussion on H-LABOR around the classic question: “When is enough, enough?” Why is it that sometimes workers are apparently able to endure conditions that at other times or in other places provoke massive unrest? Indeed, the case of workers in post-communist countries has frustrated labor-minded observers for the last decade. As David Ost and Stephen Crowley write in the introduction to this collection of essays, the initial predictions of great labor protest—against the decay of a system of social welfare and the turn to often primitive capitalism—have faded away, to be replaced by silence. Instead of workers, the central figure of post-communist society is deemed to be civil society and “new elites.” *Workers after Workers’ States* aims both to fill that gap, and to answer, in a way, the question of why workers have not risen up.

This volume brings together 10 essays on 10 countries, from Poland in the north to

Serbia in the south and Russia in the east. More often than not, such collections do not hang together at all, serving only to provide quick summaries of some research question for as many cases as possible. This one is an exception, thanks to excellent editing by Ost and Crowley. All the contributors—half are living and working in the region, and half are from the U.S. or the UK—are deeply concerned about the same problem. Though they do not speak with one voice, they are engaged in the same conversation. This should make the book accessible to readers less familiar with the region.

Broadly, the contributors agree that the communist legacy accounts for labor's weakness. Some approach this from the perspective of institutions: unions unable to break free of communist-era habits, expecting the state to listen and workers to join. Others focus more on unions' inability to furnish an identity compelling enough to compete with discourses of nation or of individual. Of particular value (for those who would like a quicker tour through the region) are essays by Mikhail Arandarenko on Serbia, David Kideckel on Romania, Crowley on Russia and Ost on Poland. Some of the other essays devote rather more time to listing all the various trade unions or major acts of labor legislation than to addressing the main question.

In their conclusion, Ost and Crowley remind us that strong labor institutions have been essential to Western democracy. It is difficult to prove that their absence is the missing piece in post-communist Europe, as democracy in some countries is thriving even as labor is weak. (For some evidence on this point, an essential book is Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik, *Rebellious Civil Society: Popular Protest and Democratic Consolidation in Poland, 1989–1993*.) Still, this book is a valuable contribution to discussions of the future of labor.

PADRAIC KENNEY, *University of Colorado at Boulder*

Contesting the New South Order: The 1914–1915 Strike at Atlanta's Fulton Mills

CLIFFORD M. KUHN, 2001

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press

pp. xi + 302, \$49.95 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper)

On the morning of May 10, 1914, hundreds of workers at Atlanta's Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills, members of the United Textile Workers (UTW), proclaimed a strike over the issue of recognizing the union for bargaining purposes and the discharge of over 800 workers for union activities. The strike, presaged by months of dispute and even short walkouts, never closed the mill complex down. The son of the founder, Oscar Elsas, led a skillful antiunion campaign using public opinion, strike breakers, espionage agents exercising surveillance over the local union's activities, and the considerable economic power of a multi-city company to keep a solid majority of the 1,300 mill hands at work.

Nevertheless, the UTW and its supporting workers, some not even employed at the mills, conducted a noisy strike replete with picketing, evictions from the company village close by the mills, public support for the strike by a Christian business men's club, and quasi-investigations of the strike by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) and the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations (CIR). Halfway through the strike a dramatic tent colony of stubborn workers kept the strike in the public eye. Yet the UTW ended the strike May 15, 1915. After the strike the company increased its welfare capitalism activities and tried to maintain a more contented workforce, although it vigorously refused to hire back the striking workers. It also continued to hire labor spies to monitor worker activities. The Elsas family sold its interest in the mills in the mid-1950s and the mills ceased operation in the mid-1970s, resolutely non-union from 1915 onwards.

This strike had earlier been examined by Gary Fink in *The Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills Strike of 1914–1915: Espionage, Labor Conflict, and New South Industrial Relations* (1993). Both Fink and Kuhn benefit from an unusual archival collection found in a vault when the

company's old mill buildings were demolished in the mid-1980s. Oscar Elsas had kept the meticulous reports of his labor spies and his own extensive company records and correspondence plus the investigative reports of the federal agencies. Both historians, using numerous other sources, got unusual access to the inner world of the strikers and the management strategy. Fink's book concentrated on the story of the labor spies and their role in the defeat of the strike. Kuhn writes in order "to provide a multi-dimensional portrait of the world of the workers and managers of the New South" so as "to test, challenge, and perhaps reshape some of the generalizations about southern textile workers" in other works (5). Kuhn, a historian of Atlanta's history, sets the strike more firmly in Atlanta and compares and contrasts the Fulton workers to the broader white working class of Atlanta. He ties the mills' management more explicitly to other southern textile labor management trends.

Kuhn devotes the first three chapters to the founding (in 1881) and development of the company by Jacob Elsas, who came to Atlanta in 1868. Two of the chapters provide an in-depth profile of the social-economic life of the workers. By 1890 the company, producing cloth and bags, was one of the few urban mills in the South. The mill complex, located just southeast of what would become Atlanta's downtown, attracted, Kuhn found, a diverse group of workers. But by 1910, the largest number came from up-county farms and from other Piedmont textile mill villages, lured by the growing city of Atlanta which grew from 89,000 in 1900 to over 200,000 by 1920. Kuhn describes a work culture at Fulton similar to that elsewhere in the southern textile belt. A ramshackle mill village, a curiosity in an urban setting, housed some workers. A family wage system enabled the workers to live. The Elsas family, not given to much welfare paternalism, kept Fulton a hard mill for workers to labor in and it had an extraordinary turnover of workers, who, among the lowest-paid white workers in the city, by 1910 could often find other jobs in the expanding Atlanta job market. In 1914, Fulton workers averaged only a month and a half of employment before leaving!

The next two chapters of Kuhn's book examine the coming of the strike and Oscar Elsas's successful efforts to keep the mill producing and his use of spies to keep workers under control. The two concluding chapters weave the decline and end of the strike with a narrative that accentuates the contest between the company and the union for favorable public opinion in Atlanta set against the backdrop of the Progressive era. Kuhn introduces the spirited story of O. Delight Smith, an Atlanta trade union figure, who joined UTW organizer Charles Miles as a leader of the strike. Her rise and fall is itself a fascinating story. Kuhn also examines the efforts of such Progressive agencies as the CIR, the FMCS, and the Men's and Religion Forward Movement, a local Christian group, which attempted to mediate the strike in favor of the textile workers.

Kuhn insightfully explores the larger meanings of the strike beyond its failure because of the replaceable cheap labor, the strident antiunion management strategy, and the ineffective efforts of a weak union. Atlanta's progressivism held no place for low-wage white textile workers. Emerging middle-class Atlanta held the workers in "near universal low regard"; the workers, severely stigmatized by other Atlantians, "seemed threatening to New South advancement in their lack of ambition, questionable moral behavior, and general unruliness" (216). Racism and anti-Semitism created a "climate of distrust and fear" that precluded any broad class alliances despite the urban setting and the modern character of the strike that the battle for public support of the strike generated (219). To Kuhn, the strike reveals the possibility of change in the New South but shows also that resistance to change meant that the traditional South continued alive and well in the urban Progressive South.

Kuhn's book has considerable interest for southern labor history. His careful look at the social and economic life of the Fulton workers confirms and expands other recent work. He vividly introduces the reader by name to a variety of southern workers. His understanding of women's roles in the strike is welcome. Urban historians will find his integration of the strike within Atlanta's history to be useful. His book falls into a group of studies that contribute to a long march of southern labor historians away from southern exceptionalism.

Finally, Kuhn blends his analytical arguments with some excellent narrative skills. This is an enjoyable read.

JAMES A. HODGES, *The College of Wooster*

Creating Freedom: Material Culture and African American Identity at Oakley Plantation, Louisiana, 1840–1950

LAURIE A. WILKIE, 2000

Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press

pp. xxv + 294, \$69.95 (cloth); \$24.95 (paper)

This is a book prospecting for news. A portrait of life and labor on the Oakley Plantation in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, *Creating Freedom* appears, up to a point, to bear the well known form of a local case study. But it proves more venturesome. First, covering a period running from roughly the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries, the book traverses the Civil War and hence purposefully breaks with the tendency informing many investigations touching on the 1800s to explore *either* the antebellum era *or* the postbellum years, to separate (especially in treatments of the South) considerations of slave-times from probings into post-slavery settings. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Laurie Wilkie's volume takes a distinctive methodological turn. Mobilizing the techniques of historical archaeology, she strives to combine documentary evidence and some flavorings of oral data with information peeled from excavated artifacts. Although Wilkie's stress is on the blending of these research approaches, this is a story that centers on what literally came from the ground—the fragments of clothing and dishes, the remains of toys and tools—at Oakley Plantation.

The principal theme Wilkie advances to bind together the object-heavy analysis she thus adduces is identity. More concretely, she examines the way members of local black families became who they were, from the era of chattel labor, through the years of Reconstruction and the period of sharecropping, tenant farming, and Jim Crow segregation, and on up to the naming of the Plantation as a State Commemorative Area in 1947. Appropriating a variety of theoretical constructs (notably Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "habitus"), Wilkie considers how her protagonists at once responded to and acted upon their frequently bleak situations, particularly their varied but often limited material possessions, both to receive and fashion identity. She characterizes the identity that consequently developed as deriving significantly from creative applications of "traditional" cultural outlooks and practices to new conditions. Hence this identity rested substantially on the "pride and dignity" harvested from beliefs and customs that were preserved and shared by the African Americans of Oakley Plantation (often as mixtures of African and European elements) and that were applied by these people to the challenge of enduring, and responding to, the strains of daily existence during and after slavery (248). And it is, in turn, this energetic retention of resilient self-awareness the author seemingly has in mind when she casts her subjects as involved in "creating freedom."

The book is not without its disappointing aspects. Despite occasional vignettes of individuals living at Oakley (including intriguing glimpses of the white spinster Matthews sisters who presided over the Plantation during the early 1900s), Wilkie fails to deploy consistently fleshed-out portraits of her cast of characters. Indeed, although members of four black families are explicitly advanced as candidates for detailed analysis, even these figures are only sketchily profiled and, as a result, do not provide the basis for a sustained inquiry into basic shifts in black situations and experiences between 1940 and 1950. Then too, there is the question of just how much, or whether, *Creating Freedom* challenges familiar paradigms. It is not just that increasing numbers of scholars are interested in historical archaeology and material culture generally. The more trenchant issue is the actual import of her findings. After all, the argument that African Americans have historically made use

of “traditional” cultural components to forge personal and community identity is not especially new. And to the extent Wilkie’s research, including her research into the “stuff” of everyday life and labor, is self-consciously placed within that overall perspective, her book ends up supplementing rather than amending received lines of argument. Despite its broad chronological reach and salient emphasis on “digs,” *Creating Freedom* does not give us a fundamentally new picture.

Still, the project’s supplemental dimensions unquestionably have value. Wilkie is good at demonstrating how African Americans used appearance to announce themselves—and their ongoing cultural identities—by combining store-bought apparel with homemade “better” clothing (160). She builds skillfully on records and artifactual remains to chart complex interplays between abiding folk therapies and medicines administered by doctors or purchased from stores—or bought from stores but used for “traditional” ends (170–177). And Wilkie also gives us new leverage on the subtle rhythms of racial proximity and distance: the quiet dialectic of living among and yet apart from whites that allowed local blacks to fashion and maintain their custom-rooted sense of themselves. Thus, she gives us reason to think carefully about the chemistry surrounding gifts—the careful balancing domestic servants and yard hands likely had to effect between feeling pleasure at the presents they evidently received from Oakley proprietors and evincing gratitude so intense as to be demeaning or contribute to jealousy among other blacks. Wilkie likewise calls attention to the precious priority of privacy, using remains of lead curtain weights to infer, persuasively, that even blacks residing in full view of the Great House took pains to shield themselves from watchful white eyes (209).

It is in this careful detailing, this adding of rich texture and nuance, that *Creating Freedom* makes its mark. And if this implies limits to the book’s implications, it also registers its very real contribution.

JONATHAN PRUDE, *Emory University*

An Absolute Massacre: The New Orleans Race Riot of July 30, 1866

JAMES G. HOLLANDSWORTH, JR, 2001

Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press
pp. 168, \$28.95 (cloth)

James Holladsworth, Jr’s detailed account of the New Orleans race riot of July 1866 provides useful information for Reconstruction scholars but offers little fresh insight on the bloody violence of the postwar South. Holladsworth has tracked down biographical information about key players involved in the gory chaos that left at least 37 dead and 100 wounded, and has established a clear timeline of conversations, telegrams, and individual acts of violence for the days from July 27 to 30, 1866. Identifying the reorganization of the 1864 constitutional convention with the purpose of legalizing black suffrage as the spark for the riot, Holladsworth also gives us a synopsis of the actions of the Louisiana legislature from 1864 to 1866 on issues of black voting, offering political scholars information about conflicts within the wartime and postwar Louisiana government. *An Absolute Massacre’s* story is detailed and straightforward. It blames the violence on the inherent racism of Southern whites and on the self-serving politicians who cared for power more than principle.

An Absolute Massacre is a curiously simple and old-fashioned explanation of such a multifaceted event as the New Orleans conflict. Absent from this story, for example, is any suggestion of tension in the city between African Americans employed by the occupying U.S. troops and unemployed white men whose families were starving, despite the mention that African American John Murrall was lucky to have a job “in a city where so many black men”—and white men, too—“were out of work” (87). Absent, too, is any suggestion of gender or ethnic conflict in the city, despite the detailed story of Irish prostitute Mary Ann

Larkin, who chased down and stabbed a wounded black man fleeing from the melee (123). Even more surprising is that a tantalizing description of police officers dressed in a combination of Yankee soldiers' uniforms and Confederate insignia (88) does not lead to an exploration of the confusion of loyalties and continuing wartime animosities in a city where broiling hot temperatures in July 1866 primed it for a popular explosion.

An Absolute Massacre's emphasis on racism and political machinations ties it to the historiography of the 1970s, and, indeed, Hollandsworth's introduction indicates his continuing interest in old-fashioned revisionism by identifying his historical disagreement with Claude—misidentified as Charles—G. Bowers' *The Tragic Era* (1929), which had blamed a "revolutionary band of Radicals" for the riot. Hollandsworth fleshes out his primary research with work from the revisionist era, calling on William Gillette's *Retreat from Reconstruction* (1979), rather than, for example, Michael Perman's more recent work on political coalition-building, Julie Saville's exploration of economic stresses in the postwar South, or even Eric Arnesen's exploration of the interplay of race and class on the New Orleans waterfront.

An Absolute Massacre invites comparison with Iver Bernstein's *New York City Draft Riots* (1990), which examined the class, racial, ethnic, and political stresses in wartime New York City. While Bernstein provided a nuanced exploration of the 1863 race riots in New York, Hollandsworth has given us a clear but simplistic examination of the 1866 race riots in New Orleans.

HEATHER COX RICHARDSON, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1862–1880

JOHN C. RODRIGUE, 2001

Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press

pp. xviii + 224, \$49.95 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper)

In the past 25 years, we have learned much about the transformation of the southern countryside after emancipation. Studies by economists such as Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch and work by historians such as Joseph Reidy on central Georgia, Leslie Schwalm on South Carolina's rice coast, and John Willis on the Yazoo–Mississippi Delta have described and analyzed the transition from slavery to freedom and the resulting agricultural regimes. *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields* is the first such study of Louisiana's sugar region, and it adds a major chapter to the history of African-American labor after the war.

In his first chapters, Rodrigue outlines the sugar region's history and describes its disruption during the Civil War. The story here is largely familiar: slaves rejected attempts to keep them under "masters," whether sanctioned by the army or not, and women diverted much of their labor from fields to households. Still, Rodrigue argues, the freedmen understood the requirements of sugar cultivation, including long hours of group labor at harvest time, and, "despite the bitterness between them, planters and freedmen were symbiotically constructing a new order" (54).

After the war, Rodrigue shows, black workers enjoyed real mobility, and, with the support of the Freedmen's Bureau, a genuine labor market emerged as planters competed for workers. Thus, Rodrigue's findings support the interpretations of Harold Woodman, Barbara Fields, and others who have argued that the South moved, haltingly but decisively, from slavery to capitalism after the war. In the sugar region, though, unlike in the cotton South, the resulting system was based on wage labor. With its requirements for quick harvesting and processing at expensive sugar mills, sugar could not profitably be grown in the dispersed pattern typical of cotton sharecropping plantations. Planter collusion to limit wages failed, and workers bargained for extra payments for such tasks as wood cutting. More speculatively, Rodrigue argues that the collective nature of sugar labor shaped

political mobilization. Black political clubs also functioned as quasi-unions, and the same groups might mobilize one week to get out the vote for the Republican Party and the next to express economic grievances. Republican officials in turn refused to use force to put down workers' strikes.

By the end of Reconstruction, then, a distinctive regime had been established in the cane fields. As before the war, a small group of planters—about 10% of landowners—controlled 60–80% of acreage. (It should be noted, however, that Rodrigue's analysis of planter persistence is placed into considerable doubt because his antebellum source for landholding—the 1860 census—and his postbellum source—Louisiana tax records—measure different kinds of land.) Some antebellum planters fell by the wayside, as only the best capitalized planters—some from the North—could afford to modernize their milling operations to face rising competition on both the world and U.S. markets. However, this modernizing elite was “far from omnipotent in dealing with freedmen,” and mobility was a “boon” to black workers that “they hastened to exploit” (138). A core group of skilled plowmen and their families remained on plantations year-round, while a transient mix of single black men, black women, and immigrants moved into the labor market when labor demand was highest. With excellent research in planters' records and local tax records, Rodrigue shows that most of these workers stayed out of debt and ended each year with cash, which they spent in various ways—buying consumer items and work animals, adding improvements to rented plots, and, more rarely, buying farms.

Redemption in Louisiana in 1877 was a serious blow to African-American cane workers. Political activity by blacks continued well beyond that date, and the Redeemers could not significantly restrict the mobility that made a free labor market possible. Yet the new regime did make a difference when it came to collective organization and resistance, as black laborers found to their dismay in 1887. Then the state government called in the militia to repress a strike of cane workers at the cost of dozens of African-American lives.

Reconstruction in the Cane Fields is well written and well organized. Rodrigue has effectively mined the records of the Freedmen's Bureau, local newspapers, census records, and, especially, planters' records and local tax records. Unfortunately, he chose not to make use of either the 1870 or 1880 agricultural censuses, on the grounds that these are “notoriously poor sources, since they do not always distinguish between owners and renters” (193). This is puzzling, since the 1880 agricultural census in particular has been an invaluable source in several earlier studies, and it explicitly distinguishes owners from both “fixed” and “share” renters. The lack of data from the postwar agricultural census perhaps contributed to Rodrigue's lack of attention to small farmers. According to his data, a large majority of landowners in the cane region owned fewer than 100 acres (110–111). Presumably most of these were whites, and it is hard to believe that they played no significant role in either the economy or the politics of the sugar region.

This caveat aside, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields* is an important addition to the growing body of local studies of the postwar South. In particular, because it deals with Louisiana and sugar, it is a timely reminder that “the” South was also many Souths, and that a full understanding of postwar labor history requires careful attention to local regions and their specific histories.

J. WILLIAM HARRIS, *University of New Hampshire*

The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865–1901

HEATHER COX RICHARDSON, 2001
Cambridge: Harvard University Press
pp. 339, \$39.95 (cloth)

Heather Cox Richardson believes that historians have neglected the class dimension of the

retreat from Reconstruction. Leading Republicans initially saw the freedmen as exemplars of the free labor ideology that undergirded their notions of political economy, which rested on a belief in the harmony of interests of social classes. Released from the bonds of slavery, black men would readily adapt to the demands of a market economy by becoming diligent, provident, and ambitious workers, seeking the self-improvement that was possible only in a free labor regime. They would serve as examples to both indolent southerners and fractious northern white workers. Governmental intervention in their behalf would be brief, for the only protection that the sturdy republican worker, black or white, needed was the ballot.

Alas for these expectations, as the Reconstruction era unfolded Republicans grew increasingly disillusioned. Northern observers all too often validated southern whites' complaints that the freedmen were feckless, irresponsible, and vindictive. Even worse was the former slaves' demand that the federal government continue to intervene in southern political, economic, and social life to protect them and provide opportunities for the politically ambitious among them. For growing numbers of Republican editors, social observers, and politicians, the former slaves were proving in their own way as dangerous as the obstreperous labor unionists and striking workers whose protests called class harmony into question. Republicans were disappointed in both restive laborites and ungrateful blacks, coming to regard both as dangerous challengers to the free labor world view that they believed had been vindicated in the Civil War.

An increasingly marginalized band of Stalwart Republicans continued to champion the rights of southern blacks, but the party's center of gravity shifted decisively toward sympathy with gentlemanly southern elites. One critical episode was the fight over public finance in South Carolina in the early 1870s, wherein white leaders persuaded many northerners that the Republican legislature was advancing confiscatory tax plans so as to exact revenge against former slaveholders and as a means of support for wild-eyed schemes of public provision designed to benefit black politicians and their work-shirking supporters. The fight over the 1875 Civil Rights bill was another milestone, as more and more Republican editors and politicians attacked federal legislative protection for blacks as special interest legislation. Southern blacks, these men believed, would gain access to the region's educational and economic opportunities, and would gain the personal respect they craved, when, and only when, they forswore claims to special treatment, ignored demagogues who waved the bloody shirt, and buckled down to honest labor. By 1889–1890 when Congress debated and defeated the Federal Elections bill, proposed by a die-hard cadre of Stalwarts in the wake of widespread voting irregularities and terroristic attacks on black voters, most Republicans were content to let the white South conduct racial affairs in their own way, free of oppressive federal oversight. Alarmed by the labor unrest of the 1870s and 1880s, Republicans had come to see the South's black masses as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution.

Richardson's method is old-fashioned. She charts the shifting views of Republicans largely through intense examination of newspaper articles and editorials, as supplemented with politicians' speeches and debates. She makes a strong case that the vigorous partisan press of the late 19th century constitutes a reliable register of shifting public ideology. *The Death of Reconstruction* also exhibits an impressive grasp of the diverse historiography of the postbellum period and its notes provide a useful running commentary on key interpretive perspectives.

Although Richardson stresses that the economic changes and labor activism that punctuated the Gilded Age strongly influenced Republican views on the freedmen, these developments are off stage in *The Death of Reconstruction*. Nowhere does the author attempt to link black demands for racial justice, on the one hand, directly with the rising clamor of industrial workers for social justice, on the other. One of the tragedies of the Reconstruction and late 19th century period was the failure of white laborites to join hands with oppressed black workers and farmers, but discussion of this failure is not part of Richardson's agenda.

She does briefly consider episodes of inter-racial agrarian activism but the book is mostly about the attitudes of Republican leaders toward blacks, not about the theme of joint worker–freedman dissent itself. Largely absent are the voices of the southern black workers and farmers about whom her public figures wrote and spoke so copiously.

The Death of Reconstruction is effective in charting the postbellum course of free labor ideology. It persuasively establishes the links that Republican leaders made between the turbulent politics of the Reconstruction-era South and the increasingly disputatious labor problem. On the other hand, Richardson is not persuasive in advancing the largely unstated notion that class concerns trumped racial considerations in shaping Republican ideology and policies. If it was true that editorialists and politicians turned against the freedmen because of their alleged deviation from free labor dicta, it seems clear even in these pages that deeply racist assumptions powerfully shaped the Republican elites' perceptions of events in the South and caused them to privilege the views of their erstwhile enemies over those of their putative allies in assessing developments in the former Confederacy.

One of *The Death of Reconstruction's* virtues is its able exposition of the views of those members of the black elite who largely agreed with critics of the mass politics of black Reconstruction. Richardson closes with a thoughtful examination of Booker T. Washington as a spokesman for black free labor views. Washington's speeches and writings, notably *Up from Slavery*, she holds, were aimed at northern white elites. They endorsed class harmony and aligned Washington and his cohorts as successful practitioners of free labor with those who were turning away from civil rights measures. In his own version of the "talented tenth," Washington looked to the small cadre of successful black entrepreneurs, professional men, and publicists for race leadership, thus in effect endorsing both the increasingly conservative views of Republican leaders and, by default, the southern white attack on black suffrage and political pretensions.

The Death of Reconstruction is a thoughtful and clearly written account of an important ideological shift that took place in the late 19th century. Interpreting Republican racial policies and politics through the lens of free labor ideology provides a valuable perspective on these familiar events. While it will not supplant David Montgomery's *Beyond Equality* (1965) as an examination of the class–labor nexus of the Reconstruction era, Richardson's book is a valuable addition to the literature.

ROBERT H. ZIEGER, *University of Florida*

Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the Far West, 1850–1920

DAVID IGLER, 2001

Berkeley: University of California Press

pp. xiv + 267, \$37.50 (cloth)

David Iglér's account of San Francisco cattle and meatpacking giant Miller & Lux effectively combines western, business, social, and environmental history to highlight the region's contribution to America's industrial development. The company's success derived not only from labor segmentation and vertical integration, but also from its ability to integrate horizontally—to control a vast rangeland, particularly the rich San Joaquin River Valley. Miller & Lux's control over labor, capital, and the landscape, according to Iglér, far surpassed its eastern rivals and, moreover, served as a model of industrial development that anticipated the transformation of agriculture into agribusiness, of pioneer ranchers into industrial cowboys.

Igler's study begins by tracing Miller & Lux's efforts to control rangeland and capricious water resources. After grounding his study in the San Joaquin Valley, he then goes on to describe the ways that access to San Francisco's capital resources enabled the company to control the industrial hinterland. In a process repeated several times Miller & Lux took advantage of droughts and floods to scoop up land from suddenly impoverished ranchers. Urban demand pulled cattle through the company's networks of ranches, from the range to San Francisco's Butchertown, and economic power flowed back through the same channels expanding corporate domination over the landscape.

Control of the land necessitated broad social control, however, and Igler suggests that Miller & Lux's reclamation work—the construction of dikes, levees, and channels on a vast scale—found its analogue in the company's attempts to engineer the social landscape. Reclamation entailed the preemption of the democratic visions of residents and the business goals of corporate rivals, and Igler effectively demonstrates the ways that Miller & Lux used its offices and the state's bureaucracy and courts to suppress these alternatives. Miller & Lux's efforts did not go without reward, and by the 1870s the company maintained the world's most productive agricultural landscape.

Massive reclamation works required a massive and mobile workforce, and again Igler draws suggestive comparisons between Miller & Lux's labor management strategies and its attempts to engineer the landscape. Where once the company had depended upon skilled Mexican *vaqueros* to direct the multitude of tasks on its ranches, simplification and regulation of the environment facilitated a shift to de-skilled casual labor. To keep wages low and maintain a ready reserve of men moving across its holdings, Miller & Lux instituted its so-called "Dirty Plate Route," providing free meals to migrants served on the dirty plates of its permanent staff, that channeled labor to a far-flung network of ranches—a practice that served to reinforce the transient nature of migrant work and the workers' marginal status. Miller & Lux controlled its growing cadre of skilled butchers in San Francisco with more conventional means: the firm created an anti-union Wholesale Butchers' Association that Igler argues successfully held organized labor at bay.

By the 20th century, however, several factors conspired to bring Miller & Lux down, among them opposition to corporate control from the growing numbers of settlers, Progressive-era legislation like the Meat Inspection Act, competition from eastern meat-packing combinations, shortsighted managerial decisions, and a more radicalized workforce. Igler contends that the most significant factor in the decline of the firm, however, was the backlash from the altered, harassed environment. Decades of overgrazing and overirrigation had led to widespread land subsidence and rising soil salinity; the firm collapsed upon its exhausted soils, crumbling waterworks, and simplified ecosystems.

Igler's case for including western industries in broader considerations of American industrial development is sound. Miller & Lux's growth demonstrates that western industrialization followed a path determined by regional factors rather than the designs of eastern capital. Environmental historians will appreciate Igler's emphasis of the role of the landscape in industrial development. His implication that, given the scope of Miller & Lux's horizontal integration, much of the seemingly open range of the West can be fruitfully viewed as a vast shop floor may also prove useful to those interested in understanding the history of western labor. Troubling to some working class historians, though, may be the unsettling tendency of environmental histories to attribute agency to the landscape at the expense of human actors. In Igler's account the landscape assumes the role of an independent variable, exerting influence dialectically against the goals of industrial capital. Labor unrest seems to arise as a dependent variable—a natural consequence of management's impulse to control all aspects of production—rather than from an informed attempt by workers to engineer their lives.

Democracy in Desperation: The Depression of 1893

DOUGLAS STEEPLES and DAVID O. WHITTEN, 1998

Westport: Greenwood Press

pp. 233, \$72.95 (cloth)

By the early 1890s, as forces of change swept away much that was familiar and the structure and dynamics of the nation's economy, political system, society, and culture underwent profound transformations, more and more Americans, sensing that "all the rules had changed" but having little idea how to respond, worried that life was entering a crisis. For historians, the eventual response to this pervasive sense of crisis has made the 1890s a watershed decade in U.S. history. At the core of this crisis was a deep economic depression between 1893 and 1897 that undermined the old systems and generated a range of creative responses that would merge into the discursive Progressive movement. In spite of its centrality to the crisis, however, there is no monograph that analyzes the causes, dynamics, and consequences of the panic of 1893 and the depression that followed.

Democracy in Desperation: The Depression of 1893, the authors argue, is the first comprehensive attempt to "trace and interpret the economic history" of the depression of the 1890s (10). Using language that stays rather close to contemporary economic records and data throughout, the authors argue that the panic of 1893 was rooted in long-standing structural changes and weaknesses in the American economy. In a marketplace restrained by a declining money supply that caused deflation, American industry, unable to respond effectively to shifting market forces, moved toward overcapacity and declining returns on investment. An inevitable "reckoning" loomed (26). The authors argue that a general slowdown in investment, as well as nervousness about the gold standard, which drew capital and specie out of the U.S., set off a contraction and retrenchment that precipitated a number of bank failures in early 1893, which spread into a general panic caused by a stock market crash in the first week of May 1893. As panic spread, calls on loans spread across the country. Unable to meet obligations, thousands of businesses from banks to merchants, railroads, and heavy industry failed, and thousands of individuals were thrown into bankruptcy. In the most analytic chapter in the book, the authors demonstrate the depth and extent of the depression. Heavy indebtedness and a dearth of gold starved investment and repressed production of both capital and consumer goods below pre-depression levels until nearly the end of the decade. Especially hard hit were high-level and luxury consumer goods. This led to record levels of unemployment and declining wages that further depressed the economy to almost 25% below capacity by late 1894. At times providing a week by week account of the economy's struggles, the authors demonstrate that full recovery was not apparent until as late as 1898. When recovery did come, the authors argue, without explaining why, the economy that emerged was profoundly different. More consolidated and oriented towards consumer goods and exports, this more modern economy would generate great changes in the decades to come.

Having analyzed the economic causes, dynamics, and consequences of the crash of 1893, the authors, in several more descriptive chapters, analyze how the economic crisis shaped and was shaped by social change, ideology, economic ideas, and politics. They view the recession as a catalyst of social and labor activism and "social sensitivity" (121), but it resulted in limited changes and even confusion in race relations. Unsurprisingly, the crisis did not shake most Americans' faith in capitalism. Nor did it seem to generate much creative economic thinking or problem solving. "Received truth" and "dogma"—economic individualism, the business cycle, *laissez-faire*—still prevailed and most calls for economic and social reform in the 1890s were conservative and moderate (116). Nevertheless, the authors argue, it did result in a cultural reconsideration about American life that changed the thought and lives of thinkers, economists, scholars, writers, and artists enough to lay the roots of 20th century progressive ideas. These changes also introduced the idea of more responsive government into the politics of the 1890s. The authors provide a straightforward account of 1890s politics as well as more detailed treatments of the Cleveland and

McKinley administrations. There are more detailed and complex analyses of most of these aspects of the 1890s elsewhere. This work provides a good overview of the depression and confirms for the reader that the decade of the 1890s was a “divide, however gentle, between a passing agrarian America and an emerging industrial power” (210).

TIMOTHY R. MAHONEY, *University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Set Up Running: The Life of a Pennsylvania Railroad Engineman, 1904–1949

JOHN W. ORR, 2001

University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press

pp. xvi + 376, \$38.50 (cloth)

This book is a son’s memoir of his father’s career as an engineman on the Pennsylvania Railroad in the last half century of steam power. John Orr, the son, wrote it largely from memory following his own retirement. It is a document of railroad work and life, and of the machines that created and shaped that life.

Oscar Orr was born in 1883. He hired on as a fireman in 1904, moved quickly to engineman, served until 1949 and died in 1954. He worked on secondary and branch lines radiating out of Williamsport, Pennsylvania. He made his home at Ralston, Pennsylvania, a coaling and crew-change point on the Elmira Branch that was his base for many years. During his career, he worked in both yard and road service and on most types of steam locomotives. Orr sat at the controls of a diesel once, but never operated the new machines that would take over almost as soon as he left the railroad.

Orr loved these machines. He made himself a master of every nuance of the equations of time, grades, weather, train weight, and the capabilities of his fireman and his locomotive. He coaxed performance out of the machines, sometimes by cutting corners. For example, he got his crew to shovel just enough coal off the top of passing coal trains to get his lumbering H6 2–8–0 “Consolidation” in without an extra coaling stop, which meant they got in ahead of other crews and therefore got the choicest outbound assignments. The company was so impressed with Orr’s ability to get trains in on time, it invited him to test new locomotives being designed at the shops at Altoona, and regularly assigned him to make shake-down runs on newly repaired locomotives from the shops at Renovo.

Orr’s working life on the railroad was a testimony to the rewards of industrial life in America. His job was constantly challenging. It paid him enough for a secure life, and he raised and educated a family. To all outward appearances, he was happy. The Pennsylvania Railroad was notoriously hierarchical and authoritarian, but it recognized Orr’s ability and loyalty, and rewarded him with dignity and a decent life. It did mess up the engraving on the certificate it presented to him at his retirement. Like everything on the Pennsylvania Railroad, said Orr, a bit wistfully, “they get close, but they never get things exactly right” (366).

We always knew being an engineman took physical stamina, but the memoir is packed with detailed stories of just how tough the job could be. Enginemen were exposed to the elements and to danger. Hours were long and irregular, robbing a person of all body rhythm. Rest periods were spent in distant bunkhouses or lonely rooming houses. The 1916 law that restricted hours of continuous work to 16 was a lifeline. Orr’s first trip in 1904 was a 72-hour health-wrecking marathon. Orr pays homage to firemen, since a good one made the engineman look good. Among the enginemen, there was often rivalry, and with other crew members, notably conductors, often outright antagonism.

A great deal of railroad economics is embedded in Orr’s story. The operation was labor intensive, and for all the hard work, not very productive. The coal trains on the 172-mile run from Altoona to Southport, for example, required 16 hours from a crew of five. Orr’s story includes an excellent economic analysis of the rise and fall of the little Susquehanna

& New York Railroad and of the tanning industry in central Pennsylvania that was the reason for its being. Late in the Depression, Jack Orr watched the dismantling of the coaling pits at Ralston and sensed great changes were afoot.

One will not find much in Orr's account of labor relations. We know he was a member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers because his son liked to read the stories in its publication, the *Locomotive Engineer's Journal*. But even stressful times like the Shopmen's Strike of 1922 seem not to have interested Orr, or at least he chose not to share them with his son. We learn little about his family life (except his relationship with his son), his neighborhood, political beliefs, religious or fraternal affiliations, or personal life.

Still, the book is an amazing document of a fulfilling life in industrial America. It is a good read, even though there are no plot twists or shattering climaxes. One comes away with a deepened sense that the bargain between capitalist and worker was arms-length but genuine, that hard work paid and a working life was rewarding.

RICHARD SAUNDERS, *Clemson University*

Fighting for Social Justice: The Life Story of David Burgess

DAVID S. BURGESS, foreword by BILL MOYERS, 2001

Detroit: Wayne State University Press

pp. 235, \$39.95 (cloth)

This book offers a heartfelt testament on a life lived in service to many causes: labor, the church, the poor, community action, and racial justice. David Burgess is one of those figures easy for scholars to overlook when chronicling the social history of the U.S. since the 1930s. Most of his career was spent in the secondary leadership ranks of the organizations in which he participated, which ranged widely from the CIO to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), from the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU) to the U.S. State Department. Moreover, his life's work was divided into three seemingly disparate careers that would present difficulties for any biographer to connect. Burgess's first career saw him active in and around the labor movement in the South in the 1940s and early 1950s; his second saw him join the foreign service from the mid-1950s through the mid-1970s; his third career saw him work as an inner city pastor and community organizer in Newark, New Jersey, in the 1970s and 1980s. His religious vocation and his Cold War-era anti-Communism further isolate Burgess from the terrain most frequently traversed by present-day students of U.S. labor history. For all of these reasons, there may never have been a biography of David Burgess had Burgess himself not taken up the task. We should be glad he did, for his is a story worth telling and remembering.

Born in New York City in 1917 to Protestant missionaries who were on a temporary sojourn at home, David Burgess spent his early boyhood in China. Upon the family's return to the U.S. in 1927, David's father obtained a sociology Ph.D. at Columbia University and then a teaching position at Claremont University in California, where New Deal Congressman Jerry Voorhis became a family friend. David attended Oberlin College in the 1930s and became socially active through the Young Men's Christian Association and the World Conference of Christian Youth held in Amsterdam on the eve of World War II. Serving as a congressional intern for Voorhis, Burgess observed first-hand the anti-Communist witch-hunting of the House Un-American Activities Committee during the late 1930s. Then, in pursuit of his calling to the ministry, Burgess moved on to Union Theological Seminary. There he was deeply influenced by such luminaries as Harry Emerson Fosdick and Reinhold Niebuhr, and by idealistic student colleagues (such as Dave Dellinger) who were adopting a position of radical pacifism in response to Hitler's aggression. Briefly flirting with the pacifist position, Burgess ultimately rejected it. But rather than joining Niebuhr in sober theological reflection on the doctrine of original sin, Burgess threw himself into his own

brand of missionary work: with migrant workers, tenant farmers, and southern trade unionists.

Burgess worked with migrants in Florida and New Jersey during 1942 and 1943. Inspired by his association with the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen and its charismatic leader, Howard Kester, Burgess went on to serve as chaplain for the STFU from 1944 to 1947. In that post he played a major role in one of the STFU's most successful postwar campaigns, the effort to save the federally financed migrant housing complex known as Delmo Homes in southeast Missouri. Then he joined the staff of the Textile Workers Union of America during the ill-fated attempt to organize J. P. Stevens plants in South Carolina during "Operation Dixie," also lending a hand in the failed effort to elect the progressive Frank Graham to the U.S. Senate from North Carolina in 1948. Burgess finished his union career as secretary of the Georgia State CIO Council from 1951 to 1955.

His work in the CIO brought Burgess to the attention of Walter and Victor Reuther, a fact that was to send his career in an unexpected direction following the shakeup produced by the AFL-CIO merger in 1955. Sharing the Reuther brothers' blend of anti-communist fervor and democratic idealism, and naturally inclined to a transnational perspective by his background as the son of missionaries, he was recruited by the brothers to serve as a labor liaison to the U.S. mission in the most important non-aligned nation of the 1950s: India. In the following years Burgess took posts as a Peace Corps official in Indonesia, a UNICEF director in East Asia, and UNICEF spokesperson in North America, before retiring from that work in 1977. Then he abruptly switched courses again. Returning to his ministerial calling, Burgess took up the pastorship of two inner city churches and the directorship of an ecumenical social action ministry in Newark from 1978 to 1990 before a heart attack forced him to give up that work. His years in Newark saw him return to organizing, joining in efforts to defend the interests of the city's working poor and nurturing the development of interracial churches.

From Neibuhr to Reuther, the courageous Brazilian cleric Dom Helder Camara to colorful STFU founder H. L. Mitchell, a fascinating parade of characters crosses the pages of Burgess's narrative. He weaves reminiscences, reflections, and history together to tell the story of an often inspiring life in a modest and occasionally self-critical tone. Most readers will want to know more about topics of which Burgess in the end says little. How did he reconcile labor's regular capitulations to segregation during his tenure as an official of the Georgia CIO? Does he have regrets about the AFL-CIO's foreign policy in the Cold War era? But Burgess shares enough about his life to make this volume well worth reading for any scholar who desires to reflect on the moral basis of postwar labor-liberalism as well as its successes, failures, and lasting legacies in unions, churches, urban communities, both in the U.S. and abroad.

JOSEPH A. MCCARTIN, *Georgetown University*

Big Steel: The First Century of the United States Steel Corporation, 1901–2001

KENNETH WARREN, 2001

Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press

pp. xviii + 405, \$32.00 (cloth)

The steel subsidiary of USX does not count for much today, but in its earlier incarnation as the United States Steel Corporation it cut a huge swath across the American landscape. So it has always been frustrating to 20th-century historians that U.S. Steel, unlike some of its peers, has kept its records closed. That of course never stopped those of us who crossed U.S. Steel's path, and we generally found plenty to work with in the public record. Over time, moreover, important private papers have surfaced, including, for example, those of Thomas Lamont, the Morgan partner on the company's board during the 1930s, and

Edward R. Stettinius, Myron Taylor's number two and then briefly his successor. We even have, thanks to the enterprise of University of Pittsburgh archivists, a singular collection of plant records abandoned by management when it shut down the great Duquesne mill. But manifestly the big questions cannot be answered without access to the decision-making story inside the corporation. So it is with anticipation that one opens this first history of U.S. Steel for which access to the company's archives was granted.

Only, alas, to be disappointed. Warren's archival research is thin, confined mostly to the Finance Committee's minutes, which record corporation-wide policy but tell little about what went into its decisions. The underpinnings in company correspondence and memoranda are scarcely tapped, with the notable exception of the reports of a consulting firm hired by Taylor in 1936 to advise him on how to restructure the company. The report on its labor program that probably had a bearing on Taylor's decision to recognize the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee however, is left unused, and so, for that matter, is virtually everything in the archival records concerning labor policy or U.S. Steel's political history and its experience during Progressivism, two world wars, and the New Deal. Whether because of restrictions imposed by USX or because of the author's own inclinations, Warren's book really does not depend on the company's archives and indeed could almost as well have been written in their absence.

The reason is that Warren is what might be called a productionist. What interests him is physical plant—how many mills, where located, with what equipment, and so on. Warren deploys this information around the question of most obvious interest to any business historian: why, given its huge initial advantages, U.S. Steel was so weak a performer, unresponsive to new technology and shifting demand, with steadily dwindling market share and lackluster profitability (although for many decades a gilt-edge investment for widows and orphans)—in short, a case study in entrepreneurial sclerosis until, in the crisis of the mid-1980s, U.S. Steel shed two-thirds of its capacity and became a case study in ruthless corporate restructuring. Stripped of its weaker plants, the steel division of USX currently rates among the world's most efficient integrated producers.

Warren's explanatory strategy is to reason back from the production end and, as an expert on the American steel industry (and author of a recent general history), he makes a good job of it, but since his judgments are not derived from the internal record, they do not rise above what any other well-informed observer might conclude. We get a whiff of what-might-have-been from an instance where Warren does follow the archival trail and reveals how the company, knowing full well that the regional market was too thin, sited a steel plant at Duluth to placate Minnesota officials threatening to tax the company's ore shipments from its Mesabi properties.

Warren presents his book as a full-scale history of U.S. Steel, but in truth his interest flags as soon as he leaves his productionist mode. His chapter on World War I is shorter than his account of the Duluth plant and says nothing about the company's fraught experience with the wartime state (Melvyn Urofsky's book on the subject is not cited); in fact, the chapter consists of little more than an accounting of production increases and new facilities built. On labor, Warren is brief—the chapter on the recent restructuring era comes to all of six pages—uninformative, and error-prone. Warren is incurious even where one might have expected him to snap to attention, as, for example, when U.S. Steel hired Arthur H. Young in 1934 to revamp its industrial relations program in the face of the New Deal threat (Warren dismisses Young on the basis of two random quotations from secondary sources) or when the company took a stand on manning levels in the great 1959 strike (Warren's account suggests that it was over wages). As for the single most important event—Myron Taylor's decision to accept collective bargaining—Warren has nothing of interest to say. He might have been better advised to have given up on those aspects of U.S. Steel's history that did not engage him and presented his book as the more specialized productionist work it really is.

In that guise his contribution is certainly useful. If you want to know when the company

built its first universal beam mill (15 years behind Bethlehem), this book will tell you. Or, at any given time, what share of its tonnage came from the ill-located Pittsburgh district. Or which are the three surviving USX integrated facilities. Scholars poring over the archival record will build on this sturdy foundation and one day go from Warren's what happened to why it happened. And who knows? Now that the ice is broken maybe USX will open its archives to labor and political historians and we will have the history of this industrial behemoth in all its glory, not only as steel-maker but as shaper of millions of working-class lives and towering presence in the nation's political economy.

DAVID BRODY, *University of California, Davis*

The Politics of the Minimum Wage

JEROLD WALTMAN, 2000

Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press

pp. xiii + 172, \$24.95 (cloth)

The minimum wage began as a Progressive era response to the economy's failure to provide many workers with a living wage and was reborn in the 1930s as part of a broader effort to legislate an end to the Depression. For the past half century it has played a peripheral role in the effort to raise U.S. living standards and a more central, but largely symbolic, role in the political struggles of business and labor. In this succinct, clearly written, and persuasively argued account of the "politics of the minimum wage," Jerold Waltman urges a new approach to the minimum wage, based on a "political economy of citizenship."

Waltman has done an admirable job of summarizing the history of the minimum wage, its role in late 20th-century politics, and its impact on low wage workers. Apart from his argument and prescriptions, he has provided historians with an excellent guide to a persistent public policy issue. His chapters examine the history of the minimum wage, the results of public opinion surveys, the relevant demographic data on minimum wage workers, the most recent congressional battle over President Clinton's ultimately successful proposal to raise the minimum wage, and perhaps most usefully, the endless effort of economists to assess the impact of the minimum wage on employment and economic opportunity.

Waltman notes a number of ironies. Nearly everyone favors the minimum wage as an anti-poverty measure (even the wealthiest Republicans are somewhat sympathetic), but almost no one takes it very seriously. Politicians pay attention only when there is an active proposal to raise the wage or extend coverage: such occasions enable them to rally interest groups and pose as defenders of vital causes. The vast majority of workers, whose pay exceeds the minimum, are no more concerned, except when the minimum wage is portrayed in symbolic, political terms. Employers loathe it in theory but do not find it particularly burdensome in practice. Anti-poverty reformers consider it at best a secondary weapon. The two major exceptions to this pattern are the economists, who delight in studying the minimum wage, and the minimum wage workers themselves, who find it a useful ally in their unequal negotiations with employers. For them, the minimum wage has immediate, practical significance.

In recent years the minimum wage has had the greatest impact in the western states and among Hispanic workers. A disproportionate number of Hispanics work full-time in poorly paid jobs and are probably the best rejoinder to the argument that the minimum wage only raises the pay of burger-flipping high school students who would be better off devoting their time to their homework.

The political debate over the minimum wage has increasingly become an argument over its impact on employment. Waltman's review of the polling data shows that support for the minimum wage declines markedly if respondents assume that it will cause job losses. Economists have traditionally taken for granted a trade-off between minimum wage levels

and jobs. However, several recent empirical studies have concluded that increases in the minimum have actually increased employment, mostly by making more prospective employees available (homework becomes less and less appealing as the wage rises). Waltman summarizes this work and concludes logically that the effect, pro or con, is probably small and inconsequential. Given the earlier assumption that the minimum wage reduced employment opportunities, this modest conclusion has large implications.

In the end, Waltman calls for fewer economic analyses and more sensitivity to the plight of the poor. The minimum wage is a good idea because it helps the poorest workers and causes little or no hardship for anyone else. Most people instinctively understand this positive effect, but the economists and politicians have effectively blocked acceptance of it. Waltman states his case in more arcane, academic language, which will probably restrict its audience and its influence, but he makes a strong appeal for the minimum wage as an expression of neighborliness and aid for the poor. Viewed in this straightforward way, the minimum wage is not a panacea but it is a simple, practical step toward improving the lives and prospects of many of our poorest workers and citizens.

DANIEL NELSON, *University of Akron*

Rekindling the Movement: Labor's Quest for Relevance in the Twenty-First Century

LOWELL TURNER, HARRY C. KATZ, and RICHARD W. HURD (eds.), 2001
Ithaca: Cornell University Press
pp. 402, \$19.95 (paper)

The predicament of the U.S. labor movement in the late 20th century was painful and obvious: declining membership, corrupt conservative leaders, and little commitment to organizing the growing numbers of unorganized workers in both old and new industries. Yet when reformers began to take over locals, international unions, and, eventually, the AFL-CIO leadership itself, a new era appeared to dawn. The recent research detailed in this volume evaluates this new era. All the authors naturally support the changes of the 1990s. And they also all agree that these changes have not been profound enough, that the U.S. labor movement needs, in a title word, rekindling.

Yet there the agreement ends. Some, such as Dorothy Sue Cobble and Charles Heckscher, argue for “rethinking the labor movement from the foundation on up” (83). Unions need to be reinvented, Cobble claims, in order to respond to the needs of workers from “cappuccino maker to computer programmer” (83). To accomplish this, she asks labor to “create new institutions and broaden its animating philosophy” by, interestingly enough, returning to its craft union roots. This is not a call to reestablish union control over labor markets as some building trades once had, but rather to allow for flexible and varied approaches to a variety of job issues, especially in the realm of professional training and non-economic psychological relations.

Similarly, but more radically, Heckscher maintains that unions need to “go with the flow” of an increasingly casualized, high-tech workforce and transform themselves into full service associations (81). It is hopeless, Heckscher believes, to fight the current increase in temporary employment. As an alternative, he points to the example of Working Today, which offers healthcare packages, financial planning, employer databases, and other job services for workers in temporary jobs. While Working Today doesn't negotiate on behalf of members or even establish minimum wage or other job standards, it does create “a sense of shared values and interests” (79). More empirically, Eric Parker and Joel Rogers in their contribution evaluate attempts at metropolitan training programs for this kind of workforce and find that what actually works is a combination of such programs with active labor market involvement and traditional bargaining and militancy by unions.

In contrast to Hecksher's suggestion that unions essentially turn from their commitment to improve directly people's wages and working conditions, other authors suggest that labor's future lies in revitalizing its traditional functions through broad mobilizations, corporate campaigns, and political coalitions. Some of the best chapters examine specific organizing campaigns. Kent Wong and Ruth Milkman, for instance, see the success of Los Angeles janitors and dry wall workers as revealing the keys to future organizing among low-wage immigrant workers. These two notable successes came from an old-fashioned combination of rank-and-file militancy and skilled, committed leadership. While acknowledging the importance of employer opposition and structural changes in the economy, they ultimately believe that worker militancy and "determined and skillful organizing backed up with adequate financial and legal resources can make or break unionization efforts" (103).

The consensus in this book seems to be that both organizational and cultural changes are necessary for the labor movement to grow. Bill Fletcher, Jr and Richard Hurd argue emphatically that local unions' success requires cultural change. Successfully growing unions need "attention to technical requirements" that bring "representational effectiveness" and develop "the capacity to organize effectively." This means devoting "sufficient economic resources" to organizing and representing members at the same time as attending to "political demands" and "effective handling of the inevitable cultural transformation" (206). Easier said than done, of course (and not very easily said; the writing here is painfully academic at times). Their point is echoed by Jill Kriesky on the mixed results of reforms in central labor councils and Amy Foerster on the challenges facing the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute.

Some of labor's biggest political challenges in the 1990s came in opposing free trade legislation and treaties. James Schoch traces labor's few victories and concludes that hope for future success lies not simply in opposition to liberal trade regimes but in "thinking seriously" about a "progressive internationalist" program (313). Along the same lines, Lance Compa agrees that "international trade policy is now a battleground for workers' rights." He traces the labor alliance with human rights groups, international organizations and environmental groups, most famously in Seattle, to uncover a "labor rights" ideology that he calls "the most direct challenge to the primacy of a marketplace ideology" (338). Paul Johnston likewise sees local political coalitions and social movement unionism as the way forward for the movement. Yet even the editors disagree among themselves about their prescription and prognosis for labor. Katz finds the prospect of social movement unionism proposed by Johnston and coeditors Hurd and Lowell Turner "wishful thinking," and argues that while substantial reforms have been made in labor, "union revitalization will be an extremely difficult uphill struggle" (341).

In contrast, Turner and Hurd maintain "there is reason to hope for the future of the American labor movement, far more reason than we have known in many years" (26). It is easier to prescribe a remedy in theory than to carry it out in reality. Still, this book will have provided a real service to scholarship, to the labor movement, and to working people if readers come away from it with a deeper understanding of just what it will take to make labor important in this century. Or as former Steelworkers' President George Becker put it in Kate Bronfenbrenner and Tom Juravich's piece: "The labor movement must be constructive, creative, and ever willing to change but it must never, never forget how to fight" (237).

VICTOR SILVERMAN, *Pomona College*