Book Reviews


Reviewed by: Joe Berry, Berkeley, CA, USA
DOI: 10.1177/0160449X11426703

Some labor educators might pass by this book as just another tribute collection to an old colleague. That would be a big mistake. Like recent collections of Howard Zinn’s work, *From Here to There* both reminds us of the remarkable time span of Staughton Lynd’s life and activism and documents the growth and insight of an activist academic who became a true organic intellectual, though that was not his origin.

This collection of both previously published and unpublished pieces ranges from the early 1960s to 2009. They reflect the breadth of Lynd’s interests and activities, which here are organized in four sections, “The Sixties,” “History,” “Possibilities,” and “Conclusions.”

“The Sixties” includes contemporary reports, essays, and speeches, some of which were directed to young radicals during the 1960s and some of which were directed to people searching for lessons at a later time. They include pieces on Thoreau, Socialism, SNCC and the Freedom Schools (of which Lynd was the director), participatory democracy or self-activity, and the Cold War origins and the purges in labor. “History” ranges from his own views on doing radical history, to stories about committing the crime of “history from the bottom up” (which he correctly credits to Jesse Lemish and Students for a Democratic Society), to the Kennedy assassination and doing guerrilla history in Gary, Indiana. “Possibilities” encompasses, among others, essays on nonviolence as solidarity, overcoming racism, students and workers, and perhaps most important, E. P. Thompson’s concept of “warrens” of working-class counterorganization, culture, and power in society. Finally, in “Possibilities,” Lynd discusses what his eighty years have taught him about American imperialism, the “repressive tolerance” of US society, the global capitalist crisis, and the sources of solidarity that might end it.

Of particular interest currently to labor educators, union activists, and labor studies scholars is his general perspective, expressed in many pieces, on lateral solidarity, as opposed to hierarchical centralized organization. He is a socialist, even a Marxist of sorts, but he admires a number of anarchist concepts that have gained new credibility among young activists. Connected with this is his discussion, again in a number of sections and in the introduction by Grubacic, of the concept of “accompaniment,” taken from Monsignor Romero of El Salvador, as an expression of the proper form for solidarity to take when exercised by those with more resources and privileges vis-à-vis those with less.

Taken together with his thoughtful comments on the relations of student struggles to those of workers, from the 1950s to the present, we have more than enough reason to look seriously at this old radical’s long-considered observations and judgments. A
final reward is his discussion of how activists and radicals should relate to each other, in other words what fraternal and comradely behavior looks like and how we have disregarded it to our serious detriment in the past. This is one of those books that can be read usefully by educators and, especially in sections, assigned in even the most basic labor-education classes.

This review would not be complete without some mention of Lynd’s large contribution directly to labor education. Few books, and the movies based upon them, have been more useful than his and his wife Alice Lynd’s Rank and File. His little Solidarity Unionism: Labor Law for the Rank and Filer (recently revised and reissued) has found its way into thousands of workers’ pockets. Finally, his example of his own “reinvention of himself” when blacklisted out of the historical profession and academia should give all of us a bit more courage when we have to decide “how far we can go.”


Reviewed by: Sue Carter, Canadian Autoworkers Union, Toronto, ON, Canada
DOI: 10.1177/0160449X11426711

Making Feminist Politics offers a compelling hundred-plus year history of organizing by union women within and across unions and borders, and between feminists in organized labor and the women’s movement more broadly. Franzway and Fonow analyze and guide the reader through example after example of trade union women seeking each other out and making use of (or creating) international structures to deploy resources and advance discourse to influence unions, employers, and governments around key feminist platforms, including childcare, pay equity, workplace harassment, precarious work, reproductive choice, and violence against women.

From their case study on the International Metalworkers Federation to their review of intra-movement and transnational organizing at the Porto Allegre World Social Forum, Franzway and Fonow provide a wealth of references for readers interested in the making of trade union feminist politics. But as Franzway and Fonow note at the beginning of the book, “whatever gains were made for women in the past now seem quite tenuous. Such losses of specific women’s positions and resources reveal the limits of a political strategy aimed at intervening in hierarchical structures of power, rather than transforming them” (p. 4).

Making Feminist Politics begins with a call for a return to a more explicit sexual politics in trade union activity and analysis at local, national, and transnational levels. They name the challenges/dangers inherent in union “family campaigns” (where “family” is framed in heteronormative terms), in “gender” policies (which risk erasing/neutralizing both women and sexism), and in lesbian-gay/bisexual/trans union
organizing (where queer politics are sanitized/de-sexed/etc.). Franzway and Fonow aren’t purists, they’re simply keen to point out the slippery slopes of political pragmatism, and rightly insist on a recommitment to sexual politics that understands “complex gender relationship of power expressed as domination, resistance, alliances, and pleasures that are central to all social institutions, including the trade union movement” (p. 9). And, picking up from Franzway’s introduction of “the laboring body” in *Sexual Politics and Greedy Institutions*, they call on feminists and unionists to recognize the fourth element of women’s labor (the invisible reproductive self-care work women do, essential to their triple roles of social reproduction, paid work, and activism).

For students and teachers of social movement theory, Franzway and Fonow offer concrete examples and initiate meaningful discussions on framing, resource mobilization, networks, and intra-social movement (as well as transnational movement) organizing. For students and teachers of labor, women’s, and queer studies, *Making Feminist Politics* builds a much-welcomed historical memory. Those interested particularly in separate organizing will find the book rich in historical and international references to women-only caucuses, committees, education programs, and of course, women’s unions.

Bringing feminist politics into the trade union movement at all levels is a hard slog. Some readers will recognize that behind each of the book’s references to what are, in many cases, transnational “go around” strategies, are local and national stories of struggle and compromise, of more or less intense sexual and racial politics, personal and collective battles.

Unfortunately, this is a slim volume—more space might have allowed the authors to detail some of their examples. In my mind, here are some of the tough questions that still call for answers about the mechanics of transnational organizing and working across “many lines of difference”: How do sexual and racial politics influence who attends international events on behalf of their unions, or how decisions are made at these levels? How, and to what degree, are issues of racial in/justice as well as north/south dynamics articulated, integrated, negotiated into trade union feminist politics and activity at transnational levels? How do dynamics of organizing between trade union feminists and the broader women’s community at the international level compare (and integrate) with coalition work at the local, state, and national levels? What are the limits of transnational organizing? How exactly does “what happens in Geneva” come home to women workers in local unions?

*Making Feminist Politics* offers a broad and theoretically rich accounting of trade union feminist cross-border efforts to build and win policies and campaigns at the level of global union federations, the ILO, and the World Social Forum, and leaves us with the important challenge of how to bring it home to the local level.
One of the enduring controversies in American labor history is whether the labor movement would have been better served by the creation of a labor party, instead of an alliance with the Democratic Party. The successes and failures of the Labor Party in England and in countries within the British Commonwealth provide either support or opposition for such a proposal. In *All That’s Left*, the editors provide a series of essays on the future of the Labor Party in Australia, and, more generally, the future of the progressive movement there.

First, a general note. This book was written for Australians and assumes knowledge of Australian politicians and parties not present in most American readers. Julia Gillard, the Prime Minister, is as familiar to that audience as Barack Obama, and Kevin Rudd, her predecessor, has a Bill Clinton-esque following. But on nearly every page, the American reader is sent scurrying to the Internet to look up names or find the difference between the Liberal and the Labor parties. Keeping that in mind, I find that the authors still arrive at some general conclusions useful for all audiences.

One issue that is noted by Dyrenfurth and Soutphommasane, and also considered in Paul Clark’s book, *Building More Effective Unions*, is the role of culture and rituals. As society becomes more fragmented both in Australia and America, the need for common culture comes to the fore. Unions and the progressive movement in general need to consider the use of songs, traditions, and history to bind up the movement.

The authors also dig deep into the ideas of social justice and progressive economics. We use these terms routinely, without thinking about an exact definition of what they mean. The authors examine two definitions of justice—liberty and fairness. But these terms can be contradictory in practice—so what do we mean when we say we are striving for social justice? As the old saying goes, if you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there. Another important issue raised in the book is the need for coalitions. In the Australian context, the authors suggest two coalition partners—the indigenous (Aboriginal) population and the green movement. The authors argue that the payoff for extending outside of traditional progressive sectors is the strength in numbers it gives.

Finally, and most importantly, the Labor Party in Australia and the progressive movement in general need to become a “party of ideas . . . leadership cannot (look) to marketing consultants for vision” (pg. 213). The authors note the progressive tendency toward long-winded manifestos and instead suggest that a series of core beliefs can serve as the lodestar for the movement.

While there are obviously many differences between Australia and the United States—politically, socially, and economically—many of the ideas put forth are equally at home on both sides of the Pacific. A progressive movement that can define and publish its basic
tenets and that can work in coalition with other groups can still emerge victorious in this Tea Party era. On the other hand, standing for vague principles and believing that the movement is the only pure faction is a recipe for continued failure anywhere in the globe.


**Reviewed by:** Debra W. Kidney, AFSCME International, Olympia, WA, USA
DOI: 10.1177/0160449X11426704

The *Worker Justice Immersion Toolkit* is a brief primer on how to develop a program to teach participants about the intersection of faith and worker justice through conversations, reflection, and direct action. As a free download from Interfaith Worker Justice, this toolkit is a user-friendly guide for churches, student groups, labor educators, or anyone else interested in designing and implementing a plan that marries the religious and social justice communities.

As stated in their mission:

> Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ) is a network of people of faith that calls upon our religious values in order to educate, organize, and mobilize the religious community in the United States on issues and campaigns that will improve wages, benefits, and conditions for workers, and give voice to workers, especially workers in low-wage jobs.

The Immersion Toolkit moves this mission to action, including everything from choosing, prepping, and debriefing activities to sample flyers, press releases, and sign-in forms.

The Toolkit outlines how to find local groups that will support the immersion experience such as unions, workers’ centers, and affiliated religion/labor groups. It then guides the user through sample agendas based on the time allocated for the program, provides direction on setting up an interaction between workers and participants, and shares fundraising ideas that could support the program. The Toolkit also includes a resource list of books, blogs, and movies, as well as existing training programs and contacts within IWJ that could assist in developing a program.

While brief, this is a thorough guide. It is well organized, complete, and can be used by organizations of any size. Even groups without a faith connection will find this a helpful template to move the issue of social justice forward within their community.
Labor geography is a diverse, interdisciplinary field made coherent by the insistence that labor must be understood as a geographically embedded actor with the capacity to shape economic geographies. Labor geography studies how workers and their organizations produce space to meet their own needs through strategies contextualized by the places in which they work and inhabit. The field was defined in terms of this reassertion of labor’s spatial agency by Andrew Herod, who put the point in a particularly forceful way. Grouping together a still small number of researchers, labor geography has become an important source of conceptual and theoretical renewal in labor studies.

*Missing Links in Labour Geography* is an edited volume that derives from a conference on “Theoretical Approaches in Labour Geographies” held at the University of Oslo in 2008. Contributors include established and junior researchers drawn largely from the economic and human geography departments of Scandinavian, UK, US, and Canadian universities. The volume encompasses seventeen short chapters in five sections, including, along with introductory chapters and a synthetic conclusion, sections on “the agency of unions,” “the politics of labour,” and “labour and strategies of capital.” In the words of the editors, the volume seeks to “investigate, systematize and further develop significant insights gained by geographers engaging with labour . . . [and to] explore how theoretical developments can be made by revisiting classical texts on labour and cross-fertilizing them with recent debates in geography” (pp. 3–4).

This is a specialist academic text. It will be useful to graduate students and labor studies scholars whose research touches on the geographical dimensions of current debates in the field, including the scale of union organizing and the spatial dilemmas of transnational campaigns and international solidarity. These issues are addressed in strong contributions here by Cumbers and Routledge on the “entangled geographies” of transnational campaigns, Rebecca Ryland’s piece on rank-and-file perceptions of labor internationalism, and Steven Tuft’s paper on the multiscaled and contradictory process of union renewal in the hospitality industry.

The main concern of the volume is with the development of the discipline itself—filling in the “missing links” between research programs on the geographies of trade unionism. This involves an attempt to synthesize the use of geographical concepts applied to labor and to address areas—including agency, the state, workers in the informal sector, and the global south—that Noel Castree and David Lier have identified as undertheorized and underdeveloped. Coe and Jordhus Lier address the need in particular to reembody working-class agency into the spaces produced by capitalist class fractions and the state. A number of contributors find inspiration in a Gramscian approach to labor-state relations and the spaces of labor regulation.
There is an ironic subtext running through early studies in labor geography. The agency of the organized working class was reasserted theoretically just as capital was exercising in actuality its power to reshape the global space-economy. When in the early 1970s Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey were arguing that social space was produced through capital accumulation primarily and class struggles secondarily, labor movements in Europe and North America stood at the zenith of their postwar strength. What can it mean now to insist on the spatial agency of labor when the impasse of labor movements everywhere seems to resolve itself precisely into an inability to defend economic landscapes that labor had once organized?

This book contributes to progress in labor geography by folding a categorical insistence on labor’s agency into a relational view that places greater emphasis on conditioning structures and strategic interactions between labor and other forces at work in the production of space. A strategy for labor renewal begins with mapping these relations.


Reviewed by: Bruce Nissen, Florida International University, Miami, FL, USA
DOI: 10.1177/0160449X11426701

This is a terrific book. It is one of the best books I have ever read on the organizing process, what determines likely success or failure, and what leaders need to pay attention to if they wish to make their union (or comparable organization) a powerful one capable of changing power relations.

Ganz, a longtime staff member of the United Farmworkers Union (UFW) in the 1960s and 1970s, sets out to answer the question: how could an organization as powerless and bereft of conventional resources as Cesar Chavez’s union win the many victories it achieved in those two decades? During the same period the AFL-CIO was unsuccessful in its attempt to organize California farmworkers despite spending huge sums of money in their campaign. And at least during this time period, the Teamsters Union was equally unsuccessful in the fields, subsequently retreating to organizing packing operations after using massive amounts of money and manpower in their effort to organize farmworkers.

Using the story of David and Goliath from the Bible, Ganz’s book asks, why did David (the UFW) slay Goliath (the wealthy growers), even in the face of the incredible resource and power imbalance initially? Ganz tells a very lively tale, undoubtedly aided by his first-person observations and experiences as well as exhaustive scholarly research. Parts of the book make riveting reading, as the author recounts periods of danger as well as triumphs for the UFW, dealing with multiple enemies as well as a
myriad of allies. The book is also a triumph of social science scholarship, theoretically grounded and insightful in utilizing that theory. Ganz argues for the importance of strategy and the decisive role of strategic capacity. The UFW had this, just as David did when he felled Goliath by fighting in a new way that was unfamiliar to the giant he overpowered.

What are the sources of strategic capacity? Some are personal or biographical: identities, social networks, and tactical repertoires. The UFW in this period had the right elements in all of these. Other sources are organizational in nature: types of organizational deliberation, the organizational flow of resources, and the methods of accountability. Ganz skillfully weaves these theoretical elements into his account of the UFW’s trials and triumphs in the period from 1965 to 1977.

The limitations of a review preclude detailed examination of how the UFW accomplished miracles during this time period. The key element throughout the book was the unique “strategic capacity” the organization possessed at the time. Everything—from the allies relied upon, the tactical repertoires used, the reliance on farmworkers themselves as the basis for organizing, the accountability to the “base,” the internal deliberative processes, and the methods of allocating and maneuvering resources—worked brilliantly. The contrast with more conventional organizations like the AFL-CIO and the Teamsters is made clear.

Unfortunately, being David was not a condition that was to last for the union. In an epilogue, Ganz briefly traces the descent of the union into a shrinking, cult-like organization built around the older Chavez’s paranoia and demands for unquestioning loyalty. Chavez forced union staff into a “game” taken from the Synanon cult, which consisted of vicious personal attacks to destroy an individual’s ego and to produce unquestioning disciples of Chavez. Almost all experienced staff were purged.

This extremely sad aspect of the later UFW’s experience is told at much greater length in Miriam Pawel’s book *The Union of Their Dreams*. By the time of Chavez’s death in 1993, the union was less than one-tenth its previous size. Eventually it became primarily a series of nonprofit organizations run by Chavez family members, with no relationship to organizing farmworkers.

But for a while, David won. I highly recommend this book, which would be usable in many labor studies classes devoted to organizing and power-building.


**Reviewed by:** Peter Shapiro, *Portland Jobs with Justice, Portland, OR, USA*

DOI: 10.1177/0160449X11418053

Labor law, fashioned largely in response to the great workers’ struggles of the 1930s, is supposed to bring a measure of order and fairness to labor-management conflicts by placing both parties on something resembling equal footing. Yet it has as its foundation a
legal tradition that evolved in large part to protect individual property rights and the sanctity of the market. This does not create a particularly stable foundation.

In a compelling and often brilliant analysis, Richard Brisbin Jr. uses one of the great labor battles of the 1980s to examine the relationship between the law and workplace struggle. Beginning in April 1989, the United Mine Workers (UMWA) waged an eleven-month strike against Pittston Coal. The strike was carried out with extraordinary skill, resourcefulness, and courage by a coalfield community and a union leadership that made mass civil disobedience its primary weapon.

Before the strike started, local union leaders were trained in nonviolence. Once it began, camouflage-clad miners, families, and supporters blocked access to struck mines by sitting down en masse in the entrance until they were arrested. Their five-mile-an-hour “rolling picket lines” held up traffic on the narrow mountain roads where truckloads of scab coal had to pass. At one point, ninety-eight strikers and a local minister took possession of a Pittston processing plant for three days, protected by a huge crowd of supporters who ringed the facility.

Nonviolent mass action was something new in a region where strikes have historically been settled by brute force. But the steady influx of outside capital into the Appalachian coalfields meant striking miners could no longer prevail by simply withdrawing their labor. The disappointing results of the Massey Coal strike four years earlier persuaded union leaders that striking miners could not afford to be isolated. A fresh approach was needed that combined economic pressure with an appeal for public support, couched in the language of social justice and employing quasireligious imagery and appeals to conscience.

It was, as Brisbin puts it, a stirring “social drama,” but the courts were not buying it. Judges made no distinction between civil disobedience and outright violence. The UMWA was slapped with a staggering $64 million in fines for contempt of court, eventually forcing it to curtail its mass demonstrations. Strong-arm tactics by state police and Pittston’s hired muscle from Vance Security went unpunished. At that point, some strikers reverted to the older tactics of sabotage, rock throwing, and the occasional sniper’s bullet fired at a scab coal truck. Such tactics are rarely discussed with outsiders, but Brisbin was apparently able to get at least some strikers to speak candidly about them.

Brisbin writes, “The UMWA leadership, which faced the costs of legal action and loss of public support for the strike, did not want [violent] lawbreaking. However, the leadership lacked any means for detecting and discouraging deviance from its policy of orderly civil disobedience by anonymous individuals” (p. 204).

The strike settlement, which included an amnesty provision, was almost sabotaged by judge Donald McGlothlin, who refused to throw out the fines on the grounds that he was bound to uphold the law regardless what Pittston and the UMWA agreed to. McGlothlin was eventually overruled by the U.S. Supreme Court, which pointed out that $64 million in fines was clearly punitive. But that occurred several years later.

The Pittston strike is generally considered a union victory, but strikers paid a heavy economic and emotional price for it, and their lives were not materially improved as a
result. Like most strikes, its settlement was essentially a truce in an ongoing and protracted war, whose rules of engagement the UMWA had only partially succeeded in challenging.

* A Strike Like No Other Strike * raises critical questions. A legalistic approach to labor relations is at the heart of the collective bargaining process. Unions train shop stewards to enforce and defend the union contract as if it were something timeless and immutable. But a collective bargaining agreement is not etched in stone; it is nothing more than a reflection of the balance of power between labor and management at the time it was signed. It may offer workers (and employers) a temporary respite from continual conflict, but it does not resolve the underlying contest for power that gave rise to it.

The problem is that the legalistic framework, necessary though it may be, ultimately works in management’s favor. Richard Trumka, who led the UMWA during the Pittston strike, put it bluntly: “The labor laws in this country are formulated for labor to lose. And if you play by every one of those rules, you lose every time” (p. 129). Trumka’s strike strategy was to challenge the law’s bias without consigning his members and their union to outlaw status.

This goal was not achieved, but the Pittston strike was a remarkable attempt to deal with the contradiction between law and justice. Brisbin has done a superb job both of capturing the drama and of analyzing its implications.


Reviewed by: Clayton Sinyai, Center for Construction Research and Training, Washington, DC, USA

DOI: 10.1177/0160449X11426707

While the specter of communism no longer haunts Europe, Karl Marx’s shadow still looms over much scholarly research. Consciously or unconsciously, labor historians often take for granted that history is “really” about class struggle and that socialism is the natural and proper expression of labor politics. These premises—whatever value they held in explaining continental European history—obscured much of the American experience.

In the *Labor Question in America*, Rosanne Curranino takes a step out from under that shadow to study American labor history under different light. Delving into the writings of late nineteenth-century labor activists, economists, and social reformers, the historian from Queen’s University (Ontario) contends that American workers redefined “economic democracy” from an issue of production relations to one of consumption standards. And she concludes that this was not a betrayal of the proletariat by sinister “business unionism” but in fact a fine thing.
The Labor Question opens by conveying the sense of crisis Americans felt during the depression of the 1870s, with many fearing their country was going the way of Europe. America’s small proprietors had established and conserved our democratic institutions through exercise of their characteristic civic virtues—thrift, industry, independence, and respect for the rule of law. But with the growth of industrial capitalism, it seemed that a despotic robber baron elite and a desperate and debased working class might trample the small producer, and our republic, between them.

Currarino offers unconventional treatments of both Chinese immigration and late nineteenth-century economic thought. Native-born workers favoring Chinese exclusion pointed to these workers’ willingness to labor long hours for low wages. For previous generations, such thrift and industry was a path to property and independence as farmers or shopkeepers. But now that many workers would never escape from life as hired hands, could excessive thrift and industry instead indicate a shameful, servile nature not fit for a free society? Currarino does not deny the presence of race prejudice in the debates, but she insists that we review the actual arguments advanced by trade unionists to support their cause.

Meanwhile, it was becoming obvious to more and more observers that the labor theory of value assumed by Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and Karl Marx was not a very robust model for understanding wages and prices in a modern economy. Historical/institutional and neoclassical economists vied to replace it offering very different approaches, but in important ways each redirected attention away from production toward consumption.

American Federation of Labor (AFL) President Samuel Gompers accommodated this shift with his notorious definition the goal of the trade union movement: “More.” Socialists and “producerists” alike remained focused on the relations of production, and regarded the change as a tragedy and a sellout. They held that “wages could not reinstate producers’ lost manhood, and wages could not confer republican independence on workers: only the reclamation of control of the means of production could do so” (p. 104).

Gompers and his AFL peers regarded this as idealistic nonsense. Socialists promised a fantasy achieved nowhere on Earth; “producerists” proposed to turn the clock back to an honorable but austere Jeffersonian republic. Better, Gompers contended, that workers demand “more” of the very real surplus made possible by modern industry. Even a wage worker could be a respectable citizen if through his trade union he could secure adequate living standards, leisure, and education.

Given a choice between virtuous poverty and a share of industrial plenty, most workers chose the latter and the “pure and simple unionism” of the AFL triumphed over its rivals. I suspect that Gompers was substantially more interested in production and its effect on workers than Currarino allows, but her argument is worthwhile reading for those willing to reexamine the conventions of contemporary labor history.
There has been much discussion on what happened to the industrial sectors of the United States in the last forty years. From coal production and auto manufacturing to the outsourcing of communication technology, the reality of what has destroyed the ability of working-class people to earn a decent living is no longer a mystery. There is plenty of blame to go around, and these two books both shed some light on this dramatic decline.

In *Roots of Steel*, Deborah Rudacille offers an intimate look at the history of one steel-manufacturing operation in Dundalk, Maryland called Sparrows Point. Starting with the earliest history of the steel plant in 1887, Rudacille takes the reader on a historical, cultural, political, and sociological journey into what manufacturing used to be in America. The author writes with such clear vision and provides such an unflinching analysis of the forces that changed this town and the industry that created it, you can even see the benzene and dirt in the coffee of the workers whose lives depended on this work that was slowly killing both them and the town.

The author chronicles the immigrant experience in manufacturing and the social and community ties that created an atmosphere of struggle and sacrifice for thousands of workers and their families. Their voices and experiences are respectfully offered along with the analysis of the external forces that were unfolding to undermine the profitability and future of steel manufacturing in America.

Rudacille spends quite a bit of time on the impact of the Consent Decree issued in the 1970s, which committed the industry to hiring and promoting more African American workers. She describes the struggle by these workers against racism and discrimination, as they challenged both their employer and their union post–World War II and during the Civil Rights Movement. She gives voice to the women who entered the male-dominated workplace and how their determination to provide for their families forced them to endure sexual harassment and discrimination. We also learn of the advances that many women and people of color fought for and won in demanding change from their union and their employers.

In her writing of the history of this town and industry, she is not an outsider. The advantages of a well-paying job for her father allowed her to attend college and create a different life away from the mills. In doing so, she acknowledges the opportunities that she was afforded and the realization of the dream of thousands of steelworkers to make a better life for their children.
The decline of the steel-manufacturing industry, particularly in Sparrows Point, is the story of many steel towns across America where the short-sighted, profit-hungry industrialists who refused to invest in new technology combined with the union leadership’s inability to face the changing nature of their work. This book helps us, as readers, understand why it is so difficult to change huge organizations that provide manufactured products and well-paying jobs, which in turn provide for the communities that support them.

The final chapters of the book are a eulogy to what has happened in steel manufacturing: the inadequate trade laws, the global competition that brought domestic steel manufacturing to its knees, and the too-late realization of the steelworkers union to recognize the need to be proactive in shaping a future for its members. The story of Sparrows Point, which is repeated in some way at US Steel in Gary, Indiana, Republic Steel in Canton, Ohio, and the many hundred of steel plants that dotted the rust belt of America, is a proud and painful history of what happens when an industry and its workers are too old to work and too young to die.

While Rudacille’s book tells the story of job loss and the impact on working-class and middle-class communities, the book Where Are All the Good Jobs Going? provides a different approach to this same story. It offers up the “facts and figures” that so many labor and management critics see as proof of the decline of manufacturing in America. This book is dense on charts, with analyses of job loss, displacement, and outsourcing. The charts are organized by quintile during the years 1992-2003 and focus on areas of job distribution, regression of wages, and the quality of jobs after downsizing. This book is helpful in understanding, from a statistical analysis viewpoint, the devastation of job loss in this country. At the end of each chapter, the authors provide conclusions about the data.

The final two chapters offer concrete recommendations on what policy considerations should be implemented. While this book is not the clear voice of despair that is heard in Rudacille’s book, there is no denying the importance of understanding the real facts behind the decline. Because this book’s data stops at 2003, a follow-up study of the data from the more recent economic collapse would be even more interesting.


Reviewed by: Howard R. Stanger, Canisius College, Buffalo, NY, USA
DOI: 10.1177/0160449X11417390

The temporary help industry developed in the aftermath of World War II. By the early twenty-first century it had become, according to Erin Hatton, “a behemoth, sending out some three million temps a day and reaching an astonishing 90 percent of employers each year” (p. 1). Although this is roughly 3 percent of the overall labor force, its
impact has been far greater. It symbolizes the degradation of work and the creation of the “disposable worker.” It also contributed to the transformation of the labor market from an “asset model,” in which unions negotiated—or employers offered—relatively secure positions with good pay, benefits, and working conditions, to a “liability model,” where employees are treated as costs to be minimized and a threat to firm profits. Hatton’s book *The Temp Economy* explores the role of the temp industry in this transformation.

Hatton documents how the temp industry won a cultural battle over the meaning of temp work beginning in the 1950s, when industry leaders cast temps in a new category of “respectable” but marginal work suited for white middle-class women desirous of earning “pin money.” Temps worked outside the bounds of the asset model, and in the 1960s and 1970s, as temp work became normalized, the iconic “Kelly Girl”—smartly attired in circle skirts, heels, and white gloves—gave way to the image of labor as machinelike and expendable. By the 1990s, the temp industry was thriving, with Manpower, Inc., surpassing General Motors as the largest employer in the United States, an important symbolic milestone in the changing quality of American jobs.

The shift from an asset to liability model was not inevitable. The temp industry aggressively employed public relations, advertising, and other means of persuasion to sell the idea of workers as “costly burdens” and “expensive headaches.” The industry was part of a broader coalition in this effort, but its unique contribution, according to Hatton, was to modernize the liability model and deliver it to willing employers.

Drawing on a variety of industry documents, advertisements, government reports, legal cases, and oppositional literature, Hatton structures the book into four themed chapters and a conclusion. In the first chapter, she traces the origins of the temp industry, but her main objective is to discuss the making of the Kelly Girl and how industry executives had to overcome two significant obstacles to sell her services. One, they successfully dissociated themselves from the padrone system and private employment agencies, which had reputations for labor exploitation, by establishing themselves as direct employers, not intermediaries. Second, they convinced unions, which were at the peak of their power, that temp work was female, marginal, and not a threat to their industrial male membership.

Chapter 2 explores the expansion of the temp industry into new populations (including male “breadwinners”) and sectors (industrial) in the 1960s and 1970s. Industry leaders updated the liability model to include the “semi-permanent employee” as an alternative to the permanent one, who was a “costly headache.”

In the next chapter, Hatton focuses on how the temp industry facilitated corporate downsizings in the 1980s and 1990s. Companies created two-tier workforces of “core” employees, who were treated well, and a growing contingent of “peripheral” workers, including temps, who worked for less pay and had little security. As the peripheral workforce expanded, core workers’ employment standards degraded. Unions faced employer demands for steep concessions and fought for institutional survival.

Chapter 4 examines the resistance to the temp industry and its explosive growth into day labor, white-collar professionals, and global markets beginning in the 1990s.
Temps, community activists, government officials, and unions led campaigns against the industry by advocating for a more expansive definition of the employment relationship beyond remuneration and by trying to both upgrade temp jobs and eliminate “permatemp” positions.

Reformers have had limited success by getting some temp agencies to improve employment standards via voluntary “codes of ethics” and by unionizing temps. In 1998, former permatemps founded WashTech to organize and train temps working in high-tech fields. Unions also have attempted to transform temp jobs into permanent ones. Hatton overlooks the successful example of the Teamsters strike against UPS in 1997, when the company agreed to upgrade thousands of permatemps.

In her concluding chapter, Hatton formulates a new asset model of work that by her own admission is “utopian.” Its reform strands, however, are not new: paying “living wages,” decoupling social benefits from the employment relationship, making employers and temp firms legally responsible for temps, and permitting temps to join unions. Hatton might have looked to western and northern Europe, where calls for greater labor market flexibility are confronting traditions of strong unions and social welfare.

Minor omissions aside, Hatton fills a lacuna in the literature on the temp industry by adding a cultural explanation for its rise and impact on the U.S. labor market since World War II. To reverse the process of job degradation, labor educators and policy makers must first understand the historical role played by the temp industry, which The Temp Economy expertly analyzes.


Reviewed by: Emily E. LaBarbera Twarog, University of Illinois, Chicago, IL, USA
DOI: 10.1177/0160449X11426705

Eileen V. Wallis’s Earning Power: Women and Work in Los Angeles 1880–1930 offers a fresh look at the landscape of Los Angeles through the experiences of working- and middle-class women during the turn of the twentieth century, seeking to broaden “our understanding of how women negotiated both issues of gender and issues of ethnicity” (p. 2) in an effort to obtain economic stability.

Wallis focuses on Los Angeles for its racial and ethnic diversity as well as the city’s “rapid urban growth” (p. 3). The strength of this book is Wallis’ fluctuation between working- and middle-class women. By choosing to include both groups of women, Wallis demonstrates the ways in which women’s lives were both segregated and intersected. And, in doing so, Wallis brings another layer to the literature on Progressive Era materialism and settlement work.

Central to Wallis’ narrative are the inextricable connections between unpaid labor/wage labor and community/workplace for all women regardless of class, race, or
ethnicity. Wallis approaches these themes from a variety of angles—blue-collar versus pink-collar work, welfare capitalism, suffrage, and immigration—in addition to using a wide array of work and workplaces to illustrate her argument. For example, in one chapter she focuses on women’s labor in the service industry, specifically laundries and restaurants. Attempting to build on earlier works by Arwen P. Mohun and Dorothy Sue Cobble, respectively, Wallis uses the union organizing campaigns by working-class women in these industries to illustrate their desire to “materially improve their situations” (p. 85). In the laundries, workers organized into mixed-gender locals, while those workers who were waitresses were segregated into single-sex locals.

Wallis argues that the two different strategies offered opportunities for racial and gender alliances, yet they failed to build sustainable relationships. Instead, women turned to the state and reform legislation to remedy injustices in the workplace. In her examination of the impact of World War I, she looks at working women in Los Angeles in the telephone and film industry as well as domestic labor. While this effectively offers additional examples of how the working-class and organized labor experienced a political backlash during the 1920s from a gendered perspective, it also illustrates the book’s overall weakness.

I am always pleased to see an addition to the relatively anemic library of works focusing on women, gender, work, and community. However, in this book I think Wallis takes on too much. In less than three hundred pages, she takes the reader to a variety of workplaces, women’s clubs, the late-night L.A. streets populated with sex workers, and the YWCA, in an effort to uncover the economic struggles of working-class women and the reform efforts of middle-class women. Just as I would get swept up into a story, Wallis would shift the focus to another group of workers and women.

Unfortunately, there is no central narrative to the book. By the end of the book, Wallis succeeds in offering up many examples of the ways in which gender and ethnicity intersected in turn-of-the-century Los Angeles, yet her ultimate goal was to “create a more complete picture of how urban women’s work influenced the economic and historical development of both California and the modern American West” (p. 10). I am not convinced that I see that picture clearly. That said, as a resource for teaching labor history, Wallis provides many colorful and exciting examples of women’s struggles that would prove useful for all types of educators.