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## Book review - Larry Savage and Charles Smith, Unions in Court: Organized Labour and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms

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## REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

**Larry Savage and Charles W. Smith,**  
*Unions in Court: Organized Labour and  
the Charter of Rights and Freedoms*  
(Vancouver: University of British  
Columbia Press 2017)

THE CONSTITUTIONALIZATION of labour rights in Canada is one of the most remarkable and, perhaps, unexpected developments in the 36 year history of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Few observers in 1982 would have predicted that the Charter rights of freedom of expression and association would provide constitutional protection for picket-line activity, collective bargaining, and strikes. Indeed, for some critical observers, the advent of the Charter was viewed as an ominous development, advancing the neo-liberal project of degrading and bypassing democratic institutions to insure the maintenance of conditions favourable to capital accumulation and the power of economic elites. Who better, after all, than the judiciary, the guardians of individual market rights and freedoms, long hostile to collective action by workers, to entrust with this task? However, in recent years, the Supreme Court of Canada (scc) has provided workers with some cover against the assault of neo-liberal governments pursuing austerity measures that restrict collective bargaining and the freedom to strike. How did this happen and what are its implications for the future of the Canadian labour movement? These are some of the questions Savage and Smith set out to answer in this insightful account of the labour

movement's engagement with the Charter and the scc's evolving jurisprudence.

Savage and Smith approach the subject of constitutional labour rights through the lens of critical institutionalism, which places law and judicial decisions in a broader social and political-economic context, which recognizes that institutions shape and are shaped by that context. More specifically, they are concerned to understand labour's strategic orientation toward the courts and the Charter in relation to the political-economic pressures they faced and by the opportunities available to protect their interests, including the statutory and jurisprudential space that legislatures and judges expand and restrict over time.

Historically, the labour movement viewed the judiciary as authors of a highly restrictive regime of industrial legality and their goal was to expand the zone of legal toleration through some combination of labour militancy and political action. The Wagner Act Model, enacted into Canadian law at the end of World War II, was that movement's ultimate achievement. It provided a regime of industrial legality that kept courts at bay (except in the realm of picketing and other strike-related activity, which the judiciary continues to tightly control) but that was premised on labour accepting severe restraints on collective action in exchange for an administrative recognition scheme that imposed a duty on employers to bargain in good faith. Statutory collective bargaining schemes were extended to the broader public

sector in the 1960s, but were subject to important limitations, particularly in regard to essential service workers, whose freedom to strike was even more restricted than that of private sector workers. Unionization rates grew and unions were often able to obtain favourable legislative reforms through their support for the New Democratic Party. Keeping the judiciary's hands off labour law was a shared objective of the labour movement and the industrial pluralists who were the architects and administrators of this new regime of industrial legality. Not surprisingly, unions were wary of constitutional reforms that would enhance the power of the judiciary to override legislation. However, as Savage and Smith show, this was not the only reason the Canadian labour movement was largely absent from the Charter debates of the early 1980s. Crucially, their silence was also driven by need to keep the Quebec labour movement, which was opposed to Pierre Elliot Trudeau's constitutional project, in the Canadian house of labour.

Notwithstanding the labour movement's lack of interest in securing specific constitutional protection for labour rights in the Charter, unions were quick to go to court and claim that such rights were implicit in the right to freedom of association and expression and the right to equality. The reason, as Savage and Smith explain, was that the post-war edifice of labour rights, particularly for public sector workers, was coming under attack by the federal and provincial governments who were embracing austerity measures that targeted their own employees. Moreover, its strategic options were limited. The labour movement's traditional political strategy of relying on the New Democratic Party or appealing to labour friendly elements in the Liberal Party was unable to halt the neo-liberal turn and revving up labour militancy was a challenge for a movement that had

largely accommodated itself to the constraints of the post-war regime of industrial legality. It is important to emphasize that the turn to constitutional labour rights was primarily defensive. The primary goal was *not* to expand the zone of legal toleration, as Savage and Smith sometime suggest, but rather to protect the post-war industrial relations regime from legislative attacks.

Savage and Smith provide highly readable accounts of the background to these early cases and, perhaps more importantly for those who are not legally trained, clear expositions of the courts' judgments and the reasoning underlying them. These early decisions were, as Charter critics predicted, hostile to claims that freedom of expression provided meaningful protection to picketing and that freedom of association protected collective bargaining and strikes. At best, the union movement could breathe a sigh of relief because the SCC had not used the Charter to dismantle trade union security measures permitted under existing labour statutes.

In the three chapters that follow, Savage and Smith explore the shifting tides of SCC jurisprudence since these early cases against a background of deepening retrenchment, including social democracy's surrender to neo-liberal policy prescriptions. The resort by unions to Charter litigation to defend labour rights was not so much a strategic choice, if by that one means a consciously considered and coordinated effort, but rather the default path for unions that could not or would not rally their members to defy the law. Just as unions complained to the International Labour Organization about Canada's violation of its international obligations without any prospect that the opinions of its supervisory bodies would have any impact on government action, so too unions continued to bring Charter claims, as if to demonstrate to

their members that they were fighting on their behalf.

What is surprising, then, is not that unions continued to bring Charter challenges despite their early lack of success, but that the SCC began to change its tune. Savage and Smith explore some early cracks in SCC jurisprudence that, interestingly, appear in response to claims brought to challenge excesses or anomalies in the post-war regime, and do however marginally expand the zone of legal toleration. First, with regard to picketing, the SCC recognized it as expressive activity, but treated it as a degraded form of speech barely entitled to constitutional protection. However, the SCC made a small concession by distinguishing leaf-letting from picketing, thereby exempting it from the highly restrictive regime that otherwise would have applied. The court also held that the tort of secondary picketing, which limited unions to picketing their employers' premises, was overly restrictive and inconsistent with Charter values. However, it left in place other torts it believed were sufficient to protect recognized private and public interests. The court also addressed the anomalous position of RCMP officers and farm workers excluded from any statutory collective bargaining scheme. While the SCC upheld the exclusion of RCMP officers, it recognized, for the first time, that freedom of association protected some group activities, including the making of collective representations and, at least for vulnerable farm workers, imposed a positive duty on the state to protect their freedom to organize with a right against retaliation by their private employers.

No doubt, these small victories encouraged further Charter challenges, but what really drove the unions to the courts was the ongoing assault on existing trade union rights, particularly with respect to public sector collective bargaining and strikes. Savage and Smith closely

examine the legal arguments made by the unions and government in these cases and provide a detailed but accessible analysis of the court's decisions, which will be quite helpful for non-specialists who want to understand the logic and parameters of constitutional labour rights. They do not, however, offer any explanation for the SCC's dramatic and, frankly, unexpected embrace of a more expansive interpretation of freedom of association to include a procedural right to collective bargaining and a right to strike. On the one hand, this is understandable since their primary concerns are to understand the labour movement's engagement with constitutional labour rights and the implications of such rights for labour's future. On the other, it would have been interesting to see what contribution a critical institutionalist perspective could make in deepening our understanding of judicial decision-making, especially when class relations are so deeply implicated in those decisions.

Savage and Smith are at their best in their discussion of the implications of constitutional labour rights for the future of the Canadian labour movement. Here they recognize that these battles have been largely defensive, limiting the freedom of government to roll back the post-war regime and, in particular, the post-war public sector collective bargaining regime. This has important implications.

First, constitutional labour rights have little impact on private sector unions and collective bargaining. Here union density, bargaining strength, and strike frequency have been declining for decades. In part, this is because changes to private sector collective bargaining laws, such as certification by ballot instead of card counts, make it more difficult for unions to become certified. But the more important reasons are that capital has become less willing to accept collective bargaining and has reconfigured their relations

of production, for example through financing, in ways that create a mismatch between law and the labour market in which it operates. Constitutionalized labour rights that merely preserve the status quo, or even soften its excesses and address its anomalies, do not begin to address these problems. Moreover, there is no prospect that the SCC will hold that the Charter requires card-count certifications or declare the Wagner Act Model unconstitutional because it fails to provide the large majority of workers with access to a meaningful process of collective bargaining, even though that is true.

Second, it must be acknowledged that the most recent judgments of the SCC benefit public sector workers. Governments must now recognize that legislation which substantially interferes with the process of collective bargaining by, for example, abrogating existing collective agreements or narrowly limiting the scope of future collective bargaining will be constitutionally suspect. So too will be blunt attacks on essential service laws that deprive workers of an effective voice in negotiating essential service agreements or of access to an independent review of governmental essential service designations. And, finally, governments must recognize that back-to-work legislation violates the right to strike and, therefore, to pass constitutional muster the government will have to demonstrate that the violation is demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. This will require governments to demonstrate that the disruption caused by the strike created a pressing and substantial public concern and that it has provided an acceptable substitute. As a result, short-term economic harm will not normally justify back-to-work legislation and attempts by government to tilt the strike alternative in its favour by, for example, appointing biased arbitrators or

by requiring them to give factors favouring the government given predominant weight will be constitutionally suspect.

However, as Savage and Smith argue, these protections at best reinforce and lend legitimacy to the constraints that were built into the public sector collective bargaining regime. Moreover, we cannot safely assume that these constitutional protections will remain robust. Just as we could neither predict that the court would expand constitutional labour rights nor satisfactorily explain why they have done so, we cannot reliably foresee how or why the law will evolve in the future. Paradoxically, while constitutional labour rights are strong, trumping the power of elected governments, they are built on a weak foundation of judicial reasoning, whose plasticity is nowhere more evident than in the SCC's labour rights jurisprudence. The labour movement's historical legacy of building labour rights on the firmer foundation of the militancy of its members and the strength of its organization was severely eroded through its incorporation into the post-war statutory regime of industrial legality. The labour movement runs the risk of its foundations being further weakened by its incorporation into and dependency on a post-Charter constitutionalized regime of industrial legality.

In sum, this book provides an invaluable addition to the burgeoning literature on constitutional labour rights. Savage and Smith situate this development within the history of Canadian labour law and the current political-economic context that make constitutionalization an attractive strategy to a weakened labour movement with few good options. They also provide a comprehensive, up-to-date and accessible account of the twists and turns of the SCC's complicated and continuously evolving interpretation of the Charter. Finally, they present a

clear-headed assessment of the possibilities and limits of constitutional labour rights.

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**Aziz Choudry and Adrian A. Smith, eds.,  
*Unfree Labour? Struggles of Migrant and  
Immigrant Workers in Canada* (Oakland:  
PM Press 2016)**

MIGRANT LABOUR has arisen as one of the most significant yet misunderstood issues of our age. The growth of migrant worker programs spark heated debate about exploitation, wage suppression, and foreign workers “taking” jobs from citizens. Amid all the protestations, one perspective is often overlooked – that of the migrant workers themselves.

The edited collection *Unfree Labour?* attempts to address this oversight. Inspired, in part, by a workshop at the Montreal Immigrant Workers Centre that brought together migrant worker advocates and like-minded academics working in the field, the book is intended to incorporate activist and scholarly perspectives for the purpose of drawing attention to the experiences of migrant workers in Canada. The originality of the book, say the editors in their introduction, “derives from its grounding in activist and organizing experiences, its cross-Canada scope, and the interdisciplinary scholarly perspectives that it assembles.” (2) Seventeen authors contribute to ten chapters with a roughly equal mix of scholarly and activist focus.

The central argument of the book, and its organizing conceptual framework, is that migrant worker programs, through imposition of restricted and limited citizenship status, construct a contemporary form of unfree labour compelled by the

state which creates intensified “hyperexploitation.” (8) This unfree labour is, of course, a highly racialized and gendered form of labour compulsion.

The academic chapters seek to place migrant labour in its historical and structural contexts, drawing links to the changing nature of capitalism and the rise of neoliberalism in North America. The contributors are careful to avoid painting migrant workers as a homogenous entity devoid of agency. Chapters look individually at the different streams of Canada’s migrant worker programs, including the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), the Caregiver Program (formerly the Live-in Caregiver Program – LICP), and the low-skill stream of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). This separation allows the authors to explore in detail the dynamics of each program.

In turn, the activist chapters explore the dimensions of working with migrant workers and discuss emerging models of organizing within their communities. Many raise significant questions about the labour movement’s relationship both with migrant workers and with the organizing approaches adopted by advocates.

The chapters are somewhat uneven both in scope and level of inquiry. While this is to be expected in an edited collection, at times I struggled to see how certain chapters related to the central thesis. The chapter by Deena Ladd and Sonia Singh on the organizing models of the Toronto Workers’ Action Centre is a useful look into building a movement among marginalized workers but seemed only tangentially connected to migrant labour in Canada. Similarly, Abigail Bakan’s chapter comparing the LICP to federal employment equity policies is an intriguing line of theoretical analysis but seems to lose sight of the very thing the book is trying to accomplish, surfacing the lived experiences of migrant workers.

There are also some original and valuable insights found in the book. Geraldina Polanco's examination of migrant workers at Tim Horton's reveals both the under-reported stories of these workers and the complex (and troubling) realities of the globalizing of the fast food industry. Adriana Paz Ramirez and Jennifer Jihye Chun do an excellent job of drawing out parallels between the struggles of the Canadian Farmworkers' Union in the 1980s with the more contemporary British Columbia Chapter of Justicia for Migrant Workers.

The book is at its best when it places migrant workers centre stage. Like when Joey Calugay and his co-authors introduce us to Louis, a Filipino who escaped military death squads and now works as a machinist in Québec. Or Neil, who came to Canada to work at Tim Horton's with the hope of becoming a permanent resident and bringing his family only to be used and lied to by his employer. He returned to the Philippines with little to show for his efforts. These are difficult stories to read but they bring humanity to the issue and serve as a reminder to the privileged few of the Global North that we must not be complacent.

The book also does the important work of highlighting that migrant workers are not passive; they struggle and resist. Their forms of resistance sometimes are unfamiliar to those of us in North America. Their actions can be veiled and subtle, reflecting their vulnerable position, but they resist nonetheless.

Migrant workers' non-traditional forms of resistance are hard for the labour movement to recognize and respect, the contributors often point out. It is a point labour activists (and researchers of the labour movement) should heed. The labour movement has been an uneasy and inconsistent ally of migrant workers and has never found a way to build long-term

relationships with their communities and advocates. The book's contributors do not shy away from discussing how this has damaged migrants' view of unions but also how it has driven them to create new forms of organizing. Their critique of the labour movement is legitimate and unions could learn much from these activists.

The book is the victim of the rapidly changing landscape of migrant labour policy. Even though it is only just over a year old, already events have rendered many of the details out of date. Some chapters discuss at length program rules that no longer exist and there are repeated references to defunct policies such as paying migrant workers 15 per cent less than Canadians. This is not the authors' fault but it bears mentioning so that readers are forewarned.

*Unfree Labour?* aims to be a mix of theory and praxis and it achieves this. The academic chapters present more as either introductory overviews of migrant worker programs or selected slices of insights. Other volumes, such as Patti Tamara Lenard and Christine Straehle's *Legislated Inequality* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), offer a more thorough examination of migrant worker programs and other authors have plowed the same fields this book sows. The concept of unfree labour is useful but not groundbreaking. It and other related concepts having been applied elsewhere.

However, if we look at the book as an intermingling of activism and theory, *Unfree Labour?* is much more successful. It is an excellent case study of how research can contribute to real world change and how academics can (and need to) be a part of the struggle to make change happen. Being a reminder that scholarship needs to be a positive force for change is the biggest contribution this

book makes. And for that reason alone people should read it.

JASON FOSTER

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**Walter Hildebrandt, *Documentaries: Poems* (Edmonton: NeWest Press 2016)**

WALTER HILDEBRANDT'S latest and eighth collection of poetry, *Documentaries*, focuses on an investigation of history, whether recent or more distant history, by exposing its fault lines, more specifically those moments when oppression is met with resistance and something new is created. It is there in "dissensus" and "disjunction," we learn in the collection's first poem, "Illegal Combinations: Glasgow 1787," that the poet finds the presence of "another history." (13) The disruption of the ordered past thus enables new alignments in that history to be perceived, and new ways of thinking and acting to be engaged by this knowledge. (13) This process of recording these other histories, such as that of the Glasgow of 1787 or the Winnipeg of 1919, and of understanding our present moment in those contexts becomes the subject of Hildebrandt's book.

There are seven poems in *Documentaries*, five of the long form variety and two shorter ones. It would be possible to call the entire work a long poem, considering the documentary approach common to each individual piece and a narrating voice that remains consistent throughout the collection as it shifts between present and past. The form of the writing, as well, with the short, broken line of projective verse connects each poem with the next, not that such formal coherence is necessary. The author could, if he were so inclined, continue to add to this collection in much the same way that Robert Kroestch did when he

turned his long poem project *Field Notes* into a life work that spanned decades. Hildebrandt is following Kroestch in this respect by showing that the work of reading the past with an eye on the present is never complete. There are many perspectives and many obstacles to be found in this undertaking. In the collection's second poem, "Let Them Eat Grass / The Dakota Wars 1862," for example, we hear the speaker struggling to come to terms with the extent of the American betrayal of the Dakota. "Treaties / had been / the hope for both," he says, until "the ground moved / the rules changed," and coexistence on the land is transformed into violence and genocide. There are "so many windows / onto these events . . . hard to see it all at once." (26) The poet relies on documenting this history as a response to the amnesia that often keeps the past safely hidden and forgotten: "removals / legislated violence / humiliations / marginalization / loss of homelands / windows / onto this complex / history / documentaries." (34)

The works within *Documentaries* lie very much within the tradition of the Canadian long poem of the past century or more, a poetry that has characteristically made history its subject. Examples of such work might include Dorothy Livesay's *Call My People Home* (1950), a treatment of the Japanese-Canadian internment; Armand Garnet Ruffo's *Grey Owl* (1996), a deconstruction of the life of Archie Belaney, an Englishman who posed famously as an Ojibwa; or Andrew Suknaski's *Wood Mountain Poems* (1976), an examination of Southwest Saskatchewan history that gives voice to Indigenous and settler experience. Hildebrandt's poetry turns decidedly toward the political, which places his work in good company with the work of poets such as Livesay. In fact, Hildebrandt may have been recalling Livesay's *The*



*Documentaries* (1968), her collection of six long poems, all addressing political subjects, when he conceived of his own *Documentaries*.

The book opens with a poem set in present-day Glasgow where we are taken directly to the site of Glasgow Green, the “people’s park,” a “place of mass protests / public demonstrations.” (9) Here in this city and in this park a “radical reform movement” would find a home in the aftermath of the weavers’ strike of 1787: “on September 3, seven thousand gather at the Green / strike / demand a just solution / companies lock them out / call in police and military / desperate times / unarmed protesters / asking to talk / answered by force.” (19) That day three would be shot dead and three would die later, says the speaker, and a union movement would be born. (20) In recording this injustice and oppression, Hildebrandt records the history of those who resist the forces oppressing them.

In “Winnipeg 1919,” one of the longer poems at 45 pages, the speaker re-stages the events that took place on Bloody Saturday at the height of the Winnipeg General Strike before he turns to the strike leaders who were charged and jailed. One of the “conspirators,” William Pritchard, a longshoreman and Socialist Party of Canada activist from Vancouver, comes in for special treatment when the poem details the trial proceedings. Hildebrandt uses as his source material for the second half of the poem *W.A. Pritchard’s Address to the Jury*. In his eloquent defence, Pritchard articulates his argument against capitalism; his position on socialism; his beliefs that the party system is “class based / corrupted by class interests” (66); his view on the “oligarchies” profiting from the war like “noisome flies / fattening at a carcass” (66); and his support for a trade unionism that seeks “to make the world / a better place to live.” (73)

In several places throughout the poem, Hildebrandt employs collage by integrating verbatim text by Pritchard and others involved. The poem closes, in fact, with a statement from Pritchard in which he expresses his conviction that “the historian of the / future will drive the knife of critical / research” into the false and extravagant claims conjured by the “legal luminaries” assembled against workers and strike leaders. (79)

If class struggle becomes one focus of *Documentaries*, then Indigenous resistance becomes another. The 60-page poem “Edmonton 2012” provides another perspective on colonialism from that presented in “Let Them Eat Grass / The Dakota Wars 1862.” Hildebrandt moves across the American border to his home in Edmonton where his speaker, in the first person, reflects on Edmonton’s history as a city founded on Indigenous land. “I’m haunted,” he says, “by what this city is built on.” (83) The city land was fraudulently acquired from the Papaschase band when their Chief Papaschase was given a finalized land-surrender agreement that he had not signed. They were “a starving people / who could not read or write English / who could not make an informed decision / lost their treaty rights / homeless still / a few dollars in their hands / paper genocide.” (86) But the Papaschase descendants have survived to this day and are currently in the courts seeking redress. The poem considers other injustices such as the displacement of the Métis from their river lots along the North Saskatchewan. Edmonton’s history is one of “Unsettled Settlement.” (108) Yet “Edmonton 2012” goes on to find hope in a city that contests in many ways, politically and culturally, the power of corporate capitalism and the forces of conservatism: “out of all this conservative evangelism / redemptive moments / the now time / a small gate-way / through.” (140)

Ultimately *Documentaries* offers hope and the assurance that the human spirit shall overcome. Hildebrandt holds up the example of Christopher Marlowe who, like his creation Faust, confronts hierarchy and authority, while knowing his certain fate. Hildebrandt finds inspiration in the people of Cuba in his short poem “Cuba January 2011,” where the speaker confesses, “I want to die here / in this place of great resistances / to colonizers / to the fascist Batista.” (146) He identifies also, more humbly, with the dogs in the streets of Havana, “lean mangy” dogs who “run independently.” (150) This is the fierce spirit that courses through this collection.

DALE LAKEVOLD  
Brandon University

**Elizabeth Shilton, *Empty Promises: Why Workplace Pension Law Doesn't Deliver Pensions* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press 2016)**

THE JUNE 2017 bankruptcy filing of Sears Canada and the consequent cuts to the pensions it owes to its retired employees briefly returned public attention to, among other problems, serious gaps in Canada's workplace-based pension system. When companies like Sears, or Nortel, go down, thousands of workers not only lose their jobs but also face deep cuts to their legally-promised (but often under-funded) pensions. Alongside these dramatic failures, even profitable companies like the “Detroit Three” automakers have been pulling the plug on the provision of secure, defined benefit (DB) type pension plans in favour of defined contribution (DC) alternatives (often on a “two tier” basis). Even many public sector employers have taken up pension restructuring as a key strategy for managing the impact of austerity budgets and revenue losses. Canadian capitalism in the early

21st century is resolving some of its contradictions on the backs of current and future retired workers.

Elizabeth Shilton's *Empty Promises* provides a timely legal history of Canada's workplace pension plans that offers vital context for understanding these negative developments. As a long-time labour-side pension lawyer, her general conclusions will shock those in the labour movement still trying to make the remaining workplace pensions work. She describes “a system that has been declining for decades and may well be in its terminal phase.... Workplace pension plans should be declared a failure.” (172–173) Shilton's path to this conclusion features a select history of the legal record on pensions – legislative, regulatory, contractual, and judicial – to tell an intensely political story. Though analytically incomplete in certain respects, this book should nonetheless provoke a deep rethinking of working-class strategies for meeting basic economic needs in later life.

The book's first few chapters set out an early history of pension provision in Canada. By selecting a short list of typical early private sector plans, Shilton develops the primary thesis she threads throughout the text – that pension plans were “conceived and designed to meet the needs of employers.” (15) Given that these earliest plans pre-dated organized trade unions by several decades, it is hardly surprising that their initiation and design was exclusively an employer affair. This meant that while they offered workers the appealing prospect of wage continuation after retirement, employer control transformed them into powerful tools to enforce workforce discipline. Plans at the Grand Trunk Railway (1874) and Bell Canada (1917) are profiled as having such a degree of employer discretion over payment that any individual – working or retired – could lose it if they stepped wrong, including by organizing: “Railway

employers ... Grand Trunk among them, had a history of using pension sanctions as an anti-strike weapon. Striking employees might be denied pensions altogether, or receive reduced pensions, because the company refused to credit pre-strike service towards their pensions. Even retired employees actually receiving pensions might find their pensions affected if they failed to support the company during a strike.” (21–22)

But even among employees who behaved well, Shilton points out that extraordinary restrictions on eligibility – such as an age 50 with 20 years service “vesting” rule – made qualifying for the pension both difficult and rare. The result was a powerful employer tool of social control that cost employers very little. Shilton cites a 1938 study of pension coverage that concludes that while about 30 per cent of the labour force of that time worked for employers with a pension plan, only about half of that number were eligible to enroll (frequently white collar or management employees) and only a very small percentage of those who did would actually retire with a pension.

The middle chapters of the book, tracing the post-World War II consolidation of the pension system we are familiar with today, provides further support for the author’s central argument of continuing employer control. Even when the emerging trade unions gained legal recognition and succeeded in making pension issues a subject of collective bargaining, employer control of a new type continued. For example, where we might expect collective bargaining struggles to wrest control away from employers, many unions were organized in workplaces that already had pension arrangements in place. Shilton points out at many unionized employers, “pension plans coexisted with collective bargaining, but the plans themselves did not always come to the bargaining table and often remained

independent of collective agreements.” (81) When many public sector workers gained union representation and collective bargaining rights in the 1960s and 1970s, pension plans had already been long established – often via legislation. Some, such as the federal public service, are still denied bargaining rights over pensions.

Post-war trade union strategy on pensions assigned priority to an appeal for a stronger regulatory framework that would end arbitrary employer control over eligibility and establish improved minimum standards for vesting rights. While this policy work achieved a measurable degree of success through two major “rounds” of regulatory reform in the 1960s and late 1980s, that focus masked an important partial defeat. Trade union demands for a European-style public plan that covered all workers gathered steam in the 1960s, well after US Social Security was established. But the resulting Canada Pension Plan (1966) provided a low level of benefits – just 25 per cent of an average salary. While Shilton’s telling of this development emphasizes the role of federal-provincial wrangling and constitutional authorities, and Ontario Premier John Robarts as the “standard-bearer for private enterprise,” (66) it suffers from inadequate attention paid to the aggressive mobilization of Canada’s banking and insurance sectors – those with most to lose from a comprehensive public program – against the proposal.

Following useful chapters on the evolution of fiduciary standards in pension administration and the specifics of public sector workplace pensions, *Empty Promises* concludes with a final chapter that convincingly reaffirms the book’s argument that workplace pensions have “failed.” Since workplace pension coverage peaked at 46 per cent in the late 1970s, it has been gradually eroding to a point where less than 30 per cent of workers

now have a decent DB pension. Of those, a majority are public sector workers and even their plans are now seeing indexation and other components being cut or eliminated. Legislative initiatives such as the federal Bill C-27 (launched just months after the book's publication) now proposes to permit elimination of the underlying legal guarantee of "promised" DB pension benefits and allow conversion of even retiree benefits to uncertain "target benefit" status. Shilton's incisive critique of this floundering system, and her closing appeal for a return to a universal "public pension" strategy, are persuasive (notwithstanding the small improvement to the Canada Pension Plan agreed upon in 2016).

The disappointment of *Empty Promises* is that its emphasis on the legal history occasionally eclipses the political economy. While blunt about the domination of this failed system by employers, Shilton offers only a limited theoretical explanation for this domination, and almost no comment on the profound weakening of trade union bargaining power over the neoliberal period. For more theoretical insight, readers will want to link this important history to a reading of those, such as Costas Lapavistas or co-authors Dick Bryan and Michael Rafferty, doing recent pioneering work on the "financialization" of working-class households.

KEVIN SKERRETT

Canadian Union of Public Employees

**E.A. Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government: A New Political History of Canada, 1867–1917* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press 2017)**

THOSE OF US WHO keenly feel our inadequacies as economic historians are reassured by Elsbeth Heaman's claim that her latest book is a cultural history of

taxation. In this way, those of us grown used to the idea that the history of Canada can be written without dealing with the history of taxation at all are brought face to face with the race, class, and gender dimensions of a question we have been quite happy to leave to our colleagues in the economics department. The publication of *Tax, Order, and Good Government* marks a turning point in our understanding of the first half-century of the country because Elsbeth Heaman has created a coat of many social, cultural, and economic colours stitched together by the history of taxation.

The book is characterized by the complexity of its simplicity. The author begins with a deceptively simple point that is on the money: John A. Macdonald's National Policy – that is, the tariff – was a tax. She then complicates the simplicity by pointing out that the National Policy was not just about revenue; it was politically intended to provide enough revenue for the federal government to stay clear of taxpayer anger and protest. The acquiring of that revenue was based on the tariff, a clientelist indirect tax that involved the blatant transfer of money from the poor to the rich. At the heart of book, therefore, is how and why of what Heaman calls Macdonald's quasi-imperialist project broke down in the first half century of Confederation.

In the decades following Confederation, Macdonald's government was able to hide behind the tariff by making fairness in taxation a local issue that focused on the inability or refusal of the poor to pay their taxes. In this way attention was diverted from the clientelism and corruption of the rich and redirected squarely on racialized minorities who were perceived as not paying their fair share. In her chapter on British Columbia, Heaman reveals that taxes were collected at gunpoint, the Chinese engaged in tax riots, and the attempt to collect poll taxes from

Aboriginal People living off reserve ultimately failed. Living up to her promise to deliver a cultural history of taxation, Heaman powerfully evokes the ways in which Chinese evasion of tax paying provided the pretext for racist whites in BC to deny the Chinese rights of citizenship.

The chapter on Montréal most powerfully evokes Heaman's claim that it is the "desperate pleas of the poor for relief" that give the book "its moral centre." (17) Heaman chronicles, in French and English, the anguish of desperate Montrealers unable to pay even a meager water tax. The figures are astonishing; in 1903 alone, 31,270 households were in arrears on their water taxes. (229) Warrants for seizure were issued in astonishing numbers, into the tens of thousands in some years. This was the municipal government, the level of government charged with keeping the poor from starving: a responsibility of which the federal government had washed its hands. The genius of Heaman's analysis is that it takes an issue, taxation, that many of us had dismissed as a bourgeois concern, and uses it as a vehicle to bring us face to face with brutal poverty and dispossession.

But the story does not end there. In taxing directly everything from dogs to water, municipal authorities had to engage taxpayer anger and, in the process, demonstrate fairness. In Montréal, the works of progressive businessman H.B. Ames (author of *The City Below the Hill*) and journalist Jules Helbronner made major contributions to a fiscal reform movement that led to the creation of "a widespread popular movement for social and economic reform." (330) Fiscal reformers insisted that a tax system must be based on moral and social considerations, and these considerations increasingly worked their way upwards into the federal realm.

The World War I period brought the efforts of tax reformers to fruition; by 1917 the Macdonaldian ship was listing badly

and in danger of sinking. The Wartime Income Tax Act was passed in September 1917, in part because major elements of the propertied classes wanted it in preference to a general property tax on accumulated wealth. Heaman recognizes the role of socialists and the labour movement in demanding the conscription of wealth, but insists that we recognize that their agitation was rooted in demands for fair taxation and social justice reaching back into the 19th century. In 1917 the wealthy were being forced to face their failure to make a meaningful contribution to the state's financial responsibilities to the poor that tax reformers had been demanding for decades. As Heaman convincingly argues, the poor were becoming visible in a way they had never been before, aided by the rise of statistics gathering and analysis embodied in the creation of a permanent Dominion Bureau of Statistics in 1918. At last, a conception of the public good and concern with the social had become a permanent fixture of the liberal federal state.

The book is a tour-de-force for anyone not expecting a Canadian version of Shays' Rebellion. Heaman has discovered that the militia was called out to put down a tax revolt in Low Township, Québec in 1895. She makes a convincing argument that there were "discrete tax revolts" (11) in Montreal, Toronto, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia, and that there were "moments of resistance and revolt" (7) throughout the land.

The argument that there was a grass-roots tax revolt of a nation-wide character is less convincing, and relies to a great extent on taking the single tax movement seriously. Heaman powerfully and effectively disputes the perception that the movement was cranky and marginal, quite rightly taking historical heavyweights W.L. Morton and C.B. Macpherson to task for their neglect of its importance. However, it is fair to

question Heaman's stance as the first historian to take the movement seriously; she is 40 years behind Ramsay Cook, who did it in an article in *Historical Papers* in 1977. That said, Cook's recognition was focused on the 1880s and 1890s, and Heaman convincingly argues that the political impact of the movement extended into the World War I period, and was a factor in the passing of the Wartime Income Tax Act. In addition, Cook's list of injustices that fuelled the movement contains a notable omission, unfair taxation, that Heaman so forcefully gives its due.

The poor may be at the moral centre of the book, but the evidence Heaman provides suggests that it was the middling people of property who had most of the agency. As the author points out, the single tax movement was based in a cross-class alliance, and what made the movement so enduring and widespread was the fact that the middling people of property identified with the poor rather than the rich. One suspects, however, that they were more motivated by Georgeism's opposition to taxes on improvements than with any genuine fellow feeling for the poor. Heaman herself acknowledges that the income tax was both progressive and regressive; it was a victory for progressive businessmen, and there are cynical socialists out there who will conclude that the poor got little more than trickle down.

Elsbeth Heaman is an historian of big ideas, and historians of big ideas tend to make bold statements to which historians of more limited vistas reply: "Hey, wait a minute, what about ... " As one of the latter, I had any number of "what about" moments as I read the book. But this is not the issue; the issue is that Heaman has written one of those rare books that changes our way of thinking about the Canadian past. You may have your reservations about the weight Heaman places

on the income tax as the barometer of progressive social reform, but you will not be able to think about the Canadian poor in the same way again. So, if are you comfortable in your understanding of Canadian political history in the years 1867 to 1917, do not read this book. But if you want to grow as an historian, find a great topic for a PhD thesis, and or just be shaken out of your complacency, *Tax, Order, and Good Government* needs to find a home on your bedside table.

PETER CAMPBELL  
Queen's University

**Dennis G. Molinaro, *An Exceptional Law: Section 98 and the Emergency State, 1919–1936* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2017)**

WRITING OF A HISTORY of Section 98 of Canada's Criminal Code – a statute that made it a criminal offence to be a member of any organization prepared to use force or violence to bring about governmental change – invites a number of narrative possibilities. Dennis Molinaro has rooted his account of Section 98 in the story of the liberal state's penchant to betray liberty – for Molinaro, its fundamental *raison d'être*. His book is also an intervention in the current debate about emergency legislation in Canada. Molinaro argues that, beginning with Section 98, emergency legislation up to and including the Anti-terrorism Act of 2015, has been deployed in peacetime to legitimize, sanction, and normalize deliberately targeted repression as an instrument of state formation. Such emergency legislation, he argues, is inconsistent with a liberal state based on "Locke's inalienable rights, which include the right to freedom." (11)

Section 98 (Revised Code 1928), approved in July 1919, began life as Section 97a and b of Canada's criminal law. This addition to the Criminal Code

was modeled after PC 2384 approved in 1918 under the War Measures Act. Conceptually, Molinaro observes, Section 98 was designed to “normalize” emergency powers forged by the executive branch in a time of crisis. Notwithstanding repeated Liberal government attempts to repeal Section 98, Molinaro sees more evidence of the normalization of emergency powers when, in 1927, Mackenzie King amended the War Measures Act to expand its potential use and to rename it “An Act to Confer Certain Powers upon the Governor General in Council in the Event of War, Invasion, or Insurrection.”

By the early 1920s, the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) had replaced British-born labour militants of 1919 as the most likely focus of Section 98 prosecutions. A detailed account of the history and evolution of the Canadian Communist Party, justified in part as a contribution to the “revisionist literature of the CPC,” (58) serves as a backdrop to Molinaro’s account of Section 98 repression. No surprise then that the first use of the law came against a Communist party organizer in 1929: the charges were thrown out by a judge who ruled that pamphlets submitted as evidence by the Crown were not “revolutionary.” (77) Aside from the successful prosecution of the leadership of the Communist Party in 1931, and labour organizer “Slim” Evans in British Columbia in 1933 (Evans got one year for advocating the use of force), most prosecutions under Section 98 went nowhere. Still, evidence suggests that the threat of such a prosecution proved a powerful weapon of reaction.

The jurisdictional complexity associated with the use of Section 98 is implicated throughout Molinaro’s narrative. Provincial premiers lobbied Ottawa to deport Communists, and Ottawa wanted the names of Communists convicted under Section 98 prosecutions for deportation proceedings. *An Exceptional Law*

contains no account of the actual mechanics of criminal prosecutions under Section 98 to illustrate how federalism complicated the actual operation of this and other emergency laws. Molinaro’s conflation of federal and provincial jurisdictions as simply “the state” implies quite incorrectly that the federal nature of the Canadian constitution was of little relevance to the operation of repression.

The most important Section 98 prosecution had a complicated provenance. R.B. Bennett, in the 1930s the most interested party in the deployment of Section 98, wanted prosecutions, but had no constitutional authority to initiate them. He put pressure on provincial attorneys-general. The 1931 prosecution of the Communist Party leadership in Ontario came about at Ottawa’s behest. Ontario Attorney-General William H. Price told a colleague that he was “under pressure from Ottawa to take action.” (79) During the trial before a jury composed of “trade workers and farmers” the prosecution presented evidence that the accused were members of a revolutionary organization intent on the use of violence to bring about change. The prosecution’s task was simplified by the fact that “the propaganda of the ... CPC repeatedly mentioned the inevitable proletarian revolt.” (101)

The conviction of the CPC leadership opened the door to widespread deportation of Communists under Section 41 of the Immigration Act. The state’s policy of deporting foreign-born Communists occurred alongside a general campaign of repression against all communists. Repression led the Communist inspired Canadian Labour Defence League (CLDL) to launch a movement to repeal Section 98. The CLDL is given a starring role in this campaign, while Molinaro discounts non-Communist political opposition to Section 98. The admission that Frank Scott was unwilling to join the CLDL, or to associate himself with the League, sits

uncomfortably next to assertions that the CLDL “spurred other progressives to join the movement it had launched.” (185)

The story of Section 98 ends with an account of the On-to-Ottawa Trek, the Regina Riot, the aborted attempt to use of Section 98 against Trek leaders, and the repeal of Section 98 by the newly-elected King government. While Section 98 was repealed, amendments to Code Section 133 to include a definition of seditious intention preserved the essentials of Section 98.

On an interpretive level, *An Exceptional Law* relies on Italian philosopher Giorgi Agamben to argue that through the creation of Section 98 the Parliament merged the World War I state of emergency under the War Measures Act – “the state of exception” – with the normal juridical condition of the post war era. Thus, the story of Section 98 is about how a liberal democracy may invoke an emergency in peacetime and violate accepted legal norms. Linking Section 98 to contemporary emergency legislation, Molinaro argues that the Canadian liberal state may “practice liberal democracy,” but it is not a bulwark of freedom. (230, emphasis Molinaro)

*An Exceptional Law* poses two important questions: Is liberty, as Molinaro suggests, the defining core of the liberal tradition? And should the story of Section 98 and Canadian emergency legislation begin in 1919? A more extended temporal and philosophical account of Canadian emergency law would suggest that both questions should be answered in the negative.

In common law jurisdictions the debate over the state’s use of emergency power dates at least to the Petition of Right (1628) that challenged the Crown’s use of military law during peace time. Gradually, the legal strictures on the use of martial law in peace time and against civilians were lifted. The Lockean

concept of prerogative was at the heart of constitutional discourse justifying the use of martial rule to defend public order and the security of the state. Prerogative said Locke was the power to act “for the publick good, without the prescription of the law, and sometimes even against it.” (*Second Treatise of Civil Government*) In the liberal tradition, reference to prerogative powers exercised in the name of security are found in virtually all liberal conceptions of law and political order from William Blackstone, Montesquieu, Hume, Rousseau, and Smith.

Arguably, Canada’s experience with the emergency state extends as far back as 1760–1764 when a military tribunal administered law in post-conquest New France. Other instances followed. In Canada, in 1914, the creation of the War Measures Act – modeled after Britain’s new Defense of the Realm Act – clothed this common-law doctrine of prerogative or necessity in a language of emergency powers and security. It may be that the beginning of wisdom about the Canadian liberal state, and the current state of emergency legislation in Canada, starts not with the creation of Section 98, but with the realization that security always trumps liberty when push comes to shove in the liberal order.

TOM MITCHELL

Brandon University

**Kathleen Carlisle, *Fiery Joe: The Maverick Who Lit Up the West* (Regina: University of Regina Press 2017)**

JOE PHELPS ARRIVED in Saskatchewan from Ontario in 1908, when he was nine years old. The Phelps family homesteaded near Wilkie, west of Saskatoon. George Phelps, his father, like thousands of settlers from Ontario and elsewhere, came to the West filled with determination and confident of success in this land of



opportunity. Reality, however, soon set in. Those pioneers who survived on the land, and many did not, faced a hostile natural environment and sold the wheat they produced into a complex international market dominated by what one farm leader referred to as commercial pirates. It was not a life for the faint hearted.

Joe Phelps, the subject of this biography, was a part of the next generation of Saskatchewan farmers which faced this situation and attempted, with some success, to construct a social and economic system that would alleviate problems and provide a degree of security for farm families. From the 1920s to the 1960s, Phelps dedicated his life to this task. It led him in the 1920s to the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, the Farmers' Union of Canada, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and the United Farmers of Canada (UFC). In the 1930s, he was involved in the creation of the Farmer-Labour Party and the Saskatchewan Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). By then Phelps clearly was a part of the left wing of the broader farm movement and had become what Seymour Martin Lipset in his study of the CCF would call an agrarian socialist.

Phelps was elected a CCF member of the provincial legislature in 1938 and was re-elected in 1944 as a part of the sweep that brought Tommy Douglas and the CCF to power. He served as Minister of Natural Resources in the Douglas government from 1944 to 1948 and was at the centre of several controversial measures involving ventures in public ownership and resource development in northern Saskatchewan, gaining the reputation of a fiery left-wing maverick. At least partly as a consequence, he was defeated in the 1948 provincial election. Phelps then turned back to the farm movement and built the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union (SFU) into a formidable force in the 1950s. In the years that followed, he

played a leading role in the creation of the Western Development Museums in the province. To the end of his life, he remained devoted to collecting and preserving the farm machinery which had been so essential to the agricultural era in the West of which he had been a part.

Kathleen Carlisle's book is an interesting and well-written account of Joe Phelps' remarkable career. It is largely based on Phelps' papers, government records, interviews, and other unpublished material. The research in regard to Phelps' contentious years as Minister of Natural Resources is particularly impressive. The book adds to our knowledge of the Saskatchewan farm movement, the Saskatchewan CCF, and the early years of the Douglas government. What is especially clear is that Phelps' ideas and the policies he advocated were rooted in Saskatchewan's rural economy. Thus he saw the Wheat Pool, the UFC and SFU, socialism, the CCF, Crown Corporations, and the possibility of a publicly-owned oil industry as ways of providing farmers with a measure of security or of making what was still an overwhelmingly rural province less dependent on the vagaries of a wheat economy.

As the title of the book suggests, Carlisle places considerable emphasis on Phelps' colourful personality in her story. One cannot understand or appreciate Joe Phelps without doing so. Various words can be used to describe him, which help explain both his successes and failures: hard working, dedicated, relentless, fearless, impatient, impulsive and difficult. Two of my favorite anecdotes from the book, which tell much about Joe Phelps, are the following. While president of the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union in the 1950s, Phelps wrote and presented a number of briefs to the board of the Canadian Grain Commission. They were lengthy, detailed, and filled with criticism, as he fought tooth and nail for any

advantage, no matter how small, for the farmers he represented. At one meeting in Winnipeg, the annoyed chairman of the Commission interrupted Phelps and told him that what he was saying was incorrect and reminded him that as chairman he could decide who had the floor. Phelps, however, informed the chairman that as of now he had the floor and asked just “what the hell are you going to do about it?” (237–238) During the 1970s, Phelps spent much of his time gathering and displaying pioneer farm machinery. For several days each July, he was a central figure in the Pion-Era Days in Saskatoon, which celebrated the province’s pioneer past. On one occasion, a gust of wind destroyed a canopy, which had been erected to display a threshing steam engine. Phelps, ever the man of action, phoned the residence of Roy Romanow, then Saskatchewan’s Attorney-General, expecting him to do something to solve this latest agricultural crisis. Eleanor Romanow answered the call and told Phelps that her husband was sleeping, to which Phelps replied: “Well, get him up.” (253)

Carlisle’s biography makes clear that Joe Phelps’s public life was a political response to economic crisis. In that sense, Phelps was a left-wing agrarian populist who saw the farm movement and Saskatchewan style socialism in the form of the CCF as practical means for creating a better day for the province’s rural population. The rise of Trumpism has revived the fierce debate over the nature of rural populism; some have carelessly and confusingly equated the two. It is entirely fitting that a new edition Walter Nugent’s classic defence of populism has recently been published. (Walter Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists*, second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). Issues like immigration, race, and gender were not central to Phelps’s career, and when they appeared, as Carlisle’s biography illustrates,

he adopted progressive positions, looking forward and not backward. Joe Phelps was one of Nugent’s tolerant populists, an agrarian socialist who fought to improve the lives of farm families during Saskatchewan’s agricultural era.

GEORGE HOFFMAN  
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**Jennifer Anderson, *Propaganda and Persuasion: The Cold War and the Canadian-Soviet Friendship Society* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press 2017)**

FOR ANY WHO IMAGINE that fake news is a product of the Donald Trump era, *Northern Neighbours*, the Canadian pro-Soviet magazine published between 1950 and 1989, provides convincing evidence that the genre was much in evidence during the years of the Cold War. Anderson has harvested some of its howlers in *Propaganda and Persuasion* – Soviet scientists would soon be able to control the weather, the people of Hungary welcomed Soviet tanks in 1956, etc. These appear particularly ironic juxtaposed against the magazine’s regular assertions that it aimed to tell Canadians only the *truth* about the USSR, countering myths and fearmongering purveyed by the capitalist press. If seeing that the claims in the magazine were factually incorrect is easy, understanding the context in which the claims were made and the nature and extent of their appeal is a more challenging historical exercise.

The most impressive aspect of Anderson’s history of the Canadian-Soviet Friendship Society (CSFS) between 1949 and 1960 is the extent of the author’s primary research. The book draws extensively on both Soviet and Canadian archival sources, including many retrieved through Access to Information and Privacy requests. Anderson has also

conducted a number of interviews with participants in the CSFS and their descendants. Combining these sources with a close reading of published material, Anderson has produced a very comprehensive account of the CSFS' activities and personnel. This research offers important evidence about the relationship between the Soviet state and the Canadian left in the Cold War. It contains, too, insight into the culture and values of Canadian Communists and fellow travellers who found inspiration in the Soviet example, however retrospectively illusory that example can be seen to have been.

The height of Canadian and Soviet friendship was undoubtedly in the latter half of World War II, when the National Council for Canadian-Soviet Friendship (NCCSF) could fill Maple Leaf Gardens for rallies and included among its patrons many prominent Canadians from business, politics, science, and the arts. The Gouzenko affair and the dawn of the Cold War undermined the public appeal of the NCCSF. Anderson's research focuses on the period following this precipitous decline, when a small coterie of activists – almost exclusively Communists and fellow travellers – attempted to promote Canadian-Soviet friendship in the Cold War years.

By 1949, when the NCCSF was renamed the CSFS, it had only about 50 members. Membership was rebuilt largely through the work of two key figures, Dorise Nielsen and Dyson Carter, who were both members of the Labour-Progressive Party (LPP – as the Communist Party of Canada was known between 1943 and 1959). By 1957 – notably, *after* the Soviet invasion of Hungary and Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin – there were 800 CSFS members. The magazine Carter edited and largely authored, *Northern Neighbours* (called *News-Facts about the USSR* from 1950 until 1956), may have ultimately had as many as 10,000 subscribers. Even more

remarkable was the size of the crowds the CSFS could attract to see speakers returned from trips to the USSR or to displays of Soviet culture, such as films, art, or music. When the Soviet Union was most reviled and demonized in mainstream Canadian circles, it remained an object of fascination, and in some cases veneration, for thousands of Canadians.

The CSFS was, as the RCMP and papers such as the Toronto *Telegram* maintained, a Communist "front" organization. Few active in the CSFS, Anderson shows, were not party members or very closely aligned with the LPP. The goal of the organization, however, was to attract and influence a broader audience, just as its predecessor organizations had done in the 1930s and during World War II. To do so, some Popular Front strategies persisted: the leadership was dominated by those with "Anglo-Saxon" names and those leaders claimed that the membership was politically diverse. In practice, however, CSFS liaised closely with Jewish, Ukrainian and other ethnic organizations with links to the Party. Links between CSFS and Jewish organizations such as the United Jewish People's Order were strained after 1956 when news of Khrushchev's acknowledgment of anti-Semitism in Stalin's Soviet Union began to circulate in Canada.

At *Northern Neighbours*, Carter proved adept at following every twist and turn in Soviet policy until the collapse of the USSR in 1989. The publication's reliability was supported by the eye-witness accounts of delegations of Canadian travellers sent under the auspices of CSFS to visit the USSR. Both the magazine and the tours were subsidized by the Soviet state. Drawing extensively on the records of the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS), Anderson demonstrates the degree to which the Soviets valued Canadian "friends" and engaged some, such as

Carter, in a longstanding patronage relationship. The Soviet commitment to this kind of cultural diplomacy was consistent, but moments of special attention and investment occurred when the Soviet image was in particular need of rehabilitation (for example, in the wake of Gouzenko or 1956). Anderson also notes the close working relationship between *voks* and Soviet intelligence (i.e. the KGB) including overlapping personnel.

Anderson explains that her account attempts to balance an “appreciation for idealism with a realistic and healthy dose of skepticism.” (xi) This attempted balance is evident in the chapter that considers the role that gender issues played in mobilizing women to become active within the CSFS. These women, Anderson notes, “saw the Soviet Union as an example of fairer state treatment of women, which included ... daycare, extracurricular education, and opportunities to advance in the workplace.” (129) In the pages of *Northern Neighbours*, “readers were told that there was no contradiction between Soviet women’s increasing autonomy, and even pre-eminence, in the workforce and their continuing traditional roles in the family.” (143) Anderson understands why this portrait of Soviet women’s lives appealed to Canadian women frustrated by gender inequality at home, but she emphasizes the degree to which it was inconsistent with a Soviet reality in which many women experienced deprivation and extraordinary burdens of the “double day.” Anderson also documents gender inequality within the CSFS itself and more broadly on the Canadian left in which women did much work but filled few leadership positions. Nielsen, with justice, resented the fact that she had been assigned a subordinate position in the CSFS to Carter and was paid a lower salary.

Pointing out the hypocrisy of CSFS and LPP male leaders preaching Soviet gender equality while not practicing it

in their own organizations is certainly fair judgment. Equally it is fair to note, retrospectively, that the CSFS was mistaken and misleading about women’s lives in the Soviet Union, as about much else. There are instances in *Propaganda and Persuasion*, however, when this kind of historical criticism seems questionable in its justification. Discussing one of Carter’s articles about the professional attainments of women in the USSR, “Soviet Women Are Overtaking their Men,” Anderson complains that no mention was made of high Soviet rates of maternal death, high divorce rates, or that abortion was the main form of contraception. Anderson’s citation here leads to sources that, in 1999, describe how these figures were censored in the Soviet Union. Abortion was officially illegal in the postwar period in the USSR. How, one wonders, could Carter – even were he not an unabashed Soviet apologist – have accessed uncensored Soviet population statistics?

After the artist Frederick Taylor visited the Soviet Union, he reported that he witnessed no anti-Semitism, met Jews among the USSR’s leading artists, and that two Jewish members of his Canadian delegation had attended synagogues in Moscow. According to Anderson, Taylor was “whitewashing the Soviet reality for Canadian readers. Five years later, with the revelations of Khrushchev’s ‘secret speech,’ Jewish members of the progressive movement were shocked by the degree to which they had been fooled into believing this rubbish.” (157) The key words in that passage, it seems to me, are “five years later.” Anderson allows that “there is no evidence to suggest that Canadian visitors were aware that great care was taken by Soviet authorities to show only the best,” but implicitly and explicitly she criticizes these visitors for not explaining to Canadian audiences how misleading their experience

in the Soviet Union was in comparison to broader Soviet realities: according to Anderson, they saw “what they wanted to see,” but left unanswered is how they might have managed to see and thereafter report otherwise. (133)

There is a case to be made that the CSFS engaged in “whitewashing” and disseminated “rubbish” about the Soviet Union, but for it to be made carefully requires synchronic contextual evidence. For example, evidence that Taylor in 1951 knew or should have been reasonably expected to know that his own personal experience in the Soviet Union belied the reality of widespread Soviet anti-Semitism. *Northern Neighbours* was, as Anderson notes, in constant dialogue with the right-wing anti-Soviet press in Canada. More evidence from the latter sources might have explained why, at the time, CSFS members *ought* to have found the portrait of the Soviet Union in, say, the Toronto *Telegram* more reliable and convincing than that produced by those such as Carter, Neilsen, or others who had visited the Soviet Union themselves.

On a more pedantic level, Anderson’s citation and select bibliography are missing some significant 21st century works on the relationship between the Soviet Union and the West, namely monographs such as David C. Engerman’s *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), Ludmila Stern’s, *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union: 1920–1940: From Red Square to the Left Bank*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), and Michael David-Fox’, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Particularly the latter book, with its detailed study of VOXS and Soviet relations with foreign friendship societies,

would have provided useful supporting evidence and grounds for comparative analysis. Soviet historiography is massive and so no fair criticism can be made for necessary selectivity, but given the comparatively tiny literature dealing with Canadian-Soviet relations, curious absences from Anderson’s references are Graham Carr’s “‘No Political Significance of Any Kind’: Glenn Gould’s Tour of the Soviet Union and the Culture of the Cold War,” (*Canadian Historical Review*, 95, 1 [March 2014]) placing Gould’s 1957 concert tour of the Soviet Union in the context of Canadian cultural diplomacy and Josh Cole’s “Alpha Children Wear Grey: Postwar Ontario and Soviet Education Reform,” (*Historical Studies in Education*, 25, 1 [Spring, 2013]) on the influence a tour of the Soviet Union had on the authors of the 1968 Hall-Dennis report on education in Ontario.

Ascending from scholarly pedantry to return to the overall achievement of this book, Anderson’s extraordinary primary research offers a wealth of evidence on the range and degree to which the idea of the Soviet Union influenced Canadian progressives in the early years of the Cold War. Her work demonstrates the context in which the propaganda that effected this influence was produced and goes some way towards explaining why many Canadians found that propaganda persuasive. Moreover, readers gain biographical insights into key activists in the CSFS including Nielsen and, particularly, Carter. Scholars of Canadian-Soviet relations and of the Canadian left will benefit from Anderson’s contribution in this book.

KIRK NIERGARTH  
Mount Royal University

**Frances Henry, Enakshi Dua, Carl E. James, Audrey Kobayashi, Peter Li, Howard Ramos, and Malinda S. Smith, *The Equity Myth: Racialization and Indigeneity at Canadian Universities* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 2017)**

THERE IS AN INVARIABLY self-reflective quality to academic studies of academics. And yet *The Equity Myth* achieves an effective balance. What this study lacks in research data it makes up for in challenging the silence around racism in Canadian universities. The authors' findings could easily apply to workplaces throughout the country.

The authors argue that racialized and Indigenous faculty, who are numerically underrepresented in academia, experience widespread forms of discrimination. Indigenous and racialized faculty's work is undervalued. There are myriad obstacles to engaging in research and teaching. They experience lower rates of pay, tenure, and promotion. Journals publish fewer articles on race and Indigeneity. Departments do not offer sufficient courses for students. Racial bias, often unconscious, is pervasive, from graduate training to reference letters and curriculum. Racialized and Indigenous faculty are at times a token symbol for their institution, which creates additional burdens on their time and service obligations (and fosters a culture where people have to justify their position). Racialized faculty are also primarily concentrated in business, health, science, and engineering faculties. Because of their lower representation in the humanities and social sciences, their scholarship in those disciplines is routinely unrecognized. The book ends with a series of recommendations around how universities can address inequality among racialized and Indigenous faculty.

A central theme in this book is neoliberalism. The authors' argue that

universities and the experiences of racialized and Indigenous scholars are profoundly shaped by neoliberalism. Rather than promote the acquisition of knowledge, postsecondary institutions encourage competition. Precarious work (as exemplified in the recent college strike in Ontario) and an obsession with productivity in top journals (or in securing grants) pervade the university workplace. In such an atmosphere, the knowledge that racialized faculty bring to the classroom and their research is disregarded. Equity and anti-racism policies, rather than continuing to evolve, are increasingly seen as an impediment to success.

One of the strongest contributions of this study is the authors' critical assessment of equity policies in Canadian universities. Those policies that exist to address racism and inequality are poorly enforced, vaguely defined, and sometimes unenforceable. They are routinely ignored because institutions are more concerned with austerity measures, accountability, and public relations. Most policies originated in efforts to address sexism or discrimination on the basis of disability or sexual orientation. They have yet to adapt to fully address racism. As a result, even institutions committed to addressing equity often fall short of confronting the unique situation facing racialized and Indigenous faculty. Even more frustrating is that the simple existence of these policies is too often taken as a presumption that universities are serious about equity despite their policies' limitations.

Another unique contribution of *The Equity Myth* is the authors' critique of human rights policies. One of the great legal innovations of the 20th century was human rights legislation that sought to eliminate discrimination in the workplace. Human rights policies at universities were modelled on these laws. However, as the authors argue, these

policies complement the neoliberal ideology of the modern university. They are concerned with individuals rather than the systemic racism that produces inequality. Equity (human rights) staff are sometimes more concerned with managing workplace relations than addressing structural problems.

The self-reflective quality that is inherent to academic studies of academia, however, is limiting. None of the authors work at French language institutions (most work in Ontario). The surveys, interviews and other research that forms the basis of this study do not include francophone institutions. *The Equity Myth*, therefore, is really about racialization and Indigeneity in *English* Canadian universities. This is unfortunate given current debates, especially among many francophone Quebecers, around accommodation and equity in public workplaces. Similarly, none of the authors work in any of the disciplines where racialized faculty are concentrated. Again, this is reflected in the research for this book, which concentrates on the social sciences and humanities. It is, without a doubt, essential that universities confront systemic racism in these disciplines. Still, it is curious that this book does not engage with the challenges facing racialized minorities in those disciplines where most of them are employed.

Another limitation with self-reflective studies is taking knowledge for granted. To be sure, each of the contributors is an expert in their respective fields. In some cases, the authors share personal experiences, which only enhances the analysis. One of the central themes in this book is that racialized and Indigenous faculty have unique knowledge and provide intellectual diversity. And yet this is never fully explained. Carl E. James argues in his chapter on university appointments that racialized faculty have unique knowledge based on their “racialized

and community experiences.” (161) Unfortunately, as is the case throughout the book, this is taken for granted. There is a danger that some readers will presume that all racialized faculty want to teach and study race. There is a similar frustration among many female historians who often face the presumption from their colleagues that they want to study and teach about women’s history. By not explaining the nature of this intellectual diversity, the authors inadvertently reaffirm stereotypes that racial identity defines work identity. This unique knowledge is undoubtedly self-evident for Indigenous and racialized faculty. A much broader audience, however, would have benefitted immensely from a better understanding of the concept of unique knowledge.

Finally, self-reflective studies can present some methodological concerns. On the one hand, Howard Ramos and Peter S. Li’s chapter on representation and income among racialized and Indigenous faculty presents solid empirical evidence on systemic racism in academia. This chapter, which is one of the best of the book, provides compelling evidence that racialized faculty are underpaid and are less likely to be hired, tenured, and promoted. On the other hand, several chapters rely largely on anecdotal evidence. Enakshi Dua and Nael Bhanji’s chapter on the enforcement of equity policies is based on a small informal survey. In fact, many chapters draw broad conclusions based on individual experiences or small samples. For instance, several authors suggest that the shift from equity to human rights policies is premised on fears or uneasiness with the commitment implied by more potentially transformative equity policies. Other chapters suggest that white faculty dominate hiring and promotion and, as a result, deny opportunities for minority faculty. Or that many deans prefer homogenous faculty rather than hiring people who are

different. There is also the assertion that racialized and Indigenous faculty face greater demands for teaching, student supervision, and service while students are less likely to take courses taught by racialized faculty.

While there is no reason to doubt these conclusions, there is also little evidence to support the authors' contention. The problem, however, lies not with the authors. In fact, they have gone to extraordinary lengths to identify issues around equity at Canadian universities using creative methods such as surveys of photographs on faculty websites. The failure lies with universities that refuse to collect and share data on their own faculty.

Of course, there is nothing inherently problematic about the self-reflective quality of academic studies about academia. It is the privilege and duty of scholars to offer reflective commentary on our society. Such studies do, however, raise important methodological and conceptual concerns. Still, the authors of *The Equity Myth* have made an important contribution by demonstrating that there is a genuine equity problem at Canadian universities. At the same time, this study challenges the silence around race and racism. This silence, as the authors note, is in itself a form of micro-aggression. *The Equity Myth* provides ample evidence to demonstrate that our lived experiences inform our workplace relations. When there are few racialized and Indigenous faculty represented in the university, and a culture of whiteness pervades the institution, it deeply informs what people teach and research, as well as who gets hired or promoted. There is a desperate need for solid data on racialized and Indigenous faculty at Canadian universities. Only then can we better confront and challenge the systemic inequalities that pervade postsecondary workplaces in Canada.

DOMINIQUE CLÉMENT  
University of Alberta

**Jeremy Milloy, *Blood, Sweat, and Fear: Violence at Work in the North American Auto Industry, 1960–80* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 2017)**

WHY ARE INCIDENTS of workplace violence now seen as the actions of individuals with particular pathologies, so-called “lone wolves”? And why is it that workers once pursued workplace justice collectively, but now most often seek individual solutions? These questions are at the heart of Jeremy Milloy's investigation, in which violence itself is the main focus and Chrysler auto plants in greater Detroit and Windsor provide the case studies.

Milloy argues that violent work processes and working conditions in auto plants were primarily responsible for violent acts committed by Chrysler workers, against each other and against supervisors, in the 1960s and 1970s. Chrysler workers toiled in dangerous conditions caused by management decisions to speed up production, reduce the work force, and refuse to invest in plant safety. The result was violence inflicted on those workers in various forms, including deaths, crippling injuries, extreme physical and mental wear and tear, and even tuberculosis. Harassment by supervisors, themselves under intense pressure, contributed to the hostile environment. As a result, at Dodge Main, the principle US example in this study, there was an upsurge after 1965 in punchings, stabbings, shootings, and killings. This is apparent in United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 3 grievance records, on which much of the Dodge Main portion of the argument relies. Milloy explains that this upsurge, to an extent, can be attributed as well to the breakdown in Dodge Main's robust shop steward system in the late 1950s and the gradual transition to a far less effective grievance procedure for resolving crucial



in-plant issues, a system known to historians of labour as “workplace contractualism.” The upsurge was also prompted by longstanding racial animosities in Detroit, and in the US more generally, and the hiring of large numbers of young, African-American workers in the mid-1960s. Racism in the plant and in the community were main ingredients in Dodge Main’s toxic stew and a new organization, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), struggled against it, often with violent rhetoric or by reserving the right to fight violence with violence. Underlying these developments, however, was the inherent violence of the production process.

In contrast with Dodge Main, violence in Chrysler’s Windsor plants stayed at roughly constant levels throughout the period under consideration. Few Blacks lived in Windsor, and those who worked in Chrysler factories were not congregated in a single department. They therefore tended to respond as individuals to negative circumstances. Steadier employment and a less hostile racial environment in the community softened the impact of brutalizing production processes, although line speeds in Windsor were also slower than those in Detroit. With a few notable exceptions, especially the killing of a popular local union president, violence in Windsor Chrysler plants was mostly limited to fistfights between angry workers. Without a comparable trove of grievance records for the Windsor part of his study, the author gained access to Local 444 documents that had not previously been available for researchers. Oral interviews with leaders and activists bolstered source bases for both sides of the investigation, but proved especially helpful in Windsor.

With the baseline chapters on Dodge Main and Windsor in place, the author delves further into DRUM, whose members, in his view, accurately diagnosed

the source of violence in the plant but did not create the violent conditions. Indeed, the upsurge in in-plant violence preceded DRUM and lasted well beyond DRUM’s demise in the early 1970s. Local 3 leadership, particularly president Ed Liska, who was white, tended to interpret Dodge Main violence as the product of problematic Black workers, not as an understandable outcome of brutal and racist conditions in the plant. Neither management nor the local union showed interest in improving those conditions, which meant that any measures taken to reduce violence, like improving plant security or harsher discipline for individual offenders, had little positive impact on the climate of fear, anger, and tension that prompted it. High-profile criminal cases had the potential to link acts of individual violence with plant conditions. For example, James Johnson, a Detroit Chrysler worker at the Eldon Avenue Plant, was found not guilty of murder, despite killing three employees at the plant, because he had been driven insane by arbitrary, discriminatory treatment at work. But in other notable cases, defenses were more conventional and did not emphasize the connection between individual acts of violence and violent workplaces.

This is a thoughtful and challenging book that makes a valuable contribution by focusing clearly and relentlessly on workplace violence, both in the production process and amongst workers and supervisors. It builds on recent work by Stephen Meyer, who argues that conceptions of masculinity and behavior characterized as “rough culture,” particularly as developed by white, male autoworkers and used against women and African Americans, were constant features in American auto plants in the 20th century. Some discussions in *Blood, Sweat, and Fear*, however, could use greater clarification. At times the author seems to draw distinctions between workplace-induced

violence and ordinary criminal behavior, like holdups and shakedowns on company property. At other times all acts of violence seem to be attributed to the production process. Greater clarity would help, although robberies, gambling, and narcotics rings would not necessarily appear in grievance records. Still, such activities surely contributed to the climate of fear experienced by so many in the plant, even while many workers engaged in them. Violent acts by men against women in Dodge Main seem to be attributed more to supervisors than to workers, but perpetrators could undoubtedly be found in both groups, and individual acts of violence against women in auto plants certainly preceded the mid-1960s, as the author recognizes. The extent of power exercised by Local 3 shop stewards before the late 1950s is probably overstated, in part because work was so unstable in the auto industry, but this is a reasonable reading of the literature and there is still much work to be done on the impact of workplace contractualism in the early post-World War II era. In one chapter, the author's argument relies heavily on a series of long, block quotes from primary sources. Although the documents are rich, it would be helpful to be guided through them more carefully. These are relatively minor quibbles, however, and they do not undercut the solid evidence that violence is indeed an important framework for analyzing work processes and the behavior of workers.

In the US, officials began tracking workplace violence after a rash of shootings at post offices in the 1980s. The interpretive framework for such incidents was encapsulated in the phrase "going postal," which to many suggested that the problem was one of individual pathology, difficult to diagnose and best addressed by trying to keep potential lone wolf attackers from workplaces. *Blood, Sweat, and Fear*, in contrast, asks us to

question whether or not the source of workplace violence is in the workplace itself, and that a better solution is more humane production processes and working conditions.

DANIEL CLARK  
Oakland University

**Katherine Turk, *Equality on Trial: Gender and Rights in the Modern American Workplace* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2016)**

KATHERINE TURK'S book explores how Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 has both inspired progressive visions of workplace gender equality in the United States and played a role in preventing many of these visions from being realized. Through richly detailed accounts of key struggles over Title VII's sex provision since the 1960s, Turk sheds light on the different interpretive possibilities that were expressed through these struggles, and explains why the more radical, egalitarian interpretations failed to leave a permanent mark on American law and public policy. The book is meticulously researched and cogently argued, and makes a significant contribution to scholarship on US women's and labour history.

The first chapter examines the government agency at the centre of Title VII, the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC), in the first years of implementation. During this time, thousands of letters poured into the offices of the EEOC, most of them from working-class women enquiring about the new law. Turk draws from these letters to illustrate the range and diversity of interpretations and expectations of the law that different women held, and which were based on their personal experiences within and beyond the workplace. Initially, EEOC officials adopted the time-consuming approach of reading and attempting to

address each individual letter. While the pressure for efficiency pulled the agency toward the more statistical approach it is known for today, Turk's fascinating dive into the early years of the EEOC reveals that, for a short period, (and due to the unique circumstances surrounding the inclusion of the sex provision in Title VII), it was a site of potential for progressive and inclusive government approaches to ensuring workplace equality.

In the next four chapters of the book, Turk examines how different groups – workplace caucuses (Chapter 2), feminist organizations (Chapter 3) and private and public sector unions (Chapters 4 and 5) – sought to use the law to “reset the terms of economic citizenship from laboring women’s perspective.” (9) In each case, initial efforts to engage with broad, inclusive notions of sex equality ultimately gave way to more narrow interpretations. Turk begins with the New York Times Women’s Caucus, which brought together women from various departments representing both professional and pink-collar work. However, the concerns of journalists and other professional women often dominated the agenda, despite some caucus leaders’ efforts to address the particular experiences faced by pink-collar women. In addition, a parallel (and in some ways, competing) campaign against racial discrimination at the *Times* drew in many women of colour who might otherwise have joined the Women’s Caucus. Turk documents how the decision to pursue litigation in the early 1970s pushed the caucus even further away from a cross-class and inter-racial approach, as lawyers put together a “winnable” class action lawsuit that focused on barriers to upward mobility and downplayed the concerns of women who did not work in or aspire to the professional jobs.

Chapter 3 takes us out of the workplace and into the offices of the National

Organization for Women (NOW). In the late 1960s and the 1970s, state and local chapters like Chicago NOW pursued grassroots activism as they sought to harness the power of Title VII, and convinced the EEOC to take on large employers such as AT&T and Sears. In the midst of the Sears campaign, however, national leadership contests at NOW brought competing visions of feminism and workplace equality to the fore; the Chicago chapter’s emphasis on economic justice as imperative to gender equality was pitted against the argument that NOW needed to become more centralized, streamlined, and focused on pushing for formal legal equality. In 1975, the latter faction won the leadership race, ushering in a new era for the organization. The Sears campaign was one of the casualties of this transformation, and by the time the lawsuit went to trial in 1986, NOW was nowhere to be seen.

As Turk demonstrates in the next two chapters, however, in the same years that some feminists and feminist organizations seemed to turn away from prioritizing the needs and perspectives of working-class women, some sectors of organized labour were beginning to step in. The comparable worth campaign for example, which reached its zenith in the 1980s, was led in part by public sector unions who brought the argument for pay equity all the way up to the Supreme Court and won a partial (albeit short-lived) victory. Yet comparable worth activists faced formidable pushback, including aggressive counter-campaigning from employers who claimed that measures to institute equal pay for equal worth would threaten economic stability and would move the country toward state socialism. The conservative backlash gained further steam under the Reagan administration, and in 1985 – the year that would “break the back of pay equity advocates’ Title VII strategy” (122)

– federal courts and federal agencies such as the EEOC issued statements decisively condemning comparable worth.

Many of the factors that Turk identifies in accounting for the limited success of these campaigns will sound familiar to students of American labour and working-class history, including: difficulties with building and sustaining broad cross-class and interracial coalitions; the refusal among employers to listen to, far less address grievances; and the use of free-market language by those employers and their allies within and outside of government to dismiss the legitimacy of claims that achieving sex equality required substantial intervention in the economy. However, Turk cautions that these campaigns do not easily fit within the conventional narrative that portrays the New Deal era as the heyday of class politics, and which paints the last three decades of the 20th century as a period of organized labour's decline. Viewed through the lens of the Title VII campaigns, the era of "decline" was actually a time of promise and potential for labour feminists as some unions finally began to acknowledge the growing female workforce, and to take action on issues that disproportionately affected working-class women.

Turk also emphasizes, however, that the failures to ultimately achieve more expansive understandings of sex equality represent a lost opportunity for improving the conditions of all workers, not just women. Moreover, as she demonstrates in Chapter 6, male employees who have sought to challenge cultural norms about masculinity and heterosexuality in the workplace, have faced their own struggles when it comes to reinterpreting Title VII. This includes efforts to include sexual orientation as a protected identity under Title VII – an issue that became particularly salient in the last years of the Obama administration, and which remains so

under the new Trump administration, but for quite different reasons.

Turk concludes her book by revisiting a point she makes at the beginning: that future struggles to secure more expansive rights that reflect difference, celebrate diversity, and protect the dignity and livelihood of all workers can look to Title VII for inspiration – not because of what the law represents today, but because of what it represented to movements of the past. Thanks to her research, we have a better understanding of the range of interpretations of Title VII that have inspired the politics of gender equality in the United States since the 1960s. And while the history of Title VII is one in which many of these interpretations have been left behind, *Equality on Trial* does its part to ensure that they are not forgotten.

KRISTINA FUENTES  
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**Lynn Dumenil, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2017)**

IN *THE SECOND LINE of Defense*, Lynn Dumenil offers a sweeping synthesis of American women's responses to their country's involvement in World War I, and attempts to reconcile two conflicting perspectives on how the war affected their lives and opportunities. On the one hand, there is consensus among American women's historians that the war did not constitute a collective turning point or watershed for women; on the other hand, Americans of the war years widely believed that it did. After laying out these contradictory positions in a pithy introduction, Dumenil sifts and weighs the evidence in five thematic chapters spanning the full extent of women's involvement in the war: political activism (both for and against American

participation), home front voluntary efforts, war work in Europe, paid labour in the USA, and visual images of women in wartime popular culture. In doing so she synthesizes a wide array of secondary literature while delving into archival sources including women's memoirs and private papers, institutional records of women's organizations and government agencies, print journalism, posters, and film. A lengthy epilogue follows these wartime developments through the 1920s. Chapter 1 is primarily a political history; chapter 5 is a cultural history; chapters 2, 3, and 4 share an emphasis on women's varied forms of wartime labour in diverse settings.

Dumenil persuasively argues that World War I offered genuinely new and exciting opportunities for American women, particularly in the paid workforce – opportunities that many eagerly embraced, and that were heavily publicized at the time. The intersection of wartime mobilization and women's own activism (pushing for significant roles and viewing themselves as a second line of defense) made these opportunities possible. However, the constraints placed on mobilization by early 20th century American gender norms, and the many fractures of class, race, ethnicity, region, and political ideology among women themselves would keep wartime changes from leading to lasting social change or even temporary gender equality during the war years themselves.

The brief duration of American participation in the war and the geographical remoteness of the fighting enabled Americans to remain more optimistic than other combatant countries' citizens when it came to envisioning the potential outcomes of the war. The year 1917 saw mass mutinies within the French army, for instance, while Canada was bitterly divided over conscription for military service. By contrast, this inaugural year

of American participation in the war was marked by hyper-patriotic war enthusiasm. Although prominent and vocal pacifist women in the US held few illusions about the likely outcomes of the war, Dumenil asserts that many other women "viewed the war as a vehicle for agendas that often related only indirectly to the war itself," (4) including social reform, racial uplift, personal adventure, and access to better jobs and higher wages. Unfortunately, she concludes, "the war's promise for women fell short." (275) The Nineteenth Amendment (federal women's suffrage), the feminization of clerical work, and the Great Migration of African Americans to northern cities were among the only lasting impacts of this brief period of change and possibility, Dumenil suggests: each significant in its own right, but collectively falling far short of ushering in a golden era of gender and racial equality, or improved social, public health, and/or working conditions.

The breadth of the topic tackled in *The Second Line of Defense* and diversity of sources used leaves the book somewhat uneven in tone. The chapter on political activism, for instance, convincingly conveys the complex web of women's organizations that existed during the war, and the clashing ideologies they held and strategies they employed (ranging from conservative maternalist reformers to radical socialist suffragists, and all points in-between) – but the chapter itself is a somewhat flavourless alphabet soup of organizational acronyms, and relies heavily on the official statements and writings of major public figures. The chapter on overseas war work, by contrast, is rich in human warmth and descriptive detail, rooted in the first-hand experiences of women who served abroad as nurses, relief workers, YMCA canteen workers, and the like. The fifth chapter's detailed analysis of visual symbolism and plot in silent films and propaganda posters takes

a completely different tone again. At the same time, the ambitious scope of each individual chapter similarly breaks up the flow of the text: the chapter on paid labour in the US, for example, begins with a review of prewar work, looks at African American women and the Great Migration, then examines protections for women workers, defense and government work, railroad work, streetcar conductor work, farm work, and clerical work. The span is admirable, and subtitles help navigate the shifts, but the breadth of coverage means that none of the areas considered are treated in any great depth, and chapters sometimes feel choppy. (As an aside, it is maddening to read of well-intentioned attempts to protect women workers that ended up barring women from jobs they wished to perform.)

Two aspects of the book are worthy of special note. The first is Dumenil's decision to foreground African American women's experiences. The bulk of the available sources deal with white women, and white women benefitted from the best of the new opportunities for paid and voluntary work brought by the war, so it is not surprising that they are consistently at the heart of the narrative. However, also highlighting the intersecting challenges of gender and race faced by African American women enriches the analysis overall. They were relegated to the dirtiest, hardest jobs opened up to women during the war, and even then only when no one else was available. The other particularly noteworthy strength of the book lies in its exceptional approach to context. Dumenil has embedded every chapter and the entire argument of the book within the broader social, political, and labour currents of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Reform movements, suffrage battles, associational life, attitudes toward race and immigration, and gendered employment patterns are all shown to be vital factors shaping American

women's hopes for (and sometimes resistance to) wartime change. Rather than marking a turning point, Dumenil makes clear, World War I "accelerated developments already underway and heightened awareness of an emerging 'new woman.'"

(5) Her lasting achievement in this book lies in its contribution to the broader history of American women in the 20th century. It took so long for that "new woman" to fully emerge, Dumenil seems to be saying, because even moments of great possibility like World War I were deeply fraught and highly contested.

SARAH GLASSFORD  
Western University

**Timothy J. Minchin, *Labor Under Fire: A History of the AFL-CIO since 1979* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2017)**

FOLLOWING A 2016 US presidential election that saw the Democratic candidate's union household vote share advantage over the Republican shrink to eight percentage points – the smallest gap in three decades – AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka initiated a restructuring of the labour federation that included dozens of staff layoffs and the elimination of several programs in an effort to address current and anticipated revenue shortfalls. This comes at a time when labour density in the United States has dropped to 10.7 per cent, the lowest level since the 1930s. In *Labor Under Fire*, the prolific labour historian Timothy Minchin has taken on the daunting task of telling the AFL-CIO's story from 1979 – when union density was 23.4 per cent – to the present, delineating an era of seemingly unremittingly grim tidings and a one-step-forwards, two-steps-back trajectory of decline. If Irving Bernstein hadn't already used the title for a work about the 1920s, Minchin could have called his book *The Lean Years*.

While the theme of decline unavoidably colours Minchin's fine history, he strives to complicate the prevailing image of a largely hapless association leading a doomed movement. Indeed, Minchin frames his narrative of the AFL-CIO under the presidencies of Lane Kirkland, John Sweeney, and (briefly) Trumka as a revision of the hostile portrayal of the federation by leading labour historians. During the long tenure of the AFL-CIO's larger-than-life founding president, George Meany, critics heaped charges of racism, sexism, and long-term strategic myopia against the organization that scholars have largely echoed. Minchin's most important and subtle analytical achievement is to show how the federation gradually but determinedly shed all of those Meany-era characteristics in the difficult decades following his retirement. Beginning with Lane Kirkland's underappreciated presidency, Minchin shows, the AFL-CIO slowly transformed into a thoroughly progressive force, "firmly on the left side of the Democratic Party and the political spectrum" (249) and still punching above its weight in political impact, at the same time that organized labour's presence *in society* diminished relentlessly, year after year.

The source base for Minchin's crisply written and organized account, spanning ten chronological chapters and a brief epilogue on Trumka's presidency, consists of 60 oral history interviews plus archival material drawn from unprocessed and never-before-used AFL-CIO papers, collections in several presidential libraries, and a slew of personal papers. Perhaps to a fault, this is a narrative told resolutely from the vantage point of the AFL-CIO's leadership. We get only sporadic glimpses at events from the perspectives of other actors – usually presidential administrations – seeking strategically to engage or respond to the federation. The narrative focus on AFL-CIO presidents and US

presidents serves an implicit analytical purpose, emphasizing both the importance of national-level public policy for labour's fate and the degree to which the federation, lacking much authority over the activities of its union affiliates, has found its comparative advantage in political lobbying and electoral work.

The first chapter offers a sweeping overview of the Meany era that impressively synthesizes decades of labour and political history while also drawing on original archival research. Minchin identifies "roots of decline" in the midcentury heyday of union power, particularly in the AFL-CIO leadership's reluctance to forge ties to progressive social movements as well as its indifference to the task of organizing new members. The decentralization of the federation's structure, which limited its ability to compel affiliate members to invest in organizing, encouraged such indifference and would greatly hinder the federation's ability to grow its membership once its strategic priorities did shift in later years.

The core of the book consists of six chapters on Lane Kirkland's presidency, spanning his ascension as Meany's groomed successor in 1979 to his ignominious and undesired retirement in the face of an internal challenge in 1995. Kirkland had the bad luck of leading the federation just as an unprecedentedly hostile presidential administration took power. Minchin recounts the largely losing battles of the 1980s waged by labour against the Reagan administration's regressive fiscal policies, its zealously pro-management National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) appointments, and (starting with Reagan's replacement of striking air traffic controllers in 1981) its norm-setting messages to corporate America declaring open season on labour. Indeed, the importance of norms and expectations in shaping the political economy is a recurring theme in Minchin's account.

Nascent corporate investments in anti-union consultants and legal strategies in the 1970s gained the critical political imprimatur of a governing regime in the following decade. At the same time, growing (and rational) skepticism among workers about the reliability of the NLRB's commitment to enforcing existing protections for organizing, collective bargaining, and labour actions tempered their willingness to undertake the risks of either forming unions in the first place or flexing existing unions' muscle in conflicts with management.

Minchin's portrayal of the cerebral and introverted Kirkland is highly sympathetic. He argues that, on each of the major topics emphasized by the AFL-CIO's internal and external critics – its resistance to female and racial minority inclusion in leadership, its deprioritization of organizing, and its lack of outreach to other progressive movements and organizations – Kirkland moved the federation haltingly but definitively in the direction sought by those critics. The clearest example lies in Kirkland's success in pushing the AFL-CIO "more firmly into a coalition model of relations with its progressive allies," (107) essentially validating the approach long advocated by leaders of labour's progressive wing. During Kirkland's tenure, what had been a dissident voice concentrated in service and public-sector unions came to dominate the federation's political outlook at the same time that such unions came to predominate within its membership.

The incremental quality of Kirkland's efforts to diversify the AFL-CIO's leadership and shift priorities to organizing, however, helped to spark growing internal frustration among a dissident faction led by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which only grew in the bitter aftermath of the Clinton Administration's

successful push to pass the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Republican congressional takeover of 1994. Minchin conveys both the internal angst as well as the great excitement and popular engagement that occasioned SEIU president John Sweeney's unprecedented leadership challenge against Kirkland's successor Tom Donahue in 1995. His two chapters on the Sweeney era play out like a grim replay of the arc of Kirkland's tenure. Further efforts at shifting resource investment toward organizing ran up against the resistance of many affiliates and the limits of national authority over a decentralized federation, while broader economic and political shifts walloped the labour movement. This in turn sparked yet another internal reform movement a decade after the first, again led by Sweeney's own SEIU, though this time the result was not a change of leadership but outright schism. Minchin's account of Andy Stern's 2005 decision to lead the breakaway "Change to Win" coalition out of the AFL-CIO paints a grim portrait of misguided infighting and destructive strategic folly.

Impressively researched and ably rendered, *Labor Under Fire* is not without shortcomings. Most importantly, particularly given its focus on the federation's involvement in national politics, it would have benefited from much more engagement with core analytical arguments about the labour movement's changing interaction with the party system offered by historically-minded political scientists like Taylor Dark and Daniel Schlozman. Minchin shies away from major, overarching analytical claims, usually opting instead to catalogue wins and losses year by year in a reflection of the perspective of the labour leaders who supply the bulk of his source material. This means that, after a brief discussion in the introduction, the book also pays insufficient attention to the comparative international



context for American labour's travails. Finally, Minchin has a tendency to make causal claims about the contribution of labour's (undeniably extensive) electoral efforts to the outcomes of various elections without much in the way of rigorous evidence. Nevertheless, *Labor Under Fire* should set the standard for national histories of the labour movement in the contemporary era.

SAM ROSENFELD  
Colgate University

**James R. Barrett, *History from the Bottom Up and the Inside Out: Ethnicity, Race, and Identity in Working-Class History* (Durham: Duke University Press 2017)**

REREAD THAT TITLE. No doubt "and the inside out" evaded you on first glance amidst the far more familiar words invoking the world of the once-new labour history of the 1970s and 1980s. Yet this is perhaps the most provocative insight Barrett offers here as he promotes the necessity of studying the "inner history" of common people as Robert Orsi has described it. He poses this central question in the introduction to this collection of his essays: might the study of the personal and the subjective enrich our understanding of workers "not simply as atoms or as cogs in a great social and political machine, but also as individuals with their own affective lives?" (4) The nine essays collected here first appeared from the early 1990s to the present with the more recent writings most pertinent to his argument about the importance of the subjective in working-class history.

To this reader the two essays of most interest bookend the collection. "The Blessed Virgin Made Me a Socialist Historian," the opening essay, offers the reader a stimulating combination of autobiography and historiography as

Barrett explores his personal history to explain his political and career path as an engaged historian. In a similar vein the volume concludes with a reflective contribution on the author's interaction with Edward Thompson, his work, and its impact on US labour and working-class history. Sharing both an Irish-Catholic ethno-religious and an early baby-boomer heritage with Barrett, I was intrigued by the similarities and differences of his memories of growing up in West Side Chicago and mine of the northern suburbs of Toronto. While we both attended parochial primary and Catholic secondary schools, his strong identifications with his largely segregated ethnic neighbourhood and parish stand in considerable contrast to my memories based on an undifferentiated Catholicism lacking in specific ethnic or geographical rootedness. Similarly his subsequent experience of mobility to an outer suburb and transfer to a new high school, "the whitest place I had ever seen," gave him a new consciousness of both race and class. Suburban North York in the early 1960s by contrast possessed only some remote Jewish neighbours and the arrival of the first Italians, both groups making matching moves north from the central city. In both these cases the Toronto experience appeared, at least to me as a teenager, in ethnic not class terms. The most significant shared part of our Catholic childhood and adolescence, however, was the import of Vatican II and its message of social justice. These new commitments carried Barrett through the social movements of the 1960s and to Northern Illinois and Pittsburgh for graduate work under Al Young and David Montgomery. It also led him out of the church, towards historical materialism, political radicalism, and the study of labour and working-class history.

This focus on the material world and an unwillingness to consider the personal

not only animates the conclusion of his reflective memories but also, in subsequent essays, the similar failure of US Communists, with the exception of some women leaders, to explore their subjective experience in autobiographies. He also applies a similar analysis to the life of US Communist Party leader William Z. Foster and then explores the relationship between Bohemian writer Hutchins Hapgood and working-class anarchist Anton Johansen. In the fourth essay of this section he returns to autobiography to detail the life of his late brother, Tom, who he depicts as a working-class type, "a blue-collar cosmopolitan," who he credits with fuelling his own childhood and adolescent intellectual curiosity. In this compelling account he demonstrates how the historian can turn the subjective and personal into larger insights into the working-class experience.

Two chapters, perhaps the most familiar of these essays, develop his important arguments about the periodic "making and remaking" of the US working class in the late-19th and early-20th century via a combination of massive, primarily European and Latin American, immigration and the great migration of African-Americans from south to north. Derived from creative readings of Eric Hobsbawm and Herbert Gutman, these are insightful arguments, especially when combined with the important analyses of the particular ways that "white," non-native American workers only achieved that status over time and how they related to their African-American co-workers. The latter of these two essays is co-authored by David R. Roediger, who also contributed a Foreword to this volume.

The penultimate essay in the collection explores the role of Irish musicians, writers, and playwrights in developing a new urban culture in the US in the Gilded Age and the first half of the 20th century. This cultural interpretation of

the Irish American experience is further analyzed in his most recent monograph, *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

By way of conclusion let us turn to his account of E.P. Thompson and "the 'New Labour History' in the United States." Here he argues, paradoxically as he himself notes, that Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* simultaneously "defined the 'working class' and the means of studying it ... [but] also helped to deconstruct the very notion of class." (193) This argument is to a considerable degree derived from Chandarvarkar's 1997 *History Workshop* essay on Thompson's influence on Indian labour and working-class history. Despite that article's focus on India, Barrett appears, somewhat contradictorily at times, to argue that this particular effect was strongest in the USA. After chronicling the by now familiar impact of Thompson on the emergence of a new left historiography, Barrett surveys the specific development of US working-class historiography from the 1970s to the 1990s. Here he returns to his making and remaking argument, emphasizing the waves of migrants and immigrants of the late-19th and early-20th centuries. And again here he posits that race played a disproportionate role in the US context based to a considerable degree on the work of David Roediger. Here, I think, he fails to appreciate fully the path-breaking role that Herbert Gutman played in bringing together the then too distinct fields of slave and working-class studies. Certainly by the time I studied with Gutman in the early 1970s, he was already emphasizing the necessity of using the same historiographical and conceptual approaches to the study of labour, both free and unfree. After noting the critiques of *The Making* by historians such as Joan Scott and Anna Clark and alluding to other post modernist criticisms

of class analysis, Barrett returns to his central theme of the personal and subjective by noting Thompson's concern with "experience." Or as Barrett puts it: "in numerous places in *The Making* the affective side of class is evoked to demonstrate the personal as well as the social costs of industrial work, political exclusion, and class discrimination." (207)

This is a stimulating collection of essays by one of the USA's finest historians of the working-class experience. His arguments for a more subjective approach to the field have appeal, but as another recently retired historian I do find myself wondering how much of that analysis is derived from the personal reflections that accompany the end of one stage of life and the beginning of another.

GREGORY S. KEALEY

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**Steven Parfitt, *Knights Across the Atlantic: The Knights of Labor in Britain and Ireland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2016)**

MY NAME IS EVOKED often in Steven Parfitt's *Knights Across the Atlantic*, but my admiration for this book has nothing to do with that. In fact, one of Parfitt's contributions is that he addresses lacunae in my work. So let me be among the first to congratulate him on an effort that casts him as a leading light in the next generation of Knights of Labor (KOL) scholars, alongside researchers such as Joseph Gertis and Alex Gourevitch.

Gaze carefully into the late 19th century and KOL footprints are everywhere. Sometimes, though, the trail is akin to tracks in melting snow – in part because of disorganization or KOL secrecy codes, but in large measure because the Knights were deliberately marginalized. For the left, Knights flunked ideological purity tests, for mainstream politicians they

were too radical, and for future trade federations they were non-pragmatic. Because the KOL faded, it was easy for its detractors to toss it into history's rubbish bin. Parfitt wisely rejects such thinking and views the KOL's United Kingdom experience through lenses such as Marcel Van der Linden's thoughts on transnational labour movements and Kim Voss's assertion that American exceptionalism was not part of the 1880s labour landscape. Borders are often fictive and they were especially so in the late 19th century. As Parfitt notes, workers such as potters and glassmakers freely crossed national boundaries, far away labour markets determined local wage rates, victories and defeats elsewhere cheered or disheartened workers, and organizational identities were fluid. The last of these also contributes to the KOL's elusiveness. British and Irish Knights left tracks, but what was the boot heel's imprint? KOL? Fabian? Social Democratic? Irish Land League? Liberal? Trade unionist? Scottish Land Restoration League? In many cases, the only answer is "yes." One must appreciate this to grasp the subtlety of arguments Parfitt makes later in his book, including that that the KOL was part of the new unionism of the late 1880s and simultaneously in opposition to it, was both outside and inside Liberal-Labour alliances, and future Labour parties were both like and unlike the Knights.

He begins his UK study of the KOL, as one must, by consulting Henry Pelling, who until now best unspooled the various threads followed by British and Irish Knights. Parfitt went on to scour archives, official records, and newspapers in both Britain and the United States. He addresses the question of why an American movement found purchase on British soil; in 1880 just 4 per cent of British and Irish workers were organized and their unions were viewed "as conservative and aloof or ... overly cautious." (30) Small wonder

that, for many, “the Knights represented the future of trade unionism.” (29)

The efforts of Staffordshire potters to form a KOL local in 1882 proved a false start, but as in New Zealand and elsewhere, UK Knights gained momentum in the late 1880s and early 1890s, even as the North American movement waned. At least 74 local assemblies formed in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland – eight more than noted in Jonathan Garlock’s database. Many of these had no official number, another challenge for KOL scholars. In truth, no one knows how many Knights there were anywhere, only that the often-cited 1886 high water mark of 729,000 is grossly understated. Parfitt reckons that some 20,000 British workers passed through the KOL or – depending upon where one wishes to draw organizational borders – perhaps as many as 40,000. Would anyone be shocked if future research revises the figure upward? Numbers alone demonstrate the necessity of removing the KOL from history’s margins and looking more carefully at its contributions, inspirations, and pitfalls. Parfitt has much to say on all three subjects and some of it topples older assumptions.

The KOL’s contributions across the Atlantic extended far beyond workplace disputes. Solidarity is the Holy Grail of labour movements and the KOL stressed the importance of rank-and-file education and constructed alternative cultural systems that have seldom been duplicated. British Knights drew great inspiration from Americans such as Edward Bellamy, Henry George, Laurence Gronlund, and Terence Powderly and understood that many systemic workplace reforms required socio-political change. Much has been made of the KOL’s distaste for politics, but too many commentators incorrectly conflate non-partisanship with apoliticism. British Knights made alliances with officials such as Liberal MP

Robert Bontine Cunnighame Graham, or elected their own to various national and local offices. Although they never achieved the success of New Zealanders, the Lib-Lab activities of English Knights and the independent course of those in Scotland “were part of the political ferment in trade union circles that eventually culminated in the British Labour Party.” (153)

The above observation points to another nuance in Parfitt’s book: his keen understanding that new movements are seldom “new”; they are mutations and remnants of *various* older things. In Britain and Ireland, the KOL donated its inspirational DNA to things as small as local politics in Walsall, and as large as mutual aid societies in northeastern England, new labour federations, the single tax movement, and more powerful miners, dockworkers, and gasworkers unions. Following John Laslett, Parfitt sees Knights as “part-catalyst and part-actor in the union movement overall and the new unionism in particular.” (184) The KOL also showed that craft unionism was not a *sine qua non* organizing principle, that the semi-skilled could be brought within labour’s fold, and that a One Big Union structure – as future Industrial Workers of the World leaders dubbed it – was more than fantasy.

Although Parfitt rejects notions that the KOL was too American to take root across the Atlantic, he is not blind to ways in which it didn’t always mesh well. Communications were often slow and scrambled, the KOL was overly averse to strikes and overly romantic of boycotts, relied too much upon the charisma of leaders, was chronically short of resources needed to aid its locals, and honoured pledges to employers when conflicts arose with non-KOL workers. In findings bound to upset some, though, Parfitt is equally critical of British labour. US Knights were far more advanced in organizing

women, did a much better job of avoiding religious sectarianism and, in many parts of America, made more progress in integrating African Americans than Englishmen did of casting aside their racialization of the Irish.

Although I do not share the generalized critique of arbitration found among British Commonwealth historians, Parfitt included, and I am an agnostic on American exceptionalism made or otherwise, mine are but quibbles with a first-rate work of synthesis followed by incisive summative statements. In our age in which unions and Labour parties appear the flotsam of a globalist tidal wave, Parfitt challenges historians to rethink reflexive beliefs in the efficacy of craft unionism, be more critical of ideologies that hewed to rigid principles, and to revisit the KOL's pioneering efforts in transnational organizing. The last of these might be organized labour's best hope. It will not be easy – and it never was – but the Knights of Labor suggest such a task is not Sisyphean.

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**Geoffrey Bell, *Hesitant Comrades: The Irish Revolution and the British Labour Movement* (London, Pluto Press 2016)**

MAINLY FOCUSING on the period between the 1916 Easter Rising and the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, this is one of a spate of books concerned with the Irish revolution one hundred years on. The book is unique in that it cogently analyses the response of the British left to the revolution, rather than the participants in Ireland or the British government. It partly follows on from the author's earlier works (also published by Pluto) including *The Protestants of Ulster* (1976) and *Troublesome Business: The Labour Party*

*and the Irish Question* (1982). These works along with *The British in Ireland: A Suitable Case for a Withdrawal* (1984) were probably shaped by Bell's socialist activism during the recent "Troubles" in Northern Ireland. *Hesitant Comrades*, based on a PhD, is less polemical.

Bell's prologue begins with an account of Trafalgar Square's "Bloody Sunday" of November 1887, a demonstration against British coercion in Ireland ending with violence on London streets, to introduce "the history of British radicalism identifying with the cause of Ireland." (x) The opening chapter discusses the Rising's gestation and the unsympathetic response of the British left, exemplified by the Socialist Labour Party's failure to provide an obituary for James Connolly, a former prominent member, following his execution. A further contextual chapter outlines Sinn Féin's electoral eclipsing of the Home Rule Party on a republican platform, and it places the increasingly deadly "Irish Question" in the context of the Russian Revolution, growing working-class consciousness, and industrial militancy in Britain.

Subsequent thematic chapters provide a detailed account of the British left's hesitant response to the tumultuous events in Ireland. Bell devotes two chapters to the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress (TUC), while "Alternatives" deals with Communists, Fabians, and the Independent Labour Party. Other chapters incorporate "voices from below" or workers' perspectives; address contemporary debates about how socialists should respond to Irish nationalism, the Ulster question, and the Anglo-Irish Treaty that ultimately recognized the partition of Ireland.

*Hesitant Comrades* emphasizes that the labour movement was critical of government policy and Bell disassociates it "from Britain's side in the Irish War of Independence. This was not their war."

(216) Nevertheless, Bell's main argument is that whilst large sections of the British working class were disturbed by their government's treatment of Ireland, the labour movement, with a few exceptions, failed even to attempt to provide leadership that could give voice to this sentiment. Rather, equivocation, confusion, and ultimately a disinclination actively to support Irish independence typified attitudes and approaches. Why? Bell convincingly points to ambivalence about the utility of Irish nationalism, limited comprehension of Irish complexities, and a strong desire that the issue would simply disappear. The Labour Party did actually move from support for Home Rule to advocating unconditional Irish self-determination. However, in 1920, the party's Executive backed away from the idea, since independence would make Ireland a military or naval menace to Great Britain. As Bell points out the "implication was that if the potential Irish 'menace' was not sorted out Labour would oppose any settlement." (72) This imperialist thinking had a left-wing corollary in the idea that since the Irish revolution was not "socialist," it deserved only qualified support. One communist organ observed that the "nationalist aspirations of the Irish workers ... are dangerous illusions" (112) and Bell notes that leading Bolsheviks felt obliged to rebuke their British comrades for such sentiments.

Bell outlines how discontinuity carried over into thinking on the "Ulster Question." Arguments for the region's exclusion from a Home Rule settlement, most forcibly made by the "reactionary" figure of Sir Edward Carson, were deemed as economic in basis by the British left and supportive Ulster Protestant workers were the dupes of Belfast's capitalists. There was in fact little understanding of Ulster worker mentalities, and when anti-Catholic violence was brought to the attention of the TUC, their

response was feeble. In 1920, over 10,000 Catholics were expelled from the Belfast shipyards by their Protestant fellow-workers, leading the Carpenters' Union to seek their reinstatement. However, the TUC leadership failed to condemn the expulsion and offered no support to its victims. Even as partition gained purchase and the need for separate treatment for Ulster obvious, the labour movement remained negatively disposed towards the idea of "two nations" existing in Ireland merely observing nationalism gone mad. Nevertheless, rhetoric around securing rights for the Protestant minority in a self-governing Ireland easily grew into acceptance of partition, especially as thinking was overtaken by events. Indeed, Bell clearly exposes the opportunist nature of Labour's endorsement of the Anglo-Irish Treaty on the grounds it "represented the practical implication" (205) of the party's confused Irish policy. The Party had prevaricated over Ireland for years, but partition was never its stated strategy. On the other hand, no British party had ever advocated partition as a permanent solution to the Irish question.

There are some heroes. Bell identifies individuals who negotiated the turbulent period with principled positions, notably Sylvia Pankhurst, who, despite some doubts, "put support for the Irish revolution before other considerations" and T.A. Jackson, whose writing he singles out for its "application of traditional Marxist methodology." (224) Here Bell's own politics seem to surface but his overall assessment is persuasive nonetheless. The perspectives of leading Labour figures, trade unionists, socialists, feminists, Fabians, and communists clearly emerge from a large range of primary sources, notably contemporary published materials such as conference reports and newspapers and autobiographies. Moreover, at various points Bell usefully contrasts their approach with

that of Irish organisations in Britain, and with the views of interested individuals at home and abroad notably Lenin and H.H. Asquith (when in opposition).

The coverage of parties is impressive but incomplete. Bell ignores the Socialist Party of Great Britain, which is surprising, given that T.A. Jackson was a former member, and that the party's thinking would probably have reinforced the book's argument that the Irish revolution was not regarded as worthy of British purists. In June 1917, the party's journal *Socialist Standard* stated: "The Irish Republic the Sinn Feiners are after is but the counterpart of France and America, where year by year the capitalist sweats dividends out of his helpless workers." Perhaps of more significance is the limited discussion of British impressions of the Irish Labour Party, and especially reactions to its decision to not contest the 1918 general election, which aided Sinn Féin's republican agenda.

Stylistically, the jargon-free prose reads easily despite the occasional typographical error. The research is superb and Bell intelligently and persuasively explains why the British left trod a hesitant path during the Irish revolution. His book will strongly appeal to scholars and non-specialists with an interest in British and Irish labour history.

PATRICK SMYLLIE

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**Laura Beers, *The Life of Ellen Wilkinson, Socialist, Feminist, Internationalist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2016)**

LAURA BEERS' BIOGRAPHY of Ellen Wilkinson, nicknamed "The Mighty Atom" because of her small size and energy, is perceptive, well-informed, and clearly focused upon Wilkinson's vital contribution to the emergence of socialist

politics in the early 20th century in both a British and an international context. Beers places Wilkinson's activities firmly within the wider and conflicting politics of her age and provides the impressive as-sociational context. Indeed, her book is a very important addition to the previous biographies. It is decidedly more critical than Betty D. Vernon's *Ellen Wilkinson: A Biography* (Brighton: Croom Helm, 1982), which presented Ellen as a worthy founding pillar of the Labour Party, and challenges Paula Bartley's more recent biography *Ellen Wilkinson: From Red Suffragist to Government Minister* (London: Pluto, 2014) by suggesting that Wilkinson was less consistent and more pragmatic in her principles than Bartley assumes. On the other hand, it rather endorses Matt Perry's excellent biography "*Red Ellen*" *Wilkinson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), which sees "Red Ellen," referred to as such because of the colour of her hair and her fiery temperament, as a transnational figure operating in the world of international socialism and greatly affected by the various socialist and Marxists she met, including Robert Blatchford, Keir Hardie, Rajani Palme Dutt, Lenin and Trotsky – the lioness figures of their day.

Famed for her support for the Jarrow march of October and November 1936, when more than 200 men marched from Jarrow to London to present a petition to Parliament for jobs, it is often forgotten how involved Ellen was in myriad other socialist organizations and activities between the eve of World War I and her death in 1947. Though by no means the dominant socialist of her age she was, indeed, one of the ubiquitous figures in the history of the British labour movement. Ellen Wilkinson was indeed a most unusual radicalized woman. She was one of the first women to go to the University of Manchester and was active in the Manchester Independent Labour

Party and the Clarion movement. She was organizer of the women's section of the Amalgamated Union of Cooperative Employees after World War I. A lifelong feminist fighting for women's rights in Britain and throughout the world, she began her work with the Manchester Women's Suffrage League before being active in numerous feminist organizations and campaigns. When World War I displaced suffrage from the agenda, she was a pacifist, although perhaps less directly involved in its activities than many others she was a member of the International Committee for Women for Permanent Peace in 1915. However, the rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930s led her to support the National Government's move to increase spending on armaments. By that time she had become deeply involved in the Spanish Civil War where she became fervently anti-fascist. As a trade unionist she investigated, with Frank Horrabin, a married man and later member of Parliament for Peterborough with whom she had a relationship, the organization and activities of the General Strike of 1926. Initially Marxist in her thinking, and a founder member of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920, she left it in 1924, feeling that its leadership was weak and divisive, with more communists out of the party than within it, to focus upon her career in the Labour Party. An inveterate attendee of meetings and member of investigative commissions, she also became involved in an examination of the brutalities of the Irish Civil War and of British brutality in India against the Indian independence movement. To these activities might be added a flirtation with Guild Socialism through her association with G.D.H. Cole, Margaret Cole, and the National Guild League. She was deeply concerned and outraged with the social conditions of poor families in Britain, and particularly the high levels of unemployment in inter-war Britain. She was

member of Parliament for Middlesbrough (1929–1931) and for Jarrow (1935–1947) and was to become parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Home Security in Churchill's wartime government and subsequently Minister of Education in the post-war Attlee government, grappling with the problems of shortages of teachers and school places but achieving the introduction of free school milk. Wilkinson's was a busy and productive life and an obituary in the *Manchester Guardian* reflected that she "brought to public affairs an acute mind, an ebullient spirit, and – the dominant thing in her – a passion for social justice, an intuitive and devoted partisanship for the poor and the weak." (5)

What of Beers' biography then? Its main strength is the way in which Wilkinson is fitted into the rich tapestry of socialist and labour history of the early 20th century. Beers effectively establishes Wilkinson's international, as well as national credentials, as she pursued her radical activities throughout the world and particularly in Germany, India, and the United States. Indeed, Beers strengthens the current work on the transnational nature of socialism and socialist debate. Beers also establishes that Wilkinson was more pragmatic than principled in her socialist pursuits, partly out of a desire to progress her career but also out of the fact that times and circumstances changed. Indeed, Wilkinson's pacifism evaporated in the face of fascism in the 1930s and her feminism was less overt by the 1940s. She establishes that Wilkinson was a feminist, a pacifist, and an internationalist but suggests that her driving force which kept these elements together was her desire to promote class struggle and to remove social inequality and injustice. "Red Ellen" was indeed an immensely adaptable social and political figure who helped to shape the lives in her class struggle against social injustice.



The one negative point in all this is the use of narrative context. There are clearly several areas where Wilkinson gets lost or almost ignored in the narrative. In addition, whilst these narratives are by and large up to date and informed, the section dealing with the General Strike appears particularly dated and dependent on secondary work rather than the voluminous research that has been produced on this event. Narrative context needs to be brief and to the point in setting up the latest available research as the backcloth to the activities of an activist like Wilkinson.

Nonetheless, this is an excellent, indeed monumental, work. It offers new evidence on the life and times of Ellen Wilkinson, endorses her transnational role, and establishes the dominating force of class struggle in her life tempered by her essential pragmatism. It is an engaging and stimulating book and should be read widely by those interested in the pluralistic nature of socialism and its key figures in the early 20th century.

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**Alessandra Corrado, Carlos de Castro et Domenico Perrotta (sous la direction de), *Migration and Agriculture. Mobility and change in the Mediterranean area*, Londres et New York : Routledge, 2017**

CES DERNIÈRES DÉCENNIES, l'agriculture dans la région Méditerranéenne a été caractérisée par de forts bouleversements sur le plan productif et sur le marché de travail, avec des conséquences sociales dramatiques pour les familles paysannes et pour la main-d'œuvre agricole, notamment migrante. El Ejido, Rosarno, Manolaba, Izbet Mershaq sont quelques villages disséminés le long les côtes méditerranéennes du nord au sud, de l'ouest à l'est, qui ont vu l'explosion de conflits, entre les locaux et

la main-d'œuvre migrante ou entre les paysans et l'état, face au nouveau scénario productif, social et politique.

Le livre « Migration and Agriculture » sous la direction d'Alessandra Corrado, Carlos de Castro et Domenico Perrotta, analyse ces changements à partir d'une approche interdisciplinaire qui articule un regard historique avec des méthodes qualitatives, en mettant en lumière le lien entre la restructuration de l'agriculture et les processus migratoires. Un lien qui se cristallise dans le travail.

Le livre est composé de 19 essais divisées en cinq parties, plus une introduction collective signée par Corrado, de Castro, Perrotta et une conclusion d'Alessandra Corrado. Les premières trois parties abordent davantage la restructuration de l'agriculture, la quatrième celle du marché de travail et des formes de recrutement, la cinquième celle des conflits et des résistances dans ces régions agricoles. Cela-dit, la structure peut être considérée seulement comme une proposition de lecture, car, grâce au travail de coordination, les contributions semblent pour la plus part se développer de façon homogène autour de l'argumentation principale: l'agriculture au cours des dernières trente ans a vécu des changements globaux avec l'adoption de politiques néolibérales, qui ont déterminées le contrôle par les grandes chaînes de la distribution, la réduction du nombre d'entreprise malgré l'augmentation de leur taille et une vocation à l'exportation avec la libéralisation des marchés. Les entreprises ont fait face à ces changements grâce au recrutement d'une main-d'œuvre (im)migrante.

Le livre est de grand intérêt pour la diversité des études de cas en Espagne, en France, en Grèce, en Italie, au Maroc, au Portugal en Tunisie et en Turquie, qui mettent en lumière de façon détaillée la multiplicité des adaptations locales

et les changements des marchés de travail dans le cadre de ce nouveau « régime alimentaire néolibérale » (320). L'attention aux adaptations locales montre qu'il n'y a pas eu un modèle unitaire de restructuration du secteur agricole, mais que l'incorporation dans les chaînes agroalimentaires globales a eu lieu de diverses façons et parfois même à l'intérieur du même pays (voir la contribution de Perrotta sur la production de tomates en conserve en Italie).

Pendant, malgré ces différences, les études de cas cernent certains processus récurrents, utiles pour comprendre l'impact de la restructuration du secteur agricole sur le travail. J'aborde ici trois de ces processus. Tout d'abord, notons qu'une construction politique des marchés de travail émerge dans chacune des analyses, où le but principal est la création d'une main-d'œuvre flexible, « juste à temps » comme le souligne Garrapa (121). Les études montrent que la création d'une main-d'œuvre flexible s'est réalisée par une composition de la main-d'œuvre agricole de plus en plus diversifiée et hiérarchisée. Cette diversité est créée notamment par la multiplication des statuts migratoires. Les auteurs mentionnent l'utilisation de personnes sans-statut, de personnes embauchées par le biais de programmes de migration temporaire et aussi, une tendance plus récente, le recours aux réfugiés, comme dans le cas des syriens en Turquie, montré par Akay Erturk (168). À la multiplication des statuts, il faut ajouter une hiérarchisation croissante des migrants selon la nationalité et le genre (voir les contributions d'Azzeruoli, Crenn, Hedio, Piro et Sanò, Reigada) qui augmente les tensions internes aux équipes de travail en favorisant la compétition.

Un deuxième aspect très actuel abordé dans le livre, lié en partie à la segmentation du travail, est la multiplication des acteurs de médiation entre les entreprises et

la main-d'œuvre. Si certains auteurs mentionnent la persistance de médiations informelles, comme dans le cas du « Caporalato » (222) analysé par Avallone dans le sud de l'Italie, d'autres auteurs mentionnent le phénomène, plus récent, de la privatisation du recrutement dans le cas des programmes de migration temporaire. En France, par exemple, comme souligne Décosse, dans le recrutement de main-d'œuvre migrante l'Office Français de l'immigration et de l'intégration (OFII) est de plus en plus remplacée par des agences privées européennes ou extra-européennes. Cette tendance est soulignée également par Gadea, Pedreño et de Castro, qui parlent d'une vraie « industrie des migrations » (90), pour définir l'activité des agences d'emploi temporaire à Murcia.

Dans ce contexte de médiations, d'informalités et de hiérarchisation du travail, le choix des éditeurs d'analyser les résistances, troisième thématique que je veux mentionner, est un défi, mais aussi un choix de grand intérêt. En effet, les études montrent la nécessité d'élargir et de complexifier cette notion. Le plus souvent il s'agit de « résilience », comme dans le cas raconté par Avallone, dans la Plana del Sele, en Italie, où les travailleuses négocient avec leurs employeurs ou les intermédiaires pour une protection face aux agressions sexuelles, en échange d'une productivité plus élevée (226). Dans d'autres contributions, certaines formes d'opposition plus ouverte sont mentionnées. Crenn souligne une action collective à Bordeaux par des associations et des syndicats pour dénoncer les conditions de travail de la main-d'œuvre migrante saisonnière (52), Papadopoulos et Fratsea rappellent la grève spontanée d'ouvriers agricoles bangladais à Manolaba réprimée par des tirs de balle par l'employeur (140). Ces luttes demeurent le plus souvent invisibles, restreintes et réprimées et témoignent de l'impasse

des organisations syndicales. Cependant, elles constituent aussi une ressource pour repenser ces organisations. Caruso, par exemple, analyse l'importante expérience de lutte du Sindicato Obreros de Campo, en Andalousie, et explique que le succès de ce syndicat est lié à son adhésion à une forme de « syndicalisme de communauté » (288), en opposition au « syndicalisme de cartel » (281) des grandes centrales syndicales. Le seul aspect de l'ouvrage qui aurait probablement mérité d'être exploré davantage, surtout en présence d'excellentes analyses qualitatives, serait l'analyse des significations que les personnes mêmes attribuent à leur expérience de travail et de migration. En effet, cela permettrait de comprendre davantage comment les politiques migratoires et la hiérarchisation produisent des subjectivités qui favorisent la continuation, ou non, de ces rapports de travail.

En conclusion le livre, par cette articulation d'aspects globales et locales, de regard historique et analyses qualitatives, est de grand intérêt pour les universitaires intéressés au travail migrant, la ruralité et l'agriculture et montre plusieurs pistes de réflexion qui enrichissent sans doute la littérature sur les migrations et celle sur l'économie politique de l'agriculture.

Suite à la publication de cet ouvrage, un incendie dans un ghetto d'ouvriers agricoles en Italie a provoqué la mort de deux personnes. À cet événement tragique, il faut ajouter l'écoulement des bateaux dans la méditerranée qui continue, malgré une attention médiatique mineure. Ces événements nous rappellent que les analyses dans cet ouvrage ne sont pas seulement de grand intérêt scientifique, mais elles doivent s'imposer aux politiques pour changer les conditions des personnes migrantes.

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**Ferruh Yilmaz, *How the Workers Became Muslims: Immigration, Culture and Hegemonic Transformation in Europe* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press 2016)**

OVER THE LAST COUPLE of decades, research on Muslim immigration to Europe has produced an important body of critical scholarship that has been characterized by a renewed interest in the intersections between the welfare state, citizenship, race, and religion in neoliberal economies. Much of this research has focused on how the period of the 1980s was seminal in the stigmatization of Muslim populations in Europe, amidst increased rates of unemployment, cuts to social services, and changes in immigration policy.

Yilmaz' research is situated within this literature as he traces the ways in which public and political discourse on immigration in Denmark changed in the 1980s. This shift involved the initial understanding of Muslim immigrants as *workers* to a discourse that erased their class background and emphasized their cultural difference as *Muslims* who were Other, separate from Danish society. The overarching argument of the book is that there was a process of "culturalization" that began 1984. (15) By culturalization, Yilmaz refers to the ontology of culture, a term indebted to anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz to describe a symbolic "meaning-making system." (16) In the 1970s and 1980s, public discourse was dominated by "economic questions such as taxes, public spending, and unemployment." (60) In Denmark in 1984 there were two simultaneous processes that occurred: a major rise in refugees and a number of Far Right actors who manufactured fear about immigrants and refugees. The evidence for Yilmaz' argument unfolds in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, where he analyzes the transformation of discourse

in Denmark that demonized Muslims and generalized all immigrants as Muslim. One of the key players featured in Yilmaz' analysis is Søren Krarup, a Far Right pastor during the mid-1980s who generated a "moral panic around refugees" (102) by, for instance, regularly putting anti-refugee ads in far-right newspapers which then drew significant media attention.

The strengths of the book lie first in its detailed account of Danish politics from the 1980s to 2000s and second, in the overall argument. First, Yilmaz is well-placed to excavate this political and journalistic history of Danish society. As a former journalist during the 1980s, he wrote actively during this period of significant political change. Yilmaz' research methods rely on both the analysis of Danish newspaper articles from 1984 to 1987, and 2001, as well as 39 interviews conducted with "ethnic Danes" in 2001. (25) (Cultural studies readers will be interested in Chapter 1 where Yilmaz lays out his methodology of content, discourse, and rhetorical analysis.) On a personal level, Yilmaz shares with the reader that he arrived in Denmark from Turkey in 1979 as a leftist activist and explains how he "became Muslim." (3) Clearly, his lived experience resonates with both the content and title of the book. Yilmaz grew up atheist and did not identify as Muslim when he arrived in Denmark; he eventually assumed this political (not religious) identity as a result of other people asking if he was Muslim.

Second, the premise that Danish political discourse shifted in the mid-1980s from an understanding of immigrants as workers to a cultural Other is a welcome contribution to the field of labour, immigration, and racism. Indeed, Yilmaz makes the case that the culturalization of immigrants made racism widely acceptable in Danish society. The historical specificity of the political conditions in which racism in Denmark grew and

was produced by particular figures demonstrates how racism is generated and is not natural or inevitable in a given population.

While focused on the Danish context, Yilmaz indicates that his case study is relevant to Europe more broadly. My research falls within the area of gender, Muslim migration, and labour in France, making this text relevant to my own interests. In Europe, the 1970s was characterized by immigration policies that relied on unskilled male migrant workers, often followed by family reunification policies in the 1980s which brought over female spouses. Similar to Denmark, this pattern occurred in France with migration from the Maghreb. In relation to my own research, there are two areas that I would encourage Yilmaz to pursue in his future writing.

First, it is worth specifying that the argument around culture is specific to the Danish context, versus a country like France, where the political distinction between religion and culture is crucial. In France, *laïcité* (state secularism) dominates contemporary public debate on Islam and migration. The treatment of Muslim populations as *religious* and not *cultural* communities often justifies Islamophobic laws (there are currently several, all of which target visibly-pious Muslim women). In contrast, if French Muslims were treated as a cultural group, the French government would have little political basis to enact discriminatory laws in the name of secularism.

Second, while Yilmaz discusses Muslim women briefly in Chapter 4 in a discussion of stereotypical tropes that construe Muslim women as oppressed and antithetical to the "core Danish values" (166) of gender and sexual equality, this section could have been developed. The ways in which white feminists (and older white women in particular) define feminism and have committed violent

acts against Muslim women is a central component to how Muslim women are racialized and gendered as Other (see for instance, Carina Listorborn, “Geographies of the Veil: Violent Encounters in Urban Public Space in Malmö, Sweden,” *Social and Cultural Geography* 16, 1 [2015]). As an interdisciplinary researcher whose own teaching areas are currently based in gender and women’s studies, I would have liked to have seen a full chapter dedicated to gender that I might include on a potential course syllabus.

Overall, Yilmaz’ text is a worthy read for labour studies scholars interested in European politics, transnationalism, racism, and immigration and citizenship policies. I hope Yilmaz takes my constructive criticism as generative and I look forward to reading his further contributions to this area.

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**Nicole Cohen, *Writers’ Rights: Freelance Journalism in a Digital Age* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press 2016)**

PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS, articles, and anecdotes about precarity in contemporary journalism and the cultural industries more broadly abound. For those still in doubt that such precarity actually exists as well as those seeking to explain it, Nicole Cohen provides a timely and compelling confirmation – as well as an interpretation of freelance labour in these industries as *exploited* labour. The key goal is to unlock readers’ understanding of labour relations in journalism rather than exploring questions of professional identity and subjectivity among workers – which is what the fast-growing literature on workers in the creative and media industries has overwhelmingly focused on. This study is (at least to this

reviewer’s knowledge) the first book-length account in the English language of freelance labour in journalism, tracing the phenomenon from its beginnings in pre-capitalist times to the digital era. In 250 pages, based on an online survey of over 200 freelancers as well as interviews with those trying to collectively organize freelancers, Cohen comprehensively explores the struggles of writers in non-permanent employment in Canada.

Cohen starts with introducing the frequently found paradox of freelance cultural work as generating professional enjoyment in the midst of precarity, calling it “freedom’s double edge.” (3) A chapter on the labour history of freelance journalists demonstrates aptly that their working conditions have often, if not always, been insecure and characterized by low income. However, it also brings to light that freelancing has been a strategy by media workers to perform their craft outside of the constraints of a standard employment relationship, especially during and after the rise of modern capitalism. This historical context makes understandable why freelance journalism today still is imbued with an idea of autonomy. One key insight from the book is that this persistent idea of worker autonomy masks the deep power imbalance between publishers and freelance writers, casting freelance journalists as independent entrepreneurs when they are in fact dependent on parameters set by publishers.

As Cohen’s principal interest is in the political-economic structures that shape freelancers’ struggles, Marxist and autonomous Marxist analysis are used to dissect current working conditions in freelance journalism. “Media capitalists” give freelance journalists freedom at the idea creation and realization stage of the production process. This resonates with the idea of worker autonomy while enabling the exploitation of freelance

labour in the next stages of the production process. Media corporations extract surplus value from freelancers by using two main strategies. First, they only pay freelancers for the finished product, not for the time required to research or write an article. Second, they impose restrictive copyright regimes that prevent freelancers from re-using and re-selling their writing while corporations exploit their works across platforms. Additionally, recent contracts that force freelancers to surrender moral rights to their productions indicate that freelance journalists, despite their own perceptions of freedom, have little to no control over their work. Indemnification clauses now often make freelancers responsible for costs from potential legal challenges arising from their work while protecting media corporations. As a result, freelance journalistic labour is precarious. It is a cycle characterized by low incomes and unpaid work time, leading to the need to work more and faster, while having to shoulder not only the costs but increasingly also the risks of media production that publishers offload onto individual workers.

While the author's principal argument is original and convincing, some of the intriguing questions raised by the book could have been addressed more clearly. First, the relevance and importance of the book is at least partially rooted in the fact that freelance *journalists* (versus other freelancers or other types of cultural or media workers) are examined. This is a group of workers who are "essential for meaningful participation in democratic life," upholding a "public service ethos" and monitoring the powerful. (7) Hence, their difficult working conditions should be of concern not just to academics or workers themselves, but to citizens at large. However, despite using "freelance journalism" in the title of her book, Cohen refers to her research participants mostly as "freelance writers" or more

generally as cultural or media workers. Is there, ultimately, a specificity of journalism as a profession compared to others, and why insist on or de-emphasize such specificity?

Further to this, Cohen states that the freelance writers examined write for magazines but also do advertising and other commercial writing for various corporate clients. The author's observation that corporate work usually pays significantly better than journalism – but is disliked by freelance writers – is critical. Obviously, not all freelance writing is precarious. More broadly, even if there exists far-reaching fragility and instability in many types of symbolic labour today, there seems to be a bifurcation: some work is valued and other work is devalued. And strangely, it is work less attractive to journalists – namely non-journalistic, corporate work – that offers better working conditions. What might be reasons for this? Possible answers lie in the paradoxical nature of contemporary capitalism whose foundational logic is two-fold: it promotes economic measurement and efficiency in all realms of social, political, and cultural life while at the same time broadly de-emphasizing political-normative values and practices. This aspect of neoliberal regimes makes understandable the phenomenon observed by Cohen: the undermining of journalism as a political-normative practice as well as its flipside, namely the "up-valuing" of writing that serves a narrow corporate purpose, be it increasing financial or symbolic capital.

These are only minor limitations of a book that is a stellar example of engaged scholarship. The research is rigorous and theoretically sophisticated but presented in a voice that clearly cares about the subject and hopes to contribute to social change. As such, the study is a significant contribution to a critical sociology of contemporary labour. Its biggest

potential impact, however, lies elsewhere, even if it de-emphasizes the specificity of journalism, as mentioned above; journalism scholars will benefit immensely from reading this work. Journalism studies is a sub-field in media and communication studies without a significant tradition of critical scholarship. Especially critical political economy perspectives are missing and Marxist analysis almost anathema to this scholarly community. Journalism researchers tend to work with a limited definition of journalists as watchdogs for democracy and often neglect how they are positioned as workers in a capitalist economy. Cohen's book demonstrates that this separation is not only artificial; it has severely hampered scholars' efforts to understand as well as provide answers to the so-called "crisis of journalism."

Lastly, *Writer's Rights* will be an invaluable resource for journalists themselves. Notorious for making light of their own working conditions and skeptical about resistance to the same, they receive a crisply written explanation for the state of their profession. It is an explanation based on data provided by their own freelance colleagues and exposes their struggles as structural, rather than rooted in themselves as individuals. Cohen's framing of freelancing as exploited labour finally puts a name to the countless frustrations and penalties associated with freelance journalistic work on a daily basis. It offers journalists an umbrella concept that crystallizes their experiences and invites a sense of community, maybe even solidarity among otherwise isolated workers. Ideally, the study will inspire journalists to build on its promising accounts of recent collective action, including union-supported bargaining and class action suits that force media corporations to pay for the unauthorized re-use of writers' works. After all, the emerging movements in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain to change freelance

working conditions described in the book are not just crucial for journalists but intimately connected to the future of our democracies.

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**Aziz Choudry and Mondli Hlatshwayo, eds., *Just Work? Migrant Workers' Struggles Today* (London: Pluto Press 2016)**

*JUST WORK?* REPRESENTS an important intervention in the existing scholarship on migrant worker issues, with explicit attention to challenges facing migrants and to accounts of labour organizers' "experiences." (1) Spanning five continents, the book is divided into four parts and twelve constituent chapters, organized according to geography: Africa and the Middle East, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, and North America. The volume is interdisciplinary and echoes many recent scholarly trends in the study of international migration and immigration's intersection with labour concerns in a context of neoliberal austerity and the increased "dehumanization" and "criminalization" of migrants worldwide. (2) The book takes on an activist character and has a professed aim to be of utility for labour organizers, broadening discussions of migrant work in a context of an increasingly divisive global migration politics. It interpretively links global capitalism and "capitalist restructuring" to changes in the migration climate as migrants occupy "different sets of rights" (4–5) and are rendered more highly subject to exploitation. The language of global illegality is problematized, while an emphasis on Southern Africa sets this work apart from other accounts; this subregion is described as an emerging "epicentre of African migration." (6) International developments in global

migration already accounted for in other works are reiterated at the outset to set the volume's contents in context.

A critique of the "racialised foundations" (8) of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program considers racial exploitation in Canada's newly contrived temporary labour sector that has effectively enhanced migrants' potential to occupy "unfree" statuses in the workplace. (7) Building on earlier critiques of neoliberal restructuring, and providing a rudimentary discussion of the place of remittances in international migration and development discourse, *Just Work?* considers a range of contemporary migrations, giving focus to organizations, their workers, and the nature of the work they do in concert with 21st century migrant power struggles. Organizations are presented as innovative, relevant, and well-positioned to contend with the distinct challenges of the migrant class. Mondli Hlatshwayo's chapter on the politics of immigrant work in South Africa focuses on how the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has adopted a fairly conservative position vis-à-vis the immigrant workforce, while Aziz Choudry contributes a closing chapter co-authored with Mostafa Henaway on temporary labour regimes in Canada. The chapters are diverse, treating a wide range of migrant flows, circumstances, and industries. Hlatshwayo highlights xenophobia's place in relation to the immigrant community, and raises the question of the social agency of this "permanent feature" of the post-apartheid state. (22) Interviews reconstruct migration experiences among Zimbabwean emigrants, and economic dynamism in South Africa serves as a magnet. Crisis spurs emigration for a class of precarious workers forced to "navigate ... difficult and unfriendly terrain." (22–23) Migrants serve as street traders, sex workers, domestics, and farm workers and efforts to advocate

for precarious workers are a work in progress. The dangers of the journey, especially for women, and immigrant workers' vulnerable existence politically and economically, speak to patterns of resiliency that are foregrounded. Local NGOs are here more effective in comparison to international NGOs in their efforts to better conditions of the migrant class, (29) while migrant-focused organizations emerge as significant vehicles for vocalizing immigrant worker concerns.

Adam Hanieh's focus on the Gulf Arab states suggests the Gulf "constitutes a global laboratory for labour exploitation today." (56) Here, a regionally and culturally-specific *kafala* system facilitates exploitation, binding workers to a sponsor and denying them rights linked to citizenship. (41) Migratory flows between the Arab sending states of Egypt, Yemen, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria to countries belonging to the Gulf Cooperation Council including Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia reveal an upswing in emigration in the 1970s, followed by a shift toward a new dependency on Asian labour after the 1980s. An Asian workforce would "underpin the region's massive urban development boom of the 2000s," with non-nationals increasingly saturating the Gulf's private sector. Citizens and non-citizens have "differential rights" with the *kafala* system allowing the state to "sub-contract" the surveillance and control of migrant labour to individual citizens and businesses," (47) often creating conditions akin to bonded labour. Resistance, despite mixed results in the Gulf, is highlighted, with a 2014 clothing factory strike in Bahrain involving foreign workers from India, Burma, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh cited, as well as a demonstration of 1,300 Ethiopian nurses in Kuwait among numerous other examples. Transnational threads also appear, with the case of a



construction worker strike in relation to the construction of a New York University campus in Abu Dhabi, repression of striking workers drew international solidarity, and generated criticism of the university's complicity by American and British media. The "spectacular reworking of Gulf urban environments" required the contributions of countless numbers of migrants, and migrants are interpretively situated at the "core" for "understanding political and economic processes in the Gulf states." (54) Baba Ayelabola's contribution on the climate of migrant work in Nigeria similarly highlights that country's place as a the economic "powerhouse" of West Africa and as a magnet for migrants from neighbouring countries, despite its high rates of unemployment. (61) It underscores the phenomenon of trans-border migration, illegal and unskilled work, the informal economy, and cases of migrant expulsion for shaping the migrant experience in Nigeria.

The Europe section explores forestry work in the Czech Republic, where illegal Vietnamese and European workers failed to gain support from national trade unions. They faced remuneration issues since 2009, creating two narratives of activism: migrants' rights and anti-trafficking discourse. One interviewee described his experience: "For the three hundred hours of work in the next month we never got a penny" and another reported, "you are owed months of wages ... and they just get away with it," (87–89), the state being responsible for the "weak regulation of employment standards." (93) Migrant justice work here took on anti-racist threads, with a tree workers' campaign seeking to restore migrants' economic rights despite their efforts to achieve justice being complicated by factors linked to migrant illegality. Still, organizations were able to make strides in support of trafficked workers, bringing their cause to national media attention.

A chapter on Latin American worker organizing in Britain offers insights into transnational mobilization that should be informative for the current struggles facing Latin American migrants in Canada. Here, 21st century victories follow "two decades of sustained attacks on workers' rights in the UK" as workers "brought with them a trajectory of struggle against such attacks in their own countries." (125) Furthermore, Latin Americans were employed in deunionized sectors; the trade union movement embraced their struggles but still sometimes adopted "orthodox" approaches toward such sectors. (125) The Asia-Pacific (Hong Kong, Japan, and New Zealand) and North American sections (California and Montréal) chart varied patterns in immigrant worker organizing, offering de-centred models and stories concerned with unique labour struggles wrought by neoliberal globalization in localized places. Owing to its contemporary nature, *Just Work* offers little in the way of new threads or windows into global labour history. Yet, for those with an interest in migrant worker problems of the present, this volume should prove richly rewarding.

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**Rob Lambert and Andrew Herod,**  
*Neoliberal Capitalism and Precarious Work: Ethnographies of Accommodation and Resistance* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar 2016)

THIS BOOK ADDRESSES the increasingly important topic of precarious work, or work that is insecure and uncertain and in which risks are shifted to workers rather than employers or governments. Theory and research have established that the spread of neoliberal political-economic policies, associated with the

decline of unions and the growing imbalances of power in favour of employers over workers, underlie the transformation in employment relations from the standard employment relations of the 30-year period after World War II in the Global North to the precarious, often non-standard, employment relations that characterize both the Global North and South. This book assembles a collection of case studies that show the consequences of precarious work for workers in diverse contexts - such as sweatshops, day labourers, homeworkers, construction workers, and sugarcane cutters - and their varied ways of accommodating and resisting their precarious situations.

The editors' introduction summarizes some of the definitional issues regarding precarious work and provides an overview of the main forms of nonstandard work arrangements (temporary and part-time work and independent contracting) and of the reasons why these have become more prominent in the past quarter century. They emphasize especially how spatial and geographical aspects of capitalism and neoliberal political-economic policies have led to the restructuring of work on a global scale and how this has impacted local workplaces and communities, a theme that is echoed throughout the volume.

The book is divided into two parts. The first consists of six case studies that examine various forms of precarious work and illustrate the variety of ways in which people accommodate themselves to their precarious work experiences. These chapters also show the diverse strategies by which workers resist and protest their precarious situations, as they seek alternatives to unions, who are often reluctant to engage with precarious workers.

Thus, the study of workers in unregulated factories in the clothing industry in the Fashion District in inner-city Johannesburg shows how international competition has weakened organized

labour, making coalitions with faith-based organizations a more likely source of power. The chapter on immigrant industrial day labourers in Chicago in the mid-2000s examines a labour rights campaign that was done without union involvement. This accountability campaign was designed to shame the client company into transferring its temporary workforce from an abusive temp agency to a more ethical one. Another chapter looks at home-based work and provides examples of the new ways in which women home-based workers are organizing in Bulgaria and Turkey. These forms of organizing are different from traditional union or collective bargaining strategies, as they use non-union international linkages (such as with the Federation of Homeworkers Worldwide, women's movements, and consumer campaigns in Europe) to build solidarity.

A chapter on the construction industry and labour subcontracting in China elucidates the culture of violence between subcontractors and workers. Its analysis of four construction sites shows how the labour subcontracting system (which is the single most important way of obtaining the labour needed by the industry) is leading to widespread collective action among workers, who are among the worst-paid in China today and are ripe for exploitation since most are not protected by China's labour laws.

Another chapter looks at how the toxic pollution of air and groundwater generated by large steel corporations have led to social and economic insecurity in a South African community (Steel Valley, near Johannesburg). The authors' analysis links nature and capitalism by revealing how the marketization of nature driven by global corporations and ecological degradation deepens social and economic insecurity. They argue that transnational solidarity networks led by labour (such as SIGTUR - Southern Initiative on

Globalization and Trade Union Rights) and environmental campaigns (“ecological unionism”) are needed to address the growing ecological crisis.

The final chapter in the section examines how global ethanol corporations and export-oriented sugar policies are leading to greater concentration in the ownership of land and wealth as well as precarious work, insecurity, work intensification and disintegration of rural livelihoods in two areas of São Paulo State, Brazil. The authors focus on the workers who cut and transport sugarcane over four distinct periods since 1930; in recent years, mass unemployment through factory closures has made it difficult for a fragmented labour movement to address the concerns of precarious workers.

The second part of the book contains four chapters that illustrate the variety of ways in which official union movements in the Global North have sought to address precarious work. A study of unions in two Korean auto companies (Hyundai Motor Company and Kia Motors) examines the conditions leading to four types of responses by unions representing regular employees to the presence of subcontracted workers. These include: exclusion; representation by proxy, whereby regular employers’ unions negotiate with the subcontracting company on behalf of the subcontracted workers; inclusion (accepting subcontracted workers into union but not covering them by collective agreements); and integration (in which unions accept subcontracted workers and seek to represent their interests). The author argues for the importance of building a collective identity between regular and precarious workers.

An additional chapter looks at the spatial strategies (independent of official union campaigns) used by various social actors in opposition to the decision to close a manufacturing facility in Nuremberg, Germany by Electrolux, a

large Swedish global corporation producing white goods appliances. The workers - who previously had stable jobs and were now faced with insecurity - were supported by civil society via consumer boycotts and disruptions that damaged the company’s brand and corporate image in Germany. The authors show how the central location of the worksite and urban geography of Nuremberg provided opportunities for mobilization and worker voice.

A study of a campaign to organize building cleaners in the Netherlands focused on the SEIU’s (Service Employees’ International Union) global partnership with a Dutch labour federation (FNV or *Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging*), using the SEIU’s Justice for Janitors model. Though the campaign made some progress, it was limited due to poor local resources and lack of support; doing away with sweatshop citizenship and precariousness requires a much larger political movement.

A final chapter builds on recent scholarship in network theory and labour geography to assess the potential of labour rights regulation that is rooted in linkages between networked actors at local, national, and international levels (as opposed to a single actor or level of analysis). The author examines a new form of labour internationalism (GFAs or global framework agreements) that are a potential union strategy to address conditions of work in global economy. How such transnational agreements might be implemented and enforced in local contexts is illustrated by a study of the framework agreement developed by the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF), which combines transnational regulation with inspections and collective agreements at the local level.

Taken together, these chapters vividly demonstrate some of the diversity of settings in which precarious work occurs and the variety of responses to precarious

work by both union and non-union actors. The editors conclude the volume by calling for collective action and seeking to stimulate debate on the character of a social movement that has the potential to be a social force to reverse the rise of precarious work and provide greater economic security. Such a movement needs to link trade unions to movements beyond the workplace and to political parties so as to provide precarious workers with the power resources to mobilize and protect their interests. The ethnographies in this volume offer helpful insights as to some of the challenges facing workers and their opportunities to challenge precarious work.

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**Lucio Baccaro and Chris Howell,**  
*Trajectories of Neoliberal  
Transformation: European Industrial  
Relations since the 1970s* (Cambridge:  
Cambridge University Press 2017)

ALTHOUGH THE DEBATE ON convergence and divergence is a traditional one in the field of employment relations (ER), a certain consensus has emerged in past years over the diversity of advanced capitalist economies. ER scholars tend to assume that their key societal, political, and economic features have endured, even in the latest stage of capitalism which is characterized by globalization, trade internationalization, and the rise of finance as a growth-model. In that vein, varieties of capitalism or business system approaches tend to use institutions as mediator variables in explaining differences in the performance of capitalist systems and to argue for the resilience and divergence of national systems from a historical and comparative point of view. *Trajectories of Neoliberal Transformation*

by Lucio Baccaro and Chris Howell aims to challenge this consensus by arguing that, rather than producing divergence, industrial relations (IR) institutions were liberalized and are following a common neoliberal trajectory in Western European countries. By analysing the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Sweden, the authors show that this transformation has been observed in the expansion of employer discretion in three spheres: wage determination, personnel management and work organization, and hiring and firing procedures.

Theoretically, Baccaro and Howell present the classical approach of comparative political economy, which presumes that institutions mediate common economic pressures, distribute power amongst actors, and offer solutions to coordination problems in market economies. The authors oppose this idea of divergence by arguing that institutions can change towards a common trajectory while remaining “allomorphic.” (14) In fact, the plasticity and malleability of institutions is central and helps us to conceptualize how different sets of rules can be transformed or by-passed, bringing us towards a common trajectory. In these processes, the state has taken an active role in expanding employers’ discretion. The authors mobilize Walter Korpi’s power resource theory, arguing that changes in these resources are likely to impact the choices made by actors. Furthermore, referring to the *École de la Régulation*, Baccaro and Howell argue that the weakening of IR institutions undermined the Fordist growth regime and that the type of capitalism that has emerged favours the flexibilization of employment relations.

After a presentation of quantitative data that supports the liberalization argument, the five countries are analysed successively.

In the 1970s, the UK was characterized by “collective regulation” through corporatism in social and economic policy, wage determination by formal and informal mechanisms, work organization subject to joint regulation, and public policy supported by the idea of collective regulation. Following the election of the Conservative government in 1979, the government adopted a “decollectivisation” strategy and brought the country towards a law-oriented model. This model has been characterized by the individualization of employment relations in which trade unions and collective bargaining had a limited role leading to a strong unitarian vision of IR and the rise of employer discretion.

France in the 1970s was characterized by a high level of state regulation due to oppositional trade union structures and strong industry-level bargaining with the extension of collective agreements by the state. This kept employer discretion over working conditions low, particularly in their ability to fire workers. The state was the key obstacle to greater flexibility. Several governments in the 1980s have introduced successful reforms. This led to the creation of new institutions or the mutation of existing institutions, particularly at the firm level. This also led to the decentralization of the system and gave more power to non-union channels of representation at the company-level. Institutions have been transformed and new ones have been created.

As for Germany, with encompassing institutions, the country once represented the archetype of the coordinated model of capitalism. These institutions were characterized by strong voice rights in the workplace but with a high acceptance of flexibility, strong vocational training, and bargaining coverage at the sectoral level. The change towards an export-led model set the stage for liberalization and can be explained by the plasticity

of existing institutions. Different events paved the way for liberalization, including the unification of Germany and the Hartz reforms. This has led to a new model characterized by the decline in collective bargaining coverage, an increase in companies who are not covered by industry agreements, and a change in the function of works councils.

In Italy, following tumultuous social conflicts at the end of the 1960s, the weak unions emerged stronger and imposed limitations on employer discretion, notably at the workplace level. Strong bargaining at both industry- and local- levels in large firms, coupled with the national wage indexation of the *Scala Mobile*, characterized the model. Italy stands out in the book where liberalization did not involve any decentralization of collective bargaining. Corporatism and recentralization of bargaining were used to impose liberalization. Most of the changes were driven in a “top-down” fashion culminating in the passing of legislation permitting derogation of industry-level agreements.

Sweden once characterized the archetype of Scandinavian social democracy. The model has long been associated with multi-sectoral bargaining, wage moderation for high productivity sectors coupled with wage solidarism between sectors, low strike levels with collective self-regulation, and a generous welfare state. The economic crisis in Sweden in the beginning the 1990s forced the state to initiate changes to collective bargaining and the coordinated system. The wage-setting model experienced major reforms that have involved the decentralization, flexibilization, and individualization of wage bargaining. Two elements now describe the Swedish system: sectoral coordination aimed at wage moderation for the export sectors and the decentralization and individualization of bargaining enabling more flexibility, notably at the firm level.

To conclude, Baccaro and Howell synthesize their findings. Three broad mechanisms of institutional change have been adopted: 1. deregulation through changes in legislation; 2. derogation to permit liberalization; 3. institutional conversion. As for the actors, not surprisingly, there has been a decline in labour's bargaining power in each country, and in parallel, employers' discourses have been radicalized. The state has been an active player in deregulation while European integration has played a major role in the liberalization and promotion of individual rights in the workplace. The main consequences are that employer discretion has increased in every country. The authors present an argument of the instability of the growth model in the context of a common neoliberal drift. As the Fordist model once produced stability with a set of industrial relations institutions, the system of accumulation has been unstable and has failed to balance the growth of aggregate demand with aggregate supply. Two models have emerged, one export-led and one debt-led. The stability being possible only in the ability to recreate institutions that reconnect aggregate demand with aggregate supply.

Though the overall demonstration is convincing, I have three minor critiques. The first one is the importance of the European Union (EU) in the establishment of this common neoliberal drift. The authors defend themselves for not according a major place in their argument for the EU's impact on national systems. However, of increasing importance since the last financial crisis and ensuing sovereign-debt crisis, the EU has played a crucial role in driving neoliberal labour market reforms and should be considered as having a central place in these changes. The second one, loosely linked to the EU, is the choice of country. We clearly understand the importance of each case in the book as these countries represent

important types of national models. Nevertheless, the countries that were the most hit by recent neoliberal reform in the past years – except for Italy – are absent in the book. The inclusion of Greece, Spain, or Portugal could have enriched and supported the argument. The last critique is a practical question: Where do we go from here? The authors do present a strong critical analysis of the trajectory of European capitalism, but are less prompt to offer any solution to counter this trend.

Few books have the pretention to shove consensus and to open strong debates in a given field. This ambitious piece aimed to challenging conventional wisdom on the diversity of European capitalist economies and the institutions regulating employment. Theoretically and empirically, Baccaro and Howell's effort is highly successful and the end result is convincing. The pretention of arguing for a neoliberal convergence has been accomplished and the book will be long remembered for its relevance. Well structured, this book offers a great synthesis of comparative employment relations that is relevant for the field of industrial relations and comparative political economy, but also for labour history as the overall argument is deeply rooted in a long-term analysis. As reforms aimed at liberalizing labour markets in certain European countries – notably in France – continue today, this book certainly a powerful analytical line of analysis for understanding these changes and should be immediately read by scholars and practitioners interested at countering common narratives on deregulation.

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**Walter Scheidel, *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2017)**

IN RECENT YEARS, experts in the social sciences and humanities have rushed around our suppurating political body, offering prescriptions. They all agree on the name of the disease – inequality – but they disagree about the causes and the remedy. Now historian Walter Scheidel has entered this conference, perhaps not so much as doctor but as undertaker. For his diagnosis is the gloomiest of all: to meaningfully reduce inequality requires shattering violence, a cure so drastic many would opt to live with the disease.

Scheidel argues this in his impressive new book, *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. According to Scheidel, inequality is literally in our DNA, with humans being descended from more hierarchical and aggressive primate lines. In Part I, Scheidel reviews global economic development, concluding that the production of surpluses was inevitably accompanied by the rise of predatory elites who leveraged wealth and political connections to hive off ever-greater proportions of their society's outputs.

Scheidel opts not to engage the question of whether these unequal societies, as Marx might have it, inevitably sow the seeds of their own destruction through their perpetuation of inequality. Instead, he's concerned with how, in history, inequality has been meaningfully levelled. He claims, over the book's final 350 pages, that only violent shocks have levelled inequality. Scheidel attributes almost every single example of shrinking inequality to one of his "four horsemen" of levelling: total war that engages all aspects of society, such as the experience of Allied and

Axis powers during the Second World War; state collapse, for example the fate of Classic Mayan civilization or late 20th-century Somalia; transformative revolution, as experienced in the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China; or pandemics, for example the Black Death's equalizing impact on much of Europe.

The amount of research Scheidel marshals in support of this argument is impressive. For each leveler, he presents dozens of examples, darting back and forth in time between every era of human history and all over the globe. Along the way, any reader is sure to find much of interest and relevance. In my case, I found Scheidel's analysis of the relationship between citizenship, military obligations, warfare, and inequality in ancient Greek city-states to be fascinating and revealing. However, taken as a whole, the frequent jumps in time and place can be disorienting, and Scheidel's presentation of example after example can bog down the reader. The sections where Scheidel is able to dig deeper and present a more sustained account of societal violence, such as his section on the Russian Revolution and civil war, are invariably more engaging.

However, it is ironic that a book in some respects so exhaustive suffers from being too narrow. On its face, Scheidel's argument is convincing and compelling. Solely focusing on the relationship between violence and levelling allows Scheidel to demonstrate that instances of societal levelling invariably are linked to violent shocks. However almost all times and places are marked by violence full-stop. Scheidel's focus only on levelling violence distorts our understanding of violence and of inequality in several important ways. The connection between the two is not considered in sufficient detail; so, while we get a revealing and thorough explanation of the extraordinarily violent consequences of the Bolshevik takeover

of Russia, their targeting of rich peasants, and their program of forced agricultural collectivization, the violence of the post-Cold War institution of rapacious capitalism is not even mentioned. This despite Russia experiencing a globally unprecedented peacetime depopulation between 1992 and 2009 – its population declining by 5 per cent – a phenomenon anthropologist Michelle Parsons connects to the social and economic fracturing that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet system and its replacement by capitalism. Nor does Scheidel consider any of the myriad forms of violence crucial to the establishment of unequal systems; for example, the clearances and enclosures of the commons in Britain that expropriated the means of reproduction of agricultural producers and shifted them into the wage labour market.

Nor does he consider the violence necessary to maintain these systems, which in our own time is apparent in mass incarceration, imperialist warfare, the deaths, disease, and injuries that result from massive inequalities in access to goods and services, and the environmental devastation that is the consequence of a system based on unrestrained consumption, waste, and resource extraction.

I am aware that in some respects, this critique is unfair, judging Scheidel's work based on the book I would have preferred

he had written, rather than the one he did. However, his focus leads to the danger of readers not attuned to the careful work he is doing focusing on levelling and violence concluding that history teaches we have only two choices: levelling and violence or inequality and stability. This consequence is clearly apparent in Eduardo Porter's article about Scheidel's book in the *New York Times* (7 December 2016), which draws on Scheidel's arguments to dismiss peaceful measures designed to mitigate or combat inequality with a glib "Dream on." Porter concludes of inequality, "Maybe we should stop worrying and love it." Case closed: nothing should be done to create a more equitable world, because it's simply not possible without rivers of blood.

Porter draws this conclusion thanks to Scheidel's conclusion that the Four Horsemen of levelling have largely left the scene, or, as he says to Porter: "The world of the future is likely to be quite stable and have very high inequality." Humanity, he argues in the book's conclusion, is not likely to deal with total war, state collapse, pandemics, or revolution anytime soon. But is the world really so stable? In a world where the spectre of nuclear war has once again arisen against the backdrop of actually-occurring transformative climate change, we might be in for a good deal of levelling after all.

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