

## Book Notes / Références Bibliographiques

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## BOOK NOTES / RÉFÉRENCES BIBLIOGRAPHIQUES

**Michael Boudreau, Peter G. Toner, and Tony Tremblay, eds., *Exploring the Dimensions of Self-Sufficiency for New Brunswick*** (Fredericton: St. Thomas University/New Brunswick and Atlantic Studies Research and Development Centre 2009)

THIS WIDE-RANGING collection of essays focuses on the political economy of New Brunswick and the problems the province faces in seeking a degree of self-determination and ability to guarantee employment over the long run in the context of an increasingly globalized economy in which New Brunswick is a bit player. Mark J. McLaughlin and Bill Parienteau trace the longstanding disputes between independent wood producers and pulp and paper companies. Joan McFarland analyzes the vulnerability and contradictory blessings of the province's ever-growing call centre industry. Bonnie Huskins and Michael Boudreau discuss the ways in which many working-class families survived in post-war Saint John through participation in the informal economy.

**Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, and Heidi Shierholz, *The State of Working America 2008/2009*** (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press 2009)

THIS ANNUAL compilation of statistics remains the best source for quantitative information about workers' lives in the United States and the impact of trade unions on improving the wages of the relatively small group of American workers

who have been able to band together to demand better conditions. The authors include historical tables so that the book captures more than the fate of American workers in a given year. It's also an excellent source for comparative information about the distribution of income in the United States relative to other advanced capitalist countries. The 2008–09 edition, among other things, demonstrates the diminishing expectations that American workers faced as a result of the deep recession of 2008 and shows that the previous period of growth failed to benefit low-income Americans. "The backsliding against poverty in the 2000s is most notable among the least advantaged, who happened to be the same groups that made the most progress in the 1990s. One particularly disheartening example is young (less than six years old) African American children. Almost half were officially poor in 1995, going down to one-third in 2000. That share has since climbed back up to 39.5%." (298)

**Karen L. Graves, *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers*** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2009)

HOMOPHOBIA's intrusion into people's lives has often meant disregard for civil liberties, including the right to work in a job for which one is qualified. In many countries, throughout long periods, gays and lesbians have been purged from the teaching profession. This book deals with efforts by Florida to create compulsory heterosexism among its teaching force

during the Cold War and the efforts of some of the purged teachers to assert their right to maintain both their sexual orientation and their right to teach. The focus is on the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee, an exercise in state-led homophobia that cost dozens of teachers the right to remain in their chosen profession.

**Lincoln Cushing and Timothy W. Drescher, *Agitate! Educate! Organize! American Labour Posters*** (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press 2009)

FOR THOSE WHO are searching for ideas for posters or other visuals for labour and social movement campaigns, this historical collection of American visuals can only be inspiring. Included are posters from organizing drives, famous strikes, union label drives, political and information campaigns. But there are also posters for cultural events, photographic and art exhibitions, and portraits of iconic labour figures. Efforts to organize women and minority workers and to promote feminist and anti-racist campaigns are included. The posters range from the quite simple to the somewhat abstract. Here's one that is both simple and effective: a poster with the smiling face of young textile worker, Linda Blythe, says on top of her picture: "On January 12, 1978 J.P. Stevens in Roanoke Rapids tried to fire Linda Blythe." Below one reads: "On February 2, 1978 ACTWU saved her job." (103)

**James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History*** (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press 2007)

THE TITLE OF THIS book is misleading in several ways. First of all, despite the word, "modern," in the title, this book mostly deals with the period from 1850

to 1950. Though the title also suggests an international history, Vernon is focused exclusively on Britain and the British Empire. For much of the period that he is investigating, elite ideologies regarded the state as blameless in the creation of famines and in need of self-discipline as it faced calls from the starving to put state resources to work to save them from death. Scientists and statisticians debated the definition of hunger and the extent to which premature deaths occurred because of poor nutrition. Eventually however the growth of social democratic ideology challenged the liberal view that markets did not create starvation and governments could neither prevent nor respond to starvation. The book provides however rather limited coverage of the views of the oppressed peoples of the British Empire regarding the attitudes of their imperial masters with regards to agricultural policy and social policy.

**Frances Devine, *Organising History: A Centenary of SIPTU, 1909–2009*** (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan 2009)

AT 1204 PAGES, this is one of the longest books on a single trade union of which I am aware. SIPTU is the Services, Industrial and Professional Trade Union of Ireland. It was the result of a merger of two formerly rival unions in 1990 and this book traces the history of both as well as the recent history of SIPTU itself. Much of the book deals with internal union matters of little interest to a general reader but there is a fair bit also about legendary workers' leaders James Connolly and James Larkin. As such a long book by a distinguished labour historian might be expected to do, it gives glimpses into every aspect of the history of SIPTU and its predecessors, from strikes to ideological debates to party politics to involvement in international issues.

**Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic*** (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2007)

IN THE GERMAN Democratic Republic, the Stalinist leadership gradually placed all of civic life under Party control. Much of the public responded to the increasingly dictatorial character of the regime by retreating into private life. Women led the movement to more familialism, a focus on consumption, and a wariness of public life. Initially the party-state responded with a fair bit of intrusion into domestic life, though eventually it accepted the popular glorification of families and adopted policies that reinforced families' focus on domestic activities such as gardening and camping. Harsch explores the role of women in the GDR and their impact on the growing gap over time between the Party's aims and the aims of the populace as a whole.

**Aradhana Sharma, *Logics of Empowerment: Development, Gender, and Government in Neoliberal India*** (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2008)

INDIA'S ECONOMIC growth over the past few decades has been impressive, but hundreds of millions of Indians have been left out of the party. This book documents their lives and outlines the work and contradictions within an organization in the state of Uttar Pradesh, in which activists and civil servants are both involved, and which seeks to empower marginalized women. Sharma demonstrates the extent to which neoliberalism and the welfare state coexist, often in great tension, within modern India.


A.F.



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