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# Andrew Feffer, *Bad Faith: Teachers, Liberalism, and the Origins of McCarthyism* (New York: Fordham University Press/Empire State Editions 2019)

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and more considered history of this important movement and its antecedents. After all, Estes claims he wrote this book in four weeks, while sitting on a couch (260). It shows.

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**Andrew Feffer, *Bad Faith: Teachers, Liberalism, and the Origins of McCarthyism* (New York: Fordham University Press/Empire State Editions 2019)**

ANDREW FEFFER HAS written a history of organized anti-communism in New York City at the onset of World War II. Now forgotten, the Rapp-Coudert Committee was one of the best organized and most far-reaching interwar witch hunts. Created by the New York General Assembly, Rapp-Coudert hounded about 50 accused Communists out of their jobs in public schools and colleges. Contrived by conservative up-state Republican legislators and down-state anti-communist Democrats, the lion's share of work was undertaken by a sub-committee chaired by Senator Frederic R. Coudert (R-NYC). Coudert took private and public evidence from hundreds of witnesses lacking access to any form of legal defense. Claiming to have revealed 69 suspected Communists, Coudert spent more than \$500,000 compiling the names of over 600 suspects.

Feffer argues Rapp-Coudert was not concerned about the Soviet Union but with labour militancy in New York City's educational institutions and the two labour unions that represented them. By normalizing "countersubversive myth-making," Rapp-Coudert helped to shift public discourse in a less class-oriented direction. (33) While Assemblyman Herbert Rapp (R-Genesee County) was putative committee chairman,

conservatives played little active role. Coudert's investigators were anti-Tammany Democrats and Republicans who promoted limited social reform. A generation before McCarthyism, the sub-committee and anti-communist liberals in teacher unions laid the groundwork for the Cold War consensus. Conflating good citizenship with loyalty to authority, they surpassed Communists in the practice of "bad faith." (12)

Part I covers the authorization of the Rapp-Coudert Committee and its first public hearing in late 1940. Coudert supervised a staff of Ivy League-trained clean-government reformers. Chief of staff Paul Windels saw political dissidents as corrupt lawbreakers. But aside from not allowing subpoenaed witnesses to invoke Fifth Amendment protection, Coudert and Windels used authoritarian and dishonest tactics, even flimsy evidence. Since the Party was legal, the main goal was giving it and leftist teachers as much negative publicity as possible. The sub-committee could only recommend that governing agencies take disciplinary action. Furthermore, although Coudert managed to have complete political autonomy and had free reign to coerce uncooperative witnesses, his public hearings did not run smoothly. The first witness, Brooklyn College English professor Bernard Gebanier, was cooperative but less than enthusiastic. College president Harry Gideonse was staunchly anti-Communist, but Coudert lost interest in that institution when no one there could be found to corroborate Gebanier's testimony. New York Teachers Union (NYTU) president Charles Hendley, a non-Communist leftist, strongly defended his union under oath. Despite backing from liberals, Socialists, and anti-Communist labour leaders, Coudert's use of union records ultimately hurt organized labour.

Part II is devoted to the institutional and intellectual context. Feffer argues

that a rift had existed for years in the NYTU between Henry Linville's pro-American Federation of Labor leadership and a Communist-dominated insurgency. John Dewey, noted liberal education reformer, civil libertarian, and Linville ally, used his Special Grievance Committee to purge Communists from the union. Leftwing teachers extended Dewey's theories to social engagement, which Deweyites opposed. (For instance, CPUSA member Alice Citron worked to institute African American history at her elementary school in Harlem.) Acknowledging that a leftist "educational front" had the upper hand in the NYTU, Linville and conservative teachers formed a rival Teachers Guild in 1935. (56) Three years later, leftist college teachers formed a free-standing College Teachers Union (CTU). Besides securing tenure for municipal college faculty, the CTU called for shared governance and organizing private college faculty. This unleashed "anti-communist hysteria" in the local press; a subtler form arose among establishment academics. (145)

Part III reviews controversies within the NYTU and between political authorities and educators. Also considered are Rapp-Coudert's long-term repercussions. NYTU membership exploded since educators in public schools and colleges had low pay and lacked protections from capricious administrators. College instructors also cited lack of academic freedom. Noting Communists' unpopularity on city campuses at the start of World War II, American Federation of Teachers (AFT) president George Counts expelled the NYTU and the CTU. Linville's Teachers Guild received AFT affiliation. At the same time, Coudert hit pay dirt at City College of New York (CCNY) when history instructor and former Party member William Canning denounced over 30 colleagues. Windels was able to corroborate Canning's testimony, despite

it being vague, undocumented, and possibly motivated by personal resentment. Windels also used police surveillance photographs of May Day parades and material already in the public sphere. Most of the accused were motivated by the Popular Front, radical students, and their own grievances. On the other hand, the sub-committee did not investigate evidence both it and the Board of Education had about fascist and racist activities in local schools. Jewish himself, Windels tolerated "genteel anti-Semitism" in New York's elite circles. (208)

In the spring of 1941, the Board of Higher Education (BHE) dismissed 36 full-time and tenured CCNY faculty and staff for not cooperating with Rapp-Coudert (the number of non-tenured faculty is unknown.) Morris Schappes, a member of CCNY's faculty union, was the only one jailed for perjury. One targeted CCNY educator successfully escaped being dismissed. Feffer does not ignore problems with the defense strategy in public hearings and subsequent BHE trials. Wanting to steer attention to broader social issues, lawyers from the NYTU and the Committee for the Defense of Public Education counseled the accused to dissemble or lie under oath about Party membership. But this hurt public appreciation of Communists' contributions to social reform causes and reinforced the view that they were secretive and untrustworthy. Nor did it exploit the fact that the accused had constitutional rights in the BHE proceedings. The BHE trials and Board of Education prosecutions over the coming decade deserve more attention, Feffer asserts.

Feffer marshals impressive evidence to show the overriding motivation for Rapp-Coudert was ideological. The author also weaves discussions of contemporary liberal and Marxist theoretical perspectives into *Bad Faith*. Feffer critiques scholars, including Michael Denning and Ellen

Schrecker. His book fits well with recent historiography, including works by Clarence Taylor and Marjorie Heins.

While Feffer has written a much-needed corrective to standard impressions of U.S. anti-communism, *Bad Faith* could have been strengthened with comparisons to other “Little HUACs” and consideration of what high-level CPUSA leaders thought about Rapp-Coudert; after all, the Patty was based in New York City. And Feffer indicates that public financing of education was a hot political topic in Depression-era New York, which tempts one to wonder if the Rapp-Coudert Committee was primarily driven by ideology. All in all, though, Feffer does a brilliant job of resuscitating an important story about education workers in Depression-era New York.

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**Jamie Woodcock, *Marx at the Arcade: Consoles, Controllers, and Class Struggle* (Chicago: Haymarket Books 2019)**

VIDEO GAMES, computer games, electronic games—whatever we decide to call them, these games may be the paradigmatic media of 21st-century capitalism. Born in the interstices of the Cold War military-industrial complex, video games have become a colossal, planet-spanning industry. They form a global commodity chain, built on both immaterial digital labour and the all-too-material exploitation of human bodies and natural resources. And they are a laboratory for training workers and consumers, monetizing deep psychological drives and colonizing hours of our attention.

Jamie Woodcock’s *Marx at the Arcade* is a short, readable book that aims to analyze video games from a Marxist point of view. A lifelong gamer, a digital labor organizer, and a sociologist of

work, Woodcock is well qualified for this task. To write his first book, *Working the Phones: Control and Resistance in Call Centres*, Woodcock worked undercover in a non-unionized telemarketing call centre, chronicling the isolation and alienation of its workers and their surveillance and control by the employer. In *Marx at the Arcade*, he draws on history, sociology, and Marxism to investigate video games as industry, commodity, and pastime. (He does not quite resolve the debate over what to call these games: opting for “videogames” in the text of his book but “video games” on the back cover.)

Woodcock is active in efforts to unionize the game industry in the United Kingdom, and he is so clearly one of the good guys that it seems churlish to find fault with this well-meaning, enjoyable book. He makes a bit more to-do than is probably warranted about the incongruity of juxtaposing Marx and video games; applying a Marxist analysis to the game industry actually makes perfect sense. Indeed, the juxtaposition has been made before, and deeper analysis can be found in works like Nick Dyer-Witherford and Greig de Peuter’s *Games of Empire* or Christian Fuchs’ *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. But *Marx at the Arcade* offers an accessible entry to the intersection of video games and Marxism, and Woodcock is an amiable guide to the territory.

It is not a criticism to say that this is an entry-level book. But it must be asked: who is *Marx at the Arcade* for? Labour historians who read it won’t learn much about Karl Marx that they didn’t already know; dedicated gamers who read it won’t learn much about video games. So is *Marx at the Arcade* an introduction to Marx for gamers, or an introduction to video games for Marxists? One might think there would be more to be gained by writing the former, both in book sales and political impact. But despite a few