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Hard Work: The Making of Labor History by Melvyn DUBOFSKY, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000, 249 pp., ISBN 0-252-06868-8.

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This book takes us back to previous writings of Melvyn Dubofsky, who is one of the five major labour historians who pioneered new approaches to working-class experience in the 1950s and 1960s. Along with Herbert G. Gutman, David Montgomery, David Brody, and Alice Kessler-Harris, Dubofsky researched, wrote about, and taught courses in labour history at a time when the field was not in fashion and there was little appreciation and support for the study of workers and their pasts. More than a compilation of some of Dubofsky's essays, this book is introduced by an exceedingly important memoir, a "confessional" account of what it was like charting new terrain in earlier years. It was not an entirely pretty picture, emerging as it did in the shadow of McCarthyism, first, and parochial pseudo-intellectual antagonism to a scholarship focused on workers and radicalism, second. Those who now find much wanting in labour history, and offer their critiques of the field from sinecures secured with relative ease and little of the pain of varied institutionalized rejections, should read Dubofsky's account of these years to understand the development of an academic area they have come to regard as politically inadequate.

Labour history, as we now know it, was not born of proselytizing zeal, of large conferences and cultivated networks and study groups and connections turned to securing grants. It produced, in solitary and haphazard ways, scholarship of extraordinary depth and richness nonetheless. Dubofsky was at the centre of all of this. If in some ways the least heralded of the pivotal figures of the 1950s and 1960s, he was, ironically, perhaps the most productive and wide ranging. In two years, 1968 and 1969, Dubofsky published both *When Workers Organize*, his dissertation-account of New York City labour in the Progressive Era, and his elegantly crafted and deeply-researched history of the Industrial Workers of the World, *We Shall Be All*, as well as three major articles and a couple of minor statements, including a journalistic piece in *The Nation*. He would later go on to co-author or author a weighty biography of John L. Lewis and an analytic account of labour and the state in modern America; up to 1999 Dubofsky had penned over 60 articles, introductions, exchanges, and encyclopedia entries, in North American and European publications.

I first met Dubofsky in 1973 as I made my way to the State University of New York at Binghamton to study labour history. It was a moment in the formation of a field, and Dubofsky's and Montgomery's graduate students were brought into contact, and forged relationships, as well, with those working with Gutman. I remember the excitement of the period, the testy openness of critique and exchange: we supported one another, but we argued and challenged as well, and Dubofsky took some hits from students such as myself, who lit into his borrowings from Oscar Lewis's "culture of poverty," which Dubofsky had applied to the IWW. Mel took the criticism well, not necessarily backing down but accepting the disagreement among scholars as healthy and stimulating. He also placed an accent on style, in ways that impressed upon me the importance of writing with flair. Dubofsky was a craftsman, in a way that some other labor historians were not, and he passed a commitment to prose *panache* on to those students willing to assimilate the lesson.

To reread the essays reproduced in this volume is to be reminded of all of this. Beyond the personalized introduction, this book contains nine chapters

grouped in three sections. The first, on labour radicalism, culture, and comparative history, is composed of Dubofsky's statements on the origins of western working-class radicalism, the IWW and the culture of poverty, and Tom Mann and Bill Haywood. They stress conceptualizing labour history in ways that accent capitalist development and cultural possibility, foundations that allow for an understanding of common historical processes and specific particularities, a duality always present in Dubofsky's seminars of the early-to-mid 1970s. The second section in this compilation addresses workers, politics, and the state, a set of persistent concerns in Dubofsky's research, but given predominance as he worked through the Lewis biography and moved, in the 1980s, into an increasing focus on state power. In accounts of Wilson and organized labour in the World War I epoch, a provocatively poised, iconoclastic, and sobering reading of the "not so turbulent" 1930s, and a long sweep through the relationship of industrial workers to political parties from Roosevelt to Reagan, Dubofsky addresses the broad canvas of working-class politics in the twentieth century. Finally, in a closing section on theory and world-systems analysis, articles that grew out of Dubofsky's close working relationship with the Braudel Center at Binghamton, and its leading early promoters, Immanuel Wallerstein and Terence Hopkins, large themes of technology and Fordism are considered against a broad chronological backdrop of the 1860-1970 period. A closing essay on Paterson, New Jersey, addresses Gutman's longstanding utilization of the city as an example of the recomposition of the "American" working class over the *longue durée*, scaffolding Dubofsky's differences with his more celebrated counterpart on an appreciation of Gutman's accomplishments.

The hard work that went into this writing of labour history is, as Dubofsky senses, somewhat underappreciated in our time, when the working-class past seems to have, in his words, "dwindling allure" (vii). Yet the capacity of current social and cultural historians to see over the heads of Dubofsky and those whom he inspired and helped, is very much built on the back of these preceding labours, empirical and analytical. It was the making of the subject of labour, at a time when there was far less openness to look beyond the most narrow of mainstreams, that many have to thank for the receptiveness with which their own subjects are now greeted. Dubofsky has spent his life defending a particular understanding of the past. These essays establish how much we have to be thankful for as a result of the work he undertook.

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