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Embedded with Organized Labor: Journalistic Reflections on the Class War at Home. By Steve Early, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009, 288 pp., ISBN: 978-1-58367-188-7.

The Civil Wars in U.S. Labor: Birth of a New Workers' Movement or Death Throes of the Old? By Steve Early, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011, 440 pp., ISBN: 978-1-60846-099-1.

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de développement de ce que l'on appelle souvent le halo du chômage, c'est-à-dire des situations dans lesquelles les personnes sont à la fois en emploi et inactives, à la fois en emploi et au chômage, ou encore à la fois au chômage et inactives. La distinction entre ces trois statuts sur le marché du travail – employé, chômeur, inactif – résulte de la construction de la société salariale par les politiques publiques du droit du travail, de l'assurance-chômage et de la protection sociale. Or, l'analyse du chômage d'exclusion montre comment ces politiques ont été vidées de leurs sens et provoquent pour les personnes des épreuves d'évaluation qui n'ont justement plus beaucoup de sens. C'est le cas par exemple des personnes « sans qualifications » qui font face à un marché du travail largement caractérisé par la surqualification. C'est également le cas pour des personnes, comme les « chômeurs militants radicaux », qui contestent la nature du travail demandé par les employeurs dans une société qui valorise de plus en plus la marchandisation du travail. On comprend alors que la question de la qualité de l'emploi soit au cœur de l'analyse. Ne faudrait-il pas compléter cette analyse en faisant le lien entre les régimes de qualité présentés dans le chapitre 1 et les travaux dans le domaine des politiques publiques sur la qualité des emplois ?

L'ouvrage, comme c'est souvent le cas dans les travaux qui visent l'originalité, a donc les défauts de ses qualités. Il reste manifestement des liens à faire entre les chapitres afin de présenter un cadre unifié d'analyse du chômage de sélection qui intègre le comportement des employeurs et des intermédiaires, ainsi que les effets et le sens que donnent les personnes à ces épreuves d'évaluation. On ne peut donc que souhaiter des analyses complémentaires et des comparaisons internationales qui permettent de quantifier le phénomène et d'enrichir la compréhension du chômage de sélection.

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REVIEW ESSAY:

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and

The Civil Wars in U.S. Labor: Birth of a New Workers' Movement or Death Throes of the Old?

By Steve Early, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011, 440 pp., ISBN: 978-1-60846-099-1.

Union activist and labour journalist, Steve Early, has written two provocative books on the labour movement in the United States. Both *Civil Wars in Labor* and *Embedded with Organized Labor* provide critical accounts of the challenges confronting trade unions and their members. What sets Early's work apart from much of the labour studies and industrial relations literature is his examination of the internal struggles that characterize debates and divisions within unions. Together, *Civil Wars* and *Embedded* provide the reader with Early's signature journalistic prose and unapologetic style of writing about working America.

It is important to emphasize the author's self-described genre of "literary" and "participatory" journalism. *Embedded* draws attention to the significance of writing about labour and unionism in an accessible, yet articulate, fashion. Indeed, the book can be read as a how-to guide for academics that are attempting to make their research known to a broader audience.

At the outset of *Embedded*, Early recognizes that much of his writing breaks what he calls the "two cardinal rules of business unionism" (p. 11). That is, not criticizing or meddling in the internal affairs of another union. Early admits to having violated both principles as a member of the miners' union reform movement in the United States, when UMW President, John L. Lewis, used local trusteeships to disempower the rank-and-file. His reputation as a critic of the

SEIU's leadership assured his ban from the union's convention in 2008, when security removed Early from the event. What Early reveals through his biographical insights is a commitment and belief in union democracy. A practice, he says, that is evident in his parent union, the Communication Workers of America.

Early draws from a range of historical accounts, like Richard Boyer and Herbert Morais' *Labor's Untold Story* and James Matles and James Higgins', *Them and Us: Struggles of a Rank-and-File Union*, among other sources. In fact, it's Early's rich engagement with history and social commentary that makes *Embedded* so relevant. Throughout the book, the author traces the racial, class, and gendered dimensions of trade unionism's history in the U.S., as well as the extent to which these social relations produced new forms of dissent and change within the labour movement.

The protagonists in Early's work are the working class intellectuals and rank-and-file activists who aim to transform their unions and participate in broader social change. Such heroic characters are contrasted with the conservative elements within trade unions. One example is the story of New York City construction workers who, in May of 1970, attacked a crowd of antiwar demonstrators on Wall Street. This became, Early argues, "an encounter emblematic of the Vietnam era", where a battle of political stereotypes unfolded in the public eye and was played up by the media (*Embedded*, p. 120). Three years earlier, delegates at the AFL-CIO convention overwhelmingly voted down an anti-war resolution, signifying a commitment to the political establishment. As the author suggests, this was a symptom of the broader disconnect between the trade union movement and the civil rights movement, and other struggles that were erupting in American society.

When John Sweeney was elected to the AFL-CIO presidency in 1995, an era of what Early describes as a *glasnost* emerged.

Sweeney's ascendancy marked a period of open discussion and criticism of union problems, which had been forbidden under the regimes of George Meany and Lane Kirkland. Union activists and officials joined academics in beginning a dialogue about what was necessary for union renewal and growth. According to Early, critics who had routinely chided American unions for their lack of militancy and progressive politics, like sociologist Stanley Aronowitz, started to applaud Sweeney's "insurgent leadership" (*Embedded*, p. 104).

But Early provides a dim review of Sweeney's presidency. Labour's "old guard" might have been eased out, and the new faces of influence are more energetic and racially diverse, but the author proposes that the leadership remains an appointed officialdom. Rank-and-file activism and democracy are still elusive, even if they are the objectives of those in positions of power. And, as trade union density continues to decline in the U.S., it is fair to ask what came from this supposed revitalization.

A decade after Sweeney's reform movement swept into power, a coalition of American labour unions broke away from the AFL-CIO to form a new federation, Change to Win. Spearheaded by then SEIU President, Andy Stern, CTF evolved from the New Unity Partnership, an alliance of unions that focused on organizing new members through union consolidation and the development of a political strategy aimed at building "union market share". There was wide acclaim for this new federation, which initially held almost a third of the AFL-CIO's membership, and its potential for organizing hundreds of thousands of workers employed in the low-paying service sector.

According to Early, CTW offered promise to the most exploited American workers. The Teamsters, the SEIU, the United Farm Workers, and the UFCW – the remaining four members of the federation – all have a

rich history of organizing immigrant, Latin-American, and African-American workers. What Early takes to task in *Embedded* is the intensively hierarchical and business union strategy ultimately adopted by the CTW's leading members, the SEIU and the Teamsters. These unions came to represent the worst features of the AFL-CIO under the leadership of Meany and Kirkland, namely the opposition to internal dissent and the authority of appointed decision makers over that of the rank-and-file membership.

Early concludes that the aim of enhancing "union market share" without a concern for democracy and membership control has its consequences. Over time, "density without democracy" can end with a lack of financial accountability and transparency, which is a symptom of undemocratic politics and a contributing factor leading to union scandals and corruption. This is the sort of business union model attacked throughout both books.

Early's chief criticism against SEIU tactics is that they mirror corporate practices, namely the fascination with the use of mergers and acquisitions as a way of making unionism more efficient. Both *Embedded* and *Civil Wars* evidence this through countless interviews, academic articles, and news reports. It is a quote by Stern himself that captures Early's argument most effectively, when the then-SEIU President stated in response to resistance over the convergence of SEIU locals, "Workers want their lives to be changed. They want strength and a voice, not some purist, intellectual, historical, mythical democracy" (*Embedded*, p. 221).

In *Civil Wars*, Early provides an in-depth review of the union's centralized and imperious response to rank-and-file dissent. However, the author concedes that there is truth in the SEIU providing a home for the country's working poor, and the union's early victories can be attributed to a social unionism that used activism to successfully organize workers. The SEIU's spearheading

of Justice for Janitors is one such example. Even Stern is characterized as having successfully replaced the "crooks and grifters" that once ran some of the SEIU locals (*Civil Wars*, p. 20). By contrast, the SEIU has also been host to the most public and vicious internal union battles in the last decade. A battle, Early emphasizes, that has been waged between independent locals and their membership with the central union officers. As American unions struggle for relevance, Early argues that Andy Stern adopted a collaborationist strategy of working with major corporations to ensure certification victories. Even more telling of the directional shift is the SEIU's attempt to have a seat at the policy-making table within the Republican Party.

From Puerto Rico, where public school teachers were pressed into certifying with the SEIU-backed Union of Puerto Rican Teachers, to the parent union's takeover of United Healthcare Workers West in 2009, the SEIU's leadership has used trusteeships and appointments as principal strategies to maintaining influence over the union. In the Puerto Rican case, Early characterizes the action as a form of "labor colonialism," whereby the SEIU worked with a local politician to break up the existing teachers' union (*Civil Wars*, p. 7). Journalists and American labour scholars such as Amy Goodman and Nelson Lichtenstein, amongst others, have been vocal opponents to UHW trusteeship on the grounds that the move disenfranchises members. Within U.S. academic circles, Early claims that rifts have opened between researchers who stand with the SEIU and those who oppose its tactics. As the author recognizes in *Civil Wars*, if academics don't remain neutral they can find themselves without union support for their teaching, writing, and research.

It goes without saying that the millions of dollars spent by the SEIU to secure the takeover of union locals, as well as the resources mobilized by members deter-

mined to fight the trusteeships, are devoted to combating allies rather than organizing new workers. Such is the consequence of a labour organization that, in the words of an SEIU critic cited in *Civil Wars*, wants to be “the Wal-Mart of unions” (p. 221). Moving towards a corporate and efficiency-based union structure does not stop with trusteeships. Early provides an examination of the SEIU’s deployment of call centres as a mechanism through which the union interfaces with members. The project was sold as a comeback strategy, but it is arguable that such a system is required to manage the SEIU’s centralized administration of over two million members.

In both books Early asks what has come from Stern’s non-adversarial approach with business and his mission to abandon the trade union movement’s supposed “class struggle mentality” (*Civil Wars*, p. 61). Dissident SEIU members and critics referenced in *Civil Wars* claim that the union’s leadership has cut deals with companies behind members’ backs, to the detriment of their benefits and pay. That said, in 2005, the SEIU won a hard-fought victory for child care workers represented by Local 880 in Illinois, through a mix of direct action tactics and political lobbying.

Early remains skeptical that the SEIU has made real gains for some of the poorest workers, despite concessions and Stern’s appeal to “responsible unions” (*Civil Wars*, p. 236). As Sal Rosselli, former president of the embattled UHW comments, “Stern’s multi-million dollar fights have diverted resources away from healthcare reform and employee free choice, weakening the former and scuttling the latter” (*Civil Wars*, p. 284). Rosselli is speaking to organized labour’s response to Obamacare and the virtual abandonment of the Employee Free Choice Act – one of President Obama’s campaign commitments to the working class and American unions. Stern also left the SEIU unable to pay its bills, undemocratic, and unwilling to defend its members, according to Early.

There are several considerations that the reader is left to contend with. First, Early questions the contributions made by the “60’s radicals”, like Stern, who took charge of the country’s most influential labour unions. It is not an accusation that their leadership has been ineffective, but that the entrenched bureaucratic power of a professional cadre of appointees has been reconstituted with new faces. Early concludes that since the 1990s, there “seemed to be a glib assumption that any solid sixties political resume guaranteed laudatory results in subsequent labor work” (*Civil Wars*, p. 17). Such assumptions were fanned by labour scholars of the same generation, who saw their peers taking over the offices once occupied by conservative labour leaders. To this point Early is unequivocal: union revitalization is nothing without strong union democracy, and neither academics nor appointed activists can substitute for rank-and-file democratic decision-making. *Embedded* and *Civil Wars* are informative, provocative, and important. Even though both speak to U.S. labour history, for Canadian readers there is inspiration in Early’s embedded approach to researching and writing about trade unions and the labour movement.

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Ces entreprises qui font la Chine

Par Dominique Jolly, Paris : Eyrolles/Éditions d’organisation, collection Stratégie, 2011, 255 p., ISBN : 978-2-212-55231-7.

Voici un excellent ouvrage, fort pertinent non seulement pour les gestionnaires ou cadres qui iront en Chine pour affaires, mais aussi pour les étudiants et chercheurs qui s’intéressent à l’évolution récente de ce très grand pays, dominant sur la scène mondiale actuelle. Comme le souligne d’ailleurs l’ancien directeur de Schneider Electric Chine en préface, la Chine attire tous les regards aujourd’hui : « le jeune cadre comme un passage obligé pour sa carrière, l’étudiant