

Book Notes / Références Bibliographiques

Volume 62, automne 2008

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt62bn01>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

ISSN

0700-3862 (imprimé)

1911-4842 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cette note

(2008). Book Notes / Références Bibliographiques. *Labour / Le Travail*, 62, 317–320.

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

BOOK NOTES / RÉFÉRENCES BIBLIOGRAPHIQUES

Peter L. Twohig, *Labour in the Laboratory: Medical Laboratory Workers in the Maritimes, 1900–1950* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press 2005)

LAB WORKERS constitute the third largest health profession in Canada. But their history is vastly under-studied compared to that of nurses and physicians. Twohig traces the origin of lab work across the Maritime provinces. He notes the beginning of training programs in the 1920s and the absorption of a large female force of trained nurses for lab training. But medical laboratory work was gendered, with women staffing hospital and public health laboratories while men worked in research laboratories at universities. In both cases, the workers carried out technical functions while physicians interpreted results. Twohig traces recruitment practices as well as outlining wages and working conditions over the period.

George Vair, *The Struggle Against Wage Controls: The Saint John Story, 1975–1976* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History 2006)

ON 14 OCTOBER 1976 more than a million Canadian workers struck for one day to protest the Trudeau government's wage and price controls which, as Trudeau had warned when Tory leader Robert Stanfield had campaigned for controls in 1974, controlled wages but did not control prices. This book, by one of the organizers of the Saint John edition of the general

strike, describes the events that led to the strike and suggests that labour pressures succeeded in reducing the impact of controls on organized labour and eventually killing the wage controls program.

Rosemary Feurer, *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900–1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2006)

DISTRICT 8 of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (UE), lead by Communist William Sentner, played a leading role in promoting militant unionism in St. Louis and Iowa in the 1930s and 1940s. It was a casualty of the Cold War and the "intra-class political struggle" (236) of that period. Feurer demonstrates that the Communists and their allies in the union campaigned hard for grass-roots unionism but lost out to their conservative working-class opponents who enjoyed the support of both capitalists and the capitalist state.

Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2004)

THIS BOOK WON the 2005 Frederick Jackson Turner Award, among other prizes. It presents a rather different view of "American frontierism" than Turner. Ngai traces the evolution of government policies regarding immigration from the 1920s, policies in which racial categories proved paramount. The book focuses especially on efforts to keep out Asians

between the wars and the “braceros” policies that attempted to create a Mexican agricultural proletariat in the US without giving these workers citizenship in the country that was benefiting from their labour.

Robert M. Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares, Suburbia, 1870–1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2005)

FOGELSON TRACES the use of restrictive covenants in the development of posh American suburbs. Not only did such covenants explicitly exclude racial and ethnic minorities regardless of income, but requirements for particular home features insured that both the working class and non-conformists of every type were excluded as well.

Grace Palladino, *Skilled Hands, Strong Spirits: A Century of Building Trades History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2005)

THIS IS A NARRATIVE institutional history by the co-director of the Samuel Gompers papers. Grace Palladino presents the history of the crafts unions sympathetically while also posing gently some questions regarding their positions on race, gender, and other social issues. Overall, however, she provides too little information about issues of democracy or its absence within these unions, their relations with other segments of the labour movement, and their larger involvement in society. This is a detailed and well-written history of business unionism, but largely an uncritical one.

Darren G. Lilleker, *Against the Cold War: The History and Political Traditions of Pro-Sovietism in the British Labour Party, 1945–89* (London: I.B. Tauris 2004)

THIS IS A COLD warrior's analysis of pro-Soviet forces in the British Labour Party. Lilleker focuses on the relatively small group of Labour MPs who could see little wrong with Soviet policies and practices and regarded the Soviet regime as unequivocally socialist. But Lilleker, in turn, views the similarly black-and-white anti-Soviet views of the Labour mainstream with uncritical, Cold War eyes.

Barry Reay, *Rural England* (London: Palgrave 2004)

REAY'S FOCUS IS on rural labourers in the nineteenth century. He notes that many rural workers were engaged in non-agricultural enterprises, and portrays the varieties of work that existed in both agricultural and non-agricultural settings. He also points out the varieties of forms of leisure and types of protest within rural England.

Dianne P. Koenker, *Republic of Labour: Russian Printers and Soviet Socialism, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2005)

THIS IS A STUDY of workers in a single trade and their responses to the unfolding events of the early years of Bolshevik Russia. Bolsheviks and Mensheviks initially clashed within the independent printers' union, and the printers often acted in opposition to productivist dictates from the leaders of the new regime. The book traces the evolution of labour regimes in 1920s Soviet Russia, from a brief period of militarization of labour during the Civil War to one of collective

bargaining within enterprises beginning in 1922 that was stifled by the end of the decade after a Stalinist purge of the union. The “golden years of NEP” and the active debates about how work should be organized and what individual workers owed to the collective goals of society form the most interesting part of this book which demonstrates the chasm between the Lenin and Stalin periods in terms of workers’ rights.

Jeffrey J. Rossman, *Worker Resistance Under Stalin: Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2005)

ROSSMAN USES archival evidence from the former USSR to unearth innumerable examples of workers opposing the Stalin regime’s labour policies. Strikes, demonstrations, food riots, slowdowns, assaults on officials, and letters to the authorities scared the regime and resulted both in repression of dissenters and sometimes reforms or capitulation to specific workers’ demands.

Arvid Nelson, *Cold War Ecology: Forests, Farms, and People in the East German Landscape, 1945–1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2005)

THE IMAGE OF outdated, polluting industrial plants in the former German Democratic Republic is a familiar one. To this could be added mutilated forests, nitrates and heavy metal in the waters, and chemical-intensive farmland. GDR scientists often warned the Communist authorities about the long-term damage of a model of industrial planning that made no allowances for nature’s limits, but their concerns were rejected. Nelson charges that party ideology, which applied Marxist and Leninist notions in a

rigid manner and was closed to considerations other than the need for economic growth, was the culprit in the despoiling of the environment in the USSR.

Michel Duquette et al., *Collective Action and Radicalism in Brazil: Women, Urban Housing, and Rural Movements* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2005)

THIS BOOK EXAMINES key social movements in Brazil since the collapse of military rule in the 1980s. The landless movement, the housing movement in São Paulo, and the women’s movement are highlighted. The book outlines the joy and then disillusionment of the progressive movements with the election of Lula da Silva of the Workers’ Party as president in 2002 as it became clear that the socialism espoused by Lula in the 1990s had given way to neo-liberalism in office.

Elizabeth Dore, *Myths of Modernity: Peonage and Patriarchy in Nicaragua* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2006)

DORE SUGGESTS that coffee growing, which began its Nicaragua boom in 1870, produced systems of feudal peonage rather than a capitalist land-holding system. Within this system of peonage, Indigenous women were the most oppressed group. Dore focuses equally on that oppression and on the various ways in which Indigenous peasant women resisted patriarchal control both by planters and by the men in their families.

June Freeman, *The Myth of the Modern Kitchen: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Berg 2004)

THIS SOCIOLOGICAL study analyzes the results of an extensive survey of British women that questioned what they considered as they purchased new kitchens. Unsurprisingly, they sought a combination of practical features and aesthetics, all within their pre-determined budgets. The book however makes no distinction among women on a class or income basis, a definite weakness.

Rob Breton, *Gospels and Grit: Work and Labour in Carlyle, Conrad, and Orwell* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2005)

BRETON EXPLORES Victorian and early twentieth century ideas of work and workers in Britain as revealed in the literature of three key figures. Breton finds that all three authors romanticized pre-capitalist organizations of work and that they all had shallow understandings of political economy, including Orwell. The writing is unfortunately rather opaque.

A.F.

José Gotovitch et Anne Morelli, dir., *Presse communiste. Presse radicale (1919–2000)* (Bruxelles, Les Éditions Aden 2007)

LES SPÉCIALISTES de la Gauche européenne accueilleront avec beaucoup d'intérêt ce recueil de textes issus d'un colloque organisé par le Centre d'histoire et de sociologie des Gauches de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles. La presse communiste n'a jamais été une presse comme les autres. Ouvertement didactique, « transmettant l'idée et facilitant la sociabilisation, » (Naif 108) cette presse engagée a un tout autre sens que la presse bourgeoise dont la pensée importe peu. (Van den Dungen, p. 30) L'ouvrage se divise en trois parties, la première couvrant la Belgique de Louis de Broukère à la presse radicale d'aujourd'hui par P. Van den Dungen, N. Latteur, M. Beys, L. Mundschaau, N. Naif, et M. Abramowicz; la seconde le Luxembourg (H. Wehenkel); la France (A. Courban, L. Strauss, F. Olivier-Utard, S. Boulouque, et G. Ubbiali); la Grande-Bretagne (K. Morgan); l'Italie (L. Castellina) et l'Égypte (D. Monciaud). La dernière section est consacrée à trois témoins (G. Smanski, J.-M. Chauvier, J. Moins) des années 1940 et 1960, et 1974 à 1988. Qu'on s'intéresse à l'histoire de la gauche ou à celle du journalisme, ce recueil d'articles sera des plus utiles.

Andrée Lévesque
Université McGill