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## American Labor: A Documentary History

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world system, this issue is mixed with exploitation of developing countries by the developed world, as women from poor countries are obliged to neglect their own children in order to perform "reproductive labor" for affluent women in the developed world. The affluent women are then free to engage in paid work, or devote their time to leisure.

These substantive contributions are thought-provoking, but they raise questions about issues of power that, except in Barbara Littlewood's chapter, the book does not really address. Paul Littlewood does relate the seemingly harmful trends he identifies to the growing power of neo-liberal ideology, but Barbara Littlewood takes it a step further, showing how global economic, class, and gender-based structures of oppression interact and reinforce each other. These contributions suggest that there are powerful political or economic agents who benefit from, and perhaps are involved in some way in perpetuating, harmful social trends and perversions of stated public policy goals. In the book's introduction, the authors hint that these are the sorts of issues the book will deal with, but only some of the chapters follow through on this promise.

Disappointingly, the other chapters are more narrowly policy-focused, and generally much less interesting. For example, M'hammed Sabour and Pasi Tulkki tell us that engineering education is important in Finland, but never explain the relevance of this observation. Ingrid Jönsson reviews recent research on work and family life, and concludes that public policies in this area vary greatly from country to country. There is an obvious opportunity for a tie-in to the regulation approach presented in Koch's chapter; yet the reader is left to speculate as to why family leave policies resist convergence, even in the context of a European Union effort at harmonization. These chapters really underline how the book could have benefited from integration into a common theoretical framework. Common themes exist that could have tied the book together, but they are not at all explored in the theoretical chapters or the introduction, nor do any of the chapters make reference to each other. Further working against the book's coherence is the lack of a conclusion.

Given the uneven quality of its contributions, its inadequate integration, and its lack of common themes, *The Future of Work in Europe* is not a book every social scientist needs on his or her shelf. That said, it contains some good research and analysis, and is worth a look by anyone with

a special interest in one of the issues it treats.

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### Historical Studies

*American Labor: A Documentary History.* By Melvyn Dubofsky and Joseph A. McCartin. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004. 326 pp. ISBN 0-312-29565-0, \$69.95 (cloth); 0-312-29564-2, \$26.95 (paper).

In *American Labor*, two prominent labor historians have collected a wide range of documentary material in one convenient volume that is highly suitable both as a reference and for course use. The book provides a much-needed replacement for John R. Commons et al.'s *Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, an eleven-volume work that was initiated over eighty years ago. In the space of little more than 300 pages, readers can find documents pertaining to everything from the first European settlement of the United States in the early seventeenth century right through to events in the twenty-first century. The book is, as the authors intended, an effective "documentary supplement to narrative and analytical histories of American labor" (p. 5).

The organization of *American Labor* is impeccable, with six chronologically ordered sections containing over two hundred diverse documents. Within these chapters, well-placed subsections explore important themes in detail. Dubofsky and McCartin guide the reader carefully, providing both helpful introductions at the start of each section and shorter pieces concisely analyzing specific documents. Throughout the work, the authors also pose questions that teachers can use as a starting-point for classroom discussion. The brevity of the documents themselves, most of which are 1–3 pages long, suits them well for seminar discussion.

Reflecting the development and growth of the subject in the years since Commons's work was published, *American Labor* casts a wide net. Rather than focus narrowly on industrial relations, it provides vivid insights into household labor, working-class housing conditions, and child labor. The authors' richly detailed treatment of female workers makes the book a good

fit for courses on women's history. Dubofsky and McCartin also give plenty of coverage to African-American, Asian, and Latino workers. Rather than treat the Latino influx as purely a recent phenomenon, they present a series of documents in an early section to highlight the important role Hispanic migrants played in the U.S. economy for much of the twentieth century.

*American Labor's* chronological scope is matched by judicious allocation of space to different periods. The authors look especially closely at the years since World War Two, devoting around a third of their work to it. This is important because there is considerable student interest in recent history. The final section, focusing on the years since 1973, covers such topics as the decline of manufacturing industries, the rise of aggressive anti-unionism, and the influx of labor from Asia and Latin America. Helping to satisfy student demand for Web-based learning, many of the documents in this section are derived from Internet sites. Dubofsky and McCartin also largely succeed in their aim of letting working people "speak for themselves" (p. 5), and they use oral sources particularly effectively in the final section.

Although Dubofsky and McCartin cover a broad range of topics very effectively, *American Labor's* few shortcomings are mostly what I would call errors of omission. Most conspicuous in its absence, in my view, is a guide to further reading, whether in the form of a bibliographic essay or a brief list of relevant secondary works. Such a section—or, perhaps, sections, one for each chapter—would have significantly enhanced the book's utility for students, who are the primary audience. It also would have been welcomed by other readers whose interest is piqued by the documents but who are frustrated by lack of guidance for further exploration of the themes raised.

Second, I would have liked to see a little more exposition and interpretation. While Dubofsky and McCartin provide a good general introduction to each section, and some discussion of individual sources, some documents, such as colonial-era sources written by white missionaries, need more explanation. A work that attempted to cover some of the same ground as *American Labor* was Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein's *Major Problems in the History of American Workers* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath,

1991). While *American Labor* provides more complete documents than are available in that earlier book, the latter remains helpful for teachers of labor and social history, partly because it provides more guidance to other reading as well as short extracts of works by historians.

A third element that I think would have strengthened this collection is supplementation with more material derived from original archival research. The vast majority of the documents in this book are already available in other published works. A large number of them, in fact, are from Commons's original collection. In an early section on "workers' grievances," for instance, four of the five documents are reproductions from the original collection put together by Commons and his team (pp. 34-42).

The book also has at least one problem of emphasis that will not escape some readers. Although the authors make an admirable effort to include material on unorganized workers and to avoid a narrow focus on organized labor, we learn much more about unionized workers than about the majority of workers who never belonged to unions. This may be something over which the authors had no control—the limitations of the available sources, which provide relatively little information on the experience of the unorganized worker.

A final small drawback I would note concerns the volume's readability *in toto*. The lack of continuity between sources, and the need to cover a wide variety of themes within each chronological section, make it difficult to read *American Labor* from cover to cover. As to this, however, the authors clearly intend for the documents to be used on a selective basis.

Considering the book's great virtues, most of the foregoing critical remarks amount to little more than quibbles. There is little doubt that *American Labor* will be essential for classroom use, providing teachers of labor history and industrial relations with a well-presented, compact collection of important documents. If the authors update the book regularly, that will keep it fresh for students in the years ahead.

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