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## The University against Itself: The NYU Strike and the Future of the Academic Workplace.

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underpin this work. However, it seems clear that there are two or three identifiable contributory currents. First, there is an evolutionary, neo-Hegelian thesis with functionalist overtones, according to which the general trend of history is toward the realization of greater cooperation in society and economy. The influence of evolutionism or functionalism is more clearly evident in some chapters than in others. The concept of requisite variety, for example, which had currency in the heyday of systems theory, is prominently featured in Galbraith's chapter, as indicated by its title, "Mastering the Law of Requisite Variety with Differentiated Networks"; this chapter also entertains notions derived from the contingency theory of organizational forms. However, perhaps the most interesting current running through this book is Adlerian "paleo-Marxism," which can be found not only here but also in other recent work by Adler. The essence of this argument is that there is in Marx a neglected dialectic between the valorization process (in which surplus value is extracted from work) and tendencies toward the socialization of economic relations. While I believe this claim has some validity, assigning a recessive strand of Marx's theory like this greater importance than the basic tension his mature work envisages between the labor process (in which surplus value is created) and the valorization processes (by which it is extracted) seems questionable at best. I would like to have seen a fuller, more direct consideration of this unresolved theoretical issue and others.

Nevertheless, *The Firm as a Collaborative Community* is a wide-ranging and highly stimulating work in the best traditions of American scholarship. It is likely to be read and quoted for some time to come. If the book places serious theoretical reflection back on the agenda in the debate it invites the scholarly community to join, so much the better.

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### Labor-Management Relations

*The University against Itself: The NYU Strike and the Future of the Academic Workplace.* Edited by Monika Krause, Mary Nolan, Michael Palm, and Andrew Ross. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008. 280 pp. ISBN 1-59-

213-7407, \$74.50 (cloth); 1-59-213-7415, \$25.95 (paper).

The authors of this collection all supported the seven-month graduate assistant recognition strike at New York University (NYU) conducted by the Graduate Student Organizing Committee/United Auto Workers (GSOC/UAW) Local 2210 during the 2005–2006 academic year. The editors seek "to draw useful lessons" from the strike, but also correctly add that although "many of the contributors focus on local detail from NYU and New York City, ... most analyze the national significance of economic forces and patterns of academic life that were highlighted by this local dispute" (pp. 8–9). Given the broad focus, as well as the partisanship and marginal participation of labor relations professionals among the contributors, readers would do well to approach the book as a set of thoughtful reflections by strike proponents about the corporate university, rather than as a comprehensive case-study in labor relations.

The book's lengthiest section, "Corporate University?," describes the setting, not the strike. Concern that the business community wields undue influence over American universities is at least 100 years old. AAUP's founding 1915 "Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure" observed that the "governing body of a university is naturally made up of men who through their standing and ability are personally interested in great private enterprises." At NYU, as Christopher Newfield and Greg Grandin document, business men (they are overwhelmingly men) do dominate the board, and most are leaders of New York's FIRE (Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate)-based economy. NYU and other "corporate universities," as the contributors further show, are distinguished from earlier business-influenced universities not merely by the extent of corporate domination of their boards but also by their extensive adoption of corporate structures and policies.

Corporatization develops as universities become diversified enterprises with revenues derived not only from on-campus tuition but also from extension, on-line and overseas programs, campus services, investments, real estate holdings, research, patents, industrial parks and partnerships, sports and entertainment, and medical and other professional services. University presidents and senior administrators thus become managers, fund-raisers, and competitive entrepreneurs. As Stephen Duncombe and Sarah Nash note, NYU president John Sexton and the president of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities make their claim to compete for public

funding based on the university's economic contribution to what these entrepreneurial presidents term the ICE (Intellectual, Cultural, and Educational) economy.

The corporate university increases the imbalance between university management and labor. Further, as Ashley Dawson and Penny Lewis show in their examination of Columbia, NYU, and CUNY, the "emerging corporate academy" polarizes academe into de-funded public institutions and elite private institutions, and creates a university work force with disciplines divided both between more and less revenue-producing profit-centers (a concept extensively treated by Gordon Lafer in a subsequent essay) and between more and less privileged staff. Ellen Schrecker among others documents the growing reliance on full- and part-time contingent faculty rather than on the tenure-track faculty who now constitute less than 35% of the instructional work force. Micki Magee illustrates the argument by discussing President Sexton's report, "The Role of the Faculty in the Common Enterprise University," which "sketches a vision of the university as a multi-tiered, highly stratified organization in which non-tenure-track full-time faculty would shoulder the bulk of teaching responsibilities without the benefits of tenure or any other form of job security" (p. 99).

Although graduate-student employees have sought to unionize since the 1960s, and have successfully done so at public universities, organizing at elite private universities has been stymied not only by institutional power and divisions among the employees themselves, but also by the absence of a legally protected right to bargain. As Susan Valentine reports, the NLRB, which had unanimously upheld the right of graduate-student employees to bargain in 2000, providing the basis for GSOC recognition and a first contract, reversed its holding in 2004 and opened the way to NYU's refusal to bargain a second contract. The editors, who incorrectly write that NYU is the first university "to attempt to bust a graduate assistants' union" (p. 3), appear unaware of the contrast between the experience of NYU and of the public University of Michigan, where, in the 1970s, the employer similarly resisted a first graduate employee contract then agreed to it under legal compulsion, resisted arbitration rulings, attempted to impose a second agreement unilaterally, and then altogether refused to bargain a second agreement until the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO) sustained itself through five years of legal appeals from 1976 to 1981 (<http://www.umgeo.org/about-geo/a-narrative-history-of-geo/>).

*The University against Itself* understates the significance of the lack of private sector legal protec-

tions and emphasizes organizing and strike tactics with a view to future success regardless of legal protection. This approach does lead to balanced analyses of press relations by Steve Fletcher, a useful discussion of the diverse views of the faculty by Jeff Goodwin, and an insightful assessment by Andrew Cornell of the factors that contributed to the initial blossoming and precipitous decline of student support. Gordon Lafer explains and advocates the use of corporate campaigns to counter the corporate university. Cary Nelson has some sensible tactical suggestions, but also issues calls for protest "without end" (p. 255), "civil disobedience" (p. 258), and faculty salary caps (p. 257), none of which are likely to promote academic solidarity.

One chapter consists of an interchange among five student activists. Their critique of the strike strategy urges greater attention to minority and gender issues, questions the reliance on the "establishment" support provided by notables including John Sweeney and Hillary Clinton, and discusses the failure to consider the difficult dilemma the strike strategy posed for those graduate employees who lacked independent financial means or were non-citizens. Two other chapters—a roundtable including the executive director of the city labor council and two leaders of the City University of New York faculty union, and an excellent essay by Monica Krause and GSOC/UAW 2004–2007 chair Michael Palm that usefully explains the difference between activists and effective organizers—partially offset the absence of a careful discussion of why the union decided to engage in an unprotected strike, and why it continued the strike in the face of rapidly eroding student and faculty support and a union-busting management ready to dismiss striking employees. Nonetheless, it is an injustice to the initially broad and intense support for the strike, the courageous efforts of those graduate employees, and the post-strike renewal of majority support for GSOC, to attribute the failure of the strike primarily to the inadequate effectiveness of the teaching assistants (Goodwin, p. 171) rather than to the lack of legal protection and the possibly inadequate consideration of this obstacle by those who decided to undertake and continue the strike.

*The University against Itself* is at its best precisely when the authors capture the continuing tension between the academic and corporate characteristics of the emerging corporate academy. Ashley Dawson and Penny Lewis too casually dismiss graduate apprenticeship as a legacy of the "feudal university system" (p. 18) and a "historical fiction" (p. 25), but rightly go on to write of the continuing "battle for faculty self-governance and autonomy"

(p. 25). Micki Magee urges that faculty unite both in the pursuit of collective bargaining and in efforts to reinvigorate tenure and academic freedom (p. 109). Unfortunately, only Cary Nelson's essay even alludes to non-economic professional advances many graduate employee unions have achieved. The lack of consideration of graduate employee professional gains may reflect both the decision of GSOC/UAW to accept an atypically narrow scope of bargaining to gain its first contract and the volume's focus on the recognition strike rather than bargaining. Because critics and opponents of academic bargaining argue that unionization will simply hasten corporatization, however, proponents would do well to discuss how academic bargaining, for graduate assistants as for faculty, can be a means not only to resist corporatization but also to renew academic and professional standards.

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### **Economic and Social Security and Standard Working Conditions**

*Safety in Numbers: Nurse-to-Patient Ratios and the Future of Health Care.* By Suzanne Gordon, John Buchanan, and Tanya Bretherton. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press (an imprint of Cornell University Press), 2008. 288 pp. ISBN 978-0-8014-4683-2, \$26.00 (cloth).

Like other volumes in the ILR Press series *The Culture and Politics of Health Care Work*, this book aims to shed light on the often "invisible" work associated with care of the sick and disabled and particularly with the work of registered nurses. The book's more specific purpose is to describe the complex historical events and rationale leading to the legal mandate of nurse-to-patient ratios in acute care hospitals in two settings, California in the United States and Victoria in Australia. The book's publication comes in the midst of one of the longest-lasting national shortages of registered nurses in the United States, notwithstanding improvements in some localities and regions, including some areas of California. Typically, it is in times of nurse shortages that people become interested in understanding the work and work life of registered nurses. *Safety in Numbers* describes the decisions made to address the shortage—not only the policy details, but the reasoning and politics

that went into them—in two different settings.

The book has three main sections. The first two explore the events and decision-making processes leading to the implementation of ratios in, respectively, California and Victoria. The concluding section reflects on the arguments for and against these policies, the policies' outcomes, and alternatives to nurse-to-patient ratios as a remedy for nurse shortages. The book is very well written and extremely readable. It can benefit a wide-ranging audience, from lay people to medical, nursing, and health administrators, health economists, and other health care professionals.

The book's first section offers a comprehensive overview of the various reasons the ratio law was passed in California, the major actors in the often contentious debates there, the legal and political maneuvering done to prevent implementation of the law, and the reaction to the law once its implementation became inevitable. It is apparent that the authors are supportive of nurse-to-patient ratios in California and that this opinion colors some of their rhetoric, but the facts are accurate and the conclusions drawn can be substantiated by events. A touch of Hollywood-style drama tends to surround many high-profile developments in California, and the nurse ratio issue is no exception. The book provides an account of the response to the issue by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger when he came to office in a special election after the recall of the previous governor, Grey Davis. Governor Schwarzenegger, portrayed as "the terminator" by much of the public and by this author as well, tried to block implementation of the ratios at the behest of the hospital industry; notoriously, in one speech delivered in southern California, he called nurses a "special interest" group and vowed to "kick their butt." His actions set off a series of events pitting him against the California Nurses Association that ultimately forced him to back down.

Section 2 provides a detailed history of the nurse work intensification in Victoria, Australia. While Victoria's experience markedly contrasts with California's in some ways, in others—particularly with respect to the strategies pursued—the two states were similar. Thus, for example, distinctive characteristics of the political landscape, health care funding, and the relationship between trade unions and the hospital industry in Victoria resulted in a broader definition of the problem of nurse overwork, legislatively provided funding for additional staff, recognition that hospitals with different missions needed different ratios, and acknowledgement that the specific ratios must be re-evaluated at intervals to update them in response to changing conditions. At the same