

result, not surprisingly, is a rather old-fashioned kind of labor history: the classic strike narrative. At times the analysis reaches beyond the account (given patterns of state and legal repression long before and after 1922, for example, I don't think Davis can sustain his argument that the Harding administration bears any peculiar or particular responsibility for the collapse of the strike). But the account itself is an important and compelling one. Its research and argument should put *Power at Odds* on the "read me" list of most students of modern American politics and labor relations; its narrative and literary qualities would make it a good text for graduate and undergraduate courses in these fields as well.

*"We Are All Leaders": The Alternative Unionism of the Early 1930s*, edited by Staughton Lynd. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996. 343 pp. Notes, index. \$44.95 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

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The dramatic expansion of organized labor in the 1930s has special significance for radical critics of the contemporary labor movement. They date the shortcomings of 1990s unions from the mid-1930s, when, they argue, union bosses and their political allies abandoned the egalitarian unionism of the early 1930s in favor of a safer, more bureaucratic and hierarchical approach, symbolized by the CIO and the National Labor Relations Board. The villains of this story are the traditional heroes of the liberal-left: John L. Lewis and other CIO stalwarts, President Roosevelt and his advisors, and, frequently, the leaders of the Communist Party. In this volume, Staughton Lynd, long a champion of this perspective, and like-minded scholars examine that earlier, purer, and more promising unionism, partly to set the record straight and partly to provide examples for present-day activists. Their case studies are readable and informative and, if nothing else, remind us that the events of the 1930s did indeed make a difference.

Lynd identifies "alternative" unionism as "democratic, deeply rooted in mutual aid among workers in different crafts and work sites, and politically independent" (3). Case studies of local unions (and usually strikes) by Rosemary Feurer, Peter Rachleff, Janet Irons, Mark D. Naason, and Elizabeth Faue tell similar stories: militant workers created democratic, egalitarian organizations, only to see them undermined and betrayed by supposed allies. Eric Leif Davin examines the local labor parties of the mid-1930s and reaches the same conclusions. Michael Kozura describes the widespread practice of bootlegging, or

freelance mining, among unemployed anthracite miners during the Great Depression. He sees bootlegging as incipient socialism, but it could also be described as entrepreneurial self-help, similar to apple-selling and other unorthodox ways of earning a living. In any case, it is hard to see how bootlegging coal qualifies as alternative unionism. Stan Weir's recollections of his career as a sailor and union organizer during and after World War II are even further afield. Finally, in one of the longest and most substantial essays, John Borsos documents the operation of alternative unionism in Barberton, Ohio. Borsos captures the flavor of this grimy but proud industrial town where unions became vital institutions. Nevertheless, he disregards the fact that Barberton's many rubber workers, as well as the much larger group in neighboring Akron, were equally devoted to egalitarian unionism and to the CIO and the Roosevelt administration. In their minds, those were compatible, not conflicting, loyalties.

Though competently executed, these essays reveal the limitations of the case study method, limitations that ultimately raise doubts about the Lynd thesis. Two problems stand out. First, the majority of new union members after 1933 joined centralized, authoritarian unions such as the United Mine Workers, the railroad brotherhoods, and the Teamsters. Only in manufacturing, where there was no meaningful union establishment, did the pattern Lynd and the others describe really exist, and even in manufacturing it was not the rule. Moreover, the preponderance of evidence, even in these essays, suggests that most union members welcomed the more stable and secure organizations of the late 1930s and after. Second, Lynd and his collaborators do not give sufficient weight to the precariousness of the union foothold in industry. Employers were confused and defensive during the early months of the New Deal. By 1934, however, they had regained their self-confidence and become formidable opponents. Thereafter, the margin of union victory was often razor-thin, and many unions failed. In this tense, competitive environment, haphazard management usually spelled disaster. Regardless of personal objectives, union leaders had good reason to centralize decision making, conserve resources, cling to the federal government, and seek public acceptance. It is not necessary to defend John L. Lewis or other union autocrats to conclude that the alternative to the AFL or CIO was not "alternative" unionism but the open shop.

"*We Are All Leaders*" emphasizes one fragment of the mosaic of union activism in the 1930s. It is a valuable fragment, though its analytical value is limited. Whether it can teach anything to the next generation of organizers is more problematic.

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