

Buenker also demonstrates an annoying proclivity for laboriously proving the obvious. Of course Wisconsin's farmers were discontented; whose weren't? And what is the value of taking four pages to show that new immigrants were concentrated in working-class occupations? Readers will also be stunned to learn that poor Wisconsinites had fewer resources than rich ones. And isn't it helpful to be told, as we are on page 527, that 1866 came "just after the Civil War?"

It is not that Buenker is overly simple. Some of his passages are absolutely opaque. Consider this one, on page 314, "Those in power strove to restructure most aspects of life into large-scale, complex, impersonal systems made up of discrete, hierarchically arranged components." Turn out the light, Martha, it's time for bed.

Wisconsinites might find this book valuable, though they will have to be determined to endure some rough sledding. I doubt that many readers of the *Annals of Iowa* will find it either edifying or enjoyable.

The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America, by Andrea Tone. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. xii, 264 pp. Illustrations, charts, tables, notes, index. \$39.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOHN WILLIAMS-SEARLE, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Some historians have argued that the ubiquity of welfare capitalism in the United States has decontextualized it as a historical phenomenon. Andrea Tone's refreshing new volume deftly combines business, labor, cultural, and gender history to resituate welfare capitalism in its contingent historical setting. She rejects the work of labor historians as overly simple; they have, she insists, been too quick to conclude that welfare work was just another corporate strategy to undermine unionization—a "padded glove over an iron fist" (3). Tone argues that corporations championed welfare work during the Progressive Era with a different, although complementary, goal in mind. These companies—National Cash Register, H. J. Heinz, and International Harvester, to name a few—feared losing authority not just to labor unions, but to the developing welfare state. To retain their power over the workplace, corporations used welfare capitalism to develop an anti-statist public culture. In her sobering epilogue, Tone concludes that the anti-statist intentions of welfare capitalism are with us still, limiting the broader reform potential of the federal state by making welfare capitalism seem the "natural" way to address social problems.

As muckrackers and the National Child Labor Committee exposed corporate abuses and demanded government regulation, com-

pany representatives seized on welfare programs as a way to reassure the public that modern industry was progressively minded. Employee magazines, for instance, tried to cultivate "a familial basis for corporate relations" (103). According to Tone, welfare capitalists intended to use these publications to lessen the importance, although not necessarily eliminate the existence, of employment hierarchies. By showing photographs of workers enjoying play on company teams and families laughing at company picnics, the employee magazine suggested employee contentment. Employees were never shown working, indicating to the public that welfare capitalism had eliminated the barriers between work and leisure. Tone notes, however, that this development did not make work more like play, despite managers' protests to the contrary. Increased attention to leisure instead represented an intentional strategy among employers to redirect employee expression. Welfare capitalists tried to use leisure to reduce the tension resulting from the technological reordering of the workplace and the eclipse of workers' control. "To employers," states Tone, "company-sponsored leisure offered an ideal substitute for workshop independence" (105).

Tone's most innovative chapter, "Gender and Welfare Work," offers critical proof that firms' embrace of welfare capitalism was fueled by their desire to limit or eliminate welfare statism. According to Tone, the majority of welfare initiatives focused on women. During the Progressive Era, companies allowed women longer rest periods, supplied them with well-furnished lounges in which to rest and dining rooms that served snacks and meals. They offered coursework in domestic education and even held dance classes. Why all this attention on women? Tone convincingly demonstrates that if welfare work was to foment an antistatist culture, companies needed to influence society's attitudes toward wage-earning women. Welfare programs developed for women allowed industrial paternalists to demonstrate the progressive aspects of welfare work while creating and retaining a cheap and loyal workforce. When the U.S. Supreme Court in *Muller v. Oregon* (1908) upheld the constitutionality of an Oregon law restricting women's working hours for the sake of their reproductive health, business leaders decided to take a firm stand against the advance of the welfare state. To retain their authority, capitalists needed to convince people that laws such as Oregon's were unnecessary. They contended that the factory was a domesticated space, a haven from the evils of industry. Companies' fear of welfare statism, more than their fear of unions, drove them to expand social programs for their workforce. In this way, they demonstrated that they could solve the problems of industrialization without state intervention.

Tone persuasively argues that welfare employers feared the meddling of the state more than the power of the union. Indeed, American Federation of Labor leaders at times shared employers' fear of the state, arguing as they sometimes did that government intervention threatened potential bargaining gains. Despite Tone's efforts to escape the widely held idea that welfare capitalism was merely an antiunion ploy, however, the rhetoric of antiunionism still emerges from her sources. Employees were suspicious of company motives, and rightly so. They recognized the impermanence of privately provided welfare benefits, which regularly declined or disappeared during economic downturns. While Tone's work is thought-provoking and adds complexity to the historiography of welfare capitalism, it does not completely overturn the "padded glove over an iron fist" thesis. That thesis persists not because of its simplicity, but because workers knew that even though their cage was gilded, it was still a cage.

Workers' Paradox: The Republican Origins of New Deal Labor Policy, 1886-1935, by Ruth O'Brien. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. xii, 313 pp. Notes, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

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Once credited with empowering American labor, the New Deal's National Labor Relations Act of 1935 has fallen upon hard historiographical times. Some reinterpreters now see it as containing and thwarting labor's bid for equitable power, and some, like Professor Ruth O'Brien, believe that further scrutiny of its origins can help explain that outcome. In her view, the act implemented a policy choice for "responsible unionism" rather than the "voluntarism" of the American Federation of Labor or the tripartite "corporatism" experimented with during World War I. And the policy chosen originated in efforts to keep labor weak. Its architects were not labor unionists or social democrats but rather legalistic jurists, Republican party leaders, and elite regulationists, intent upon using an expanded state to convert unions into semipublic associations and thereby contain their potential threat to individual rights and freedoms. Paradoxically (the "paradox" of the title), American individualism produced a statist policy denying liberty and equality of opportunity to workers' associations.

O'Brien's history of this "responsible unionism" falls into three major segments. In chapters 2 and 3, she focuses on the pre-1920 emergence of a new labor law concerning union rights and liabilities, noting particularly its derivation from the law of agency, its application in

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