

In a tightly written epilogue, the author maintains that to understand changes in the West, one needs to study the dynamics of capitalism throughout the region. This includes the perpetually changing character of its political and economic culture, the inherent instability of its resource sector, and the conflict over time between city and hinterland. The contemporary West is a region in transition, with rising and declining sectors, but also with a global component to its economy and business partnerships. For Robbins, California epitomizes the emerging post-Cold War West with its dramatic demographic movements and constantly restructuring local economies.

This book will encourage continuing analysis of the West at the turn of the twenty-first century and the impact of regional history on those conditions. Although the author focuses his argument on the mountain, desert, and coastal West, most readers of this journal will benefit from Robbins's depth of analysis, stimulating interpretation, and clear straightforward narrative style.

*The Making of Western Labor Radicalism: Denver's Organized Workers, 1878-1905*, by David Brundage. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994. xii, 207 pp. Notes, index. \$26.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT JOHNSTON, YALE UNIVERSITY

David Brundage has produced a solid monograph about the political radicalism of Denver's unions over a significant stretch of history. It is a workmanlike book, although the content between the covers does not by any means match the ambition of the title.

Brundage's major contribution is to demonstrate the continuity between the "old" producer-oriented Knights of Labor, the craft-oriented American Federation of Labor, and the very new Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or Wobblies). Traditionally, historians have told us that the radical Wobblies suddenly burst on the scene because of the violence and super-heated exploitation characteristic only of the western mining frontier. Instead, Brundage argues that labor activists' quarter-century-long efforts at political reform linked business unionists and revolutionary syndicalists in a culture of protest that grew organically out of working-class Denver.

Brundage's book proceeds by way of relatively autonomous chapters on different topics. Brundage discusses the economy of late nineteenth-century Denver; the legacy of Irish nationalism on the Knights of Labor; the Knights' fight against the saloon; the development of syndicalist ideology within the mainstream labor movement; the effect of the 1890s depression and the Populist revolt on ideas about industrial unionism; and the milieu around the turn of the

century that led to the formation of the Wobblies. Brundage is at his best when narrating various ideological and political battles within Denver's House of Labor. Yet the slim size of the book, whether an artifact of the author's goals or of publishing constraints, rarely allows him to develop a narrative that has much flow or effectively connects the chapters. Indeed, Brundage's contention that the Knights of Labor's desire to cultivate working-class temperance in the 1880s had much connection to IWW attempts to build a "movement culture" is at best tenuous and at worst a highly suspect kind of teleology. Denver's most famous Wobbly, the carousing Big Bill Haywood, had significantly different views about how to create a subversive working-class community.

In fact, Brundage consistently overstates his case. For example, when he analyzes the different ideologies competing for the allegiance of Denver's workers at the turn of the century, Brundage states, "In 1897, the Denver garment workers broke decisively with the 'pure-and-simple' tradition in the American labor movement when they declared that the discussion of politics would be allowed at their local meetings" (134). In the absence of much other evidence, this is rhetorical overkill.

If we take apart the title of the book, we can see even more clearly the unfortunate results of Brundage's attempt to embellish his claims. This is a study not of *western* labor, but of labor in Denver with hardly any comparison to other cities or regions. It is not about *labor radicalism* in general, but about the roots of one brand, the syndicalist industrial unionism of the IWW. It is not about the *making* of western labor radicalism, because it deals only with the precursors to the flowering of such radicalism—a better word would have been *origins*. Finally, it is not about Denver's *organized workers* in a general sense; Brundage rarely descends below the level of union leaders, newspaper editors, and political elites.

Several other important conceptual problems mar *The Making of Western Labor Radicalism*. For a labor historian who generally insists on upholding the virtue and creativity of the working class, Brundage must explain the presence of so many middle-class reformers and ideas in the universe of "working-class" radicalism. This could have provided him with the opportunity to rethink the general idea that most scholars have that working-class and middle-class ideologies are by nature always completely opposed to one another—that, for example, workers have a "mutualistic ethos" but white-collar folks an "acquisitive" and individualistic one (31)—but Brundage merely restates the traditional wisdom. Also, Brundage does not take advantage of recent exciting attempts to integrate issues of race and gender into his

analysis; the reader clearly knows when we have reached the page that is allotted to women. This is particularly unfortunate, since so many Wobblies were the most manly of men.

Despite all these criticisms, Brundage does state an argument that merits reflection. Still, this book is so insistently narrow in focus that one little wonders why so many labor historians feel like their field is in crisis.

*The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, by Michael Kazin. New York: Basic Books, 1995. x, 381 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JEFFREY OSTLER, UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

In *The Populist Persuasion*, Michael Kazin undertakes the project of writing a history of populism from the 1890s People's Party to the present. Given the slipperiness of populism both as a concept and as a historical entity, this is an extremely difficult task. The result is a bold, thought-provoking, and important book.

Kazin's introduction outlines his approach to the study of populism. Rather than treat populism as a coherent ideology or as a series of social movements, Kazin analyzes it primarily as a linguistic phenomenon, as a "flexible mode of persuasion" (3). Kazin traces the roots of populist discourse back to the American Revolution and shows that in the nineteenth century, populist rhetoric contained two strands. One, drawing on the rationalism of the Enlightenment, "stressed economic grievances and reaffirmed the producer ethic." The other, drawing on evangelical traditions, "fixed on the ethical beliefs of the majority and called on the nation to return to Christ" (17). Both of these strands were present in the rhetoric of the 1890s People's Party and in William Jennings Bryan's campaign for the presidency in 1896.

In the early twentieth century, Kazin argues, the two strands of populist rhetoric separated. The American Federation of Labor continued the tradition of the producer ethic, while the Prohibitionist crusade perpetuated the pietistic tradition. This separation marks one of two important transitions in populism's history.

The second transition occurred in the late 1940s, when, Kazin contends, populism "began a migration from Left to Right" (4). Kazin discusses this shift and its aftermath through chapters on McCarthyism, the New Left, George Wallace, and the conservative "capture" of populism under the presidencies of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. Kazin concludes with a brief account of the election of 1992 followed by some observations on whether or not populism is the "language we need" (282).

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