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# Toni Gilpin, *The Long Deep Grudge: A Story of Big Capital, Radical Labor, and Class War in the American Heartland* (Chicago: Haymarket Books 2019)

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recalcitrant neoliberalism, empowered capital, and a labour movement that is fragmented at best, we should not expect free money to accomplish much.

This all leads Benanav to conclude the book by asking if, “instead of presupposing a fully automated economy and imagining the possibilities for a better and freer world created out of it, we could *begin* from a world of generalized human dignity, and then consider the technical changes needed to realize that world” (82). A world of generalized human dignity, for Benanav, requires the abolition of private property and the instantiation of democratically planned production. This is not, crucially, a theory of a post-work society but rather a post-scarcity one where essential tasks in the realm of necessity are shared out fairly and free time in the realm of freedom expands accordingly for everyone. And how might we move towards such social arrangements? In a postscript Benanav is clear: leaving behind technocratic solutions (basic income, fiscal policy) requires social movements organized and built around the goal of controlling production.

*Automation and the Future of Work* is impressively multifaceted for such a short text. While it is appropriate to emphasize the book’s function as economic history, its secondary functions as critique of the automation discourse and counter-proposal for a post-scarcity world are not merely incidental. In fact, the explicitly political conclusion to the book adds a level of interest to the economic history, rendering it not just as an academic exercise but an urgent analytical step along the way to the kinds of politicized reflection that Benanav takes part in and which readers on the left will find especially interesting. The economic history, for its part, is convincing. In addition to disproving much of the automation theory, which is not always that troublesome, Benanav effectively raises

and disputes potential historical and economic counter-arguments.

To end a laudatory review on a critical note, it could be said that between the post-scarcity tradition with which Benanav allies himself and the automation discourse to which he objects there are currents of post-work thought that warrant more attention. The post-work idea gets raised in the final chapter just so that it can be dismissed in the space of a paragraph. Only a 1998 post-work manifesto is cited, and important recent publications, especially from Marxist-feminist perspectives, are not engaged. There are good reasons to prefer Benanav’s post-scarcity framing, but these are not so straightforward as to be demonstrable in a paragraph. Finally, and less substantively, the book has been transparently “covidized” with rote mentions of what the analysis might mean in the context of the pandemic. The relevance of Benanav’s arguments would be entirely apparent without these inclusions and at a moment or two they detract from an analysis which, if timely, is not only timely. These are small quibbles with an excellent book.

MACK PENNER

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**Toni Gilpin, *The Long Deep Grudge: A Story of Big Capital, Radical Labor, and Class War in the American Heartland* (Chicago: Haymarket Books 2019)**

IN HER STUDY of unionization struggles at the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company and later International Harvester (IH), historian Toni Gilpin tells a story that will be very familiar to those who study the labour movement in the 19th and 20th-century United States: industrialization and the rise of corporate power during the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era, when great fortunes were built on the regimented toil of immigrant

and American-born workers, gave rise to militant industrial union efforts that transformed working-class consciousness and workers' lives; but the suppressive conservatism of the Cold War ultimately undermined union strength. While the book is very much grounded in the most urgent subjects that have long shaped the study of US labour and working-class history, its particular story makes a powerful and timely case for the relevance of union history today. Gilpin's study is a rich document of a useable past that workers, activists, and community members can look to for inspiration and lessons to be learned as they confront stifling conservative resistance to progressive social change. Utilizing a wide array of secondary sources, newspapers, government reports, company records, union archives, and even her own collection of family papers, Gilpin brings into view a now-distant past that is of great contemporary relevance.

As Gilpin explains, the animosity that prevailed between workers and management at McCormick reached back to the Gilded Age. Cyrus McCormick II, who took over his father's Chicago-based reaper business in 1879, oversaw a booming enterprise that employed hundreds of labourers, including an influential cadre of skilled metal workers, who made possible the family's success. McCormick's aggressive efforts to minimize labour costs, as well as his determination to dictate the pace of work, galvanized worker resistance. In Chicago, "the capital of American radicalism," immigrant and native-born workers increasingly embraced syndicalist critiques of capitalist power, and these wider currents of radical ideas (including anarchism) shaped labour militancy at McCormick (26). Worsening labour unrest – fueled by managers' determination to end their unwanted reliance on skilled workers – culminated in the demonstration and

violence at Haymarket in 1886. Cyrus McCormick's turn to labour-saving machinery allowed him to push skilled men out, and the wider suppression of radicals after Haymarket rolled back the ability of militants to organize. Beginning in the Gilded Age, the company demonstrated a grim determination to completely control the workplace and prevent the organization of workers, a situation that engendered a state of continuous class warfare.

Left-led unionization efforts at International Harvester (the company's new name in 1902) stemmed from long-standing worker frustrations with management's stringent wage policies and the total stifling of dissent, as well as the principled and shrewd leadership of local union activists. In particular, Cyrus McCormick's insistence upon piece-rate determinations of wages sustained widespread resentment among the employees at IH, as every worker at the company was subjected to intense demands for production while earning reduced and variable rates of pay. While piece rates applied to individual jobs, workers experienced their frustrations collectively. Unionists channeled worker resentment into organizing on the shop floor, first with the early campaigns of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and continuing through the era of welfare capitalism in the 1920s and the growth of the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) during the 1930s. Communist union organizers finally broke through in the late 1930s with the new Farm Equipment Workers (FE) union of the CIO, winning union recognition and International Harvester workers' first contract in 1938.

Much of Gilpin's book details how the FE built and sustained a militant shop-floor culture ("its characteristic combativeness") at International Harvester (229). Shop stewards were very active, repeatedly challenging managers whenever

they attempted to side-step contract language that guaranteed certain wage rates or production output. Strategically timed walkouts were very frequent, much to the ire of company leaders. Stewards enjoyed great success mobilizing support for a series of work stoppages and strikes that challenged management's continuous manoeuvring against the union contract, fostering with each confrontation the view among IH workers that the labour situation (especially the persistently anti-union stance of management, as well as their constant efforts to curtail wages) demanded a perpetually battle-ready rank-and-file. When International Harvester opened a new manufacturing plant in Louisville, Kentucky, in the hopes of moving some operations to the more anti-union, lower-wage South, FE leaders mobilized the new workers there (both African-American and white) to successfully strike for union recognition in 1947.

The FE's accomplishments did not last, however. Just as quickly as the union won its victory over the company in Louisville, several factors began to rapidly unfold inside International Harvester and beyond that hastened the demise of the FE. The Taft-Hartley Act and the politics of the early Cold War undercut the strength of the union, as FE leaders and the rank-and-file approved leaving the CIO rather than submit to the indignity of non-communist affidavits and the disavowal of the left. Gilpin powerfully shows how Cold War anti-communism shaped the splintering of the labour movement; key figures such as Walter Reuther – the president of both the United Automobile Workers (UAW) and the CIO – weakened progressive unions with his repeated calls for communists to be purged. Reuther pressed FE members to reject their own union. Pressures on the FE intensified inside the company as well. The new CEO, John

McCaffrey, intolerant of the company's coexistence with the FE, set a new tone for labour-management relations that rejected any pretext of cooperating with the union: in the 1952 contract negotiations, management presented rigid terms that reduced wages and curtailed shop stewards' ability to address grievances. The new tenor of management triggered an unsuccessful strike of 30,000 workers. Completely stonewalled by the company, workers ultimately had no choice but to accept management's miserable terms. In 1955, workers would vote to join the UAW and leave what was left of the Farm Equipment Workers union.

While Gilpin's study robustly explains how militant left-led unions tipped the balance of power with corporations and transformed the lives and labours of rank-and-file members, as well as how militant union leaders created the union's success, the content of the book actually raises questions about the lurking, long-term consequences of union militancy. Every FE victory, whether big or small, reinforced the company's determination to get rid of the union – shaping the capital flight that was Harvester's feint to Kentucky and culminating in the 1952 strike debacle. Even as the FE won many of their battles with IH, they ultimately lost as time went on. The book shows that capital not only engages in flight; it also waits. There was never a point when the company really accepted the union. Instead, management waited until the tables could be turned. Gilpin seeks to vindicate left-led unions by demonstrating what they won and how; she also wants readers to understand how union militancy counters employer power. However, the book's chapters illustrate how capital never surrendered.

Gilpin's book is a well-timed and important addition to labour and working-class historians' conversations about how progressive change happens as a result of

belief, dedication, and action. However, the saga of the FE should remind us that the work of creating social change cannot guarantee what the future might hold.

GREGORY WOOD

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**Betsy Wood, *Upon the Altar of Work: Child Labor and the Rise of a New American Sectionalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2020)**

DID THE ABOLITIONIST impulse die after emancipation? Hardly. Rather, as Betsy Wood shows us in her fascinating new book, the fire simply spread to new fields. After helping introduce the idea that the economy ought to be governed by a humanitarian logic, many antislavery activists developed more of an appetite for further intervention into the market. Once the “private” realm of the plantation fell away, reformers next set their sights on the factory, the mill, and the mine. For as industrialization accelerated after the Civil War, the abovementioned enterprises employed children by the millions. And in so doing, some lamented, they ushered in what was termed the nation’s “new white slavery.” Ending the abusive practice of child labour thus became the next great abolitionist crusade, Wood argues, and the struggle was often fought along sectional lines. “My goal in writing this book,” the author announces, “was to extend our scholarly perspective on the historical reach of the moral and social questions broached by antislavery and slave emancipation into the 20th century. In doing so, I have endeavored to use the lens of the battle over child labor to draw new connections between 19th- and 20th-century moral and social reform” (2). The fruits of that endeavour are striking.

The first two chapters lay important groundwork. Wood demonstrates that

during the antebellum era, youth-focused northern organizations like the Children’s Aid Society were implicated in the fight over slavery. Their hope was to ship impoverished orphans into the West, transform them into productive members of society, and thus demonstrate the superiority of free labour principles. But this initiative, one which viewed children’s work as a wholesome exercise in character building, faced greater scrutiny after the Civil War. In the South, carpet-baggers and concerned parents looked askance at apprenticeship laws that granted the courts wide latitude to wrest Black children from their homes and employ them elsewhere. To the north, meanwhile, the *padrone* system among Italian immigrants trapped children within an exploitative labour system. Responding to these (and other) provocations, several state legislatures began to investigate the working lives of young people more generally. Official reports bemoaned the long hours, barbaric conditions, and lack of educational attainment. By the 1870s, it was beginning to look as though the North’s vaunted free labour system was not as morally sound as the early abolitionists imagined. The time to contemplate limiting children’s engagement with capitalism had come.

But as Wood demonstrates, the campaign to curtail child labour in the United States – as a formally organized political movement – traces its origins to the New South. With textile plants appearing across the region as investors chased cheap workers, reformers expressed revulsion at the sight of what they considered the uniquely miserable conditions endured by southern mill children. Muckrakers claimed to “know the sweatshops of Hester Street, New York [and] the lot of the coal miners of Pennsylvania, but for misery, woe, and helpless suffering, [they had] never seen anything to equal the cotton-mill slavery of South