

Reform or Repression: Organizing America's Anti-Union Movement. By Chad Pearson. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. Pp. viii, 303. \$55.00, cloth. doi: 10.1017/S0022050717000262

Repression or Reform attacks the “Labor Problem” with startling vigor. Armed with an exceptional amount of well-researched detail, Chad Pearson begins at full-speed, packing every sentence of the Introduction with countless features and auxiliary accounts of the state of workplaces in the United States in the Progressive era. Pearson focuses on employers and charts their role in a time when strikes and political reform dramatically altered the norms of American workplaces.

The Introduction will overwhelm readers unfamiliar with this era since paragraphs are crafted to avoid missing any facts whether they are crucial or not. The initial paragraphs are fortified with nonrestrictive clauses that interrupt the flow of this vital history of the power struggle between unions, employers, and other stakeholders. The main sections of the book are well worth the overpowering and highly concentrated 20-page Introduction.

Pearson divides this political economy into two parts. He begins with the national level story, and the second part consists of region case studies. The carefully selected case studies explore the idiosyncrasies of Cleveland, Buffalo, Worcester, and various Southern cities including Birmingham, Huntsville, and Chattanooga.

Pearson first frames the issue by astutely noting the key interest groups including union leaders, large employers, defeated strikers, blacklisted unionists, and at-will employees. Then, attention shifts to the colorful personalities, backgrounds, and strategies adopted by the organizers of the anti-union movement. Each organizer brings unique talents and insights, but a common theme becomes apparent. The marketing and progression of the pro-employer organizations was crucial to their success. For example, the National Metal Trades Association (NMTA) led by Ernest F. Du Brul exemplified the process by emphasizing “the open-shop principle’s defensive, educational, and patriotic virtues” (pp. 41–43). The battles and propaganda were essential. Pro-employer groups began with educational missions, then built strike-breaking workforces, and finally reinforced their actions with testimonials and success. These organizations were not geographically oriented, but rather focused on “free men” everywhere. They portrayed union leaders as bullies. Arguably, pro-employer organizations (like NMTA and several others) represented both the individual workers’ right to offer their services without meddling from unions and the employers’ right to autonomy, liberty, and the ability to avoid being cornered into operating shops closed to non-union workers. Pearson illustrates a dozen or more of these skilled organizers each one demonstrating some ability to push the movement forward and to resonate with the proper people whether those are employers, journalists, or even competing union leaders.

The title, *Reform or Repression*, in one sense, reflects the contrasting perspectives of the different competing interest groups; however, the accounts that Pearson describes clearly indicate both repression *and* reform of labor and employers in American workplaces during the Progressive era. While numerous pro-employer organizers argue that unions limited the freedoms of independent workers, they didn’t push to eliminate unions altogether. Rather, complete and direct opposition to unions rarely originated from pro-employer organizers. Instead, they sought to reform them and relieve pressure on “free workers,” perceiving closed-shops as “tyrannical” and un-American. Pearson’s work stands out partly because he does an excellent job of weaving characters and their pertinent back-stories into the interpretations of key events. He highlights the roles of

national politicians (like Theodore Roosevelt), academics, members of the press, as well as religious and other community leaders.

In the regional assessments, Pearson explores the ten intense years of industrial sparring in Cleveland beginning around 1900. In this case study, there is further evidence that a multifaceted approach is necessary to limit strikes and the intimidating power of the closed-shops in manufacturing. The open-shop movement enlists the aid of lawyers, organizers, politicians, as well as writers and poets to sway legal and public opinion toward increased freedoms for independent workers and employers. In another case study, (“Avenging McKinley”), Pearson holds his microscope over the city of Buffalo to assess the movement’s reaction to labor challenges in a city with heterogeneous factory owners representing different religious and economic classes and reeling from the recent assassination of President McKinley by a reactionary, leftist.

Economists generally agree that strikes are a wasteful method for resolving workplace disputes. Of course, the threat of a strike must be credible for a labor union to gain bargaining power; however, the inefficiencies of picketing and protesting low pay and harsh working conditions may have been rivaled by the tremendous effort required to mobilize the anti-union effort. Pearson’s historical narrative demonstrates that while the public ultimately accepted the pro-employers’ open-shop stance, it was not a swift or costless endeavor. It took years of resolute determination in spite of the understanding that union strikes and protests were inherently welfare-reducing.

Pearson’s prudently fashioned prose represents a superb and intimate understanding of the critical actors in this era of American labor history. His use of word play to exploit the nuances of contemporary industrial labor relations makes up for the lack of illustrations and figures to represent the state of these local economies in the midst of turmoil. Pearson makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of the open-shop movement.

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Slaughterhouse: Chicago’s Union Stock Yard and the World It Made. By Dominic A. Pacyga. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. Pp. xvii, 233. \$26.00, cloth; \$18.00, e-book.
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This book concerns the history of Chicago’s Union Stock Yard and its surrounding neighborhood, the Square Mile. The growth of the railroad network and the development of the refrigerated rail car during the late nineteenth century facilitated the concentration of meatpacking and slaughtering in a central location. As a consequence, Chicago’s Square Mile became the most important nexus of this burgeoning meat trade. The largest meatpacking firms, including Armour, Swift, and Morris, located their central operations within this area. *Slaughterhouse* furnishes an exciting and highly readable account of the emergence, rise, decline, and rebirth of this neighborhood, the meat-related industries that located within it, and the working class (often immigrant) communities that lived nearby.

Slaughterhouse tells this story in more or less chronological order. Chapter 1 describes how the Union Stock Yard, which organized the killing and processing of