

**Craig Slatin, *Environmental Unions: Labor and the Superfund* (Amityville, N.Y.: Baywood Publishing Co., 2009).**

In *Environmental Unions*, Craig Slatin explores the history of health and safety training and legislation in the United States since the early 1970s. Slatin offers a detailed history of the Worker Education and Training Program (WETP) and the legislation that created it, the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986. Examining the history of the intersection between workplace safety and environmental concerns through political debates, legislation, and training strategies, Slatin argues that organized labour played a significant role in both the passage of SARA and the subsequent implementation of the WETP. He ambitiously links this history to the political economy of late twentieth century America, framing the actions of unions, management, and the state in the context of the decline of the “golden age of regulation” (3) and increasing neoliberal reforms beginning during the Reagan administration.

Slatin chronicles the coeval development of the hazardous waste management industry, the increasing awareness of the convergence of labour and environmental concerns, and the labour movement’s attempt to improve working conditions and create a health and safety structure in a political climate increasingly hostile to unions and regulation. The centerpiece of this narrative is the passage of SARA, which appropriated federal funds to develop and conduct the worker training program that would become the WETP. Slatin explores the history of this program’s predecessor, the federally funded New Directions training program developed during the Carter administration, describing in intricate detail the origins of a coordinated response to worker health and safety concerns and union involvement in the many hearings and proposals in the discussions leading up to the passage of SARA.

Slatin offers two case studies concerning the implementation of the WETP to complete his account of the history of worker health and safety training programs. The Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW) and the Laborers-Associated General Contractors (L-AGC) designed worker health and safety training programs to negotiate the circumstances defined by the particular hazards of their respective workplaces as well as the relationship between labour and management. These cases demonstrate the different ways organizations justified health and safety training to union members and management. OCAW used worker training to struggle against management’s proclivity to blame workers for accidents and illnesses on the job, while L-AGC represented a joint venture between the Laborers International Union of America (LIUNA) and the contractors’ association to train workers and make union labour more appealing to contractors seeking to gain a foothold in the emerging hazardous waste remediation industry. Slatin paints the response of OCAW and LIUNA as political maneuvers made within a restrictive political context. Health and safety advo-

cates were operating within the limited political space available during the 1980s, forced to creatively adjust goals and compromise when necessary to ensure the existence of training programs.

Slatin bolsters this narrative through the use of union documents, government publications, and interviews with union members and health and safety professionals, making his account of the development of worker health and safety legislation and training programs the strongest part of the book. The political component of this work is somewhat less developed. Slatin's examination of the political economy of the work environment provides a cursory glance at the motives and actions of labour, health professionals, management, and the state, adding a short discussion of the impact of social movements. Integrating more of the growing literature on deindustrialization, deregulation, and the environmental justice movement would have improved this section by demonstrating the specific forces aligned against the regulatory and training efforts of labour and extending this analysis to encompass the impact of these changes on employment, union membership, and working class communities.

A similar critique can be made of Slatin's emphasis on the difficulties the union movement faced when confronted by neoliberal attacks and the increasing mobility and political influence of corporations. Slatin does not sufficiently address examples of what the neoliberal restructuring of the New Deal order meant for the workplace health and safety movement, and a more direct approach to these very real dangers facing the labour movement would have strengthened his argument. Instead, the rising tide of deregulation, along with the response and actions of management, persistently lurk in the background, emerging at the end of each chapter only to reiterate the influence of these forces at the expense of a clear definition of how this movement experienced neoliberal reforms.

Slatin's refreshing political directness makes this book of interest to academics, health and safety professionals, and activists interested in a policy-driven account of "the limitations of reforming capitalism at the expense of the ongoing degradation of human health and environmental sustainability" (7). *Environmental Unions* fills an important place in the literature on this topic, and provides a useful starting point for social and cultural historians interested in this field.

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**Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).**

*Solidarity Stories* is the culmination of nearly three decades of interviews with