

Jacobs herself, for obvious reasons, has never referred to this, at least in print. But in the last great book, *Systems of Survival*, the sense is very strong that most of those who have never accepted any invitation, from her and perhaps from any woman when it came to considering cities, were men working in what she identifies as the guardian syndrome, men with establishments and traditions to protect. While she has no interest in engaging in a sex war, she doesn't mind, in this book, putting much of the evidence and arguments about the ethics of traders into the mouth of Kate. So, at one moment:

"I like what C.S. Lewis said about courage," Jasper put in, "He called it the master virtue because it makes the practice of all the others possible."

"Maybe," said Kate, "but I'd think cooperation is probably the most important of the universals. We're social animals, and everything we are or have hangs upon cooperation."

(That, says my wife, reading these words, is the real point). The guardians tend to prefer courage, and leadership, to cooperation, or coming to voluntary agreements or, respect of contracts, or that commercial virtue which seems to have guided Jacobs herself the most: "Be open to inventiveness and novelty."

Take the journey. Cross over the bridge. Have one's windows cleaned. All these require a sense of cooperation and collaboration in order to work. Most traders are too busy being traders to bother with the kind of reading about themselves that Jacobs offers; it is guardians, with their different and alien syndrome of ideas and ethics who read her and, very frequently, feel her alienness in its traderly sense of things: shun force, admire honesty, seek optimism. To say these commercial virtues are gendered does not make all traders women any more than it makes all women cowards. But it does offer an explanation for the gap between this much admired and little fully understood writer and those who feel that cooperation with her is different from what they are used to, and more than they know how to give.

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Karin A. Shapiro, *A New South Rebellion: The Battle Against Convict Labor in the Tennessee Coalfields, 1871-1896* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

To a growing literature on American convict leasing, *A New South Rebellion* adds a bracing account of free workers organizing to repeal the lease. Along with other Southern Reconstruction states, Tennessee began leasing its overwhelmingly African American prisoners out as labourers in 1871. Coal operators rented convict miners less for a cheap labour force than for a reserve

strikebreaking force. Free coal miners appealed to the state government with petitions and rallies to no avail for twenty years; meanwhile they won laws guaranteeing payment in cash and independent checkweighmen. When east Tennessee operators collaborated in 1891 to deny cash payment and checkweighmen, and imported convicts to replace outraged free miners, the free miners swapped petitions for rifles. In orderly raids on mining compounds, miners packed convicts into trains back to prison and burned their stockades. Yet even as they directly challenged state authority and the privileges of capital, free miners loudly proclaimed their civic virtue and petitioned the state to end the lease. In her study of the Tennessee miners' uprising, Karin Shapiro explores this seeming paradox of radical tactics embedded in a strategy of republican politics.

Populism and the rise of the Farmers' Alliance form the heart of Shapiro's explanation. Alliancemen took nearly half the state legislature and the governorship in 1890, raising the hopes of their miner constituency that repeal of the lease was at hand. But once in office the Alliance was paralyzed by political inexperience, the strain of cooperating with Republicans, and the continuing power of Democrats. Citizens recoiled from the prospect of higher taxes to pay for state resumption of responsibility for convicts and stymied repeal. The inaction of Alliancemen helped drive the miners to rebel.

Tight-knit mining communities and charismatic local leaders fomented dissent as well. Shapiro's miners are less an awakening proletariat than an aspiring middle class; miners embraced the cooperative ethic of the Knights of Labor (even inviting a mine boss to lecture them on "the relations of labor and capital") and trumpeted their republican virtue, and local merchants and farmers who depended on miners' business supported the rebellion. Shapiro astutely maps regional variations in the coal industry and communities, and their effect on the rebellion. In mid-Tennessee, where a single operator dominated, miners were organized in Knights locals and more quiescent, only joining the rebellion in 1892. Multiple operators exercised less influence in eastern Tennessee, where United Mine Workers locals initiated the rebellion. And a larger population of African American families in eastern Tennessee helped some black miners win union office and better jobs, while a smaller cohort of single black men suffered far sharper exclusions in mid-Tennessee.

A detailed account of the rebellion and the miners' political maneuvers takes up the bulk of the book. Shapiro shows that early public support for the miners grew from their republican claims of civic virtue and good manners — the miners harmed no one and destroyed only company property in the raids. Sympathetic local militiamen refused to restrain the miners. By 1892, however, militiamen recruited from western Tennessee and paid largely by the operators felt no such fraternity. When four militiamen were killed in a skirmish, public sentiment turned sharply against the miners and they ceased their raids.

Thereafter the miners relied on political pressure. Shapiro comments that

“ironically, the miners generally found their most steadfast allies among those public servants least dependent on public approbation.” A labour-friendly Commissioner of Mines and Labor used his office to regulate and harass mine operators, and state attorneys challenged the mine operators’ practice of subleasing convicts, inflicting real financial damage on operators. These tactics ultimately helped end the lease in 1895. Equally important, though, was the assent of coal operators. Shapiro lucidly describes the competitive pressures and capital constraints plaguing the companies, and the increasing burden of the lease’s fixed costs on operators during economic downturns. Operators had always argued that the lease’s chief benefit lay in checking free miners’ militancy, not in cheap labour. Convict miners’ reluctant work and the fixed costs maintaining them plagued especially smaller, less-capitalized operators. As the lease’s authorizing legislation expired in 1895, operators agreed that it need not be renewed.

Shapiro keeps a tight focus on Tennessee, allowing her to explore the rebellion and its aftermath in rich detail. But confining her study to Tennessee sometimes obscures as well. For example, she notes that Kentucky coal miners had risen up in 1887 to protest convict leasing. Their leader, William Webb of the UMW, surfaced as a leader of the east Tennessee rebellions, and Kentucky miners crossed the border to aid the Tennessee rebellion. Yet this seemingly significant regional coordination, and the roles of national labour organizations like the Knights or the UMW, get short shrift. So do other broad questions, like the progress of the Alliance nationally and the Southern career of Jim Crow. The clarity of Shapiro’s Tennessee portrait comes at the expense of a more expansive perspective.

As for the contradiction between the miners’ tactics of rebellion and petition, Shapiro resolves the paradox by arguing that far from intending to undermine the state, the rebellion can best be seen as “an especially vehement form of political petition.” The state figures prominently in Shapiro’s study, but the growing body of literature on state theory does not. In practice, her treatment of the state most resembles Theda Skocpol’s model of “relative state autonomy,” in which political blocs can exploit fissures within the state and turn state power to their own ends. Critiques of Skocpol may be apt here as well. Skocpol’s maternalists generally represented elite white women, and likewise the miners’ defenders did not necessarily speak for the interests of all miners. In the same years of the miners’ rebellion, Tennessee restricted voting rights for African Americans and poor whites, and in Shapiro’s account no state or miner officials challenged Tennessee’s brutal penal code that filled prisons with so many African Americans.

With its sharp analysis and fine prose, *A New South Rebellion* should appeal not only to historians, but to trade unionists as well. Indeed, Shapiro’s rich narrative suggests alternate readings of the rebellion. Miners seethed over workplace control, not just convict leasing, and an operators’ conspiracy to

deny independent checkweighmen and cash wages was the immediate catalyst for the rebellion. As Shapiro rightly notes, the miners did not attack the state directly; nor did they march on operators' headquarters. Instead, miners struck at a vulnerable spot — the convict lease, a blurry boundary between state and corporation. In the early years of the modern American bureaucratic state, the miners developed a strategy that turned a nascent regulatory apparatus against capital to damage operators financially. Simultaneously miners rallied community support, lobbied legislators, and worked to control their public image in the press. From the late twentieth century, this campaign looks remarkably like the “comprehensive” campaigns increasingly waged by American unions, in which labour marshals government regulatory agencies, community coalitions, corporate finance tactics, and political allies to pressure employers to recognize and bargain with unions. And modern comprehensive campaigns similarly aim at the interstices of state and corporate power — tax subsidies, government contracts, and the like — to wrest state power into labour's service. That American workers in the twenty first century must resurrect the tactics of 1890s miners is a telling commentary. What better illustrates the deterioration of American labour rights?

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Fred Siegel, *The Future Once Happened Here: New York, D.C., L.A., and the Fate of America's Big Cities* (New York: The Free Press, 1998).

At the dawn of the millennium, scholars and social pundits alike have been scrambling to understand why the second half of the twentieth century witnessed the wholesale decline of American inner cities. How could it be that many thriving American metropolises of the 1940s and 1950s devolved into crime-ridden, economically devastated, wastelands by the 1980s? How could it be that poverty is even higher now than it was thirty years ago, that race relations are as polarized as ever, and that inner cities are the very last place one might look for business vitality? Many who tackle this question believe that the answer lies in an analysis of the grand socioeconomic experiment that began in the mid-1960s called the “Great Society.” It was, after all, the Great Society liberals who made it their mission to eliminate America's urban woes, to end poverty nationwide and, as importantly, to address once and for all the brutality of racial discrimination both *de jure* and *de facto*.

Historian-turned-journalist Frederick Siegel has embarked on just such an inquiry in his recent book, *The Future Once Happened Here*. This is not Siegel's first foray into this subject. His caustic treatment of the Great Society