

does not pursue the extent to which the French example shaped working-class militants' sense of the possible. Katz does acknowledge that foreign-born workers, most notably, those active in the International and in the Workingmen's Party of the United States, were more likely than native-born workers to join with middle-class reformers to embrace the Commune. Given that few of those foreign-born workers had actually participated in the Commune, why did the struggle resonate more with them? What does the disparity between native-born and foreign-born workers tell us about the dynamics of international awareness? In this account, it is primarily foreign-born workers and the bourgeoisie who demonstrate a sense of living in an age of civil wars. Native-born working people seem bounded by a more local, less expansive sense of their times.

Despite leaving questions about the implications of the Commune for working-class Americans, *From Appomattox to Montmartre* is well worth reading. It takes a significant step toward de-exceptionalizing U.S. history, both by situating it in an international context and by addressing just how exceptional nineteenth-century Americans (especially bourgeois Americans) considered themselves. Using the Commune as his reference point, Katz tackles the difficult problem of periodizing exceptionalist sensibilities. His conclusion? In the early 1860s, Americans liked to imagine themselves as being on a convergent path with the rest of the world, for they considered republicanism the ultimate destination. But after the Civil War, and especially after the Commune, they were increasingly dismayed at the thought that the U.S. and Europe might be converging. "Instead of exporting self-government, free labor, and liberty, the United States seemed to be importing ignorance, class warfare, and tyranny" (192). The Commune, in sum, appears to have contributed to the appeal of an exceptionalist outlook.

Beyond his specific claim that the Commune occupied an important role in American thought in the 1870s, Katz makes a larger point: that the international setting is of great relevance to U.S. history. He builds such a convincing case for Americans' captivation with the Commune that his book serves as an admonition to U.S. historians to pay more attention to the reverberations of foreign events.

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Craig Heron, ed., *The Workers' Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

The Workers' Revolt in Canada 1917-1925, edited by Craig Heron, is a long-awaited study of Canadian labour history in the late teens and early twenties, a

period in which the Canadian working class became a force to be reckoned with in Canadian society. In the introduction Heron tells us that the book's purpose is to advance an analysis in which gender and ethnicity are more "fully integrated." The authors of the individual chapters seek to situate the worker's revolt "within the larger structure of Canadian social, economic, and political history," and to more fully explore "the dynamics of regionalism." (7) As is so often the case with essays written by different authors, but addressing a common theme, the goals set out by the editor are addressed with varying degrees of success by the individual authors.

In the first chapter, authors Craig Heron and Myer Siemiatycki make a convincing argument that the workers' revolt should be understood to have started in 1917, a watershed year in the history of the Canadian working class. It was the year in which the imposition of conscription — following on the heels of Prime Minister Borden's assurance that national registration was not a prelude to conscription — united farmers and workers, French and English, east and west in a way that no other issue of the war years was able to do. It was the year that the call for the conscription of wealth, as well as the conscription of labour, created a degree of working-class cohesion not seen since the early 1870s and mid-1880s. Retail price inflation took the crisis into the home as well as the factory, and brought working-class women into the emerging labour upheaval. The hiring of women in munitions plants, and the increasing employment of immigrant workers, produced the diversification of a workforce that would break down at least some of the barriers separating working-class men from working-class women, and Anglo-Saxon workers from their East European, South European, Black, Asian, and Aboriginal co-workers.

In the chapter on the Maritimes authors Ian McKay and Suzanne Morton grapple with the long-standing view of the Maritimes as characterized by an almost inherent conservatism. McKay and Morton argue that weaknesses in Maritime radicalism stemmed not from the character of the region's people, but rather from the existence of two political economies and two ethnic realities: that of the industrialized coal and steel centres where there was a significant immigrant population, and the rural Maritimes, where largely Anglo-Celtic and Francophone workers and farmers earned a living on farm, in the forest, and on the seas. One of the obstacles to the development of a broad-based labour revolt was the split between the labourers and the farmers. As McKay and Morton point out, the working-class movement failed to cement an alliance with primary producers in the countryside, and thereby failed to sustain the momentum built up in the early years of the labour revolt.

McKay and Morton call the years 1917-20 the dynamic phase of the labour revolt in the Maritimes. In these "red years" Maritime radicalism was provided by politicized farmers and labourists. Ironically, given the book's emphasis on the salience of region, McKay and Morton argue that the "labourist consensus" Maritime workers and farmers created was based on ideas similar to those which

prompted western workers to organize the One Big Union. Once the OBU was formed its influence was much in evidence in the Maritimes: for example, the Amherst Federation of Labour overwhelmingly supported the Winnipeg-based organization. McKay and Morton reveal an interesting dialectic at work in the Maritimes involving nation and region, but do not really explore its meanings or implications.

McKay and Morton then move on to discuss what they call the “catastrophe” of the years 1922-25, but without really exploring what this means in terms of the meaning of the word revolt. This section, entitled “The Miners’ Armageddon, 1922-1925,” tells a familiar story with a familiar cast of characters — J.B. McLachlan, “Red” Dan Livingstone, John L. Lewis, and Roy Wolvin — as it details the heroic resistance of Cape Breton miners, facing job loss, starvation, and violence in the face of the brutal assault by the federal and provincial governments and the British Empire Steel Corporation. Again the most original and informative aspect of McKay and Morton’s discussion is the influence of the OBU and its emphasis on rank-and-file unionism and questioning of trade union leadership and bureaucracy, although the authors miss an opportunity to expand our knowledge of the marvelous relief efforts launched by the OBU and the western Canadian working class to provide relief for striking miners in Cape Breton in 1925.

Geoffrey Ewen’s look at the workers’ revolt in Quebec in the 1917-25 period is premised on two assumptions difficult to dispute, that Quebec has been ignored by English-Canadian labour historians, and that when the subject is broached it has almost always focused on the rise of the Catholic labour movement. Ewen creates the expectation that we are to be rewarded with important insights and new analysis, and in significant ways, he delivers. He begins with a look at the prominence of women in the workforce, especially in Montreal, in large part due to the importance of the textile, foodstuffs, and shoemaking industries. By pointing out that Socialist Party of Canada members took a leading role in organizing the unemployed, Ewen challenges the stereotype of “respectable” SPCers concerned only with skilled workers and contemptuous of the “rough.” The SPC helped organize large rallies of the unemployed, and challenged Montreal’s municipal politicians to find them work, while the Montreal Trades and Labour Council steered clear out of fear that these rallies would get out of hand. Ewen reminds us, in his look at the August 1916 strike of miners in Thetford, that the Western Federation of Miners, almost always thought of as a strictly western organization, succeeded in uniting an ethnically diverse workforce in eastern Canada. Ewen also points out that women, especially Jewish women, were active and militant in Quebec’s industrial union movement, and that Montreal was a city in which Jewish socialists and Marxists were integrated into the radical left.

These important findings remain located, however, in a basically familiar picture. Quebec’s workers’ revolt faced fragmentation at every turn — conflict

between AFL and Catholic unions, between French and English, between men and women. Many Montreal unionists placed more faith in the city's business elite than they did in ostensibly working-class organizations such as the Montreal Trades and Labour Council. In the years 1917-19 the Quebec government was in an effective alliance with male trade unionists in excluding women from employment, and the Montreal Trades and Labour Council asked the federal government to fire and replace all women working in enterprises that had formerly employed men.

In spite of the sexism of male trade unionists, as elsewhere in the country women's organization and activism "reached a new peak" in 1919. (107) So did the labour revolt. On 18 June some 12,000 workers were on strike and another 15,000 were ready to walk out. The general strike movement foundered, however, on the rocks of craft union leadership. Not entirely convincing, however, is Ewen's assertion that support for the general strike was "much weaker" in Montreal than in Toronto, a claim more asserted than proven. (113-14) The failure of the 1919 general strike notwithstanding, the general strike option was debated again in 1920, a year in which there was a high level of strike activity.

Ewen does confirm that outside Montreal the Catholic union movement was a major impediment to militancy. Other factors inhibiting the workers' revolt included the failure of the anti-conscriptionists of 1917-18 to join the industrial militants. As in the Maritimes labour-farmer cooperation increased in 1919, but fizzled out shortly thereafter. In spite of strong support among some Montreal militants, including Rose Henderson, Becky Buhay, and Annie Buller, the One Big Union did not have as great or as long-lasting an impact in Quebec as in the Maritimes. In May 1919, for example, the Montreal Trades and Labour Council voted 73-3 to condemn the western-based organization. Many Quebec labourists, who were actually progressive liberals, drifted back to the party of Laurier and King in the early 1920s. The new hope for radicals, the Communist Party of Canada, failed in its bid to attract French Canadian workers, who were more attracted to a Catholic union movement less opposed to strikes and militance in the early 1920s than it had been in the 1917-20 period. In the final analysis Ewen provides evidence of more radicalism in Quebec than is usually assumed, but does not fundamentally disagree with the existing historiography, pointing out in his summation that Quebec's working class was rent by "profound divisions." (132)

James Naylor, in his chapter on Southern Ontario, echoes Ewen's findings for Quebec, beginning with an argument that the Southern Ontario labour movement was "deeply divided." (145) Naylor continues the theme of his book *The New Democracy*, noting that the labour revolt of 1919 had a marked impact on central Canadian workers, but in the end having to recognize that the conservative craft union leadership was able to beat back — in most cases relatively easily — the exponents of industrial unionism and radical politics.

Like Morton and McKay, Naylor suggests that it was largely a failure of strategy, but again like Morton and McKay, without really outlining what form a more effective strategy might have taken. Nor is Naylor entirely convincing when he suggests that the rejection of the One Big Union was a “strategic decision,” rather than a “declaration of conservatism.” (155) Perhaps so, but is the issue here not that the dominance of the conservative craft union leadership in southern Ontario necessitated the taking of this kind of strategic decision?

Naylor notes the importance in southern Ontario of the machinists, in both the International Association of Machinists and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. The ASE in Toronto and Hamilton were among the first to support the One Big Union. Naylor also points out that the machinists were more willing than elsewhere to organize women specialists working in the shops. These are important findings, because they challenge claims that white, male machinists were characterized by a sexism that excluded women from inclusion in the industrial union movement of the late war years. Naylor’s findings stand in marked contrast to those of Ewen, whose research indicates that male workers in Quebec’s munitions factories may have been more hostile to women’s wage labour than elsewhere in Canada. My own research suggests that the response of Montreal machinists working in the shops was echoed by their brothers in Winnipeg and Calgary. If the hostility was not confined to Quebec, then Naylor has found an important exception to the general trend worthy of further study.

Naylor also discusses the key role played by Federal Labour Unions in contributing to the workers’ revolt in southern Ontario by organizing unskilled workers. Federal labour unions, in part because they permitted the membership of non-trade unionists, were important centres of socialist leadership drawn from workers and petit bourgeois socialists willing to challenge the influence of the AFL/TLC craft union leadership. As Naylor demonstrates, they were important vehicles for the creation of a more inclusive workers’ movement.

As in the case of the chapter on the Maritimes, the discussion of electoral politics on the left leaves the reader with more questions than answers. The election of 11 members of the Independent Labour Party in 1919, who formed Canada’s first farmer-labour government with the United Farmers of Ontario, seemed to presage a new era in Canadian politics. As Naylor points out, however, labourists in the ILP were more concerned with cleansing the party system and ridding parliamentary institutions of corruption than they were with effecting any radical transformation of capitalism. Many workers in southern Ontario were much more supportive of the protectionist arguments of their employers than they were of the demands of the farmers for lower tariffs. As in the Maritimes labour-farmer cooperation wrecked on the shoals of fundamental disagreements. As well, locating a “revolt” in labourism raises crucial questions concerning the meaning of revolt.

The James Naylor and Tom Mitchell chapter on the prairies is the richest, most focused, and most fruitful in terms of direction for future research of all the

chapters in the book. Naylor and Mitchell effectively and rewardingly take on a number of myths about the labour revolt in western Canada. First, taking advantage of the work of James Conley, they highlight the importance of the increasing unity of skilled and unskilled workers in Winnipeg and elsewhere in the west. Second, they demonstrate that there was more unity between Anglo-Saxon and non-Anglo-Saxon workers that has generally been recognized. Third, while acknowledging that the leaders of the Winnipeg General Strike were not actively attempting a revolutionary transformation of Canadian society, they recognize both the revolutionary meanings, and yearnings, that characterized the mind set of many western workers in the late war years. In effect, Naylor and Mitchell respect what many workers thought and believed.

Taking advantage of Tom Mitchell's work on the meanings of citizenship in this period, the authors argue effectively that the crushing of the Winnipeg General Strike and discrediting of its ideological underpinnings fed into the "moral regulation of society" through institutions such as the public school. (213) The willingness of organizations such as the OBU to defend immigrants from the "cultural offensive" of the Winnipeg Citizens' League and the Canadian Reconstruction Association convinced Winnipeg's business and political elite that the worker's revolt contained an assault on British-based concepts of citizenship that amounted to an early recognition of Canada's "multicultural" reality. Naylor and Mitchell point us in new, and promising, directions. Hopefully historians who take up their theme will be open-minded enough to recognize that the OBU continued the promise of 1919 into the reactionary twenties, opposing the Ku Klux Klan, and attacking race-based theories of intelligence in the pages of the *OBU Bulletin*. Yes, Naylor and Mitchell take the hopes and dreams of the workers seriously; and yes, there's a little romance in their conclusion. At this point in time the writing of Canadian labour history needs a little romance.

The strongest chapter in *Workers' Revolt* is followed by the weakest, Allen Seager and David Roth's treatment of the history of labour in British Columbia. The chapter begins well, with Seager and Roth providing good descriptions of the impact of labour-saving technology on the fishing, mining, and logging industries. They make the important point that while resource extraction characterized west coast industrial capitalism, this did not mean that west coast capitalists lagged behind in the introduction of labour-saving technology or scientific management. In so doing, Seager and Roth mount another challenge to the idea of western exceptionalism, revealing that workers in British Columbia were fighting the same trends in industry that workers in Winnipeg, Toronto, and Cape Breton were fighting, thereby adding another important element to the national character of the workers' revolt.

As the chapter progresses, however, Seager and Roth seem more intent on conforming to contemporary critiques of older approaches to labour history than in explaining the forces at work in the period under study. Seager and Roth

take the obligatory swipe at the Communist tradition in Canada — with scarcely a nod in the direction of that tradition's contribution to the history of the Canadian left — relegating Communism to the rubbish heap of history as a “tragically sectarian identity.” (242) Warming to the task, the authors claim that the industrial union movement was not based in an “abstract solidarity,” thereby echoing the claims of David Bercuson and Janice Newton that the sexism and racism of Canadian workers meant that the entire industrial union movement was a vessel empty of real meaning and content. It was not the industrial union movement, the radicalization of skilled and unskilled workers, or the Marxism of Canadian socialists that constituted the labour revolt, but rather the willingness of Asian workers and women to take job action which is a “much more accurate measure of working-class militancy.” (252) This is nonsense. The attitudes of “white” workers notwithstanding, the mobilization of women and workers of colour happened as part of, not in spite of, a more general mobilization of Canadian workers committed to working-class education and organization. Seager and Roth's argument says more about the current academic political culture than it says about the Canadian working class during the labour revolt.

In the following chapter entitled “National Contours: Solidarity and Fragmentation,” editor Craig Heron makes some of the most important observations and connections in the volume. Ironically, one of his main points is that the workers' revolt, as a national rather than regional phenomenon, really ended in 1920, not 1925. As Heron correctly points out, the only real justification for the 1925 endpoint are the miners' strikes in Cape Breton. Heron is right, I think, in arguing that the years 1917-20 were characterized by “a remarkable spirit of working-class unity and class consciousness.” (272) Directly countering the Seager and Roth argument, Heron points out that labour's “spirit” manifested itself in the creation of industrial unions, district councils, labour federations, and trades and labour councils. The sympathetic strike was its major manifestation, and one of its most important legacies. Its other major legacy, as Heron points out, is that the workers' revolt was not based in a call for state bureaucracies or the rule of experts, but rather in notions of rank-and-file mobilization. Yes, acknowledges Heron, the prejudices of the white, male Anglo-Celtic workers did not disappear, but they were eroded. Finally, Heron makes an excellent point about the way in which labour historians have neglected the role of the provincial governments during the labour revolt.

The problems with the “National Contours” chapter really only come into focus once we have read the conclusion, also written by Craig Heron. One of the central problems of *Workers' Revolt* is that Heron speaks with two voices — as an individual, and as a spokesperson for the collected authors. This dual role creates some problems. Having in the “National Contours” chapter identified divisions between the right and left wings of the workers' revolt as a significant factor in the decline of the labour revolt, in the conclusion Heron echoes the

position taken by Naylor and Mitchell and claims that the issue during the workers' revolt was not one of "radicalism" versus "conservatism." The change in terminology does not obviate the contradiction. In the conclusion Heron emphasizes the importance of regionalism, in spite of having stated in the "National Contours" chapter that the location of radicals and militants — without whom, presumably, the workers' revolt would not have happened — is not explained by region, but rather by industry, occupation, ethnicity, and the local history of industrial relations. These are not, of course, mutually exclusive categories, but the shifts in emphasis are enough to confuse the reader and call into question the book's main argument.

One of the major weaknesses of *Workers' Revolt* is the omission — again — of northern Ontario. The history of northern Ontario is vital in both understanding the workers' revolt and in furthering debate concerning the theory of western exceptionalism. Northern Ontario was the bridge between east and west: if our understanding of the western exceptionalism debate is to be enriched the study of the history of northern Ontario remains essential. In 1919, when Bob Russell ordered 20,000 copies of the *Origins of the OBU*, he planned to send them to nine locations in Canada: three of those nine locations were in northern Ontario. In the 1920s northern Ontario was the heartland of the Communist Party's support: by 1925 a disproportionately large percentage of the CPC's membership was in northern Ontario. But perhaps this is the problem. Given Seager and Roth's dismissal of the Communist Party, and Craig Heron's equally brusque dismissal of the party's "flamboyant sectarianism," it is perhaps not surprising that editor and authors would shy away from the region, in spite of the fact that region is one of the book's main focuses.

The related issue is that any analysis seeking to extend the labour revolt into the 1920s cannot afford the kind of off-hand dismissal of the Communist tradition to be found in *Workers' Revolt*. A number of authors in the work argue that the failure of the revolt was a failure of strategy, a failure acknowledged at the time by Socialist Party of Canada activists like Jack Kavanagh, who went on to join the Communist Party. Does it not seem fair to suggest, therefore, that the authors of *Workers' Revolt*, having identified strategy as the key issue, should take the leading strategists of the Canadian left in this period into consideration? The issue is not that Canadian labour historians are now backpedaling like crazy to distance themselves from anything even remotely associated with Marxism-Leninism; the issue is where the hopes and dreams of many Canadian workers turned after the defeat and disillusionment of 1919-20. It is a simple historical fact that many Canadian workers, for right or wrong, turned their lonely eyes to the Soviet Union. Any effort to extend the workers' revolt to 1925 that does not take the impact of the Communist Party into account is flawed from the outset.

*Workers' Revolt* is a good book, an important book, a book that needs to be read. It also points us in a number of fruitful directions. We need to know much more about the reaction of Canadian machinists in all regions of the country to



the creation of the One Big Union and to the entrance of women into the machine shops. We need to know much more about the breakdown of the attempts to unite workers and farmers. There is important work to be done on comparing cities such as Winnipeg and Montreal, two cities in which Jewish socialists and women played especially important roles on the left, and cities in which urban, immigrant socialists attempted to broaden a struggle while literally encircled by a rural and religious political culture. The inclusion of northern Ontario in the equation is a must, and the inclusion of Newfoundland and the north would represent valuable additions as well. We need to know much more about the 1920s, with less emphasis on the destruction wreaked by mass culture on working-class culture and more attention paid to the ways in which the working-class held on to its values and fought the imposition of an upper-class defined conception of British citizenship. It is a tall order, but the editor and authors of *Workers' Revolt*, the criticisms here notwithstanding, have raised the bar and it is now up to the rest of us to respond to the challenge.

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Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Carolyn Hamilton's book on Shaka Zulu is not a study of the early nineteenth-century ruler, but of the invented traditions that have centred around him. She reveals the various ways in which the image of Shaka has been used in political struggles in eastern South Africa, from his lifetime right up to the present day. Her work has real relevance to contemporary politics, addressing the extreme bloodshed in Natal in the late 1980s, and the possibilities of drawing on the region's "heritage" to create the reconciled "rainbow nation" in the early 1990s.

A central contention of her book is that "invented" traditions are not crudely the product of white "inventors" in the African colonial context, but are rather "contested" or "negotiated" traditions. African actors are also involved in the creation of invented traditions. White colonisers could only manipulate indigenous symbols within the limits set by local understandings of those symbols – and these local understandings were themselves the product of contestation and negotiation within and between African communities. The meanings of the image of Shaka Zulu in contemporary politics reflect and continue this process.

Hamilton is explicitly challenging the thrust of recent, influential, scholarship, which emphasises the appropriation of indigenous symbols and systems by the colonial project. This scholarship, represented here by the