

Philippines, and the “Stop-N-Shop,” a successful chain operated by “an immigrant from the Middle East” in Sacramento. Although Yee’s approach raises questions such as what makes an English-speaking, third-generation, North American-born person and someone who grew up in Japan-occupied Taiwan both “Chinese,” and how to categorize and compare different cultural groups, he nonetheless invites future scholars to draw much needed parallels and contrasts across ethnic and national boundaries.

Yee has written an original and accessible study on Chinese-American supermarkets, their business practices, and the intricate economic and social conditions that accompanied their rise and fall. It is worthwhile reading for anyone interested in ethnic history, Asian-American studies, and business practices and labour union organizations in the trans-Mississippi West.

Belinda Huang  
Princeton University

Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America’s Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

Comparative history is fairly common, but it is not always done very well. Sometimes one part of the comparison is underdeveloped, the analysis of the similarities and differences between cases is weak, or the comparison does little to explain other larger questions of historical change. *Industrial Sunset*, however, suffers from none of these deficiencies. Steven High skillfully uses a comparative approach for an enlightening look at economic decline in the Great Lakes region, on both sides of the national border, between 1969 and 1984. His book also blends various fields of history to good effect, exploring the linked economic, political, social, and even environmental aspects of deindustrialization.

High’s writing style and chapter organization make for generally easy and rewarding reading. The writing is never impenetrably technical and the concise chapters, part of a painstaking approach to peeling away the multiple layers of deindustrialization, make precise points. The interpretation is also well-supported by a variety of sources, including government records, union archival material, trade journals, and 137 oral history interviews. As often happens, High was denied access to the records of companies playing key roles in the story he tells, but he did find some that had made their way into public-access collections.

High’s main argument wrestles with why Canadian workers in Southern Ontario fared so much better than their American “Rust Belt” counterparts when industrial decline led to numerous plant closings. He contends that

Canadians' use of nationalism allowed them to soften the blow of wholesale job loss, sustaining direct union action and winning government legislation that provided advance notice of layoff, severance pay, pension reinsurance, job placement assistance, and preferential hiring rights. In the United States, however, both the AFL-CIO's "Buy American" campaign and New Left veterans' "community strategy" failed to galvanize widespread opposition and won only limited, poorly enforced state and federal legislation to assist displaced workers.

To lingering materialists, a thesis that centers around the "empowering myths" (10) of community and nation might raise suspicions that *Industrial Sunset* is "post-structuralist". But the book is nothing of the sort. High firmly roots his interpretation of deindustrialization in the political and economic realities of the late twentieth century. Although he is interested in rhetoric, there is no mention of texts or workers' bodies as signifiers. In a straightforward way, High investigates the role played by differing cultural values during a major transformation in workers' lives. He is clearly working within the tradition of E.P. Thompson, recognizing how worker consciousness varies, changes, and matters for class struggle.

High begins his book with a chapter on the cultural evolution of the Great Lakes region from industrial "heartland" to "Rust Belt," providing an interesting history of the latter term. This compares to the resiliency of "Golden Horseshoe" to describe Southern Ontario, which he explains was due to the health of the region's economy (which was more diversified) and the faltering rise of Canada's frontier sunbelt (which provided less of a foil). On the other side of the border, the decline of concentrated industries in places like Youngstown, Ohio, and Detroit, Michigan, along with relatively better opportunities developing in the Southern states, combined with memories of the "Dust Bowl" to transform the Upper Midwest both in image and reality.

Chapter two chronicles the impact of job loss on workers who went from thinking of the factory as their home and co-workers as their family to shock and displacement after receiving notice. High draws on oral history interviews here and finds that Americans felt much more insecure and uncertain, identifying themselves as 'I-75 gypsies' or 'transplants' when they were called back from layoff for a job somewhere other than their hometown. As their unions failed them, they also felt helpless and disillusioned, with a few turning bitterly antiunion when they found entirely different jobs. None of the Canadian workers, on the other hand, felt compelled to question their identities as workers or union members, because they were still bound to people and places that made those identities meaningful. Their unions did not stop plant closings, but they did not simply abandon the membership and, in fact, mustered a strong fight for compensation and assistance.

The next chapter delves into another aspect of capital mobility in the post-

industrial era, when increased criticism by environmentalists combined with the appeal of cheaper land, lower taxes, and freedom from unions to lure factories to suburban industrial parks or rural sites. Between 1945 and 1984, High argues, planners and the companies they served gave more attention to incorporating environmental values into factory exteriors, marking a return to industrialism's earlier attempt to blend pastoral ideals with mill design. This new aesthetic of industry, however, was simply one part of a larger effort to camouflage and legitimate corporate efforts to lower production costs and pursue the ideology of growth – whatever the costs to local communities and nations. As a social environmental history of a neglected aspect of postwar industrialization this section, although a bit out of place in the book, is not only engaging but also astute.

High goes on to compare the differences between plant closings in Southern Ontario and the Upper Midwest. He notes that American companies made conscious decisions against modernizing their facilities and instead chose to invest somewhere else, shifting the blame for job loss to aging equipment and unproductive workers. In Canada, shutdowns hit the electrical, textile, and other industries but planned obsolescence did not claim a single major auto assembly plant or integrated steel mill. Consequently, these industries remained vital parts of the region's economy and unionized auto and steel workers remained active members of the country's organized labor movement.

Chapter five takes up the responses workers and union leaders made in the United States and Canada when faced with plant shutdowns. High suggests that the Vietnam War drove the militant New Left from the American labor movement, tarnished nationalism for them, and encouraged participants to embrace decentralization and localism. Later, when the factory closings began, they organized around defending local communities. One problem with this argument, however, is that the New Left was never so completely alienated and disengaged from American unions (which were never so fully supportive of the war). Many activists were also sympathetic to an internationalist, often socialist, vision and that certainly must have shaped how they saw capital's role in deindustrialization. But High is right that organized labor's emphasis on "Buy American" protectionism, tainted by racism and deflecting attention away from corporate culpability, clashed with the veteran New Left's response. He demonstrates this in two Ohio case studies, Fridgidaire in Dayton and Youngstown Sheet and Tube.

The approaches American workers and their supporters took to protecting their interests against plant closings produced few results, High explains, besides some state legislation that was rarely enforced. In Canada, however, workers and their unions rallied around anti-American nationalism and won many important legislative victories. An earlier version of economic nationalism had warned against too much foreign investment and this was modified in

the 1970s and 1980s to focus attention on the motives and likely impact of American disinvestment. High points out that this was a somewhat erroneous explanation of the forces behind deindustrialization, but the particular myth of nation served workers and their unions well. Their movement against plant shutdowns culminated in a wave of plant occupations during the 1980s, the spread of national anxiety among the general population and political leaders, and significant assistance from the federal government.

High explains, however, that Canadian workers failed to stop the plant closings. They were no more successful in this respect than Americans and this makes his comparison of national unionization rates somewhat puzzling. He suggests that the divergence between the two countries, starting in the 1950s and now reflected in Canada's 41 percent rate of unionization, nearly double the level in the United States, is due to a greater capacity to resist plant closings and concessions. Perhaps this is true in part – following from the continued vibrancy of organized labor, the greater respect it shares among workers and the general public, and more hesitance among employers to attack unions. But there are many other reasons for the pitiful performance of organized labor in the US and much stronger showing in Canada.

High also suggests that Americans would have fared better if they rose “in defence of community based on nation” (166). It is not clear, however, how American workers would have used the same strategy as Canadians to successfully protect their interests, considering that Canadian nationalism seemed to work because it was anti-American. In the end, it seems, neither set of workers had a viable strategy for resisting plant shutdowns which, put in their proper context, are actually part of a new global mobility of capital. But High's book goes a long way in helping us to understand some of the more recent struggles in North America against that phenomenon.

Chad Montrie  
University of Massachusetts Lowell

John Saville, *Memoirs from the Left* (London: The Merlin Press, 2003).

John Saville's accomplishments are many. He was the founder (with E.P. Thompson) of the *Reasoner* and the *New Reasoner*, editor of the *Dictionary of Labour Biography* and the British volumes of the *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier international*, long-time editor (with Ralph Miliband) of the *Socialist Register*, and one of the founders of the Society for the Study of Labour History. As Chair of Economic History at the University of Hull, Saville was instrumental in establishing an impressive labour history archive and he published over 100 books and articles in a prolific career spanning the