

Space does not allow even a brief appreciation of all the powerful contributions contained in this work that is organized into six sections documenting various examples of workers' control from the late nineteenth century until today. First, the reader is treated to a historical overview that nicely sets out the problems and possibilities of this subject. Next, a stimulating selection of essays looks at workers and revolution in the early twentieth century. The brilliant article by Ralf Hoffrogge on the revolutionary shop stewards in Germany, 1914–18, provides a sense of the possibilities that existed before the legal restrictions of the Weimar Republic demobilized (and repressed) radical workers who would later fall prey to Nazi barbarism.

Likewise, Andy Duncan brings to life the spirit of the common people in Spain during 1936–37 before Stalinist conservatism and fascist repression destroyed even the most basic aspects of workers' self-organization. The third section presents articles that detail the experience of workers' control under state socialism. The case studies of Yugoslavia and Poland illustrate that struggles for workers' control are not limited to only the traditionally capitalist nations. The next section shines light on little-known examples of workers' self-emancipation as part of anticolonial struggles in nations as diverse as Indonesia, Algeria, Argentina, and Portugal.

The capitalist reorganization of the global economy from the late 1960s until the 1980s provides the background for a burst of workers' factory takeovers. The contributions in this work range from studies of Great Britain and the United States to Italy and Canada. What all these workers' movements have in common is the determination of average employees to take direct control of their workplaces and establish reasonable conditions of their labor. Immanuel Ness's insightful article on the United States is unusually thought-provoking and an extremely useful contribution.

Last, this amazing collection concludes with a discussion of workers' revolts in the past twenty years. Examples ranging from West Bengal through Latin America—the experiences of Argentina, Venezuela, and Brazil—prove that struggles to master the means of production do not belong only to the distant historical past. This is a powerful reminder that earlier struggles are not relegated to the past but are part of an ongoing and unfolding process.

*Ours to Master and to Own* is a remarkable work that reminds us that history is not dead . . . it is not even past. It is an ongoing process whereby women and men choose not to accept the workplace or the world as it is. Those who teach labor studies would profit from adding this book that covers the often-forgotten history of workers' agency to their reading lists. This book is highly recommended.

---

Budd, John. *The Thought of Work*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011. 246 pp. \$24.95 (paper).

**Reviewed by:** Charley Richardson, retired, UMass Lowell, Jamaica Plain, MA, USA  
DOI: 10.1177/0160449X12466829

Books that focus on work are far too rare. As John Budd points out:

Work defines who we are, individually and collectively. . . . Work is how we earn a living, build a material world, develop (or lose) our self-esteem and social identity, interact with others least like ourselves and experience society's power imbalances. (p. 179)

I was intrigued by a book that explores the many different ways that work is defined, described and deconstructed—a book that puts work at its center.

Budd travels through history to explore the wide range of “conceptualizations” of work, discussing how they present and affect the world of work. He organizes these conceptualizations into 10 categories, ranging from work as a curse through work as a commodity to work as caring for others, identity and service. Using these categories, he catalogues views of work in ways that he hopes will be useful to scholars as they attempt to move to a broader understanding of the role of work for individuals and for society as a whole.

Budd challenges all of us to think of work in its broadest sense, beyond the narrow views that focus on paid work, undervaluing those who labor without pay, like women who work in the home or volunteers who work to improve society. For someone writing a thesis on sociological and philosophical conceptualizations of work, the wandering walk through the many different views of writers about work may be of great use.

But as I read Budd's book, I was left underwhelmed and more than a bit frustrated. From the perspective of a labor educator, the book is a disappointment. It lacks any useful analysis of the various views of work or practical applications for those who are interested more in changing and improving work than in philosophizing about it.

Budd leads us to the edge but fails to delve deeply into the interests (including class interests) of the various conceptualizations of work. His assertion that “. . . the thought of work shapes the nature of work in practice” (p. 17) leaves aside the needed discussion of interests, class and power, particularly of conceptualizations that are designed to constrain struggle or simply achieve productivity and profitability.

Work has changed over the years, and these changes need to be analyzed and understood. But this is indeed where the book lets us down. References to new modes of production such as teams or new Human Resource Management approaches such as work enhancement are not followed by a discussion of what these really mean for the workforce, and for those who are promoting them.

Instead, Budd gives us shallow generalizations: “In the United States, Britain, and other wealthy, industrialized countries over the last three decades, flexible specialization has replaced mass manufacturing as the industrial catchphrase, employee empowerment rather than scientific management is embraced, the service sector or the creative sector is displacing manufacturing as the employment engine, and globalization is straining employers, employees, unions and communities” (p. 9). In Budd's presentation, the

rhetoric and reality are too often indistinguishable. Thus, for the labor educator, the critical steps from knowledge to understanding to action are left unexplored.

I would have liked to see more direction, analysis, and discussion of how various conceptions of work fit together or conflict, and how the interests of various classes are served by particular conceptions of work. I wanted a deeper view of how concrete changes in the nature of work are analyzed and understood. Budd's book gives a lot but leaves me wanting much more.

---

Fletcher, Bill, Jr. *"They're Bankrupting Us!" and 20 Other Myths about Unions*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2012. 200 pages. \$15.00 (paper).

**Reviewed by:** Larry Savage, Brock University, Niagara, Canada  
DOI: 10.1177/0160449X12466833

In a political and economic climate in which hundreds of thousands of working class people view unions as part of the problem rather than a credible vehicle to improve their working lives, Bill Fletcher Jr.'s new book, which tackles twenty of the most popular anti-union myths, is truly a breath of fresh air. In fact, the content of the book is so important for the future of the labor movement that every union member in the country should be given a copy to read upon their first day of employment and, in turn, be encouraged to pass on the book to a non-union friend or relative.

The book is divided into twenty-one highly accessible, bite-sized chapters that confront a wide array of popular anti-union myths spun by the right-wing news media, big business, and anti-union special interest groups. In each chapter Fletcher debunks a different myth, picking apart the argument before setting the record straight. Fletcher carefully explains why corporate interests promote and sustain each myth, arguing that the ideological war against labor is every bit as important to capital as undercutting the economic power of unions.

A number of chapters really stand out. Three myths—#1: "Workers are forced to join unions, right?" #3: "Unions are actually run by labor bosses, aren't they?" and #8: "The union uses our money for political action and I have no say in the matter!"—all tackle the question of union democracy in a brilliant, historically infused, yet succinct way.

In a handful of chapters, Fletcher uses the anti-union myths as a base from which to change the conversation entirely, taking aim at the ethos of business unionism (Myth #15, "Yes unions are good for their members, but they hurt the rest of us!") and the uneven demographic make-up of the union leadership (Myths #12, "Unions are all racist and people of color need not apply" and #13, "Unions have a history of sexism ... what makes them better now?")

While the author could have easily fallen into the role of an overzealous union cheerleader, Fletcher is careful not to discount the real lived experiences of workers

Copyright of Labor Studies Journal is the property of Sage Publications Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.