Senior Editors' Note

As is true of many scholarly journals these days, issues of ILWCH alternate between those that are thematic, with articles addressing a similar question or theme, and those that consist of individual submissions which reflect the wide range of topics currently being studied by historians of work and labor, as is the case with this issue. Yet even in this non-thematic issue, we quickly discerned certain common themes and approaches and have grouped the articles accordingly. The convergences and overlaps among the submitted articles are not just serendipitous; rather, they indicate the common historical questions and shared concerns elicited by the moment in which we are living, and that have generated new trends in the field of historical studies.

The first two articles in the opening section, on East Europe and the Troubled Memory of "The Worker," speak to an issue that has demanded the attention of historians across the globe—how to represent the contested pasts in public spaces, especially in the aftermath of moments experienced as historical ruptures. Some twenty years ago anthropologist Katherine Verdery, in *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*, alerted us to the particular challenges of grappling with the past in the former state-socialist societies of East Europe, and the authors of these two articles have extended this discussion into an era in which the full impact of neoliberalism and its individualist-consumerist ethic was/is in evidence. Magdalena Rek-Woźniak and Wojciech Woźniak compare museum representations of workers in two de-industrialized textile cities, Tampere, Finland and Łódź, Poland, that were both part of the Russian empire and the Tsarist proto-industrial economy. Despite the many similarities in the history and trajectory of the two locations, the authors found very different representations of their past in official public spaces. The Polish city museum highlighted the benevolence and expertise of a few of Łódź's textile magnates; after decades of the Polish communist party's lionization of workers, contemporary museum narratives turned their back on labor and looked to capitalist entrepreneurs for historical heroes. In Tampere, on the contrary, museum administrators used the memory of a collective labor force to build a communal memory of a city's past united around labor, unions, and a shared working-class culture. The question of who can be celebrated in public space has been particularly fraught in post-socialist Albania where statues celebrating "The Worker" were as common during the socialist era as those commemorating specific political figures. According to Raino Isto, the tendency in Albania has been not only to topple the statues of reviled individuals, but also to remove or vandalize the omnipresent images of The Worker from public spaces as Albanians transitioned to a post-socialist society premised on individualism and consumerism, and in which class holds little meaning. In this context, Isto finds, images of workers spark inter-generational debates about working conditions in

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contemporary society and the legacy of the socialist past. Rounding out this section is an article by Jan De Graaf that recuperates the history of a largely forgotten strike movement in Poland's Dąbrowa Basin. Poland became famous for its striking shipyard workers in the 1980s, but far less attention has been paid to labor strikes during the Stalinist period. In "The Occupational Strikes in the Dąbrowa Basin of April 1951," De Graaf examines a strike called by the miners of that region after the regime extended the working day by one hour. Miners in this communist stronghold walked off the job as communist managers engaged in the kind of wage-reducing tactics that Polish workers knew well from the previous capitalist period. But in 1951 the workers found much of the rhetoric they had used against capitalist employers being turned against them by the communist government and the strike (and, until recently, the memory of it) was ultimately suppressed.

Recent years have seen extensive and productive debate about the concept of neoliberalism, with scholars in a number of disciplines questioning assumptions about its origins and its scope, and just how "neo" neoliberalism might be. With these cautions in mind, we have grouped the next set of articles under the title "Labor Activism under Neoliberalism" since all four authors examine the fate of labor movements and workers' initiatives in moments and contexts defined by a logic typically associated with the neoliberal order, but their research also helps us refine our historical understanding of neoliberalism, its complicated origins and its multifarious consequences. Among those workers who have most suffered from the consequences of budget cutting and the hollowing out of the welfare state are public-sector employees. In his study of parastatal employees in Southern Benin, 1989–1990, Alexander Keese analyzes the various strategies adopted by these workers to protest or resist decline and unemployment. The catastrophic impact of neoliberal policies coincided in Benin, as elsewhere, with a process of democratization, which enabled workers at risk for unemployment to articulate their critiques and concerns in petitions and other documentation even as their position within the public sector became unsustainable. The somewhat ironic result is a plentiful collection of evidence that reveals how these imperiled employees interpreted their circumstances and the remedies they proposed in the face of the neoliberal onslaught. The next two articles focus principally on rural workers in Spain during the decades following the end of the Franco dictatorship, and during the transition to democratic governance and the ascendancy of neoliberalism. Both present cases of worker organization that involved ideological influences and participation by sectors of the worker/peasant population that were not typically associated with rural unions during an earlier era of labor militancy. In their study of the Autonomous Union of The Vine in Jerez (SAVID), from 1979 to 1987, based on the life histories of two prominent union members, authors Beltrán Roca and Eva Bermúdez focus on the unconventional ideological roots of this Catholic trade union, and trace the rise and decline of a "paradigmatic" instance of what they term "militant particularism." The authors also offer the brief history of SAVID as evidence to contest dominant narratives on

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the role of the trade union movement during the Spanish transition. Moving from Andalucía in the south to Galicia in the north of Spain, the article by Ángel Rodríguez Gallardo and María Victoria Martins-Rodríguez illuminates the changing role of women in the Galician peasants' union, "Sindicato Labrego Galego." Starting in the 1980s, scholars of social movements noted that groups defined by gender, sexuality, or ethnicity were expanding their presence in movements for labor rights and social justice, and the authors present a case that affirms the impact that feminist movements could have even in locales, such as rural Galicia, typically not associated with projects for greater gender equality. Furthermore, they contend that women's expanded role in the sindicato from 1970 to 1990 not only re-shaped the union movement but also changed the rural definition of gender. In the final article in this section, Aimee Loiselle makes an important intervention into the growing historiography of neoliberalism and globalization. "U.S. Imperialism and Puerto Rican Needleworkers" explores the role that locations such as Puerto Rico played in the development of "exceptional" economic practices, including the formation of Export Processing Zones, that formed the "scaffolding" for what we would now call neoliberal economic policies. Particularly significant is her argument that the skilled needlework of Puerto Rican women attracted investors in the textile and clothing business to the newly acquired US territory, but these same women also shaped and even frustrated the trajectory of various economic initiatives by migrating to the mainland and adopting other strategies to improve their economic position. Among its contributions, Loiselle's article challenges the historical narrative that portrays neoliberalism as arising from a linear movement of capital away from "advanced" economies with robust labor unions to locales with more manageable labor forces in the Third World or the Global South.

Divisions within the working class, or between segments of the labor force, and their political, social, and cultural implications, have long been a major object of study for labor historians. In the final section of this issue, "Lines of Labor, Lines of Production," three articles set in very different contexts discuss circumstances in which such divisions can be hardened or effaced. In his study of labor migration and food provision on the early-colonial Kenyan coast, Devin Smart reveals key aspects of the migratory experience and social reproduction by highlighting the changing channels of food supply in the region around Mombasa. Although food rations supplied by employers in the early decades of the twentieth century could be seen as a form of "racial paternalism," Smart contends that the extreme monotony of the diet and the need for the migrant men to do their own cooking became the grounds for protests both for better quality provisions and higher wages. The food ration (posho) also reduced the differences between the rural and urban workers in this period since both relied primarily on the posho for subsistence. Shifting to a different corner of the British Empire, Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh's article on the Caledon Lockout in rural Ulster (1918–1922) examines a failed strike at a woolen mill that nonetheless succeeded in uniting for a time Irish Catholic

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and Protestant workers in a stronghold of Ulster Unionism. The author argues that such episodes of working-class solidarity occurred with relative frequency during Ireland's revolutionary period (1916–1926), and thus contest the view that traditional sectarian divisions were immutable. At the same time, the strategies adopted by the employer to foil the strike, and the ensuing local sectarian violence, offer us insights into the dismal political outcomes of this period in Northern Ireland. Finally, moving to industrializing Japan, Jamyung Choi looks at yet another division in the workforce, what he aptly calls the "collar line," in his study of the professionalization of engineering and social stratification in Japan. The author follows the trajectory of the Tokyo Worker School, founded in 1881 and originally intended to upgrade the status of manual workers. Instead, as the article shows, the school became a site for the professionalization of engineers and technicians eager to distance themselves from blue-collar workers, even those who were skilled and well-paid, and thus this innovative institution for worker training ultimately served to reduce the prestige of manual labor even as it functioned as a springboard for a new cohort of technical employees.

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