

for the complexities and contradictions of history, arguing for instance that with its uprooting of Mexican society the Mexican Revolution solved the labour problems encountered by the oil companies before 1910.

Many of us will recognize late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century mechanisms of labour recruitment, exploitation, and social and political repression from our own work, but this volume clearly posits itself in the line of a new social history that is both interdisciplinary and which offers multiple perspectives. Apart from its ecological viewpoint, it also offers a clear gender-sensitive approach. This book succeeds in presenting the perspectives of the different groups in their internal logic, but also as the result of the interaction with actions and perspectives of other sectors of society. In general, it presents the best the new approach to labour history has to offer. It may be hoped that it will also be read by many who do not have a direct interest in Mexican or Latin American history.

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TRIECE, MARY E. *On the Picket Line. Strategies of Working-Class Women During the Depression.* University of Illinois Press, Urbana [etc]. 2007. viii, 179 pp. \$60.00. (Paper: \$25.00.) DOI: 10.1017/S0020859008083466

Over the past few months, I have had the opportunity to read a number of books which have highlighted for me some of the key issues involved in this review of Mary Triece's new book, *On the Picket Line: Strategies of Working-Class Women during the Depression*. Some of these books have been written by non-historians applying the tools of their particular fields to questions of historical interest. The authors' success in doing this varies greatly, particularly when examined from the point of view of an historian. Several other books are recent additions to the history of the Communist Party in the 1930s. Both of these sets of books address important issues raised by Triece's book.

Mary Triece teaches in a School of Communications and uses a number of theories from the fields of communications and rhetoric in building her analysis. In this book, Triece claims to examine the question, "How did working-class women in a well-known leftist organization, the Communist Party USA, manage the paradoxes arising from gender and class discrimination during a tumultuous period in US history?" (pp. 2–3). She promises the reader that she will do this through an analysis of the rhetoric of female leaders of the CP and the discourse of "countless 'ordinary' women" (p. 10) writing in the columns of the CP publication, *Working Woman*, as well as "extra-discursive' tactics" which "forced the hand of employers, owners, and landlords" (p. 6).

I was intrigued as I began reading Triece. How would she examine these issues differently from past historians? What insights would her background in communications bring to the issues addressed? These are the types of questions I always ask myself when I read historical works by non-historians. My recent reading of other works had left me particularly aware of these questions. For example, Canadian geographer Geoff Mann's recent book, *Our Daily Bread: Wages, Workers, and the Political Economy of the American West*, illustrates many of the most useful ways in which social science theories can be brought to bear on historical questions. With careful attention to the social meanings of place, Mann traces what he calls the "cultural politics of the wage" in three struggles of workers in the western United States. I found the book's portrayal of these three struggles

both fascinating and frustrating; fascinating because of his application of theory to each, and frustrating because he jumps around in time without fully (and historically!) considering how the passage of time might be effecting his three cases. Beginning with Los Angeles oil workers immediately following World War II, he then jumps back to California timber workers in the 1920s, followed by the recounting of Pacific Coast fishermen's efforts from the 1930s into the early 1950s.<sup>1</sup> As a historian, I winced at this largely unacknowledged jumping. At the same time, I think most of us who consider ourselves "social historians" hold more appreciation for theory and other disciplines' methods than do some other types of historians. I was glad to have read Mann's book.

Close to the time I read Mann's book, I also read Jean Pfaelzer's new book, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans*. Pfaelzer is a professor of English, East Asian, and American Studies, and her book is a good example of what a wonderful book of history can sometimes be written by someone unbound by the confines of the historian's discipline. Filling a major gap in the historiography of Chinese immigrants' experiences in the United States, Pfaelzer has done an amazing job at unearthing stories from the perspective of the Chinese themselves. Rooting through attics, basements, and second-hand stores, as well as through archives and descendants' memories, Pfaelzer has come up the long-lost story of how Chinese immigrants and their families experienced the horrific events of the anti-Chinese movement in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Pfaelzer's book raised for me all sorts of questions about how historians choose their sources as well as how historians might be able to expand their definitions of sources.

As I began reading Triece, I hoped to gain similarly useful insights. Unfortunately, I found Triece's book to be much weaker than either Mann's or Pfaelzer's. Much more of her work focused on the rhetoric of CP leaders and famous speakers like Ella Reeve Bloor and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn than on that of "ordinary" women, let alone "extra-discursive" tactics. Furthermore, when she is claiming to talk about ordinary women's voices, she does little more than to take the letters in the CP's *Working Woman* at face value; she has no discussion of why she thinks the anonymous letter writers are in fact representative of working-class women during the 1930s' depression. In a single footnote, she comments that "Although it is not possible to know for sure the authenticity of [...] letters appearing in CP publications [...], I believe that the letters signed as ordinary workers or wives did, in fact, represent the voices of those individuals" (p. 154, n. 1). Personally, I would have liked to have seen a more thorough discussion of this issue (in the text!), including some acknowledgement of whether Triece's arguments would have to be changed if the letters were revealed as *inauthentic*.

In general, recent works on the Communist Party USA during the 1930s have presented a much more nuanced view of the Party than that portrayed by Triece. Randi Storch's book, *Red Chicago*, for example, reveals how complicated the "reality" of life in the CP was through its simultaneous use of publications and records found in the US and those found in the Russian State Archive in Moscow, now available on microfilm in the Library of Congress.<sup>3</sup> Triece's book does not display any knowledge of either the tortured history of the CPUSA or of any of the debates about the CP which have raged among US

1. Geoff Mann, *Our Daily Bread: Wages, Workers, and the Political Economy of the American West* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007).

2. Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* (New York, 2007).

3. Randi Storch, *Red Chicago: American Communism at its Grassroots, 1928–35* (Urbana, IL, [etc.], 2007).

historians for decades. While I am not arguing that Triece's book is flawed because she did not travel to Moscow for her research, I am arguing that the book would have been strengthened by more of an acknowledgement of the works written by recent historians on her topic.

Throughout the book, Triece implies that women in the CP were somehow different from other working-class women activists, but she is never explicit about what constituted that difference. In fact, in the disappointingly brief section of the book devoted to "extra-discursive actions" (pp. 99–109), she does not even attempt to discuss how women's actions varied from men's. Her statement that "[f]rom the workers' standpoint, extra-discursive actions such as walkouts were often the most effective and sometimes the only way for them to 'argue' for fair wages and work conditions" (p. 108) is a fairly bland statement of why workers strike rather than a striking insight into women's activism. Despite a title which suggested an exciting exploration into just these types of "extra-discursive actions", I gained no insights into the particular activities of women during strikes or other types of demonstrations from this book.

While that was my greatest disappointment in reading Triece, it was compounded by numerous historical errors and/or elisions. Triece displays little understanding of the Depression years, assuming that Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal spanned all of them and that "a cornerstone of the New Deal was the National Industrial Recovery Act" (p. 13). For Triece, neither the Depression and its politics nor the CPUSA and its politics ever changed over the course of the 1930s. Accordingly, her examples of "authentic working-class women" come most often from either 1931 or 1938, neither of which year could reflect reactions to the NIRA, since it was not passed until 1933 and was declared unconstitutional in 1937!

I had hoped to find in Triece interesting new ways to examine women's actions "on the picket line". Short of that, I expected to see new examples of women workers' activism during the 1930s. Unfortunately, I found neither in *On the Picket Line*.

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VAN KEMSEKE, PETER. *Towards an Era of Development. The Globalization of Socialism and Christian democracy 1945–1965*. [KADOC Studies on Religion, Culture and Society, vol. 5.] Leuven University Press, Leuven 2006. 324 pp. € 32.00. DOI: 10.1017/S0020859008093462

One of the most interesting aspects of globalization is that the spread of the new international economy has been accompanied by the growth of an international civil society, that is, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which span national boundaries. Most of the important NGOs today are organized around an issue and are not explicitly linked to political parties: Amnesty International, Greenpeace, etc. By contrast, Peter Van Kemseke, in this innovative book, looks at the pre-history of international NGOs which were alliances of political parties: the Socialist International (SI) and its Christian democratic counterpart, the Nouvelles Equipes Internationales (NEI). The interwar Socialist Labour International having collapsed in World War II, the international socialist movement initially was without any formal structure after 1945, although representatives of socialist parties were already holding meetings in 1948. Meanwhile, the NEI was