

NEW DIRECTIONS AND THEMES IN
LATIN AMERICAN LABOR AND
WORKING-CLASS HISTORY:
A Sampler

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- MOVIMIENTO OBRERO Y LUCHA SOCIALISTA EN LA REPUBLICA DOMINICANA (ORIGENES HASTA 1960)*. By Roberto Cassá. (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1990. Pp. 617.)
- LA "SOLIDARIDAD" SINDICAL INTERNACIONAL Y SUS VICTIMAS: TRES ESTUDIOS DE CASO LATINOAMERICANOS*. By Åke Wedin. (Stockholm: Instituto de Estudios Latinoamericanos de Estocolmo, 1991. Pp. 187.)
- EL DESAFIO DEL CAMBIO: NUEVOS RUMBOS DEL SINDICALISMO*. By the Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores (ORIT). (Caracas: Nueva Sociedad, 1989. Pp. 163.)
- SINDICATOS BAJO REGIMENES MILITARES: ARGENTINA, CHILE, BRASIL*. Compiled by Manuel Barrera and Gonzalo Falabella. (Santiago: Centro de Estudios Sociales/United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1990. Pp 318.)
- UNA PUNTADA EN EL TIEMPO: LA INDUSTRIA DE LA AGUJA EN PUERTO RICO (1900-1929)*. By Lydia Milagros González García. (Santo Domingo: Centro para el Estudio de la Realidad Puertorriqueña [CEREP] and the Centro para la Acción Feminista [CIPAF], 1990. Pp. 139.)
- "... *LA VIDA MIA NO ES FACIL*": *LA OTRA CARA DE LA ZONA FRANCA*. By Teodora Espinoza, as told to Magaly Pineda. (Santo Domingo: Centro para la Acción Feminista [CIPAF], 1990, Pp. 60.)
- MUNDO URBANO Y CULTURA POPULAR: ESTUDIOS DE HISTORIA SOCIAL ARGENTINA*. Compiled by Diego Armus. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1990. Pp. 361.)

Without doubt, the field of Latin American labor and working-class studies remains alive and well in the United States, Latin America, and Europe. Evidence can be found in the number of panels treating labor and working-class topics at meetings like those of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) or even the more conservative American Historical Association. Further evidence is the establishment this past year of the

Labor Working Group within LASA, the inclusion of special sections on Latin American labor at regional conferences like the Southern Labor Studies Conference in Atlanta during the fall of 1991, and the conferences on Latin American Labor History held regularly at various universities since 1984.¹ Finally, publication of the *Latin American Labor News* (now in its third year) and a series of working papers by the Center for Labor Research and Studies at Florida International University in Miami are providing a specialized forum for articles on labor by North, Central, and South Americans. The center's emphasis on bibliographical material is also helping assemble a valuable pool of references that can be hard to come by (see French 1990a, 1990b).

By any measure, most scholarly work on this topic is taking place in Latin America. Labor and working-class studies are flourishing today in almost every Latin American country after a period of relative quiescence during the repressive years of the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Research institutes in several countries specialize in the field, often combining contemporary and historical studies. Four of the many examples are the Asociación Laboral para el Desarrollo (ADEC/ATC) in Lima; the Centro Interdisciplinario de Estudios sobre el Desarrollo, Uruguay (CIEDUR) in Montevideo; the Programa de Economía del Trabajo (PET) in Santiago; and PEHESA/CISEA (Programa de Estudios de Historia Económica y Social Americana/Centro de Investigaciones Sociales sobre el Estado y la Administración) in Buenos Aires. Many existing academic nongovernmental organizations house one or more researchers who are studying some aspect of labor and the working class. In addition, the Comisión de Movimientos Laborales of the Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO) has sponsored considerable research as well as seminars and conferences that have resulted in substantial publications (see Comisión de Movimientos Laborales 1986 and Zubillaga 1989). Some research is also being carried out within Latin American universities.

I have attempted elsewhere to assemble a select inventory of current work in the field (see Spalding 1991). Its production is marked by increasing diversity and a stretching of previous limits to encompass a broader range of topics. One example is work that concentrates on women or gender (for examples, see Babb 1990 and Phillips 1990). A major thrust of this effort is the focus on women's role in the labor force in "traditional" areas (such as point of production, domestic piecework, or service jobs) but also on "hidden labor" performed at home as housework or in the fields. One aspect of this research has involved the development of a statistic known as the PEA-F (*población económicamente activa-femenina*), meaning the economically active population including the hidden female

1. The most recent such conference was hosted by New York State University at Stony Brook in April 1992.

component. Here too, major research institutes, most of them recently created, are populating the field. Three examples are the Centro Flora Tristán in Lima, the Centro para la Acción Feminista (CIPAF) in Santo Domingo, and the Grupo de Estudios sobre la Condición de la Mujer Uruguaya (GRECMU) in Montevideo (for more on these groups, see León and Spalding 1992).

Work on Latin American labor and working-class issues over the past decade has drawn heavily on the “new social history.” Scholars have ventured into new areas, struggling to learn how best to combine the old with the new. This effort has been detailed in the special issue of *International Labor and Working-Class History* dedicated to Latin America (ILWCH 1989). Attention has turned away from traditional institutional expressions of the working class like unions and political parties to such topics as social space, personal relations, and popular culture. In other words, scholars are seeking to understand the process of class formation (or lack of it) within given societies and historical moments and also to examine how ordinary people lived on a day-to-day basis.

These studies almost unanimously emphasize the diversity of experiences within the laboring masses and caution against making the kind of broad generalizations that researchers favored during the field’s formative years. Issues of location within the economy, prior work and social experience, ethnicity, gender, and local conditions are all yielding a variety of views, attitudes, and compartments on the part of workers (used here in the broadest sense). This perspective contrasts directly with more traditional labor studies, which emphasized class confrontation and *the* labor movement. Yet despite a clear turn away from Marxism by many younger (and some older) scholars—partly for opportunistic reasons—class has not entirely disappeared from analyses. But the concept has increasingly become an explanatory factor among many rather than the only one or the main one. For example, in some feminist research, class may become almost entirely subordinate to gender.

One aspect of these new lines of investigation that comes closer to traditional labor studies involves the current status of the labor and working-class movement. Several scholars have postulated a new era for labor, one born of the repressive dictatorships that ruled in most of Central and South America in recent years. These analysts perceive two general trends: a weakening of the power of organized labor due to its diminished role within local economies; and a new independence from political systems and parties. The debate over these trends also involves organized labor’s connections with unorganized workers and with international organizations.

The discussion that follows will attempt to examine some of these points by selecting examples from the recent literature. Thus this essay seeks less to review each title than to discuss the portion of the work or

hypotheses that bear on these points. I make no claim to have even scratched the possibilities under each point—numerous review essays could be written, each involving entirely different titles. Similarly, the references cited are illustrative, designed to provide only a representative fraction of very recent work.

General histories involving all of Latin America (such as Collier and Collier 1991 and Melgar Bao 1989) or specific countries (such as Godio 1990, 1991) continue to appear even within the current research environment, which emphasizes micro-histories as building blocks for future syntheses. An excellent example of national labor history is Roberto Cassá's work on the Dominican Republic. *Movimiento obrero y lucha socialista en la República Dominicana (orígenes hasta 1960)* is not just another chronological study but the work of a sensitive historian who has clearly thought long and hard about his subject, the country, and the larger world context.

The book begins with a fine analytical introduction discussing basic theoretical issues involved in writing working-class and labor history. Cassá differentiates acutely between the socialist movement (or socialist thought) and working-class organization. He correctly points out that these two ran along parallel tracks for most of the twentieth century, coming together for the first time during the upsurge of working-class activity in the 1940s. Cassá cautions that anyone writing labor and working-class history must walk a fine line between mechanical determinism and idealist indeterminism. He observes that classes as such are not the sole agents of historical change, rather, class struggle is tempered by factors like nationality, religion, ethnicity, local and regional attachments, culture, and education. These factors are especially important in underdeveloped, dependent societies like the Dominican Republic, where classes form slowly.

Cassá notes that subordinate groups are always important, no matter what role they may play at a given historical moment. He also acknowledges that organized movements among workers are not necessarily socialist but may take on a purely economic character. Nor do they have specific, predetermined final goals. Class consciousness emerges slowly, only via input from those who have a particular socioeconomic analysis, and it may decrease or even disappear over given periods of time.

Cassá mercilessly criticizes "leftist" intellectuals who stayed in their own particular theoretical cocoon rather than participate in national politics. Whether deliberately or not, he shows in particular how the young leftists of the 1930s and 1940s turned into the McCarthyites of the 1950s and 1960s in order to look good in U.S. eyes and thus have a chance to govern after the fall of Rafael Trujillo. Juan Bosch, for example, used his connections with the ruling Cuban social democratic party, the *Auténticos*, to ensure the persecution of exiled Dominican Communists throughout the Caribbean.

In researching his history, Cassá mined archives, recorded oral interviews of major labor leaders, and studied the appropriate theoretical literature. His *Movimiento obrero y lucha socialista en la República Dominicana* stands out as a milestone in Dominican labor and working-class history. He has shown that such a history can be written even about societies in which the proletariat and organized workers play a secondary role. Cassá fully acknowledges the lacunae in his study resulting from lack of available evidence, an inevitable problem in a country where political activity took place semiclandestinely much of the time. He often raises interesting historical questions only to say that the evidence needed to answer them has not yet surfaced or does not exist. Throughout the work, a lively dialogue with other scholars dots the text and footnotes.

Dominican workers in the small modern sector of the economy began to organize from the time of the U.S. occupation (1916), initially on a minimal scale due to their small number and state repression. The movement grew in the 1920s, feeding off nationalist and anti-American sentiment, but Trujillo tamed it easily via co-optation and repression, creating the state-controlled Confederación de Trabajadores Dominicanos (CTD). Only in the late 1930s and 1940s did working-class and labor activity revive with the founding of the Partido Democrático Revolucionario Dominicano in 1943. In 1946 the Partido Popular Socialista was founded, the country's first Communist party. This upsurge lasted only briefly, however, and following a democratic opening at the end of World War II that fomented the sugar strikes and general unrest of 1946, Trujillo cracked down again, virtually destroying both the labor movement and progressive political parties. Between 1949 and 1960, the press reported only one strike, which took place with government approval. *Movimiento obrero y lucha socialista* ends with 1960, but Cassá links the subsequent weaknesses of the working-class and labor movement to its lack of previous development.

The internationalist aspects of the Dominican struggle stand out in Cassá's study. Cubans and Puerto Ricans in particular played important roles at times within the country and in helping exile communities from the 1920s onward. This theme in its modern context also preoccupies Åke Wedin in *La "solidaridad" sindical internacional y sus víctimas*. Wedin, a career labor bureaucrat with extensive experience internationally and with the Swedish labor movement, explores the subject of international solidarity by using three case examples to show how even well-intentioned outreach can backfire. He draws on fieldwork that included personal interviews. Wedin also gained access to important and sometimes semiconfidential documents through his personal involvement as representative of the International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural, and Allied Workers.

Wedin argues that solidarity can only achieve its goal of strengthening the labor movement if it takes place among equals on a one-to-one basis at all levels. It clearly cannot take the form of top-down charity. He

chastises international labor groupings and governments that use solidarity as a guise to influence and control local labor organizations for their own narrow political or economic purposes. Wedin singles out the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), an entity funded by the U.S. government that implements the official foreign policy of the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations), for its blatant interference in Latin America (see Armstrong et al. 1989; NACLA 1988; and Spalding 1992).

Wedin's three case examples, all from the 1970s and 1980s, involve Costa Rica, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. The first shows how AIFLD's heavy-handed tactics divided and weakened the Costa Rican movement when developments did not go entirely its way. Wedin notes that international rivalries may encourage abuses by local officials. For example, if one international organization withdraws support, another steps in, often without asking questions. This competition is not always strictly ideological. For example, the Social Democratic German Friedrich Ebert Foundation considers itself as opposed to the AFL-CIO as to Christian Democrats.

The Colombian case involved international support provided to build the movement through rural cooperatives. Corrupt Colombian labor leaders siphoned off funds for their own benefit, and as a result, a promising cooperative movement in Popayán never received back-up funds. By the time the International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural, and Allied Workers and the Swedish Agricultural Workers Union found out, the money had vanished. Wedin places the blame on both sides, pointing out that donors must follow up projects closely, that administration should be carried out by committees composed of an equal number of persons from both sides, and that accountability should be mandatory. Corrupt leaders not only got away scot-free when the International forgave the debt but immediately picked up funding from AIFLD when the Swedes pulled out. Moreover, one of the AIFLD-financed leaders (later a high official in the Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores, or ORIT) subsequently helped launder money for a notorious Colombian drug baron after gaining control of a union-sponsored bank. AIFLD ignored this breach and continued its support (p. 98).

Wedin's final case involves rural unions in the Dominican Republic. In this example, however, an honest and hardworking group of unionists resisted foreign blandishments and outside pressures, even refusing aid with strings. Yet foreign funding proved to be a mixed blessing: unions ended up outside any major confederation because they had no need to join, thus helping atomize the movement in a country already famous for splintered groups.

Wedin nevertheless does not despair of international solidarity, recognizing the vital role it can play in labor development. But he thinks that substantial changes must occur if it is to become effective. He foresees

some positive movement on the international scene with the demise of the Communist labor international (in Latin America, the Congreso Permanente de Unidad Sindical de los Trabajadores de América Latina, or CPUSTAL). Along with existing independent unions, former CPUSTAL organizations form a formidable bloc. Where it goes may prove crucial to the future direction of Latin American labor. This bloc could remain independent and form a separate organization, continuing a movement divided in three. It could splinter, leaving the United States and Germany as the most powerful funders and sources of outside influence. Or it could join ORIT and provide a counterweight along with the Canadians to the United States. Which direction the bloc will take remains unclear.

Wedin correctly criticizes ORIT for its historical role as cat's paw for the AFL-CIO and AIFLD. ORIT has nevertheless changed, slowly but surely, over the past decade, as demonstrated by the main resolution adopted in 1989 at its congress in Caracas. This document, published as *El desafío del cambio: nuevos rumbos del sindicalismo*, outlines the organization's new stances. Three propositions stand out. First, ORIT now endorses a more openly political position, in contrast with AIFLD's "apolitical" unionism. ORIT defines itself as classist, pluralist, participatory, and sociopolitical with the goal of conquering political, economic, and social democracy (pp. 7, 75). ORIT is also urging the integration of different ideological currents (such as the social democratic and Christian democratic) in Latin America and the Caribbean and has pledged itself to work toward world peace, democracy, and cooperation between northern and southern tiers.

Second, ORIT has clearly moved away from past positions on key questions. For example, it proposes strict union and movement autonomy, much tighter controls over transnational corporations, expansion of the New International Economic Order, and a position on the debt question captured in the slogan "Primero el pueblo, después la deuda" (pp. 11–12). The ORIT Congress also called for introducing new technologies only after worker and management negotiation, opening up company books, and labor coparticipating in management. ORIT remains critical of neoliberal economic policies that hurt workers and postulates the need to build an independent working-class movement to oppose national and local capital as well as often hostile governments. This stance performs means developing explicit political positions (pp. 42–43, 91–96, 124).

Third, the document recognizes that the traditional working class has lost power due to profound changes in the Latin American economy. It remains internally divided along multiple lines—rural versus urban, generationally, by legal distinctions between blue- and white-collar workers, ideologically, and in other ways—and its numbers and importance have dwindled in relative terms. Yet in order to build democracy with social justice, the traditional working class must gather all into a single movement. This goal requires creating alliances with other social groups:

the informal sector, the unemployed and underemployed, members of new social movements such as youth, women, and “greens,” and other groups. Such a goal even may call for alliances with enlightened capital (pp. 114–17, 128).

Chapter 7 of *El desafío del cambio* recognizes the need for a pan-American approach. While acknowledging differing realities in the United States and Canada, ORIT notes the common interests of workers everywhere and the many similar problems that remain. ORIT further calls for an independent movement without any government interference or financing, a direct slap at AIFLD. In short, judging from its recently enunciated positions, ORIT has come a long way from being merely an echo of its master’s voice and seems poised to play an independent role.

Recent changes in the labor movement have preoccupied scholars in several countries. The volume compiled by Manuel Barrera and Gonzalo Falabella, *Sindicatos bajo regímenes militares*, contains six essays: two on Argentina, one by Francisco Delich and one by Bernardo Gallitelli and Andrés Thompson; two on Brazil by José Alvaro Moisés and Laís Wendel Abramo; and two on Chile by Guillermo Campero and Falabella. A prologue by Alan Angell, Barrera’s introduction, and Falabella’s epilogue round out the work. The essays provide useful data along with sometimes controversial interpretations of the role of labor under authoritarian regimes. All the contributions have strengths, but the Chilean sections seem the best overall.

Several points emerge that link the three experiences and also echo ORIT’s preoccupations. Despite legal and economic restrictions as well as police repression, unions survived under these regimes, often inventing creative responses to extremely difficult situations. In Brazil, where repression took a lesser toll than in Chile or Argentina, the movement emerged stronger than ever in some aspects. Perhaps more important, organized workers in Brazil and Chile in particular reached out to others to create a more generalized resistance. The labor movement began to talk about working-class and popular grass-roots strikes.

Last and perhaps most significant, the military regimes’ dissolution of political parties along with unions meant that ties between the parties and the unions either weakened or disappeared, making it easier for more autonomous entities to evolve after democracy was restored. In Brazil workers successfully loosened traditional government controls. The cutting edge of the movement centered in the metal trades in the ABC triangle (comprising the *municipios* of Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo, and São Caetano do Sul), which eventually provided the core of a workers’ party, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT). The relative newness of democracy leaves the situation in flux in all three countries, although traditional party influence over unions has clearly lessened. But to what degree and how permanently remains undetermined. For example, the

1988 elections for the Chilean Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT) echoed pre-1973 splits between the Socialists (37.7 percent between two lists), Christian Democrats (36.6 percent), and 25.6 percent for the Communists (Valenzuela and Frank 1991, 29). In Argentina the new and independent unionism made least headway of all, although reformist currents seemed stronger in the 1980s than before, and the Radical party gained ground within the movement. Exactly what the antiworker policies of the "Peronist" President Carlos Menem will ultimately produce remains unclear, but some indications suggest that elements within the labor movement are moving in new directions.

While workers have been turning toward new alliances, scholars too have ventured into new areas. For example, research on women has blossomed and quickly become fully as sophisticated as other work. Lydia Milagros González García's excellent monograph on the needle trades in Puerto Rico is a good example of this trend. *Una puntada en el tiempo: la industria de la aguja en Puerto Rico (1900–1929)* is part of a larger study, now nearing completion, of the industry in Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Cuba during the first decades of the century. This volume is based on archival research and interviews conducted with former workers and intermediaries in the trade. The book also features some fine photographs of changing fashion and workplace interiors.

But the genius of *Una puntada en el tiempo* lies in its ability to make the connections between the development of the sewing trade in Puerto Rico and industry trends in the United States, which in turn respond to national economic developments. González García establishes the links of dependency from U.S. East Coast department stores, to jobbers, to larger workshops in Puerto Rico, to smaller establishments often located in rural towns, which in turn distributed orders to domestic workers or to subcontractors, who then doled out piecework to women (and children and even husbands) at home. González García clearly shows how Puerto Rico fulfilled the necessary conditions for a ruthlessly competitive industry by providing U.S. retailers with cheap, unorganized, low-paid labor that had work discipline from prior experience in agriculture and the necessary skills from a pre-existing cottage sewing industry. The state helped by aiding vocational education for young girls. Because of depression in the coffee sector, rationalization in sugar production, and subsequent unemployment and labor migration, many women turned to the needle trades to ensure family survival. Competition prevailed, and by the early 1930s, average wages had been driven as low as three cents an hour, often not enough for workers to feed themselves. Contemporary testimony bears witness to the fact that many families ate only twice a day and that younger children often died from malnutrition. Attempts to organize the industry failed at both shop and domestic levels. The Puerto Rican government brutally aided capital in crushing any strikes or protests that did develop.

Despite the exploitative conditions, many workers liked piecework because they could put in more time and use family members to help while watching the children. Workers themselves opposed or violated laws designed to limit work, just as they did with those prohibiting minors from holding down jobs. This phenomenon has also been noted in the upsurge of working at home elsewhere in Latin America in recent years (Fontana and Prates 1989, 82–84). Paternalism marked the industry: the heads of shops or houses where women worked called the sewers “*hijas*” or “*empleadas*” but never the socially disrespectful “*obreras*.” By the 1930s, the Puerto Rican industry was employing almost fifty thousand workers, and its exports ranked second only to sugar. This all-too-brief history thus rescues a significant part of the island’s heritage and demonstrates the impact of dependent capitalist development.

Reading about the needle trades in Puerto Rico reminds one of a seemingly remote past, when workers had to fight for the most basic rights, even that of survival. Magaly Pineda’s rendering of the testimony of Teodora Espinoza (a pseudonym) jolts us back into the reality that many Latin Americans (and other First and Third World citizens) still live and work under such conditions. “. . . *La vida mía no es fácil*”: *la otra cara de la zona franca* presents the personal testimony of a Dominican woman who now works in the free-trade zone at San Pedro de Macorís. The account takes her from a poverty-stricken rural upbringing through a discouraging urban experience with relatives and finally to factory work in the free zone.

Espinoza details the horrible working conditions endured by the mostly female labor force in the free zones. She tells how after work she often ran the considerable distance to her home in order to save bus money and to arrive on time for domestic chores. She describes the numerous ways used by management to squeeze workers, such as enforced overtime and shortened meal or rest breaks. And she shows how owners evade even the minimal protections provided by the antiquated national labor law dating from the Trujillo era. Despite violent employer opposition (supported by the government) and the use of blacklists against activists, free-zone workers have struggled to improve their lot. With the help of the nearby progressive union of sugar workers, the San Pedro workers managed to form the first union in any Dominican free zone. Although the Dominican labor ministry refuses to recognize the union, it continues to function and claims some three thousand members. This short work adds to the growing list of titles based on interviews with women workers (see also Rostagnol et al. 1989 and Sapriza 1988).

Researchers interested in labor and working-class themes have broken out of traditional molds in other ways. Some have gone beyond the study of organized workers and their formal institutions to examine the development of popular culture and to study the lives of those who may

not have belonged to a labor union or working-class political party. This trend is obviously following the lead of the new social history. An excellent example is the volume of essays compiled by Diego Armus, *Mundo urbano y cultura popular: estudios de historia social argentina*. Its twelve selections cover a variety of topics that include theater, non-elite culture, neighborhood associations, housing, women and children in the labor force, changing attitudes toward work, and a case study of a meat-packing plant. Most of the articles rely on local documents and newspapers as well as interviews. All but four selections deal with Buenos Aires.

Some of the essays reinforce accepted wisdom, although often providing new detail and insights, while others break new ground or challenge standard interpretations. Several essayists remind readers that persons from all classes and backgrounds (except the elites) inhabited the rapidly forming new neighborhoods of Buenos Aires. The resulting consciousness evolved as class collaborationist and reformist rather than in the confrontational and combative style often displayed in older districts, which were more strictly working-class. The class collaborationist consciousness evolved in part because upward mobility existed, in part because the Argentine state seemed too strong to confront, and in part because local and city politics appeared to be possible vehicles for change. Particularly in the last decades of the nineteenth century (but also in the 1920s), many *porteño* immigrants felt that they could advance through hard work, and sufficient numbers did so to lend this view credibility. After the turn of the century, however, opportunities began to close down as the structure of industry changed away from artisanal production and small shops to larger units, a trend that made entry harder. With ever greater numbers of bodies competing for work due to increased immigration, the early twentieth century developed predictably into a period of intense working-class agitation.

Readers are also reminded that it is misleading to talk about “the immigrant experience” or even to generalize about a single group. For example, Spaniards and Italians behaved in different ways once they arrived in Argentina. Further, the variety of backgrounds and experiences of the Italians who came to Argentina over a period of more than fifty years meant that nationality guaranteed little homogeneity. In other words, melting-pot theses must be reexamined carefully. Groups that immigrated together, however, tended to stick together. Strong factors favored assimilation, but powerful ones operated against it too, at least among first-generation immigrants. In general, Spaniards tended to accept permanent residence more readily than did Italians.

Taken as a group, the seven books under review provide a glimpse of the variety and richness of today’s labor and working-class studies. The pace with which the field is advancing makes it an exciting growth area. Given the almost universal application of some form of neoliberal eco-

nomics in most Latin American countries, we can look forward to significant future changes within the ranks of labor, in class formation, and in social movements. The scholarly studies that will result from these changes, alongside continued historical research, will make most interesting future reading.

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