

## RECENT LABOR STUDIES

### Old Assumptions and New Approaches

- POLITICS AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN CHILE*. By ALAN ANGELL. (London: Oxford University Press, 1972. Pp. 289. \$17.00.)
- WORKERS AND MANAGERS IN LATIN AMERICA*. Edited by STANLEY M. DAVIS and LOUIS WOLF GOODMAN. (Lexington, Mass: D. C. Heath and Co., 1972. Pp. 308. \$12.50.)
- TWO DEMOCRATIC LABOR LEADERS IN CONFLICT: THE LATIN AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE ROLE OF WORKERS*. By CARROLL HAWKINS. (Lexington, Mass: D. C. Heath and Co., 1973. Pp. 138. \$11.50.)
- LABOR UNIONS AND POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF BOLIVIAN WORKERS*. By JOHN H. MAGILL. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974. Pp. 291. \$20.00.)
- ARGENTINA, AIFLD LOSING ITS GRIP*. By North American Congress on Latin America. (*Latin America & Empire Report*. Volume 8, number 9, November 1974. Pp. 24.)

Scholars in recent years have turned their attention increasingly to topics concerning Latin American labor and the working class. On a theoretical level this phenomenon has occurred within the framework of the debate between those who view Latin America as a "modernizing" or "developing" area and those who subscribe to the "dependency theory." On a political level the attempt to crush the Brazilian labor movement since 1964, the overwhelming support for a Marxist government by Chilean working class voters, the return of Peronism in Argentina, and the revolutionary role played by the Cuban working class are only several circumstances which have led to a revived interest in labor themes. The works reviewed here clearly reflect some of the above concerns and each, tacitly or explicitly, endorses one side of the larger theoretical question.

Angell treats Chilean labor in historical perspective but concentrates on developments since World War II. Based on extensive research, his work represents by far the best summary available in English. It delves into the complex problem of relationships between labor unions and political parties, a topic deserving more attention from labor scholars. The first section examines the historical factors influencing the labor movement, its size and structure, and the legal system as it affects workers. The second part concentrates on the role of the Communist, Socialist, Radical, and Christian Democrat parties within the labor movement and then looks at labor organizations and parties from the union point of view. Two brief appendices outline salient developments in rural unionism and note some external influences on Chilean labor.

Angell's central thesis is that while trade unions have served to regulate conflict between workers and capital, they also played a revolutionary role within the total context of Chilean society by functioning as vehicles of mobilization for progressive political parties which pressure the system. He also postulates that the influence of political parties committed to parliamentary socialism (Communist and Socialist) or parliamentary reformism (Christian Democratic and Radical) bred unionist attitudes among workers, a factor which inhibits revolutionary radicalization in the Marxist sense. He further suggests that political influences often prevent unions from acting as independent political entities, yet at the same time states that Chilean unions practice a large measure of union democracy.

This analysis, however, raises several questions. He assumes, for example, that the rules of the political game in Chile are constant and that the evolution of the working class will make workers less militant than the leftist political parties. It thus appears that unions and/or labor operate in a private arena relatively unaffected by either the ruling class or foreign influences. Yet the Allende period and its aftermath cast serious doubts on these assumptions. In many instances workers took initiatives despite political parties and often in specific work situations which seemed unlikely foci of radical activity. This touches on a key issue for all labor scholars: What generates worker militancy in given situations? Perhaps, rather than macroanalysis as undertaken by Angell, microanalysis as suggested by either Peter Winn or Juan Carlos Torre can produce more fruitful results at this stage of our knowledge. Similarly, in view of the overwhelming evidence continuously coming to light about foreign complicity in Chilean internal affairs, perhaps the approach of Timothy Harding or Steven Volk, which incorporates foreign influences when treating national labor movements, can more fully serve to evaluate the strengths of individual labor movements as well as the concrete obstacles they face.<sup>1</sup>

Davis and Goodman present forty-one selections, one general introduction, and three shorter introductory statements. These serve to underscore some fundamental similarities of workers and managers in Latin America while at the same time stressing cultural, social, economic, and political dissimilarities. Specifically, the first section examines sociocultural settings, the second the economics of enterprise and the workers' situation, and the last power and politics in the industrial milieu. On balance the volume provides a good initial exposure to important research questions concerning the interaction and primary concerns of both workers and managers. By including the two groups it projects an investigatory framework often ignored.

It is difficult to isolate a single central theme from such a wide-ranging work but two topics appear to stand out. First, the extreme difficulty facing the Latin American economy in keeping pace with present population growth if it is to improve material standards or even begin to satisfy rising expectations among the bulk of its inhabitants. Second, the perplexing question of the validity of applying established models to Latin American reality. On the first issue, the editors seem pessimistic, but neither offer nor suggest viable alternatives to existing practices. On the second, they say that cultural differences create new variables and

recognize that older historical models cannot be applied uncritically to nonindustrialized areas. At the same time, they include several selections which seem to ignore such variables and to assume that older models must work in contemporary Latin America.

Even within the context of presenting all sides of the argument, however, those accepting dependency analysis will question the inclusion of essays which appear to be nothing more than apologies for United States business abroad. To praise United States individualism or sense of equality in contrast to Latin American personalism, or to infer that only American (United States) or European companies can generate sufficient economic development smacks of paternalism at best and, for dependency advocates, evades the vital question of capitalism's ability to solve the problems facing Latin America. Similarly, a discussion couched in terms of United States-style pragmatic unionism versus Marxist revolutionary and political unionism hardly clarifies the real issues confronting the working class (Gordon, chap. 34).

Many of the contributions, for example, discuss the state's all-important role in industrial relations and its control over multiple aspects of working class life, yet no selection broaches the key issue of who controls the state. Only one article specifically focuses on the Cuban example and it concentrates upon the use of unpaid labor (Mesa-Lago, chap. 23). The book's main themes, however, relate to the material welfare of the Latin American working class. Thus it seems strange that no space is devoted to the fact that unemployment has virtually been eliminated in Cuba; that workers have a voice in plant level, local, regional, and national planning decisions; or that Cuban workers enjoy perhaps the best all-around work conditions in Latin America.<sup>2</sup> Finally, this reader would have liked some discussion of the problems posed by the emergence of multinational corporations which threaten to internationalize world labor markets.<sup>3</sup>

Magill's opus, originally a University of Wisconsin Ph.D. dissertation, is a case study based on interviews conducted in 1968 of 373 workers belonging to the miners, factory workers, petroleum, and *campesino* unions. The author hypothesizes that a strong and consistent relationship persists between union experience and workers' attitudes and behavior. More specifically, he indicates that the greater a union's success in achieving its goals (or those of its members) the less likely are its members to reject existing political and economic systems. He also finds that the more a union interacts with the external environment, specifically the government, the more externally oriented and politically aware workers tend to be. Lastly, he concludes that the level of political competition for union control is in inverse proportion to worker alienation. The author also correctly assesses the limits built into this type of study and the pitfalls in applying its findings to other areas. Nonetheless, its theoretical implications bear more than passing interest, particularly in view of Davis and Goodman's pessimism concerning the future viability of the Latin American economy. Unions, as Magill states, are the main socializing units for those making the transition from rural to urban environments. Thus, it could follow that only apolitical, procapitalist unions provide appropriate vehicles for socialization designed to prevent militancy in worker

movements throughout Latin America. Such a conclusion raises the question of the connection between government policy and working class research. Can, for example, the existence of studies like this one be related to the fact that more and more Latin American governments have sought to suppress independent unionism and replace it with organizations totally dominated by the state? At a different level, is it significant that Dr. Magill works for USAID in Latin America?

The real and potential interrelationships between the Latin American labor movement and the United States form a central question examined by NACLA. Their monograph, subsequently reprinted as part of a larger work, briefly reviews Argentine labor history and then discusses specific United States agencies created to influence Latin American labor, highlighting the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD).<sup>4</sup> It details the various shifts in United States government strategy toward Argentine labor, showing how it first took a strong anti-Peronist position by backing the so-called "democratic" unions which had formed the bulwark of anti-Peronism within the working class. When this strategy collapsed in the face of continuing Peronist gains among workers, the policy changed to one of co-opting rightist Peronist unions and splitting them off from the more militant elements within the movement.

The text also discusses the extensive use of International Trade Secretariats as conduits for funds and how these organizations, in conjunction with United States labor attaches and AIFLD, seek to influence labor bureaucrats through trips abroad, grants and loans, and a variety of other projects. Lastly, it places these efforts within a broader perspective by showing how the right-wing labor bureaucracy has participated in these programs in order to enrich itself, while muting militant class struggle against imperialism and the national bourgeoisie. This study, like others which touch upon the question of foreign influences, thus rests on the assumption that the international dimension forms a key variable to any study of Latin American labor.<sup>5</sup>

A different treatment is afforded the international aspects of Latin American labor by Hawkins's work. It examines the rivalry between the Centro Latino Americano de Trabajadores (formerly CLASC now CLAT) and the Organización Inter-Americana Regional de Trabajadores (ORIT). He accomplishes this by comparing and contrasting each organization's leader: Emilio Máspero of CLAT and Arturo Jáuregui of ORIT. The first part looks at Máspero's ideological orientation toward labor organization and Jáuregui's belief in apolitical unionism. The second compares the former's anticapitalist and anti-United States views with the pro-capitalist and pro-United States stance of the latter. The last part treats Máspero's ideas that unionization should concentrate on the still unorganized sectors and that it should aim at fundamental social change, against Jáuregui's thesis of mere amelioration within the system by existing unions.

This short monograph adequately describes each individual's main positions, but its lack of analysis may frustrate some readers. The author, for example, presents the accusations leveled by Máspero against ORIT as a "tool of Yanqui imperialism" but never really comes to grips with the question of their veracity. Similarly, the use of a biographical approach in this instance avoids the key

question of what class interest lies behind each organization. In the end, Hawkins does not reach a conclusion in the sometimes violent debate between the two protagonists, but explicitly recognizes the validity of both positions. He agrees with most of the other authors reviewed here by assuming that those positions are the only viable ones for the Latin American working class.

On the whole, these books serve to underscore differences in approaches to the study of the working class. On one level, the crucial assumptions of each differ so widely as to the questions asked of the material, that no dialogue between the two is possible. This should not mean, however, that dependency-school advocates should ignore the work of establishment scholars, as data unearthed by them can still prove useful in dependency research.

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#### NOTES

1. Peter Winn, "Workers into Managers: Worker Participation in Chilean Textile Industry" (Paper delivered at the Conference on Labor and Social Change in the Americas, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J., 1973); "Approaches to Labor History in Latin America: Yarur, A Chilean Factory Study, 1937-1973" (Paper delivered at the American Historical Association, Chicago, 1974); Juan Carlos Torre, "Workers Struggle and Consciousness," *Latin American Perspectives* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1974): 73-81; Timothy F. Harding, "A Political History of Organized Labor in Brazil" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1973); Steven S. Volk, "Class, Union, Party: The Development of a Revolutionary Union Movement in Bolivia (1905-1952)," *Science and Society* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 26-43.
2. See the author's review of Mesa-Lago's *Revolutionary Change in Cuba* in *NACLA's Latin America & Empire Report* 6, no. 10 (December 1972): 30-31; and *Cuba Review* 4, no. 1 (July 1974), devoted to workers and unions in Cuba.
3. For example, Steve Babson, "The Multinational Corporation and Labor," *The Review of Radical Political Economics* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1973): 19-36.
4. Republished in *Argentina in the Hour of the Furnaces* (New York: North American Congress on Latin America), pp. 56-76.
5. For example, Kenneth P. Erickson, Patrick V. Peppe, and Hobart A. Spalding, Jr., "Research on the Urban Working Class and Organized Labor in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile: What is Left to be Done?," *LARR* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1974): 115-42; Jeffrey Harrod, *Trade Union Foreign Policy* (Garden City, L.I.: Doubleday, 1972); and chapter 6 covering labor and imperialism in the author's forthcoming book on Latin American labor (Harper and Row, 1976).