

## Editor's Introduction

Leon Fink

**A**mid a growing awareness of occupational injuries and illnesses, Alan Derickson takes up a workplace issue so basic to workers' health that it is surprising that it has not received prior scholarly attention. Sleep denial—or deficiency of unconscious rest due to managerial imposition—was likely a common quality of working-class industrial life but perhaps nowhere more so than among African American porters employed by the Pullman Sleeping-Car Company. For decades the bitter irony was that these workers, whose tasks were dedicated to ensuring a full, comfortable night's rest for passengers, rarely got one themselves. Even as the railroad corporations pioneered in time discipline and continuous operation of their capital investments, so they also regularly stretched their porter employees into several back-to-back workdays during which only an unsafe and uncomfortable “smoker couch” and intermittent daylight rest times afforded a break from work routine. As Derickson demonstrates, however, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters assiduously pursued these issues within its basic bargaining strategy. Before the era of sleep science and sleep medicine, ordinary workingmen and women used their own powers of observation to assert the link between healthful work conditions and basic self-respect.

Historical discussions of the “culture wars,” in particular those involving the political transformation of white working-class “blue-collar” from Roosevelt to “Reagan Democrats,” often invokes Republican strategems under President Richard Nixon as a starting point. Only a few years ago, for example, we were pleased to publish Jefferson Cowie’s essay “Nixon’s Class Struggle,” which documented how Kevin Phillips, H. R. Haldeman, and Charles Colson, among others, helped a scheming president “reimagine the meaning of the American working class” through appeals to “whiteness” and “machismo.” Ed Wehrle now takes exception to the Nixon-and-realignment talk. He argues that the “blue-collar strategy” worked but only temporarily and for only one reason, the “unique politics of the Vietnam War.” Effectively, Wehrle shifts the explanation for Democratic dissonance from the exertions of the Nixon team to the AFL-CIO itself, especially the actions of foreign policy hawks George Meany and International Affairs Director Jay Lovestone. Yet, vociferously diverging from the Republicans on economic and other issues, both the labor leaders and their rank and file quickly detached themselves from a marriage of convenience following the 1972 presidential campaign.

One of the more exotic examples of the midseventies upsurge in labor activism centered on the Maine independent woodcutters’ movement. Resisting the tightening of piece rates by the large paper companies dubbed “paper plantations,” small proprietors banded together with wage-earning employees in the Maine Woodsman’s Association to strike in 1975 against a truck weight law viewed as restrictive. Mass meetings quickly produced picket lines at lumber mills around the state; back-to-the-land New Leftists joined in; even the state police, dispatched to control the strike, showed sympathy toward those engaged in the occupational traditions of their own families. Yet, as Michael G. Hillard and Jonathon Goldstein demonstrate in this careful

reconstruction of the woodsmen's campaign, the workers' own nativism—directed at French-Canadian “guest worker” employees of the large companies—and general isolation from other workers (together with a doggedly antiunion governor) helped doom their efforts.

Featured in the Arts and Media section is an appreciative if not uncritical review of *Wobblies: A Graphic History of the Industrial Workers of the World*. Speaking of reviews, Reviews Editor Julie Greene's ability to not only pick a great lineup of new books, but also to get senior talents to review them is very much on display in this issue. Reviewers of new works focusing on slavery and race include David Montgomery, Jonathan Prude, and Moon-Ho Jung. In addition, Marc Rodriguez essays two new Mexican-American histories; Mary Blewett reviews Marla Miller on working women in the revolutionary era; Premilla Nadasen takes up the latest offering from Dorothy Sue Cobble; and Randi Storch judges Bryan Palmer's opus on James P. Cannon. The inclusion of Paige Raibmon, William Jones, and Esyllt W. Jones, among other reviewers, also promises some absorbing reading!

Along with the above encomium, it is time to announce an important changing of the guard. By the time this volume appears in print, I will, alas, have accepted Julie Greene's resignation as reviews editor. Julie has served brilliantly as a coeditor and as an effective adviser in chief since we “inherited” *Labor History* in 2002 and then bolted to form *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* in 2004. Although I, as well as readers, will miss her strong and sure-handed presence, we can take comfort on two counts: one, Julie will remain on board as associate editor for review essays; and, two, we have the best possible replacement for her in Cindy Hahamovitch, a veteran contributor to our shared project. I should also like to announce that John Rosen, our most able editorial coordinator, is stepping down to accept a

competitive dissertation writing fellowship. I think that all who have had contact with our offices over the past two years will vouch for John's good judgment and cheerful attention to administrative detail. Benjamin Peterson, another aspiring and already accomplished PhD candidate in labor history, steps into the coordinator's shoes. Welcome, Ben!

Sadly, we must also take note of the recent loss of our esteemed colleague Alan Dawley. For years one of the most creative, gentle, and genuinely humane labor historians in the land, Alan was also a fierce advocate for expanding the definitional borders of our craft and ensuring a more open and democratic process within our own ranks. We will miss him even as we cherish his memory and his enduring body of work.

Finally, we are delighted to announce the winner of our biennial Best Article Prize. The \$1,000 prize goes to Paige Raibmon for "The Practice of Everyday Colonialism: Indigenous Women at Work in the Hop Fields and Tourist Industry of Puget Sound" in the Fall 2006 special issue, "The New Women's Labor History."