Black Potatoes, The Story of the Great Irish Famine, 1845-1850
Reviewed by Joe Doyle

The horrors of famine
A million people starved to death, another two million emigrated from Ireland, three-quarters of them to the U.S. (many ending up in New York). Haunting contemporary newspaper engravings show skeletal waifs scrabbling in the dirt for blackened potatoes; eviction, families huddling in a ditch, “coffin ships,” and forced evictions.

Black Potatoes targets young readers. (Bartoletti said to teach 8th grade.) Nearly every double-paged spread of Black Potatoes is illustrated. Young readers can grasp the tragedy of 1840s Ireland simply looking at the pictures and reading Bartoletti’s poignant captions. When they’re older they can read Bartoletti’s powerful narrative. In 172 pages (plus a useful timeline) Bartoletti skewers British government policy: 1) exporting cattle and grain to Ireland—without outraging opponents in Parliament—who else might our landlords afford large peasant families on the tiny acreage they could afford to rent?; 2) British soldiers stood guard as wrecking crews knocked down cottages of peasants who fell behind on the rent. Already starving, now they became homeless. (Bartoletti devotes Chapter 9 to the Irish patriot who responded in 1848 with the Young Ireland insurrection.) 3) Prime Minister Robert Peel tied himself in knots trying to avert mass starvation—without killing them—by feeding together anecdotal eye-witness accounts by survivors and aid workers, all of them traumatized, some of their protests still white-hot 170 years later. “...the Irish people weren’t starving because there was no food. They were starving because they did not have money to buy food.” The bitter irony: much food. (Bartoletti’s timeline) Bartoletti skewers British government policy of 1) exporting cattle and grain to Ireland—without outraging opponents in Parliament—who else might our landlords afford large peasant families on the tiny acreage they could afford to rent?; 2) British soldiers stood guard as wrecking crews knocked down cottages of peasants who fell behind on the rent. Already starving, now they became homeless. (Bartoletti devotes Chapter 9 to the Irish patriot who responded in 1848 with the Young Ireland insurrection.) 3) Prime Minister Robert Peel tied himself in knots trying to avert mass starvation—without killing them—by feeding together anecdotal eye-witness accounts by survivors and aid workers, all of them traumatized, some of their protests still white-hot 170 years later. “...the Irish people weren’t starving because there was no food. They were starving because they did not have money to buy food.” The bitter irony: much food. (Bartoletti’s timeline)

Chapter 9 to the Irish patriots
Peel’s dilemmas sounds eerily contemporary. It is only the labor movement that can fight with the world in which we find ourselves. The union’s campaigns to organize the city’s car wash workers, the Fight for Fifteen Campaign, the fight to keep Wal-Mart out of the Bronx, have all been carried out by building ties to grass-roots community organizations.

The Great Hunger
By Jane LeTour
The annual John Commerford Labor Education Awards ceremony on December 2nd felt like the future—and a far happier future at that. Both award recipients brought a huge amount of enthusiasm with them to the 1199/SEIU Penthouse on 42nd Street, and it was contagious. NYLHA board member Gail Malingreen, the event’s chief organizer and M.C., introduced labor attorney Larry Cary, who presented the award to Stuart Applebaum, President of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. Cary noted that, at a labor history association, we look to the past in an attempt to understand how we got to such a bad place. “In that context, Stuart Applebaum is trying to roll back the anti-immigrant tide and the efforts to take away the right to a union shop for public sector workers. These are huge challenges and we are fortunate to have people devising strategies to meet them—and winning—like Stuart Applebaum,” Cary said.

Building better lives
Accepting the award, Mr. Applebaum spoke with great passion about the campaigns his union is leading. He began by saying that the award is for those union members who are struggling just to build better lives for their families. “It’s a joy to be involved with such great people and to deal with the world in which we find ourselves. It is only the labor movement that can fight back against economic injustice,” he said. He spoke about the contradiction of organizing in New York City, the wealthiest city in the world, yet being surrounded by poverty. He contrasted the percentage of people living in poverty with the handful of Walton family members who hold a disproportionate share of the nation’s wealth, while their corporation, Wal-Mart, refuses to pay its employees a living wage—or even to provide them with regular work schedules. “The people working for Wal-Mart are recipients of public assistance. We are subsidizing the wealth of the Wal-Mart heirs,” he said.

Stuart Applebaum and Larry Cary
“Income inequality is the plague of the 21st century,” Applebaum said. “There is only one way we can respond. We have to come together collectively—with a collective voice—a call to action. Time after time, we are inspired by people who stand up and take collective action—people who have been marginalized.” He described the 17-week strike by the workers at the Mott Applesauce plant, contrasted the percentage of people living in poverty with the handful of Walton family members who hold a disproportionate share of the nation’s wealth, while their corporation, Wal-Mart, refuses to pay its employees a living wage—or even to provide them with regular work schedules. “The people working for Wal-Mart are recipients of public assistance. We are subsidizing the wealth of the Wal-Mart heirs,” he said. The union’s campaigns to organize the city’s car wash workers, the Fight for Fifteen Campaign, the fight to keep Wal-Mart out of the Bronx, have all been carried out by building ties to grass-roots community organizations.

Leyla Vural and Sara Horowitz
“Building better lives” Income inequality is the plague of the 21st century,” Applebaum said. “There is only one way we can respond. We have to come together collectively—with a collective voice—a call to action. Time after time, we are inspired by people who stand up and take collective action—people who have been marginalized.” He described the 17-week strike by the workers at the Mott Applesauce plant, contrasted the percentage of people living in poverty with the handful of Walton family members who hold a disproportionate share of the nation’s wealth, while their corporation, Wal-Mart, refuses to pay its employees a living wage—or even to provide them with regular work schedules. “The people working for Wal-Mart are recipients of public assistance. We are subsidizing the wealth of the Wal-Mart heirs,” he said.

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Continued from page 1 and her accomplishments, and described her own experience working for the union in a research position, and about Horowitz's deep affinity for the history of the labor movement. "Sidney Hillman was one of her heroes. Her daughter was born on Samuel Gompers' birthday." Vural described the long list of prestigious awards that have been showered on Horowitz for her work, and the inspiration she provides for others: "She shows what's possible. She shows what we can do."

Strategies for change
Horowitz began by saying that she loved the Commerford Awards because she loved the idea of a labor leader who was always re-inventing the labor movement, in a reference to John Commerford. She noted that the movement is about people coming together to solve problems. She spoke about the critical issue the labor movement is focused on: "Sidney Hillman—when workers needed collective action." She used the example of Sidney Hillman, the leader of the 1830s. "He did not have the benefit of major prior unionization, and thus much of what he accomplished was a new response to a new situation," Yellowitz said. To read Dr. Yellowitz’s full remarks, and a synopsis of the three prize-winning student papers, visit the NYLHA website. A slide show, “Photos By and About Department Store Workers,” was presented by LaborArts at the event. To view the exhibit, visit the LaborArts website.
Harper Lee’s re-set

Continued from page 4

unforgettable scene in Mockingbird in front of the local court house when the lynch mob comes looking for its victim. Two incidents cause Jean Louise, formerly known in her hour, to feel betrayed. In Watchman Watchman the case at the center of Mockingbird is summarized in one page as the case in which Atticus “won an acquittal for a colored boy on a rape charge.” Jean Louise thinks of that case as she sits in the balcony of the court room watching her father and her probable husband-to-be as they play prominent roles at a meeting of the local White Citizens’ Council.

The principal speaker at the meeting is a dreadful Mr. O’Hanlon who, we are told, goes from place to place spewing hate and prejudice. Atticus introduces him, albeit briefly. Henry gives it his assent. The second incident centers on Calpurnia. Her biological mother having died when Jean Louise was young, Calpurnia became a substitute mother. In Watchman, Calpurnia, now old and seeing once again.


Reviewed by melva Dubofsky, Distinguished Professor Emeritus Binghamton University, SUNY

Steve Fraser is a prolific writer and historian, the author of a superb prize-winning scholarly biography of the labor leader, Sidney Hillman and an equally excellent history of Wall Street and the broader financial community written for a general audience. He also contributes regularly to several small circulation leftist periodicals and online news and commentary sites. Perhaps it is his reputation as a serious observer of US history and contemporary politics that has produced the glowing biographies of his latest book’s jacket from such eminent historians as Eric Foner, Greg Grandin, and David Nasaw.

Lengthy tome

Writing as an historian who considered Fraser’s biography of Hillman to rank, alongside Nelson Lichtenstein’s biography of Walter Reuther, as the two finest studies of U.S. labor leaders ever written, I found Fraser’s Age of Acquiescence to be confounding if not dismaying. His purpose in writing the book is clear enough; as he sees it, we are facing an era as different and as difficult as the last three decades of rising economic inequality and increasing immiseration for millions of ordinary citizens has there been so little mass political resistance unlike the first Gilded Age, c. 1870s-1890s, when citizen resistance to economic inequality surged and bloody class warfare erupted. Yet I am not sure for whom he has written this book. It lacks original research and draws overwhelmingly, if not entirely, on the published works of scholars for its history and contemporary newspapers, periodicals, and websites for its portraits of the past. Today little in the book will strike American historians as unfamiliar or new although some parts (as I will note below) may strike them as odd. General, non-academic readers may be put off by the book’s length, 421 pages exclusive of notes, acknowledgments, and other features, as well as its sometimes dense prose. Let me offer just a couple of examples of language likely to discourage common readers. On p. 218, Fraser writes about the anesthetized citizen of contemporary America. “Her soulfulness is that of the abstract, depersonalized fungible commodity, a homunculus of rationalizing self-interest.”

And in his conclusion, he observes, “We have grown accustomed to examine all sorts of personal foibles as if they were political MBLs lighting up the interior of the most sequestered political motivations (p. 412).” Here, I feel, we have one more example of a leftist preaching to a small chorus of sympathizers.

Little light shed

Fraser’s reading of US history strikes me as idiosyncratic. His first Gilded covers a long nineteenth century that Fraser dates from the late eighteenth century to the coming of the New Deal in the 1930s. It reads as a history of endless primitive accumulation. Primitive accumulation as explicated by Marxists, however, bears little resemblance to how the US economy actually developed. In the case of the US during Fraser’s long nineteenth century the number of independent farmers grew steadily and tenancy leases and sharecropping kept millions tied to the land. Not until the Great Depression and the New Deal were masses ofagrarians forced from the land, a tale told so well by John Steinbeck. By then the US was a fully developed capitalist economy. It is equally strange to see the US on the eve of the Civil War described as almost a pre-capitalist economy with rudimentary market relations and limited free, wage labor. The American South may have prospered on the basis of slave labor, and it was indeed the wealthiest region in the nation, but its wealth derived from participation in global markets that were part of an expanding capitalist system. Before the Civil War most states had adopted general incorporation laws and the limited liability corporation became the preferred method of business organization used by nearly all transportation enterprises, financial institutions, and manufacturing firms. Rather than birthing corporate capitalism, the post-Civil War decades led to its maturation, a process that created an oligarchic economy and the immense fortunes accumulated by the Rockefeller, Vanderbilts, Carnegies, Swifts, Harrimans, and Guggenheimers. Positive resistance to economic concentration and rising inequality, as Fraser stresses, precipitated political challenges to the existing order by Greenbackers, Populists, and socialists and to employer autocracy by workers who struck, built unions, and waged class war against their adversaries. Fraser builds a narrative of populist resistance to corporate capitalism that culminates in the New Deal. Unfortunately, he also commits a number of factual errors. The governor of Idaho who died as victim of bombing did not meet his fate as a result of breaking a strike called by the ‘Wobbly-run Western Federation of Miners’ (p. 140). Fraser’s account of the Okla Persiflage, this is also the working program for a general audience. He also contributes regularly to several small circulation leftist periodicals and online news and commentary sites. Perhaps it is his reputation as a serious observer of US history and contemporary politics that has produced the glowing biographies of his latest book’s jacket from such eminent historians as Eric Foner, Greg Grandin, and David Nasaw.

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The long fight to integrate NYC's bravest and finest


The overpowering Southern and small town solidarity of Maycomb surrounds Jean Louise. On the one hand, she is obliged to suffer through a coffee arranged by Aunt Alexandra for former high school class mates with whom she now shares very little. On the other hand, the story contains the remembered high school Commencement Dance when, in a tangle of unanticipated consequences, "falsies" belonging to Jean Louise come to be hung on a tree. The overpowering Southern and small town solidarity of Maycomb surrounds Jean Louise. On the one hand, she is obliged to suffer through a coffee arranged by Aunt Alexandra for former high school class mates with whom she now shares very little. On the other hand, the story contains the remembered high school Commencement Dance when, in a tangle of unanticipated consequences, "falsies" belonging to Jean Louise come to be hung on a tree.


A Mockingbird as Scout is a young woman in her mid-twenties who goes by the name Jean Louise. She has been living in New York City. We meet her on the train as she returns to Maycomb, the Alabama town where she grew up, for her annual vacation. By page 9 Maycomb has surrounded us for what proves to be the remainder of the book. Jean Louise expects to be greeted by her father, Atticus, now in his seventies and afflicted with severe arthritis. Instead, she is met by her long-time boy friend and suitor, Henry Clayton, who works in Atticus’ law office and expects to take over the practice. In the end, the book will become an account of how Jean Louise confronts what she discovers to be the attitudes toward race of these two men.

The last name of Jean Louise, Atticus’ brother Uncle Jack, and his formidable sister Alexandra, is Finch. One evening Henry and Jean Louise visit Finch’s Landing, "where Finch Negros [sic] loaded bales and produce, and unloaded blocks of ice, flour and sugar, farm equipment and ladies’ things.” When Jean Louise asks Atticus for his compromises with the conventional, he reminds her that “there are some things I simply can’t do that you can... You’re a Finch.” Sure enough, Aunt Alexandria frowns on the idea that Jean Louise might marry Henry because, while Henry is a fine young man, “we Finch do not marry the children of rednecked white trash.”

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Crossword puzzle clues

ACROSS
1. Rosa _____ of the 1955 Montgomery
   Bus Boycott.
4. Brown vs. _____ of Education.
5. Abdul-Jabbar, outspoken basketball player and author, who
   boycotted the 1968 Summer Olympics over the United States' treatment of
   African-Americans.
6. Kennedy was a lawyer for the
   Panther 21 and a co-founder of the
   National Organization for Women.
13. The Amsterdam _______, Harlem’s
    long-time newspaper, was founded
    in 1909 by James H. Anderson.
14. This famous Civil-Rights
    organization was founded in 1942
    in Chicago and sponsored a protest
    in Williamsburg, Brooklyn in 1964
    opposing racial discrimination by the
    F. and M. Schaefer Brewing Company. Six
    protesters were arrested. (Abbreviation).
15. Michael ______ was killed by police
    in August 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri.
16. Clayton Powell, Jr., famous long-time
    Harlem Congressman.
17. Andrew ______, Civil-Rights
    Activist murdered in Mississippi in 1964.
18. _____ Cullen, famous Harlem
    poet.
20. Jesse _______, long-time Civil
    Rights activist and head of the Rainbow
    PUSH Coalition.
22. Spike ___, director of “Do
    The Right Thing”, “Four
    Little Girls” and many more great movies.
23. _____ Marable, biographer of Malcolm X.
25. The _______ Railroad was the secret
    network of homes used to set
    slaves free on their journey north.
27. The _____ Riots of 1863 centered on
    Manhattan in opposition to the Civil War.
29. _____ Wright, Harlem resident
    and famed author.
31. ______ Panthers, founded in
    Oakland in 1966.
32. Bayard _______, long-time gay
    Civil Rights Activist.
33. John _______, mayor of New
    York City who spoke at Martin
    Luther King, Jr. memorial rally in
    Midtown Manhattan in 1968, which
    was sponsored by District 65, Retail,
    Wholesale and Department Store
    Employees Union.
34. Long-time political activist Angela
    Davis was jailed in the old Women’s
37. Eric ______ was killed by the
    police in Staten Island in an illegal
    chokehold in 2015 while selling loose
    cigarettes on the sidewalk.

DOWN
2. Legendary actress ______ Dee, grew up
    in Harlem and died at the age of 91 in
    2014.
3. Reverend Al ______, former activist
    with the Southern Christian Leadership
    Conference and currently head of the
    National Action Network.
5. Nat ______, singer of “Mona Lisa”
    and “Unforgettable,” among other great
    songs.
6. Founded in the 1930's, this public
    employees union featured Nelson
    Mandela at its 1990 convention (Abbrev).
7. The _______ Club in Harlem opened
    in the 1920’s and featured Count
    Basie, Cab Calloway and Billie Holiday,
    among others in its storied history.
11. ______ Simone, a singer and Civil
    Rights Activist who wrote the song
    “Mississippi Goddam” in the 1960s.
12. _______ Department Store was one of
    Harlem’s most famous 125th
    Street tenants for over 80 years and the site
    of the stabbing of Martin Luther
    King, Jr. in 1958 while he was on a
    book signing tour.
13. Son was written by 29 Acros.
15. The African ______ Ground was
    rediscovered in 1991, along with 419
    bodies.
17. Danny ______ is a famous actor,
    director and political activist as well as a
    strong union supporter.
18. Black Lives ______ is the motto of the
    anti-police brutality movement of 2015.
20. _____ Cullen, famous Harlem
    poet. His son is now the Mayor of Newark, New
    Jersey.
21. ______ Dinkins was the first African-
    American Mayor of New York City.
24. The Village ________ which
    opened in 1935, is one of Greenwich
    Village’s most famous jazz clubs.
26. Amiri ______, was one of America’s
    most famous poets. His son is now the
    Village’s most famous jazz clubs.
28. University was the site of the
    1968 student strike over the
    university’s expansion into Harlem.
30. The _______ Church was the site
    of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speech against the Vietnam War in 1967,
    one year to the day before he was
    assassinated.
33. The _______ Non-Violent
    Coordinating Committee was one of
    the leading groups of the Civil Rights
    Movement and was headed by John
    Lewis, Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap
    Brown, among others.
36. ______ Shakur, the late rapper,
    witnessed the Panther 21 Trial from
    inside the womb of his mother, Afeni
    (Answers on page 9).
Continued from page 3 until 1905. The Political Scientist Louis Hartz held a professorship at Harvard not Columbia (p. 175), and the president of the UMW in 1977-78 was Arnold not Arthur Miller (p. 355). What about the contemporary scene? Does Fraser's analysis of the creation of a second "Gilded Age" and an era of unprecedented inequality in which the top one percent of Americans have grabbed all of the total increase in national income while the mass of the citizens, the 99 percent, have experienced income loss or wage stagnation enlightened readers? The tale he tells is pretty much the standard one in which complacent labor leaders eagerly cooperate with government and corporations to effect their own interests.

Suddently faced with hostile political leaders and transnational corporate "partners" amid a rising tide of globalization in which capital moved freely and workers grew immobile, labor leaders watched helplessly as their union empires shriveled—by the end of the century under seven percent. Fraser bemoans the absence of mass resistance prior to the rise of Occupy Wall Street (OWS), and its condemnation of the one percent that exploited the 99 percent. Fraser fails to explain satisfactorily why the 99 percent acquiesced in its own subjugation for nearly three decades. In a book of more than 400 pages no ordinary citizen or worker comes to life. We never learn why working people who became Reagan Democrats, or devotees of evangelical Protestant faiths, or the audiences for Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck behaved as they did.

Analysis misses mark By some strange alchemy family capitalists from the sunbelt—the Waltons, the Kochs, Sheldon Adelson—turned the nation neoliberal, defeated the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), and spread the gospel of "right to work." But the Waltons, Kochs, Adelsons, and even Warren Buffett are not the family or merchant capitalists of early capitalism; they may control the finances of the modern limited liability corporations their names conjure but they use the most sophisticated business methods implemented by university-educated professional managers. Instead of focusing on the concept of family capitalism, Fraser might have highlighted the financialization of the economy in which shareholder value and returns became more important than the longer term health and growth of business enterprises. He might also have noted how mergers and consolidations in key sectors of the economy had created a form of concentrated corporate economy that surpassed that created by J.P. Morgan and his generation of financiers between 1897 and 1907.

It remains unclear how Fraser expects massive citizen resistance to the power of organized wealth in the United States to arise when the deck is stacked against "the people" and he designates the alliance between the leaders of organized labor and the professional class of liberal reformers who created the New Deal order. Instead Fraser disdains what remains of "big labor" and dismisses contemporary "limousine liberals". He hyperbolically characterizes John Maynard Keynes as a high priest of "limousine liberalism" (p. 378) instead of crediting the English economist as a prescient critic of corporate capitalism and the financiers and executives who dominate it. Readers who seek to understand how and why the second "Gilded Age" arrived and why material inequality has reached epic proportions would be better served by reading Thomas Piketty's Capital in the Twenty-First Century, an even longer tome than Age of Accumulation and with a heavier scholarly apparatus.

And for those who want to understand why ordinary citizens think and behave as they do, I would suggest reading Steve Greenhouse's The Big Squeeze and George Packer's The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America in which real people occupy center stage and suffer the slings and arrows of our new "Gilded Age."

insurance, and defined benefit pensions. In a new world of contingent work and intermittent employment remotely reminiscent of the first "Gilded Age," workers assume all the risks and employers reap the benefits. Independent contractors shifting from gig to gig and temp workers employed by agencies and not the firms for whom they worked grew into large segments of the labor force. Fraser bemoans the absence of mass resistance prior to the rise of Occupy Wall Street (OWS), and its condemnation of the one percent that exploited the 99 percent. Fraser fails to explain satisfactorily why the 99 percent acquiesced in its own subjugation for nearly three decades. In a book of more than 400 pages no ordinary citizen or worker comes to life. We never learn why working people who became Reagan Democrats, or devotees of evangelical Protestant faiths, or the audiences for Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck behaved as they did.

Analysis misses mark By some strange alchemy family capitalists from the sunbelt—the Waltons, the Kochs, Sheldon Adelson—turned the nation neoliberal, defeated the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), and spread the gospel of "right to work." But the Waltons, Kochs, Adelsons, and even Warren Buffett are not the family or merchant capitalists of early capitalism; they may control the finances of the modern limited liability corporations their names conjure but they use the most sophisticated business methods implemented by university-educated professional managers. Instead of focusing on the concept of family capitalism, Fraser might have highlighted the financialization of the economy in which shareholder value and returns became more important than the longer term health and growth of business enterprises. He might also have noted how mergers and consolidations in key sectors of the economy had created a form of concentrated corporate economy that surpassed that created by J.P. Morgan and his generation of financiers between 1897 and 1907.

It remains unclear how Fraser expects massive citizen resistance to the power of organized wealth in the United States to arise when the deck is stacked against "the people" and he designates the alliance between the leaders of organized labor and the professional class of liberal reformers who created the New Deal order. Instead Fraser disdains what remains of "big labor" and dismisses contemporary "limousine liberals". He hyperbolically characterizes John Maynard Keynes as a high priest of "limousine liberalism" (p. 378) instead of crediting the English economist as a prescient critic of corporate capitalism and the financiers and executives who dominate it. Readers who seek to understand how and why the second "Gilded Age" arrived and why material inequality has reached epic proportions would be better served by reading Thomas Piketty's Capital in the Twenty-First Century, an even longer tome than Age of Accumulation and with a heavier scholarly apparatus.

And for those who want to understand why ordinary citizens think and behave as they do, I would suggest reading Steve Greenhouse's The Big Squeeze and George Packer's The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America in which real people occupy center stage and suffer the slings and arrows of our new "Gilded Age."

Crossword Answers

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<td>1. Parks</td>
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| 25. Underground | 164, shared a similar story. With AUD's help, he beat the slander charges leveled against him. But when he mentioned his plans to move up and become a supervisor, Benson cursed him out: "You s.o.b.! You've told me the leadership is lousy, the members don't know what to do, you just took up two hours of my time helping you, and now you're telling me you're going to leave the union?"

So Hanley decided to stick with it. "I probably would have left if it wasn't for you, Herman. So I've got one thing to say to you—you s.o.b."

Herman Benson turns 100...
Lucy and Gloria considered

Lucy Stone, An Unapologetic Life, Sally G. McMillen, Oxford University Press, 2015

Reviewed by Bette Craig

What is it that I don’t like about Sally G. McMillen’s Lucy Stone: An Unapologetic Life? Well, somehow, Sally McMillen has made Lucy Stone’s life seem boring. There’s no grand sweep of the big picture, but lots of tedious detail.

McMillen, Mary Reynolds Babcock Professor of History at Davidson College, tells us that she wrote the book to try to restore Lucy Stone to the pantheon of woman suffrage heroines, in the company of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott. She points out that Lucy’s self-effacement and dislike of being written about contributed to the “who is Lucy Stone?” issue.

Bowing down no longer

When Stanton and Anthony and their collaborator, Joslyn Matilda Gage, were working on a history of the women’s suffrage movement (first volume published in 1881), Lucy didn’t want to be in a history “written by the other wing.”

“The other wing” consisted of Stanton and Anthony’s National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), which was formed when the suffrage movement split after the Civil War. Stanton and Anthony opposed the 15th Amendment, which was respected in her family, but not for girls. Her father, Francis Stone, ruled the family with an iron hand and a tight fist, but subscribed to William Lloyd Garrison’s Liberator. The abolition cause was what impelled Lucy Stone toward her life-long struggle for women’s rights.

She was much influenced by abolitionist Abby Kelley Foster who spoke in Lucy’s hometown. Stone also witnessed the censure of Sarah and Angelina Grimké by Massachusetts Congregational ministers for lecturing on anti-slavery and women’s rights in 1838.

It seems that these days, Lucy Stone is remembered most for keeping her maiden name after she married. People who follow this practice are still sometimes called “Lucy Stoners.” But the original Lucy Stone was extraordinary. She was the first woman to speak full time for women’s rights, the first woman from the State of Massachusetts to earn a college degree. (But she wasn’t allowed to read her senior essay from the platform on that occasion because it wasn’t considered seedy at Oberlin, even though the institution was admitting women as well as black students.)

Lucy Stone began her public speaking career when the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society hired her as a lecturer in 1848, the year after she graduated at age 29 from Oberlin. Gradually, she incorporated more and more of her thoughts about women’s rights in her abolition speeches and was able to set up her own speaking engagements and make a living at it. As she said in 1855 in a Cincinnati speech to 2,000 people, “From the first years to which my memory stretches, I have been a disappointed woman… In education, in marriage, in religion, in everything, disappointment is the lot of woman. It shall be the business of my life to deepen this disappointment in every woman’s heart until she bows down to it no longer.”

Against all logic

This year has also seen the publication of a memoir by one of our current feminist icons, Gloria Steinem. In My Life on the Road, Steinem details her itinerant childhood where she absorbed her father’s love of independence and life’s possibilities. She tells how she went on the 1963 March on Washington “against all logic, marching inside a Mrs. G reene who pointed out that Dorothy Height was the only woman on the speakers’ platform and she isn’t speaking. And where is Ella Baker, who trained all of these SNCC youngsters? And where is Fanny Lou Hamer?”

So, it seems that Gloria Steinem’s progression of consciousness was very similar to Lucy Stone’s. Like Lucy Stone, who ventured out to speak in public, sometimes to crowds of thousands when the going was much more difficult, Gloria Steinem believes in the power of being in the same room—especially when it can include a talking circle where...

Continued on page 16

Continued from page 9

one-vote for top Teamsters offices, provided federal oversight of national elections, paving the way for reformer Ron Carey to become the union’s first directly elected president. AUD influenced several defining moments in labor history, including the Miners for Democracy movement of the early 1970s and reform efforts inside the Steelworkers later that decade.

When California health care workers were fighting off trusteeship, and recently when bedside nurses in New York were pushing to shed a century of union domination by nurse managers, AUD backed them up. Today it defends free speech on social media too.

Above all, Benson said he told each reformer, “You’re doing the right thing. Keep it up, buddy.” Sometimes this encouragement was the best thing AUD could offer: “There was often very little we could do for them. But that little loomed as encouragement was the best thing AUD could offer: “There was often very little we could do for them. But that little loomed as encouragement was the best thing AUD could offer: “There was often very little we could do for them. But that little loomed as encouragement was the best thing AUD could offer: “There was often very little we could do for them. But that little loomed as...”

In his closing remarks, Benson summed up the enduring need for union democracy.

African-American Crossword Puzzle

Union Democracy

In a half-century, he said, “the labor movement has become weaker, there’s no question about that. But it’s vastly improved in many ways, and it’s more prepared for the years to come—in its attitude toward immigrants, toward the lower-paid, toward rallying support from the public.

“Issues of union democracy are posed in a much different way—but there’s still a need for the defense of civil liberties and democracy within our unions. So I’m hoping that some of you will be inspired by what you heard today to join this great cause.”
Struggle to dismantle school segregation

General Robert Kennedy to say in 1963: “The only places on earth not to provide free public education are communist China, North Vietnam, Sarawak (part of Malaysia), Singapore, British Honduras—and Prince Edward County, Virginia.” Some students were sent to other cities to go to school but most African-American students received no education during this time: some never graduated and the illiteracy rate in the county quadrupled. The original racist Whites-only private school is still open today under a new name and didn’t integrate until 1984.

Ms. Green alternates the narrative of the fight to get integrated schools with her own personal story as she grew up in the county and then returned after getting married to raise her children. She discovers that her grandfather, who never said much about this disgusting situation, was on the board of the racist Whites-only school and active in the original group that created the school. Ms. Green interviews current residents who lived through the integration battle and chronicles how separate the races still are today and that in some ways nothing has changed in this sleepy, southern small-town community. Ms. Green also follows the story of her family’s African-American maid, who sent her daughter to another city to get an education and who subsequently never came back to live with her own mother again.

Separate and unequal

The older 1950s and 1960s history is very interesting but overall the more personal narrative story slows down the flow of the book and it could have been shortened. When you think back to this era you say this couldn’t possibly happen today but the situation reminds you of America today in many ways. Ridiculous arguments supporting segregation by politicians, judges and newspaper publishers in the Civil-Rights Era remind me of the exact same nonsense spewed today by Republican presidential candidates when talking about race, police brutality, climate change, Planned Parenthood, immigration and other issues. And speaking of the Supreme Court, Justice Scalia’s recent ludicrous statements opposing affirmative action are almost word for word taken from the arguments of racists of the 1950s (segregation is good for African-Americans and only helps them).

Looking back at this horrible situation you would think that setting up a separate school system today would be impossible and is something only done over sixty years ago. Yet, with a different purpose, the 2010s the hedge-fund-owned, union-busting charter schools are thriving in setting up a separate school system.
Making history personal

LONGTIME NYLHA supporter Debra E. Bernhardt (1953–2001) was an activist, an archivist and a labor historian dedicated to documenting the undocumented history of workers in New York City, LaborArts, which she helped to found, carries on her mission in a small way; she left it, along with a wealth of other initiatives, to carry forward her inspired and inclusive work. A new online exhibit can now be found at LaborArts.org, with photos of Bernhardt and a sampling of her myriad projects. Work History News readers are asked to consider contributing links to resources and documentation projects that Debra helped inspire. Let’s document the documentation!

Teamster power through a different lens

Robert Bussel, Fighting for Total Person Unionism: Harold Gibbons, Ernest Calloway, and Working-Class Citizenship Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015 Reviewed By Robert D. Parment York College, The City University of New York Though Samuel Gompers preached “pure and simple unionism” and David Dubinsky identified with “social unionism,” neither labor leader advanced a vision of what Ernest Calloway and Harold Gibbons called “total person unionism,” a “trade union oriented on slums.” Calloway, an African American, and Gibbons an Irish American, were both coal miners’ sons who sought in St. Louis through the “community service” program of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 688 to create “worker-citizens,” “new kinds of unionists whose workplace and civic lives were seamlessly integrated.”

Dual biographies In Fighting for Total Person Unionism, Robert Bussel brilliantly follows Calloway and Gibbons as they combined to transform workers into activists who would bring about political change that would benefit them as well as their city. The idea was to integrate the unionists’ workplace and civic lives. Using the first part of his book for dual biographies, Bussel describes how the two leaders overcame “handcuffs” early lives to work together when Gibbons invited Calloway, whom he had first met in Chicago in 1937, to join him in St. Louis thirteen years later.

Both had labor education backgrounds and firm anti- communist views, with Gibbons having union positions with the American Federation of Teachers, Congress of Industrial Organizations, and Textile Workers Union before becoming a Teamsters vice president and the leader of the St. Louis Teamsters’ local. His career with the latter then took him to the side of President Jimmy Hoffa, to whom he became a trusted aide until he criticized the Vietnam War, which brought about the temporary loss of his vice presidency.

Calloway’s odyssey included battles against racial segregation and organizing Chicago railroad station porters. Committed to his beliefs, in 1940 he fought a successful battle to avoid serving in the segregated United States Army. Following a losing contest with communists for control of the United Transportation Service Employees in North Carolina, he joined Gibbons in St. Louis, thus beginning the partnership to bring about “total person unionism.”

At a January 1952 conference, Gibbons and Calloway stated their theme. “The union member is also a citizen and his interests as a citizen coincide with those of his fellow citizens. Accordingly, they enlisted members of Local 688 in a program to make productive use of the “other sixteen hours” when they were not doing their regular work. Calloway also continued his civil rights activism and became president of the St. Louis National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Together they and others in Local 688 waged campaigns dealing with such concerns as public transit, juvenile delinquency, racial discrimination in public housing, downtown redevelopment, rat control, and higher education. Along with the National Urban League, they attacked racial employment inequality at Coca Cola. Against the backdrop of a wildcat strike that Calloway and Gibbons opposed, they successfully integrated the St. Louis taxi industry. Stirring the most controversy, in 1957 they led a labor-civil rights coalition that defeated an attempted revision of the St. Louis city charter. Business and civic groups had wanted to restructure the city government so as to lessen the “growing influence [of labor and civil rights organizations] and grant the city’s power elite a free hand to make critical economic and social decisions.”

Teamster ‘troubles’ The demonstration of Teamster power in St. Louis Continued on page 13

Lucy and Gloria considered

Continued from page 6 she can hear back from the people who come to listen to her. She writes of the inspiration she received from the village women she met in the two years she spent in India after graduating from Smith College in 1956 and the Native American women she came to know later, both groups sharing the tradition of the talking circle and consensus building. Her background as a journalist has led her to seek the truth that only her own eyes and ears can tell her.

I was put off on page 95 of McMillen’s book because in the brief biographical introduction of Susan B. Anthony as an interactor, McMillen says she was born in 1820 in Rochester, New York. While it is true that Anthony moved to Rochester with her family later in her life, it wasn’t until 1845. It happen to be sensitive to this because I am a part-time resident of the Berkshires in a neighboring town to Adams, Massachusetts, which claims Susan B. Anthony as its own and has created a museum in the house where she lived until she was six years old. Even Wikipedia has this information. If you’re looking for a more exciting approach to Lucy Stone’s life, you might want to take a look at Andrea Moore Kerr’s Lucy Stone: Speaking Out for Equality, published by Rutgers University Press in 1992. It starts out “Extra! Extra! Lucy Stone Is Dead!”

Stone states that The New York Times ran a 10-paragraph obituary when Lucy died in October 1893. The Washington Post printed a five-paragraph notice on its front page. Lucy Stone was not obscure in 1893.
When Government Helped: Learning From Sheila Collins and Gertrude Goldberg, Review and NYLHA book launch

Sheila Collins and Gertrude Goldberg, in their new book, When Government Helped: Learning From the Successes and Failures of the New Deal (Oxford University Press, 2014), did excellent work in putting together a comprehensive overview of government’s response to the crisis and the context which shaped it. Of the volume’s 11 chapters, six were the work of the two editors with others drawn from participants in the Columbia University Seminar on Full Employment, Social Welfare and Equity.

Festing problems

The book is a collection of essays on key aspects of the New Deal, the social and economic conditions that it hoped to address, and the political environment that shaped it. The authors were clearly inspired by the contemporary economic crisis, now generally referred to as the Great Recession.

In today’s political environment, with sometimes violent challenges to the authority of the federal government, it can be difficult to imagine how the state could address our festering problems of profound inequality, political corruption, a shrinking “middle class” with stagnant or falling wages, and other looming crises, any more than FDR could in 1933. Collins and Goldberg did excellent work in exploring this terrain. Their introduction and Collins’ first chapter were especially useful in setting the context, pointing out that the threat of another crisis of similar proportions is still with us, as the “The Great Recession” of 2008 showed. Not to be lost in this regard is that the New Deal, however much it ameliorated the consequences of an unbridled capitalism, did not result in a deeper social transformation.

While the authors/editors credited New Deal programs with sorely needed reforms in the relation of the state to society, they did not hesitate to see their flaws and shortcomings. Nor did they lionize FDR unduly, instead seeing mass social movements unduly, instead seeing mass social movements and labor unrest for making workers’ rights, social insurance (welfare), and agriculture and the environment urgent issues for government action. The unfortunate domination of the Senate by Dixiecrats, however, led to the shameful exclusion of many Black Americans from coverage under various New Deal programs, especially the National Labor Relations Act. And at no moment in Roosevelt’s presidency was he willing to put an Anti-Lynching bill before Congress, even in the face of resurgent Klan activity in the ‘30s.

In the hope that this volume would spur wider interest in the relevance of the New Deal to contemporary American social problems, the NYLHA along with the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, NYU, co-sponsored a book launch on September 17th at the Tamiment. The audience was small, but the discussion was lively with a healthy exchange between Professors Collins and Goldberg and audience members.

What was striking in some of the response to their presentation was a critique of the role of organized labor for its hesitancy to support some New Deal measures and what some saw as unions continuing failure to embrace universal measures to tackle the gaping inequality of 21st century American capitalism.

New Deal benefits

The event might have been of special interest to public school social studies teachers as well as college faculty in U.S. history and political science. Several teachers attended, including NYLHA board member Kimberly Schiller.

One participant, Kimberly Finneran, a secondary social studies teacher, said that the program would be valuable to her in teaching about the New Deal. About the program, she said “I was able to enrich my understanding of the long-term benefits of FDR’s New Deal and can plan an even more engaging unit for my students,” particularly noting FDR’s proposal of an Economic Bill of Rights, the Visiting Nurse Program’s child health study for giving a realistic picture of the nation’s strength and weaknesses, the New Deal conservation programs confronting climactic challenges, and arts programs that helped democratize American culture as well as revitalize a traumatized population.

This is a well-researched and well-written book that is timely and deserves a wide audience.

New York Labor History Association

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