

Another Civil War: Labor, Capital, and the State in the Anthracite Regions of Pennsylvania, 1840-1868

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Review

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Palladino, Grace *Another Civil War: Labor, Capital, and the State in the Anthracite Regions of Pennsylvania, 1840-1868*. Fordham University Press, \$15.00 paper ISBN 823225917

The Economy of the Civil War

Explaining the Role of Labor and Business

Fordham University Press has recently reissued Grace Palladino's fine 1990 study of internal divisions during the Civil War in the Pennsylvania coal country, *Another Civil War*. This is a welcome event, as the book is one of the best community studies dealing with the northern home front, and remains one of the very few works to examine closely the experiences of rural workers during the conflict. Palladino, a former student of the pioneering labor historian David Montgomery and currently the co-director of the Samuel Gompers Project at the University of Maryland, very profitably mines the sources and provides a refreshingly clear and insightful look at a group whose fierce opposition to the war and federal policies like conscription has mostly led to their being either neglected or harshly condemned in most accounts of the Civil War North.

The author's most fundamental as well as most valuable contribution to our understanding of the wartime opposition movement in Pennsylvania is to put it in the larger context of the conflict between labor and business interests in the nineteenth century. She nicely explicates the continuities between this ongoing process and the events of 1861-1865. Too, she makes clear how these workers, largely Irish and largely dedicated to the Democratic Party that courted them, perceived the Republican administration and its policies as hostile to their interests. Republicans were aligned with the mine owners, after all, who could consistently count on the power of the state to aid them both through legislation and through the application of military force to break up strikes. The fact that the provost marshals charged with implementing conscription had, in many cases, close allegiances with the hated mine owners, as she points out, could well have

been a contributing factor to the miners' hatred for this policy, as was the outright inequality of its provisions, particularly the substitution and commutation provisions. Palladino convincingly demonstrates that the forces of order conflated draft resistance with labor organization, portraying both as equally threatening to the war effort. This was likely opportunistic and willful deception on the part of local authorities and capitalists, whose interests were better served by bringing the power of the Union Army to bear to crush organized labor as well as organized opposition to the war, though these were not really the same thing.

While this book adds a welcome perspective to our understanding of draft resistance in the rural North, one wonders if it does not tend to downplay the importance of racism, anti-emancipation sentiment, and outright hostility to the war for national survival among these workers. The Democratic opposition had a dark side that defies efforts to entirely rehabilitate it, as was manifested in the murderous New York City Draft Riots as well as in threats and actual violence against enrollment officers and others in Pennsylvania. The book's almost wistful conclusion bemoans the disappearance of the republican world of independent workers, conquered by the harsh and impersonal forces of industrialization and consolidation. One suspects that at such times the book might tilt too far in the direction of not just understanding but actually ennobling these fiercely determined draft resisters whose motives were perhaps rather more mixed than Palladino would have it. We should be careful not to romanticize these workers, who undoubtedly had a rational and understandable basis for their dislike and distrust of the Republican administration and its policies. But ultimately it is as unsatisfying to lionize them for their militancy and farsightedness as it would be merely to condemn them for their disloyalty and truculence. Neither heroes nor villains, these miners defy easy categorization; theirs was in many ways a harsh and brutal existence, and they fought for survival and self-interest, as they saw it. Palladino's excellent book provides the most enlightening window onto the world of these workers that has yet been created, and one hopes that other scholars will build on this superb and original beginning.

Michl T. Smith is assistant professor of history at McNeese State University. He is the author of A Traitor and a Scoundrel: Benjamin Hedrick and the Cost of Dissent (University of Delaware Press).