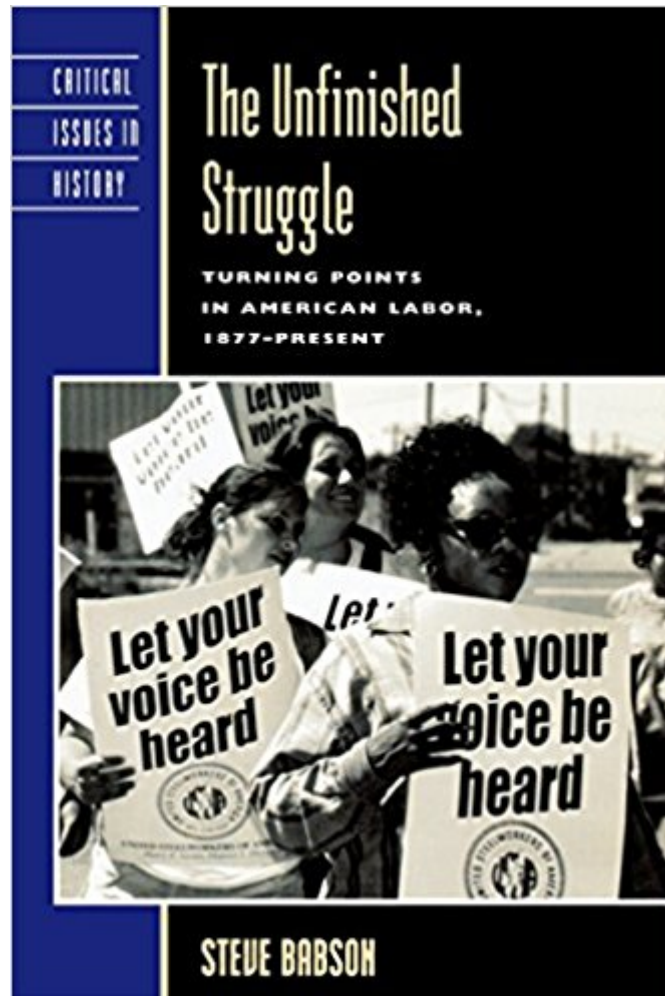




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The Unfinished Struggle



Synopsis

The Unfinished Struggle is one of the most concise, comprehensive, and accessible histories of the modern American labor movement ever written. Labor scholar and activist Steve Babson's dramatic narrative examines the numerous attempts to organize workers from the Great Uprising of 1877 to the 'sitdown' strikes of the 1930s to the present day. Babson illuminates the tumultuous past, evolving agenda, and continuing conflicts of the labor movement. He carefully identifies the causes of labor's decline in recent decades and explains union leaders' attempts to revive their organizations. Most important, Babson shows readers how the fortunes of organized labor are tied to larger trends in American history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Unfinished Struggle, considering its brevity and the number of years that it covers, represents an adequate, even good, effort at describing the difficult, hazardous, uneven, and highly compromised journey of the labor movement since the Great Railroad Uprising of 1877. Since the book is intended for those without thorough knowledge of the labor movement, a shortcoming of the book is the absence of any history of unions prior to 1877. How did they start? What was/is the social, economic, and political/legal context of unions? But the book is a window into the practicality and realities of unionism since 1877. The author shows that other than for a brief thirty-year period the labor movement has mostly struggled for relevancy, even survival. It is not clear as to the

degree of optimism that the author has regarding the completion of the struggle. As a practical matter, a reading of this book leaves little room for optimism. In the absence of great detail, the author focuses on historical "turning points" as markers to indicate the standing and prospects of the labor movement. Among those selected for discussion were the Strike of 1877, the Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912, WWI, the Steel Strike of 1919, the Great Depression, the Wagner Act of 1935, WWII, the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, the PATCO Strike of 1981, and the change in the leadership of the AFL-CIO in the mid-90s. In addition the conflicts and contradictions within the labor movement are well assessed. Basically, the book is a very sobering account of the labor movement. The author acknowledges the next to impossible task of writing a short history of the labor movement because of its complex past, but he has done a very credible and worthy job.

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