

beyond and urbane appreciation of this deceptively open writer. Haig-Brown was never the kind of artificer of the imagination who creates a world of his own into which we can enter without the personality and the life of its creator intruding. He wrote, when he wrote best, about the world of his own living, and the more we know about that world he asked us to share with him, the better we understand his work. But even with abundant data from the writer's life, a deeper kind of analysis than Mr. Robertson practices in his comments on Haig-Brown's books would be necessary to do them real justice. Some of his insights are shrewd, and his writing is always serious and at times clearly influenced by Haig-Brown's example of graceful clarity, but he moves too swiftly and too shallowly for anyone familiar with Haig-Brown's books to feel he has learned much that he did not know already. The real book on Haig-Brown, the conservationist and amateur naturalist as well as the writer, remains to be done.

Vancouver

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One Union in Wood, by Jerry Lembke and William M. Tattam. Harbour Publishing and International Publishers, 1984.

One Union in Wood is, surprisingly, the first book-length study of the International Woodworkers of America. There have been earlier books, but these have been anecdotal accounts by people very close to the scene of action, most notably Vernon Jensen's *Lumber and Labor* and Myrtle Bergren's *Tough Timber*.

Other studies of labour organization have included the IWA only as a part of a larger picture of national or international trade unionism. Lembke and Tattam have attempted to provide a survey of all of the major events in the history of woodworkers' unions from their earliest beginnings in the nineteenth century in the Pacific Northwest to the Newfoundland strike of 1959. They have subtitled their work "A Political History of the International Woodworkers of America," by which they mean to let the reader know that this book will describe the events which produced a communist-dominated union and subsequent events

Because the IWA is not yet fifty years old, it has been possible to rely which resulted in the removal of the communists from leadership. on oral accounts as well as newly available documentary sources. Sometimes this produces curious shifts in focus, from a crisp account of the

proceedings of an IWA convention to the orally derived record of workers marching fifty miles through the bush from Parksville to Great Central Lake, assisted by townspeople. I do not suggest that something like that did not happen, but anyone who knows the terrain must regard it as unlikely; there was a rail line for the greater part of the fifty miles.

For B.C. readers, the 1948 breakaway of the B.C. section from the international organization forms the strongest part of the book. The authors go on to show that this was the first bang in a series of explosions that swept on through the American side of the union, echoing on a minute scale the politics of the cold war, and ending in a restructuring of the IWA in a way that removed power from the local unions and vested it in regional organizations whose boundaries were carefully drawn in order to neutralize the power of such pockets of communist support as remained by the mid-fifties.

Undoubtedly the energy and colour of these parts of the book arise from the fact that the authors had the good fortune to be able to interview both Karly Larson and Harold Prichett, both of whom were dedicated organizers for the woodworkers' union and as well for the communist party, exhibiting a determination and enthusiasm not to be seen in today's business unions. For them, the class war continued. Presented with representative members of a new, post cold war generation, they seized the opportunity to show Lembke and Tattam the world through the eyes of the IWA Red Bloc of the 1940s.

Indeed, all history is biased, and any that attempts true objectivity fails. I do not quibble with Lembke and Tattam having adopted a particular viewpoint. What I do find a problem is the pervasive tendency to present the communist leadership or the Red Bloc as victims, buffeted by events over which they had no control, and finally subverted by the anti-democratic forces of the state. See, for example, page 132: "When imprisonment failed to change Dalskog's mind, the court attacked the entire WIUC leadership." B.C. courts may often appear unjust and unfair to underdogs, but they cannot "attack" a union leadership. This kind of phraseology turns up all too frequently in this book and weakens it as a critical study.

A more profound weakness arises from the authors' failure to tie the book to the development of communism in Canada and the U.S. It was not accidental or merely incidental that the early organizers were communist party members. Certainly it is fair to state that they were good organizers because they understood the nature of class conflict in a capitalist society. But it must also be stated that they were directed by

the Communist International and later, after the Comintern was disbanded, by Moscow. This can no longer be dismissed as the kind of distortion promulgated by red-baiters. The documentary evidence exists. See Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks*. In fact there is good reason to refer to this evidence, because it clarifies what is at some points a confusing tale of labour and political intrigue, which, though well researched, does not take us as far as it could toward understanding the trade unionism of the thirties and forties.

It is clear that the Workers Unity League and the Lumber Workers' International Union were established in the early thirties as a result of a Comintern directive to organize unions outside the American Federation of Labor. Since the AFL was not actually organizing the woodworkers, the policy made sense. In the late thirties and early forties the communist directive was to co-operate with all anti-fascist forces. To that end the IWA attempted to affiliate itself with the B.C. CCF (a socialist party). The CCF rejected the IWA because it could not, or would not, guarantee that delegates to the CCF convention would not be members of other political parties (i.e., were not communists).

By 1945 the communist directive was to attack socialists. In B.C. this meant running communist candidates in the elections of that year. The executive officers of the communist party in B.C. were also the executive officers of the IWA. Some of these were also candidates in the elections. When a member of Local 1-357 raised a query about \$9,372.85 which was "not accounted for" (p. 121), there was a more serious underlying question: had the IWA executive assisted the communist party executive with about \$9,000 in union funds towards election expenses?

Unfortunately, by having relied solely on Red Bloc interviewees in B.C. the authors have missed this essential point. Though they go on to provide a mass of information about audits and vouchers, charges and denials, the one basic question has not been addressed. Which came first for the communist leadership of the union: the Party or the IWA?

Despite these weaknesses, this is an important book, and it will become a reference point for future work on the IWA and others of the once communist-dominated unions. In B.C. at least, the field has hardly been touched, and it is to be hoped that Lembke and Tattam will inspire others to pursue this work while some of the main participants are still with us.