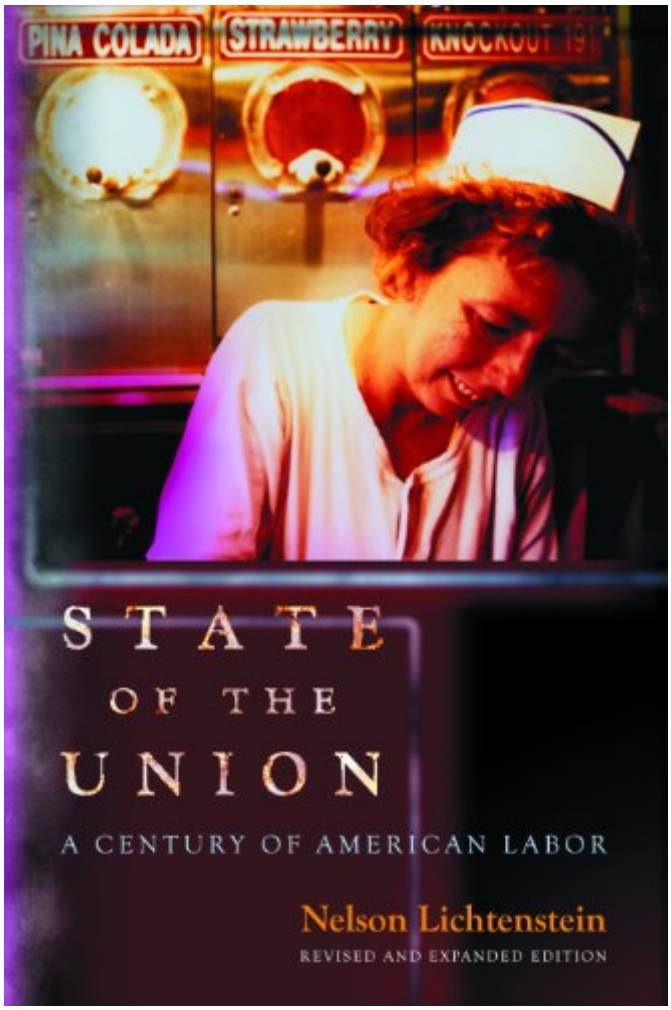
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State Of The Union: A Century Of American Labor (Politics And Society In Modern America)



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Synopsis

In a fresh and timely reinterpretation, Nelson Lichtenstein examines how trade unionism has waxed and waned in the nation’s political and moral imagination, among both devoted partisans and intransigent foes. From the steel foundry to the burger-grill, from Woodrow Wilson to John Sweeney, from Homestead to Pittston, Lichtenstein weaves together a compelling matrix of ideas, stories, strikes, laws, and people in a streamlined narrative of work and labor in the twentieth century. The "labor question" became a burning issue during the Progressive Era because its solution seemed essential to the survival of American democracy itself. Beginning there, Lichtenstein takes us all the way to the organizing fever of contemporary Los Angeles, where the labor movement stands at the center of the effort to transform millions of new immigrants into alert citizen unionists. He offers an expansive survey of labor’s upsurge during the 1930s, when the New Deal put a white, male version of industrial democracy at the heart of U.S. political culture. He debunks the myth of a postwar "management-labor accord" by showing that there was (at most) a limited, unstable truce. Lichtenstein argues that the ideas that had once sustained solidarity and citizenship in the world of work underwent a radical transformation when the rights-centered social movements of the 1960s and 1970s captured the nation’s moral imagination. The labor movement was therefore tragically unprepared for the years of Reagan and Clinton: although technological change and a new era of global economics battered the unions, their real failure was one of ideas and political will. Throughout, Lichtenstein argues that labor’s most important function, in theory if not always in practice, has been the vitalization of a democratic ethos, at work and in the larger society. To the extent that the unions fuse their purpose with that impulse, they can once again become central to the fate of the republic. State of the Union is an incisive history that tells the story of one of America’s defining aspirations. This edition includes a new preface in which Lichtenstein engages with many of those who have offered commentary on State of the Union and evaluates the historical literature that has emerged in the decade since the book’s initial publication. He also brings his narrative into the current moment with a final chapter, "Obama’s America: Liberalism without Unions.?

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Customer Reviews

I read this book when it came out in hardcover. It is such a good book, and so important, I am rereading it in the Kindle edition.I grew up reading and thinking about labor history, I found this book hugely rewarding - it provides a positive but realistic framework for understanding the role, the strengths and weaknesses, and the importance of the labor movement in this country. Happily, Lichtenstein is also a good writer and this is an enjoyable read.

Nice survey of American labor and the workplace from 1930 ’s to the Presidency of Barack Obama and the Wisconsin protests.

Very good information.

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