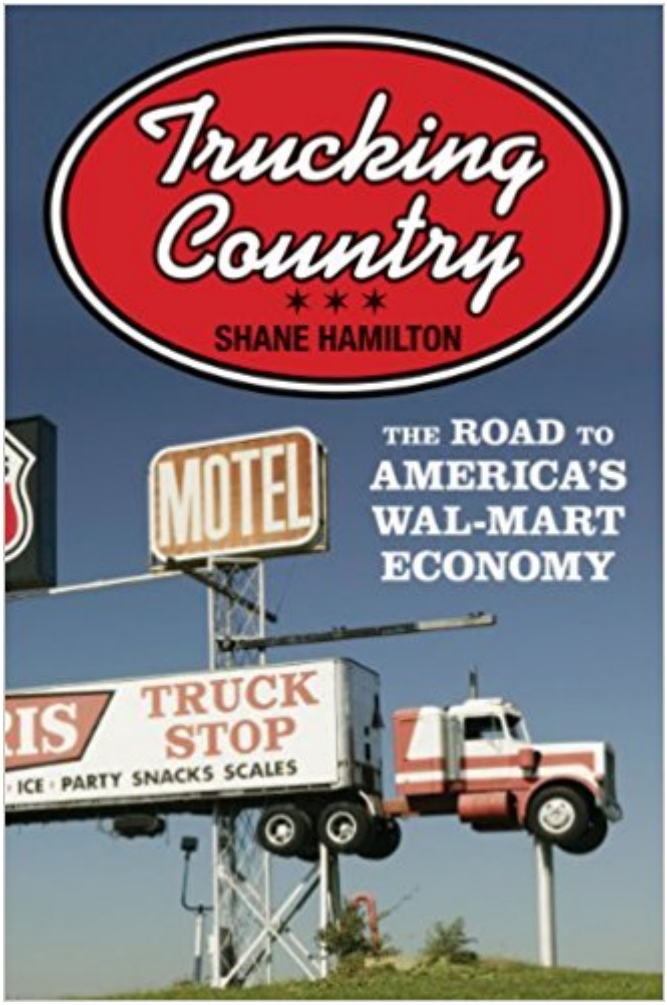
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Trucking Country: The Road To America's Wal-Mart Economy (Politics And Society In Modern America)



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Synopsis

Trucking Country is a social history of long-haul trucking that explores the contentious politics of free-market capitalism in post-World War II America. Shane Hamilton paints an eye-opening portrait of the rural highways of the American heartland, and in doing so explains why working-class populist voters are drawn to conservative politicians who seemingly don’t represent their financial interests. Hamilton challenges the popular notion of "red state" conservatism as a devil’s bargain between culturally conservative rural workers and economically conservative demagogues in the Republican Party. The roots of rural conservatism, Hamilton demonstrates, took hold long before the culture wars and free-market fanaticism of the 1990s. As Hamilton shows, truckers helped build an economic order that brought low-priced consumer goods to a greater number of Americans. They piloted the big rigs that linked America’s factory farms and agribusiness food processors to suburban supermarkets across the country. Trucking Country is the gripping account of truckers whose support of post-New Deal free enterprise was so virulent that it sparked violent highway blockades in the 1970s. It’s the story of "bandit" drivers who inspired country songwriters and Hollywood filmmakers to celebrate the "last American cowboy," and of ordinary blue-collar workers who helped make possible the deregulatory policies of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and set the stage for Wal-Mart to become America’s most powerful corporation in today’s low-price, low-wage economy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This detailed, closely argued book chronicles the U.S. trucking industry’s history, particularly its role in rolling back New Deal policies and regulations, "paving the way for the low-wage, low-price capitalism that would define the final decades of the twentieth-century political economy." Associate history professor Hamilton (Univ. of Georgia) provides a clear if dry tour of 20th century regulation issues case by case, documenting the rise of unions, automated agribusiness, the marginalizing of independent operators and the increased demand for "vigorously anti-New Deal" policies for farm country. Though at times repetitive, the decentralized, grassroots nature of the movement keeps things lively, and Hamilton is a knowledgeable guide to everything from beef trusts to the National Farmers Organization to the 1979 strike that opens the book, in which 75,000 truckers tried to shut down the nation’s highway system. Economy and market buffs looking for a different perspective on America’s 20th century economic evolution will find this intriguing and informative. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"This detailed, closely argued book chronicles the U.S. trucking industry’s history, particularly its role in rolling back New Deal policies and regulations. Hamilton is a knowledgeable guide to everything from beef trusts to the National Farmers Organization to the 1979 strike that opens the book, in which 75,000 truckers tried to shut down the nation’s highway system. Economy and market buffs looking for a different perspective on America’s 20th century economic evolution will find this intriguing and informative."--Publishers Weekly"With the US again engaged in a debate over the merits of regulation versus the free market, the book’s academic research touches on some timely historical issues. It is also a fascinating account of the political battles over the diesel engine and the refrigerated truck, which had emerged as the new technology of the 1920s and 1930s and a threat to the dominance of the railroad distribution system for beef and milk by a few large meat packing companies and local dairies."--Jonathan Birchall, Financial Times"Trucking Country offers a finely crafted mix of cultural identity, regional tradition, economic history, legislative politics, political argument and policy transformation. Shane Hamilton uses the history and contemporary development of the trucking industry in the U.S. to reveal the social, economic and political dynamics that were instrumental in shifting the industry away from the heavy regulation of the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) towards deregulation, fragmentation, and free-market competition."--Michael Foley, Times Higher Education"Independent trucking is for Hamilton what Kansas was for Frank--the locus that shows a part of what has gone wrong with American

politics."--David Kusnet, Bookforum"Trucking Country intervenes in [the] crowded debate over the demise of New Deal liberalism from a genuinely original vantage point: the political culture of independent long-haul truckers and the political economy shaped by the agribusiness corporations that they served."--Matthew Lassiter, Democracy"If you want to know what really drives the US economy, then this thoroughly researched and well-written book is for you--and that's a big 10-4, Rubber Duck."--Joe Cushnan, The Tribune (UK)"[B]y drawing together structural, institutional, economic, and cultural analyses, Hamilton has offered a dense, textured, and complex account of his subject. Trucking Country is essential to any understanding of the decline of the New Deal and the rise of economic conservatism at the end of the twentieth century."--Joseph E. Lowndes, Perspectives on Politics"A brilliant read."--Fleet Transportation Magazine"[U]ndeniably a major achievement. Shane Hamilton has written a brilliant book that will be required reading for anyone interested ill understanding the conservative groundswell of the postwar era."--Jordan Kleiman, Technology and Culture"This is a convincing and useful book."--Peter J. Hugill, Journal of American History"[A] fascinating study of the hauling business. . . . From the 1930s through the end of the Carter administration, Hamilton's history is thoughtful, detailed, and informative."--Jesse Walker, Reason"Trucking Country is imaginative, thought-provoking, and persuasive. . . . [N]o scholarly work is more essential for understanding the transformation of Northwest Arkansas."--Michael Pierce, Arkansas Historical Quarterly

Great read; recommended.

If anyone wants a better understanding of hour their "stuff" (food, electronics, furniture, etc.) gets from point A to B so fast and cheap today, they need to read this book. It is an outstanding history, from the Depression through the 1980's, of how products were moved in this country and the political and commercial forces who helped set the rules for said movement. It explains how the Teamsters, along with New Deal politicians, set up a framework of regulated trucking routes that restricted competition and kept transport prices high. That framework was steadily eroded through an exemption in the regulation that allowed farmers to use unregulated trucks to bring their product to market. The ensuing four-and-a-half decades were spent battling over what the meaning of the words "farm products" meant in an economy increasingly dominated by consumers want for cheap products and farmers want for maximum profit in their pockets (and not truckers). Pulling on a voluminous list of citations, the author turns what could be a dry topic into one of fascinating statistics, first person accounts, and cultural references that make one feel like they are riding

shotgun with a driver trying to eek out a living as "the last American cowboy".The only reason that this book didn't receive 5 stars from me was it's abrupt ending. Once through President Carter's de-regulation era, the author attempts to sum up the last 30 years of trucking in several concluding pages. Perhaps there weren't as many primary sources as there were for earlier decades, or maybe the point of the book was to stop with Carter's actions. Whatever the reason, it seemed a bit abrupt given the volume and depth of the previous chapters. It's the one blemish in an otherwise outstanding documentary on the nearly 80 years of trucking since the Great Depression.

"Trucking Country" is on the ROROTOKO list of cutting-edge intellectual nonfiction. Professor Hamilton's book interview ran here as cover feature on May 1, 2009.

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