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Jeffrey Haydu. *Citizen Employers: Business Communities and Labor in Cincinnati and San Francisco, 1870-1916.* ILR Press, 2008. x + 268 pp. $39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8014-4641-2.

Reviewed by Nikki Mandell

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Jeffrey Haydu has long been interested in class relations and the struggles between workers, employers, and the state that marked American industrial development at the dawn of the twentieth century. In this new book, *Citizen Employers*, Haydu addresses the employers' side of that struggle. He challenges presumptions that employers' virulent opposition to unions was motivated solely by self-interest (whether of the greedy or rational bent). Certainly self-interest was an active force; Haydu does not dispute this. However, *Citizen Employers* seeks to understand businessmen on their own terms, taking their explanation and actions as legitimate expressions of their beliefs and motives. This is important, according to Haydu, because "[t]he business of America is business, and the ideologies through which merchants, manufacturers, and managers publicly justify their position have exerted tremendous influence on our culture and institutions" (p. 2). In order to uncover employers' ideologies Haydu draws on theories of class formation and social movements that are more typically reserved to the study of workers, revolutionaries and reformers. He asks: Did employers at the turn of the last century form a "business class" and, if so, how did the process of business class formation shape their resistance to unions?

Citizen Employers examines this question through comparative case studies of businessmen in Cincinnati and San Francisco. These cities shared much in common at the turn of the last century. In 1890 Cincinnati and San Francisco were the nation's seventh-largest and ninth-largest manufacturing cities, respectively. They housed some of the same industries (including shoe and garment manufacturing), and the typical businessman in both cities was a proprietary owner employing an average of twelve workers. Beyond these structural similarities, Haydu finds that employers in both cities made similar claims that business was a public good, that their civic activities were acts of selfless public service, and that their response to unions was a part of their selfless service on behalf of the public good.

There were also significant differences, and it is around those differences that the story of ***Citizen Employers*** turns. Cincinnati was suffering an economic decline, as railroads replaced water transportation, and struggling with political corruption under the rule of "Boss Cox." San Francisco's economy, on the other hand, was booming, labor unions were powerful, and racial conflict between Euro-Americans and Chinese confounded structural class divisions. As they responded to these concretely different conditions, employers in Cincinnati and employers in San Francisco crafted distinctly different business-class identities. Cincinnati employers assumed a class identity that Haydu terms "business citizenship." San Francisco employers developed what Haydu calls a "thoroughly un-American" class identity of "practical corporatism" (p. 4).

Citizen Employers uncovers these contrasting employer ideologies in three stages informed, according to Haydu, by class formation and social movement theory. Rather than focusing on relations between employers and workers, about which there is a rich literature, Haydu invokes class formation theory to direct this investigation to "social ties, common experiences, and shared cultural orientations" among employers. A business-class identity or ideology took shape not only through the increasing separation of employers and workers, but also through the increasing ties that connected employers across different business sectors. These ties contributed to class formation defined as an "alignment between economic positions on one side and cultural practices or collective action on the other … [that] may be labeled the class consciousness of … businessmen" (p. 108). Haydu invokes social movement theory to explain how and why those alignments took different shapes in Cincinnati and San Francisco. Employers' class identity in each city was affected by a process of "path-dependency," "cultural tools," "cultural scripts," and "lock-in mechanisms" (p. 209). He writes, "[I]nitial forays into movement activities and organizations can lock in early choices by forging bonds and constructing identities that participants become reluctant to give up" (p. 209). In other words, prior organizational affiliations and collective action directly influenced subsequent affiliations and activities.

The first stage, comprising chapters 1 and 2, examines employer organizations and associations. Between 1870 and 1890 Cincinnati employers responded to economic decline and the chaos of an 1884 court house riot by organizing around initiatives to promote civic order and civic improvement. Businessmen engaged in a wide cross-section of manufacturing, commerce, real estate, and the professions joined forces to establish the Cincinnati Commercial Club, the Committee of One Hundred, the Business Men's Club, and the Employers' Association. Despite differences in their degree of exclusivity and particular mix of social, political, and economic activities, these businessmen's clubs united their members around common agendas to improve the urban infrastructure, expand civic amenities, promote law and order, and end municipal corruption.

San Francisco employers' collective organization was affected by a different set of experiences. Confronted by powerful unions and competition from a handful of monopolistic industries employing cheap Chinese labor, San Francisco businessmen joined trade specific and cross-class organizations. As their names suggest, the Associated Boot and Shoe Manufacturers, the Retail Grocers Association, and the Merchants' Association sustained employers' trade identity, rather than fostering a broad business-class identity. The two cross-sector business organizations similarly represented division, not unity, within the San Francisco business community; small-scale businessmen organized the Municipal League in 1901 for the express purpose of mediating between the big business dominated Employers' Association and an array of striking unions that shut down restaurants, bakeries, local transportation, and the docks. The Employers' Association rejected the of-

fer. At the same time, small businessmen in San Francisco joined forces with powerful labor groups to oppose cheap Chinese labor. In addition to individual membership in the Pacific Coast Anti-Coolie Association, employers organized in the Associated Boot and Shoe Manufacturers provided financial support to the Boot and Shoemakers White Labor League. Small cigar manufacturers jointly promoted a white label campaign with their organized workers.

After establishing that different organizational affiliations emerged among businessmen in Cincinnati and San Francisco, *Citizen Employers* turns to an exploration of the ideologies or class attitudes expressed by these organized business groups. This second stage, comprising chapters 3 and 4, presumes that employers in both cities drew from a common "republican repertoire." This republican repertoire, grounded in the producer ethic of the mid-nineteenth century, served as a "tool kit" of ideas and attitudes that employers selectively adapted to meet their city-specific situations. Haydu finds that Cincinnati and San Francisco businessmen made different selections from this common tool kit. These different selections produced different business-class identities in the two cities. Cincinnati employers constructed a class identity that drew heavily on republican ideas of the common good. They celebrated individual rights and duties, claimed to be nonpartisan and above class, and asserted that the interests of business and the interests of the city were one and the same. This ideology of "business citizenship" was not, Haydu asserts, an expression of middle- and upper-class liberalism. In contrast to liberalism's laissez-faire separation of business and government, Cincinnati businessmen embraced civic leadership and a unity of interests between business and government.

Whereas Cincinnati employers crafted an identity in opposition to the class of artisan producers, San Francisco employers melded this republican notion into an idea of a "virtuous middle class" of white labor and local businessmen standing between "Asian hordes and rapacious corporations" (p. 112). They also adapted republican fear of tyrannical power to oppose economic tyranny in the form of monopoly power. Thus, San Francisco employers' "practical corporatism" represented a class-based identity in which organized business accepted organized labor as an essential actor in the public arena. Neither group presumed the sole right to speak for the public good. Instead, the public interest "was best served when both sides were organized, had levelheaded leaders, and worked out their differences through peaceful negotiations" (p. 88).

Haydu argues that evidence of these business-class formations can be found in employers' application of their respective ideologies at both the workplace and in the civic arena. The final section of *Citizen Employers*, chapters 5 and 6, focuses on how employers' organizational affiliations and civic ideologies "crossed institutional borders … [and] provided a common script for thinking about work and politics" (pp. 133-135). Cincinnati employers, for example, assessed the "good worker" according to the same yardstick they used to define the "good citizen." Both should display habits of self-discipline, sober judgment, hard work, ambition for self-improvement, and a willingness to sacrifice for the good of the whole (be that the firm or the polity). Returning to the opening question, the ideology of business citizenship helps to explain Cincinnati employers' virulent anti-unionism as more than greedy self-interest. Unions were the antithesis of the good economic citizen; they acted in the name of class rather than standing against class, they promoted mob action in place of sober judgment, they served selfish interests instead of cooperative self-sacrifice.

San Francisco employers did not initially share their Cincinnati counterparts' opposition to unions. Guided by an ideology of practical corporatism San Francisco businessmen embraced

union participation at the workplace and in the civic arena. Employer groups supported arbitration of workplace disputes, invited union participation in expositions designed to sell San Francisco, and joined the Union Labor Party coalition that elected the president of the powerful Building Trades Council as mayor in 1907. However, this cross-class coalition weakened after 1910 and, by 1916 had given way to a reformulated business class that was openly hostile to unions. Employers' shift from practical corporatism to Cincinnati-style business citizenship reflected changes in both the economy and polity. Organized labor lost its attraction and its power as the threat of cheap Chinese labor lessened and as workingmen supported a progressive party coalition in place of its own Union Labor Party in municipal elections. At the same time that organized labor became a less desirable partner for organized small-scale employers, San Francisco businessmen found greater unity of interest across industrial sectors as they prepared for the 1915 Pan-Pacific Exposition and responded to the bombing of the 1916 Preparedness Day Parade. Thus, by 1916 San Francisco's exceptionalism had given way to the more widely shared employer ideology of business citizenship.

Citizen Employers joins a growing literature on class formation among the middle and upper classes. This vein of scholarship has focused on white-collar workers and elites, broadly defined. [1] Haydu enriches this historical conversation around class formation by focusing on a group that is rarely examined in this way, businessmen. *Citizen Employers* makes a number of valuable contributions. Most noteworthy are its attention to employer organizations as sites of class formation, and the use of obituaries and memorial testimonies to demonstrate that businessmen spoke a language of classlessness, class harmony, and good citizenship that is more commonly associated with their Progressive Era reform antagonists. Most significantly, *Citizen Employers* challenges us to consider the possibility that the weakness of American labor unions owes at least as much to the triumph of employers' ideological construction of classlessness as it does to their union-crushing actions.

Haydu's approach to this subject clearly reflects his grounding as a sociologist. *Citizen Employers* purposefully names processes of change in ways that are uncommon in historically grounded scholarship. The introduction, for example, explains that "the usual way of summarizing this style of explanation is through the metaphor of path dependency, in which multiple possibilities are winnowed down and one of those possibilities gets locked in over time.... A path-dependent account of frame selection might begin by asking which inherited cultural tools from the past are effective in coping with current problems" (p. 14). The advantage of transparently identifying ideas and events as cultural tool kits, lock-in mechanisms, switch points, identities and frames, boundary-making, threshold effects, and short-term triggers is that it reminds the reader of how historians make sense of the past. On the other hand, the mechanistic nature of this style of explanation does not produce an engaging narrative or capture the lived world of its employer protagonists.

In fact, some of the limits of *Citizen Employers* may be attributed to the cumbersome nature of this methodological approach. The businessmen in this story seem to operate in a world in which nineteenth-century producer republicanism is the only "cultural tool kit" from which they could draw ideas and identities. Readers of *Citizen Employers* would not know that a consumer ethic was replacing the nineteenth-century producer ethic, that Victorian constructions of gender were deeply embedded in class identity, or that a progressive reform movement was challenging corporate power. Equally troublesome is the failure to consider multiple meanings of key ideas other than producer republicanism. Gilded Age liberalism is dispensed within a few short paragraphs. Although employer ideology in Cincinnati

is defined as "business citizenship," the book misses an opportunity to place business citizenship within the struggles over citizenship that punctuated this era. The notion of "businessmen" is similarly one dimensional. Businessmen and business ideology are presumed to have been fully encompassed by clubs with limited membership. With the significant exception of divisions between nationally and locally based employer organizations in San Francisco, *Citizen Employers* does not consider who was and was not an "employer," or which employers did or did not share the ideology projected by their city's businessmen's organizations. Haydu raises important questions about the nature and impact of business-class formation and reminds us that class formation and social movement theory can be powerful tools for investigating these issues. There is much more to be learned about these processes.

Note

[1]. See, for example, Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *Ruling America: A History of Wealth and Power in a Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Daniel J. Walkowitz, *Working with Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle-Class Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); and Olivier Zunz, *Making America Corporate* (University of Chicago Press, 1990).