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# Duquesne and the Rise of Steel Unionism, by James D. Rose

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tends that the clandestine nature of both these practices highlight the pervasiveness of Victorian ideals among the working class and their willingness to self-enforce them, while underscoring the precarious nature of urban working-class single motherhood. A short epilogue closes the book in which Broder makes explicit connections between the nineteenth century's discourse on welfare and the family with America's current political dialogue.

Ultimately, Broder has written an insightful study which uses sources imaginatively to tease out voices in a discourse that have historically been hard to hear. Unfortunately, this talent is at times narrowly applied. The intense discourse analyses on sources like the SPCC's are made at the expense of providing other sorts of necessary context. Philadelphia as an evolving city and the study's backdrop is swiftly dealt with and then set aside leaving many of the stories she tells to be detached from any real sense of place. Moreover, no thorough examination is made of those who funded or ran institutions like the Haven or SPCC and for what purposes, although in the case of the Haven this may have been for reasons of privacy. More troubling, however, is that these organizations are referenced to have ties to municipal institutions like the police, but rarely does any sort of local or regional government factor into the study. Nonetheless, Broder's analysis of what she does include is both provocative and sound, and her insights should be integrated into larger, more contextual studies of urban workers and social reform. Historians of poverty, urban welfare, or philanthropy will want to be sure to add this book to their personal libraries while scholars of urban, labor, or gender history should make a point to give it a careful read.

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**James D. Rose, *Duquesne and the Rise of Steel Unionism*.** Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001. xi + 284 pp. \$42.50.

Back to the shop floor! This book is a welcome addition to the literature of American labor in the mid-twentieth century. Through meticulous analysis of steel workers at the workplace in Duquesne, Pennsylvania, James D. Rose explains the emergence and eventual victory of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC), a part of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), in all its complexity. In doing so, he reveals the inadequacy of Lizabeth Cohen's culture of unity as well as Staughton Lynd's militant alternative unionism to explain the labor history of the 1930s. In addition, he reintroduces the idea that the federal government's role in industrial relations was crucial to the success of the CIO.

Rose uses newly available records of the US Steel-Duquesne Works, especially its personnel department which included its employee representation plan (ERP), records that were discarded by the company when it shut down the Works in the 1980s and were rescued by the UE/Labor Archives at the University of Pittsburgh. This has allowed him to enter the little-known world of the

ERP. In fact, the ERP, which US Steel had rejected in 1919 when other major companies instituted them as a bulwark against unions, was established by the company after the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) in 1933 as an answer to the growing dissatisfaction of its work force and the organizing activities of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) affiliate, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers. The book traces the attraction of various workers to these two organizations from 1933 to 1935 and finds deep divisions at the Duquesne Works. The Great Depression, rather than drawing workers together across skill and ethnic lines, exacerbated these divisions. Rose discovered that the ERP attracted skilled and semiskilled tonnage workers who worked in groups as well as the traditional skilled tradesmen, all of American or Northwestern European backgrounds. The Amalgamated drew its strength from the unskilled hourly workers, both foreign-stock (southern- and eastern-European immigrants and the second generation) and Black. Each had specific grievances that were addressed by the respective organizations. The tonnage workers found that the ERP dealt rather effectively with their rate grievances and safety issues. The Amalgamated's Fort Dukane Lodge attracted immigrant and Black workers who bore the brunt of the depression's downturn and who responded to the NIRA's apparent support for worker representation. They faced layoffs and reduced hours, thus bringing these low-wage workers to the brink of destitution.

The excellent and unique chapter on the ERP reveals the extent to which skilled workers used the ERP to press the company for correction of antiquated wage structures, restraint of the arbitrary power of foremen, and the improvement of overall working and safety conditions. Rose claims that the ERP leadership evolved from the 1933 company loyalists to more militant representatives who by 1936 "had developed a sophisticated shop-floor bargaining structure and grievance procedure." (102) This story, in all its nuance, is well worth reading, for it reveals the extent to which ERP militants ultimately tried to build a central committee of all US Steel ERPs to deal with the company on a united basis. The company management would stand for none of this. Ironically at this point in late 1935, with the passage of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA or Wagner Act) and John L. Lewis's announcement of the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization, US Steel began resisting their own ERPs.

Having effected an agreement with the Amalgamated, Lewis announced the formation of SWOC. In January 1937 in hearings before the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), ERP leaders from the Duquesne Works revealed that they had joined SWOC as organizers. The following month SWOC established a Duquesne local with a coalition of ERP and Amalgamated leaders. But this did not signal unity with Amalgamated members at Duquesne, as the rift between the two groups of workers remained wide. SWOC had to overcome the legacy of depressed conditions and the Amalgamated's failures of the NRA years. The ERP loyalists, at the same time, were forced as a result of the NLRB hearings to choose between the ERP and SWOC. What galvanized both factions to unite was the firing of a prominent SWOC leader, and popular SWOC issues

were seniority and protection for union members. In time, SWOC built a local whose leadership had a strong foreign-stock character, though Black leadership declined. Moreover, some ERP loyalists had not been won over and threatened to evolve into an independent union.

When in March 1937, US Steel president Myron Taylor announced he was recognizing SWOC as a collective bargaining agent, he refused to recognize SWOC as the sole bargaining agent but limited only to its own members. SWOC adopted many ERP practices and policies; Taylor even initialed the ERP grievance procedure as part of the SWOC contract. This continued brake on SWOC power took its toll as the "Roosevelt recession" of mid-1937 led to lay-offs that SWOC could do nothing about. The victory of SWOC leader Elmer Maloy as Democratic mayor of Duquesne in the Fall 1937 elections, a victory repeated throughout the Monongahela Valley, belied the fact that the local was split along political lines, with many tonnage men remaining Republican. The Democratic victory was soon undercut by Republicans retaking the City Council the following year.

Chapter 6, which discusses the consolidation of the union in the late 1930s, is an important reminder to historians that the CIO barely hung on to its membership and its contracts in 1938 through 1940. The declining economic conditions, the continued antagonisms among racially and ethnically diverse work forces, and the continued resistance of employers might have spelled the end of the CIO if the wartime boom had not breathed new life into the economy. Still, only the decisions of the National War Labor Board (NWLB) consolidated SWOC (and other CIO affiliates) in their roles as sole collective bargaining agents for their workers. As Rose notes, SWOC's overwhelming victory in the 1942 NLRB election at the Duquesne Works obscured the fact that one in four eligible voters either did not vote or voted against the union; SWOC continued the monthly struggle to collect dues from the rank and file. Here Rose takes on those historian detractors of the New Deal who see only bureaucratization in the CIO's acquiescence to the federal government's industrial-relations mechanisms like dues check-off and maintenance of membership (NWLB contract decisions that ordered companies to deduct dues from workers' paychecks and required workers to remain members of the union for the duration of the contract if they chose to join it). In contrast, he states that these NWLB decisions "artificially strengthened an inconsistent and fragmented rank-and-file and masked the internal weaknesses of the union." (217)

Finally, Rose argues that only by deeply investigating 1930s unionism in all its instabilities and limitations can we begin to appreciate how the labor movement came to its weakened state in the latter part of the twentieth century. Case studies such as this still have their place in the study of an era that seems to have had its history already settled. All labor historians of the twentieth century will want to read this book.

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