

Wobblies of the World: A Global History of the IWW. Edited by Peter Cole, David Struthers and Kenyon Zimmer. Pluto Press, London, 2017. 312pp. NZ price: \$39.59. ISBN: 9780745399591.

WOBBLIES OF THE WORLD claims to be first global overview of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – an energetic, innovative revolutionary syndicalist trade union whose members were nicknamed ‘wobblies’. That union, founded in the United States in 1905, is often seen as an American union. Yet, during a global wave of industrial unrest before and after World War One, it spread around various parts of the world, including Aotearoa New Zealand, and then faded away by about the 1920s after experiencing strict repression. This collection, influenced by the ‘global turn’ in history, contains a wealth of detail of IWW influence worldwide, including in Mexico, India, Canada, Sweden, Spain, Australia, Ireland, South Africa and Aotearoa New Zealand (represented by two chapters by Mark Derby and Peter Clayworth), and the multiple transnational connections within the US IWW itself.

The IWW, as an internationalist multi-ethnic union, seemed free of the influence of the racist ‘white labourism’ that many white unionists globally espoused during the early twentieth century. In that regard, perhaps the book’s main innovation, besides attempting a genuinely global purview, is how many of its authors draw upon a wide variety of non-English sources, including Russian, Finnish, Italian and Spanish IWW newspapers produced by migrants in the US. Derby examines how Percy Short, in the Aotearoa New Zealand IWW newspaper the *Industrial Unionist*, appealed to Māori to join the IWW, on the basis they had a mutual enemy: the capitalist class. Remarkably for the time, he did so in te reo. For example, during the attempted 1913 general strike, Short wrote that the ‘bosses ... confiscated your land ... [and] shot your ancestors This gang of thieves is your enemy. We are all workers together, we are ever one tribe – the tribe of workers’ (p.195, Derby’s translation). However, as Derby notes (p.196), it is unclear if these appeals actually had any influence among Māori, and, furthermore, whether any Māori joined the IWW. Overall while migrant and ethnic wobblies are explored well in this book, the IWW’s global class composition, and conceptions of anti-capitalism and gender, are less well studied.

Another major strength of this book is that is not solely aimed at academics, but also at activists and unionists. It is a readable book, relatively free of jargon, and contains much detail about localized IWW organization, and biographies of remarkable globetrotting wobblies. However, this has meant that *Wobblies of the World* often has a top-down focus on key IWW organizers, and gives the impression that a mobile militant minority were essential for Wobbly activities and influence. In contrast, the IWW generally aimed to be a grassroots and member-led union.

In presumably attempting to appeal beyond academia, most chapters are only ten to 15 pages long and are mostly narrative-based. Consequently, authors do not provide much context for, or explain the wider significance of, their work. More importantly, the book lacks sustained critical analysis, as most authors do not engage in-depth with the IWW’s critics. In contrast to Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe’s classic transnational study, *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective*, the editors of *Wobblies of the World* did not provide an analytical framework or frameworks for studying the IWW – and the broader syndicalist movement, of which it was a part – in a transnational perspective.¹

Perhaps one framework that could have been explored as a possible theme of the book was the differences in strategy employed by various national-based IWW unions. For example, a major contrast existed between the US IWW, with its 'dual unionist' strategy (meaning it set up a new militant industrial union in opposition to conservative, craft-based unions), and the IWW in Australasia, where, as Verity Burgmann details in her chapter about the Australian IWW, Wobblies aimed to 'bore from within' existing unions and union federations, such as the 'Red Feds' (the first Federation of Labour in Aotearoa New Zealand), and actually had some success.

Further, in seeking to overcome the IWW's marginalization by historians globally – including in this country – the book sometimes veers towards over-inflating the IWW's influence. For example, the editors' claim that 'the IWW reached almost every corner of the globe' (p.8) seems exaggerated given the IWW's negligible presence in Africa and Asia, and its sporadic influence in Europe and South America (apart from perhaps Chile and Argentina, which are not covered in the book).

Wobblies of the World is a welcome addition to studies of the IWW and syndicalism globally and in Aotearoa New Zealand. It covers a broad range of countries, uses multi-lingual sources innovatively, and attempts to overcome the academic–activist divide. Yet overall these innovations are unfortunately let down by its narrative-based chapters that overall lack in-depth critical analysis. Very good, and sometimes excellent, chapters about the French influence over the IWW, and the IWW influence in Australasia, Mexico, Sweden and South Africa (among others) sit uneasily alongside chapters which are little more than fragmentary snippets and biographical vignettes.

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NOTE

1 Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe, eds, *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective*, Scolar Press, Aldershot, 1990.

This Realm of New Zealand: The Sovereign, The Governor-General and The Crown. By Alison Quentin-Baxter and Janet McLean. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2017. 356pp. NZ price: \$65. ISBN: 9781869408756.

THE BRITISH ROYAL FAMILY continues to attract an ongoing celebrity status in New Zealand, as Prince Harry's marriage to Meghan Markle in May 2018 demonstrated. At the same time the future of New Zealand's constitutional monarchy, and particularly whether it should be replaced by a republic, is an issue that has sparked periodic debate in recent decades – albeit on a far more muted level than the media coverage of milestones in the royals' personal lives. But despite these factors, as lawyer Dame Alison Quentin-Baxter and University of Auckland Professor Janet McLean suggest in *This Realm of New Zealand: The Sovereign, The Governor-*