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Teacher Strike! Public Education and the Making of a New American Political Order by Jon Shelton (review)

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political discourse or even through social acceptance but through a black art of living on new terms—sometimes unspeakable terms—that only the poet, the painter, and the performer could evoke.

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Teacher Strike! Public Education and the Making of a New American Political Order.

By JON SHELTON. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017. 274 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$95; paper, \$27.95.)

Few subjects have garnered more attention from American historians in recent years than the nation's political realignment by 1980. Historians have shown how civil rights activists, feminists, student radicals, evangelicals, and southern suburbanites all pushed American politics to the right during the long 1970s. Public school teachers are rarely included in this roll call. But in *Teacher Strike! Public Education and the Making of a New American Political Order*, Jon Shelton argues that hostility toward striking teachers among white urban parents helped break the New Deal coalition in such northern cities as Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Newark, New York, and Chicago.

Teacher Strike! examines a wave of teacher strikes between 1968 and 1981 that led white urban parents to abandon progressive and pro-labor politics in favor of neoliberalism, which Shelton defines as a political ideology equating individual freedom with market freedom. Shelton asserts that as teachers' unions became more militant through illegal striking, white working- and middle-class parents in northern cities increasingly viewed public school teachers as drains on their hard-earned tax dollars. White parents came to associate public sector employees with the problems of the urban poor in general, deploying racialized language to chastise both for being "unproductive." Shelton argues that criticisms of teacher strikes were also gendered by reporters and parents who expressed discomfort with a primarily female workforce demonstrating political power in the streets rather than nurturing children in the classroom.

Teacher Strike! is best read as a collection of local case studies highlighting how clashes over teachers' labor rights weakened the "labor-liberal coalition" in a handful of northern cities. Shelton combs through an impressive range of sources to follow shifts in public perceptions of striking teachers, including newspaper and television press, op-eds, political cartoons, letters to the editor, private correspondence, and community forums. The author pays close attention to how unique social and economic tensions in various cities—such as the rise of Black Power in Newark or the shrinking tax base of metropolitan Pittsburgh—helped shift local opinion of public sector unionization from supportive to hostile. *Teacher Strike!* makes a compelling argument for how economic fears worked with cultural ideas about race, gender, and productivity to push parents toward

privatized solutions for urban schools. However, what makes this “new American political order” distinctly neoliberal rather than conservative or neoconservative is not always clear in Shelton’s analysis.

Teacher Strike! demonstrates why historians should pay more attention to education in studies of American political economy. State funding for education increased dramatically in the postwar decades, which, as Shelton argues, led many Americans to directly relate their personal tax burdens with public school teachers. Both in the 1970s and in our current wave of teacher strikes, conflicts about education are inherently conflicts about policy, race, gender, family values, and individual rights. Shelton rightfully places teacher activism at the center of America’s cultural and political realignment for these reasons, making *Teacher Strike!* a revealing read for any scholar of twentieth-century American history.

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Remaking the Rust Belt: The Postindustrial Transformation of North America. By TRACY NEUMANN. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. 270 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$49.95; paper, \$24.95.)

The descriptive term “Rust Belt,” similar to “Sun Belt,” “Bible Belt,” or “Black Belt,” often fails to embody the analytic rigor scholars strive for in their research. But Tracy Neumann, through her transnational comparison of postindustrial urban politics in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Hamilton, Ontario, turns the Rust Belt into a political orientation as opposed to a spatial location. In both cities, civic leaders and elected officials realized privatization was necessary to combat the capital mobility that a postindustrial economy encouraged. Neumann argues, however, that community leaders in Hamilton could not emulate policies implemented in Pittsburgh due to local conditions that distinguished these steel towns.

In Pittsburgh, federal and state encouragement for public/private partnerships helped sustain civic involvement from institutional leaders and local philanthropists even as industrial operations declined in western Pennsylvania. Civic elites encouraged a “Pittsburgh Renaissance” that attracted white-collar residents through cultural amenities, environmental improvements, and diversified employment, but these plans were put into practice through the exclusion of small property owners, labor activists, and racial minorities from planning and development. On the other hand, Neumann finds, Canadian policies prioritized collective gains over individual profit, and community leaders in Hamilton had to organize those actors systemically excluded from planning regional redevelopment in Pittsburgh. Neumann concludes that the cultural homogeneity of western Ontario flattened relations among civic actors so that public/private collaboration occurred on an ad hoc basis. The greatest contrast in Hamilton