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Strike-Breaking and Intimidation: Mercenaries and Masculinity in Twentieth-Century America. *By Stephen H. Norwood.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. xii + 328 pp. Index, notes, bibliography, illustrations. Cloth, $59.95. ISBN 0-807-82705-3.

Reviewed by Melvyn Dubofsky

Stephen H. Norwood catalogues a half-century of violent employer resistance to trade unions. His tale of strikebreaking flows from the late nineteenth century through the 1930s, covering such industries as underground mining, urban transport, and automobiles. Norwood examines different groups of strikebreakers, ranging from college students to African Americans and professional mercenaries. He highlights the entrepreneurs of strikebreaking, men like James Farley, Pearl Berghoff, James Waddell, and Archie Mahon, who rose from "rags to riches" by supplying employers with replacement workers during strikes. He skillfully limns their "career" trajectories, how they built their enterprises, and why employers chose to buy their services.

Much of the material in the book seems familiar. The antiunion tactics employed by General Motors in Flint, Michigan, and Anderson, Indiana, in 1937, are the subjects of fine previous scholarship: Harry Bennett's union-breaking operations as head of the Ford Motor Company Service Department bulk large in Keith Sward's history of Ford Motor and other, more scholarly, books. The mine wars in northeastern Pennsylvania and the hills of West Virginia have had numerous historians, as have both the 1914 battle in the copper mines of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and the Ludlow Massacre. The struggles between strikers and their sympathizers during urban streetcar wars have been a staple of scholarly studies, and there have been other accounts of African American strikebreakers. Finally, Norwood's epilogue, which describes the forces that weakened trade unionism between 1973 and 2001, will not be news to most of this journal's readers.

What, then, is new and different in Norwood's treatment of a familiar subject? Why should those interested in business history read this book? I am not sure that I can answer these questions. Those interested in the economics of strikebreaking will not find answers in Norwood's pages. Those who seek estimates for the actual numbers of strikebreakers, how much they earned, where they came from, and where they went also will find few answers here. Those seeking to learn what proportion of replacement workers were "hired guns" (Norwood's rubric), mercenaries who made their living exclusively by selling their labor to strikebound employers, what proportion were unemployed workers in search of a living, and what proportion were true believers in the "right to work" will be disappointed. So, too, will those who want to know how

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large a proportion of the strikebreaking armies actually consisted of African Americans and other minorities. Hard data are most notable by their absence. Norwood has, perhaps, written a postmodern history of strikebreaking, in which language, especially the language of masculinity and sexuality, substitutes for harder, more measurable data.

The postmodern quality of the book appears most clearly in Norwood's interpretation of the motivation of strikebreakers. Early on, he writes that men were drawn to strikebreaking in the first decades of the twentieth century by a profound need to demonstrate their virility. "The culture of strikebreaking had at its core," Norwood asserts, "a defiant, highly aggressive masculinity, in sharp contrast to family-based middle- and working-class society, shaped in significant ways by women" (p. 12). Because he is interested the links between the violent aspects of strikebreaking and hypermasculinity, Norwood excludes women from his history of replacement workers. His stress on masculinity begins with an analysis of college strikebreakers, affluent youths who, like their fathers, were in the "midst of a 'crisis of masculinity.'" For such youths, breaking strikes was the domestic equivalent of military conflict, a counterpart to college football as an arena in which to establish their manhood. Strikebreaking declined as a choice for college students, according to Norwood, as campuses became coeducational and heterosociability replaced homosociability; in his words, "strikebreaking, performed by men in groups, an activity of intense male bonding, greatly diminished as homosociability declined" (p. 33).

For Norwood, strikebreakers are men who take up "society's most dangerous civilian occupation, most closely approximating that of combat soldier" (p. 34). Fighting labor wars satisfied men's "longing for a tougher and more independent model of masculinity." He is so consumed with our contemporary language of masculinity and sexuality that, in alluding to a newspaper story about a woman strike sympathizer who bragged that she had "bounced [a brick] off a fink's nut," he refers to the woman's "castrating power" (p. 49). (Perhaps, he doesn't know the difference between a noggin and a testicle, or that "Irish rain" [bricks] descended from rooftops.) For African American strikebreakers, according to Norwood, the need to establish one's manhood proved more important than the urge to find a job. "Strikebreaking," he writes "appealed to many African Americans because it provided the black man his best opportunity to assume a tough, combative posture in public and to display courage while risking serious physical injury or even death. Strikebreaking thus allowed African American men to challenge openly white society's image of them as obsequious, cowardly, and lacking the ability to perform under pressure" (p. 80). Thus African Americans during the 1904–05 meatpacking and teamsters' strikes in Chicago acted more as military adventurers eager to certify their manhood than as desperate job seekers. This theme dominates the text. We learn about the psychosexual origins of

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Harry Bennett's taste for violence and are told that, by the 1960s, violent strikebreaking was a phenomenon of the past because "the movement toward androgyny that began in the middle class in the 1960s resulted in a further softening of working-class masculinity" (p. 229).

If Norwood has failed to advance significantly our knowledge of the economics of strikebreaking, he has synthesized a considerable amount of information about the sordid history of violent resistance to trade unionism. If parts of the book retell old stories well, other sections expose readers to the relatively unknown tale of labor violence in the coal mines of southwestern Arkansas and to the obscure lives and careers of the entrepreneurs of strikebreaking. Norwood covers all the aspects of employers' strikebreaking apparatus: private suppliers of armed and unarmed replacement labor; coal and iron police; private detective agencies; and state police and militia. Such an abundance of detail and synthesis about the subject, more than any putative links between masculinity, sexuality, and strikebreaking, represents Norwood's contribution to scholarship.

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