

of the period. His interview sample was predominantly male, and skewed more towards former campus radicals and labour leaders than worker activists. Nonetheless, this collection of primary source data and first-person accounts is a remarkable achievement in itself, and will no doubt prove to be a valuable resource for future scholars of the Canadian sixties.

Rebel Youth has other flaws that go deeper than the limited perspectives of its oral histories. Most significant is its lack of analytical focus. Milligan begins *Rebel Youth* by setting out to “demonstrate the salience of labour,” and Chapters 1 and 2 do a good job of incorporating workers’ perspectives into New Left history. But, as the book unfolds, the workers tend to fade into the background and the story becomes much more about campus-based New Leftists and their sometimes more, sometimes less, successful efforts to support working class struggles. Similarly, Milligan’s very conception of the New Left and its constituents shifts over the course of the book. While he notes in Chapter 2 that young workers saw themselves as part of the New Left, (44) for much of the book he counterposes “New Leftists,” by which he means student activists, and workers. To what extent does the author see the two groups as separate, or as different parts of the same movement? Milligan vacillates on the question. His narrative also lacks cohesion and can be difficult to follow at times. The individual cases and stories are engaging, but it remains unclear why Milligan selected these cases, or how they work together to develop a broader argument. Overall, the manuscript could have benefited from more careful research design and more thorough editing.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, *Rebel Youth* is a much-needed addition to the scholarship on labour and the New Left in 1960s Canada. Readers wanting to

know more about this critical period will find much of interest, and Milligan’s work will provide an important base for future research.

BARRY EIDLIN

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Gordon Hak, *The Left in British Columbia: A History of Struggle* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press 2013)

THIS IMPORTANT BOOK examines a vital topic in Canadian working-class history – the political trajectory on the “left coast” of British Columbia from its origins in the 19th century to the present. Hak’s approach is moderate and balanced rather than Marxist, evident in his selection, structuring, and discussion of subject matter and themes. To be sure, Communists, anarchists, and other radical activists and currents receive proper attention, but Hak is careful to reach out to the diversity of left perspectives and working-class viewpoints in crafting this survey work.

He traces the history of BC’s left from the standpoint of the working class, broadly conceived, with the objective of identifying a movement capable of inspiring and mobilizing a majority of people in a project for far-reaching social and economic change. As a result, Hak’s association with familiar protagonists and institutions is necessarily detached, meaning that some readers, particularly those most familiar with aspects of BC’s left history, or those who most strongly identify with particular ideologies or organizations, may feel their pet topic has received short shrift. Hak’s generous and inclusive approach produces a high-quality work that is accessible to general readers, while providing a valuable contribution for specialist scholars and post-secondary educators. The book is readable and inviting, employing plain

language, effective illustrations, and a useful glossary.

A survey work of this scope, given the abundance of prior specialist studies, is a challenging assignment and Hak delivers with competence and finesse. He provides useful original insight on the politics of craft workers and others in the 19th century and traces the trajectory of electoralism from “Lib-Labism” and the pre-World War I Socialist Party, through the various labourist parties of the inter-war period, to the ebbs and flows of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the New Democratic Party, immersed in the broader political, social, and economic context. Actors from Knights of Labor to Single Taxers to Wobblies to New Leftists to the Squamish Five are woven into the tapestry.

Hak also situates the British Columbia left in global context, demonstrating how international events – the Russian Revolution, world wars, economic depressions, Keynesian interventions, oil shocks, trade agreements, climate summits, Occupy protests – as well as national factors such as the Reform Party and Idle No More – influenced developments in BC.

To be sure, there are aspects of the book that could be developed more fully, particularly discussion of the relationship between the Left and women, workers of colour, and indigenous people. Specific themes such as the social gospel, the co-operative movement, and working-class culture are hardly mentioned, reflecting the challenges of telling a complex story in a compact and accessible way.

Hak deftly pursues the connection between left politics and union organization and struggle throughout the book, as well as the interplay of radicalism, reformism, and militancy. Comparing the Industrial Workers of the World to more conventional forms of labour organization, Hak discusses the trade-off between “the loss of democracy” and “the ability

to wield more power on behalf of workers.” (59) Examining how the Communist Party eclipsed other radical left formations, Hak suggests the party “built on a successful revolution, provided a concrete institutional structure, and exuded the promise of a new international order” (66) – before the process of Stalinization “blunted discussion, and hence creativity, and ensured the future ossification of revolutionary Marxism in British Columbia.” (73)

Of social democracy, Hak acknowledges the limitations of the CCF and NDP programs in opposition and in government, while suggesting (in relation to the defeat of the Barrett government in 1975) that “the NDP had sizeable electoral support and it had the ability to scare the business community.” (143) Turning to the neoliberal era and the Solidarity movement’s challenge to Restraint in 1983, Hak posits that “Social Credit had transgressed fundamental values in a modern liberal society ... but the transgression was not sufficient to raise questions about the legitimacy of established state and democratic institutions.” (156)

The book is particularly strong in its closing sections, where Hak provides a thoughtful and timely analysis of the challenges and opportunities confronting the BC left from ascendant ecological consciousness, organization, and electoral support. He explores the tension between working-class economic interests and environmental concerns over the management and conservation of natural resources, examining how “the left and the Greens remained aloof from each other,” (175) both electorally and more broadly in the provincial political landscape. Seeking to bridge class interests and post-materialist ecological values, Hak suggests the need for “a political and union movement that integrates the left and environmentalism or an environmental movement that critically engages

capitalist institutions and ideals.” He posits that the ecological crisis could “serve as a catalyst” for the left to transcend the stultifying conditions of the neoliberalism.

Hak is both a realist and a dreamer, acknowledging that “working-class political identities in a liberal capitalist society are indeed complex.” (167) He concludes the book with powerful commentary that people in British Columbia and other lands would be wise to consider: “In the long-term, if the goal is to construct a society based on leftist principles and ideals, and not merely to elect an NDP government, the battle for the hearts and minds of working and lower-middle-class-right populists will be important. To be successful, the left will have to acknowledge the insecurities, hopes and interests of these right populists ... [and] develop solutions that are more persuasive than those coming from the right.” (201)

BENJAMIN ISITT
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Gerald Tulchinsky, *Joe Salsberg: A Life of Commitment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013)

GERALD TULCHINSKY’S fascinating biography of Joe Salsberg explores the multifaceted nature of this prominent activist’s complex life. Born in a small town in Poland in 1902, Salsberg immigrated to Canada in 1913 and grew up in an Orthodox Jewish environment. In Toronto, he began a full-time job as a clothing worker at the age of thirteen and became a committed trade unionist. As Tulchinsky demonstrates, Salsberg’s subsequent life of intense activism revolved around two identities: his Jewishness and his working-class culture of solidarity.

Drawn at first to the Left Labour Zionist movement as a response to deep

currents of anti-Semitism in both the Old and New Worlds, Salsberg joined the Communist Party of Canada in 1926 largely because of his growing conviction that the Soviet Union would not only advance the cause of the working class but would also create an environment where anti-Semitism would be completely condemned and Yiddish culture would thrive. As a committed Communist, he became a leading – but by no means orthodox – Party figure, playing an especially prominent role building the Workers’ Unity League (WUL) during the first half of the Great Depression. As Tulchinsky stresses, Salsberg stayed in the Party until 1957 despite the fact that, as early as the 1930s, he began to have serious misgivings about the treatment of Jews in the USSR. Tulchinsky also examines Salsberg’s stint as city councillor (intermittently in the late 1930s and early 1940s) and as an openly Communist member of the Ontario Legislature from 1943 to 1955. The last section of the book then focuses on Salsberg’s later years as a journalist for the *Canadian Jewish News* and as a Jewish activist who strove to confront the influence of the “allrightniks” (those who were upwardly mobile and forgot their working-class roots) within Canada’s Jewish community. In this phase of his life, Salsberg struggled against the narrow religiosity and consumerism that he believed were becoming so influential in the Jewish mainstream.

A highly prominent scholar of Canadian Jewish history, Tulchinsky is perceptive when elucidating Salsberg’s Jewish concerns. One of the important strengths of the book is the way in which the author captures the sounds and the flavour of the *yiddishe gassen*, the neighbourhood along Toronto’s Spadina Avenue where so many immigrant Jews congregated in the early years. Highlighting this neighbourhood culture, Tulchinsky explains why many non-Communist Jews continued