

No Cubes: An Updated Look An Industrial Workplace And The Fate Of Its Alienated Wage-earning Employees

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Abstract

This article represents an updated look at a specific workplace and its workforce that have each and reciprocally gone through a period of mercurial change. Adverse economic conditions and bottom-line profit motivations often undermine a presumed moral commitment to employees, so the crux of this article is to discuss a company's rapid growth and equally rapid decline, paying particular attention to those cycles'effects on the organization's wage-earning employees – the ones with no cubes. Selected elements of social conflict theory, modern accounting theory, and a variation of Merton's paradigm of adaptation to cultural materialism are used to illustrate the negative impact of economic fate on its "hidden" workers.

"Moving through the world with a title – doctor, lawyer, college student – gave you armor. Having to continually try to find a way to tell people who you were – which really meant telling them what you did – was difficult when you didn't fit into one of the world's neat little cubes."

(Jennifer Weiner, *In Her Shoes*)

INTRODUCTION

We live in times when we honor success, power, and possession of "symbols of class and status which are independent of personal acquaintance" (Dewey 1960 65). When meeting others, for example, we often define our master statuses in terms of the kinds of work we do or the places where we work, our educational backgrounds, and the sets of initials behind our last names. College students want to know the academic placements and majors of others, and college professors want to know how others' degrees and c.v.s were earned. Novelist Weiner (2002 p. 347) affirms these truths as pedigrees that are our armor or cubes. Most members of a surplus supply of workers (Marx 1954), including such categories of people as conscripted soldiers and sailors, adjunct

university faculty (Berlow and Collos 1974; Hartung 1992; Shea 2004; Street 2010), the factory workers in O'Sullivan's 2002 study, and those of this research, are all peripheral, marginalized, unprotected, exploited, and vulnerable victims because they have no shields, no "pull," no "juice," no advocates, no power, no totem poles to climb – they have no cubes. They are among the "hidden" workers in our economy and social class structure (Sennett and Cobb 1972), rich in social poverty and economic utility who perform the gut/scut/core/grunt jobs of their various industries, lacking opportunities for social mobility or meaningful statuses within or between their jobs, whose diminutive life and work circumstances are justified by others as necessary elements of the moral economy of doing business (Gans 1971; Magdoff and Magdoff 2004; Pfeffer 1979; Schwartz 1999; Sennett and Cobb; and Stoll 2008).

Several years ago, O'Sullivan (2002) revealed his paradigm shift into the realm of labor-management tensions, identifying a greater appreciation of/for conflict theory. His revelations are supported through such popular culture outlets as novels and visual media, as well as traditional sociology,

which identify the presence of, and conflict between, many dual-class systems comprised of the "haves" and the "have-nots." The focus of his report was on the workers and the managers at his place of work that was then known as "Industrial Development, Inc." (IDI), located in "Lichenville, IL," doing the sub-assembly of engine components for the diesel engine division of "Woolly Bear, Inc." with its corporate offices located in nearby "Will It Play Here? City." IDI's employees were treated and replaced with no more attention paid to them than the way we view used sparkplugs or chattel (O'Sullivan 2002), who could be similarly described as "... objects to be owned and discarded, no different than pieces of livestock" by novelist Vince Flynn (1999 98). IDI has since become "Subsidiary Logistics Kompany" (SLK), a wholly-owned division of "Huge Logistics Kompany" (HLK) of "Famous for Its Beer, City," Wisconsin. The company name was changed, but its wage-earning employees are still occupationally mobile, non-union, and semi-skilled temp-to-hire "throw away" men and women. This article updates O'Sullivan's company story.

Several tasks need to be completed in order to complete this investigation. The first is to reprise O'Sullivan's 2002 look at worker alienation as it was then based on four years of employment at the old IDI. The second is to review the Marxian notion of a surplus supply of labor in terms of historical and contemporary applications. The third is a look at the evolution of IDI into SLK and its visionary goals and means to achieve them, and its economic zenith and nadir effects on workers who are already marginalized. Semi-skilled and unorganized workers often have few

recourses and resources available to them upon termination of employment, and are hit hard and early in periods of economic decline—a hallmark of Marxian theory and labor-management conflict that O'Sullivan came to appreciate.

THE FIRST TASK: O'SULLIVAN REVIEWED

O'Sullivan admits that his personal background was not one that entailed much economic or vocational strife. However, a disappointing academic career and subsequent entry into the private sector of the economy gave him a broader appreciation for conflict-based relations between diverse categories of people. Drawing from a diversity of novels, histories, appropriate travelogues, visual media, and sociological sources he showed that there was ample evidence to support the contention that there were multiple and often co-existing dual-class structures of power differentials spanning time and place.

As an employee of the former IDI, he worked on the production floor of this subcontracting company, and IDI was one of many others that did about the same for "Big Saffron" or Woolly Bear (O'Sullivan 2002). Though his educational background surpassed that of his colleagues, he was still on the receiving side of classic labor-management conflict, chided by a manager for the mismatch between his degrees and his work, but that happened only once; and such treatments were the basis for his study.

He relied heavily on the elements of worker alienation according to Marx (1959) and Seeman (1959, 2001) as he illustrated his workplace, then added two more environmental variables. The treatment of employees as *human*

chattel is demeaning and is based on the presumed superiority of one group of people over the presumed inferiority of another group (Pfeffer; Sennett and Cobb). The aura of *negativity* is a composite variable of impersonal communication, absence of gratitude for work done well, the fear of quick and unaccountable firing, rules that were differentially interpreted and arbitrarily applied, rules that were intended to ensure employee conformity rather than personal safety or quality assurance, and the dirt and grime was so pervasive and airborne that white tissue paper became black when noses were cleaned. He continued his discussions by borrowing Merton's 1968 paradigm of adaptation to illustrate how workers could adjust to their plight, and those methods will be replayed later.

Social conflict theory takes many directions, and people spend entire academic careers investigating its facets, nuances, and applications. There are too many of them to discuss here, so reliance is placed on its descriptions of surplus labor forces that will be discussed next in summary form, then applied later to the transition from IDI to SLK with its optimistic visions and unanticipated frustrations.

THE SECOND TASK: MARX AND THE SURPLUS/RESERVE LABOR FORCE

Marx was an economic historian whose general theory of human and economic evolution was so profound that one history of sociology book declares that we have since been engaged in a "debate with Marx's ghost" (Zeitlan 1968 p. 109). Much of Marx's writing detailed the processes of evolution from simple economies identified by cooperative production and sharing within a group to

more complex ones identified by segmented and specialized labor, the ownership of property and profit, and the treatment of human labor as a capital asset that can be manipulated at will by those who own or manage the means of production, as IDI managers described their employees. Wage-earning employees had become things, objects not subjects, to be weighed against capital liabilities on accounting balance sheets, susceptible to decisions made in accord with the general theory of *asset-liability management* or ALM (AllBusiness 1999-2009). Though the principles of ALM succeeded Marx, he understood that the overriding purpose of business in capitalism is to make a profit.

THE SURPLUS / RESERVE LABOR FORCE

This body of workers has been described in orthodox presses and provocative electronic outlets as a body of "marginally attached" people who want full-time jobs but have unsuccessfully tried to join the ranks of the fully employed (Sandrosky 2004). For Marx, they were the "industrial reserve army" or the "relative surplus population" of workers who existed in a tenuous but symbiotic relationship with their employers: A "mass of people living in insecurity or fearful of future job prospects" (Magdoff and Magdoff 2004). Bosses, also known as "suits" or "shiny shoes," have them perform the actual work of production; the employees, in turn, need the jobs and the incomes that employers offer. Because full-employment (enough jobs for all potential employees) is rare, there is an unequal balance between available job and those who would do the work, and this imbalance stacks the deck against them. Owners/

managers of businesses are advantageously positioned to determine conditions of employment. They can hire people at lower-than-cost wage rates, and dictate the details of benefit packages, "perks," if any exist.

While workers may be considered as being assets from an accounting perspective as human "capital," they can also be perceived as liabilities, as overhead in the form of the cost of doing business. During times of economic downswings (when there is need to reduce overhead) or in times of economic upswing (when investment requirements expand) employers can shift assets and liabilities for best advantage, and unprotected labor forces have little, if any voice, in those decisions. Members of the working classes are pawns (O'Sullivan 2002), and it was in *The Communist Manifesto* that the working proletariat was called to unite, rebel, and affect global economic history (Marx 1894/1954 p. 82).

OUTSOURCING – THE SHORT STORY

Just as economic globalization exploits lower-waged foreign labor markets, local outsourcing does the same for domestic workers. Both offer corporations lower overhead costs or potential liabilities maintenance that can interfere with profitability. When used, though, finished product sales cost are not reduced in accord with lower production expenses so profits can remain the same, both aided by the exploitation of cheaper labor sources (Magdoff and Magdoff 2004).

Entire outsourcing industries serve the needs of Woolly Bear, for example, providing logistical, transportation, janitorial, and assembly services by semi-skilled workers. When Woolly

Bear's market and financial forecasts are bright companies like IDI/SLK can also expand, employ newer technologies, hire more employees, increase wages and benefits, and still earn profits. When Woolly Bear's forecasts are more reserved or dim, so are those companies with outsourced responsibilities. As Woolly Bear goes so go they, all making necessary "bottom line" decisions according to the principles of ALM.

ASSET-LIABILITY MANAGEMENT

ALM is originally a finance expression, viewed as a macro-level phenomenon, whereby banks try to have acceptable balances, or *positive gaps*, between assets and liabilities rather than *negative gaps* between them (Allbusiness). Simply put, positive gaps exist when more assets are owned than liabilities, and negative gaps exist when liabilities outweigh assets. Assets and liabilities exist in tandem on balance sheets, both fluctuate under varying market conditions, but when liabilities exceed acceptable levels they may be liquidated by selling them to more aggressive investors. Other types of businesses do much the same thing when, for example, the costs of maintenance on reduced-use or unused fixed-capital assets, like grounds and buildings, exceed their derivative gains. Individuals, in like manner, manipulate accounts in their investment portfolios as they try to make their money work for them, not against them.

A precept of all economic exchanges is that any *expenditure* or use of capital assets (money, resources, time) is made in anticipation of a positive-gapped *investment*—that the benefits gained will eventually outweigh the costs, as anthropologist Wolf (1966) discussed *funds* as expenditures and investments.

Companies do this when they acquire others, buy property and appropriate tooling/machinery, expand their labor forces, and create training programs to socialize existing and new employees as economic forecasts warrant; but, any ALM decision involves risk, and the long-term benefits may not materialize, making it necessary to cut losses, downsize, or take the chance of going “belly up” by closing doors and suspending operations. In times of economic prosperity workers are benefactors with opportunities for regular work and pay, but during economic declines the workers, especially those who have no advocates, get hit hard, losing much. While business managers realize that the labor forces may need to be reduced, and while those who are dismissed/laid-off may understand how/why those decisions are made, such realizations do not lessen the impact of being “canned” with no recall date.

Woolly Bear is one of only a few companies that makes diesel engines for trucks, and for many years they were able to affect the market for them. One parent company of trucks decided to make its own engines, and another vehicle manufacturer had plans to do the same. The several major manufacturers were then over-producing for their fair shares of the market, so executives at Woolly Bear decided to discontinue this money-making product that was made at its Lichenville plant. Economic decline hit a region and a company with its subcontractors that had historically been safeguarded from business downswings, and liabilities needed to be liquidated, reducing negative gapping.

**THE THIRD TASK: RISE AND FALL AT
SUBSIDIARY LOGISTICS
KOMPANY**

Industrial Development, Inc. was formed several decades ago to perform warehousing and packaging duties for Woolly Bear, and those eventually evolved into the sub-assembly of parts for engines. Several years ago, HLK, a company that specializes in inventory control and movement technologies, convinced Woolly Bear that its technologies were more efficient than IDI's old ways, and in 2007 HLK acquired IDI, naming the experimental division SLK. There was a ten-year contract between Woolly Bear and SLK, and Woolly Bear sold one of its Lichenville campus buildings to SLK because it could house the technology that SLK would set in place with its larger workforce. Woolly Bear rid itself of the fixed-asset-turned-liability, SLK acquired it, then sold its old quarters to another logistics company. Complex ALM decisions were made by all, and the prospects for SLK brought about many changes that were philosophically and economically driven.

At the philosophical level and in company parlance IDI had a “work harder, work faster,” work better “or else” version of a “management knows best” view of management endorsed by Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911/1947), the “father” of modern management. The new leaders of SLK brought with them a variation of another motivation theory by Frank B. and Lillian E. Gilbreth (1916/1920, 1917) that included an interest in worker satisfaction: Contented employees increase productivity and profitability, and SLK implemented changes to that end.

Pay differences between “company” and temp-to-hire employees were equalized; IDI's profit-sharing retirement package was changed to SLK's 401k investment plan, and its original

contribution rate was expanded. A new promotion scale was formed and made public, replacing a mysterious and closed black box formula, employee recognition and reward programs were set into place, and a monthly newsletter, the "*Kit and Kaboodle*," was distributed as it contained company and employee news stories – all with the apparent intentions of opening Johari windows of communication for transparency and trust (Luft 1955 and 1969).

An employee orientation and training program was established that included the company's history, mastering the technical skills for electronic scanning of parts and containers for inventory control and billing; programs for international business standards were outlined, and that program's other two auditors and I were sent off-site to receive training beyond our original certifications. The company implemented the trendy 5S, ISO and Root Cause programs of organization to promote cleanliness, reduce waste, improve the flow of work, and increase product quality, all of which may be seen as modern elements of the Gilbreths' *chronocyclography* of time-motion study to improve efficiency and productivity. Because IDI had a bad local reputation for managerial abuse and dehumanization of employees (O'Sullivan 2002), the HLK-based upper managers listened to a seasoned voice of experience from the production floor and created an employee mentor program and "meet and greet" lunch sessions where new employees met their floor managers with the hope that such contact would reduce management-labor tension and cut employee attrition rates by alleviating "I'm nobody" or "nobody special" frames of mind (Sennett and Cobb), encouraging workers to have

healthy rather vapid interest in the company and its work (Gilbreth 1916 and Gilbreth), or, perhaps, the program was managerially intended to violate the spirit of its sponsor as bribery through flattery in a staged game of "cooling the mark out" (Goffman 1952) – a pseudo-*gemeinschaft* (Merton 1968) between management and labor rather than the master-servant or lord-vassal link described in O'Sullivan's 2002 article.

My work with the company shifted from full-time floor duties to full-time administration by conducting training sessions for existing and new employees, investigating the root causes of production errors for which I had received certified training, conducting inspections of production standards, monitoring employee retention/loss rates and reporting all of these findings to upper management for review, and by being on the company safety committee. The company was making significant and beneficial changes, but they did involve internal costs.

Systematic training programs are, in fact, expenditures for companies such as SLK. It spent about \$5,000.00 to hire and train an employee until he/she was self-sufficient on the job, and a continuous rollover of employees erodes profitability in several ways. Besides the direct expenses of training there are internal time-lost allowances derived from product rebuilding, replacement, and transportation. Woolly Bear reserved the right to levy fines for improperly made products which hit its production lines; and the company paid a total of \$2,250.00, plus expenses, for our two-day off-site training sessions. The overall ALM cost-benefit of training and orientation, though, was a respectable compromise between

derivatives and expenses, and the old IDI had little interest in comparable values.

A CORNER IS TURNED

"Things fall apart" wrote Nigerian author Chinua Achebe (1958/1994) in his novel of social change in an African village. IDI officially became SLK in January 2007, bringing with it new philosophies, visions, and upper-level managers who replaced a "good ole boy" hierarchy. The move to its new facility began in the Summer of 2007, and the transition was completed by the end of that year. Rumors about Woolly Bear began to circulate, and in the Fall of 2008 Woolly Bear announced that one of its major product lines, diesel engines for highway trucks, would be discontinued.

Woolly Bear's decision to discontinue that product line by 2010 prompted a wide range cost-cutting actions, including buy-outs for salaried people, reduction of supplemental (non-union) employees, and notices of contract termination with companies that provided services within Woolly Bear's plants. These necessary ALM decisions had ripple effects on Woolly Bear's service and product providers, such as SLK, that made its own cost-cutting adjustments when anticipated profitability tanked.

Promotions and pay raises were frozen; the increase in its 401k contributions was reduced to the original level. No employees were hired and the training program was suspended, and an employee parking lot was closed to avoid upkeep costs. Work weeks were shortened, and people were then sent home early if their work was ahead of schedule, having the tandem effects of reducing payroll costs and workers' take-home net pay. Second- and third-shift production was halted, assuming only

logistical duties; workers were laid off, and, finally, the company encouraged voluntary layoffs without contest. While the executive managers of HLK/SLK scrambled for new business, there has been some rebounding due to its logistical capabilities of warehousing, material control, and dock-to-door material redistributions, but that occurred at the expense of another local outsourcing company that lost contract with Woolly Bear, thus putting its employees in jeopardy, as well. A few of SLK's employees have recently been recalled, but worker morale remains low due to a combination of factors including the company's precarious ties with Woolly Bear and personal backgrounds that might make future employment difficult to find.

Many of those workers have no technical certification; many are semi- or unskilled workers, many have legal issues with which they must contend, many have no reliable means of transportation, are chronic users of alcohol, have lost their drivers' licenses, have to commute great distances to work because there are few jobs in their home towns, and are work-release prison inmates. There are those that have suspicious U.S. residency status, have bad habits of personal hygiene, one has robbed banks in Texas, one was convicted on internet sexual solicitation of a minor, and each served time in federal prisons. Some wear electronic movement (GPS) sensors as stipulated by their parole officers, and one proudly wears his t-shirt that pronounces "My Anger Management Class Pisses Me Off." One was fired for trying to impress a female co-worker by masturbating in his work area, and one was fired for smoking marijuana in the restroom.

Neither job "seniority" nor "company" vs. "temp" employment status protected jobs, and many senior employees were dismissed first because they earned more than new-hires or temps, regardless of work skills. The workers do not have executive "head hunters" to find new jobs for them; instead, they have employment agencies that only list similar types of jobs. They do not have employment counselors who help fashion impressive resumes. Unemployment statistics change daily, and thousands of hidden workers exist and flounder somewhere in the labor market between its floating, latent, and stagnant components (Marx 1954). They have few resources and no cubes, and it is these very background features that employers/managers, people with "superior" skills or education, people who are often hired from the outside, use in their gate keeping roles of maintaining low wages, restricting opportunities for advancement (Sennett and Cobb 1972), and becoming increasingly cautious as they considered their positions in the circulation process (Pareto 1935), covering their own "assets," as SLK adjusted its costs.

COST OF EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Payrolls are one of the largest and most salient costs of doing business, but there are others. Employers must also contribute to Social Security accounts, pay premiums for unemployment and workman's compensation funds, carry the lion's share of payments to health and death insurances, cover the expenses of shifting employees during their vacations or other absences, deduct and pay employee income taxes to national and state governments, contribute to 401k,

IRA, or other retirement accounts, and pay for all internal bookkeeping of employee accounts. HLK/SLK initially invested about \$35,000,000.00 in the new venture, realized substantial initial profits, then experienced diminishing returns and unexpected negative gapping in its investment and decided to lower overhead with a number of cost-saving measures, including its most expensive one, the cost of employee retention.

The process of employee notification of layoff is swift, sure, and often unexpected – no one wants to be targeted and culled. When Atropos, one of the *Fates*, decides to cut the thin thread of employment, one of SLKs floor managers approaches the worker and says something like "Gather your personal belongings. You're on today's lay-off list." That employee, and others, are then escorted through the plant in the status degradation ceremony (Garfinkel 1956) of public cashiering. Though not fatal, it has been symbolically called "dead man walking" or "walking dead man" by novelists Stephen King (1966) and Jack Higgins (2009), respectively. As a display of managerial power it serves the functions of enticing slackers to work harder with fewer mistakes and of quelling militants (Magdoff and Magdoff 2004) lest the same fate befalls them.

Terminated employees are/were each informed about private insurance options and COBRA, stipulations about last paychecks, and basic facts about unemployment benefits and their 401k accounts. They are told that hard times make for hard [ALM] decisions, thereby fulfilling a "having good reason" justification to the employees (Sennett and Cobb 158), just as the former workers are told that the decisions are not

personal reprimands because they are/were all valuable employees, thereby fulfilling a "face-saving sincerity" (Sennett and Cobb 1972;158). Finally, the workers are given their "walking papers," are told to relinquish their i.d. badges, and are told to leave the premises immediately. The bosses' first responsibility is to the company and its purposes, of course, but there may be other issues of social morality in play here.

Schwartz (p. 37) argues that objective economic decisions erode some elements of sympathy, favoring anonymity. By taking the "high ground" stances of "having good reason" and "face saving sincerity" in the lay-off process, he might argue, managers are ridding themselves of personal guilt or responsibility, even though they know the plight of those upon whom they once depended. Two days before I was laid-off, for example, the president of the company, with whom I had had several brainstorming meal sessions, at company expense, hinted that SLK would be needing trainers for a new Woolly Bear plant to be built in Texas – an "SLK II." program. Others who have been laid-off agree that it is humiliating, impersonal, and demoralizing. To paraphrase *Doonesbury*, there is the smoke, the fire, the hose, and the shovel of dismissal (Trudeau 2009) that was happening elsewhere, also. In January 2009, for example, another outsourcing service/product provider for Woolly Bear laid off 100 employees, and later in May warned that it may close its "Will It Play Here? City" operations due to losses of contracts. SLK was not alone.

The principles of ALM are macro-level phenomena with banking industry foundations and middle-level applications when such individual companies as

Woolly Bear and SLK are assessed. The principles of ALM also have micro-level individual applications, for which there is a need to return to O'Sullivan's original study of IDI.

ASSET-LIABILITY MANAGEMENT AND THE INDIVIDUAL

O'Sullivan's 2002 study of labor-management relations is one of two where he modified Merton's paradigm of goals-means adaptation that is normally discussed in the context of deviant and conforming behavior. The other use to which the model was put identified how dissatisfied members of religious congregations can adapt to their worship surroundings (O'Sullivan 1995). Merton's original presentation and the subsequent uses by O'Sullivan are not disparate because they address the ways that we make deals with ourselves, how we make selections in our lives. All of us face choices of action that contain a minimum of two alternatives from which we must select the most beneficial one, or the least costly one. We make our selections based on expectations of outcomes that Klandermans (1968) called an *expectancy-value* approach to decision making that may be otherwise interpreted as a version of ALM that O'Sullivan (2002) basically used in his translation of Mertonian sociology.

The worker-*conformist* accepts his/her plight and adjusts by internalizing the company's principles. The worker-*ritualist* disagrees with his/her placement but makes no effort to change it or escape it, performing a job, putting in a full shift, then leaving work for another day. The worker-*rebel* tries to implement change, but such acts are usually met with disdain, and can be dismissed for militancy or insubordination, still being

told "You're fired!" with eldritch glee by a co-director of human resources, who, with her boss, each play their "good cop, bad cop" roles with practiced precision. The worker-*retreatist* disagrees with the entire premise of a work ethic, bails out, and withdraws from an active labor force. The worker-*innovator* is the one who understands the inequity of the work environment, does not like it but sees the futility of trying to change it, decides that other jobs might have more opportunities and greater rewards, and in a flashpoint of discontent follows the lyrics in Johnny Paycheck's famous, humorous, and worker-friendly song by hastily telling the company to "Take This Job and Shove It!" – often a dream come true, but also often made without forethought of possible consequences (costs) from voluntary separation.

Before O'Sullivan's 2002 study, though, personal adaptations to workplace conflicts had been addressed under different expressions. Pfeffer, for example, identified four. *Compliance* means that the workers cooperate, if for no other reason that they are paid to do so. *Doing their job* means that workers do not invest much of themselves into their jobs but just do them routinely. *Making do* refers to work conditions that are not optimal, but it is easier to make informal adjustments than it is to create a fuss over repair. *Kicking something upstairs*, finally, means that workers try to avoid responsibility by making their bosses accountable for problematic issues or decisions.

The current status of SLK promotes another form of worker innovation, but it is not necessarily founded in dissatisfaction so much as it is based on economic hardship. Work hours and take home pay are reduced, but the

costs of traveling to work and back are not. Many workers are single parents or make child-support payments, and those costs are not reduced proportionately. For many, then, the benefits derived from working do not support the costs of working, also resulting in anguished decisions to cut losses by accepting the company's offer of uncontested voluntary layoff to seek unemployment insurance and/or other assistance programs because the decision's accepted risk involves the loss of job "perks," like insurance, too. Schwartz 1999 (p. 34) would persuasively argue here that what the market economy can do *for* people, it can do *to* people.

The fiscal health of Woolly Bear has significant impact on all of "Will It Play Here? City." Peripheral or marginalized surplus workers no longer have the opportunity for horizontal or lateral mobility, shifting from one like job to another. They are most likely to be hit first in times of economic downswing, and to date, only a few floor supervisors have lost jobs at SLK, even though there is less work being done and fewer people to oversee. Those employees with no cubes remain exploited and most vulnerable to economic fluctuations, and if they are lucky enough to find other jobs the workers may be no better off, or in worse straits, than before. Now in its third year of operation, many feel that SLK is still just the old ITI wrapped in pretty ribbons, but that should come as no surprise to either Marx, O'Sullivan, Pfeffer, or Sennett and Cobb. Workplaces are authoritarian rather than egalitarian. Managers owe their first allegiance to the company. Companies are not in the specific business of catering to the welfare of their employees. It has been argued that capitalism and

businesses are more than just profit-motivated ventures. They also seem to exist, unfortunately, to control the attitudes, the actions (O'Sullivan 2002; Sennett and Cobb 1972), and the fates of hidden workers, those who possess no cubes.

CONCLUSION

The events surrounding the history of Industrial Development, Inc. turned Subsidiary Logistics Kompany represent a type of case study. Beyond that, though, the consequences of "boom or bust" business cycles on other companies' hourly-wage employees are happening with regularity in today's troubled times.

Philosophical novelists proclaim that a humanistic combination of social, political, and economic equality is possible: Thomas More (1516/2002), for example, described his Utopia; James Hilton (1933/1996) told us about Shangri-La; and B.F. Skinner (1945/1962) portrayed life at Walden Two; but, the great ideological experiment to implement Marxian ideals through the old U.S.S.R. seems to be unfulfilled (Dolgun 1975; Solzhenitsyn 1973, and Sorokin 1950).

While there seem to be discrepancies between ideals and their implementations, Marx was on target in his appreciation for the plights of working men and women in many industries, regardless of color now. Labor unions have mitigated some of the power and financial differences between owners/managers and workers, but such changes are not universal. State and national laws have set many employment standards, but they are often resisted and artfully dodged, as SLK seems to have found a way to conveniently sidestep certain provisions and obligations of the

Worker Adjustment and Retraining and Notification Act (WARN). Just as some things change, others remain the same. To paraphrase Taylor and then Pferrer, "management *always* rules." There is no compassion shown by management toward labor as O'Sullivan (2002) previously showed.

A popular culture mass media personal finance specialist recently recommended five steps to take when jobs are lost: File for unemployment (insurance); trade down [sic] the totem pole of job hierarchy; get retrained; fill times gaps in resumes; and find alternative sources of income (Willis 2009 6), but that expert seems to directing her suggestions to the executive classes that are experiencing dilemmas that are foreign to them. Perhaps she should address another stratum because its hidden workers, and others who are like-situated, are already near bottoms of their totem poles, and current economic forecasts remain dim.

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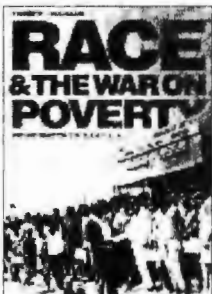
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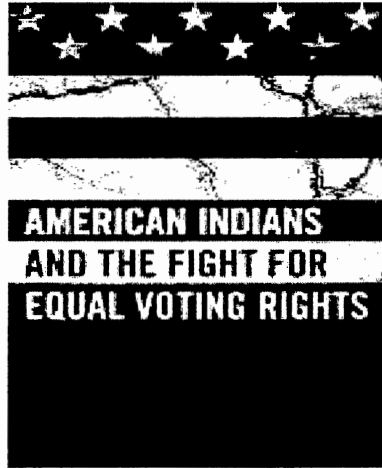
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American Indians and the Fight for Equal Voting Rights

By Laughlin McDonald
Recounting Indians' progress in the voting booth

The struggle for voting rights was not limited to African Americans in the South. American Indians also faced discrimination at the polls and still do today. This book explores their fight for equal voting rights and carefully documents how non-Indian officials have tried to maintain dominance over Native peoples despite the rights they are guaranteed as American citizens.

Laughlin McDonald has participated in numerous lawsuits brought on behalf of Native Americans in Montana, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming. This litigation challenged discriminatory election practices such as at-large elections, redistricting plans crafted to dilute voting strength, unfounded allegations of election fraud on reservations, burdensome identification and registration requirements, lack of language assistance, and non-compliance with the Voting Rights Act. McDonald devotes special attention to the VRA and its amendments, whose protections are central to realizing the goal of equal political participation. McDonald describes past and present-day discrimination against Indians, including land seizures, destruction of bison herds, attempts to eradicate Native language and culture, and efforts to remove and in some cases even exterminate tribes. Because



of such treatment, he argues, Indians suffer a severely depressed socioeconomic status, voting is sharply polarized along racial lines, and tribes are isolated and lack meaningful interaction with non-Indians in communities bordering reservations.

Far more than a record of litigation, *American Indians and the Fight for Equal Voting Rights* paints a broad picture of Indian political participation by incorporating expert reports, legislative histories, newspaper accounts, government archives, and hundreds of interviews with tribal members. This in-depth study of Indian voting rights recounts the extraordinary progress American Indians have made and looks toward a more just future.

Laughlin McDonald is Director of the Voting Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union. He is the author of numerous books and articles on voting rights policy, including *A Voting Rights Odyssey: Black Enfranchisement in Georgia*

Cesar Chavez: The Struggle for Justice

Cesar Chavez: La lucha por la justicia

by Richard Griswold Del Castillo (Author), Anthony Accardo (Illustrator), Jose Juan Colin



César Chávez (1927-1993), generally regarded as the best-known and mostly highly discussed Mexican American, is the subject of this bibliography. Chávez, born in Yuma, Arizona, transcended his major significance as a labor organizer and leader of California farm workers. People viewed, and continue to view, Chávez in different ways: a courageous model; a dedicated spokesperson for Mexican Americans in general; branded by enemies as a Communist rabble-rouser; a catalyst for the cultural "Chicano Renaissance", and a spiritual humanist. Ultimately, this biography portrays him as a moral leader possessing uncommon energy.

The compelling narrative traces the principal stages of Chávez' life: the youngster who was forced to become a migrant worker; his own oppressive experiences in the fields; his zootsuit and military service days; his family life; the crucial influences on his life; his

growing awareness of the contributions he could make as an organizer and leader; and the development of his dedication to realizing "La Causa." Biographical interpretations include his commitment to a Gandhi-style non-violent ideology and his highly astute practice of politics intermingled with charisma, integrity and spirituality. The biographers also chronicle Chávez' association with United Farm Worker Dolores Huerta, and thereby give appropriate attention to the increasing significance of the Chicana in the history of the Mexican American laborers' struggles.

The two biographers are both Chicano historians: Richard Griswold del Castillo from San Diego State University and Richard A. García, from California State University, Hayward. This study, however, is not limited to an academic readership. In fact, the co-authors make it clear that it is impossible to have a definitive biography of a figure as recent as Chávez. The result is a thoroughly researched book, showing depth and a consideration of Chávez' multifaceted life, and told with clarity, precision, and sympathy. The authors have molded Chávez' many complexities into a focused portrait of a man who emerged from the Chicano community as a man of all oppressed people. Just as Chávez' life could be interpreted in many essential ways as a microscopic portrait of the Mexican American in twentieth-century America, this highly readable book represents the seemingly simple but highly complex man of the earth that Chávez embodied.

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Moving Beyond Borders:

Julian Samora & the Establishment of Latino Studies



Moving Beyond Borders examines the life and accomplishments of Julian Samora, the first Mexican American sociologist in the United States and the founding father of the discipline of Latino studies. Detailing his distinguished career at the University of Notre Dame from 1959 to 1984, the book documents the history of the Mexican American Graduate Studies program that Samora established at Notre Dame and traces his influence on the evolution of border studies, Chicano studies, and Mexican American studies. Samora's groundbreaking ideas opened the way for Latinos to understand and study themselves intellectually and politically, to analyze the complex

relationships between Mexicans and Mexican Americans, to study Mexican immigration, and to ready the United States for the reality of Latinos as the fastest growing minority in the nation. In addition to his scholarly and pedagogical impact, his leadership in the struggle for civil rights was a testament to the power of community action and perseverance. Focusing on Samora's teaching, mentoring, research, and institution-building strategies, *Moving Beyond Borders* explores the legacies, challenges, and future of ethnic studies in United States higher education.

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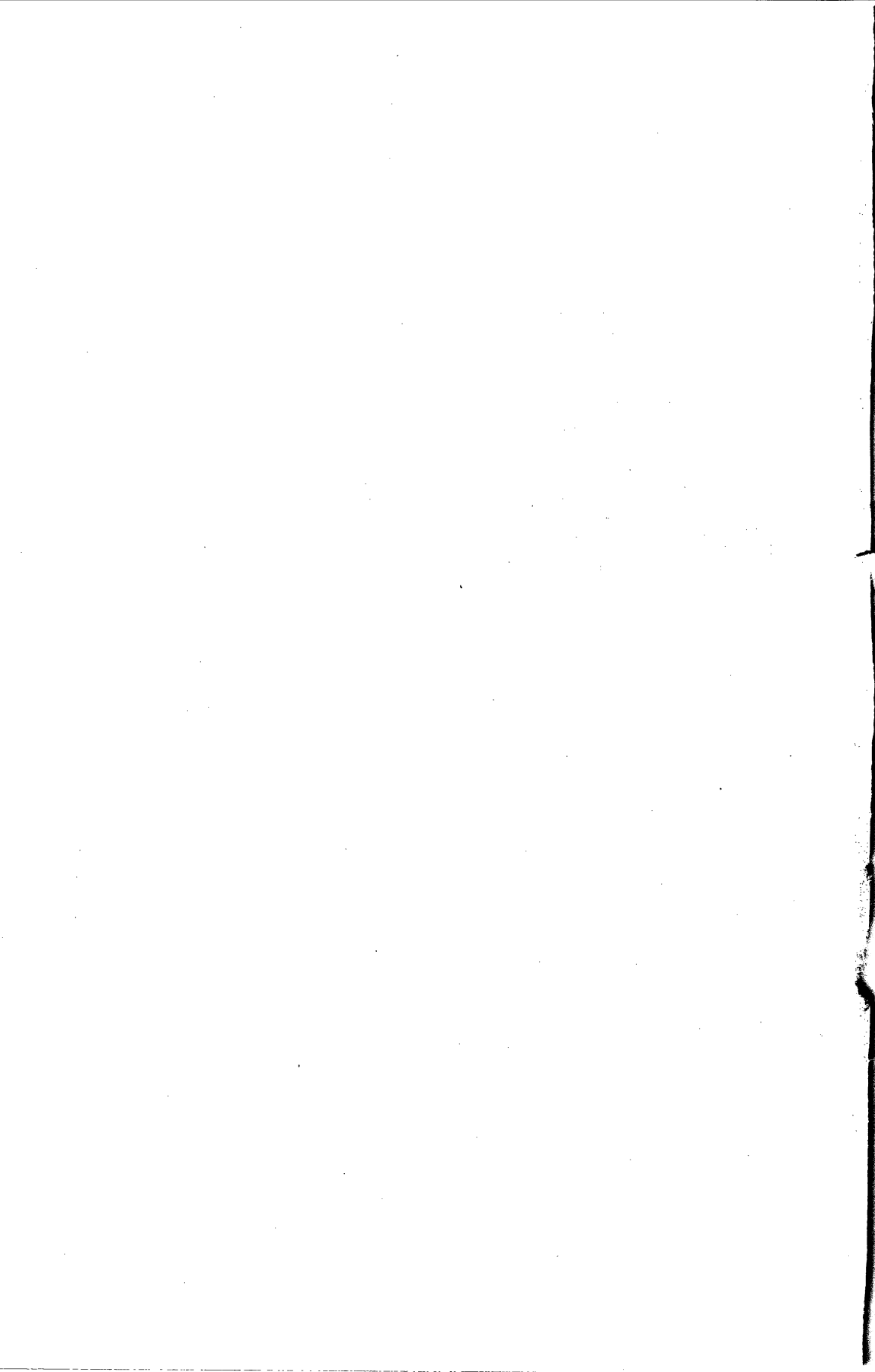
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