

While he had started his career as something of a Keynesian himself, Friedman's transition to monetarist and critic of the standard model fostered active and frequent debates in the 1960s with leading Keynesians such as Paul Samuelson and James Tobin, both in print and on television. Nelson describes vividly how Friedman, through these appearances, brought practical economics into living rooms across the United States, leading to the profession's great heyday in this period. Volume 2 also covers the gradual shift in Friedman's focus away from academic research and toward policy by the late 1960s, when, after being a well-known critic of monetary policy during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, he had the opportunity to be both supportive of President Nixon and disappointed with his price control policies at the same time.

It is safe to say that these volumes are and will continue to be the definitive works on Friedman's career. The depth of the background research is remarkable, and the work stands as an important contribution to the history of economic thought. But it is really so much more than that. It is an intellectual history and biography of Friedman, all in one, as seen through the eyes of a monetary economist able to draw from a deep academic knowledge of the field to integrate multiple perspectives on Friedman's work with his own unique take on them. It is much recommended.

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The Edge of Anarchy: The Railroad Barons, the Gilded Age, and the Greatest Labor Uprising in America. By Jack Kelly. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018. 308 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$28.99. ISBN: 978-1-250-12886-7.

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Reviewed by Albert J. Churella

The Edge of Anarchy reminds readers that issues of income inequality, social justice, and a living wage are not unique to the early twenty-first century. While some historians may dispute the status of the 1894 Pullman Strike as "the greatest labor uprising in America" (the events of 1877 are certainly in contention for that distinction), most would acknowledge the dislocations that occurred in the Gilded Age.

In a manner that will appeal to a broad popular audience, Jack Kelly emphasizes the conflict between two central characters. Eugene Debs, the head of the American Railway Union (ARU), receives perhaps three times as much coverage as his big-business adversary, George Pullman. A voracious reader with a prodigious intellect, Debs was a pragmatist rather than an idealist. A short stint as a locomotive fireman established his bona fides as a railroad worker. He shared with that group the emphasis on skill, sobriety, and masculinity that Paul Michel Taillon has described in *Good, Reliable, White Men* (2009). Kelly traces Debs's growing dissatisfaction with craft unions and his commensurate support for industrial unionism. An 1894 strike on the Great Northern vindicated his methods and garnered the loyalty of railway workers.

Pullman, in contrast, features largely as the archetypal Gilded Age industrialist, one step removed from the haughty and avaricious robber baron, whose quest for efficiency extended to the ruthless exploitation of his workforce. Kelly correctly, albeit briefly, describes how Pullman "experimented with the techniques of mass production . . . aggressively built a monopoly position in his industry . . . and integrated the business vertically" (p. 51). Growing reliance on a bureaucracy of middle managers – another common characteristic of big business – ensured that George Pullman retained little direct oversight of the company that bore his name. Pullman's company town, south of Chicago, facilitated greater control over his employees and only superficially improved their welfare. The depression of the 1890s induced Pullman's Palace Car Company to shift most production to piecework, a tactic that it shared with firms in many industries. Piece rates gave near-dictatorial power to factory foremen, who occupied a nebulous position between workers and management. Employees who faced starvation wages and unaffordable rents in company housing were unable to gain concessions from Pullman executives.

The events that followed are familiar to most business historians. Debs envisioned a strike by railway workers, first in Chicago and eventually across the United States. While he did his best to coordinate the strike, disaffected employees often undertook their own local, and personal, calculations. Most protested peacefully, but scattered episodes of violence by railroad workers and other interested parties gave the news media ample opportunity to suggest that Debs and the ARU were a threat to capitalism, the social fabric, and the survival of the United States. Attorney General Richard Olney, an individual with close ties to railroad management, persuaded a reluctant President Grover Cleveland to accede to the unprecedented use of federal power. By securing a sweeping injunction and provoking strikers to interfere with the delivery of the mail, Olney created an excuse for the deployment of federal troops.

The courts acquiesced to Olney's vigorous defense of big business, based on judicial interpretations that favored property rights and the doctrine of corporate personhood.

State-sanctioned violence broke the strike, but the structure of the labor movement contributed to the outcome. Against his better judgment, Debs agreed that Pullman porters and other African American railway workers could not join the ARU. Skilled operating employees refused to risk their careers by joining the strike on behalf of industrial workers. Samuel Gompers, the president of the American Federation of Labor, was likewise reluctant to support what he judged to be a futile endeavor; he waited until the day after the strike collapsed to announce that the AFL could not become involved in the dispute.

Given the power of the capitalist class, the outcome was predictable. Yet, Kelly emphasizes, workers lost the battle but eventually won the war. Jane Addams and other social reformers took note of working conditions and the intransigence of corporate officials. In 1898 the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that Pullman lacked the authority to operate a company town, while the Erdman Act protected the right of operating employees to join unions. Progressive-era regulations improved working conditions and reduced the excesses of monopoly capitalism. The New Deal ensured the triumph of industrial unionism. The success was temporary, and the book ends with a brief account of the erosion of union membership, the pro-business conservatism of the Reagan years, and the industrial decline that counted the Pullman plant, closed in 1981, among its casualties.

By highlighting the importance of social justice and racial equality, *The Edge of Anarchy* borders on presentism. As the dust-jacket blurbs make clear, it is a story that resonates with modern supporters of organized labor, the marginalized, and the dispossessed. While it posits a cautionary tale, however, the book is neither a polemic nor a jeremiad. It is amply researched, with a diverse bibliography – although only direct quotations receive source citations. To the extent that he discusses the development of capitalism, Kelly follows the organizational synthesis model. His research includes Alfred Chandler's *The Railroads: The Nation's First Big Business* but not *The Visible Hand* or the legions of studies that that seminal work inspired. There is minimal engagement with the wider literature related to business history, labor history, or the legal and regulatory context of Gilded Age capitalism. That is to be expected, given the book's undoubted appeal to a broad popular audience. At a time of declining interest in the historical narrative, coupled with acrimonious debates over the future of work – and workers – in the United States, *The Edge of Anarchy* is good popular history, with a well-written and persuasive narrative. Undergraduate history and

business majors, as well as the general public, will discover – perhaps for the first time – insights into past events that resonate in our time. Even those who know how the story will end will want to keep reading, to see what happens and to see if one person’s quest for social justice can be fulfilled.

Albert J. Churella is professor of history at Kennesaw State University and author of *The Pennsylvania Railroad, vol. 1, 1846–1917: Building an Empire* (2013). The second and final volume is forthcoming.

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Grassroots Leviathan: Agricultural Reform and the Rural North in the Slaveholding Republic. *By Ariel Ron*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020. 324 pp. Illustrations, maps, figures, notes, index. Cloth, \$59.95. ISBN: 978-1-4214-3932-7.

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Reviewed by Franklin Sammons

Ariel Ron’s impressive new book about the agricultural reform movement in the antebellum United States opens with a series of straightforward but crucially important statistics. Prior to the Civil War, the vast majority of Americans resided in rural places and the United States remained a predominantly rural society. While “revolutions” in transportation, technology, and manufacturing remade landscapes, reorganized production, and reoriented the daily activities and livelihoods of many Americans, in 1860 eighty percent continued to live in small towns with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants. Fifty-nine percent of Americans carried on working in agriculture. Even in the Northeast, where most of the nation’s industrialization and urbanization was concentrated, nearly two-thirds of its people lived in rural places. For most Americans, then, agriculture remained paramount throughout the antebellum period.

Those statistics help frame Ron’s deeply researched and densely argued account of how an agricultural reform movement comprised of middling farmers, journalists, and rural businessmen mobilized one of the largest mass social movements in the first half of the nineteenth century. Yet, despite the movement’s size and influence, scholarship on agricultural history, state formation, and political economy has overlooked the reform movement’s political significance. Ron suggests two primary explanations for this historiographical gap. First, the region’s industrial transformation has obscured the importance of northeastern farmers by directing attention to urban workers instead. Second,