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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Labor-Management Relations in Puerto Rico during the Twentieth Century by Arleen Hernández-Díaz

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of Mexican archival material and oral history work with local participants, not to mention a notable engagement with the excellent work of Mexican historians of medicine and public health. Birn is able, finally, to present a portrait of this crucial public health transformation through Mexican as well as Rockefeller eyes, and to reveal the complexity and ambiguity in the relationship while showing that the marriage itself kept Mexico within the orbit of a new system of international health revolving around the USA.

*Marriage of Convenience* has many admirable qualities – playful and piquant prose that shows off Birn’s historical *joie de vivre*, an ability to portray historical subjects with all their contradictory loyalties and hesitations, an insistence on making connections between this local nation-state story and the larger horizons of the nascent universe of international health institutions and discourses. But what is most impressive about this book is the depth of scholarship it parades before an academic world in which the exigencies of productivity result in the publication of a great many muddled and shallow studies. Birn first broached the issue of Rockefeller public health in Mexico in the early 1990s, but *Marriage of Convenience* bears little resemblance to that dissertation. The book has been carefully assembled from a series of forays in article and chapter form, a number of them collaborations, and then aged in different conceptual frameworks as the author explored new archives and tackled other defining issues in the history of international health – from the innovations of the Uruguayan maternal and infant health programmes of the early 1900s to the technocratic assumptions about the nature of international health, and public health, in the Grand Challenges of the Gates Foundation. The result is a work of rare maturity and insight and a milestone in scholarship on Rockefeller Foundation public health, and on the character of international health more generally. Birn’s study is essential reading for students of Mexican history, scholars of international and global health, and those interested in the nature of global philanthropy at a time when the Rockefellers of our digital age – not just Gates, but also Mexico’s Carlos Slim, allegedly the current richest man in the world – have launched new institutionalised health philanthropies that bear thinking about in historical perspective.

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Hernández-Díaz, Arleen (2006) *Labor-Management Relations in Puerto Rico During the Twentieth Century*, University Press of Florida (Florida), 288 pp. £45.49 hbk.

Labour relations have occupied a privileged place in modern Latin American historiography. The role of the working class and organised unionism is considered crucial to our understanding of some of the most relevant social developments twentieth-century Latin America, such as the rise of populism, the demands for agrarian reform and the process of industrialisation. Despite differences among nations, Latin American unions have usually confronted similar enemies (landowners, industrial bourgeoisie or multinationals) and have sought similar allies (populist leaders, Socialist organisations

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or even the Catholic Church), permitting historians to draw some generalisations about the evolution of the labour movement in the region. Puerto Rico, however, is not one of Latin America's nation-states and, therefore, its labour history did not follow the patterns seen elsewhere in Latin America.

In her book, Arleen Hernández-Díaz analyses the history of Puerto Rican labour unionism within the framework of the island's political evolution from Spanish colony to American territory, never an independent nation-state. Based on a large number of primary sources, Hernández-Díaz argues that the evolution of Puerto Rico's labour unions was strongly determined by the fate of labour unionism in the continental USA. This was because Puerto Rico and the USA shared the same labour legislation (enforced particularly during the New Deal) and because the island's unions allied with the large labour federations of the USA (such as the American Federation of Labor (AFL)). In the long term, Hernández-Díaz argues, Puerto Rico's unionism became too dependent upon the federal government's and US federations' support, weakening Puerto Rico's labour organisations. Moreover, after the Second World War, unions became extremely politicised and began to compete with one another, weakening the movement even further.

The book shows how labour activism started before 1898, but was repressed by the Spanish government, whose legislation forbade unionism. US military governors eliminated the previous Spanish restrictions, permitting the creation of the first unions in the island. The most important labour organisations, however, emerged among sugar workers in the 1930s. Endorsed by the New Deal's legal framework, these unions negotiated collective contracts with their employers.

Pre-Second World War Puerto Rican unionism differed from that in the USA in the sense that it showed concern for issues beyond 'bread and butter', including the island's political status and the strengthening of relationships with labour unions in Latin America. These concerns, however, waned in the post-war years. A combination of factors, including mass emigration to continental USA, military recruitment and an official policy of industrialisation on the island changed Puerto Rico's social landscape: labour became scarcer and industrial workers began to play a more prominent role in the economy than rural workers. Industrial workers did not negotiate with the local elite (as had occurred with the rural workers), but with American businessmen. This led the labour unions to approach even more their cousins in the US industrial sector and operate like them. Among other things, this meant focusing strictly on salary issues, and, consequently, abandonment of wider political projects.

Puerto Rico's industrialisation also changed employers' strategies. In the pre-Second World War period, employers directly confronted the unions by trying to break strikes or by firing organisers. After the Second World War, the industrial employers hired management consultants to develop strategies with the aim of convincing employees that joining a union worked against workers' interests. The employers also unionised themselves in order to negotiate with the workers as a bloc, and hired specialised lawyers to represent them in negotiations.

One problem with this book is that it is not clear about the contribution it wishes to make to the field. In the introduction, Hernández-Díaz claims that previous studies on the island's unionism had been 'biased,' distorting reality to favour certain political

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agendas. Yet the author does not mention which particular studies she is challenging, the ways in which they were biased, or why the readers should think her work is more 'objective' than earlier studies. Her attempt to make this work useful not only to scholars, but also to 'practitioners' (meaning managers, government officials, and union organisers) makes some of the chapters too focused on contemporary issues and detailed descriptions of current legislation, compromising the book's historical scope. Some sections, for example, read like a report for managers or lawyers analysing the feasibility of investing in Puerto Rico at the present time. Finally, the theoretical perspective behind the book remains occluded from the reader. The book does not analyse labour conflicts within the framework of class conflict, but as problems within business organisations. Given the fact that most of the works written on the history of Latin American labour assume unionism as a manifestation of conflicts between capitalists and proletarians, it would be worth mentioning why the book decided to take another approach, and in what way this approach challenges current research paradigms.

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Clarke, Colin (2006) *Decolonising the Colonial City: Urbanisation and Stratification in Kingston, Jamaica*, Oxford University Press (Oxford), xxv + 298 pp. £85.00 hbk.

*Decolonising the Colonial City* is British geographer Colin Clarke's sequel to his 1975 classic *Kingston, Jamaica: Urban Development and Social Change 1692–1962*, which dissected the structure and development of Kingston as an archetypically colonial city. A second, updated edition of this standard was in fact published recently in Jamaica and this second edition's last chapter is basically a condensed version of *Decolonising the Colonial City*; both examine processes of urbanisation in post-independence Jamaica, updating and expanding on themes studied for the colonial period. *Decolonising the Colonial City* is based largely on an impressive data set encompassing a huge range of quantitative material from Jamaican censuses of 1943, 1960, 1970, 1982 and 1991, and two large-scale census-based surveys from 1960 and 1991, enabling profound longitudinal analysis.

The first chapter is a concise overview of Kingston's colonial history, based on Clarke's first book. It offers a rich and detailed account of changes in the urban economy, population, stratification and spatial structure during slavery, in the post-emancipation period, and after constitutional decolonisation in the decades before independence. The chapter charts the gradual development of a 'Creole, colonial city' with a classic European spatial form and a social structure and economic base stratified by colour and class.

The next four chapters of the book draw on these statistical data, followed by two based on secondary literature, and a conclusion. The second chapter provides a vivid outline of the development of post-independence Kingston, starting with a discussion of changes in Jamaica's political economy and the effects of structural adjustment. This