

Remaking Worker-Employer Relations: A Historical Journey from Pearl Harbor to the Reagan Era



In the wake of the Second World War, the United States underwent a profound transformation in its labor relations. The war had brought about a surge in industrial production, which in turn led to a dramatic increase in union membership and collective bargaining. By the end of the war, unions represented nearly a third of the American workforce, and they had achieved significant gains in wages, benefits, and working conditions.

The Labor Board Crew: Remaking Worker-Employer Relations from Pearl Harbor to the Reagan Era



(Working Class in American History) by Ronald W. Schatz

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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However, the postwar period also saw the rise of a new conservative movement that sought to roll back the gains made by labor unions. This movement was led by business leaders, who argued that unions were too powerful and that they were stifling economic growth. In the 1940s and 1950s, Congress passed a series of laws that restricted union activities, and the Supreme Court handed down a number of decisions that weakened unions.

As a result of these changes, union membership declined steadily in the postwar period. By the early 1980s, unions represented only about 15% of the American workforce. This decline in union power had a significant impact on worker-employer relations. Employers were now able to set wages and benefits without having to negotiate with unions, and they could more easily fire workers who were not performing to their satisfaction.

The decline of unions also led to a decrease in worker participation in decision-making. In the postwar period, many companies had established joint labor-management committees that gave workers a voice in how their

companies were run. However, as unions declined in power, these committees became less common.

The Reagan era marked a watershed moment in the history of worker-employer relations. Reagan was a staunch opponent of unions, and he pursued a number of policies that weakened them even further. He appointed anti-union judges to the Supreme Court, and he supported legislation that made it more difficult for unions to organize workers.

Reagan's policies had a devastating impact on unions. Union membership declined to its lowest level in history, and unions lost much of their influence in the workplace. As a result, worker-employer relations became even more adversarial than they had been in the past.

The legacy of the Reagan era is still being felt today. Unions continue to be weak, and worker-employer relations are often characterized by conflict and mistrust. However, there are signs that this may be changing. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in unions, and some workers have begun to organize new unions.

Whether or not unions can make a comeback remains to be seen. However, it is clear that the history of worker-employer relations in the United States is a complex and ever-changing one.

The book "Remaking Worker-Employer Relations: From Pearl Harbor to the Reagan Era" provides a comprehensive overview of this important topic. The book is well-written and engaging, and it is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the history of American labor relations.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part covers the period from Pearl Harbor to the end of the Second World War. The second part covers the postwar period, from the late 1940s to the early 1980s. The third part covers the Reagan era, from 1981 to 1989.

The book is full of insights into the history of worker-employer relations. The author provides a detailed account of the rise of unions in the postwar period, and he explains the factors that led to their decline in the Reagan era. He also discusses the impact of unions on wages, benefits, and working conditions.

"Remaking Worker-Employer Relations" is a valuable resource for anyone who wants to understand the history of American labor relations. The book is well-written and engaging, and it is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the challenges facing unions today.



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