

The focus of these central articles on labour's recalcitrance to engage in more militant actions seems to be a case of putting the cart before the horse. Labour cannot be radical because labour isn't structured in a radical way. It needs an internal revolution before it can participate meaningfully in an external one. *Whose Streets?* would benefit from taking this lesson of the G20 and giving it a thorough consideration in this text.

Ross, Stephanie and Larry Savage, eds. 2012. *Rethinking the Politics of Labour in Canada*. Halifax: Fernwood. ISBN 978-1-55266-478-0. Paperback: 29.95 CAD. Pages: 224.

**Reviewed by Julie Guard**  
**University of Manitoba**

This is a thoughtfully conceived and carefully structured collection of essays that coheres exceptionally well to present a timely account of the state of organized labour in contemporary Canada. In just over 200 pages, this slim volume covers a lot of ground with remarkable efficiency, analysing the current and historical state of the labour movement with sufficient clarity to make it suitable for classroom use. But it does more: defining politics more broadly than most enables the collection to deliver more than the title suggests, combining an overview of the current state of labour in politics with analyses of political alternatives and case studies of initiatives toward union renewal, mostly through community unionism. As a whole, the book draws an instructive contrast between labour's long-standing efforts to make gains within electoral politics and what the contributors, in various ways, argue are the more fruitful possibilities of alliances between labour and community organizations. Several chapters provide insightful perspectives on organized labour and political parties, but the primary emphasis is on labour's varied relationships with community-based organizations, grassroots movements, and equity-seeking groups, and in particular, how political activism within unions creates possibilities for a reinvigorated, renewed, and revitalized labour movement.

This tension within the labour movement between electoral and extra-parliamentary politics is the books' central preoccupation, and the contrast between labour's traditional approach to politics and the more generative potential of a return to grassroots labour politics is established in a thoughtful and very useful chapter by Donald Swartz and Rosemary Warskett. Their overview of the history of labour in Canadian politics offers an important discussion of the evolution of solidarity, and argues for a

broad understanding of collective struggle that recognizes the interpenetration of economic and political rights and challenges the neoliberal individualist culture with a culture of broadly based solidarity. Amanda Cole and Charlotte Yates' chapter interrogates the possibilities of the kind of broad-based labour solidarity Swartz and Warskett advocate, and offers concrete evidence that supports and complicates that position. Surveying the various ways collective solidarity has benefitted unions by mobilizing workers in support of women's rights, they observe that, while solidaristic struggle has improved women's status in their workplaces and unions, union men's support has not always been as wholehearted or undivided as women workers have quite rightly demanded.

Several of the contributors assess organized labour's engagement in electoral politics, including its relations with political parties, but as the chapters by Bryan Evans, Larry Savage, and Peter Graefe demonstrate persuasively, even when labour has maintained close and friendly relations with the NDP or has attempted to work with the Liberals or the PQ, the viability of these alliances has depended on unionists' unilateral compromises. Yet, as they show, despite labour's concessions, its political allies have been unreliable friends and the incremental advances achieved through those collaborations have been inadequate and temporary. The courts, as Charles Smith demonstrates in a valuable summary of charter challenges, have similarly failed to protect, much less advance, union rights, despite the statutory provisions in the Charter ostensibly guaranteeing rights of association that unionists hoped would secure the courts' defence of collective bargaining.

These and other chapters raise the timely question, why do unions continue to support alliances with political parties and judicial challenges, which provide such poor returns on their considerable investments, especially in the current climate of austerity and declining membership? A number of the contributors provide evidence of labour's engagement in extra-parliamentary political activities, reflecting an implicit consensus among them that these alternatives to electoral politics offer far more promise. Their collective argument for community or social unionism, which involves community alliances with labour, and proceeds from the kind of broadly based solidarity advocated by Swartz and Warskett, is strong. Chapters by Stephanie Ross and Simon Black highlight the diversity of community-labour coalitions and caution us against facile judgements that, as Ross in particular points out, overlook the complexities of real-world trade-offs in a context of hard choices and difficult compromises. Several chapters offer insight into the opportunities and challenges such collaborations present, as well as suggesting something of the range of community unionism. All offer valuable perspectives on the potential, and pitfalls, of community unionism. In their contribution, for instance, Suzanne Mills and Tyler McCreary offer surprising and encouraging evidence of over three decades of union collaborations with Aboriginal organizations. Yet these collaborations, they observe, face significant obstacles, including unions' tendency to

prioritize economic issues over social justice or anti-colonial struggles, and First Nations' own struggles for sovereignty, which can complicate or undermine their relationships with unions. In their chapter on migrant workers, unions and workers' centres, Aziz Choudry and Mark Thomas demonstrate that social unionism that links genuine grassroots mobilization at the local level with international solidarity networks and encourages workers' self-organization can help overcome some of the daunting challenges facing these vulnerable and marginalized workers, and at the same time, strengthen and energize the labour movement. Kendra Coulter's case study of union cooperation with anti-poverty organizations offers an important reminder that, when unions overcome their long-standing aversion to working to advance the interests of the poor, they stand not only to recover their moral compass, but by publicly opposing the backlash against the poor, they do what we hope unions will always do: unite us, as working people, in the creation of a better world for all.

This linking of community unionism and labour politics, and the multiple examples of broadly based solidarity in practice, moves the conversation well beyond the usual frame of labour in politics and in this way, the book makes an unexpected and innovative contribution to the growing literature on union renewal. The many case studies that illuminate praxis – theory embodied in action – make that contribution especially valuable. The collection as a whole is an important resource that I predict will be used by unionists, labour scholars, and students, and indeed, it should be recommended to anyone seeking insight into the world today.

Sharzer, Greg. 2012. *No Local: Why Small-Scale Alternatives Won't Change the World*. Winchester, UK: Zero Books. ISBN 978-1-84694-671-4. Paperback: 21.95 CAD. Pages: 178.

**Reviewed by Charles Z. Levkoe**  
**University of Toronto**

It appears that the honeymoon with the locavore has come to an end, that is, if it ever began. Over the past decade, a renewed embrace of localism has been heralded as a way to engage in ethical consumption, build communities, strengthen economies, protect the environment and, at times, transform society. Local food initiatives have been central to this trend, with an explosion of research studies, popular literature, documentary films, policies, community-based initiatives, entrepreneurial activities, and, of course, an abundance of new purchasing opportunities. In recent years, however, the popularity of