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relations in popular perceptions. But he ignores the fact that this improved clarity might stimulate working-class resistance, potentially destabilizing the system and even discouraging further centralization of capital. In minimizing the role of class and maximizing that of monopoly, this partial vision seems almost a mirror image of Brenner's over-emphasis on competition.

Lebowitz's third methodological theme may seem strange after this last point: the totality that Marx analyzed in *Capital* was itself one-sided. As argued in *Beyond "Capital"*, Marx's book treats working people mostly as objects of capitalist exploitation and not as active and conscious subjects; this approach centers on the assumption that workers' needs and the real wage are constant. In one chapter, Lebowitz summarizes this view, then applies it to the theory of the capitalist state. Then, the book's final chapter (his Isaac Deutscher prize lecture) goes further. Replacing *Capital's* assumption of constant real wages, he argues that in the social analysis of capitalism, it is the degree to which the working class is divided that should be held constant instead. Unlike Marx's original assumption, this directly recommends efforts to unify workers to promote their collective self-liberation. This vision may be linked to Lebowitz's own practice during the Chávez period in Venezuela.

In the end, we must worry *why* this kind of Marxism is not widely accepted. Obviously, there are a lot of political differences among socialists. But there are problems with the book's presentation: as Paul Sweezy noted in this book's excellent chapter on his work, Lebowitz quotes from Marx far too often. More importantly, his HegelianMarxist language (also seen in his other books) can easily be off-putting to many readers. This book would have been more accessible with more down-to-earth prose.

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Lettuce Wars: Ten Years of Work and Struggle in the Fields of California, by Bruce Neuberger. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013. \$22.95. Pp. 416.

In *Lettuce Wars*, Bruce Neuberger tells the story of his experience as a volunteer farm labor organizer with the United Farm Workers Union (UFW) in Salinas, California, during a ten-year period beginning in the spring of 1971.

Lettuce Wars is a memoir, but the author's fascinating personal story never overshadows the history of the farmworkers movement that it also documents.

Neuburger had been a student and a political activist in Berkeley. His main political training came from his involvement with the Revolutionary Union (RU), which became the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) in the mid-1970s. In 1971, Neuburger began working full-time in the agricultural fields of the Salinas Valley, mainly in lettuce and other truck crops, to support himself. His decision to work in the fields was inspired partly by the Cultural Revolution and by the Chinese communists who encouraged youths from the cities to work and live among peasants in the countryside as part of their political training. As he explains, he "wanted to be part of a struggle to bring about a better society [and] a more just world" (73). His vision of "a better society" was not limited to the building of a union; it included a world based on equality for all workers and oppressed peoples across the globe. His decision to work in the fields was also an anti-racist act, given that farmworkers in the United States are almost exclusively people of color — mainly Latinos, but also Filipinos, Arabs, and Blacks.

Neuburger describes in great detail the various kinds of labor he and other workers performed in the fields. The work was physically demanding and oftentimes painful. Harvesting celery, for example, "is like eight hours of football practice" (48). He also vividly depicts the horrendous working conditions, the low wages, the poor benefits, the absence of job security, the inhumane treatment by supervisors and labor contractors, the racism and sexism, and generally the "apartheid-like system that surrounds farm labor" (25). But his description of farm work also has a positive side. The specific skills required to do each job oftentimes take weeks, months, or even years to learn. Thus *Lettuce Wars* offers a view of farm labor that contradicts its categorization as "unskilled" and instead appreciates the level of training and specialization required to develop those particular job skills proficiently. Plus the social dynamics of a field crew can potentially become an open school for political discussion. In Neuburger's experience, farmworkers were enthusiastic about discussing current events, history, philosophy, political organization, revolution, personal battles, and other topics, and consequently over the years he formed deep friendship ties with many of his co-workers.

Even though he worked tenaciously for nearly a decade to build the union, Neuburger formulates a sharp critique of Cesar Chavez and the UFW leadership in *Lettuce Wars*. He criticizes Chavez's pacifism, reformism, and reliance on religious icons, and he exposes the political hypocrisy in Chavez's public support for the Philippines dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the state of Israel in its war against Palestine. Significantly, he takes issue with the UFW's alliance with the Democratic Party and expresses a "common disdain for Republicans and Democrats" because both are "parties of imperialism

with slightly different styles and rhetoric" (150). Chavez's reactionary politics and his anti-worker racism became most evident with his policies against undocumented workers. "Not only were 'illegals' denounced as strikebreakers, the union began making a public issue of demanding that the Immigration Service come and deport them!" (167). Chavez even employed vigilantes who used physical force to prevent undocumented workers from crossing the U. S.–Mexico border.

Following in the tradition of conservative trade unions historically, the UFW leadership worked arduously, and sometimes violently, to remove suspected communists from the union. They banned the distribution of revolutionary literature at union events and in the fields, and they even threatened to harm any communists attempting to organize farmworkers. Neuburger himself was beaten by the Chavistas, eventually driven out of the union, and blacklisted from working in the fields. Importantly, Neuburger draws a distinction between the UFW leadership and the farmworkers movement. The workers' militancy in strikes and other labor actions during the 1960s and 70s, coupled with their sophisticated level of political organization, won significant gains in wages, benefits, and working conditions for workers.

What might be most intriguing about Neuburger's memoir is its commitment to the idea of communism and the importance it gives to Marxism for understanding the causes of exploitation, racism, and other forms of oppression. In recent years, several books have been published that criticize the problematic, anti-working-class politics of the UFW leadership during the 1970s. But none of these works offers a Marxist analysis of the farmworkers movement, and they all fail to recognize the strategic importance of conceptualizing a post-capitalist society. *Lettuce Wars* fills this void. Neuburger contemplates the contradictory position confronted by communists involved in union organizing and other kinds of economic struggles, and he discusses efforts to find a strategy that correctly manages the contradiction of revolution and reform — that is, how to fight for workers' immediate reform demands but simultaneously organize for the long-term goal of revolution and a post-capitalist society based on social equality. Reflecting on the way labor is organized in the lettuce fields, Neuburger asks, "What if we did things differently? Shared everything. It made me think of communism. . . . Imagine a world where what we were doing went on voluntarily — in the sense that we were working for the common benefit of the larger community" (225). But he also recognizes that such a world will not come easily or automatically. "Only mighty struggles, guided by our best efforts to understand the world as it is, can make such potential a reality. There is no guarantee" (226).

Lettuce Wars offers an astonishing account of political commitment and class struggle, but I was nevertheless left wishing that Neuburger had spent some time describing the organizational role of the RU (later the RCP) in

the political activities he describes. How many party members worked and organized in the fields? How were decisions about strategy and tactics made? How many farmworkers were recruited to the party during this ten-year period? What was the party's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the work among farmworkers? And, in retrospect, how could the work have been done differently, or how could it have been stronger? These questions are important for historians attempting to assess the work of communists organizing within unions, and they are perhaps even more significant for political activists attempting to improve upon the practice of which Neuberger was an integral part.

Despite my lingering questions, I highly recommend *Lettuce Wars*. It is an inspiring work that is at once immensely personal and rigorously historical. More importantly, it expresses a profound and optimistic commitment to fight against class exploitation and social inequality.

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