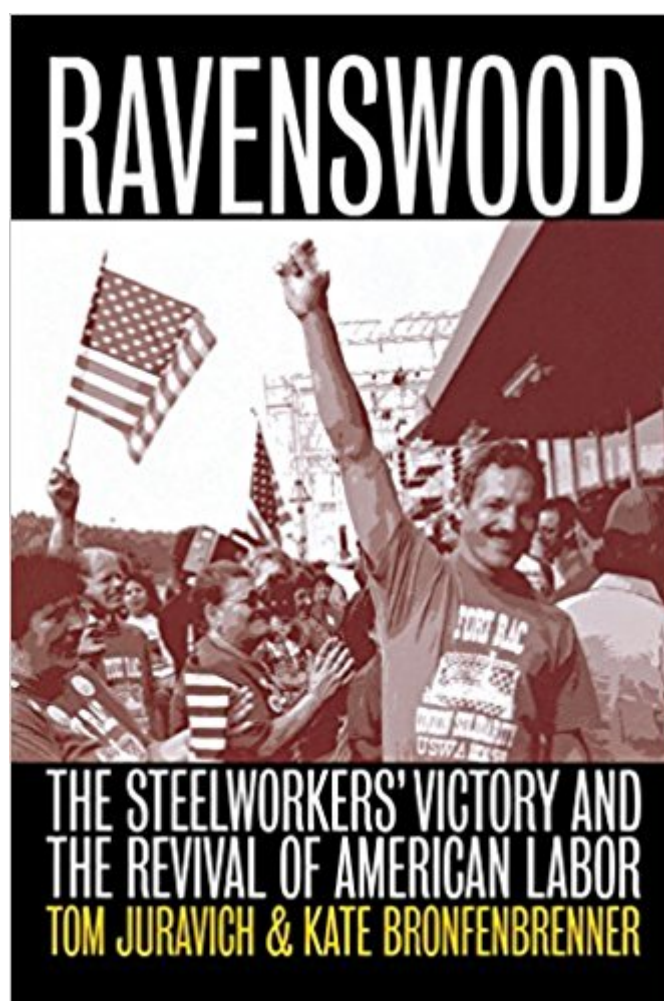


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Ravenswood: The Steelworkers' Victory And The Revival Of American Labor (Ilr Press Books)



Synopsis

Over the past two decades, Americans have seen their workplaces downsized and streamlined, their jobs out-sourced, sped up, and, all too often, eliminated. Unions have seemed powerless to defend their members, with big defeats in the strikes at PATCO, Eastern Airlines, International Paper, and Hormel. Ravenswood recounts how the United Steelworkers of America, in a battle waged over an aluminum plant in West Virginia, proved that organized labor can still win—even against a company controlled by one of the world's richest and most powerful men. Fast paced and compellingly written, the book provides an insider's look at the new tactics that many hope will revitalize the struggle for workers' rights in America. On November 1, 1990, just as its contract with the United Steelworkers of America was about to expire, Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation locked out its seventeen hundred employees and hired permanent replacements. Despite deteriorating conditions that had led to five deaths in the previous year, the company had refused to discuss safety and health issues. The locked-out workers faced an industry in turmoil, a plant manager with a grudge against the union, and a business controlled by a billionaire fugitive from justice. Tom Juravich and Kate Bronfenbrenner describe how victory was achieved through the commitment of the workers and their families coupled with one of the most innovative contract campaigns ever waged by an American union.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"In important ways, the Ravenswood strike illustrates the difficulties facing US workers as economic forces transform traditional employment patterns and relationships. The authors contend that unions remain a viable means of effective collective action. They depict in compelling detail the courage and intelligence of Ravenswood workers, whose efforts signaled a new vitality in the labor movement. . . For anyone with an interest in labor issues, this book is a valuable account of a significant union victory." —Choice. January, 2000

Juravich and Bronfenbrenner analyze a little-noted labor victory that may turn out to have been more significant in revitalizing a flagging labor movement than the 1997 Teamsters' strike against UPS. . . Most important, Ravenswood illustrates the consequences that result when financial consultants and corporate raiders take over companies and move to slash costs." —David Rouse, Booklist. July 1999.

"The book succeeds remarkably well. . . . I highly recommend the book to labor educators, union activists, and others interested in seeing how American unions have adapted to changing corporate structures and the dramatic decline in their ability to exert economic pressure using the traditional strike weapon." —Jeffrey B. Arthur, Assistant Professor of Management, Fairfield University.

Industrial and Labor Relations Review. July 2000.

"Unionists seeking a manual on how to run a strategic contract campaign should read this page-turner about the steelworkers' struggle against Ravenswood Aluminum Co. . . . The authors vividly capture every step of their difficult but intrepid and inspiring struggle, which marked a turning point in labor's revival after years of setbacks." —Molly Charboneau, AFSCME DC37 Newspaper

"Global capital rules today; thanks to Ravenswood, workers can learn sophisticated tactics to face distant owners. This book is a key tool for a revived and effective labor movement and shows that all the components outlined combine to make effective union campaigns." —Mike Matejka, Union News. December, 1999.

"Ravenswood is the story of 'permanently replaced' aluminum workers who pushed themselves. . . to the limit to save their way of life. It is well worth reading." —David Keene II, The Federal Lawyer. November/December, 1999.

"The epic struggle and ultimate victory of the Steelworkers at Ravenswood proves that determined workers and their union can overcome the entrenched, bitter resistance of a rich, global corporate empire. Workers everywhere are indebted to Kate Bronfenbrenner and Tom Juravich for recounting this story of hope in such a compelling and human fashion." —George Becker, President, United Steelworkers of America

"This record of the struggle and victory of Ravenswood workers and their community is exciting and inspiring, a marvelous account of courage and solidarity. It is also highly instructive. As the authors vividly show, the imaginative techniques that were devised to overcome the lockout yield many lessons for working people and unions in the face of 'new powerful yet diffuse corporate structures,' and

socioeconomic policies that enhance their power." Noam Chomsky" Tom Juravich and Kate Bronfenbrenner have blended these workers' voices with a razor-sharp analysis of the winning strategy at Ravenswood the result is both compelling and useful. As today's workplaces are rapidly downsized and globalized, it is more important than ever that the Labor Movement understand our victories in order to replicate them." John Sweeney, President, AFL-CIO

Ravenswood is an excellent account of the recent labor victory for the USWA in 1992. The book reads well and does a very good job of holding the reader's interest as the tale of how Local 5668 fought the infamous Marc Rich and won. The drawback of the book is that it is written by very pro labor authors and the view point and opinion portrayed throughout is very slanted in the union's favor. Unbiased opinion and view point is missing, if you're looking for an objective view of the account, this book will not offer that.

I ordered three of these books for Christmas gifts. It's a great read. Since these come from 3rd party all three came from different places. Don't order from Fairy Tale books. Still getting the run around of no book and no refund. Gave me story of being broken into but doesn't follow through with any customer service. Stay away from Fairy tale books!!!!

If you are a UNION activist you MUST read it. It's hard to put this one down once you start. Just buy it.

I now work at the aluminum manufacturing facility about which this book is written. I read the book as research while considering the job offer and found it enlightening and well done. The "story line" clearly is inspiring to people in the labor movement and, quite frankly, it should be. This being said, it's not a "one sided story," as I found out once employed at the facility. Conflict at the plant was intense, with very strong feeling on both sides. The story of the replacement workers - scabs - is given relatively short treatment. If the people I've spoken with at the facility are to be believed, significant violence associated with the conflict is skimmed over and reported minimally. This is a very good book - not the last word as the current owners and the USW are still working to heal some of the old wounds at the facility. I'd recommend it highly to anyone interested in the labor movement...

During the Reagan era of the National Labor Relations Board, the labor climate in America was

decidedly pro-employer. Yet even against that bias, the workers at the Ravenswood Aluminum Company were able to prevail against Emmett Boyle and his cohorts. This victory resulted from a combination of the egregious conduct of Boyle et al and the tenacious protests of the Steelworkers. Juravich and Bronfenbrenner detail how the workers built a successful campaign which capitalized on the gaffes committed by RAC and exposed the criminality of ownership's conduct. The authors follow this campaign as it progressed in the United States and abroad. The narrative is extremely readable, with character insights into the leading forces on both sides of the issue. The narrative bogs down a little when detailing the trek across Europe, but it does not become slow enough to make one set the book aside. In an era when the grandchildren of union workers question the need for unions, and at times even lay blame at the feet of unions, this book is a reminder of the evils which would otherwise be unchecked, were it not for effective labor organizations. If not unions, what would be the check on the conduct of management? Will quarterly reports to shareholders, who are only concerned with profits, insure worker safety? Will often unenforced criminal laws mold the conduct of people like Emmett Boyle? Will OSHA regulations insure fairness? Is it possible that our tort system will protect the economically disadvantaged workers in battles against the deep pockets of management? Only an effective organized labor movement can adequately protect today's workers from abuses inherent in the system. Without being obnoxiously ideological, the authors powerfully convey this sentiment.

This is a book about a strike against an aluminum plant in West Virginia by the United Steelworkers labor union in the early nineties. First, this is a genuinely good read (just based on the story....) with characters (all be they real...) that you root for and others that you shy away from (Emmitt Boyle and Marc Rich are drawn as evil incarnate....) Aside from this, this book serves as a record of a number of things: 1) a model for how a small-town labor struggle could be conducted on a broad-based front; 2) the ways in which capital does not exist in a locality so much as scattered throughout the world; and 3) an illustration of how labor stoppages in small towns have evolved from the days of Pinkerton thugs and picket lines to something more complex and... well, modern.... I'd really recommend this book to about anyone but, well, honestly, only people really into labor are ever going to read this. This is a really good book....

As the daughter of a 5668 lockedout employee, who was really too young to fully understand the total impact of the lockout, I looked forward to this book. It has allowed me to have a better grasp of what it was really like for my parents and all of the other Steelworkers and their families. I have

come to appreciate what it is to be UNION! This book gave me some surprises that I did not anticipate (PIC!! You know who you are!!!) It also brought me to tears on a number of occasions. I know the fear, depression, hopelessness that all of these members felt. Bless our union! You truly held "ONE DAY LONGER" than that "Boyle on your Back" and prevailed!! BTW my dad did not make it through the 1st chapter before putting it down in tears, and never picked it up again, because it hits home that hard. Truly a must for anyone involved with this dispute or anyone involved in one of their own. Congratulations 5668

"Ravenswood" details the fight of West Virginia steelworkers to maintain their jobs and community against a multinational employer. This book echoes the workers' voices and their struggle. Innovative tactics gave these workers tools to not only wage an effective local effort, but an impressive international one as well. This is a key for labor's revitalization and an important book for activists.

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