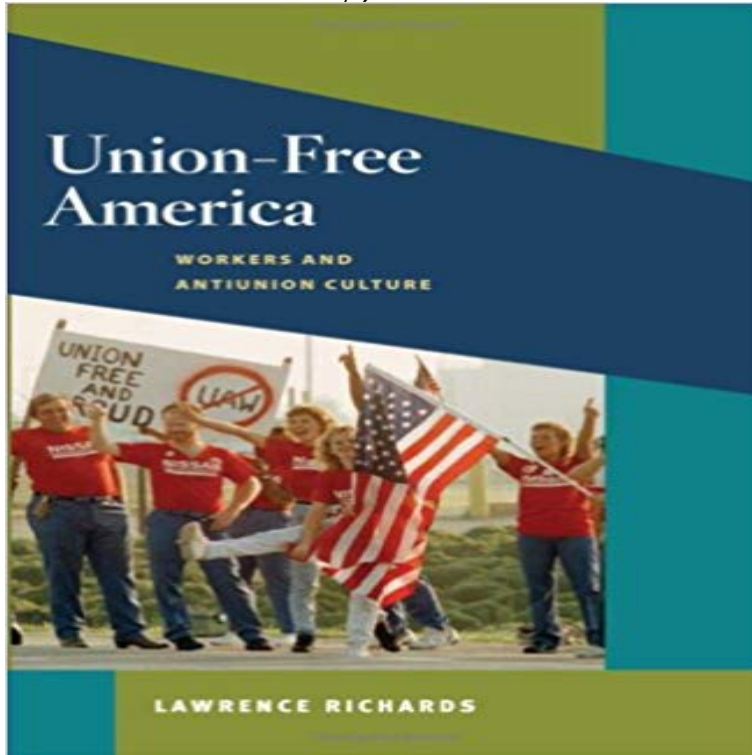


Union-Free America: Workers and Antiunion Culture (Working Class in American History)



Union-Free America: Workers and Antiunion Culture confronts one of the most vexing questions with which labor activists and labor academics struggle: why is there so much opposition to organized labor in the United States? Scholars often point to powerful obstacles from employers or governmental policies, but Lawrence Richards offers a more complete picture of the causes for union decline in the postwar period by examining the attitudes of the workers themselves. Large numbers of American workers in the 1970s and 1980s told pollsters that they would vote against a union if an election were held at their place of employment, and Richards provides a provocative explanation for this hostility: a pervasive strain of antiunionism in American culture that has made many workers distrustful of organized labor. Weighing the arguments of previous historians and sociologists, Richards posits that this underlying antiunion culture in America has been remarkably consistent over the course of half a century. Assessing organizing efforts among blue-collar, white-collar, and pink-collar workers, Richards examines the tactics and countertactics of company and union representatives who sought to either exploit or neutralize workers popular negative stereotypes of organized labors insidious control over workers autonomy. The book considers a number of case studies of organizing drives throughout recent history, from the failed attempt by District 65 to organize clerical workers at New York University in 1970, to a similarly fruitless drive by the Textile Workers Union in 1980 at a textile factory in Charlottesville, Virginia. In both of these particular cases and in many more, antiunion culture has operated to hinder unions efforts to organize the unorganized. By examining the manifestations and motivations of antiunion culture in the United States, Richards helps explain why

so many American workers seem to vote against their own self-interest and declare themselves Union Free and Proud.

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