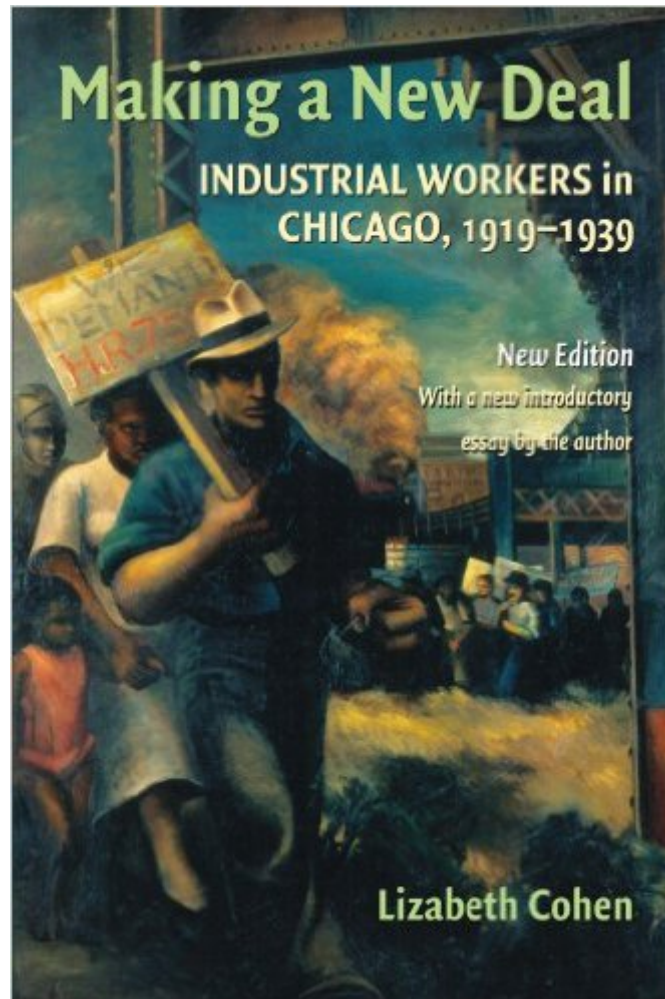


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# Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers In Chicago, 1919-1939



## Synopsis

This book examines how it was possible and what it meant for ordinary factory workers to become effective unionists and national political participants by the mid-1930s. We follow Chicago workers as they make choices about whether to attend ethnic benefit society meetings or to go to the movies, whether to shop in local neighborhood stores or patronize the new A & P. Although workers may not have been political in traditional terms during the '20s, as they made daily decisions like these, they declared their loyalty in ways that would ultimately have political significance. As the depression worsened in the 1930s, not only did workers find their pay and working hours cut or eliminated, but the survival strategies they had developed during the 1920s were undermined. Looking elsewhere for help, workers adopted new ideological perspectives and overcame longstanding divisions among themselves to mount new kinds of collective action. Chicago workers' experiences as citizens, ethnics and blacks, wage earners and consumers all converged to make them into New Deal Democrats and CIO unionists. First printed in 1990, *Making a New Deal* has become an established classic in American History. The second edition includes a new introductory essay by Lizabeth Cohen.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* by Lizabeth Cohen. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (England); New York, 1990. Pp. xviii + 526; illustrations. \$47.95, cloth; \$17.95, paper. *Making a New Deal* describes the evolution of Chicago's unskilled and semi-skilled

labor force during the inter-war years from individuals bonded in groups only by a common ethnicity or race into a cohesive, broad-based alliance responsible, along with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the federal government, for the success of the union movement during the darkest days of the nation's Great Depression. Cohen's concentration is focused on five of the city's industrial giants and the neighborhoods in which they were located, from which they garnered their workforce: the garment industry in the Old Immigrant Neighborhoods of the near west and southwest sides, International Harvester's McCormick Works and Western Electric's Hawthorne Works in the Southwest Corridor, Armour and Swift located in Packingtown, U.S. Steel and Wisconsin Steel of Southeast Chicago, and, with no industry of its own, the Black Belt. Cohen pursues an answer to the question: how it was possible for these industrial workers to become a cohesive force in national politics in the mid-1930's in light of their disunity entering the decade of the 1920's? During the Twenties, church and a myriad of other neighborhood institutions, mass marketing, government, union organizers, and employers all exerted forces on these laborers. Cohen concludes that the metamorphosis was caused by "the change in the workers' own orientation during the 1920s." It took nothing less than a shift in their very value systems, as old symbols of ethnic security began failing or vanished completely, e.g.

Making a New Deal describes the evolution of Chicago's unskilled and semi-skilled labor force during the inter-war years from individuals bonded in groups only by a common ethnicity or race into a cohesive, broad-based alliance responsible, along with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the federal government, for the success of the union movement during the darkest days of the nation's Great Depression. Cohen's concentration is focused on five of the city's industrial giants and the neighborhoods in which they were located, from which they garnered their workforce: the garment industry in the Old Immigrant Neighborhoods of the near west and southwest sides, International Harvester's McCormick Works and Western Electric's Hawthorne Works in the Southwest Corridor, Armour and Swift located in Packingtown, U.S. Steel and Wisconsin Steel of Southeast Chicago, and, with no industry of its own, the Black Belt. Cohen pursues an answer to the question: how it was possible for these industrial workers to become a cohesive force in national politics in the mid-1930's in light of their disunity entering the decade of the 1920's? During the Twenties, church and a myriad of other neighborhood institutions, mass marketing, government, union organizers, and employers all exerted forces on these laborers. Cohen concludes that the metamorphosis was caused by "the change in the workers' own orientation during the 1920s." It took nothing less than a shift in their very value systems, as old symbols of ethnic security began

failing or vanished completely, e.g., national churches, ethnic-based savings and loan associations and insurance companies, local stores and, eventually, the welfare capitalism practiced by their employers.

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