



# Subterranean Fire: A History of Working-Class Radicalism in the United States

*Sharon Smith*

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Workers in the United States have a rich tradition of fighting back and achieving gains previously thought unthinkable, from the weekend, to health care, to the right to even form a union.

But in 2005, the number of workers organized in unions reached a 100-year low in both the public and private sectors, even though more and more people would like the protection of a union, and real wages for most workers have stagnated or declined since the early 1970s.

Smith explores how the connection between the US labor movement and the Democratic Party, with its extensive corporate ties, has repeatedly held back working-class struggles. And she closely examines the role of the labor movement in the 2004 presidential election, tracing the shrinking electoral influence of organized labor and the failure of labor-management cooperation, “business unionism,” and reliance on the Democrats to deliver any real gains.

Smith shows how a return to the fighting traditions of US labor history, with their emphasis on rank-and-file strategies for change, can turn around the labor movement.

*Subterranean Fire* brings working-class history to light and reveals its lessons for today.

**Sharon Smith** is the author of *Women and Socialism*, also published by Haymarket Books, as well as many articles on women’s liberation and the US working class. Her writings appear regularly in *Socialist Worker* newspaper and the *International Socialist Review*. She has also written for the journal *Historical Materialism* and is a contributor to *Iraq Under Siege :The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War* and *Women and the Revolution* by Ethel Mannin. She lives in Chicago, Illinois.

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