

Insurgent Labor

The Vermont AFL-CIO 2017–2023

David Van Deusen

Foreword by Kim Kelly • Introduction by Steve Early

Insurgent Labor tracks the trials and tribulations of bringing a formerly stagnant labor union into national relevance with an unapologetically left-wing agenda.

David Van Deusen charts the rise of the UNITED! ticket to create a progressive and militant labor union. He chronicles the many victories throughout his tenure including expanding union democracy into the rank and file, moving power away from single individuals and into democratic structures, supporting farm workers, supporting Black self-determination, and supporting Black Lives Matter. Van Deusen also managed to include support for the revolutionary efforts in Rojava.

The boldest step undertaken by the Vermont AFL-CIO—and marker of years of steady progress in labor organizing and raising of political consciousness in Vermont—was authorizing a call for a general strike throughout Vermont as a possible response to the November coup threat.

This book should be of interest to anyone, whether they have merely thought of joining a union or are an old union hand. Most importantly, *Insurgent Labor* offers a blueprint for militant labor's advances in an era of capitalist polycrisis and offers hope for a brighter future based around equality, justice, and true democracy.

About the Contributors

David Van Deusen is a longtime libertarian-socialist thinker, organizer, and militant union leader. He has been President of the Vermont AFL-CIO since 2019 and is part of the progressive United! Slate. He is also a member of Democratic Socialists of America and a past member of Anti-Racist Action and the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective (NEFAC-VT). Van Deusen resides in Northern Vermont.

Kim Kelly is an independent journalist, author, and organizer. She has been a regular labor columnist for *Teen Vogue* since 2018, and her writing on labor, class, politics, and culture has appeared in the *New Republic*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Baffler*, the *Nation*, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *Esquire*, among many others. She is the author of *Fight Like Hell: The Untold History of American Labor* and resides in Philadelphia, PA.

Steve Early has been active as a labor journalist, lawyer, organizer, or union representative since 1972. He is the author of *Embedded with Organized Labor: Journalistic Reflections on the Class War at Home, The Civil Wars in U.S. Labor: Birth of a New Workers' Movement or Death Throes of the Old?*, and *Save Our Unions: Dispatches from a Movement in Distress*. He lives in Port Richmond, CA.

ACCOLADES

"Employing historically effective left strategies Van Duesen shows how a Central Labor Body organized to fight for both the economic and political interests of workers can unite with other social movements to blunt right-wing attacks on workers at the workplace and globally. Essential reading for those who believe in democracy."

—Fernando E. Gapasin, principal researcher for AFL-CIO 1996 "Union Cities" project and coauthor with Bill Fletcher, Jr. of *Solidarity Divided*



SUBJECT CATEGORY

Labor Relations, Political Advocacy, Anarchism, Activism & Social Justice

PRICE

\$19.95

ISBN

9798887440361

PAGE COUNT

288

SIZE

6x9

FORMAT

Paperback

PUBLICATION DATE

07/30/2024

US DISTRIBUTION

Publishers Group West

1-866-400-5351

www.pgw.com • ips@ingramcontent.com

CANADA DISTRIBUTION

Publishers Group Canada

1-800-663-5714

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UK DISTRIBUTION

Turnaround Publisher Services Ltd

020-8829-3000 • orders@turnaround-uk.com

PM PRESS

P.O. Box 23912 • Oakland, CA 94623

www.pmpress.org • info@pmpress.org

510-703-0327

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