

Homestead Steel Mill— the Final Ten Years

USWA Local 1397 and the Fight for Union Democracy

Mike Stout

Introduction: JoAnn Wypijewski • Afterword: Staughton Lynd

From the famous strike of 1892, through the century-long fight for a union and union democracy, *Homestead Steel Mill* is a case history on the vitality of organized labor in the twentieth century.

Written outside the halls of academia, fellow worker and musician Mike Stout sets the record straight with *Homestead Steel Mill—the Final Ten Years: USWA Local 1397 and the Fight for Union Democracy*. This is an insider's portrait of the union at the U.S. Steel's Homestead Works, specifically the workers, activists, and insurgents that made up the radically democratic Rank and File Caucus from 1977 to 1987. Developing its own "inside-outside" approach to unionism, the Rank and File Caucus drastically expanded their sphere of influence so that, in addition to fighting for their own rights as workers, they fought to help stop the closures of other steel plants, opposed U.S. imperialism in Central America, fought for civil rights, and built strategic coalitions with local environmental groups.

Mike Stout skillfully chronicles his experience in the takeover and restructuring of the union's grievance procedure at Homestead by regular workers and put at the service of its thousands of members. Stout writes with raw honesty and pulls no punches when recounting the many foibles and setbacks he experienced along the way. The Rank and File Caucus was a profound experiment in democracy that was aided by the *1397 Rank and File* newspaper—an ultimate expression of truth, democracy, and free speech that guaranteed every union member a valuable voice.

Profusely illustrated with dozens of photographs, *Homestead Steel Mill—the Final Ten Years* is labor history at its best. Mike Stout has provided a vivid account of how ordinary workers can radicalize their unions. This book will serve as a timeless organizing tool for future generations of working people as well as those concerned with social justice and truly democratic structures.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

For more than fifty years, **Mike Stout** has been an antiwar, union, and community organizer, as well as the last Local 1397 Union Grievance Chair at the U.S. Steel Homestead Works. He is currently president of the Allegheny Chapter of the Izaak Walton League, the oldest environmental conservation organization in the United States.

JoAnn Wypijewski is a writer and editor based in New York. Her work has appeared in numerous magazines, including *CounterPunch*, where she writes a monthly column, "Diamonds and Rust." Her latest book, with Kevin Alexander Gray and Jeffrey St. Clair, is *Killing Trayvons: An Anthology of American Violence*.

Staughton Lynd received a BA from Harvard, an MA and PhD from Columbia, and a JD from the University of Chicago. He taught American history at Spelman College in Atlanta. He is a lifelong union and peace activist and the author of many books, including *Solidarity Unionism* and *Wobblies & Zapatistas*.

ACCOLADES

"I can see this book finding a privileged place on the shelves of American radicals. This is a labor history which is exciting, emotional, and thought-provoking, a splendid example of radical history at its best."

—Andrej Grubačić, professor and chair of Anthropology and Social Change, CIIS—San Francisco; author of *Wobblies and Zapatistas*

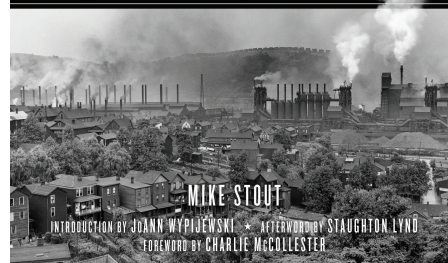


"If every local union had the fighting spirit of 1892, this holiday, the U.S. labor movement would be in far better shape." —STEVE EARLY

HOMESTEAD STEEL MILL

★★★★ THE FINAL TEN YEARS ★★★★★

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