



Green Syndicalism: An Alternative Red/Green Vision (Space, Place and Society)

Jeff Shantz

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It is widely understood that the burdens of ecological destruction are borne disproportionately by working-class and poor communities, both through illness and disease caused by pollutants and through the depletion of natural resources from which they make a living. Yet, consistently, the voices of the working class are the most marginalized, excluded, and silenced when discussing how to address ecological concerns and protect the environment from future destruction. Both mainstream environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club and Greenpeace, and radical environmentalists, such as EarthFirst!, are reluctant to engage with working-class and poor communities, often viewing blue-collar workers as responsible for the destruction these groups are trying to prevent. In Green Syndicalism, Shantz issues a call to action to the environmental movement and labor activists, particularly rank and file workers, to join forces in a common struggle to protect the environment from capitalism, corporate greed, and the extraction of resources. He argues for a major transformation to address the "jobs versus the environment" rhetoric that divides these two groups along lines of race and class. Combining practical initiatives and theoretical perspectives, Shantz offers an approach that brings together radical ecology and revolutionary unionism in a promising vision of green politics. Green syndicalists work as coalitions to increase community-based economics and productive decision making that encourages the participation of all stakeholders in the process. Drawing, in part, on his own experiences growing up in a working-class family and organizing within radical ecology and labor movements, Shantz charts a path that accesses the commonalities between these groups in an effort to take on the forces that destroy the environment, exploit people, and harm their communities.

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