

**EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWS OF  
THE UNIONS AND THE DEMOCRATS: AN ENDURING ALLIANCE**

“With consistent elegance, tracing labor’s role under every presidency since Lyndon Johnson, Dark argues that relations with Democrats in Congress and in the White House are not so different today from what they were 35 years ago. . . . A fine book, perhaps the best study of labor in politics since the work of Greenstone. The book’s evidence restores a necessary balance, and a useful explanatory framework, to an understanding of labor’s role in American politics. I highly recommend it for anyone interested in labor’s political activities, the Democratic party and its policies and influence in Congress and the White House, the alleged breakup of the New Deal coalition, progressive political coalitions of today and tomorrow, and/or the contemporary revitalization of the American labor movement.”

– Lowell Turner, Cornell University, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*

“Has the power of organized labor in American politics declined since the 1960s? Has it changed in form? Finally, how shall we understand the relationship between labor unions, political parties, and the state? These three questions – broad in scope, and equally challenging in tenor – occupy Taylor Dark’s The Unions and the Democrats. It is a wonderful book, not the least because it traverses ground that has so rarely been covered. . . . With an artful blend of historical narrative — drawn from extensive interviews and archival research — and political science analysis, Dark proves beyond a doubt that organized labor has maintained a privileged position within the big tent of Democracy. The Unions and the Democrats is a superb rendering of a very difficult subject – of interest to those who study American labor, Congress, the presidency, and recent American history. It should spur renewed study of a long-neglected subject.”

– John Gerring, Boston University, *Political Science Quarterly*

“The Unions and the Democrats, by Taylor E. Dark, is one of the best books on both subjects in recent years. Although the author, a professor at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan, supports both unions and the Democratic Party, it would be difficult to identify a book that is more informative about the political dynamics of organized labor in the United States. Dark’s sympathetic attitude toward his subjects undoubtedly helped him gain access to union leaders and union-oriented politicians, but his sympathies did not undermine his objectivity in dealing with his subject matter. . . . For over half a century, the AFL-CIO has been unsuccessful in amending federal labor law in ways intended to enhance unionization. This failure should not obscure the fact that organized labor has been a critical component of Democratic coalitions that have expanded the welfare state. As Dark shows persuasively, the unions, especially the public sector unions, are the building blocks of these coalitions.”

– Myron Lieberman, Education Policy Institute, *Labor Watch*

“With this book, Dark carves an important place in the unions-and-politics literature. . . . The Unions and the Democrats is a uniquely documented analysis of both surface-level and hidden aspects of union political activity. . . . The book's strengths are numerous. First, it tells a fascinating story. Second, its theoretical grip is forceful. Third, it is rich in institutional detail. Fourth, it puts labor's role into the broader electoral/legislative contexts it deserves. Fifth, it is interpretively balanced – not polemically annoying. . . . Overall, I recommend the book without hesitation. The Unions and the Democrats is must reading.”

– Marick F. Masters, *University of Pittsburgh, Industrial and Labor Relations Review*

“... a valuably argumentative and well-written analysis that combines rational choice and historical institutional approaches. . . . Dark connects his analysis to large parts of the American and comparative literatures on labor to make an original contribution to our understanding of contemporary politics. . . . The book is substantially devoted to presenting fascinating case studies of union-Democratic leadership relationships and of legislative cooperation and conflict involving organized labor.”

– Stephen Amberg, *University of Texas, San Antonio, American Political Science Review*

“It is widely said that the New Deal order has collapsed. Taylor Dark questions that wisdom with a judicious and well-informed portrait of the continuing collaboration of the unions with the Democratic party which was the hallmark of that order. An illuminating and chastening book, especially for those who think that labor's resurgence depends on an aggressive new labor politics.”

– Frances Fox Piven, *City University of New York*

“Taylor Dark's book makes a valuable and original contribution to our understanding of contemporary American politics. Dark argues clearly and persuasively that despite all the claims about organized labor's decline, the unions remain an invaluable ally for the national Democratic party.”

– David Plotke, *New School for Social Research*

“This welcome book provides a much needed update on the national political influence of organized labor. In a fair and balanced assessment Dark demonstrates labor's continuing influence, even in the face of a general labor decline. . . . The historical interpretation works well because the author relies on a consistent set of influential variables from setting to setting and time to time. Among the explanatory variables are central bargaining capacity of both unions and political allies, office holding by the allies, and labor union aggregation of other interests. The extent to which these variables exist determine whether unions seek broad reform goals or more narrow issue-by-issue wins. Recommended to students of interest groups, political parties, public policy, and general American politics.”

– W.P. Browne, *Central Michigan University, Choice*

“Taylor Dark examines the theme of union declension and the presumed marginalization of organized labor as a political actor with insight and imagination. He makes a compelling case that organized labor has continued to operate with surprising effectiveness on the political and legislative front. His analysis of the changing character of the political system, especially with reference to legislation and policy development concerning organized labor’s role, is particularly cogent.”

– Robert H. Zieger, *University of Florida*

“Political pundits have credited a reinvigorated labor movement with helping the Democrats achieve last fall's surprising election results. This analysis helps confirm Dark’s well-documented assertion that the conventional wisdom is wrong in suggesting that union power is on the decline because of shrinking union membership rosters.”

– David Rouse, *Booklist*

“In *The Unions and the Democrats*, Taylor Dark shows how the issue of employee relations with management has been handled in Washington. . . . Dark also points out that Clinton's veto and other less-noticed actions have paid off politically. They not only ensured the support of the unions for the Democratic Party but encouraged them to work actively and effectively for Clinton’s reelection.”

– Andrew Hacker, *New York Review of Books*

“This book actually contains a rather informative account of the ebb and flow of relations between the Democratic party and the AFL-CIO during the last thirty-five years. They were good during the Lyndon B. Johnson era, terrible during the 1970s, and somewhat better in the 1980s and in the years of the Clinton administration. Dark's thesis is that when labor leadership is unified, AFL-CIO influence with a Democratic Congress and president is sure to rise.”

– Nelson Lichtenstein, *University of Virginia, Journal of American History*

“Taylor Dark approaches the subject from a fresh perspective, that of the contemporary literature on American elections and political parties rather than labour history. In *The Unions and the Democrats*, Dark mounts a surprisingly persuasive critique of the conventional wisdom. . . . *The Unions and the Democrats* provides an excellent examination of the dynamics of union-party interaction over the last four decades, and presents a strong case for a new understanding of the modern Democratic coalition.”

– Clayton Sinai, *Rutgers University, Party Politics*

“What makes Unions and the Democrats a valuable resource for labor educators is its thesis of how and when organized labor successfully plays the ‘Washington Power Game.’ Dark postulates that labor’s ‘bargaining capacity’ is enhanced when both the Democratic party and the AFL-CIO function in a centralized fashion. Leadership in both institutions must be strong, unifying and capable of forging consensual arrangements before labor can expect to achieve meaningful goals in Washington. This leadership structure is referred to as ‘centralized pluralism.’ . . . Dark’s ‘centralized pluralism’ explanation is one that labor educators should wrestle with and present to their students. There is much here that needs debating. If the argument seems at times to be a defense of a top-down, less-democracy is better approach to union governance and political rule, it also rings true as a reflection of how the ‘Washington Power Game’ is actually played and more importantly, won.”

– Robert Bruno, *University of Chicago, Labor Studies Journal*

“Dark’s book is very readable. It provides a broad sweeping overview of the relationship between the Democratic party and unions. . . .Scholars may find worthwhile projects in careful empirical examinations of Dark’s central hypothesis.”

– Joseph P. McGarrity, *University of Central Arkansas, Journal of Labor Research*