favor by establishing a web site for their book, tracking current developments both on the shop floor and in theory. This debate is not over.

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Labor and the Environmental Movement: The Quest for Common Ground. By Brian K. Obach. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004. 338 pp. ISBN 0-262-15109-X, $68.00 (cloth); 0-262-65066-5, $27.00 (paper).

What are the possibilities and limitations of alliances between labor and environmentalists? In contrast to those who see these groups as inherently at odds or separated by strong cultural barriers, Brian K. Obach argues that the difficulties of blue-green coalitions are rooted largely in organizational factors. Obach's book provides a useful empirical sociological analysis of the bases of cooperation and conflict among labor and environmental groups in the United States. It highlights processes by which groups sometimes manage to unite against a common enemy and the ways in which the structure of social movement sectors and the demands of organizational maintenance make this cooperation tenuous. Despite a few limitations, this is a good book on a very important topic.

Obach starts by showing that labor and environmental interests are not inherently contradictory. Drawing on previous economic analyses, he convincingly argues that the infamous jobs versus environment trade-off is overblown (or at least only applies in a limited number of settings). Looking historically, he shows that organized labor and environmentalists have cooperated to support several important policy initiatives—including the Clean Air Act, OSHA, and community right-to-know legislation—as well as, more recently, to oppose NAFTA and the WTO.

Yet a basis of shared interests is not sufficient to produce effective coalitions. Obach argues that actual processes of coalition formation must be examined in light of a "coalition contradiction," which is rooted in the structure of American politics and the dictates of organizational maintenance. According to this analysis, the fragmented character of the American state—with its multiple branches and plethora of administrative agencies—combined with the explosion of environmental groups in the 1960s has produced a crowded social movement sector with many different (and often narrowly focused) organizations. Because of this, coalitions are crucial for achieving significant policy changes. But at the same time, the number and narrowness of social movement organizations undermines the formation and persistence of coalitions, since organizational leaders find themselves at risk of losing members and financial support if they move too far away from their core issues and missions. This is a more serious problem for environmental organizations (and other voluntary associations) than for labor unions, since the latter produce largely "private goods" for a stable membership base.

In spite of the coalition contradiction, labor-environmental alliances do form. Obach shows that they are facilitated by previous interaction among leaders, moments of crisis, and the skillful work of "coalition brokers" who have the kind of overlapping experience that allows them to build effective "bridges" between camps. Most of this coalition activity is short-lived and purely instrumental, but in some circumstances, Obach argues, a process of organizational learning can occur, in which broader conceptions of problems and solutions can become institutionalized in an organization.

Most of the analysis is based on case studies of labor-environmental coalitions in five states—Wisconsin, Maine, Washington, New York, and New Jersey—with information drawn from organizational literature and interviews with labor and environmental leaders working at the state level. These case studies are supplemented with an original survey of state labor leaders. Clearly the research has provided Obach with a wealth of rich information from which to draw.

Although Obach never cites sociologist Charles Perrow's description of organizations as "recalcitrant tools" (*Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay,* 1986), his main argument resonates with that image. Obach discusses a variety of instances in which narrowly constructed organizational goals ("We just don't work on that"), leaders' perceptions of members' interests, and the need to compete for resources (from members and foundations) produce a kind of organizational inertia that makes substantial cooperation difficult.

There are a number of appealing things about

this book. It engages with theoretical debates about materialist versus post-materialist politics, old versus new social movements, and the like, but does not get bogged down in them, instead staying firmly rooted in the empirical materials at hand. It also very productively applies the resource mobilization theory of social movements to develop an original and potentially powerful analysis of coalitions.

Another strength of the book is that it moves beyond static analyses of workers' and environmentalists' interests, to look at the ways in which conceptions of interest vary over time and across industries. Both cooperation and conflict are structurally possible, Obach argues, so the important issue is the way in which particular sets of organizations define their interests at a particular juncture. The historical chapter is especially good in this regard, reminding us that labor-environmental cooperation is not so new—and that it often rests on a complex set of interests, goals, and compromises.

Obach also does a nice job of debunking strong cultural explanations that locate the difficulty of coalition work in conflicting class cultures. He shows that these explanations have garnered much of their power from a focus on the "timber wars" in the Pacific Northwest, while ignoring many of the idiosyncrasies of this industry. As an alternative, Obach convincingly argues that much of what appears to be cultural conflict is really rooted in differing organizational procedures, with the more hierarchical and rigid decision-making style of unions being rooted in their legal mandates.

The main weakness of the book is that the evidence and the key causal arguments are not always well connected. For instance, one of the main arguments is that organizations that define their scopes more widely are more likely to engage in coalition work. This makes sense descriptively, but as a causal argument it borders on tautology, especially since having a wide organizational range is defined as working on both environmental and social/workplace issues. We are left with only hints about why organizations define their goals more broadly or narrowly in the first place. The analysis of organizational learning is also weak when it comes to explaining *why* new conceptions of scope and interest sometimes get institutionalized (but usually do not) during the process of coalition work.

On a similar note, although the strategy of looking at coalitions across different states is appealing, the criteria for selecting the states are not well connected to the main arguments of the book, and the states do not end up providing much analytical leverage. A better comparative design could have strengthened the analysis. For instance, if the need to compete for members really imposes significant constraints on environmental groups' coalition efforts, then coalition politics should look different in states with high levels of movement competition than in states with less competition.

By focusing on leadership-driven coalitions formed at the state level, Obach has greatly increased our knowledge of one site of coalition work, but this of course leaves out a great deal of important coalition activity at the local level. There are always limits to what can be done in a single study, but I wondered if greater attention to the local level might produce an account of coalition formation (and dissolution) that is more dynamic, emotional, and bottom-up than the one emphasized here.

I would have preferred to get the full narrative for at least a few cases of coalition formation, rather than just the author's conclusions about the cases spread out over several chapters. A thorough narrative exposition could have provided a sounder basis for readers themselves to evaluate the arguments, and, given the richness of the data, could have also provided some very compelling stories about the promises and pitfalls of these tenuous but tremendously important alliances. As it is, the book is clearly written but somewhat repetitive and longer than it needs to be.

Despite these shortcomings, *Labor and the Environmental Movement* makes a major contribution to a crucial area of study. Anyone interested in understanding or building blue-green alliances or any kind of social movement coalition should definitely read this book. It may also be of interest to social movement theorists, organizational researchers, and those working on labor or environmental policy.

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Families That Work: Policies for Reconciling Parenthood and Employment. By Janet C. Gornick and Marcia K. Meyers. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003. 461 pp. ISBN 0-87154-356-7, $39.95 (cloth).

Freud said that people need love and work to be happy. One does not have to be a Freudian