(Constance F. Citro and Robert Michael, eds., *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1995.) Certainly the authors of *Raise the Floor* have the democratic right to argue for their view that a minimally adequate standard of living is around twice as high as the current poverty standard. As the 1995 NAS book indicated, most other evidence, from other budget studies, public opinion surveys, and studies in other countries, agrees that the current U.S. poverty standard is too low, although many would not advocate raising the standard as much as do the authors of *Raise the Floor*.

The book is less successful in making a strong case for its solutions, one that will convert the unconverted. For example, the authors' contention that the minimum wage has little adverse effect on employment and business relies on selective use of the available evidence. The research of Card and Krueger, which agrees with Sklar, Mykyta, and Wefald's thesis, is cited, but not that of researchers who have concluded that the minimum wage does have significant negative effects on the employment of teenagers. David Neumark is cited for his research suggesting that local living wage requirements may lower poverty, but his research suggesting negative employment effects of the minimum wage is not given equal credence in *Raise the Floor*. The book would have been more convincing if the authors had admitted that some research indicates that a higher minimum wage may have some negative employment effects. Mere acknowledgment of such research results would not necessarily invalidate the book's proposals. A 2001 report by Isabel Sawhill and Adam Thomas found that even if the negative employment effects of a higher minimum wage are considered, a higher minimum wage is still likely to reduce poverty. (Isabel Sawhill and Adam Thomas, *A Hand up for the Bottom Third: Toward a New Agenda for Low-Income Working Families*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, May 2001.)

Also missing from the book are quantitative estimates of how the authors' proposed solutions would affect the identified problem. For example, there are no projections of dollar gains for families that currently fall below the minimum needs standards, or of the percentage of households that would rise above those standards. A rough cost estimate is provided for the proposed $8 minimum wage (a $96 billion gross cost increase to employers, before allowing for any cost savings from higher productivity or lower turnover or recruitment costs), but no budget cost estimates are presented for the expanded Earned Income Tax Credit, the expanded child tax credit programs, the expanded health insurance programs, or any other program. Perhaps such data are of more interest to policy wonks than to the general public, but in my view the book would have been more persuasive to skeptics if it had included such evidence.

The book also omits any extended discussion of how to increase full-time and full-year employment among low-income families. As the authors themselves state, of the 29 million households below the proposed minimum needs standards, 14 million do not work at all during a typical year, and many of the remaining 15 million only work part-time or part-year (p. 47). Although the book does advocate expansionary macro policies, it seems unlikely that such macro policies will fully address these employment problems of low-income families. Because these employment issues are not fully addressed, the book's solutions seem incomplete.

However, in an era in which little national attention is devoted to the plight of low-income families, a book that highlights these problems and proposes bold solutions is welcome. *Raise the Floor* will provide inspiration and helpful data for many activists. Research by others can fill in some of the gaps left by the book.

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Men of Uncertainty: The Social Organization of Day Laborers in Contemporary Japan. By Tom Gill. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001. xviii, 263 pp. ISBN 0-7914-4827-4, $68.50 (cloth); 0-7914-4828-2, $23.95 (paper).

A recent newspaper article titled "The Great Shadow of Depression" argued that the three major trading blocs—the United States, the European Union, and Japan—are all suffering economic recession (*The Guardian Weekly* [UK], December 2002). Economic stagnation in the EU, scandals such as those associated with *world.com* and *Enron* in the United States, and deflation and bad loans in Japan are symptoms of the crisis. According to Harvard University's Heizo Takenaka, the "thirty dirties"—30 banking and construction companies riddled with bad loans—are at the core of the Japanese loan

crisis. *Men of Uncertainty,* a compendious but empirically rich work that is largely based on 600,000 words of field study notes, concerns one section of Japanese industry, construction, in which the great majority of workers are day laborers.

Tom Gill begins by positioning these workers inside the Japanese political economy. The book's opening chapters swiftly move from a particular incident—a description of the murder of a "day labor union leader in Tokyo by a Yakuza gangster" in January 1986 (Introduction, p. 1)—to a general historical overview tracing the origin of day laborers in construction (Chapter 2). The following ethnographic chapters detail the day laborers' work and living situation. In Chapter 3, the author outlines the social framework in which day laborers exist, and in Chapter 4, on *doya-gai* (day laborer towns) and *yoseba* (day labor meeting places), he discusses their situation in various prefectures around Japan. "Who Are These Men?" (Chapter 5) analyzes their background, examining, in particular, how and why they became day laborers; "The Meaning of Home" (Chapter 6) discusses what home means to these largely homeless men; and "Marginal Identity" (Chapter 7) explores the nature and implications of their position at the fringes of Japanese society, a theme on which the author enlarges in Chapter 8, "The Role of the Yoseba in Contemporary Japanese Society." The epilogue predicts rising uncertainty and diminishing solidarity among day laborers.

Non-Japanese observers commonly and mistakenly regard "lifetime employment" as the core of the Japanese employment system (Kazuo Koike, *Understanding Industrial Relations in Modern Japan,* 1988). In fact, lifetime employment has generally been confined to workers between their mid-twenties and mid-fifties who are employed by large conglomerates (*zaibatsu*), and has never characterized the jobs of the majority of Japanese workers. Many other species of employment exist in Japan, and day labor is one that is of considerable sociological interest if not great economic importance.

According to Gill, the number of day laborers—whom he defines as workers "employed by the day" (p. 2)—varies depending on the statistical definition used. The Ministry of Labor (MOL) estimated 42,000 for 1998, while the Labor Statistics Bureau of the Management and Coordination Agency put the figure for that year as high as 1.26 million. Writing specifically of those who seek work in the *yoseba,* Gill writes,

> [They] are hard to count. My own semi-informed guess is that there could be up to 80,000 day laborers making regular or occasional use of the yoseba, made up of the 42,000 or so registered with the MOL plus a similar number of unregistered men. (p. 4)

Measured against a population of 126 million (July 1999), 80,000 day laborers are undeniably a tiny minority. The value of Gill's work, however, is out of proportion to the group's numerical size: this case study of a marginal but important labor market in Japan is searching, thoughtful, and richly detailed.

Tokyo's *yoseba* are small areas

> embedded in the city, where men stand in the street very early in the morning and look for work opportunities. There are two basic ways of doing this: formally, through the casual labor exchange set up in yoseba by the national and local governmental agencies; or informally, through negotiation with street labor recruiters called tehaishi [arrangers], who usually have some connection with the yakuza [the Japanese equivalent of the mafia]. (p. 4)

Historically, such arrangements go back to the *Heian Era* (794–1185), greatly antedating the abolition of slavery in Japan. As in the United States many centuries later, slavery, following its formal abolition, hung on in attenuated form as semi-slavery, serfdom, bond servitude, or indentured tenancy. With the looming industrial revolution—actually, much less a revolution than a state-sponsored transformation—during the *Meiji Era* between 1868 and 1912, day laborers became a signal instance of "Marx's concept of the disposable industrial reserve army" (p. 32). This development occurred predominantly in the construction industry, the culture of which "closely resemble[d] the criminal underworld" (p. 33). In sum, day laborers have been part of Japanese history at least since the era of slavery; they flourished in feudal times; and their presence persists, albeit with diminishing strength, under capitalism.

Ethnographically and sociologically, day laborers and their *yoseba* meeting places are identifiable by certain specific features. These marginalized men live a marginal existence because they are somewhat detached from mainstream society, being both disconnected from family structures and excluded from traditional company employment. They often have a rural background, are in the "forty to sixty age range" (p. 115), are mostly unmarried, and tend to live alone.

Mainstream society's perception of the lives of day laborers is conflicted. On the one hand, the "noble outcast" myth "is very strong in Japan" (p. 176). On the other hand,

> some Japanese react to [day laborers] with disgust expressed in physical violence. There have been countless incidents of day laborers being beaten up, especially when they are sleeping rough, and even murders are not uncommon. (p. 176)

Essentially, their low numbers and different lifestyle make them an easy target for a notoriously conformist mainstream society. "A nail that stands out, gets hammered in," goes a commonly invoked adage in Japan (p. 171); but no amount of hammering has availed to drive down this anomalous subculture.

Tom Gill concludes his excellent field study by noting a steady decline in day laborers, as well as in the yoseba. He assigns three main causes to this decline: the advent of prefabricated units and other innovations on building sites, which has eroded jobs in construction; a structural change in Japan away from heavy industries toward the service sector; and a shift from Japanese labor to migrant labor, which has tended to weaken the classical yoseba arrangement (see Y. Debrah, *Migrant Workers in Pacific Asia,* 2002). The author concludes, "A decade of recession has eaten away employment security across the board, and all too many workers have discovered that industrial relations based on mutual trust lasts only as long as it suits management's side" (p. 193).

Men of Uncertainty not only is a brilliant case study of Japanese day laborers, but also eloquently demonstrates that the Japanese industrial relations system as a whole is far more complex than some have led us to believe. To the unitarist picture of that system as one based on trust, mutual understanding, seniority, lifetime employment, and enterprise unionism, it is hard to imagine a stronger empirical antidote than the one provided by Tom Gill in this book.

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Labor Economics

Sustaining the New Economy: Work, Family, and Community in the Information Age. By Martin Carnoy. Russell Sage Foundation (New York) and Harvard University Press (Cambridge, Mass.), 2000. 238 pp. ISBN 0-674-00373-X, $43.00 (cloth); 0-674-00874-X, $19.95 (paper).

My first encounter with Martin Carnoy's work was by way of his 1980 book, *Economic Democracy,* co-authored with Derek Shearer. The synthesis of findings from across a host of disciplines, the writing, and the policy conclusions were all impressive and sensible. The book was marked by a belief in "small d" democracy, and a sense of optimism that many of us found refreshing and invigorating.

In reading Carnoy's latest work, *Sustaining the New Economy,* I was wondering what had happened to his thinking in the two decades since publication of the earlier work. Surely his sense of optimism would have been tempered? After all, the Reagan revolution had effectively reduced the bargaining power of unions, the number of union members, and governmental supports for the poor. The Berlin Wall had fallen, leading to increasingly successful challenges to even minimal public works and welfare programs, particularly in the United States. And the people who were, in Carnoy and Shearer's earlier vision, supposed to form democratic teams inside the American workplace had been increasingly differentiated. Dramatic increases in income inequality emerged, along with downsizing and outsourcing or the credible threat of their occurrence, while a culture of comfort with frequent movement from one job and one employer to another appeared among young workers. The conditions underlying the arguments found in the earlier work had changed, undercutting the premises for those arguments, and making the conclusions sound slightly silly in retrospect.

In the newer book, Carnoy not only recognizes these sea-changes in society; he details them at length. A chapter on technological innovation and employment provides a careful review of the evidence and concludes that new technologies are, on net, creating jobs. The most telling argument here proceeds from the observation that every one of the developed economies has absorbed a massive influx of women into the labor market during the past few decades, a point conveniently ignored by analysts who focus on the continued loss of manufacturing jobs in developed economies. Carnoy underscores the indisputable fact that many jobs and the vast majority of good jobs now carry high knowledge requirements.

A chapter on work reflects on some implications of these new technologies. Carnoy describes both the increasing isolation of workers from one another, their employers, and their communities, and the simultaneous development of a global economy wherein workers, ideas, and markets operate within increasingly