From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth

This book reconstructs how a group of nineteenth-century labor reformers appropriated and radicalized the republican tradition. These “labor republicans” derived their definition of freedom from a long tradition of political theory dating back to the classical republics. In this tradition, to be free is to be independent of anyone else’s will; to be dependent is to be a slave. Borrowing these ideas, labor republicans argued that wage laborers were unfree because of their abject dependence on their employers. Workers in a cooperative, on the other hand, were considered free because they equally and collectively controlled their work. Although these labor republicans are relatively unknown, this book details their unique, contemporary, and valuable perspective on both American history and the organization of the economy.

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From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth

Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth Century

ALEX GOUREVITCH
Brown University
In dedication to my father, Peter Gourevitch, and in memory of my mother, Lisa Hirschman.
## Contents

_Acknowledgments_ **ix**

**Introduction: Something of Slavery Still Remains** 1

1. **The Paradox of Slavery and Freedom** 18

2. **“Independent Laborers by Voluntary Contract”: The Laissez-Faire Republican Turn** 47

3. **“The Sword of Want”: Free Labor against Wage Labor** 67

4. **Labor Republicanism and the Cooperative Commonwealth** 97

5. **Solidarity and Selfishness: The Political Theory of the Dependent Classes** 138

**Conclusion: The Freedom Yet to Come** 174

*Bibliography* 191

*Index* 207
Acknowledgments

Although my name is on the title page, this book is not mine alone. It started as a dissertation, nearly a decade ago, so it is only right for me to begin by thanking my dissertation advisors, Jean Cohen, Nadia Urbinati, and Ira Katznelson. In their different ways, they helped me realize I had an idea worth developing and then pushed me to develop it. Jean’s razor-sharp questions kept me focused and spurred me to find my own voice. Nadia’s feel for the sweep of history was an inspiration well past the dissertation phase, and her mentorship when I was first starting out is something I will continue to treasure. Ira’s feel for how to move between history and theory is a model I continue to follow. I am also grateful for the comments of my two other dissertation readers, Corey Robin and Andreas Kalyvas, who were the first to help me understand how I might turn my project into a book. In fact, Corey continued to provide much needed counsel well into the late stages of the book’s completion. I also must thank Daniel Kato and Ian Zuckerman. Their comradeship during our dissertation writing group was essential during the otherwise long and solitary months of writing during that early phase.

Aziz Rana has been not only a great friend and a close reader but an inspiration throughout this project, from its inception right up until just about the very last day. In certain ways, this book continues a conversation we began more than a decade ago. In the long process of turning my dissertation into a book, so many other people read chapters and papers that I hardly know where to begin acknowledging their contributions. I am sure I have, unconsciously, left some people out, but I would especially like to thank Chris Bickerton, Corey Brettschneider, Daniela Cammack, Philip Cunliffe, Sandipto Dasgupta, Prithviraj Dhatta, David Estlund, Isabelle Ferreras, Nicholas Frayn, Pablo Gilabert, David Grewal, Javier Hidalgo, Sean Ingham, James Ingram, Carlo Invernizzi, Sharon Krause, Matthew Landauer, Charles Larmore, Bruno Leipold, Chris Mackin, Tamara Metz, Laura Phillips, Peter Ramsay, Danya
Acknowledgments


The Montreal Political Theory Manuscript Workshop was easily the most rewarding and intense experience – really a crucible – during this book’s writing. The participants not only read the entire manuscript; they then spent a full day carefully helping me eliminate errors and clarify crucial ambiguities. They all deserve thanks, but I would like to especially mention the commentators and the organizers: Arash Abizadeh, Evan Fox-Decent, Pablo Gilabert, Jacob Levy, Victor Muñiz-Fraticelli, William Clare Roberts, and Robert Sparling. I would also like to thank the two reviewers for Cambridge University Press for their many helpful suggestions on improving the manuscript and deep thanks also to Lew Bateman and Shaun Vigil for believing in the book and for shepherding me through the production process.

Looking back, I can truly say that whatever truths this book contains would not be there without the help, perhaps I should say cooperative efforts, of others. Whatever errors still remain are mine alone. One other person deserves more than acknowledgment: my wife, Tal Astrachan. Gratitude does not even begin to describe how I feel about her support.