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0521021448 - French Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Public Sphere

Kenneth H. Tucker

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This study explores the evolution of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) and its interaction with the French public sphere, between 1900 and 1920. Animated by revolutionary syndicalist discourse, the CGT supported federalist worker control of industry in fin-de-siècle France, and, by World War I, had developed a distinctively productivist discourse, emphasizing increased material output through efficient, expert direction of the economy. Kenneth Tucker examines the triumph of this productivism and instrumental rationality, in contrast with other visions of society and the future. He gives an innovative Habermasian twist to the recent linguistic turn in labor history, focusing on the role of competing bodies of knowledge in influencing the self-understanding and strategies of the CGT. He also goes further to situate the rise of productivism within the social and cultural context of the French Third Republic. He makes an eloquent case for using history as a cultural resource in confronting our own fin-de-siècle.

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For Sherry

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