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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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[More information](#)

For Sherry

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page x</i>
Introduction	
Prologue	3
1 The Belle Epoque and revolutionary syndicalism	13
Part I: Reconfiguring the language of labor: the advantages and limitations of a Habermasian historical sociology	
2 Syndicalism, the New Orthodoxy, and the postmodern turn	33
3 Public discourse and civil society: Habermas, Bourdieu, and the new social movements	51
Part II: Visions of modernity in the liberal and proletarian public spheres: positivism, republicanism, and social science	
4 The liberal and proletarian public spheres in nineteenth-century France	71
5 The fin-de-siècle public sphere, the academic field, and the social sciences	104
Part III: Exploring revolutionary syndicalism	
6 Pelloutier, Sorel, and revolutionary syndicalism	131
7 Reformulating revolutionary syndicalism	159
8 Toward a new public sphere: Taylorism, consumerism, and the postwar CGT	183
Conclusion	
9 The legacy of syndicalism	209
<i>Notes</i>	218
<i>Index</i>	276

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Frontmatter
[More information](#)

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