

# H-Net Reviews

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**Charles F. Howlett.** *History of the American Peace Movement 1890-2000: The Emergence of a New Scholarly Discipline.* Chicago: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005. 321Seiten. \$119.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7734-6017-1.

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## C.F. Howlett, History of the American Peace Movement

After reading the title of this book, I eagerly opened its pages, expecting to find either a collection of new scholarly works or a historiographical collection of the best examples of American peace history, chronicling the most important topics and theoretical perspectives within this field. Unfortunately, I was disappointed on both counts. Instead, Charles Howlett's *History of the American Peace Movement* is a basic introduction to American peace history, designed to be used in introductory peace history or peace studies courses. The essays he has selected are examples of how various historians have approached the subject. Howlett provides a brief overview of American peace history in the first chapter, introductions to each of the essays along with study-guide questions, and concludes with a brief historiographical review of the subject. He also includes helpful appendices, providing brief descriptions of important peace advocates in American history, a glossary of peace terminology, and a bibliography. This book is remarkably similar to Charles Chatfield's anthology, *Peace Movements in America* (1973), only with more helpful learning aids and a handful of more recent essays. In the dearth of other introductory readers on American peace history, it is a welcome addition.

Howlett's introductory essay provides a solid, but brief overview of the history of American peace movements since the 19th century. Students new to the field will find this helpful, but other peace scholars will find it a bit shallow and uncritical, with little discussion of the theoretical assumptions employed by peace historians, or

deeper philosophical issues within the peace movements. His introductions and questions for each of the following essays are similarly clear, basic, and uncritical.

The essays in this collection are arranged in chronological order, with the first two essays covering peace movements prior to the First World War, the next three essays analyzing the peace movement from World War I through the 1930s, and the last three essays discussing various aspects of the peace movement from the 1950s through the 1970s. The first half of this book appears as if it will cover all the important topics and periods in peace history, written by the most important historians of the twentieth century. Indeed, three of these essays were written by giants in the field: Charles Chatfield, Charles DeBenedetti, and Lawrence Wittner. These first essays, all written before 1980, cover familiar territory and are useful for introducing students to the first histories of peace movements. The second half of the book, however, takes a different turn. Rather than studying the peace movements specifically and exploring new and current approaches to the peace movements, Howlett has selected essays which were written in the 1990s by lesser-known historians and which explore movements related to, but not focusing on, peace. This change in focus begins with James Tracy's essay, "Direct Action, 1957-1963." While this is perhaps the best-written essay of the lot and the first half of it deals with the important anti-nuclear movement of the 1950s, the second half of the essay focuses on the civil rights movement, with little discussion of the connections between the two move-

ments. Tracy does thoroughly discuss these connections, as well as the movement against the Vietnam War in his excellent monograph, *Direct Action: Radical Pacifism from the Union Eight to the Chicago Seven* (1996), but Howlett has omitted this discussion from his excerpt. The next chapter, "From Civil Rights to the Second Wave of the Feminist Movement, 1960-1975" by Harriet Hyman Alonso, is similarly abbreviated. This essay focuses on the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Women Strike for Peace. It provides an interesting discussion of these peace organizations, but is too brief to fully explore the impact of feminism on the peace movement. While these two essays are interesting and focus on different dimensions of the peace movement, the last essay, "The Clamshell Alliance: Consensus and Utopian Democracy" by Barbara Epstein, does not focus on the peace movement at all. This essay explores an environmental movement to stop nuclear power in New England in the 1970s. While it is an interesting essay, the only way it relates to peace history is its discussion of the tactic of nonviolent civil disobedience. Nonviolence is of course relevant, but there are so many other essays which discuss this tactic in the context of actual peace movements. Why not include a discussion of this tactic as it was used in the Vietnam antiwar movement, or the anti-bomb movement of the 1980s?

Although this collection of essays would be adequate for undergraduate introductory classes, even in this capacity it has some important flaws. One recurring annoyance throughout the book is its numerous typographical errors. In addition to many misspelled words, in several of the later chapters, periods are incorrectly used instead of commas and end-of-line hyphens from the original manuscripts have not been corrected. While these basic errors do not impede our understanding, they do annoy and make this collection appear less professional. Another more serious problem with using this anthology as an introduction to American peace history is its omission of an essay on the anti-Vietnam war movement, one

of the most important topics studied by peace historians over the past fifty years. This omission is puzzling, especially since many of the authors he includes had also published important studies of the Vietnam era peace movement. His essays also barely touch on the massive anti-nuclear war movement of the 1980s, and do not discuss any peace activism since 1980. These are serious omissions, especially for an introductory course on American peace history.

Overall, however, the essays are of high quality, introducing students to the basic history of American peace movements (with some important omissions), and the approaches of some important peace historians. While these essays analyze different periods, organizations, and people, and use different sources in their approaches, all operate within the same basic theoretical framework and have the same goal. In his forward to the book, Charles Chatfield calls this the "social mobilization approach."<sup>(iii)</sup> This approach seeks to understand what factors mobilize social movements and explain their successes and failures. All offer a positive and uncritical overall perspective of peace activism, and none explores deeper theoretical issues of scholarly analysis in the field of peace history. Again, this collection seems designed mostly for the novice student, rather than the informed scholar. Howlett's introductory essay, introductions to each essay, and concluding historiography help to make this collection intelligible to students. Thankfully, Howlett has retained the original footnotes for each of the essays, a practice that is essential for undergraduates to learn how historians do their work, and to follow the sources for further research on the various topics. Overall, this book is effective for its intended purpose: if you are looking for a basic introduction to the study of peace history in America, this book will suffice. If, however, you are a scholar of peace history, looking for new work or a theoretical discussion, you will be sadly disappointed.

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