



### Popular Radicalism and the Unemployed in Chicago during the Great Depression

By Chris Wright

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**Reevaluates the collective struggles for survival of the long-term unemployed in the Great Depression that challenged fundamental institutions of capitalism and their successes and failures that hold lessons for us today.**

In a time when mass joblessness and precarious employment are becoming issues of national concern, it is useful to reconsider the experiences of the unemployed in an earlier period of economic hardship, the Great Depression. Focusing on the bellwether city of Chicago, this book reevaluates those struggles, revealing the kernel of political radicalism and class resistance in practices that are usually thought of as apolitical and un-ideological. From communal sharing to “eviction riots,” from Unemployed Councils to the nationwide movement behind the remarkable Workers’ Unemployment Insurance Bill, millions of people fought to end the reign of capitalist values and usher in a new, more socialistic society. Today, their legacy is their resilience, their resourcefulness, and their proof that the unemployed can organize themselves to renew the struggle for a more just world.

#### Key selling points

- Challenges stereotypes of American conservatism and individualism
- Tells the history of the forgotten movement to pass a socialist unemployment insurance bill in the depths of the Great Depression
- Explores the modes of class resistance of the long-term unemployed
- Highlights the role of violence and coercion in suppressing oppositional strains in popular culture.

#### Contents

Acknowledgments; Introduction; Chapter One - Overview; Chapter Two - Hardship; Chapter Three - Coping; Chapter Four - Relief; Part I: “Shelter Men”, Chapter Five - Relief; Part II: Governments, Unions, and Churches, Chapter Six - Collective Action; Conclusion; Index

#### About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Chris Wright is Adjunct Assistant Professor of History at the City University of New York. He is the author of *Worker Cooperatives and Revolution: History and Possibilities in the United States* (2014). His writing has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Dissent*, *Truthout*, and other publications.

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