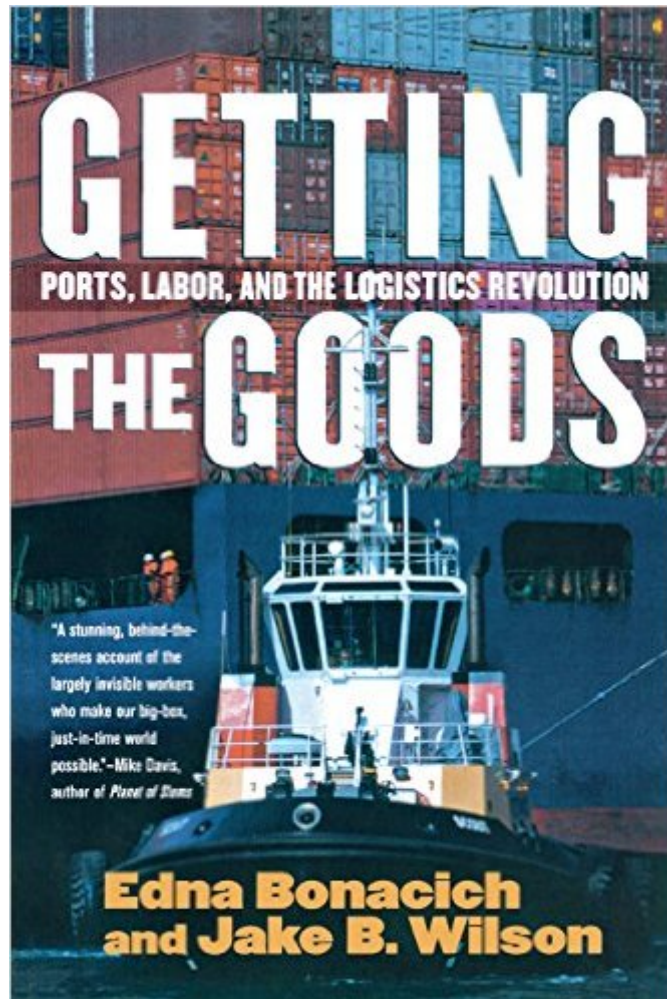


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Getting The Goods: Ports, Labor, And The Logistics Revolution



Synopsis

In *Getting the Goods*, Edna Bonacich and Jake B. Wilson focus on the Southern California ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, which together receive 40 percent of the nearly \$2 trillion worth of goods imported annually to the United States, to examine the impact of the logistics revolution on workers in transportation and distribution. Built around the invention of shipping containers and communications technology, the logistics revolution has enabled giant retailers like Walmart and Target to sell cheap consumer products made using low-wage labor in developing countries. The goods are shipped through an efficient, low-cost, intermodal freight system, in which containers are moved from factories in Asia to distribution centers across the United States without ever being opened. Bonacich and Wilson follow the flow of imports from Asian factories, exploring the roles of importers, container shipping companies, the ports, railroad and trucking companies, and warehouses. At each stage, *Getting the Goods* raises important questions about how the logistics revolution affects logistics workers. Drawing extensively on interviews with workers and managers at all levels of the supply chain, on industry reports, and on economic data, Bonacich and Wilson find that, in general, conditions have deteriorated for workers. But they also discover that changes in the system of production and distribution provide new strategic opportunities for labor to gain power. A much-needed corrective to both uncritical celebrations of containerization and the global economy and pessimistic predictions about the future of the U.S. labor movement, *Getting the Goods* will become required reading for scholars and students in sociology, political economy, and labor studies.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

On page XII, Ms. Bonacich informed she was a Marxist. Furthermore, she expressed her initial warped views regarding typical capitalists as being in favor of environmental devastation as well as consumerism that "leaves us without meaning in our lives". Later on, after contacting those capitalists she confessed they were "all helpful, friendly, and sensible people". She finally added "they are decent people". Mr. Bonacich does not live in North Korea or Cuba, but in the USA. Thus, it appears she does not socialize with Americans in general at all. Who said capitalists are in line with her rooted prejudices? Incidentally, in 1989 I had the chance to visit East Germany (DDR) where the city of Magdeburg was the most polluted place I ever saw. Besides, in East Berlin I could see a number of desperate consumers looking for items to buy that they were unable to find, including basic staples. Notwithstanding the above outline, I should say that I do not foster any grudge against Marxists and even enjoyed reading Ms. Bonacich's book. Actually, the authors have carried out detailed surveys and interviews as to have an accurate insight concerning the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. Though the authors dedicated their work mainly to look into labor relations, they also examined key aspects regarding the supply chain/logistics revolution that might be of great interest for many readers. I myself live overseas but got surprised that many problems described along the book are similar to the ones I find in my country. Lastly, the last chapter contains an excellent analysis as for vulnerabilities of the logistics revolution that might also affect the LA/LB port complex.

Good read, and a real eye-opener.

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