

activism connect clearly with modern-day struggles for equality and justice. Overall, Jabour's biography is an enjoyable and enlightening contribution.

## German Texans and Farmer-Labor Radicalism

**Alter II, Thomas. *Toward a Cooperative Commonwealth: The Transplanted Roots of Farmer-Labor Radicalism in Texas*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2022. x + 277 pp. \$28.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-0252086366.**

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By tracing three generations of the German-Texan Meitzen family, Thomas Alter II's *Toward a Cooperative Commonwealth: The Transplanted Roots of Farmer-Labor Radicalism in Texas* finds a "bright red thread" (14) linking the German Revolution of 1848 and the later Populist and Socialist movements in the United States. For more than five decades, the Meitzens helped sustain and infuse new ideas into an enduring farmer-labor voting bloc. Although the bloc was later subsumed into a Democratic Party dominated by social conservatives, Alter reveals the transnational, multiethnic, and even sometimes interracial history of Texas farmer-labor radicalism.

Otto Meitzen, a millwright and religious nonconformist, lived in the Silesia region of Germany. Silesia was both heavily industrialized and agricultural. When revolutionary fervor swept Europe in 1848, Silesia emerged as a center of radical democratic politics. There, a provincewide organization known as the Rustic Alliance formed to align peasants and laborers together. Its activities quickly collapsed when soldiers of the Hapsburg counterrevolution overwhelmed Silesian workers and restored the feudal regime. Although Otto's precise role in the 1848 revolution is unknown, he escaped the counterrevolution and fled to Texas.

In Texas, Otto Meitzen's son, E. O. Meitzen, worked within the Farmers' Alliance and was a statewide leader of both the People's Party and the later Socialist Party. Injuries had compelled Meitzen to give up blacksmithing as a young man. He taught for three years, and, in 1883, began farming. He joined the Grange in 1885. When the Great Southwest Railroad Strike erupted the next year, Meitzen joined the Knights of Labor and the Farmers' Alliance. He moved and changed jobs, continued working for the Farmers' Alliance, and resisted but then relented and joined the People's Party, running fierce but ultimately doomed campaigns as a congressional candidate in 1892 and for state comptroller in 1894.

E. O. Meitzen linked Populism and Socialism. At the 1896 People's Party convention, Meitzen and the Texas delegation allied with Chicago Socialists led by Henry Demarest

Lloyd to fight efforts by party leaders to limit the platform to the silver issue. Continued collaboration and communication with the Chicago Socialists converted Meitzen and other Texas Populists to Socialism. Meitzen and his sons, E. R. and Arnold, joined the Socialist Party in 1904, but Meitzen resigned after winning an election to serve as county judge. His newspaper, however, continued to openly support Socialists. These Texas labor radicals borrowed Edward Bellamy's idea of the Cooperative Commonwealth to describe the Socialist future they fought to create. The Texas Socialist Party, however, lacked many of the advantages of the People's Party. For instance, it never achieved substantial interracial political cooperation. The Meitzen's continued to believe, however, that farmers' organizations could support the Socialist's political party. They worked to sustain the Farmers Union and later the Renters' Union as viable organizing and advocacy groups, but both were short-lived.

E. O. Meitzen's sons, E.R. and Arnold, joined his efforts to create a working-class party that united farmers and workers together. They tapped into their father's old networks of activists from the Farmers' Alliance, Knights of Labor, People's Party, and Farmers Union. E. R. in particular belonged to a left-wing faction of the Socialist Party opposed to Victor Berger's top-down leadership, and the Meitzens and their left-wing allies emerged victorious in their battle for control of the Texas Socialist Party. Under E. R.'s leadership, state party membership doubled. In 1912, the Texas Socialist Party passed the Republican Party as the second largest in Texas. As the popularity of Socialism within the state peaked, E. R. ran as the Socialist Party candidate for governor in 1914 and 1916.

Like his father and grandfather, E. R. helped to import new political ideas into Texas. At the 1912 Socialist Party national convention, E.R. joined North Dakotans Albert Bowen Jr. and Arthur LeSueur to make the party more responsive to farmers. In 1916, the Meitzens supported LeSueur's failed bid for the party's presidential nomination. Regardless, the ties between the Meitzens and LeSueur would lead Texans into the Nonpartisan League (NPL). In 1917, E. R. wrote LeSueur and expressed interest in the NPL. LeSueur encouraged NPL leader Arthur Townley to invite E. R. to North Dakota and Minnesota. The NPL held hopes of the Meitzens' newspaper aligning with the order and paid for E. R.'s trip north. He soon became a national organizer, and his father, E. O., moved to Fargo to edit the German-language supplement of the NPL's *Nonpartisan Leader*. The NPL hoped its association with Meitzen family would extend its electoral success, however, the NPL's opponents successfully reminded Lone Star State voters of E. R.'s Socialist Party gubernatorial campaigns. E. R. continued to look toward farmers' organizations, and supported the Farm-Labor Union of America (FLUA) after its 1920 formation. Less than two years later, he arranged for its merger with the Texas NPL. By then, however, the emergence of the Second Ku Klux Klan re-oriented state politics and swept farmers' issues out of Texas politics.

The Meitzen family's search for a political route to the Cooperative Commonwealth faltered especially as the White Primary Law disenfranchised Black voters and squelched any attempts to create an interracial farmer-labor bloc. Like many members of the Texas farmer-labor bloc, E. R. became a New Deal Democrat. As Alter writes, with this transition, "Texas ceased being a hotbed of economic radicalism and instead became one of social conservatism—a transition that has had lasting political ramifications on the entire nation" (204).

The Meitzen family's history alone does not provide enough evidence to make sweeping generalizations about the origins, conduct, or legacy of the Populists, the Socialists, or the NPL. However, the Meitzens—and Alter's book—are too important for scholars of labor and American political radicalism to ignore. *Toward a Cooperative*

*Commonwealth* should further appeal to a broader audience of scholars of immigration and transnational history, while lay readers—especially those interested in Texas political history—will find it a rich and rewarding experience.

## Musician on Patrol: How Chicago’s Chief of Police Saved Irish Music

**O’Malley, Michael. *The Beat Cop: Chicago’s Chief O’Neill and the Creation of Irish Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022. 350 pp. \$27.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0226818702.**

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Michael O’Malley’s *The Beat Cop* traces the journey of Francis O’Neill, an Irish immigrant who rose to the top of Chicago’s police department while cultivating a passion for Irish music. Equal parts biography, historical synthesis, and cultural commentary, *The Beat Cop* positions Chief O’Neill at the crossroads of multiple modernizations in police work and information-gathering within the rough-and-tumble urban landscape of late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America. All the while, O’Neill, profoundly nostalgic for his Irish homeland, preserved for the American public authentic Irish music through data collection and publication. But O’Neill was steeped in the murky waters of imperialism: O’Malley convincingly demonstrates that O’Neill viewed Irish music as a kind of natural resource to be mined in Chicago and elsewhere for the benefit of Ireland. This allowed O’Neill “to be both eminently Irish and eminently American” (5).

O’Malley’s first chapter recounts the early life of O’Neill, who was born during the famine in 1848. His family was able to lease a sizable portion of land and therefore fared better than many others in Ireland. O’Malley reminds readers that the O’Neills were “strong farmers” who were able to live above the subsistence level, rendering them, in O’Malley’s words, as “colonialism’s middlemen” (16). Francis attended a National School where his education was infused with a colonized mindset: imperial-oriented instruction fostered O’Neill’s rejection of nationalism through physical force. “He seized on music as a sign of Irish national character,” O’Malley writes (26). O’Malley questions O’Neill’s own idealized assertions about his childhood and Irish society more broadly given in books and interviews published later in his life. What is certain, however, is that Irish music played a key role in O’Neill’s upbringing.

By O’Neill’s seventeenth birthday, restlessness and the allure of the sea and distant lands led to his departure. He would not return home for forty years. O’Malley’s second chapter focuses on O’Neill’s brief career as a sailor. He traveled to Egypt, the Pacific, and