



Conservative Counterrevolution: Challenging Liberalism in 1950s Milwaukee (The Working Class in American History)

Tula A. Connell

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In the 1950s, Milwaukee's strong union movement and socialist mayor seemed to embody a dominant liberal consensus that sought to continue and expand the New Deal. Tula Connell explores how business interests and political conservatives arose to undo that consensus, and how the resulting clash both shaped a city and helped redefine postwar American politics.

Connell focuses on Frank Zeidler, the city's socialist mayor. Zeidler's broad concept of the public interest at times defied even liberal expectations. At the same time, a resurgence of conservatism with roots presaging twentieth-century politics challenged his initiatives in public housing, integration, and other areas. As Connell shows, conservatives created an anti-progressive game plan that included a well-funded media and PR push; an anti-union assault essential to the larger project of delegitimizing any government action; opposition to civil rights; and support from a suburban silent majority. In the end, the campaign undermined notions of the common good essential to the New Deal order. It also sowed the seeds for grassroots conservatism's more extreme and far-reaching future success.

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