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The Future of Organized Labor in American Politics *by Peter L. Francia. New York, Columbia University Press, 2006. 224 pp. $40.00.*

Organized labor's current crisis is undeniable. The ranks of union workers have continued to erode, from the mid-1950s high point, when 35 percent of wage earners were organized, to the present, when barely 12 percent claim union membership. Yet, as Peter L. Francia convincingly demonstrates, in the face of this crisis, labor has become an increasingly adept and effective vote-mobilizing force. Especially in the decade since John Sweeney took over the AFL-CIO presidency, labor has redoubled its political efforts and has developed an increasingly proficient electoral apparatus. This is a backstory to organized labor's current troubles that few observers have grasped as well or analyzed as astutely as Francia does in this fact-packed volume.

As Francia makes clear, labor's renewed focus on political action was necessitated by the election of anti-labor Republicans to the control of Congress in 1994. That political earthquake set in motion a series of changes within organized labor. Indeed, the Republicans' seizure of Congress was largely responsible for Sweeney's victory in the first seriously contested presidential election in the history of the AFL-CIO in 1995. Once Sweeney took the reins, labor's effort to restore Democratic control of Congress forced unions to become increasingly partisan and to perfect their political action accordingly. The result has been a dramatic improvement of labor's political operations.

Francia evaluates labor's political record in the Sweeney era according to several criteria, including the efficiency of campaign spending, the extent to which union members vote Democratic, labor's success in keeping Democrats loyal, and labor's ability to increase the share of voter turnout that comes from union households. Under Sweeney, Francia shows, labor targeted campaign contributions more shrewdly, made labor a powerful force in electing Democrats to open congressional seats, and developed a get-out-the-vote operation that has given union households a larger share of all voters, despite union membership losses.

In many respects, the evidence that Francia amasses in this book vindicates Sweeney's political strategy. Yet, as Sweeney's critics within the labor movement point out, and as Francia acknowledges, labor's growing effectiveness in politics still has not made enough of a difference. The results of the 2004 election make this clear. Union households turned out 24 percent of all voters, and trended Democratic by a healthy two-to-one margin. Yet Republicans were still victorious. Indeed, Republicans have not only retained control of Congress, they have grown increasingly anti-labor as the number of moderates within the party has diminished. Meanwhile, increased corporate funding of political action has far outstripped labor's spending. Even more ominous, declining union density is eroding the base that labor seeks to mobilize politically.

Francia sees no easy solutions to such problems. For example, he quickly dismisses the notion popular among some observers on the left that unions

should break with the Democrats and launch their own party. The structural impediments inherent in a winner-take-all two-party electoral system would doom such an effort, he argues. Moreover, he shows that labor's political problems stem more from the hostility of the ruling Republicans than from soft support among Democrats.

In the end, labor is facing what Francia calls a classic "'chicken-or-the-egg' dilemma" (p. 143). Unions need to organize more workers in order to increase their political clout. Yet unions need access to political power in order to reform outdated labor laws in ways that would make organizing easier. Francia does not pretend to resolve that dilemma in this slim volume. But he does a fine job of clarifying it.

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Congress and the Cold War *by Robert David Johnson. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005. 380 pp. Cloth, $70.00; paper, $25.99.*

In his prologue, Robert Johnson cites Robert Caro's observation that "historians can explicate the role of procedural gambits in Congress only through precise, detailed descriptions of the tactics involved" (p. xxiv). Johnson takes this insightful statement to heart, and his book is clearly the richer for it. Covering a period of roughly forty years, Johnson chronicles the see-saw of competing ideological factions and competing political parties in the Congress, and their respective rise and decline in influence on U.S. Cold War policy. As Johnson makes clear, however, this influence was manifested not through dramatic applications of the Congress's war-making or treaty-approval powers. Rather, when the Congress was influential, that influence typically was achieved through back-door procedural gambits, most often associated with the legislature's power of the purse.

As Caro prescribes, Johnson presents this story through detailed explications of the various tactical situations in which the Congress acted. This approach is simultaneously both the strength of the volume and the stage set for its major flaw. For while these detailed recitations of minute legislative battles long past are essential to explaining how members of Congress exerted influence on Cold War policy, the reader ultimately gets lost in the details of struggles won and lost, and the author provides far too little explanation of each incident's significance for the underlying trends and its lasting significance, if any, for Congress's role in U.S. foreign policy in the current century. At the end of each chapter, for example, the author typically provides but a single paragraph summarizing the meaning of the history just recounted, and the book ends with a chapter describing the final episode in the history, rather than any kind of overarching summary and analytical discussion.

Johnson's focus on detailed recitations of procedural tactics has other consequences, as well. He often fails to get behind the legislative scene, neglecting