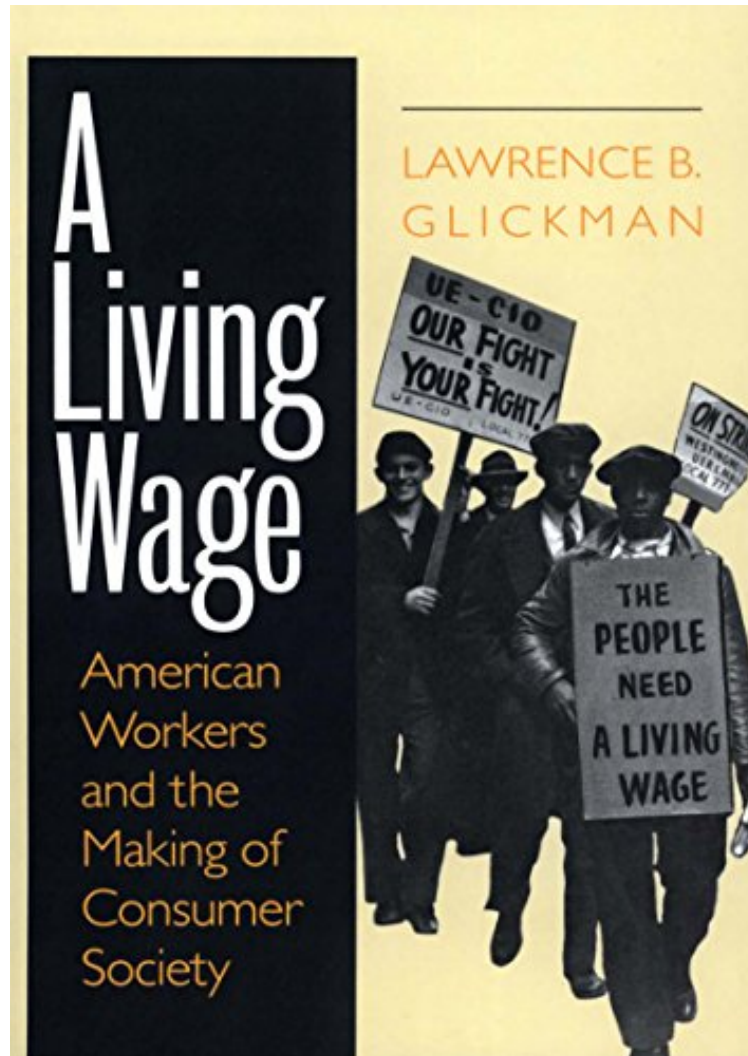


# A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society

Lawrence B. Glickman

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**Lawrence B. Glickman : A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society:

The fight for a "living wage" has a long and revealing history as documented here by Lawrence B. Glickman. The labor movement's response to wages shows how American workers negotiated the transition from artisan to consumer, opening up new political possibilities for organized workers and creating contradictions that continue to haunt the

labor movement today. Nineteenth-century workers hoped to become self-employed artisans, rather than permanent "wage slaves." After the Civil War, however, unions redefined working-class identity in consumerist terms, and demanded a wage that would reward workers commensurate with their needs as consumers. This consumerist turn in labor ideology also led workers to struggle for shorter hours and union labels. First articulated in the 1870s, the demand for a living wage was voiced increasingly by labor leaders and reformers at the turn of the century. Glickman explores the racial, ethnic, and gender implications, as white male workers defined themselves in contrast to African Americans, women, Asians, and recent European immigrants. He shows how a historical perspective on the concept of a living wage can inform our understanding of current controversies.

From Library Journal  
Glickman (history, Univ. of South Carolina) analyzes the change in labor-movement ideology from aspiring to make workers self-employed artisans to accepting their status as wage earners. Nevertheless, labor unions disdained "wage slavery" and fought for a "living wage" that would reward workers commensurate with their needs as consumers. In doing so, Glickman argues that working-class Americans played an important role in the transformation of America from a producer-driven to a consumer-oriented society. He also disputes earlier influential interpretations of American labor ideology as being "exceptional" compared with European ideology, a view found particularly in the writings of John R. Commons and Selig Perlman. Recommended for labor collections of academic libraries.  
?Harry Frumerman, formerly with Hunter Coll., New York  
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"If history is to instruct, if history is to motivate, then Lawrence B. Glickman's interpretative study on the nexus between the worker as employee and the worker as consumer, from the late nineteenth century to the New Deal, fulfills the promise. Active workers, unions and writers in those turbulent decades asked bigger questions about their political economy and challenged the illegitimacy of corporate control far beyond the horizons of their successors today. All who are part of today's growing movement for a living family wage, in an America of predominately declining real wages and rising fraud on consumers, can benefit vigorously from this living labor history."Ralph Nader  
"A Living Wage is an important book that challenges the view of pure and simple unionism as apolitical. It also calls into question where, when, and why Americans first embraced a consumer identity. . . . A fascinating study of the rise of a consumer-oriented working-class ideology."  
Journal of American History  
"Glickman makes a bold contribution to the wider task of rethinking the late nineteenth-century labour movement, and his findings deserve wide notice."  
Labour History  
"Glickman provides an entirely new way of understanding working-class material demands." s in American History  
"A very fine, well-written study of changes in rhetoric and ideology, as well as a lucid discussion of what these changes tell us about the goals of working-class leaders, thinkers, and reformers. Glickman's study is less about wage labor and consumption than about changing notions of and perspectives on these issues. As such, A Living Wage is a valuable contribution to the history of working-class culture, rhetoric, and ideology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."  
Industrial and Labor Relations  
"Glickman's lively and thoughtful intellectual history of the concept of a living wage speaks both to historians of American working people and to historians of American culture. . . . His primary method is discourse analysis, and he does it very well. . . . He writes clearly and evocatively, with sensitivity to gender and race, as well as class."  
Journal of Social History  
"This is a work of enormous range and brilliance that maps one of the great sea changes in recent history: the accommodation to wage labor and the reorientation of the discussion of citizenship, rights, race, and gender to the new realities it imposed. This is the kind of book that will have an enduring life because of the way in which it so fundamentally shifts the terms of the debates into which it enters, and those who read it will thereafter look at the worlds of work and consumption in a new way."  
Susan Porter Benson, author of Household Accounts: Working-Class Family Economies in the Interwar United States  
"A Living Wage is an original, exciting, and important book. By taking us inside the labor movement's long-term rumination on wages and the wage-relation, Lawrence B. Glickman shows what so few other historians have been able to demonstrate: namely, how American workers ideologically negotiated the transition between then and now, how that negotiation opened up new political possibilities for organized workingmen, and, at the same time, how it reinforced and finessed contradictions that continue to haunt the labor movement."  
Jean-Christophe Agnew, Yale University  
About the Author  
Lawrence B. Glickman is Professor of History at Cornell University. He is the author of A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society and the editor of Consumer Society in American History: A Reader, both published by Cornell. His other books are Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America and The Cultural Turn in U.S. History: Past, Present and Future.