

Mike Stout's well-constructed and splendidly illustrated memoir is about a special place and time, but it also serves as a window on a social insurgency that can provide inspiration for future social progress. It is a story of skilled workers who proudly got their hands dirty - an industrial world of crane men, machinists, mechanics, millwrights, laborers and electricians that once dominated a region; who also combined working class culture as writers, poets musicians, cartoonists and even lawyers. Today, there are new skills and different jobs, but class domination and oppression endures. Greed without end, or solidarity forever? The choice remains and the consequences for a sick earth and an imperial world order could not be greater.

---Charles McColleston, former Chief Steward, UE Local 610, Switch and Signal Plant; former Professor of Labor History at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP).

This book should be read by activists in workplace situations all over the United States, not just as a stirring story but as a manual in response to the question, what is to be done? The Homestead struggle demonstrated that imaginative and aggressive use of contract language can result in substantial monetary compensation for workers who are displaced. The spirit of solidarity so abundantly displayed in Local 1397's struggle is what the rank-and-file labor movement – as well as the broader Movement to change the larger society - is all about.

Staughton Lynd – Attorney, labor organizer, and author of over a dozen books including *Wobblies and Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism and Radical History*

“Shop-floor activists at U.S. Steel’s famous Homestead Works played a key role in the democracy movement that swept through their national union and almost topped its top leadership in the late 1970s. After that Steel Workers Fightback campaign, they turned USW Local 1397 into a model local union, just in time to mount spirited resistance to mill closings throughout western Pennsylvania. Mike Stout’s first-hand account of rank-and-file militancy and creativity in the face of de-industrialization and capital flight contains many relevant lessons for union members today. If every local union had the

fighting spirit of 1397 in its heyday, the U.S. labor movement would be in far better shape.”

--Steve Early, former International Representative, Communications Workers of America and author of *Refinery Town: Big Oil, Big Money, and the Remaking of an American City*

" I can see this book finding a privileged space on the shelves of American radicals. This is a labor history which is exciting, emotional and thought-provoking, a splendid example of radical history at it's best."

—Andrej Grubacic, Professor and Chair of Anthropology and Social Change, CIIS-San Francisco, author of *Wobblies and Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism and Radical History*

“Women of Steel” was a pretty apt name for the women working in the mills, as Mike Stout shows us. These women stood together and stood up for themselves, plus organized the guys against corporate greed and union officials’ sexism. Stout’s description of the women’s strength, smarts, and leadership comes from the heart; he worked for members’ rights alongside these women, or stood behind them when they stepped forward.

--Martha Gruelle, former co-editor, *Labor Notes* and co-author (with Mike Parker) of *Democracy Is Power*.

The best movements have the most leaders, and Mike Stout does a great job introducing us to some of the many people who took on the steel industry and devious union bureaucrats during the last decade of US Steel’s Homestead Works in Pittsburgh. Mike’s union sisters and brothers built community alliances, and they had fun, partied together and mourned together. They made mistakes and built victories. It’s a story from the era of de-industrialization, but with lessons for all of us working to rebuild a powerful labor movement for the future.

--Ken Paff, National Organizer, Teamsters for a Democratic Union

Mike Stout's *1397 Rank and File* tells the story of the Rank and File Caucus at the Homestead PA steel mill from 1977-1987. Homestead was an epicenter of the era's burgeoning rank and file revolt against sclerotic union bureaucracies -- and of its freewheeling working class cultural and political anti-authoritarianism. The book vividly describes how the Rank and File Caucus evolved tactics ranging from a rank and file newspaper to inventive grievance campaigns, union elections, rock concerts, unemployed committees, food banks, coalitions with community and environmental groups, occupations of corporate headquarters, work-ins, work stoppages, and work-to-rules complete with practical details that workers in any workplace could learn from today. Laced with compelling stories, lively oral histories, and the author's own rock-n'-roll song lyrics, Mike Stout's book truly exemplifies its claim that "solidarity and democracy" are our "main weapons" against "greed, money interests, and a system that is crushing us all."

—**Jeremy Brecher best selling author of *Strike!***

“In his moving book, informed by years of real experience as a worker and union activist in a Homestead steel mill, Mike Stout demonstrates the continued importance of unions today as well as the need for unions to be authentically run by their members. Stout pulls no punches in telling the story of how he and his fellow union brothers and sisters fought against both corporate tyranny and union bureaucracy to defend their rights on a daily basis. This is a story which everyone interested in workers rights and the labor movement should read.”

— **Daniel Kovalik served as in-house counsel for the USW international union for over 25 years.**