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*Practical Liberators: Union Officers in the Western Theater during the Civil War*, By Kristopher A. Teters (2018) Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 240 pages. ISBN: 978-1-46963-886-7

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are the interlocutors of cooperatives require them to comply with high standards—standards that cooperative workers negotiate, seeking to preserve an autonomy that is part of their collective commitment. Even in the face of municipalities close to the Workers' Party, and therefore benevolent a priori in recognizing the rights of cooperative workers, autonomy is and remains an issue under close scrutiny. Could it be otherwise when it is a major issue in the conflict between capital and labour? In other words, collective bargaining is a way of policing this conflict but does not go beyond it. The various examples discussed here raise the question again and again as to whether other institutional constructions, other forms of compromise than that inherited from Fordism and widely challenged in the world, are possible and desirable. In any case, the richness of the empirical evidences presented here allows us to raise some questions.

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### **Practical Liberators: Union Officers in the Western Theater during the Civil War**

By Kristopher A. Teters (2018) Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 240 pages. ISBN: 978-1-46963-886-7.

When he began his study of Union officers in the Western Theater of the U.S. Civil War, Kristopher A. Teters hoped to find that many embraced emancipation for moral reasons. However, what he discovered was that "pragmatism, far more than morality, motivated western officers to support emancipation" (p. 2). Although many officers eventually accepted emancipation because they believed it helped the Union war effort, Teters contends that their racial attitudes barely changed at all. *Practical Liberators* focuses on 410 Union officers in the Western Theater, and how they conducted the

work of emancipation. During the first year and a half of the war, the army manifested inconsistent policies toward fugitive slaves. Some officers returned fugitive slaves; others did not. After President Abraham Lincoln issued the *Emancipation Proclamation*, the army focused heavily on liberating able-bodied adult male slaves. Thus, according to Teters, "the army proved to be practical liberators" (p. 4). Teters makes an important point about the Western Theater. This theater included Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and South Carolina, as well as portions of Louisiana and Florida and, thus, contained the vast majority of the slaves in the South. Teters correctly asserts that the Western Theater, rather than the Eastern Theater, is the critical arena for understanding how emancipation unfolded on the ground and officer attitudes.

In the early months of the war, Union armies did not fight to liberate slaves. However, the slaves themselves forced the issue by fleeing to the Union lines. As Teters notes, officers responded inconsistently: "Top commanders in the West adopted generally very conservative or moderately conservative approaches in dealing with fugitive slaves" (p. 8). This often meant protecting slavery in border States like Missouri so as to not alienate Missouri Unionists. Interestingly, even as he spins a story of practical army commanders who refused to confiscate slaves and returned fugitive slaves, Teters turns up, again and again, stories of soldiers, lower-ranking officers, and sometimes entire regiments, who rebelled against the policies of their commanders. As he notes, in a revealing statement, "through Grant and Halleck tried to keep slaves away from Union lines during the 1862 campaign into western Tennessee, they faced challenges from below" (p. 18). Officers routinely defied the orders of their commanders. Charles Wills, an adjutant in the Seventh Illinois Cavalry, for example, "contended that army generals assured the slave owners that the slaves

would not be permitted to leave with the army" (p. 20). Notwithstanding, General Pope's army welcomed the slaves around New Madrid into Union lines. In addition, some higher-ranking officers, like Brigadier General Ormsby Mitchel "grasped that confiscating slaves was a military necessity before most other generals" (p. 22).

The inconsistent policies changed considerably when Congress replaced the relatively weak *First Confiscation Act* with the stronger *Second Confiscation Act*. Union officers tended to allow many slaves to enter Union lines and, despite diverse attitudes toward African Americans, officers "were generally willing to carry out emancipation policies" (p. 45). Even Don Carlos Buell, one of the most conservative generals in the Western Theater, "began to grudgingly adopt more proconfiscation policies" (p. 50). That is not the say that all officers acted identically. Brigadier General Lovell Rousseau returned fugitive slaves to Kentucky masters and had an explosive confrontation with the Twenty First Wisconsin. The regiment allowed two slaves to hide in their camp and drove their masters away. Rousseau "ordered the other regiments of the brigade to surround the Twenty-First Wisconsin with their guns loaded" and asked the men if they would tell him where the slaves were and obey his orders. On soldier piped up, "Yes General, if consistent with our duty and Conscience, but no slave catching" (p. 53). As other historians have illustrated, the U.S. Civil War featured many wars within the war. Rousseau versus the Twenty First Wisconsin was surely one of the more epic struggles. In this confrontation, members of the military offered sharply diverging ideas about how to conduct the work of emancipation. Nor was this conflict an aberration; as Teters notes, "while the high command of the Army of Kentucky made clear their policies on slaves, lower-level officers did not always obey their superiors' orders" (p. 56).

The army began to consistently carry out emancipationist policies such as the confis-

cation and employment of slaves, because they believed harder measures necessary to destroy the rebellion. Still, even as many embraced emancipations, "it appears that nearly as many officers still opposed taking the war in an emancipationist direction" (p. 63). Even those officers who embraced emancipation did so out of pragmatism rather than principle. Teters comments, "the level of opposition to emancipation declined strikingly after the first few months of 1863 because officers came to realize its practical benefits and, in some cases, came to understand the harsh reality of slavery" (p. 73). Similarly, many white soldiers opposed black troops, usually out of racism, but "some officers still supported black soldiers because they would help win the war" (p. 76). In sum, officers followed Lincoln's language from his reply to Horace Greeley's "Prayer of Twenty Millions," what they did, they did to save the Union. Pragmatism, Teters asserts, "counted for far more than morality or idealism" (p. 82).

Despite coming into contact with African Americans, the racial views of officers changed very little. Black servants might temper racial prejudices, but "no matter how much officers might respect individual black Southerners, there was no profound transformation in their racial attitudes" (p. 101). Teters makes an interesting point, but he uses his evidence to advance an overly sweeping conclusion when he writes, "this persistent racial prejudice of Union officers helps explain why the North eventually retreated from Reconstruction and acquiesced in segregation and disfranchisement. The Civil War had eliminated slavery but had hardly solved the problem of racial prejudice" (p. 105). Reconstruction failed for many reasons, not least of which was massive violent resistance by ex-rebels. Historians should be careful about assigning too much blame to northern soldiers. In addition, the point Teters argues is a straw man. No serious scholar would argue that the Civil War solved the problem of racial

prejudice. Teters concludes by analyzing General William T. Sherman, a reluctant emancipator if ever there was one. Still, even if Sherman was not interested in liberating all slaves and thought little of black soldiers, “the army was still a powerful force of liberation” (p. 138). The slaves who found shelter, employment, and freedom behind Union lines, in other words, likely did not care if Sherman and his men were motivated by pragmatism or morality. Teters might have included more African American voices in the book to see what they thought about the “practical liberators.”

Teters has written a thought-provoking book, but one wonders if it might have been organized differently. His fifth chapter, “A Practical Army of Liberation,” details the actual work of emancipation. Since Teters is correct that the Western Theater contained far more slaves than the Eastern Theater, an in-depth study of the way emancipation unfolded, and how officers, soldiers, slaves, and politicians played multiple roles in this process might have been more significant than discussing pragmatism. In addition, as mentioned above, Teters sometimes creates straw man arguments. For instance, he comments, “while it [the Civil War] had pushed Northerners to emancipate the slaves, it did not make them into racial egalitarians” (p. 157). One would be hard pressed to find a historian who argues that soldiers who supported emancipation, whether their support came early or late in the war, were all racial egalitarians. Some obviously were, some were not, and some were no doubt ambivalent. These criticisms suggest the inherently fascinating nature of the topic. Practical *Liberators* would be a useful book to utilize in upper-division undergraduate courses or graduate seminars to spark lively discussions.

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## **Not for Long: The Life and Times of the NFL Athlete**

By Robert W. Turner II (2018) New York: Oxford University Press, 258 pages.  
ISBN: 978-0-1998-9290-7.

Of the various team sports played across the globe American football poses the greatest physical and (possibly) psychological risks to its participants. A game based on speed, strength and physical domination over others is an occupation with a very high injury rate and short careers. National Football League (NFL) players have an average career of 3.1 years (p.x). Injuries to their bodies and their brain resulting from numerous concussions provide them with a post football life of pain, reliance on medical prescriptions and ‘illegal’ drugs, weight problems, family break-ups, difficulties in finding second career employment, mental disorders, depression and suicide. Despite the high income players may earn, Robert Turner quotes a 2009 report in *Sports Illustrated* that within two years of retirement, 78 per cent of players are bankrupt or in financial hardship due to joblessness or divorce (p. 2).

Robert Turner is a former player with stints in the now defunct United States Football League, the Canadian Football League and the NFL. When he was cut from the NFL, he faced the dilemma of not knowing what he would do next. He sees this problem as being common to all players. Their identities are all linked to being footballers. Once this comes to an end—invariably as the result of an injury or a fitter or less injured younger player who can be employed for less—, players find themselves in a state of limbo and, if they are not careful or smart enough, long term decline into misery. Turner turned to education, obtained a PhD in sociology, which focused on sport and is a sport’s scholar. Much of this book draws on his PhD.

*Not for Long* examines the career path of American football players from Pop Warner youth leagues, through high school,