In the same vein as authors of *Alternatives* writing about Indigeneity, Welch, Willow, and Grossman, "certainly foregrounded [Indigenous] affiliations in order to lend credibility to their ability to speak to Indigenous issues." (161) These authors had significant work-based lived experience in their sites of research. Welch's chapter shows intricate knowledge of the White Mountain Apache Tribe's activism, likely owing to his decades of experience in Apache lands. Similarly, Willow's study has resulted from years of working with activists in Grassy Narrows First Nation (Ontario) and West Moberly First Nations (British Columbia). Grossman's experience as a community organiser for Native and rural non-native alliances to protect local ecologies informed his work on how local-level climate action can pose serious confrontations to shipping and expansion practices of fossil fuel industries.

Yet, the authors who included a positionality statement to outline their lived experiences of working with Indigenous peoples also fall short of reflecting upon their racial or gendered position within their work. Willow comes closest to acknowledging her social location in her work: she states her Euro-American and middle-class identity as a position of privilege but does not delve into how she has navigated this privilege while conducting research with Indigenous and non-Indigenous environmental activists. Here we may recall Indigenous scholars, such as Marisa Elena Duarte, signalling the centrality of delving into researcher positionality within the project of intellectual decolonisation.

As the editors point out, several tools and processes of environmentalism within and outside of green organisations have been highlighted within this volume – coalitions and alliances (between Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists; the state and activists; and the state and Indigenous Peoples); adaptation and growth trajectories of organisations; and incorporation of scientific expertise in activism. Curation of chapters centring on various geographical areas in Part 2 lends itself well to re-historicising environmentalism, especially in Canada, which can be seen as a crucial contribution of this volume. Overall, *Environmental Activism on the Ground* makes crucial contributions to contemporary environmental sects within archaeology, sociology, history, and geography.

Chetna Khandelwal
University of Calgary

William C. Pratt, *After Populism: The Agrarian Left on the Northern Plains, 1900-1960* (Pierre, SD: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2022)

Farm-based protests have a long and important history in both the Canada and the United States. In the period studied in William Pratt's insightful book, they were fueled by the transformation of agricultural economies as family farms confronted powerful corporate interests and declining returns in what increasingly felt like a losing struggle. This is an oft-told tale and historians can usually recite a list of agrarian movements which rose and fell in various areas at different times. Pratt examines the northern US plains and (to a lesser extent) the Canadian prairies – regions which, at least in the countryside, have become conservative strongholds. But they had, he explains, a significant left-wing past.

To be clear, explicitly radical organizations were never very large. The pre-World War I Socialist Party had a significant rural base, most famously in Oklahoma, although with a measure of support on the northern plains; there were over 17,000 subscribers to their weekly *Appeal to Reason* in the Dakotas

and Nebraska and speakers crisscrossed the region. Similarly, the Communist Party had rural branches on the northern plains from the early 1920s into the late 1940s – many, but certainly not all, in immigrant communities. More significantly, Pratt carefully documents the important roles such activists played in wider farm movements. The Nonpartisan League is a prime example. Built to a significant extent by socialists, it grew into a politically diverse movement, won state government in North Dakota in 1918, and created a network of state-owned elevators, insurance, and banks. In the 1920s, radicals, including the new Communist Party, were active in attempts to build a farmer-labour political movement. Despite differences on the broader left over whether to build a third party, these developments led to Robert La Follette's independent campaign for president which had particular resonance on the northern plains states where La Follette won about 40 per cent of the vote, well over twice that of the nation as a whole.

Spurred by the hard times, the farm revolt of the 1930s achieved new levels of militancy. Most notably, the Farmers' Holiday led a wave of farm strikes and militant eviction protests. This was a widespread grassroots movement often guided by those with experience in past farmers' movements, including the Communists' United Farmers' League (UFL). Communist Party activities included a "Farm School on Wheels" which travelled around the region presenting two to four week-long courses on politics and organizing skills. The turn to the popular front at mid-decade led to the UFL dissolving itself into the larger farm organizations.

Despite the downturn in farm movements in the late 1930s, in large part due to the relief provided by New Deal farm programs, this activist political tradition had its echoes after World War II. The leadership of the National Farmers' Union (NFU) on the northern plains had socialist roots and sought both to defend farmers' economic interests and fight back against the looming Cold War. The NFU opposed the Truman Doctrine and the formation of NATO, stances which attracted, unsurprisingly, substantial redbaiting and demands that it sever any connections to the Communists. In 1948, the NFU played a major role in the left-liberal Henry Wallace third-party campaign for US president. Here Pratt focuses on North Dakota, a stronghold of the NFU, with a membership of 44,000 and the support, it claimed, of 75 per cent of the state's farmers. The North Dakota Farmers' Union's leaders held out as long as they could against demands that Communists be purged from the organization, and they fought pressure to adapt to the jingoism of the Korean War era – a war that was unpopular in the state. Nationally, Pratt points out the interesting distinction with the CIO unions whose leadership was closely integrated into the Democratic Party. "Left" CIO unions were expelled if they opposed the Marshall Plan or supported Wallace's candidacy. Such sentiments had a safer harbour in the NFU where a left-liberal alliance persisted, particularly on the plains.

A final echo of this history was seen in the farm revolt of the 1980s. Perhaps best remembered for Willie Nelson's Farm Aid concerts, the decade saw a new wave of rural protests against foreclosures. In the face of the failure of the main national farmers' organizations to respond effectively, new organizations emerged which scoured the history of farm activism (along with more recent civil rights strategies) in shaping its response. Remnants of the agrarian left sprang to life, apparently for a final time.

Pratt's tales of regular trips down the section roads of the northern plains,

https://doi.org/10.52975/llt.2024v93.027

finding pockets of radical support, interviewing veterans of left-wing movements, and prowling cemeteries for socialist iconography, combined with scouring FBI records and research in Moscow makes this book an engaging tale of a historian's journey. His path also led to the Canadian prairies where he explored, in particular, the United Farmers of Alberta and the Saskatchewan Farmer-Labour Party as it evolved into the CCF. While this chapter lacks some of the historical texture derived from the author's grassroots research, he provides a helpful broader vantage, placing these movements in the context of a region which transcends the 49th parallel. Pratt places emphasis on the ways in which local political cultures, forged through decades of experiment and struggle, shape this history differently from place to place. This ability to combine an understanding of wider farmer and socialist movements with an appreciation of local contexts is an invaluable skill for historians – and for the activists he studies.

The farmers' movements Pratt explores did not exist in isolation. Socialists, in particular, understood that change would come through an alliance with the working class. The history of farmer-labour alliances and parties was, however, fraught; institutional success was only achieved in Minnesota and Saskatchewan, and never without conflict between the allies. In the case of the Communist Party, farmers were, at best, an afterthought. Broader alliances were also forged with urban liberals, particularly in the popular front era – ties which persisted until they buckled under the pressure of the Cold War. Through all of this, as Pratt successfully argues, leftists played important – sometimes key – roles in building and guiding farmers' movements.

James Naylor
Brandon University

Andrew C. McKevitt, *Gun Country: Gun Capitalism, Culture & Control in Cold War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023)

The history of gun ownership and use has attracted much scholarly attention in the United States in the last quarter century. There are popular, legal, and academic reasons for this work. High profile murders and mass shootings grab the public's attention, spurring a desire to understand the roots of the challenges America faces in mitigating the risk of widespread gun ownership. Recent decisions by the United States Supreme Court necessitates historically informed legal scholarship since the constitutionality of gun regulations now requires the identification of historical antecedents to modern gun control measures.

Much of the scholarship on the history of firearms and gun control in the United States focuses on developments before World War II. However, in *Gun Country: Gun Capitalism, Culture & Control in Cold War America*, Andrew McKevitt invites us to shift our attention to the postwar period, a time when the rate of per capita firearm ownership spiked, and when, according to McKevitt, the modern American attitude to firearms formed and cemented. McKevitt suggests that the reasons for this postwar boom in gun ownership are "shrouded in myth" as most gun histories "assume a natural state in which the supply of guns is simply always there, or the consumer demand is unswervingly insatiable, or both." (x)

McKevitt challenges this popular assumption. He argues, "the postwar world forged the gun country as much as did the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century developments that typically get all the credit." (262) McKevitt asserts that to understand modern American gun culture it is necessary to "turn to the Cold War and consumer capitalism," which he says