Anti-Unionism and the Idea of the Liberal Consensus
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Labor and the Right

Although historians are becoming increasingly aware that many corporations sustained their opposition to labor unions long after the passage of the Wagner Act, the idea that American business participated in a liberal consensus continues to remain a vital part of the historiography of postwar America. This paper will consider the ways that recognizing the role that opposition to labor unions played in the development of the broader conservative movement changes our understanding of the modern right, and of the way that it reshapes our analysis of the narrative of post-1945 American history. It will look at the institutional and thematic connections between opposition to labor unions and other elements of the right, for example social traditionalism and religious conservatism. It will analyze the ways that anti-unionism affects how historians understand the class politics of the conservative movement. And finally it will ask how grappling with this hostility to labor affects the way that we see the changing role of business in politics throughout the postwar period.