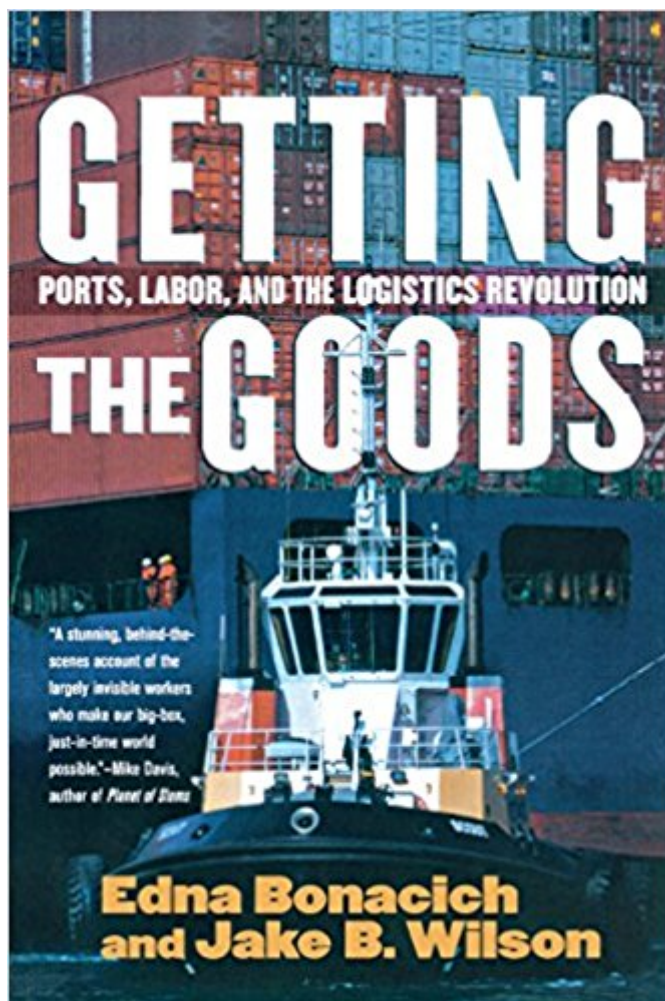


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Getting The Goods: Ports, Labor, And The Logistics Revolution



Synopsis

In *Getting the Goods*, Edna Bonacich and Jake B. Wilson focus on the Southern California ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, which together receive 40 percent of the nearly \$2 trillion worth of goods imported annually to the United States to examine the impact of the logistics revolution on workers in transportation and distribution. Built around the invention of shipping containers and communications technology, the logistics revolution has enabled giant retailers like Walmart and Target to sell cheap consumer products made using low-wage labor in developing countries. The goods are shipped through an efficient, low-cost, intermodal freight system, in which containers are moved from factories in Asia to distribution centers across the United States without ever being opened. Bonacich and Wilson follow the flow of imports from Asian factories, exploring the roles of importers, container shipping companies, the ports, railroad and trucking companies, and warehouses. At each stage, *Getting the Goods* raises important questions about how the logistics revolution affects logistics workers. Drawing extensively on interviews with workers and managers at all levels of the supply chain, on industry reports, and on economic data, Bonacich and Wilson find that, in general, conditions have deteriorated for workers. But they also discover that changes in the system of production and distribution provide new strategic opportunities for labor to gain power. A much-needed corrective to both uncritical celebrations of containerization and the global economy and pessimistic predictions about the future of the U.S. labor movement, *Getting the Goods* will become required reading for scholars and students in sociology, political economy, and labor studies.

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Customer Reviews

"Bonacich and Wilson present a richly detailed and highly interesting portrait of the global logistics industry. This study will provide a firm foundation on which to build future social scientific research." — Matt Vidal, *Work and Occupations*

"A stunning, behind-the-scenes account of the largely invisible workers who make our big-box, just-in-time world possible." — Mike Davis, author of *Planet of Slums*

"In *Getting the Goods*, Edna Bonacich and Jake B. Wilson analyze a weak spot in global capitalism, a fragile point that organizers might target in order to redress the shortcomings of this economic system; but this political agenda is briefly described and the authors' tone objective. This book also contains a wealth of information about container ports, sea carriers, land carriers, and warehouses. The reader can feel the pulse of each type of activity, feel as if he or she is with the authors as they talk to the key people involved; the interviews in *Getting the Goods* are first rate, vivid, and alive." — Gary G. Hamilton, University of Washington

"If labor organizers ever want to have a shot at organizing the retail behemoth Wal-Mart, they must understand that the company's business plan is fundamentally a logistics model that relies heavily on maritime imports from the Pacific Rim. Bonacich and Wilson in *Getting the Goods* give us a bird's eye view of the multi-modal logistics system in the largest ports in the United States: Long Beach and Los Angeles. They paint a living picture of the supply chain that is a must read for those on the ground thinking about organizing the workers in the giant retailers whose lifeblood is the importation of millions of containers through America's largest ports. I'll be mandating that every ILWU organizer read this important book!" — Peter Olney, Director of Organizing, International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU)

"In this fascinating book, Edna Bonacich and Jake Wilson take us inside the nation's largest port to expose the inner workings of the retailer-driven global supply chains that are increasingly vital to today's import-dependent U.S. economy. Their richly detailed analysis of the logistics revolution's effects on labor—from poorly paid immigrant port truckers engaged in an uphill organizing battle to the labor aristocracy of long-unionized longshore workers—bristles with insight. *Getting the Goods* is a great read, provocative, and surprisingly optimistic." — Ruth Milkman, UCLA, author of *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement*

"Edna Bonacich and Jake Wilson have produced a powerful examination of the logistics revolution and its implication for workers. This book should be a vital instrument in the development of strategy for increasing the power of workers in this globalized world. Rather than treating workers as powerless victims of globalization, Bonacich and Wilson illustrate how workers can capitalize on their strengths

and position in the transportation and retail industries to counter the 'race to the bottom' workers across the planet have been experiencing. This book is a must read for all labor activists, whether in unions, worker centers, or other independent working-class organizations." — Bill Fletcher, Jr., Co-Founder, Center for Labor Renewal and syndicated columnist

"In *Getting the Goods*, Edna Bonacich and Jake B. Wilson analyze a weak spot in global capitalism, a fragile point that organizers might target in order to redress the shortcomings of this economic system; but this political agenda is briefly described and the authors' tone objective. This book also contains a wealth of information about container ports, sea carriers, land carriers, and warehouses. The reader can feel the pulse of each type of activity, feel as if he or she is with the authors as they talk to the key people involved; the interviews in *Getting the Goods* are first rate, vivid and alive." — Gary G. Hamilton, University of Washington --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

On page XII, Ms. Bonacich informed she was a Marxist. Furthermore, she expressed her initial warped views regarding typical capitalists as being in favor of environmental devastation as well as consumerism that "leaves us without meaning in our lives". Later on, after contacting those capitalists she confessed they were "all helpful, friendly, and sensible people". She finally added "they are decent people". Mr. Bonacich does not live in North Korea or Cuba, but in the USA. Thus, it appears she does not socialize with Americans in general at all. Who said capitalists are in line with her rooted prejudices? Incidentally, in 1989 I had the chance to visit East Germany (DDR) where the city of Magdeburg was the most polluted place I ever saw. Besides, in East Berlin I could see a number of desperate consumers looking for items to buy that they were unable to find, including basic staples. Notwithstanding the above outline, I should say that I do not foster any grudge against Marxists and even enjoyed reading Ms. Bonacich's book. Actually, the authors have carried out detailed surveys and interviews as to have an accurate insight concerning the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. Though the authors dedicated their work mainly to look into labor relations, they also examined key aspects regarding the supply chain/logistics revolution that might be of great interest for many readers. I myself live overseas but got surprised that many problems described along the book are similar to the ones I find in my country. Lastly, the last chapter contains an excellent analysis as for vulnerabilities of the logistics revolution that might also affect the LA/LB port complex.

Good read, and a real eye-opener.

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