



# Labor and the Environmental Movement: The Quest for Common Ground (Urban and Industrial Environments)

*Brian K. Obach*

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Relations between organized labor and environmental groups are typically characterized as adversarial, most often because of the specter of job loss invoked by industries facing environmental regulation. But, as Brian Obach shows, the two largest and most powerful social movements in the United States actually share a great deal of common ground. Unions and environmentalists have worked together on a number of issues, including workplace health and safety, environmental restoration, and globalization (as in the surprising solidarity of "Teamsters and Turtles" in the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle). *Labor and the Environmental Movement* examines why, when, and how labor unions and environmental organizations either cooperate or come into conflict. By exploring the interorganizational dynamics that are crucial to cooperative efforts and presenting detailed studies of labor-environmental group coalition building from around the country (examining in detail examples from Maine, New Jersey, New York, Washington, and Wisconsin), it provides insight into how these movements can be brought together to promote a just and sustainable society. Obach gives a brief history of relations between organized labor and environmental groups in the United States, explores how organizational learning can increase organizations' ability to work with others, and examines the crucial role played by "coalition brokers" who maintain links to both movements. He challenges research that attempts to explain inter-movement conflict on the basis of cultural distinctions between blue-collar workers and middle-class environmentalists, providing evidence of legal and structural constraints that better explain the organizational differences class-culture and new-social-movement theorists identify. The final chapter includes a model of the crucial determinants of cooperation and conflict that can serve as the basis for further study of inter-movement relations.

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