Livingstone, David; Dorothy Smith and Warren Smith. 2011. *Manufacturing Meltdown: Reshaping Steel Work*. Halifax: Fernwood. ISBN 978-1-55266-402-5 Paperback: 27.95 CAD. Pages: 218.

Reviewed by Ann Duffy
Brock University

Livingstone, Smith and Smith provide us with an invaluable guide to understanding the specifics of the decline of steel industry in Hamilton and, more broadly, the implications of recent momentous shifts in Canadian labour markets for workers, their families and communities. Livingstone's introduction raises the increasingly ubiquitous question of whether there is a future for manufacturing employment in developed nations. Livingstone argues for the possibility of a profoundly changed but persevering steel industry. These themes of transformations and potentialities permeate the subsequent essays.

The first chapter, by Livingstone, guides the reader through the tumultuous history of Stelco in the context of a globally transforming steel industry. This very detailed discussion introduces most of the major economic factors in play. Technological innovation, global competition, trade agreements, unions, finance capital and workplace restructuring all figure prominently. In an account with Shakespearian overtones, Stelco rises to become the largest Canadian-owned industrial company and for sixty years is Canada's "wealthiest, largest and most diversified steelmaker." By 1980, with 26,000 workers, it is the cornerstone of Hamilton's economy. From these heady heights, the decline is precipitous. Thousands of workers are displaced and by 2003 about 9,000 workers remain. These numbers dwindle to a mere 850 by mid-2010. As Livingstone explains through interview excerpts, these events transform the lives of workers, their families and the surrounding community. A "good job for life" is beyond the grasp of all but a few and many bustling plant floors become "human deserts."

Against this historical backdrop, in Chapter 2 Dorothy Smith and Stephen Dobson explore the implications of these events for training and skill retention at Stelco and, more generally, in the manufacturing sector. As the authors explain, former patterns of skill transmission tended to rely on worker-controlled on-the-job learning, apprenticeships and transmittal of skills in the working-class community. The net result was a workplace that valued the experienced worker's expertise and which tended to draw managers and supervisors from the shop floor. The restructuring of the steel industry has eviscerated these processes and replaced them with state-funded educational programs, notably at community colleges, that target corporate needs. The authors underscore the importance of recognizing the knowledge and skills (and workers' control) that are being lost. As Stelco's labour force ages (reflecting seniority rights and layoff patterns), there are few mechanisms for capturing the worker expertise developed from years of on-the-job

experience. In the more generalized process, the manual/mechanical skills "stored and transmitted" in working-class communities are being steadily undermined and workers' power resources eroded.

In the final chapter by David Livingstone and Warren Smith (a long-time Stelco steelworker and former president of USW local 1005) the Stelco story is updated. In 2004 the company declares bankruptcy and in 2007 US Steel takes over. On the ropes in the face of cheap imported steel and mounting debts, Stelco still fails to address the problem of labour force renewal. As its workforce ages and retires, it relies on overtime and contracting out (including the rehiring of retirees on a contract/temporary basis) to manage its labour needs rather than hiring and training a younger workforce. At the same time, including under US Steel, the company maintains a heavy-handed, top-down approach to labour relations which excludes the kinds of management-worker consultation which might facilitate co-operation and on-the-job training. The authors conclude with an examination of alternative futures for Stelco/US Steel. In particular, they focus on the undesirability of foreign ownership and the possibilities for repurchase by Canadian private capital, for the creation of a Crown Corporation and for worker ownership. In terms of possible alternatives for management-labour relations, they critique top-down hierarchical management and urge consideration of consultative management, industrial democracy and worker self-management. Emphasizing the possibilities implied by agency and political will, they conclude with the potentialities for a more democratic and environmentally friendly workplace and economy.

There is no question that this collection provides invaluable insight into the processes that transformed Stelco, Hamilton and, in many respects, the Canadian economy and working-class communities. The analysis is accessible and compelling. Further, the reader is invited to "make connections" to a wide array of issues beyond the factory floor, including the role of education and training, changes in working-class communities and families and the prospects for democratic actions in Canada.

Within this overall very favourable response, I would suggest that the argument that manufacturing will persist as a significant source of employment warrants, in my view, a bit more qualification. The sheer numbers of lost jobs speaks to a profound shift not only in manufacturing employment but also for the communities which rely on these jobs. The process of "making things to sell" may persist, but "good" manufacturing jobs (secure, unionized, well-paid and well-benefited employment) appear decidedly imperilled. Ironically, in the absence of much else in the way of employment, arts and crafts are being promoted by local governments and agencies in Hamilton as the new entry point into the labour market. As de-industrialized workers I've interviewed in Niagara repeatedly comment, "we need good jobs" and "we need thousands of jobs, not hundreds." And, as those workers who have been "adjusted" into both service sector work and low-paid manufacturing work complain, "how is it possible to have a mortgage on $15 an hour?"

The current economic downturn has provided a further opportunity for companies to shed more unionized workers or to hamstring unions with tiered contracts and the constant threat of layoffs. In this context, it appears likely that only a minority of workers will have continued access to the traditional "good" manufacturing job while the overwhelming majority will be displaced to service sector employment or to a kind of marginalized manufacturing work characterized by much smaller workplaces, little or no unionization and insecure employment. These smaller manufacturing plants are clearly more vulnerable to relocation to cheaper labour markets. In the growing absence of good unionized jobs secured by a massive workforce, the working class and its communities will in all likelihood be fundamentally altered.

Dorothy Smith and Stephen Dobson have raised an important issue in terms of the erosion of working-class skill sets—skill sets that traditionally grounded familial and community relations and were an important source of self-worth. Hopefully, researchers will pick up on this important cross-over between paid and unpaid work and community and explore its connections to both commodification and the rise of corporations such as Home Depot.

Finally, although the proposed alternative futures are desirable, they seem far removed. Recent events, such as the decision to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board, the lack of an effective, co-ordinated reaction to US Steel, the almost complete absence of effective responses from any level of government to the closure of industries, the blatant bullying by Caterpillar Corporation and, overall, the growing gap between haves and have-nots suggest a troubled path to progressive social change.

Camfield, David. 2011. *Canadian Labour in Crisis: Reinventing the Workers' Movement*. Halifax: Fernwood. ISBN 978-1-55266-416-2. Paperback: 19.95 CAD. Pages: 160.

Reviewed by Stephanie Ross
York University

In *Canadian Labour in Crisis*, David Camfield offers a bracingly honest and accessible look at the labour movement's current impasse. Grounded in the conviction that working people's movements are central to greater social and economic equality and the development of human capacities beyond that envisioned by profit-driven capitalism, Camfield argues that union renewal, the "attempt to energize the movement in its current form" is not enough. Rather, "sweeping changes that would reinvent the movement" are called for (6-7). Combining overviews of academic literature and political commentary