The author might have added a third type of baseball history that seeks to place baseball within the larger themes of American social, cultural, and economic history. It is here that Browning does not go, and that decision leaves the reader longing for more. As a result, *Baseball’s Greatest Season: 1924* adds little to our overall understanding of the game and its place within the fabric of American life.

*University of Central Florida*  
Richard C. Crepeau


It is an axiom of politics that the only thing worse than being wrong is being stupid. The Federalist Party’s behavior in the opening years of the nineteenth century qualifies it as guilty on both counts—and more. On the surface, the party lacked sagacious leadership that could curb rank partisanship. It lost touch with the mounting political and social trends sweeping across the country and became a sectional oddity, reflexively lashing out at presumed domestic enemies while flirting with actual international ones. With astonishing consistency, the Federalists misread the events that led to the War of 1812, behaved petulantly once it broke out, and declared it irredeemably lost at just the moment when Andrew Jackson’s successful defense of New Orleans made its conclusion seem a national triumph. The subsequent devolution of the Federalists in the years after the war became a case study of how unforgiving the political arena can be for those who have been wrong and stupid.

Still, the Federalists have had their defenders, and recent scholarship has tended to be charitable in describing their activities as at least understandable (they were trying to adjust to their minority status) and, by some estimates, beneficial (they might have been overzealous, but they did curb Democratic–Republican excesses). In a careful and measured study, however, Richard Buel, Jr., challenges these generous judgments by refusing to accept the indulgence that hindsight provides the Federalists. Because the war ultimately turned out all right does not mean, he insists, that Federalists were not as dangerous as Republicans claimed.

Buel works from the perceptions of the time. In that regard, he does not so much turn the tables on the Federalists as he readjusts the historical gauge by which they have been measured: historians have lately been inclined to judge Republicans through Federalist eyes, but Buel thinks it is more illuminating to judge Federalists from a Republican perspective, especially because the Republicans were the country’s majority party. The result is an absorbing analysis,
meticulously researched and ably presented, in which the Federalists come off very badly, very badly indeed. Rather than a valuable minority that pulled Republicans to the center, the Federalists, according to Buel, were a strident gaggle of extremists who nearly pulled the country apart. In the years before the war, failure in national elections and fading influence compelled their retreat to presumed strongholds in New England, but they were horrified to discover their control of that region ebbing as well. Increasingly powerless and insecure, the Federalists were eventually willing to do anything to save the country from the Republicans, even if it meant siding with the British. For their part, the Republicans were not blameless, for they reacted to, rather than coped with, alarming Federalist tactics, and the result was their belief that both internal dangers as well as external threats necessitated war with Britain.

Yet, Buel sees the Federalists as most culpable for placing America on the brink in these formative years of the republic. His reevaluation of familiar sources and the insight afforded by years of study make this a welcome contribution to the literature. It is also a vigorous beginning for what is sure to be a spirited debate, for Buel sees in these events a cautionary tale for our own times.

*Colorado State University, Pueblo*  
David S. Heidler

*American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture.*  

During the 1940s and 1950s, a tumultuous battle over communism tore apart the U.S. labor movement. Labor’s internecine fights led to the collapse of a social democratic alternative in American politics and to the current pitiful state of the unions. The articles in this volume provide useful and provocative views of this story in order to reassess the crisis of postwar labor.

Viewed from the top of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), postwar anticommunism was a bitter but straightforward story. The CIO purged and raided communist-led unions, which represented approximately one-fifth of its membership. Although a few Communist Party-led unions survived intact, by the end of the 1950s, the era of red trade unionism in the United States was over. Debate has centered on whether this transformation was a necessary step to labor’s survival or a cowardly betrayal of the militants who had built the movement.

As historians over the last thirty years have shifted their research from big conventions and top leadership to local unions and communities, a messier but