Student

Course

Instructor

Date

Book Evaluation

‘TRIANGLE: The Fire That Changed America’ is ultimately a passionate narration of the implications of fire Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire incident in 1911. David Von Drehle has identified in his story that how this historic tragedy became the foundation of an extensive labor reform struggle and safe workplace conditions for the Americans. Drehle has shed spotlight over the political, activism and reform agenda of Tammany Hall for the progressive era of the American. He has argued through his story that the negligence of politicians, policy makers and fire department led to such a tragic incident that caused 146 immigrants deaths in the factory (Linne et al.). He begun with the uprising of shirtwaist workers and their strike ‘Uprising of the Twenty Thousand’ which led to the establishment of the international ladies’ garment workers union. The dramatic hostility among the immigrant working girls and the employers was headed by the Shirtwaist company. It continued for months and in the process, the movement began to expand and attracted suffrage advocates, young college women and activists or reformers as they received attention and consideration. However, the riot ended with a significant yet partial success for the union.

Drehe mentioned that the fire took the lives of not very anonymous people, rather they were the strikers. He has argued it with great conviction in his book after following through the trial of company owners Max Blank and Isaac Harris that they were the ones responsible for the manslaughter. He put the blame on them as the door of the factory was locked which prevented so many worker to escape the fire. The reason for this monstrous thing to do was to make worker’s avoid any additional breaks. He also followed through the creation of the New York State legislative commission which was co-shaired by Al Smith and Robert Wagner. It provided support to the bring about reforms for the factory safety and in its process, the concept of “Urban liberalism’ was invented that would later characterize the Democratic Party for the following years. The political future was based on self-preservation and support of immigrant rights and union reforms. Drehe’s narrative strategy is primarily focused on the individual workers. For him, the uprising was particularly the tale of some specific strikers and the fire incident was tragedy of the individualized victims (Manning et al.). He also raised the issues related to immigrant rights, safety measurements at workplaces and role of politics in shaping the progressive agenda.

This book is not a scholarly study that can be integrated in the scholarship regarding immigration, labor rights, progressive reforms or several other relevant topics. Drehe has openly mentioned the concept of urban liberalism and new deal policies. His narration themes and arguments have kept historians and academicians from introducing his work into the syllabus for undergraduates. However, there is nothing wrong in studying about any historical event with different perspectives that opens up ways for cognitive thinking about the issues of the time and struggles through the progressive era. This book also provides an insight about the labor rights, negligence, policies and regulations leading to a massive disaster and then how reforms were being brought in the industry to provide safety and basic rights to the labors. And most importantly, he gave identities to the victims of the fire incident and highlighted important figures and activists.Drehe has done exceptional work in introducing political and social transformation and rise of the urban liberalism.

**Works Cited**

Linne, Rob, et al. *The New York City Triangle Factory Fire*. Arcadia Publishing, 2011.

Manning, Jack, et al. “The Triangle Fire: 100 Years of Influence and Analysis.” *History*, vol. 297, 2014, p. 9.