



Pedal To The Metal: The Work Life of Truckers (Labor And Social Change)

Lawrence Ouellet

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From this experience, Lawrence J. Ouellet has the advantage of a rare perspective and a profound understanding of the two fundamental questions he asks in this book: Why do truck drivers work so hard even when it doesn't result in more money or other material gains? and How do truckers make sense of their behavior to themselves and to the outside world?

A vivid ethnography of trucking culture, *Pedal to the Metal* documents and analyzes truckers' lives and work ethic, exploring the range of identities truckers create for themselves—the renegade cowboy, the company man, the voyeur, the lone king of the road. To explain truckers' motivations, Ouellet examines the meaning of work and the motivation for excelling despite long, unsupervised hours on the road. He finds that their occupational pride results in extraordinary efforts on the job and, subsequently, a positive sense of self. Driving skill allows truckers to improve their hauling times, which they proudly track to the minute, and to increase their productivity and income.

Truckers' knowledge of the industry's structure and the idiosyncrasies of their own company allows them to improve their ability to get and carry out assignments, to maneuver around a traditional concept of rank and seniority, and to recreate to their advantage the pervasive cultural myths that the public expects should dictate a trucker's behavior. Whether capturing the pleasure and enchantment of trucking—driving under moon-lit skies across a snow-covered mountain range—or the miseries of boredom, bad weather, and exhausting schedules, Ouellet exhibits deep appreciation and passion for his subject.

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