

TRADE UNIONS AND POLITICS

KEN COATES & TONY TOPHAM

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Trade Unions and Politics

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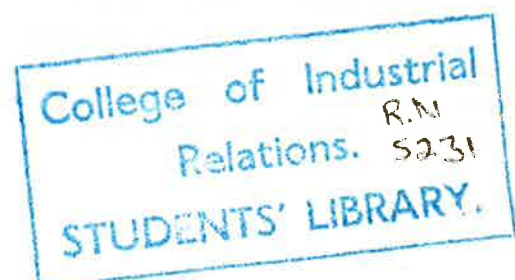
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Abbreviations

Trade Unions

ACTT	Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians
APEX	Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff
ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
ASTMS	Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff
AUEW	Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
AUEW/TASS	(Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Staff)
BFAW	Bakers, Food and Allied Workers
COHSE	Confederation of Health Service Employees
CPSA	Civil and Public Services Association
EETPU	Electrical, Electronic and Telecommunications and Plumbing Trades Union
FTAT	Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades
GMBATU	General, Municipal, Boilermakers' and Allied Trades Union
ISTC	Iron and Steel Trades Confederation
NACODS	National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers
NALGO	National Association of Local Government Officers
NATSOPA	National Society of Operative Printers, Graphical and Media Personnel
NATTKE	National Association of Theatrical, Television and Kine Employees.
NCU	National Communications Union
NGA	National Graphical Association
NUAW	National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers
NUGMW	National Union of General and Municipal Workers
NUGSAT	National Union of Gold and Silver and Allied Trades
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen
NUS	National Union of Seamen

PLCW/TW	Power Loom Carpet Weavers/Textile Workers
POEU	Post Office Engineering Union
SLADE	Society of Lithographic Artists, Designers, Engravers and Process Workers
SOGAT	Society of Graphical and Allied Trades
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
TSSA	Transport Salaried Staffs Association
UCATT	Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians
UCW	Union of Communication Workers
UPW	Union of Post Office Workers

Other Organizations

CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CLP	Constituency Labour Party
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters (Cheltenham)
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trades Unions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IWC	Institute for Workers' Control
NCEO	National Council of Employers' Organizations
NEB	National Enterprise Board
NEC	National Executive Committee
NEDC	National Economic Development Council
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TULV	Trade Unions for a Labour Victory

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Britain's trade unions, once so influential, are now on the defensive. In the face of world economic recession and mass unemployment, their industrial power has been eroded, their membership has declined and industrial action has increasingly become ineffective, even self-defeating. The passing of the post-war sellers' market for labour has undermined the unions' traditional perception of their role and as yet they have failed to define a new one. As union confidence has faltered, so that of a Conservative Government committed to reform of labour legislation has grown, culminating in the passage of the 1984 Trade Union Act.

Throughout this century trade unions have sought closer relations with, and influence over, employers and governments. The authors scrutinize the progress of these relations from the 1913 Trade Union Act through the years of consensus and 'corporatism' to the increasing polarization of class and party interests in more recent days, examining closely the role of trade union leadership in the political process. In a series of tightly argued chapters, illustrated with a wealth of statistical information, they discuss the phenomenon of the general strike, the significance of political funds and the campaigns to retain them, the place of the unions in the Labour Party organization, and the pre-eminent need for an international approach: not 'beggar my neighbour' but 'better my neighbour'.

A crisis thus confronts the unions, and it is the central contention of *Trade Unions and Politics* that their response must be a political one. Ken Coates and Tony Topham both have a long record of involvement with the unions and this book constitutes a plea for the revitalization of the movement through a concerted push into the political arena.

Ken Coates is Reader in Adult Education at Nottingham University and **Tony Topham** is Senior Lecturer in Industrial Studies at the University of Hull. Together, they have written *Industrial Democracy in Great Britain* (1968), *The New Unionism* (1972) and *Trade Unions in Britain* (1980), now a standard work on the subject.

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