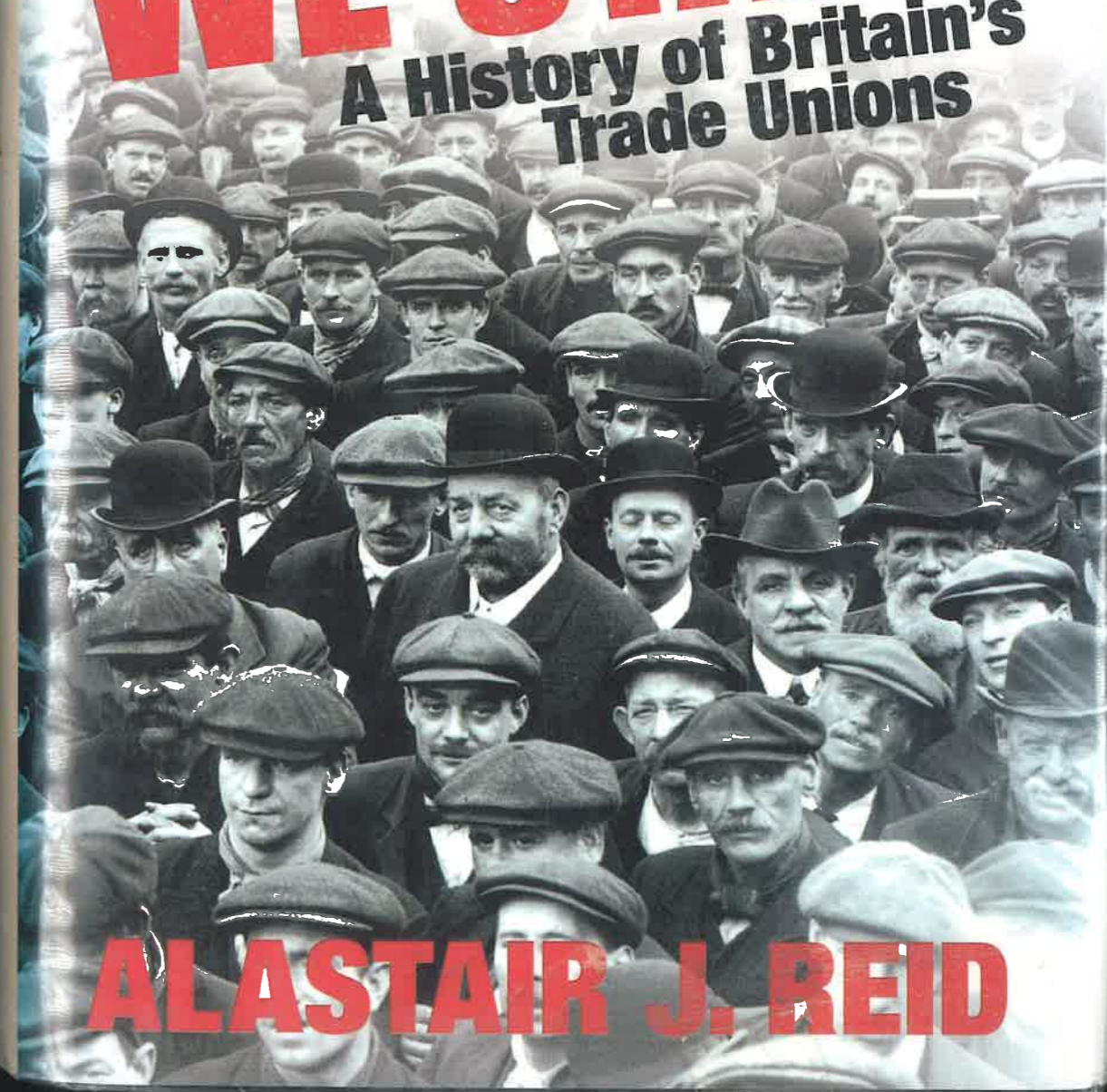


UNITED WE STAND

A History of Britain's
Trade Unions



ALASTAIR J. REID

United We Stand is a highly original and fundamentally important history of how working people in Britain, from the eighteenth century to the present, have sought to improve their position in an often harsh world.

Throughout the modern era trade unions have been a crucial element in British life, and all governments – whether they like it or not – have had to develop policies to deal with them. Now, as a new generation of union activists faces off against a New Labour government committed to ‘cynical pragmatism’, this is the essential book to read on a key phenomenon of British history.

While previous accounts of the British trade unions have tended to treat the ‘working class’ as a single entity – giving their identity coherence and dignity, but also making them separate and excluded from the rest of society – Alastair Reid discards this entire model, preferring to see ‘working people’ as integral to British society as a whole. He examines how trade unions have grown and shrunk depending on the skill with which they have used their position, but also depending on a whole host of social, cultural and political factors. Looking both at individual workers and their fates and at the often vast organizations that have represented them, Reid shows that understanding the trade unions and their changing fortunes is in fact vital to understanding the history of Britain.

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