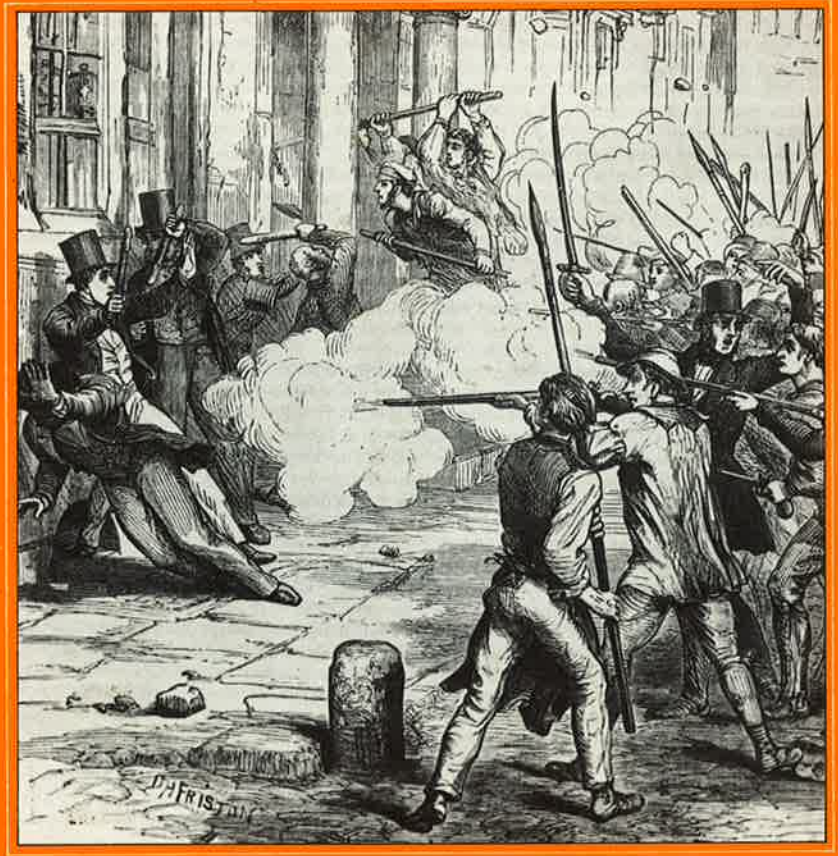
# HISTORY AND HERITAGE

## The Social Origins of the British Industrial Relations System



Alan Fox

Attempts to explain Britain's industrial relations system, its institutions, its characteristic texture, and its place in the wider society, often assert the significance of historical origins and continuities but rarely demonstrate and elucidate them. In this book Alan Fox offers the first comprehensive exploration and assessment of the historical developments that are of crucial importance to anyone wishing to understand the current industrial relations scene. This involves him in looking at pre-industrial patterns of thought and behaviour; at seventeenth-century religious and political struggles; at shifting emphases upon contrasting strategies of rule and social control; and at the central significance of the ruling order's conditional commitment to the rule of law and certain liberal freedoms. Some of the familiar landmarks, such as the Combination Acts and the Tolpuddle Martyrs, reveal less familiar facets under this examination. Fox brings the analysis up to date by tracing the influences which have twice brought to power a brand of Conservatism, hitherto historically contained, that seems bent on repudiating the old accommodations upon which the relatively peaceful British political settlement has rested.

This account will be of interest not only to those with a specialist interest in industrial relations and industrial sociology, but also to those concerned to explore how economic change, strategies of political rule, political and social philosophies, religious movements, and the law have their bearing upon major social formations. Alan Fox's long involvement in the study of industrial relations, reflected in his highly influential writings on the subject, has increasingly convinced him of the importance of drawing from this wide frame of reference. Through doing so in *History and Heritage* he is able to point to deep-rooted continuities, but also to suggest that lasting changes in Britain's political stabilities and freedoms may be afoot.

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*For Stephen and Andrew*

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# Contents


| | | page |
|---|---|---|
| | Preface | xi |
| 1 | Pre-Industrial England<br>*Central Features of the Heritage* | 1 |
| 2 | The Eighteenth Century<br>*The System in Embryo* | 30 |
| 3 | Alternatives and Choices<br>*The 1790s to the 1840s* | 68 |
| 4 | The Emergence of the System<br>*The 1850s to the 1880s* | 124 |
| 5 | Challenges to the System<br>*The 1890s to 1914 (Part I)* | 174 |
| 6 | Challenges to the System<br>*The 1890s to 1914 (Part II)* | 221 |
| 7 | Consolidation and Integration<br>*1914 to the 1950s* | 280 |
| 8 | The System under Strain<br>*The 1960s to the 1980s* | 373 |
| 9 | Summing Up and Conclusions | 432 |
| | References | 453 |
| | Index | 469 |


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