

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND EUROPEAN STATE TRADITIONS

COLIN CROUCH



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In some western European countries trade unions and employers' organizations share responsibility with government for maintaining order and efficiency in the labour market as a matter of course. In others such a role is seen as an unacceptable interference with either the free market, or the prerogatives of the state, or both. How can we explain these differences? How enduring are they? Do they matter? In the 1970s there seemed to be a growing popularity for the first approach, leading to the explosion of interest in neo-corporatism; did all that evaporate during the ostensibly neo-liberal 1980s?

Colin Crouch tries to answer these questions with reference to fifteen western European nations. Using a combination of rational choice theory and historical analysis he traces the development of industrial relations systems in these countries from the 1870s to the present. He ends by seeking explanations for differences further back in time, showing that longer-term historical explanations of contemporary institutions are more necessary than most exercises in policy analysis prefer to accept.

Colin Crouch is Fellow and Tutor in Politics at Trinity College, Oxford, and Faculty Lecturer in Sociology. His books include *Trade Unions: The Logic of Collective Action* (1982), *Corporatism and Accountability: Organized Interests in British Public Life* (edited with Ronald Dore, Clarendon Press, 1990), and *Social Research and Social Reform* (edited with Anthony Heath, Clarendon Press, 1992).

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To the memory of
Charles Crouch
(1903–1990)
and
Doris Crouch
(1913–1990)

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