



Industrial relation

Timothy Whitton

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CIVILISATION BRITANNIQUE

LE COMMENTAIRE DE TEXTE PAR L'EXEMPLE

Collectif coordonné
par Anémone Kober-Smith et Timothy Whitton

EDITIONS
DU TEMPS

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et Timothy Whitton

Marie-José ARQUIÉ
Emmanuelle AVRIL
Myriam BOUSSAÏBA-BRAVARD
Elaine DUBOURDIEU
Raphaële ESPIET
Jean-Noël EVANNO
David FÉE
Christophe GILLISSEN
Catherine HAJDENKO-MARSHALL
Anémone KOBER-SMITH
Michael PARSONS
Brendan PRENDIVILLE
Emmanuel ROUDAUT
Karine TOURNIER-SOL
Timothy WHITTON

EDITIONS

DU TEMPS

DOCUMENT 8:

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

5

Timothy Whitton

Pendant les années 60 le gouvernement travailliste tente de remettre de l'ordre dans ses relations avec le mouvement syndical. On considère que celui-ci outrepassa ses droits acquis au fil des ans au point de contribuer non seulement à la grave crise économique que traverse le pays mais aussi au climat de tensions
 10 *qui règne au sein du Parti travailliste.*

En 1968, Barbara Castle, ministre de l'Emploi est chargée de faire des propositions pour améliorer la collaboration entre son gouvernement et les syndicats. Ses conclusions sont publiées sous forme d'un livre blanc intitulé 'In Place of Strife' et reflètent la volonté de concilier la libre négociation des
 15 *salaires (free collective bargaining) revendiquée par les syndicats avec le droit d'intervention que doit assumer un gouvernement en exercice compte tenu des responsabilités politiques que son mandat lui confère.*

BARBARA CASTLE, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT
 AND PRODUCTIVITY "IN PLACE OF STRIFE:
 20 A POLICY FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS",
 JANUARY 1969

The role of government in industrial relations

[...]

5. The State has always been involved in the process of industrial
 25 relations. It has always had to provide a framework of law for dealing with the activities of individuals and groups struggling to advance and protect their interests. The growth of employer power in the 19th century challenged the adequacy of the conventional doctrine of "laissez-faire" and highlighted the need for employees to combine in their own defence.
 30 The result was the growth of trade unions which led Parliament and the

courts to examine how far the law should tolerate “coercive” action in “restraint of trade” by employers or trade unions and how far it should seek to defend the wider interests of the community. In the ensuing debate on the principles to be applied, two conflicting philosophies emerged in reports of successive Royal Commissions and Enquiries. The first was the doctrine of “collective laissez-faire”. Trade unions should be accepted as lawful and given the right to organise. The State should recognise the right to strike and the right to bargain collectively to improve wages and conditions. But so long as the “rules of the game” were roughly fair to both sides the State should not be concerned with its consequences. In effect the Government should provide facilities to help the parties agree, but should not interfere to impose a settlement upon them. It is worth stressing that it was never any part of this view that industrial relations in general or trade unions in particular should be outside the law; it was merely felt that so far as possible the law should not interfere with the day-to-day results of collective bargaining.

6. But from the very beginning of this debate there was an alternative view: namely, that while the periodic “re-adjustment” of bargaining power between the two sides was an essential part of the Government's role, it was not in itself sufficient. The State also had to act at times to contain the disruptive consequences of the struggle for those not immediately affected especially if non-intervention was likely to result in widespread damage to the interests of the community at large. Linked with this argument to an increasing extent was a related one: that Governments should intervene still further if it could be shown that certain important economic or social objectives were not sufficiently furthered or were frustrated by collective bargaining.

7. Within the last hundred years, an example of Government action to contain the effects of disruption was sections 4 and 5 of the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875. This was designed to limit the freedom to strike where it was likely to have undue effects on essential services or on life or property. The Truck Acts, the creation of Wages Councils, and the Fair Wages Resolutions were examples of intervention to advance objectives which could not at the time be met by collective bargaining.

8. More recently intervention has become much more necessary and pronounced. The State has laid down minimum periods of notice in contracts of employment in the Act of 1963. Action has been taken to secure improvements in the quality and use of labour by creating Industrial Training Boards and the Redundancy Payments Scheme, both financed by compulsory levies on industry. The Government has increasingly had to play a part in helping to tackle the industrial problems of the motor

industry. Far-reaching reforms have been initiated in worker-management relations in the docks.

75 9. As a result of these and other developments both management and
trade unions have come to accept, and in many ways positively to
welcome, Government involvement that in practice goes far beyond the
confines of the theory of non-intervention by the State. While often still
voicing the doctrine of non-intervention, managements and unions have
80 entered into a positive and mutually beneficial partnership with the State
to secure common objectives. Indeed in their evidence to the Royal Com-
mission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, and in their
representations to Government, bodies representing both employers and
trade unionists have urged further intervention and involvement – at least
85 where they see it as advantageous to them. Demands have been made
by employers for new laws to discourage strikes; requests have been put
forward on behalf of trade unions for minimum wage legislation and
Government action to force employers to recognise trade unions. In short
the doctrine of non-intervention is not, and never has been, consistently
90 preached. The need for State intervention and involvement, in association
with both sides of industry, is now admitted by almost everyone. The
question that remains is, what form should it take at the present time?
[...]

Source: Department of Employment and Productivity, *In Place of Strife: A*
95 *Policy for Industrial Relations*, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office,
Parliamentary Papers, Cmnd. 3888, January 1969, p. 5-7.

COMMENTARY

Introduction

In the closing years of the 1960s, a decade during which British society witnessed far reaching societal changes, the Labour Party was actively searching for a way of harnessing trade union collaboration in order to optimise its economic objectives. Labour had indeed come to power in 1964 promising Great Britain that the “white heat of technology” was the key to the nation's prosperity but had underestimated both the budget deficit inherited from the Conservatives and trade union hostility to any measures that might encroach upon their freedom of action. The situation of relative full-employment meant on the one hand that the unions could command considerable influence in the highest spheres of government. On the other, it had exacerbated shop floor truculence which had in turn reinforced informal bargaining structures and consequently weakened central union control over its members.

The title of Command Paper 3888 *In Place of Strife* presented to Parliament by Barbara Castle, Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity since April 1968, expresses the government's desire to limit the number of working days lost through strikes. It came in the wake not only of the Conservatives' policy statement *Fair Deal at Work* which had put forward the need to use the law to enforce collective bargaining agreements, but above all the Donovan Report. This latter was the fruit of three years of intensive work undertaken by a Royal Commission headed by Lord Donovan. While rejecting the Opposition's demand to use legislation to circumvent trade union unruliness, it had nevertheless underlined the expansion of local bargaining which was swiftly becoming the rule rather than the exception. Greater union responsibility was requested by Lord Donovan and his collaborators who were fully aware of the fact that public opinion too was becoming more and more hostile to the seemingly perpetual climate of industrial unrest sparked off by trade union action. Once more, the Labour Party was not giving the impression that it could govern efficiently and above all its efforts to redress the British economy and implement its social programme were being hampered. Something had to be done to prevent the trade unions from being seen to wield excessive power to the extent that they could dictate policies to elected governments. Yet, the Labour Party had to be wary about cutting off the hand that fed it and was also particularly keen on promoting the virtues of its own brand of industrial democracy.

“Strife” was thus costly for all parties involved and whereas the Conservatives had expressed their belief that government could resort to legislation in order to curb trade union influence, a large proportion of the Labour Party still believed that voluntary and free collective bargaining was still the best way forward. In this sense, the links between the Labour government and the unions also epitomised the stressful relations within the Labour Party itself. As a prominent member of the Cabinet, Barbara Castle knew indeed that any trade union reform promoted by her government could potentially jeopardise its chances of winning the next General Elections or on the contrary reinforce its political viability not only by securing the unions' votes but also by ironing out disagreements within the Labour Party itself. Her job was therefore to use her political talents to confront the traditional practise of free collective bargaining with a legal framework whose aim was to reconcile the interests of employers, unions, government and above all of the nation.

This short extract, five paragraphs out of a total of one hundred and nineteen, highlights the role of the unions within the structure of British industrial democracy, their struggle against state intervention and the dilemmas the Labour government had to face in order to justify its policy choices. At times it seems as if ideology fell victim to economic expediency which in turn undermined the fundamental values that the Labour Party wanted to defend.

The legitimacy of the trade union movement

Great pains are taken by Barbara Castle in this extract to refrain from vilifying the trade union movement. Although tensions between government and the unions may have come to a head during the 1960s, the Minister quickly points out that worker organisations had constantly had to “[struggle] to advance and protect their interests” (line 5) and “combine in their own defence” (line 7). It is true that the scene had been set by the very first “combinations” of

workers – more often than not in the form of “Friendly Societies” – who could be punished under
150 the common law of “conspiracy in restraint of trade”. There was no specific legislation that
acknowledged the rights of workers to cease selling their labour in an attempt to improve their
lot. Hence the ensuing struggle to win legal recognition from Parliament whose Members, at least
until the late nineteenth century and the extension of the male franchise, tended to view any
form of worker organisation with alarm. The Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800, which were
155 repealed in 1824, testify to the government's desire to nip all kinds of industrial unrest, seditious
or not, in the bud.

It was essentially with the growth of industrialisation following the Industrial Revolution that
“laissez-faire” emerged as the prevalent doctrine in the field of industrial relations. While
craftsmen were in a position to command relatively decent conditions of work thanks to the
160 scarcity of their skills, other workers realised that the only way for them to defeat the abuses of
“laissez-faire” was to combine their forces. Herein lies one of the main principles and fundamental
ambiguities of the British trade union movement which Barbara Castle points out quite clearly.
By confirming on the one hand that “*The State [...] has always had to provide a framework of law
for dealing with the activities of individuals and groups struggling to advance and protect their*
165 *interests*” (line 1-3) and on the other “*it was never any part of this view that industrial relations in
general or trade unions in particular should be outside the law*” (line 19) the Minister highlights
the stark reality that British trade unionism has traditionally been organised more along the
lines of immunity from the law rather than according to a strict code of practise established by
Parliament. This ambiguity is underlined further when Barbara Castle mentions the “*demands*
170 *[which] have been made by employers for new laws to discourage strikes*” (lines 51-52 emphasis
added) as if there is no question of using the law to make industrial action simply illegal. In other
words action undertaken in the name of a worker organisation can be held to be legal whereas
beyond the boundary of this remit this legality ceases. Therefore, legislating in the field of
industrial relations is precisely a question of striking a tricky balance between interpreting the
175 law so as to accommodate legitimate trade union action while bearing in mind that “*it [the law]
should seek to defend the wider interests of the community*” (line 10).

These principles are enshrined in the 1876 Trade Union Amendment Act which was passed in
the wake of the 1871 Trade Union Act and above all the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of
Property Act mentioned in line 31. Whereas by referring to only two sections of the law Barbara
180 Castle suggests that it “*was designed to limit the freedom to strike where it was likely to have
undue effects on essential services or on life or property*” (lines 32-33), in reality it enabled the
authorities to adopt a lenient stance towards illegal conflict organised within the scope of
industrial relations thus contributing indirectly to the legitimacy of otherwise unlawful action.

This is all the more true in a context of full employment – as was the case in the 1960s – when
185 trade unionism is particularly strong and union activity geared towards increasing their “clout”.
On the other hand, as events during the 1980s have made crystal clear, when unions are weak, it
is far easier for Parliament to use legislation to limit the incremental increase in their power.

The emergence of amalgamated trade unions in the latter half of the 19th century was a
response to the need for unskilled workers to unite in order to increase their influence. This was
190 all the more important as by virtue of “*collective laissez-faire*” (line 12), the unwritten rule was for
the State to intervene only when either the unions or employers overstepped the mark in terms of
the methods employed to improve their respective positions. This is reminiscent of such notable
trade union insurrection as Luddism or the events in Sheffield in 1866 when undue force was
used to impose the unions' point of view. On other occasions however, for example when unfair
195 competition tended to drive wages down well below thresholds of decency, the State had felt
obliged to intervene on behalf of employees. This somewhat qualifies the statement that “*as far as
possible the law should not interfere with the day-to-day results of collective bargaining*” (line 25).

Barbara Castle is keen to emphasise the historic spirit of fairplay that characterises industrial
relations – despite the brutality with which police and strikers have clashed on a number of
200 occasions and especially in 1926 – with each party healthily probing in search of a legitimate role
to play. To this end, industrial relations are considered to be a game with the State's role reduced
to arbitrator thus by definition unconcerned with the “*consequences*” (line 16). In short, State
recognition of trade unions should in ideal circumstances be limited to their scope of action rather
than to the results obtained.

205 The union movement was to gain political recognition in the shape of the Labour
Representation Committee founded in 1900 which adopted the name “Labour Party” in 1906. It

was made up of trade unionists and sponsored by their movement. To this end, Barbara Castle is the mouthpiece of a political party that relies essentially on union funding and support to remain afloat: as the expression goes, the Labour Party was indeed born from the bowels of the trade unions. Her task is therefore to justify government – and more specifically her Labour government's – intervention in a sphere where antagonism had reached a head, fuelled by the relationship between the body politic and the corporate trade union movement. In view of this, “*the conventional doctrine of ‘laissez-faire’*” (line 6) was at some stage bound to be challenged by the government in an attempt to replace it with its own “*alternative view*” (line 21) of “live and let live”.

Justifying government intervention

Once the Labour Party had been established as a genuine political movement one of its main tasks was to ensure that it could attract and maintain an electorate. This was naturally to be found within the ranks of the working population and obviously the trade unions who now had a form of political expression within Parliament. During the Great War, trade unions increased their influence throughout industry and a new wave of amalgamations began with shop stewards emerging as the vital linkmen between central organisations and the shopfloor. By 1919, the central union organisation, the Trades Union Congress (TUC), could boast some 6.5 million members but during the next decade their ranks withered. Despite their efforts to mobilise the Triple Alliance between dockers, miners and transport workers, the 1926 General Strike was a failure and enabled the Conservative government to ban sympathetic strikes and introduce contracting-in whereby unions had to explicitly request members' approval before deducting the political levy from their wages. Already, government felt that trade unions were taking advantage of their influence without systematically referring decisions to the rank and file for approval. Hence the regular need for Parliament to “*examine how far the law should tolerate ‘coercive’ action in ‘restraint of trade’ by employers or trade unions*” (lines 8-9).

Despite these setbacks, the Second World War enabled the trade unions to ingratiate themselves more than ever before in the eyes of public opinion. Even though the war period had witnessed its fair share of industrial unrest, the overall climate of this international conflict was symbolised by the “Spirit of Dunkirk”, even within the ranks of the trade unions. Both the Labour Party and the unions had participated in the National Government during the war and the landslide victory of Clement Attlee's Labour Party in 1945 meant that the long-term problems of reconstruction could be broached against a backdrop of political stability. Yet the problem of union representation was to remain a bone of contention between successive governments of all persuasions and trade unions.

In this respect, Barbara Castle refrains from politicising her recommendations too explicitly. The Labour Party is not mentioned in this extract as if the terms “*Government*”, “*State*”, “*Parliament*” and “*the courts*” (§5) lend more absolute weight to her ideas. Her arguments are supported by the findings of “*Royal Commissions and Inquiries*” (line 12 and again in line 48) and legislation passed under opposition governments is mentioned. In this sense, her intention is for her propositions to transcend traditional party political barriers as illustrated by the opening sentences which boldly state that “[t]he State **has always** been involved in the process of industrial relations” and “*It has always had to provide...*” (emphasis added). As the title of this extract suggests, the Cabinet Minister attempts to justify her Party's action by referring to the historical responsibilities that befall any government in the field of industrial relations. By assuming this task, *In Place of Strife* was not so much the expression of any revolutionary measures as a policy statement to show that the Labour Party was able to govern.

This is why while acknowledging the inalienable rights that have been acquired by the unions, Barbara Castle strives to pinpoint the duties of the present government in terms of its historical legacy. By stating that “*The State should recognise the right to strike and the right to bargain collectively to improve wages and conditions*” (line 13-14) and “*the Government should provide facilities to help the parties agree, but should not interfere to impose a settlement upon them*” (line 16-17), the Secretary of State attempts to come to terms with the fact that government cannot shirk its fundamental responsibilities in the field of industrial relations. Also, at different instances in this extract historical facts are used to show that government intervention may, at times, be the result of political choice: the Truck Acts which guaranteed paid wages to workers,

the Wages Councils which established minimum wages and the Fair Wages Resolutions (§7) are ideal examples to show how Parliament at times chose to intervene directly in order to improve working conditions. In the contemporary context this “involvement” is assumed more often than
265not in accordance with union demands: “*requests have been put forward on behalf of trade unions for minimum wage legislation...*” (line 68). Paragraph 8 mentions several recent occasions when direct intervention was deemed necessary in order to accomplish a certain number of “*periodic readjustments*” (line 24).

It would have been relatively easy at this stage for Barbara Castle to point out the fact that
270government intervention had at times been necessary in order to compensate for union weaknesses. That Parliament should have had to establish minimum wages and ensure that employers respect the same conditions of pay nationwide implies in many ways that trade unions were incapable of defending their brethren. However she refrains from doing this by underlining the fact that industrial relations should not fundamentally be built upon opposition between
275government and the unions. This show of political pragmatism is taken a step further with her rejection of the “*theory of non-intervention by the State*” (line 45) and again when an attempt is made to depict intervention as being mainly “*involvement*” (line 74). According to the Minister, theoretical non-intervention is the main weakness of the historical legacy that seems to dictate many of the rules that bind the State, employers and unions in their perpetual struggle for power.
280Reality on the other hand paints a different picture since “*managements and unions have entered into a positive and mutually beneficial partnership with the State to secure common objectives*” (lines 46-47).

In this way, employers and trade unions are also portrayed as being able to assume their responsibilities in a “positive” way and paragraph 9 highlights the various occasions when trade
285unions have worked hand in hand with the government and have not confined their action to mere opposition. Even so, it is at this stage that the Minister tries to attribute the recent improvements in industrial relations to her Party’s “involvement” used specifically in comparison with “intervention”. The examples of collaboration all relate to recent developments as if this sudden mood change could be dated back to the first Wilson government which took office in
2901964.

Free collective bargaining versus a planned economy

The post-war social democratic consensus was broadly based on the creation of the Welfare State and the participation of employers and the trade unions in a Keynesian inspired planned economy. The trade unions had worked closely with the Labour Party during preparations for the
2951945 election and fully approved of the Labour government’s ambitions to use its powers in order to stimulate growth, create the necessary conditions for full employment and above all reduce social inequalities. Their newly acquired legitimacy meant that they could rely on their principles of free collective bargaining being maintained. At the same time, to encourage responsible union action, their presence was encouraged in the highest spheres of decision making even though
300their role was officially claimed to be one of mere consultation.

The Labour government which won a landslide victory in 1945 was committed to an extensive programme of nationalisations. This was to make sure that the control of industry be guaranteed by the State as stipulated in Clause IV of the Labour Party’s constitution. True to their word, the Bank of England, gas, electricity, the railways and the mines were nationalised. When the
305Conservatives were returned to power in 1951, their slim majority meant that they too had to accommodate trade union influence. In their quest to maintain social peace, they adopted a more flexible stance vis-à-vis shop-floor resistance to their economic objectives to the extent that during their thirteen years in government, industrial unrest was relatively subdued. Even so, the kickback on this attitude was a transfer of authority away from the centre of trade union
310organisation to the rank and file.

Ultimately this was to lead to a situation whereby union action in the form of wildcat strikes and certain practises such as the closed shop came under fire from public opinion and to a certain extent both sides of Parliament. Barbara Castle talks about the “*disruptive consequences of the struggle for those not immediately affected*” (line 26) for indeed the informal locally based pay
315bargaining structures organised outside any agreements reached with the government were gradually replacing “legitimate” ones. This had recently had particularly disastrous effects during

the seamen's strike in 1966 and in the car industry, mentioned in paragraph 8, when in November 1968, 22 operatives stopped work at the Girling brake factory and laid off thousands of workers in the “*motor industry*” mentioned in line 41. In these two cases, a limited number of 320 employees had been able to cause a maximum amount of damage not only to their own industries but also to national interests. The overall ensuing wages drift meant that politicians were in a far weaker position to put forward an overall plan for the national economy. Given this situation, when the Labour Party won the two elections in 1964, the second one being organised in order to improve their majority in Parliament, it had to bear in mind “*that Governments should intervene* 325 *still further if it could be shown that certain important economic or social objectives were not sufficiently furthered or were frustrated by collective bargaining*” (line 27-29). To show that the Labour Party could be entrusted with the helm of the nation, a thorough shake-up of trade union representation in national politics was required. But any reform would have to take place in the knowledge that 131 out of the 348 Labour MPs were sponsored directly by the trade unions and 330 there was little hope of them voting against their masters.

The Conservatives had attempted to improve their relations with the trade unions by creating successively the National Economic Development Council, the Council on Prices Productivity and Incomes and the National Incomes Commission but the stronger unions were in no mood to pay much heed to the government's calls for restraint in pay bargaining. Faced with a £800 million 335 budget deficit, Wilson's Labour government desperately worked out a statement of incomes policy with employers and the unions which took the form of a “Declaration of Intent on Productivity, Prices and Incomes” published in December 1964. A National Board for prices and Incomes was established and in 1965 a Royal Commission headed by Lord Donovan was appointed to study the problems of industrial relations. His examination of trade unions took three years and came to 340 the conclusion that informal bargaining structures were at the root of most evils. But contrary to the radical opponents of unions, the Donovan Report held the point of view that strikes were above all symptomatic of the overall failure to devise institutions in keeping with changing needs. Reform of the collective bargaining system was recommended but recourse to compulsory powers was rejected.

Barbara Castle is perfectly aware of the influence of the Donovan Report, but knows that its remit was strictly limited to the field of industrial relations. Unlike Donovan, her own recommendations are going to be subjected to far more intensive political scrutiny insofar as she is walking the tightrope with her Party's political future. To this end, by stating that “*bodies representing both employers and trade unions have urged further intervention and involvement –* 345 *at least where they see it as advantageous to them*” (line 50-51, emphasis added), the Minister clearly questions the ability of the unions to respect the well established “*rules of the game*” (line 15). It seems she is eager to point out that at times government intervention has been necessary in order to protect the most vulnerable flanks of its movement with the Wages Councils and the Fair Wages Resolutions being ideal “*examples of intervention to advance objectives which* 355 *could not at the time be met by collective bargaining*” (line 34-35). This seems to be a particularly euphemistic way of expressing her Party's irritation about the unions' churlish attitude whereby they were favourable to State intervention when it suited them. Indeed, minimum wage fixing for the most vulnerable categories of workers enabled the unions to concentrate on the stronger elements of their movement and government would have much appreciated greater union 360 recognition of their own weaknesses in the form of greater respect for the Chancellor's “National Plan” for example.

It must be said that since being elected, the Labour government had had to deal not only with a severe budget deficit but a consistently weak pound as strike action caused confidence in British currency to plummet. Devaluation had been decided in November 1967 as a last resort, especially 365 in Prime Minister Wilson's eyes. These economic difficulties could therefore only be worsened by trade union truculence which was not only jeopardising attempts to foster healthy industrial relations but also the government's efforts to fulfil its social ambitions. Thus irresponsible trade unionism – described as “*widespread damage*” (line 25) in this extract – is seen as having frustrated Labour's attempts to use Britain's industrial potential in order to alleviate the plight of 370 the poorer members of society. Not only did their political allegiance with the unions suffer from poor industrial relations but also the support from their grass root electorate.

Conclusion

Whereas Donovan had tried to deal with industrial relations with a velvet glove, the new Secretary of State chose a more forceful approach. This can in part be attributed to the fact that
375 the Prime Minister himself was feeling very politically unsure at the time and possibly considered that hardline tactics to curb the unions would be supported at least by public opinion. The Labour Party was in the throes of an internal crisis at the time and five major figures had resigned over various issues, including the government's desire to use legislation to limit the scope of unofficial strikes. Nevertheless, it was the Party's leadership that was causing the greatest amount of ill-
380 feeling.

Given this context, Barbara Castle had a clear remit to go beyond the recommendations of the Donovan Report and indeed the traditional power of "re-adjustment", but she was reticent about taking coercive action in order to restrain union action. She chose instead to underline the responsibilities that the legacy of history had bestowed both on the trade unions and governments
385 of all persuasions in the field of industrial relations. In doing so she rejected the theory that non-intervention had ever been a viable alternative especially since, on many occasions, government had felt that workers needed protection above and beyond that provided by the different unions. If intervention by Parliament could be justified in these circumstances then there was no reason that it should not be used in order to stop the more disruptive elements of the union movement
390 from wreaking havoc.

But it would be short-sighted to suggest that the government's sole aim was to rein in union power for the sake of more harmonious industrial relations. The Labour Party's political future was at stake not only in terms of its ability to harness the trade union vote but also as far as its electoral promises were concerned. The pulse of the Labour Party's economic strategy, deemed to
395 be the key to implementing its social policies, could be felt through its relations with the trade unions. Without their collaboration, bringing the effects of other economic factors under control – such as the budget deficit and weak sterling – was proving to be an impossible task. This was considerably hampering Labour's efforts to fulfil its traditional political ambitions and the Party feared that this might ultimately lead to its downfall as voters questioned its ability to govern.

400 The time had perhaps come to make a stand given the constant toing and froing between pay pauses, wage freezes, wage standstills, guiding lights, price plateaus, severe restraint; in fact a whole plethora of terms which deftly summed up the contemporary relationship between successive governments and the trade unions. Nevertheless, the fact that the proposals laid out in *In Place of Strife* were defeated in Parliament with many Labour MPs casting their vote against
405 their own Party is clear proof that the time was not yet ripe to force the trade unions into accepting that Parliament be allowed to meddle too directly in what they continued to believe were their own affairs. As long as the unions were (too) strong, the fine balance between the powers of the State, employers and workers would constantly be fraught with difficulty. The Conservatives, reelected in 1970, paid the price of believing that legislation could be used to bring
410 the unions to heel by being ousted from power four years later. From 1974 to 1979 Labour resorted once again to intense collaboration with the unions in the form of the Social Contract but to no avail. It was with the election of Mrs Thatcher in 1979, ten years after *In Place of Strife*, that strong government was to become the deciding element of the Divine Trinity in industrial relations.

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Ce manuel est un guide pratique de la méthodologie du commentaire de texte en civilisation britannique. Il est destiné en priorité aux étudiants anglicistes à l'université ou en classe préparatoire mais peut également intéresser des politologues ou des historiens.

Il propose un échantillon de quinze sources primaires britanniques tirées de rapports officiels, de discours d'hommes politiques, de textes de lois, de tracts ou d'articles de la presse nationale qui couvrent tout le XX^e siècle. Chaque document est accompagné d'un commentaire et d'une bibliographie sélective.

L'originalité de ce manuel réside dans les sources primaires proposées qui forment des repères à la fois chronologiques, événementiels et thématiques et dans les commentaires entièrement rédigés en anglais par des universitaires spécialistes de la civilisation britannique qui ont tous une bonne expérience de l'enseignement en premier cycle.

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Emmanuel Roudaut – Karine Tournier-Sol – Timothy Whitton



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