

## **Gordon Pritchard - Restructuring, state employment and labour relations. Portsmouth dockyard, a case study, 1945-1997**

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This thesis examines restructuring, state employment and labour relations in Portsmouth Dockyard between 1945 and 1997. It acknowledges the link between changing contextual factors and labour relations without resorting to determinism. The focus of the study is an area of state employment - an industrial sector of the civil service – which has effectively been neglected due to an overwhelming emphasis, in the existing literature, on the non-industrial civil service. Consequently, assumption and the characteristics of state employment associated with the non-industrial civil service; the model of the state as a 'model' or 'good' employer, the bureaucratic nature of civil service organisation and Whitleyism, form the basis of our knowledge of labour relations and the experience of state employment in the civil service, until the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. Subsequently, the changes implemented in the civil service have been shown to have had dramatic implications in relation to a model of static continuity in the period before 1979.

Similar 'radical break' assumptions underpinned notions of change and continuity in areas such as state intervention and manufacturing industry, but have increasingly been questioned and shown to be generalised. By 'overlooking' the fact that the dockyards were an area of industrial production and subject to continual economic, political, social and cultural change, the social relations of administrative, or non-productive, work have been unproblematically, and in a deterministic manner, transposed onto the yards. Hence, we are left with a distorted knowledge and understanding of restructuring, state employment and labour relations in the post-war period. Portsmouth Dockyard represents a useful case study to challenge the assumptions and generalisations inherent in broader patterns of development.

The thesis provides new insights into an industrial area of the civil service and the experiences of state employment and labour relations, by considering change and continuity as historical processes. A variety of models and perspectives, from a range of academic disciplines, are utilised and a range of primary sources are employed, some either previously unavailable or simply ignored. It argues that the idea of continuity and dramatic change characterised by the notion of the state as a good employer and the Thatcher reforms is inadequate. A significant contribution to our knowledge of state employment, and challenge to the rhetoric directed against state employment, is gained by considering the longer-term post-war experience of Portsmouth Dockyard. A more general contribution is made to a number of debates around management trade unions and workplace culture in the post-war period.