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978-0-521-15313-3 - Union Business: Trade Union Organisation and Financial Reform in the Thatcher Years

Paul Willman, Timothy Morris and Beverly Aston

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It is fashionable to speak of trade unions in the UK as organisations in decline. They have lost membership, power, and influence over the last decade. However, those who have commented on the possible long-term decline, or even disappearance, of unions have not generally examined their organisation or, in particular, their financial status, and these are the factors which ultimately dictate unions' ability to survive, recruit, and influence employees.

This book provides the first systematic picture of union financial status for thirty years, and reveals a dramatic picture. Though, overall, unions have become financially less healthy in the post-war period, many unions experienced an improved financial position during the membership contraction of the Thatcher years. The authors analyse the reasons for this, and also reveal the extent to which unions are highly dependent on overt or covert financial support from employers. They show that the long-term financial decline of unions has been more affected by the competition between unions for membership than by the effects of traumatic industrial disputes.

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# Union business

*Trade union organisation and financial reform  
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Paul Willman

Timothy Morris

and Beverly Aston

*London Business School*



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The usual disclaimer applies. The errors we have retained we covet as our own.