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978-0-521-41292-6 - Constructing a Competitive Order: The Hidden History of British Antitrust Policies

Helen Mercer

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Businessmen have always had a strong inclination to avoid competition and regulate the market. Helen Mercer traces the evolution of British competition legislation designed to discourage such practices, from 1900 to 1964. Textbooks frequently attribute the dynamic behind the development of this legislation to an undefined ‘public opinion’. Helen Mercer disagrees. She contends that competition policies have been shaped by the strategies of powerful business interests – at home and in the United States. Trade unions and organisations of labour have provided a consistent pressure on governments to legislate on private monopoly, in the face of sweeping criticisms of free enterprise. This book makes extensive use of archival sources to give a detailed analysis of government–industry relations. In the course of this it sheds new light on Britain’s changing industrial structure, and offers pointers to the likely outcome of business regulation in Britain in the future.

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Notes on conventions used and abbreviations

Unless otherwise stated all primary sources cited are Public Record Office references, e.g. CAB87/3, BT64/318, see bibliography for more details.

All secondary sources are cited with place and date of publication, unless the place of publication was London in which case only the year of publication is given.

The reports of the MRPC are cited in full in the bibliography, but given abbreviated titles throughout the text.

Abbreviations

FBI	Federation of British Industries
MRPC	Monopolies and Restrictive Practices Commission
PEP	Political and Economic Planning
RPM	Resale Price Maintenance
TUC	Trades Union Congress
RPM	Resale Price Maintenance
BPP	British Parliamentary Papers
<i>BHR</i>	<i>Business History Review</i>
<i>Bus Hist</i>	<i>Business History</i>
CBI	CBI Predecessor Archive
<i>EHR</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
<i>EngHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Economic Journal</i>
<i>JCH</i>	<i>Journal of Contemporary History</i>
<i>JEEH</i>	<i>Journal of European Economic History</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Economic History</i>
LPA	Labour Party Archive
<i>Parl. Deb.</i>	Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) House of Commons Official Report 5th Series
<i>Parl. Deb.</i> (Lords)	Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) House of Lords Official Report 5th Series