

Accountancy And The British Economy, 1840-1980: The Evolution Of Ernst & Whinney

worker control strike is passed over via the notion that such strikes were short, sharp jabs, as if this was a deliberate, reasoned tactic. Problems of this sort by no means demolish the argument. They do raise some questions about its breadth of applicability.

Price would like to suggest that the pattern he has uncovered may apply to other segments of the British labor force. He appropriately cites other recent studies, as on the engineers, that do mesh at points. He is however dealing with a set of crafts—unskilled builders laborers are not really covered. The generalizability of his argument is more dubious than frequent and confident references to the working class might imply.

There is, however, no harmonizing Price and Hunt. They see labor's world quite differently. One important distinction lies in their sense of how the nineteenth century fits modern British labor history more generally. Hunt's nineteenth century stands alone, self-contained, though he has some sensible things to say about it in comparison with twentieth-century developments elsewhere. Price's century is part of a continuum that leads to the struggles of British workers in the twentieth century, many elements of which were set in the decades he actually treats. Whatever the judgment on some of the details of his argument, Price's approach is the more fruitful use of history.

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ACCOUNTANCY AND THE BRITISH ECONOMY, 1840-1980: THE EVOLUTION OF ERNST & WHINNEY. By Edgar Jones. London, B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1981. Pp. 288. £10.00.

Reviewed by Richard P. Brief

Edgar Jones was commissioned by the accounting firm of Ernst & Whinney to write the history of the British segment of this international firm of accountants. The book weaves into this history the role that the firm and the accounting profession played in the development of the British economy. Although at least a dozen other accounting firms in the United States and Britain have published histories, ranging from rather narrow uninteresting documents to books of higher quality, Jones's work is the most ambitious effort to date.

The pages are crammed with facts based on secondary sources and original documents. The book details the various mergers in the predecessor organizations that led to the formation of Ernst & Whinney in 1979. It presents time series data on the fees earned and the sources of income for many of the merged firms. It discusses the leading British accountants over the last century and the influence on professional accounting and their involvement in the economy more generally. It also touches on education, several famous fraud cases, sex discrimination and how the wars influenced the hiring of women, taxation, international accounting, and multinational corporations. In short, many topics of interest to accounting and business historians are discussed.

The material is dealt with chronologically and is punctuated by the two world wars, which simultaneously increased the demand for accountants and reduced

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