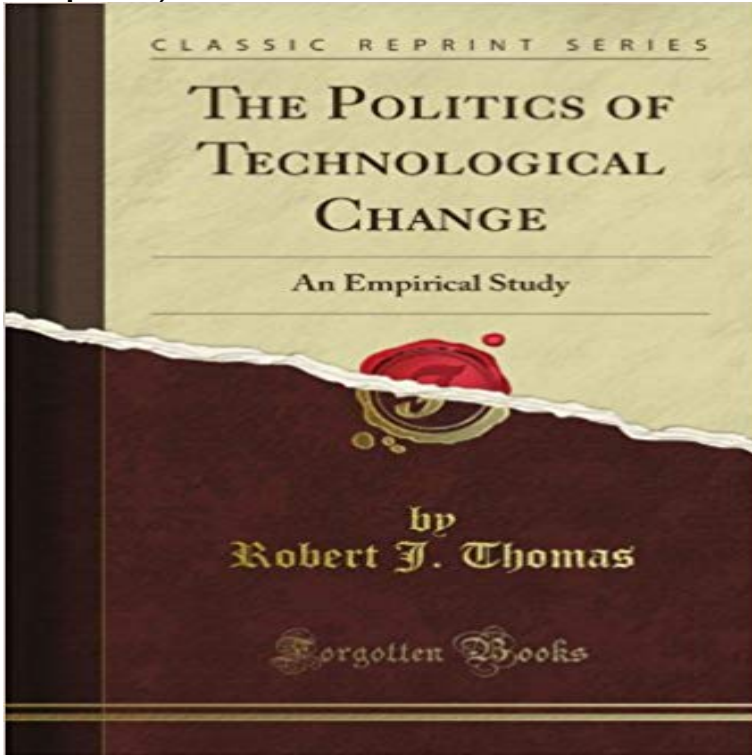


# The Politics of Technological Change: An Empirical Study (Classic Reprint)



Introduction      Developments in manufacturing and information technologies over the past decade have given rise to a substantial body of research and debate about the implications of technological change for employment, skill levels, and economic competitiveness. On one side, postindustrial and socio-technical theorists suggest that numerous factors -- including technological developments themselves -- are presenting business organizations with the opportunity (or, in the minds of some, the necessity) to fundamentally recast themselves in the direction of greater flexibility and responsiveness to market conditions. These attributes, they suggest, can only be achieved through a sea change in organizational approaches to the design and deployment of technology and human resources (cf., Piore and Sabel 1984; Walton 1987; and Hirschhorn 1984). It is argued, for example, that the potential benefits of new informing technologies (Z uboff 1982) can only be realized through the grant of greater autonomy and responsibility to employees formerly handcuffed by Taylorist definitions of automation; and, according to Hirschhorn (1984) and others most notably Davis and Taylor (1976), the greater complexity and sensitivity of new manufacturing technologies actually demand greater -- not lesser -- involvement, commitment, and skill from production workers. In short, technological and organizational possibilities are increasing in number. What remains at issue is whether managers (especially American managers) will grasp those possibilities. On the other side, analysts working from marxian labor process theory suggest that neither technological developments nor hopeful scenarios are likely to shake managers from a philosophy and a practice aimed at cost reduction, deskilling, and enhancement in control over the work

process. They point to the shopfloor use of new technology and qu(Typographical errors above are due to OCR software and dont occur in the book.)

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