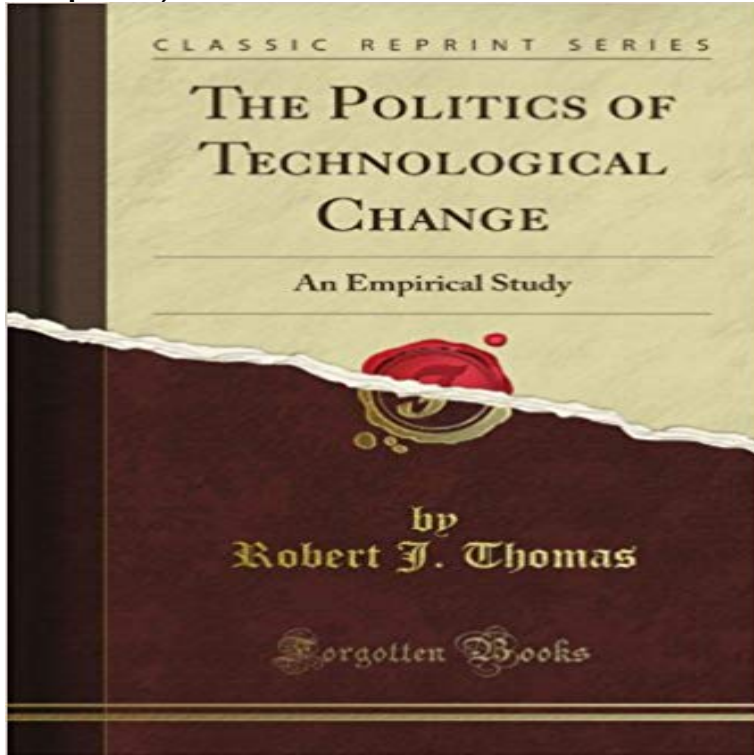


# The Politics of Technological Change: An Empirical Study (Classic Reprint)



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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