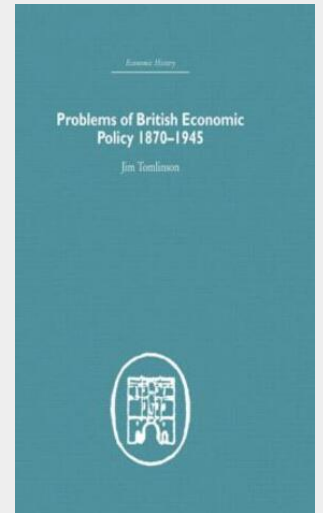


Tomlinson

## Problems of British Economic Policy, 1870-1945

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Most historical accounts of economic policy set out to describe the way in which governments have attempted to solve their economic problems and to achieve their economic objectives. Jim Tomlinson, however, focuses on the problems themselves, arguing that the way in which areas of economic policy become 'problems' for policy makers is always problematic itself, that it is never obvious and never happens 'naturally'. This approach is quite distinct from the Marxist, the Keynesian or the neo-classical accounts of economic policy, the schools of thought which are described and criticized in the introduction. Subsequent chapters use the issues of unemployment, the gold standard and problems of trade and Empire to demonstrate that these competing accounts all obscure the true complexities of the process. Because they adhere to simple assumptions about the role of economic theory or of 'vested interests' previous histories have been unable adequately to explain the dramatic change after the First World War in attitudes to unemployment, for instance, or the decision to return to gold in 1925. Jim Tomlinson surveys the institutional circumstances, the conflicting political pressures and the theories offered at the time in an attempt to discover the conditions which characterized the questions as economic problems and contributed to the choice of 'solutions'. The result is a sophisticated and intellectually compelling account of matters which have remained at the forefront of political debate since its first publication in 1981.



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