Politics and the Public Interest in the Seventeenth Century (RLE Political Science Volume 27)

This book examines the concept of public interest against the background of English politics from the Civil War to the coming of the Hanoverians. These years witnessed both the rise of the modern notion of the public interest as a part of ordinary political language and the growth of a social philosophy of individualism. The new ideas challenged the status quo, based on order, reason of state and national power, in the name of legitimate self-interest and respect for the rights of the private person. In presenting a complex set of ideas in their historical context, the author examines both abstract philosophies and the issues of the day as recorded in press, pulpit and law courts. A chapter devoted to economic thought includes a re-assessment of the social assumptions of mercantilism.

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