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when one was not provided for him by external events.

One of the book's chapters, called 'Reluctant leader', explores this theme to a certain extent. But what is never made terribly clear is why Kennedy wanted to be leader in the first place. Perhaps his main problem is that he never really had to fight for anything. Once he managed to be selected as SDP candidate for Ross, Cromarty & Skye in 1983, his political career followed almost effortlessly. His candidacy for the leadership in 1999 can be seen as simply following the line of least resistance; at the time it would be more difficult for him *not* to stand, since everyone expected him to, and many actively wanted an alternative to the potentially dangerous Simon Hughes.

Unsurprisingly, given the nature of Kennedy's departure, the book devotes a chapter to 'Demons and drink'. Obviously his binge drinking, although not consistently an issue, was hardly conducive to effective leadership. Yet Hurst leaves the reader with the impression that alcohol was the main problem,

and without his drunkenness, Kennedy might still be leader. I think this is wrong.

Kennedy's first two years in the job, from 1999 to 2001, were quite successful, but primarily this is because he was not Ashdown; his lack of an agenda, and his approach to managing his party – which was not to – came as something of a relief after Ashdown's hyperactivity and insistence on trying to lead the party in a direction (closer links with Labour) in which it did not want to go. Since no one expected the Liberal Democrats to do well in the 2001 election, Kennedy and the party were not subjected to particularly searching scrutiny, unlike in 2005. But after 2001, everything fell apart. The absence of any meaning to his leadership, his inertia and drift, his failures at party management, and his lack of self-belief, were all increasingly and cruelly exposed. The underlying problem with Kennedy was not alcohol. The underlying problem was that he couldn't lead.

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nant concern for generations of modern Liberals, from Mill and Gladstone to Grimond. The alternative, they thought, was a 'bare ballot-box democracy' and a more or less plebiscitarian regime. In the twentieth century, the latter has been the fate not only of Communist countries and 'banana republics', but, to some extent has also characterised Western democracies. Even in Britain since 1951 '[t]he problems of virtue and corruption within the market [have] ... given way to the problems of avoiding a major slump in demand and employment, or later with maintaining full employment and stable prices. These problems appeared to demand an efficient management of the economy by mandarins of the Treasury and the Bank of England ... It was a necessarily elitist and statist approach, against which the republican demand for citizen participation appeared irrelevant.' (p.11)

The social manifestations of the republican tradition in modern Britain have been explored by a number of scholars, including Jose Harris and Frank Prochaska. Here Foote is interested not in the social dimension, nor merely in the history of political thought, but rather in the interplay between political thought and intellectual traditions. In this sense he goes beyond Quentin Skinner's 'text in context' approach, and explores the complexity and confusion 'caused by the emergence of a new politics within an old language' – as in the case, for example, of republican ideas emerging from the Marxist language of *New Left Review*. From the late 1950s E. P. Thompson, John Saville, Alasdair MacIntyre, Raphael Samuel and others began to extol the virtues of 'culture' against Marxist determinism, and of 'community' against the rigid national assumptions of 'class'. What they most feared was apathy – non-participation – in an

Citizenship and democracy

Geoffrey Foote, *The Republican Transformation of Modern British Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

Reviewed by **Eugenio Biagini**

HERE GEOFFREY Foote, the author of the magisterial *The Labour Party's Political Thought* (3rd ed. 1997), identifies and explores a central factor in the development of the ideological and political framework of today's politics in Britain.

'Republicanism', in Foote's sense of the word, has nothing to do with anti-monarchism. It is, rather, the political tradition which insists that participatory citizenship and a sense of 'com-

mon good' are essential to healthy democratic life. For Thomas Jefferson, the 'mother principle' of republicanism was 'a government by citizens in mass, acting directly and personally, according to the rules established by the majority' (cit. p.4). While this was completely feasible only in the ancient city-states, such as Athens, or in the medieval republics of Italy and Germany, self-government by active citizens has been a domi-

increasingly complacent age of consumerism. Utilitarianism – the cornerstone of the centralised welfare state – was identified as a philosophy of passivity and corruption, ‘the Western equivalent of the Stalinist enemy’ (p.28). This had profound implications in the sphere of economic policy and revealed a real difference between the New Left and traditional Labour on the question of public ownership. While the Bevanites stressed nationalisation and relegated industrial democracy to a mere consultative role, ‘the New Left ... denied that the State was somehow in itself the embodiment of the *res publica* because it did not represent genuine citizens’ (p.32). They detested Communist planning in the USSR, but also hated paternalism and bureaucracy in England. Their ideas influenced the Institute of Workers Control (1964), Tony Benn and the Left Militant, especially in the aftermath of the general strike

and occupation of factories in France in May 1968.

In parallel, republican ideas were studied and adopted by other groups. Political theorists such as Carole Pateman and Dennis Thompson explored the participatory dimensions of liberty in the thought of J. S. Mill, which they contrasted with Isaiah Berlin’s emphasis on ‘negative’ freedom. Significantly, it was in the context of the historic Liberal Party that the new republicanism delivered its most interesting fruits. As Foote writes, ‘[w]here the socialist politics of the New Left prevented them from moving beyond a Keynesian-corporatist approach to the management of the economy, the Liberal circle around Jo Grimond were able to develop a fuller republican conception of the economy, based on a politics of citizenship participation ... without the need to reconcile it with public ownership of a centrally directed apparatus. The idea of an unservile society, where citizenship was based on property, was also distinct from the laissez-faire approach of other Liberals who saw the market as the crucial mechanism for individual choice, irrespective of an antagonism to the *res publica*’ (p.89).

The latter was also going to be crucial to the appropriation of republican ideas by the Conservative right. Powell, and eventually Thatcher, insisted on the notion of individual property and resurrected the old republican suspicion against ‘corruption’ of the elite and related institutions. ‘The sales of shares in publicly owned companies and of council housing, both at massively discounted prices to ensure popular acceptance and participation, could hardly be fitted into a strict market approach to society’, but was a dimension of Thatcher’s ‘interlacing of liberal economics, social authoritarianism, and commitment to a republic of

property-owners’ (p.116). A republic of property-owners was the Thatcherite campaign which attracted support from the ageing Grimond. In the early 1980s he criticised the politics of the Alliance and their continued reliance on Keynesian corporatism and championed what he regarded as ‘the positive side of Hayek’, which he wanted to see ‘married to a defence of the common interests’. ‘While he supported the denationalisation of industry, he was critical of the manner in which pension and trust funds ... were allowed to take a controlling share of ownership; as an alternative he sought the fostering of workers’ cooperatives. Similarly, his opposition to an incomes policy was based not on a simple free-market opposition to state intervention in the labour market, but on a concern over the collapse of the “common feelings, the bonds of a liberal society” which should make such centralised restrictions of liberty unnecessary.’ (p.171)

The republican transformation is an important contribution to the study of modern British politics and political ideas. Pace Quentin Skinner, Foote shows that republicanism does not embody any particular self-contained, coherent notion of liberty which can be taken as a progressive alternative to liberalism. Instead, republicanism consists of a family of ideologies and concepts which have been used to serve different and even contrasting social and economic interests and visions of society. In the age of Tony Blair, the language of citizenship and community has been firmly established as the idiom of the new political consensus, although its rhetoric has often proved empty and illusory in a context which has continued to be dominated by a centralised state, the irrelevance of local government and the celebration of managerial

The Republican Transformation of Modern British Politics



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values and market imperatives, in contrast to civic responsibility and the normative function of the common good.

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'Women's rights and women's duties'

Ursula Masson (ed.), *'Women's Rights and Women's Duties': the Aberdare Women's Liberal Association, 1891–1910* (South Wales Record Society, 2005)

Reviewed by **Eugenio Biagini**

LOCAL WOMEN'S Liberal Associations began to be established in various parts of the country from the early 1880s, but it was the 1886 home rule crisis which gave new impetus to local initiatives and generated a national movement culminating in the formation of the Women's Liberal Federation (WLF) in 1887. The WLF counted 20,000 members by 1888 and continued to grow in the following years. There were several reasons for this development, including the democratisation of the UK electoral system in 1883–85 (which required larger numbers of party workers for tasks at which women excelled) and the intrinsic nature of the issues under discussion from 1886. For Home Rule was more than merely the cause of Irish Nationalism. It was also about participatory citizenship, civil rights, the end of authoritarian rule from Dublin Castle and the plight of the evicted tenants and their families. Thus, supporting Gladstone's Irish policy soon came to signify a commitment to an all-encompassing humanitarian crusade, with clear implications for spheres as diverse as British social reform and foreign policy.

Morality and religion had long been perceived as the twin pillars of the women's 'duty to society', but from 1886, under the combined pressure of

Gladstone's haunting rhetoric and the dictates of the 'nonconformist conscience', they also became central to national party politics. Exploiting the newly-blurred divide between public policy and the private sphere, women started to expand their claims to political rights, hitherto limited to local authority affairs. Feminine Liberalism developed a distinctive agenda, which was formally consistent with contemporary conventions about women's duties in society, and yet subversive of such roles and tasks. As one leaflet proclaimed, 'religion is not more important to our spiritual wants than politics to our material wants ... Religion tells us we should be helpful to one another, and politics shows us how to be helpful, wisely and effectively.'¹ This line of argument was effectively summarised by Lady Aberdeen when she declared that 'Liberalism was the Christianity of politics'.² There was no longer any legitimate room for the selfish pursuit of naked national interest, because politics had become the arena in which moral standards were upheld and religious imperatives applied to the solution of social and constitutional problems. By the same token, humanitarianism, both at home and overseas, emerged as the defining feature of the Gladstonian faith. In the

process, women felt politically empowered and legitimised and rank-and-file female Liberals were gradually won over to suffragism.

Ursula Masson has produced a splendid edition of the papers of one of the best documented local organisations, the Aberdare Women's Liberal Association. The latter was formed in 1891–92 and at its peak had a membership of 500, including eminent nonconformists such as Anne Griffith Jones and Maria Richards, herself a pioneer of women in local government (she served as a Poor Law Guardian from 1894–1929).

Especially in its first ten or fifteen years, the Association attracted suffragists and campaigners for women's rights, issues so hotly debated that they led to a nationwide split within the WLF as a whole in 1892 (a minority of anti-suffragists left the Federation). But the Aberdare WLA was also passionately involved in a range of other issues, especially those pertaining to the humanitarian agenda of contemporary Liberalism – such as the campaign to stop the massacre of Armenian and other Christians in the Ottoman Empire (1894–97) and the 'pro-Boer' agitation to stop British brutalities against civilians in South Africa (1899–1902). These Gladstonian issues were closely related to a parallel concern for human rights at home, which inspired the Association's campaigns on behalf of working-class women and children. For Masson, Liberal women's associations 'considered themselves to be working, above all, for women, rather than party' (p.23), but by so doing they extended the meaning and depth of Liberalism as a whole. The minute book records the meetings of the executive and general committees and includes also the reports of public meetings and speeches. Masson has contributed a substantial introductory essay

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