



previously noted Salisbury's mastery of political strategy) and his outlining of Salisbury's key role in the transition of the Tories to a mass party are illustrated by some wonderful turns of phrase; the misgivings Salisbury stirred in 'the cautious mediocrities who collect at the top of political parties' could be applied today to the party's apparent mistrust of charismatic politicians who aspire to lead them.

Individual contributors are not afraid to express strong opinions. Mark Garnett's forensic examination of Ted Heath is wonderfully written and also skewers Nicholas Ridley for rewriting his own history with little regard to the facts. Dennis Kavanagh challenges the myth that has grown around the efficiency and effectiveness of Thatcher's early leadership and organization in opposition — the Winter of Discontent encapsulates Macmillan's belief that political fortunes are driven by events. Judgements on recent leaders pull few punches. Weak leadership and organizational 'confusion and chaos' typify the short reign of Iain Duncan Smith and William Hague is dismissed as seeming 'ineffectual, uncharismatic and unconvincing' when compared to Blair, 'a boy up against a man'.

My one quibble with an excellent book would be that the party's times in government are generally ignored by contributors. While I know this is a book about the Conservatives in opposition, a few pages between each chapter outlining, for example, the crucial events of 1970–1974, would have been extremely useful to provide a handy link between periods of opposition. However, this is a minor criticism. The quality of writing, research and insight make this essential reading for any serious student of British politics.

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### **The Political Thought of the Conservative Party since 1945**

Kevin Hickson (ed)

*Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2005, 232pp., £18.99*

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This accessible, edited collection is a timely addition to the literature on the British Conservative party given its most recent electoral setbacks and the introspection to which this will no doubt lead on the critical issue of 'whither now?' However, these essays are of uneven quality and the book's accessibility is not only its main strength — it is certainly a very useful text for undergraduates and this may be its intended audience — but it is also its main



weakness: one cannot see any usefulness for postgraduates and researchers, especially the last section, which adds very little to what is already known of the authors' positions.

For Conservatives in need of constancy and reassurance about the party's future direction, a number of the essays that make up this collection will only give further cause for uncertainty, as Hickson notes in his own conclusion. For, the collection makes clear the many diverse, and often conflicting elements within the party that have recently given it the appearance of purposelessness. Structured around the party's various key, contemporary fault lines the three sections of the book deal firstly with ideological fault lines (traditional Toryism, new right, centre and one nation), secondly with thematic fault lines (the constitution, Europe, economic statecraft, social morality and inequality), and thirdly with commentaries from four conservatives (Simon Heffer, John Redwood, Francis Maude, Damian Green) associated with the various positions identified and discussed in the first section.

Part One of the book makes clear that the political thought of the Conservative party has not reached its own end of history with the ascendance of the New Right and that currently, although certain strands predominate, they do not (with, perhaps, the exceptions of the commitment to free market capitalism and Euroscepticism) remain completely uncontested. Arthur Aughey's measured essay, therefore, makes clear the many paradoxes in traditional Toryism, its still insistent appeal, and also its fundamental Englishness. Mark Garnett's and David Seawright's essays on the centre and one nationism, respectively, reflect upon the impact of the new right on these dispositions and conclude that both have struggled with little success to cope with life in the party post-Thatcher. Norman Barry's essay, though, rather than display some degree of thoughtful introspection on the problems that beset the party, including those that others (including other authors in this collection) lay at the door of the new right, verges on feverish triumphalism for the cause.

Calm is restored in Part Two as Phillip Norton writes elegantly on the constitution while Kevin Hickson usefully addresses what he convincingly argues is the core conservative ideal, inequality. Bruce Pilbeam's discussion of social morality is perhaps the best essay in the collection. As Pilbeam argues, the issue is one with which the Conservative party has been and continues to be much concerned, but which has caused it much angst recently and that arguably, in the form of sleaze (particularly around the issue of personal morality) associated with the Major government, contributed to the crisis in which it now finds itself so deeply embroiled.

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