

political theory or analysis which sufficiently contextualises the political struggles. Instead, the reader is confronted with a large number of facts, names, dates, seats, and vignettes—making it difficult for the reader to keep track of who's who in the zoo. This is also because many of the women's names and achievements are new to the reader, unlike the familiar names of Prime Ministers. A contextual overview of each decade including women's education levels, marriage rates, employment industries, and births would have helped the reader to 'place' the women representatives within their peer groups. Wherever these reflections do occur in the book it enables the reader to find access points into the information and debates described.

So Many Firsts illuminates how women's policy development and the women's vote have historically been critical for the Liberal Party in moving from opposition to government. Fitzherbert argues that generations of federal Labor parliamentary party teams did not engage with women due to the limitations of the faction/union based party structures, which prioritised men's employment over women's liberation. In contrast, the Liberal Party, from its very inception, and in no small measure due to Menzies' reliance on the political strength and funding of the Australia Women's National League, targeted the concerns of women and courted their political votes. Indeed, the Liberal Party held this uncontested space until Whitlam.

Fitzherbert analyses the long history of the Federal Women's Committee and the State Women's Councils and their influence on

party policy. In addition, these forums have been influential through encouraging and training women to fight pre-selections from within the organisational wing of the Liberal Party. There is a fascinating discussion on the complex story of competing conservative and liberal views also contested through these forums. Fitzherbert then dissects how the Liberal Party grappled with second wave feminism and internal debates on affirmative action and equal opportunity. And yet this party won federal government in 1996 with the greatest representation of women ever (25 women elected).

Fitzherbert's analysis shows how strong women performers in opposition (Newman, Judi Moylan, Bronwyn Bishop, and Vanstone) shaped their own opportunities when the party was elected. Generations of Liberal women have undertaken their political apprenticeships in opposition and been formidable in the prime of their political careers when the party was in power. These claims and discussions are the real gemstones of the book and offer much for political analysis and debate within academic research circles.

A broader history of the Australian Liberal Party and, in particular, through the lens of women, is timely while the federal Liberal Party goes through the introspection of opposition. Women continue to be the majority of voters, are currently more likely to swing vote, and yet continue to be underrepresented in our parliamentary structures. What does all this mean for women? What does it mean for the Australian Liberal Party going forward?

Reviewed by Michelle Irving

The Death of Conservatism
by Sam Tanenhaus

Random House, New York,
2009

US\$17, 123 pages

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It is not unusual for articles, essays and books to be published following an election year that declares the 'death' of a particular movement or political party. Perhaps the best example in Australia is Chris Puplick's *Is The Party Over? The Future of the Liberals*, published after John Hewson's defeat in 1993. In the United States, former Democratic Senator Zell Miller wrote *A National Party No More* following the loss of the Democratic majority in the 2002 mid-term elections.

It is difficult to consider these books as anything other than cathartic exercises. Their performance in prophecy is not impressive—John Howard became the second longest serving Prime Minister in Australian history two years after Puplick's book, and three years after Miller's book the GOP suffered its worst mid-term result since 1974.

Sam Tanenhaus's *The Death of Conservatism* falls into this tradition nicely. The key difference is that Tanenhaus is not a member of what he calls 'movement conservatism.' The book is an extension of an earlier essay titled 'Conservatism is Dead,' published shortly after Barack Obama became President. Indeed, the book reads like an essay, and carries the strengths and shortcomings that come with the narrative style adopted by the author.

This is a history of 'movement conservatism,' from its rise in post-

War America to its death in the 2008 presidential election. At 118 pages, it's a thin history, but the general argument of Tanenhaus is a simple and passionately argued one. He begins by describing the current paradox of the modern Right—'its drive for power has steered it onto a path that has become profoundly *un-conservative*.' Conservatism to Tanenhaus is epitomised by Edmund Burke who rejected ideological purity in favour of maintaining the equilibrium between 'the two principles of conservation and correction.' Burke is referred to often in *The Death of Conservatism*, but such references do not add much and appear more as rhetorical flourishes that add a bit of British gravitas to a fairly simple argument against radicalism.

This history is made up of the usual criticisms any Democrat would level against the stereotypical conservative—the hyperbolic opposition to the New Deal, McCarthyism, Goldwater's free market zealotry, and the so-called 'Southern strategy' of implicitly appealing to racists. These events are described by an excessive amount of quotations—at times the book has the feel of being entirely constructed of quotes by people that Tanenhaus either implicitly endorses or by conservatives who are usually saying something stupid. He may not necessarily be wrong on these historical arguments, and there is indeed a dark undercurrent in some sections of American conservatism, but the method of exposition is sloppy.

Where *The Death of Conservatism* ultimately fails is that we never really know who or what movement conservatism is, at least not in any

meaningful way. Tanenhaus selects several well-known conservative commentators, William Buckley, Jr, Irving Kristol, Whittaker Chambers, James Burnham, and a few others, to provide the bulk of the movement's arguments. While this selection is interesting, it is difficult for the reader to play connect-the-dots history without further information regarding 'movement conservatism' as a *popular* movement. For all we know, the movement could consist of 20 people or 20 million. No serious effort is made to tie the intellectual meanderings of the *National Review* with the specific problems confronting America. Tanenhaus often talks of 'they' and 'them,' and these generalisations are confusing.

At times, the arguments and criticisms made by Tanenhaus are the same as those articulated by Paul Krugman in his *Conscience of a Liberal*, only without the economic history or any mention of the Chicago School and its influence on American public policy. Like most intellectual histories, *The Death of Conservatism* exists in a space not occupied by a 300 million population but by a couple of dozen thinkers.

The book is frustrating to read because the recommendations made by Tanenhaus of the need to compromise are written so uncompromisingly. Instances when the GOP genuinely did act on contemporary problems and less on ideology are often dismissed and ignored by the author. So-called supply side economics, mentioned once and dismissed in a sentence,

is described as 'lightening the tax burden on the rich in the faith, or hope, that the poor would be taken care of.' No mention is made of the stagflation of the 1970s, which pushed low and medium income earners into higher and higher tax brackets. No mention is made of the failure of Keynesian economics to respond satisfactorily to conditions that were entirely different from the period in which Keynes wrote. Some arguments are very misleading. Tanenhaus describes the famous critique of *Atlas Shrugged* by Whitaker Chambers in the *National Review* as 'a critique not just of Rand but of all movement orthodoxy,' having spent the previous several pages describing the *National Review* as part of that orthodoxy. The feud between Buckley and Rand is well documented, but the two figures are synonymous according to Tanenhaus.

Clearly Tanenhaus did not intend this short polemic to be an authoritative critique, but unfortunately his ambitions far outstrip the length his thesis deserves. As a result, the reader is left with a highly compromised history.

Reviewed by Andrew Kemp

Prosecuting Heads of State
by Ellen L. Lutz and Caitlin Reiger (eds)

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Forced disappearances, political corruption, ethnic cleansing:

