

cork on the great Liberal tide.’ Protectionist and interventionist Liberalism of the Victorian variety occupied the policy space that Labor might otherwise have filled, and worked closely and comfortably with Labor. But as the Victorian Socialist Party and Tom Mann gained influence, all that changed.

Nick Dyrenfurth shows Labor as a party increasingly consumed by the ideologies of class and race, detailing its determination to intensify the class division between the parties (and oppose Watson’s moderation) and its ‘populist scare campaign’ based on race to discredit the Liberals in 1910 as soft on White Australia. Ultimately, those in Labor who were determined to divide Australia by class came to dominate the party, expelled Hughes, and crippled Labor nationally for a generation.

With his Victorian background, Deakin was at ease governing with Labor support (so long as they behaved like Victorian Labor), and even to let Federal Labor govern (albeit briefly) as a minority government under J.C. Watson. But Strangio reminds us that the Liberal Protectionists’ dominance in Victoria was under assault as early as 1902, not from Labor but from a popular and highly organised rural and urban middle-class revolt against the Protectionists’ big government alliance with Labor. The Kyabram movement, transmuted into the small government National Citizens Reform League, took over the state and, with the support of the Australian Women’s National League in 1904, continued to drive back the Protectionists. Fusion

began to look more attractive to many of the Deakinites as their base crumbled.

The Protectionist push was also weakening in New South Wales. Michael Hogan shows that the Protectionists in New South Wales had largely collapsed as an organised force by 1909, and that the political battle there had already slipped into the pattern of Liberal (free trade) versus Labor. Reid’s experience of his own state informed his claim that the future cleavage of Australian politics would be between Liberal and Labor—between liberalism and socialism.

The Liberal Party resulting from the Fusion governed twice—with Deakin as Prime Minister (1909–10) and with Cook (1913–14). World War I however gravely damaged both the liberal consensus and national unity, and the 1920s and ’30s saw the liberal economy under sustained attack domestically and internationally. Menzies, recalling the dream of Liberal unity, in 1944 established a new Liberal Party, as he said, to ‘revive liberal thought’ in Australia. How far he succeeded is a story for another day.

Reviewed by David Kemp

So Many Firsts: Liberal Women from Enid Lyons to the Turnbull Era

by Margaret Fitzherbert

The Federation Press, 2009

\$39.95, 227 pages

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Margaret Fitzherbert’s new book *So Many Firsts* tracks the political achievements of Australian Liberal women, their political

representation, their significant impact on government policies, and their many hard won legislated freedoms in the second half of the twentieth century.

The Australian Liberal Party has held federal government for most of Australia’s post-War history. Fitzherbert’s book reveals the story of a few determined women and their dynamic personalities who engaged in the cut-and-thrust of political pre-selection fights, jostled for ministerial portfolios, engaged conservative Prime Ministers as both allies and policy opponents, and literally shaped the party itself. There is so little academic research, let alone popular books, about women and the Australian Liberal Party that another contribution by Fitzherbert—who has also written *Liberal Women: Federation to 1949*—is a welcome addition to the history of politics in Australia.

It is difficult for current generations of women to imagine the day-to-day lives of ordinary Australian women before the radical changes of second wave feminism. Fitzherbert takes us back to the 1940s to 1960s when the domestic sphere of women was laborious in ways that are unrecognisable today. In doing so, she highlights which domestic concerns were the policy domains of government. For example, butter and sugar were still rationed following the war years. The end of rationing was a significant policy milestone for all Australian households and, in particular, Australian women.

Although the 1940s and 1950s did see a surge in women in paid employment, in this world of our mothers, grandmothers and aunts, there was no equal pay and no ‘careers’ for women outside

teaching, nursing, and low-level administration jobs in the civil service. In addition, most women were required to resign their jobs upon their marriage. Once they had children, given the large family unit, their daily work was in the home, unpaid.

Robert Menzies reflected the views of his generation and a long-held Liberal philosophy that women were not a special interest group with a specific range of policy considerations. However, he was one of the first political leaders to target the 'women's vote' and design policies aimed at women. This agenda was strongly influenced by Dame Enid Lyons.

Women had been able to stand for election since 1903, but it took 40 years for any woman, from any party, to be elected to federal Parliament.

In 1943, there were 24 women candidates, two of whom won their contests: Enid Lyons (United Australia Party) and Dorothy Tangney (Labor). Fitzherbert describes the 'warm bond' between Lyons and Tangney and details of the long friendship between Annabelle Rankin (Liberal) and Tangney as the only two women Senators in the late 1940s.

At the age of 14, Enid trained as a teacher in Tasmania, married Joe Lyons (35 years old) at 17, and raised 10 children. Dame Enid Lyons came to public prominence as the Prime Minister's wife, was very popular, spoke widely at public meetings, and wrote newspaper articles all her life. While this was a full life for any woman, Dame Enid Lyons launched from this platform into the political fray in

her own right. She was a formidable political force in federal Parliament for eight years, willing to tackle Menzies on many policy fronts (most successfully on the extension of child endowment), and became the first woman member of a federal Cabinet.

Although the book chronicles many political firsts and policy initiatives, *So Many Firsts'* sub-themes are marriage, motherhood, and the financial and employment equity so critical to the emancipation of women in



Australia. One strength of Fitzherbert's work is that she illuminates how powerfully generations of Australian women were conceptualised and confined by their relationships as wives and their roles as mothers.

From the 1940s through the late 1960s, government policies, including child endowment and taxation structures, favoured the male breadwinner and stay-at-home mother, even though World War II had dramatically changed the labour force landscape. Fitzherbert expertly tracks these policy debates and the personal investments in influencing government decisions. For example, she deftly tells the story of the 1950s long battle to remove the marriage bar in the public service, which decreed that upon marriage, every female officer 'shall be deemed to have retired.' Women were able to remain temporary employees but could not be supervisors or maintain their superannuation. Britain had lifted this restriction in 1946. It took the tenacious advocacy of Rankin, Nancy Butterfield, Ivy

Wedgwood, and Agnes Robertson and the lobbying of the Liberal Party's Federal Women's Council for a decade to win the debate. Fitzherbert also acknowledges Labor's Bill Hayden's role in consistently raising the matter in Parliament. The 1966 Holt government ended the bar.

One delight of the book is that it demonstrates how social policy issues appeared on the agenda, including many policy reforms that we now take for granted: child endowment, abortion and reproductive rights, equal opportunity and equal pay, maternity leave, family law, superannuation reform, and new issues such as RU48 and strategies to address domestic violence. The book details some excellent demonstrations of cross-party gender alliances on policies, including therapeutic cloning, RU48, cervical cancer vaccine.

Fitzherbert expertly draws on the personal details of female ministers (for example, Rankin, Margaret Guilfoyle, Kay Patterson, Kathy Martin Sullivan, Bronwyn Bishop, Amanda Vanstone, Jocelyn Newman) and deftly identifies their policy and political impact as well as highlighting their personal stories in the context of the broader party machinations (pre-selections, cabinet shuffling, Prime Ministerial influence). There are some delightful recollections of differences of opinion between Bishop and other ministers, and some wonderful details on Howard, Costello and Reith's relationships and influences on the Liberal women's careers and political strengths.

One limitation of Fitzherbert's book is that there is no overarching

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

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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-