

engages his attention. It is clear that he possesses a general answer to his question in advance and he occasionally makes this explicit — for example, in discussing the unreality of Cannon's advice that the insurgents should join the opposition. He knows, that is, that American parties are not parliamentary parties, that they are primarily electoral rather than ideological formations. What he has done, then, is to show at a period of quite acute party crisis precisely how unlike his comparative model American party formations are. It is not a criticism of what he has done to suggest that this approach may not have exploited his comparative perspective to the full. One has the impression from these occasional generalising remarks that Holt places considerable emphasis on constitutional peculiarities in America in his explanation for the distinctiveness of party behaviour. It might be illuminating, however, to pursue the suggestion, at least as old as Ostrogorski, that the diffuseness and anti-ideological bent of American parties arise from the complex social setting in which politics must be conducted as much as from the separation of powers. It is interesting to reflect on the force of Holt's concluding remark that it was the federal system which defeated the insurgents at the national level. The very persistence of the eighteenth century federal system in this way, however, suggests how, in the sphere of politics at least, the collapse of what Robert Wiebe has called nineteenth century 'island communities' was far from complete by 1916. If Wiebe's general argument is valid, then it may seem that politics was neither the true dynamic nor an accurate reflection of social change in Holt's period. Indeed of all American institutions in the early twentieth century, party politics may have been among the least responsive agencies through which reform impulses might be channelled.

The difficulty of pursuing a programmatic or ideological politics within such a party system remained, despite all other evidences of modernisation and national bureaucratisation, until the nineteen-thirties is not beyond.

Holt has provided important material for reflection on these matters. His specific purposes necessarily limit the extent to which he could confront all of the interesting questions his book raises. His exemplary discussion of the issues he does raise only increases our anticipation of the less severely political study of the nineteen-thirties on which he is presently engaged.

P. F. BOURKE

University of Melbourne

The Whigs in Opposition 1815-1830. By Austin Mitchell. Clarendon Press, 1967. 266 pp. U.K. price: 38s. N.Z. price: \$5.50.

SIR LEWIS NAMIER once offered to describe the politics of George III's early reign without needing to use the term 'party' at all. Dr Mitchell's book is a salutary warning to those who are inclined to apply the advice of that distinguished, if a trifle impetuous, historian to the politics of the post-Napoleonic era.

Even those who are phobic about the perils of permitting ideas of modern party anachronistically to distort our vision of past politics will now, one trusts, acknowledge party as fact in the age of Grey and Liverpool. The 'fact' of course was rather different from that of here and now (even if Dr Mitchell labours too heavily some basic similarities). Vestiges, but only vestiges, still survived of the factional system which dominated

the eighteenth century. Party identity may have been clearer than during the anarchic years of the eighteen-fifties, but party discipline was yet an amorphous thing. There were genuine 'independents' in parliament even if their numbers have sometimes been exaggerated; nor were they all country gentlemen, for the bankers, merchants and manufacturers were a significant and uncommitted group. Party colourings ranged a wide spectrum from true-blue right to red radical left; and there were major areas where party abdicated — on issues such as reform of the poor law, the currency, corn laws, factory legislation, or slave trade. On the whole, however, when the Victorians looked back upon the pre-reform era as the hey-day of a strong two-party system, they were right. A careful analysis of parliamentary voting patterns, of Whig behaviour and structure, triumphantly bears this out. The central fact of life was the divergence between 'two centres of gravity with some degree of overlap between them'.

This study nicely elucidates the complex role of Whiggery in an era which saw confrontation between the forces of change and reaction. Although genuine liberalism existed within the Whigs, and although the party was attractive to the emergent and advanced-thinking capitalist groups, the Whigs were still part of the Establishment, and still empiricists. Their relationship with popular and radical movements was thus equivocal. During the crises over Peterloo, the Queen Caroline affair, and the Reform Bill, the Whigs would blow hot and cold, stirring up their county meetings in Yorkshire, Northumberland, London, as benefited a popular party, but then recoiling from the democratic Frankenstein which they, and distress, and the agitators, had called into being.

Yet the pursuit of exploitable popular issues was indispensable to a party against which all the existing cards were stacked. George IV disliked the party of catholic emancipation, led by the censorious Grey, and including the unspeakable Brougham (defence counsel in the queen's trial). So long as the disparate Tory groups were held together by Liverpool's conciliatory skill, and by the spectre of red republicanism, the Whigs were unable to make a crushing parliamentary victory. They did, indeed, draw blood in lesser duels. Their most effective campaigns were fought for retrenchment and reduced taxes, pleasing to the 'waverers' and fringe groups of M.P.s. But the real support alive in the nation for the Whigs could not adequately be brought to bear in an unrepresentative Commons. Partly for this reason the party was committed as early as 1821 to a programme of 'moderate, practical and useful reform'. Indeed, the terms on which the Whigs were, hopefully, prepared to take office after Castlereagh's death in 1822 closely foreshadowed those on which Grey was to insist in 1830.

Whig fortunes are a story of running battles and dashed expectations, of remarkable party fortitude during prolonged adversity. Grey's flaccid leadership did not help — he was constantly in the country, perpetually threatening to abdicate but inconveniently failing quite to do so. Organised opposition began at last to falter at the time of Canning's ascendancy in the ministry (1823-7). 'Though the gentlemen opposite', said one Whig, 'are in office, we are in power, the measures are ours, but all the emoluments are theirs.' As rapport ripened into something more fruitful, party in the old post-war style seemed to be fast disappearing. Between 1829 and 1830, however, the old pattern was to be re-established. This complex story is here carefully untangled, with close attention devoted to the transforming effect of the deaths of the king and the liberal-Tory leaders, catholic emancipation, the tensions created by Wellington's assumption of office, and

by economic distress. One by one the obstacles barring the way to a Whig régime were destroyed, and the Whigs came to office, appropriately, on the crest of an irresistible popular wave.

Written with scholarly care and occasional wit, this book is an important contribution to the literature; it is nonetheless rather stolid reading, lacking graphic historical and biographical background, and being at times irritatingly mechanical in approach. The world of political ideas, of the Edinburgh reviewers, radical journalists and agitators, is neglected; the world shaken by a generation of revolutions and world war is hardly dragged, bloody, challenging and real, before us. But then these traumas impinged only to a limited extent upon the well-bred consciousness of contemporary Whiggery; and we shall be long indebted to Dr Mitchell for the massive industry, and appraising intelligence, with which he has illuminated that latter phenomenon.

D. P. CROOK

University of Queensland

AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND HISTORY

Vol. XIV, No. 2

August, 1968

Indonesia's *Gestapu*: the view from Moscow and Peking

J. M. VAN DER KROEF

Nauru, Phosphate and the Nauruans

MERZE TATE

Controlling Factors in Canadian - American Relations

ROBIN WINKS

The Overseas Indians: A Problem in Indian and Imperial Politics at the end of World War I

A. T. YARWOOD

Sources of the Australian Price Index: a note

SUSAN BAMBRICK

Book Reviews

Australian Political Chronicle

Price: \$1.50

Published three times yearly

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

St. Lucia, Queensland, 4067.
