



Book Reviews

The Marketing of Political Parties: Political Marketing at the 2005 British General Election

Darren G. Lilleker, Nigel A. Jackson and Richard Scullion (eds.)

Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2006, 269pp, paperback £14.99; hardback £55

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This edited collection of 11 chapters is driven by a single question: to what extent has politics, as a process, become marketised? It is a good question. It is given force and focus here through the device of examining a particular election through the marketing lens. Thus the book is organised into three sections: the political offering or product, political salesmanship and communication strategies, and the view of the ‘consumers’, the electorate.

The editors provide an accessible and genuinely useful introduction to the state of the art of political marketing research. They nicely set up what follows; a series of chapters which deal with, *inter alia*, analyses of the degree and type of market orientation of the parties, the value and use of branding in politics, the ‘marketing vs ideology’ dichotomy, the possibly differential nature of political and consumer choice and youth (dis)engagement with the campaign. It is a welcome book and one that all those who teach political campaigning will find valuable. It is to the editors’ and contributors’ credit that every chapter demonstrates a willingness to wrestle with the core question, and several with the underlying normative concern of just what happens to our politics if and as it is ‘marketised’.

Overall, this is an enthusiastic endorsement. However, within that one cannot escape the concerns that routinely bother the entire field of political marketing. The first is the added value question: what do we learn about the 2005 campaign that we did not already know? Much as I enjoyed the book, it is hard to imagine political scientists rushing to revise their explanatory paradigms; its value for them will lie in the descriptive detail rather than the approach. It is a persistent problem for political marketing scholars that while we insist that marketing runs deeper than election campaigns they continue to consume much of our focus. Second, is the analysis/prescription dichotomy; what are we trying to do here? Are we trying to develop more elegant theoretical constructs to analyse the political market; are we trying to understand what is really happening through an examination of what it is that parties and voters do; or are we looking for ways to encourage more



holistic, ethical, consumer-sensitive practices in politics? In truth all these approaches are evident simultaneously. This is part of the charm of political marketing research and part of its problem. New perspectives and spaces for enquiry are opened up, but too often they are curiously inward-looking, driven by a desire to demonstrate marketing value in some shape or form, rather than to focus on the really big question of what is happening to our politics.

To what extent is our politics marketised? It is a good question. However, it is potentially a great one, feeding into broad and urgent anxieties about the state of politics and society; about the depoliticisation of the public sphere, the essence of citizenship and consumerism, the proper relationship between the rulers and the ruled, the power of media in political affairs, and the power, ethics and limits of political persuasion. Ultimately, debates about whether some piece of party campaigning is marketing or packaging, sales or market oriented, are of interest only to anoraks. This book asks good and hard questions; it will help move us to the great ones.

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Britain's Pension Crisis — History and Policy

Hugh Pemberton, Pat Thane and Noel Whiteside (eds.)

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The 2008 centennial anniversary of the introduction of the Old Age Pensions Bill, which first established a state pension in the UK, is fast approaching. In the Bill's Second Reading debate in the House of Commons, Lloyd George was embarrassed by the new scheme's limitations, and was keen to stress that the proposals were a first step and not a final word. Nearly 100 years later, and the cycle of complex and muddled reforms continue.

The book is the product of a conference held at the British Academy in June 2005 to consider the publication of the final report by Lord Turner's Pensions Commission on the adequacy of pensions provision in response to what had

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