

reputation. Immediate responsibility for the scheme rested with Stewart and Kincaid; thus it constitutes a rare blot on their reputation also. For instance, when accused of sending off emigrants to Canada too late in the season, they claimed unconvincingly not to have taken account of the severity of the Canadian winter.

Unfortunately, the methodology and structure of this valuable book are flawed. The subject is eminently tailored to a thematic approach, but the author chooses instead to deal with each estate individually. Although understandable in terms of the writer's convenience and, perhaps, the interest of local historians, inevitably this leads to much unnecessary overlap and repetition.

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Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey, *From the corn laws to free trade: interests, ideas and institutions in historical perspective* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2006. Pp. xiii + 426. 37 figs. 29 tabs. ISBN 0262195437 Hbk. \$47.50/£30.95)

The postwar generation of nineteenth-century British historians of, for example, Asa Briggs, Sidney Checkland, and Harold Perkin, took for granted the importance of material self-interest in explaining political behaviour. One outcome of their marxist approach was W. O. Aydelotte's famous dataset on the 1841–7 Parliament. That Parliament was an obvious candidate for investigation, partly because it was sharply defined politically—in 1841, for the first time, almost every candidate was elected on a party rather than an independent ticket—while in 1846, the governing Conservative party split irrevocably following Prime Minister Peel's decision to attack Conservative economic interests by repealing the corn laws. Realizing, perhaps, that statistical inquiries were not ones in which they were likely to excel, but also because there did not seem to be a significant correlation between MPs' votes on repeal and their personal sources of income, historians during the last 30 years have abandoned largely the search for interest-based explanations, and have left the field to a posse of political scientists, most of whose work on corn law repeal passes unmentioned in conventional political histories. Not the least reason for welcoming Schonhardt-Bailey's landmark volume is that it provides a critical guide to this flourishing literature. Certainly no one should neglect her finely detailed and highly wrought contribution, which quite simply takes the subject onto a new plane of technical sophistication. It is overly repetitive, a consequence perhaps of so much having appeared previously in article form, but otherwise quite beautifully written.

It is impossible here to do more than sketch the main thesis. The book is not about *why* the corn laws were repealed, and there is little on the motives of key players like Peel and Russell. Rather it is about *how*—having decided on repeal himself—Peel managed to convert enough of his supporters (described as 'Peelites' to distinguish them from 'non-Peelite Conservatives'). By focusing not on MPs' private interests but on those of their constituents, and by calculating the latter in terms of income flows rather than (as in most previous analyses) capital stocks, Schonhardt-Bailey demonstrates triumphantly that landlords' economic interests were more diversified (meaning less dependent on agriculture) in the Peelites' constituencies than in those of non-Peelite Conservatives. Portfolio diversification led to a 'soft' as distinct from 'hard core' type of protectionism, and so rendered voters more susceptible to the arguments of the Anti Corn Law League, whose propaganda machine benefited hugely from the combination of an increasingly concentrated cotton sector (to provide organizational focus) and an increasingly diversified commercial and

manufacturing sector. Even more effective was the League's campaign to create new urban freeholder voters while getting protectionist voters struck off the register in county seats. So far so clear, but—as Schonhardt-Bailey points out—if Peelite MPs (many of whom represented boroughs) had been guided *solely* by their constituents' material interests, they would have supported Villiers's amendments for immediate repeal. A sticking-point was that, by voting on grounds of interest, Peelite Conservatives could be accused of acting as delegates, whereas their self-projection was to act as trustees for the nation as a whole. At this point, Schonhardt-Bailey turns from demand-side (or interest-based) explanations to supply-side (or ideas-based) explanations. In brief, her claim is that Peel managed to dress up a policy based on sectional selfishness as being in the national (and even the agricultural) interest, and so enabled Peelite MPs to reconcile repeal with conventional notions of trusteeship.

Schonhardt-Bailey's is a quest for 'the holy grail of politics—namely, a general theory of the interaction of the three "I"s" (meaning interests, ideas, and institutions)' (p. 8). Her expert and imaginative deployment to this end of such techniques as multinomial logistic regressions, computer-assisted content analysis, characteristic word recognition, and factor correspondence analysis deserves to be evaluated by a capable reviewer. As an historian rather than a political scientist, I wonder about some of her premises. For example, she argues that because protection was the 'core' Conservative policy, 'the definition of repeal required reinterpretation [by Peel] so that it could be seen to be compatible with Conservative ideology' (p. 42), whereas I would argue that there was no core Conservative ideology, the party having been divided politically and ideologically for many years. She believes that the party's divisions only set in with 'the abrupt reversal of the Peelites' (p. 6) following Peel's decision to repeal late in 1845, but she underplays divisions between liberal and ultra Tories dating from the 1820s, as well as the more specific revolts over social and economic policies in 1844. The most surprising omission is that of any reference to the Maynooth crisis; yet some historians would claim that the fundamental division in the party was religious, the crisis over repeal being epiphenomenal. Appendix 5 on the local newspapers available to different MPs is a marvel of thoroughness, yet might be seen as explanatory overkill. After all, was the conversion of the Peelites really such a 'puzzle'? Schonhardt-Bailey rejects as 'simplistic' the idea that Peelites acted as they did out of loyalty to Peel, yet it remains a striking fact that 86 per cent of what today would be called the 'payroll vote' supported repeal.

All such questions aside, this is the most invigorating contribution to an old debate that has appeared for a very long time. Let us hope that it attracts historians back to a mode of investigation they have neglected for too long.

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Deborah McDonald, *Clara Collet, 1860–1948: an educated working woman* (London: Routledge, 2004. Pp. xiv + 256. 13 figs. ISBN 0713002417 Hbk. £80/\$145; ISBN 0713040602 Pbk. £28.99/\$51.95)

In the acknowledgements to this first full-length biography of Clara Collet, the author thanks her subject. 'I hope I have done her justice', she writes, 'and at last placed her amongst those inspirational women who have helped to change the course of history' (p. x). Yet the following pages fail to convince this reviewer that Collet (always Clara to McDonald) deserves such an accolade. Collet was a highly