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## Review [untitled]

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tish historical research. Not only has Gordon Donaldson been the author of significant books, articles, and reviews (some of which latter have left a firm impression on those authors whose books have been dealt with as only Professor Donaldson could have done) but he has also served the public sector of historical study in the Scottish record office, acted as first editor of the *Scottish Historical Review* after its revival in 1947 (a revival, it may be said, with which Professor Donaldson had much to do), and been the mentor to almost two generations of students and scholars, some of whom are represented in this *Festschrift*. Given the parochial treatment which Scottish history as a discipline has for long received within the larger curriculum of British, including even Scottish, universities, it may be said without very much exaggeration that Professor Donaldson's writings and, more properly, the standards which he has imposed, consciously or unconsciously, upon his co-workers in the field have helped significantly in broadening interest and raising the quality of scholarship of the discipline to new levels of achievement.

The range of the contributions is so various as to make a full summary of each impossible within the limits of a short review. While the quality of all the essays is very high, certain of them more closely touch upon Professor Donaldson's area of particular interest, namely, the field of Scottish ecclesiastical history during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus the essays of the two editors as well as those of James Kirk and Maurice Lee deal with topics in Scottish religious history, while T.M.Y. Manson in an essay on Shetland in the sixteenth century touches upon an historic area which, possibly because of his Shetland descent, has also attracted the scholarly attention of Professor Donaldson. Professor Denys Hay discusses the influences of the Italian Renaissance on Scotland, while aspects of social history are covered by the contributions of John Bannerman, Edward J. Cowan, John Durkan, and Margaret H.B. Sanderson. T.L. Christensen and Athol Murray deal, respectively, with the tribulations of a sixteenth-century Scotish exile in Denmark and the finances of the royal household in the reign of James V (1513-1543). There are appreciations of various aspects of Professor Donaldson's life and scholarly career by Thomas Lothian and John Imrie.

The scholarly richness of the offerings does credit to the editors and is worthy of its honorific.

*Boston University*

SIDNEY A. BURRELL

D. Hywel Davies. *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1983. Pp. ix. 286. \$27.50.

It was only in the 1960's that, along side its counterpart in Scotland, Welsh Nationalism forced its way to center stage of British political life. Perhaps what is most remarkable about the early years of the Welsh Nationalist Party—a story told by Hywel Davies with sensitivity and considerable insight—is that it survived. Indeed, in

many ways, it was not a political party at all, in the established sense. It failed to contest many parliamentary or local elections. When it did so, its organization was shown to be weak and its electioneering skills virtually non-existent. The rewards at the polls were meagre. Elections were fought principally as a means of recruiting new converts.

Founded in 1925 by a small band of intellectuals—an unlikely revolutionary vanguard—the party was, as its opponents claimed, a cultural association of “poets, preachers and teachers.” The party—more accurately, the nationalist movement—emerged not in a vacuum, but in the circumstances of the years of disillusion following World War I, a war fought, according to Prime Minister David Lloyd George, on behalf of small nations. For nationalists, Lloyd George himself personified the limits of what the political system offered to Wales. The one-time leader of a self-proclaimed Welsh nationalist faction within the Liberal Party in Wales, went on to success at Westminster, and to become the great war leader and jingoistic champion of Empire.

The example of Ireland was very much in the minds of founders of Welsh Nationalism. Yet, unlike the Irish Republicans, Welsh nationalists were troubled and uncertain about the methods to be used in pursuing their objective of Welsh self-government. Party ideologists were intent on rejecting “English” modes of thought and “English” politics. Despite this, the fear of involvement in militant action on the part of a membership brought up in homes and communities steeped in the values of respectability and humility as expounded by the Non-conformist Protestant churches placed Welsh Nationalism very much in the web of political culture typical of the petit bourgeoisie of England, as well as Wales.

What was distinctive about the Welsh-speaking intelligentsia was the common bond of the Welsh language. With the dawn of the 1920's, it became apparent that an era had ended. The class which had provided the leadership to religious dissent and the movement for political reform associated with the Liberal Party, now found itself assigned to a status of social and political irrelevancy. The plight of the language brought on by the associated forces of modernity and anglicization, seemed to sum up the threat to a whole way of life. Thus it was the struggle to save the language rather than self-government for its own sake, which motivated nationalists.

The years 1920 to 1945 must be viewed as a period of unremitting political failure for the Welsh Nationalist Party. Yet, if the party is viewed as a focus of a political movement—a current of ideas—the contribution of these years, as Hywel Davies makes clear, was more significant. Led by a handful of visionaries, Welsh Nationalists sought to separate themselves from the dominant trends in Welsh political and social thought. The very success of the party in separating itself from the political mainstream is one telling reason for its political failure. It was a party of “amateurs”, quite lacking in political experience, and largely unsuited by temperament and upbringing to the regular routine work required of its activists by a political party.

In ideological or cultural terms, the impact of the party's existence was more tell-

ing. By the end of the 1930's, the nationalist vision had become the leitmotif of the most dynamic elements on the Welsh-language literary scene. The majority of the leading writers and poets of the post-1945 era were to owe their inspiration to nationalism. In turn, this vision of an independent Wales and a vigorous minority culture was passed on to the next generation, which would have fewer inhibitions about militant political action.

The party's inspirational figure in its earlier years was Saunders Lewis; a convert to Roman Catholicism, much influenced by French radical conservative thought, and particularly the ideas of Barrés and Maurras. The "papism" of Lewis and a small group within the leadership of a predominantly Protestant party in a profoundly Protestant society did little to win over popular support. Such was Lewis' intellectual predominance that his thinking went largely unchallenged despite its lack of fit with mainstream political thinking.

It may be claimed, with justice, that the ideology forged by Lewis was out of keeping with the needs of the times. However, the independent track followed by Lewis and his colleagues contributed enormously to the ability of subsequent generations of nationalist leaders and intellectuals to forge a distinctive world-view, which would prove sufficiently strong to hold together a resilient nationalist sub-culture in the face of the onslaught of the age of media hype and elections fought largely on television.

Hywel Davies' book has been some time in the making, but the result is a most worthwhile addition to a scant literature (in English, at least). The author tells the story of an often obscure and bewildering social group with fairness and imagination. One disappointment is the absence of a more detailed treatment of the thinking of nationalist intellectuals and the writers they inspired. However, there are other books which do this and none which focus in such detail on the early years of Welsh nationalism. An understanding of these years, and of the fate of the nationalist idea in Wales at a time when the English-speaking world was understandably hostile to nationalism in all its guises, is important to a broader view of the events of later years, when minority nationalism was to become a significant movement of political opposition throughout the western world.

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