

framework for discussion of a policy issue which has generated more heat than light in Australia over the last few years.

John Tydeman's paper on the prospects for teletext and videotext in Australia presents a case for policy making based on ongoing technological, social and industrial assessments of those technologies. Once more the theme of research-based policy making emerges. John Gillam's paper on organizing for access to the Australian domestic communication satellite presents an analysis of the background to the Australian satellite initiative. While events have passed this paper by, one wonders how Australian politicians and policy makers might plan for the development of "new communication carriers and innovative services". It will be interesting to see whether systematic research will be able to contribute to the encouragement of innovations which retain the best features of Australia's present telecommunications infrastructure.

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**Australia Since the Coming of Man by Russel Ward**

(Lansdowne Press, Sydney, 1982 edition) pp. 254, \$20.00.

This is neither a text for tertiary students nor a specialist study of an aspect of Australian history, though elsewhere (in *A Nation for a Continent* and in *The Australian Legend* respectively) Russel Ward has offered us both of these. In the book under review the author appears to have the general reader in mind. It has a quickly-moving and relaxed narrative style, lavish illustrations, and large-format pages in a hardcover edition.

What distinguishes this volume is, according to Ward, three themes "barely mentioned in other general histories of Australia — the doings of Aborigines, of explorers and of the female half of the Australian people". The first chapter covers the millenia of settlement prior to 1770 (a date at which most comparable histories begin), surveying the evidence and speculations of the prehistorians and archaeologists concerning Aboriginal society before white settlement. By the final chapter the Aborigines are still prominent in Ward's story, with some amelioration of their disgraceful treatment by Europeans occurring in the 1960s and 1970s.

Ward is commendably open regarding his biases in his interpretation of historical evidence. He declares:

I am for the weak not the strong, the poor not the rich, the exploited many not the select few. I believe reason has done more for mankind that religion; and that reformist and radical political parties have done more for Australia than conservative ones . . . I hate particularly conservatives who smash constitutional traditions instead of jealously guarding them.

*Caveat emptor.* This reviewer's concern about the book lies not in its approach or biases, but in the subsequent handling of material. It is as if Ward wishes merely to confirm the views of readers sharing his biases and

to cause those who do not to put his book aside. Little effort seems to be made to exercise that supremely valuable characteristic of historical scholarship — forcing the reader to confront the complexities of people and events in their historical context where such a confrontation challenges overly simplified interpretations.

The chapter covering the last decade or so seems to illustrate this. Ward's discussion of the rise and fall of the Whitlam government (the Federal opposition parties are described as behaving "more like a gang of fascist thugs than responsible politicians in a democratic country" in 1974) is really a polemic. It is all too shrill and binary — reaction versus reform, men versus women, Aborigines versus European. The defeat of the Coalition parties in 1972 and their return for seven years of government after 1975 cannot convincingly be described or explained in Ward's overly simple framework. Perhaps it is unfair to judge a book on one chapter. But it is the period for which most general readers have independent evidence and their own interpretations to compare with those of Ward.

For readers of this journal, no special emphasis is given to the history of invention, the diffusion of innovations (whether Australian or foreign in origin), or to the social and economic consequences of technological change. Blainey's *Tyranny of Distance* remains the only major attempt to interpret Australian history using as a theme the impact of technological change (a sequence of transport innovations that lowered costs and widened markets).

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**Australia: A Client State.** by Greg Crough and Ted Wheelwright  
(Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1982) pp. 255, \$7.95.

This work is one of a series of monographs and reports emanating from the Transnational Corporations Research Project at the University of Sydney. Its central theme is that the "explosion of a few hundred transnational corporations" (p. 11) from a few developed countries, viz. the USA, UK, France, Western Germany, Japan and Switzerland, has created a New Corporate World Economic Order (NCWEO) which is concerned with global rather than national organisation and can largely insulate itself from the operation of market forces. Further, that the post-war waves of foreign investment have locked Australia (and many other countries) into the NCWEO; and that this has meant that "the power of the nation state to control its own economic destiny has been gravely weakened" (p. 130).

In Chapters 1 to 4, which constitute the (untitled) Part One, Crough and Wheelwright set out the basis of their claim that Australia has become a client state of transnational capitalism. Chapter 1 documents the phases of post-war foreign investment into — successively — manufacturing, mining and finance and land ownership; and the policy responses (or, as the authors see it, lack of such responses) to foreign investment. Both the Vernon (1965) and Jackson (1975) Reports are commended for their far-