

groups). The degree of government, let alone public, scrutiny and comment was appallingly limited by today's standards, due in equal parts to a lack of interest and expertise within Papua New Guinea and Australia at that time. Labor relations dominated a lot more of the department's attention.

The longer-term consequences of the mine's beginnings for the evolution of the provincial government system in Papua New Guinea, for the people who lived around the mine, and for the renegotiation of the original mining agreement are dealt with in the two concluding chapters. The volume ends with the author assessing the various judgments that have been made of the origins of the crisis. His own judgment is more prosaic and circumscribed: "if blame must be allocated, it should attach less to Australian individuals than to Australian principles, the transcendent value of the nation-state, and the value of land as a commodity. The long-term tragedy was that these principles survived Papua New Guinea's independence, making it all too easy for landowners to be ignored until they turned to violence" (203).

An early (1968) report by the noted Bougainville anthropologist Douglas Oliver to Conzinc Rio Tinto Australia is included as an appendix to the volume. This is valuable material, and it is striking how similar the issues that arise in the context of contemporary Melanesian mining are to those that Oliver described for Bougainville in late 1968. The industry may have, as it professes, learnt what the lessons of Bougainville are, but the identification of the issues does not necessarily mean that their resolution is straightforward.

This book provides insights into late colonial history, but it also does much more. It provides a timely warning to policymakers everywhere that the value of legislation and regulation is limited to the extent to which these laws are widely held to be legitimate, fair, and just, particularly by those who are governed by them.

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Australia and the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century, by Roger C Thompson. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1998. ISBN 1-875606-54-8, xi + 304 pages, map, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, A\$50.

It has been an interesting experience, reading Roger Thompson's *Australia and the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century* interspersed with reports from Fiji of the attempt by George Speight and his henchmen to seize power in Fiji. At the time of writing, the situation remains unresolved—the hostages are still held in the parliamentary compound, Speight and the military leaders are both saying "Pick me" to the Great Council of Chiefs, pictures of downtown Suva look indistinguishable from those from Dili a few months ago, tourism is down, the sugar mills are silent, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara has withdrawn to Lakeba, the west of Viti Levu is threatening to secede, and the future of former cabinet ministers is as uncertain as that of the leaders of the (attempted) coup.

This juxtaposition has been a reminder that imperialism is broader

than colonialism, and that Australia's influence in the Pacific Islands ranged well beyond those areas for which it had formal responsibility. Fiji might have been a British colonial possession but it has been, as Thompson reminds us, "a virtual Australian economic colony" (1).

The effective cut-off date for this book is late 1997, which excludes the Fiji constitution now under challenge. There is enough, however, to see how the hand of Australian business—most notably the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR), but also the shipping, trading, and retailing interests of firms like Burns Philp, W R Carpenter, and Morris Hedstrom—had a decisive influence not only on Fiji's economic development but on the demographic, social, and political structures that represent the contested ground on which the current conflict is taking place. The power of CSR, not only in securing favorable commercial conditions for its sugar operations, but also its leverage on government and effective veto over the diversification of Fiji's agricultural economy, has been well documented before. Britain was concerned to protect indigenous Fijians and yet to have sufficient economic activity to ensure "development" while minimizing aid; there was a consequent reluctance to challenge CSR's economic dominance and the foundations of a society that balanced precariously on Ratu Sukuna's three-legged stool, for which indigenous Fijians provided land, Indo-Fijians provided labor, and Europeans provided capital and managerial expertise.

The current crisis has to be set against the land and labor policies that underpinned the interests of CSR

and a colonial inheritance of politics predicated on the resulting plural society. Despite constant underlying tensions and occasional eruptions of conflict, the situation was managed by the colonial power as arbiter; however, postcolonial constitutions have founded on the struggle between democracy and indigenous rights and the weight of individual ego and political ambition. In 2000, as in 1987, it would seem that Australia's diplomatic protests and economic sanctions are unlikely to endure beyond a mandatory period in the international sin-bin of Commonwealth and regional isolation. As this book shows, Australia's strategic and economic interests are so closely integrated into the economic and political fabric of the region that a coup is no more likely to have an enduring effect than the Rabuka-led coup of 1987, or current secessionism and failures of governance in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

Australia and the Pacific Islands is primarily a study of government policy and implementation, as well as of economic relationships, rather than the domestic histories of island states. It builds on Thompson's earlier *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific*. Despite its modest length for such a large subject, the author has resisted the temptation to write what might be a work of synthesis from the publications of others in favor of extensive original research of his own in widely scattered archives and libraries. Apart from separate chapters on the Australian Territory of New Guinea from 1914 to 1939 and the decolonization of Papua New Guinea, the organization is essentially chronological, with one to two decades per chapter in

most cases, and a focus that spreads beyond Papua New Guinea (the predominant concern throughout) to Nauru, the New Hebrides–Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Fiji. The nature of the book, with its broad focus and long time-span, disguises the amount of research involved, and the insight that has been gleaned from years of research. It is a pity, then, that Thompson has not been well served by his publishers: not all works cited in the Notes appear in the Bibliography; enough names are misspelled to be irritating (for example, Oscar for Oskar Spate, Tupoulina for Tupouniua, Barnaban for Banaban); and the book is well written but not well constructed—the review copy disintegrated during its first reading.

Australia's role in regional organizations is touched on only briefly; there is little here on the former South Pacific Commission or the South Pacific Forum, or organizations like the Forum Shipping Line and the Forum Fisheries Agency, to which Australia has made a contribution. An even more surprising omission is SPARTECA, the regional agreement that provides a framework for preferential trade with island states. For those wanting a concise account of the regional preoccupations of Australian governments over the century, or a starting point for some more detailed study, *Australia and the Pacific Islands* will serve very well. In the detail, there is little that is new in the evidence or its interpretation, and that is to be expected and not a criticism, given the nature of the task. As an act of synthesis, however, in exploring themes by time as well as place, and the discussion of the role of officials as well as politicians in policymaking, the

book makes an important contribution to the historiography.

The book opens with the declaration, "The Pacific islands have long fascinated some Australians," and the outcome of those fascinations in official circles, commerce, and missionary organizations is the subject of the book, even if it is not always clear just how far the matters under discussion have actually engaged the attention of the Australian public as distinct from the Australian government. The author makes clear that his focus is on government policy; that said, those seeking a more populist history might wonder about the influence of Fosters' Lager, Victoria Bitter, rugby and rugby league, Qantas, Travelodge Hotels, Australian tourists, and ABC radio and television. These are influences that are more difficult to tease out, and more subtle in their impact, but they all have their impact on Pacific Islands societies as well as on the perceptions of the region's peoples of their large and powerful neighbor, and their definitions of their own perceptions and ambitions.

Australia and the Pacific Islands brings together research and understanding pursued over the best part of three decades. It will serve a general readership as well as undergraduates in universities and the new millennium's public servants and policymakers who seek an understanding of the past in coping with a troubled present—now the prime minister of Solomon Islands has also been taken hostage—and planning for an uncertain future. In the twenty-first century, Australia may be engaged in regional relationships with nations where political instability is endemic, governments lack a capacity to govern or deliver

services, and the strengthening of civil society will present a continuing challenge—a challenge in part derived from Australia's own previous involvement in the region.

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Strategies for Sustainable Development: Experiences from the Pacific, edited by John Overton and Regina Scheyvens. London and New York: Zed Books, 1999. ISBN cloth, 1-85649-641-4; paper, 1-85649-642-2; xiv + 306 pages, tables, maps, bibliography, index. Paper, \$27.50.

Pacific Development Sustained: Policy for Pacific Environments, by Colin Hunt. Pacific Policy Paper 32, National Centre for Development Studies. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press for Australian National University, 1998. ISBN 07315-2383-0; x + 163 pages, tables, bibliography. A\$20.

For readers wishing to cover the widest spectrum of opinion on Pacific Islands economic development, these two books complement each other rather well. Hunt's *Pacific Development Sustained* applies conventional economic theory to systems that have so far failed to respond to policies generated by such theory, while the authors of Overton and Scheyvens' edited collection of *Strategies for Sustainable Development* recognize implicitly that this theory is insufficient to deal with the region's growing economic, social, and ecological problems. Both books take the ambiguous notion of "sustainability"

as a basic value of the equally ambiguous notion of "development," but while *Development Sustained* is primarily concerned with sustaining national economies within the existing global system, *Strategies* emphasizes local social perspectives and experience in dealing with problems ultimately deriving from participation in this system. This approach is characterized by a chapter on "Pacific Islands Livelihoods," the dynamic relationships between communities and their resources, as fundamental to development for the benefit of local people.

Both books accept that conventional economics have failed to provide either sustainable national economies or sustainable livelihoods, but while *Development Sustained* suggests more rigorous applications of the theory, *Strategies* challenges it. Unfortunately the introductory chapters of *Strategies*, intended to contextualize the case studies that make up most of the book, are not always equal to this task. Physical and human geography is well summarized, but the chapter on colonial history neglects the consideration of indigenous political and economic systems that is essential to the "inside-out" perspective intended for the book. When "Culture and Society" follows as a separate chapter, it reinforces the complaint made in the introduction that this subject is "a junior partner in the development coalition." This chapter also seems to depend more on idealism than evidence when it asserts that "sustainable societies" must be equitable and just, considering the longevity of some very inequitable societies in the Pacific Islands, as elsewhere. Other introduc-