Books


This is a welcome paper-back edition of the original published in 1962. Many will find particular joy in Russell Drysdale's drawings, although these and the text fully complement each other.

Innumerable books have been written of the heat, aridity and grandeur of Australia's inland and the ways of its inhabitants, human and animal, but not since Joseph Furphy's Such Is Life have the interminable miles between camp and camp been traversed in so lively a compendium of yarns, scientific observations, sensitive description, scraps of history, provocative opinions and laughter as in Journey Among Men.

The "journey" is a zoological expedition of some 10,000 miles around Australia, west coast and inland, by two teams of hard-working scientists. Of the "men" encountered, inevitably few, Marshall and Drysdale make human oases in an empty land. An eminent Professor of Zoology somewhat noted for irascible sallies against human ignorance and folly, Marshall here indulges a genial tolerance for these men of the outback fashioned into oddities or sages by the pressures of endurance and isolation.

Several pages devoted to the "mystique" of the bush pub, to the ceremonial ecstasy of the first beer after "days of dusty trails," are lyrical enough to shatter the convictions of the most rigid teetotaller. These tiny pubs which "verandahed about, stand on the plains like ships at sea" are the "real social centres . . . disseminators of news and mail . . . where affairs of the district are decided . . . and bargains sealed with a drink."

Along with his lusty humor, Marshall is blessed with rare appreciation of nature's ways, her forms, colors and movement, that inspire him at times to notable writing.

On the track to Marble Bar is Gallery Hill, "an extraordinary granite outcrop . . . whose great boulders are engraved with hundreds of petroglyphs by long-gone generations of Aboriginal artists . . . The granite weathered and butchered by nature maintains a curious order and delicacy and rises like architecture out of the plain. The carvings appear almost golden in color for they are hammered into and beneath the age-old patina of red brown that covers the boulders . . . One can picture them (the brown men) squatting or standing high on the pinnacles, pounding and hammering into the granite, the sweat running down the ochre of their foreheads, grunting in time to the rhythm of the blows, or with voices lifted in an age-old chant. Men of the stone age, creating a great gallery of art. It is conceivable that while the builders of Chartres were raising their sublime creation to the glory of God, these children of the dawn were engraving their vision of the creation of mankind on a cathedral wrought by the elements from the face of the earth, a vision open to the wide light of the sky, to the singing winds of the desert and the sparse and cooling rain."

Parts of the book, Marshall says, were written as articles for the Lon-
don Observer. If many of the geological, zoological and historical facts, the debunking of fantasies — and the caustic comments — were for the benefit of the benighted Britisher, most of them are illuminating to us ignorant Australians. Journey Among Men is not just another “away-from-it-all” book. It brings home once again how little we know of our continent.

Though the future of our nation is decided among the masses of men in cities and towns, the vast, harsh land at our back doors still presents its challenge to be known and understood and put expertly to human use.

That challenge will some day be met, confidently, by the Australian people in a world at peace.

J.T.


"THIS book gives an introductory analysis of the influences affecting the level of national production, income and employment with particular reference to Australia . . . the ideas here discussed are those stemming from J. M. Keynes' The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money." (p. ix.)

Both Keynes and Marx were on common ground in assessing that "historical experience indicates that there is no inherent tendency for a capitalist economy to settle in a position of full employment equilibrium" (p. 12), although there is only formal similarity between their explanations for this phenomenon, both in the long run and over the shorter trade cycle.

It is a pity that Prof. Cameron does not examine the longer run implications of Keynes' theory in the Australian context. Keynes suggested that the marginal efficiency of capital (roughly, the anticipated rate of profit) fell in the long run due to the progressive exhaustion of the opportunities for the utilisation of capital goods. Moreover, because of the "fundamental psychological law" that only part of an increase in income is spent on consumption, the increasing non-consumed income (savings) does not find sufficiently attractive investment possibilities because of the decline in the marginal efficiency of capital, leading to a lower level of income and employment.

In a formal sense, this is similar to the long-term marxian tendency, although Marx did not recognise a community propensity to consume but a class propensity: the working class consumed all their income whereas the capitalist class accumulated, and the rising organic composition of capital (ratio of expenditure on means of production to that on wages) implied a falling rate of profit. In the keynesian case, the decline in the rate of profit proceeded from a purely technological base; in the marxian, from the relations of production.

Professor Cameron might usefully have examined the keynesian proposition since there is debate in keynesian and marxian circles about the conformity of these theories with experience. An exhaustive study by the marxist J. Gillman, The Falling Rate of Profit, suggests that it has not fallen historically; in this century the
counteracting tendencies pointed to by Marx have proved the stronger force.

Over the shorter period trade cycle, Keynes' explanation did not approach the logical consistency of Marx's. Keynes' fluctuations were due to erratic movements in prospective yields on investments (expectations), an explanation which offered little scope for development by post-keynesians.

On the basis of the keynesian concepts, however, an alternative theory has been developed in terms of the interaction of the multiplier and the accelerator. In this, a multiplied income increase derives from a constant or increasing level of autonomous investment, and the increased consumer demand created by the income increments induces further investment (the acceleration principle). The boom continues until the full employment ceiling is reached where the accelerator operates in reverse, causing the downturn.

While Prof. Cameron cites this as "among the more important of the special theories of industrial fluctuations" (p. 86), he notes that it too has proved theoretically deficient; the explanation of the upturn is unclear, as is the explanation of the level of "autonomous" investment from which it derives. Moreover, the statistically calculated acceleration coefficient of 5 for advanced capitalist countries would have caused fluctuations of greater magnitude than have been experienced in Australia.

A key role is assigned in the model to the rate of interest, for Keynes assumed that investment proceeds up to the point where the marginal efficiency of capital equals the rate of interest. (pp. 71-3.) Historically, however, it seems that the rate of interest has had little effect on the level of investment because companies increasingly are financing investment from internal sources. Prof. Cameron does note these objections to the keynesian proposition but seems to discount them; "... a firm which finances its investment by an equity issue may not think the interest rate is important, but . . . its future equity issues will not be successful if those profits fail to match prevailing interest rates." (p. 74.) Nor will they if profits fail to match the prevailing average rate of profit.

In Australia, given the preponderant importance of non-interest bearing sources for investment this would seem the more general statement, so that the opportunity cost of an investment project (p. 72) becomes not the rate of interest but the average rate of profit. This deduction proceeds from a different understanding of interest from the keynesian. Keynes had to assume for his interest model that all investment is financed by borrowed funds so that interest becomes the reward for not hoarding. In the marxian definition, which seems to accord more with experience, interest is the reward for lending and determines the division of surplus value into interest and profits, a purely quantitative distinction which has become institutionalised into a qualitative one.

From a marxist point of view, the strength of the book lies in the manner in which it reveals the forces undermining the drive for economic rationality in capitalist society. In different ways the main concern of both Keynes and Marx was to reveal the anarchic and chaotic nature of the workings of capitalist society. Keynes, of course, thought these maladjust-
ments could be remedied within the framework of the capitalist system, and to some extent the application of his theories has modified its workings. Despite the growing role of the state, the separation and contradictions between savings and investment plans have not been overcome, and many of Keynes' suggested palliatives (e.g., higher taxation on the rich to lower their propensity to save) have not been effected.

Marxists will argue that it is because of the very nature of capitalist society that such measures cannot be introduced, and therefore that the triumph of economic rationality will be postponed till the advent of socialism.

HENRY CARROLL.

HISTORY JOURNALS, Some comments by W. A. Wood.

In the June issue of the journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, John Cobley analyses for the first time the real crimes of the first fleet convicts.

Examining the sentences passed on 646 of them, Mr. Cobley finds nothing sensational. The convicts weren't village Hampdens or desperate murderers. The biggest total was scored by "simple theft" (247), "highway robbery" (48) and the stealing of various animals (61). All but 24 of the 646 were thieves of some kind—a small kind. As Mr. Cobley says, "highway robbery" could mean stealing a silk handkerchief worth a shilling. A hundred and ninety of the thieves were lucky to escape being hanged. Their death sentences had been commuted to transportation. Two of these were guilty of "sacrilege" as well as theft, having stolen the silver from Magdalen College chapel, Oxford. The silver was a good deal more sacred than the lives of the poor to the ruling classes of those days.

So Australia it turns out, was founded by small thieves. The big operators, like Macarthur, came soon afterward to steal the country itself, and get their photos onto today's two-dollar bills.

One of these thieves (of labor power as well as land) was the Rev. Samuel Marsden, and Michael Saclier in another article draws attention to a little-known manuscript in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, till recently uncatalogued but now, says Mr. Saclier, known to be Marsden's work.

The MS confirms that Marsden was opposed to Macarthur—he was in England during the Rum Rebellion—but he would have backed Bligh. Marsden notes how deeply entrenched were the Rum profiteers, saying that any Governor who took them on would find himself up against the "private interests" of men whose "active minds would suggest a thousand ways to make him feel the weight of their resentment."

Why Sydney's Archbishop Loane, newly enthroned, should have singled out such an unsavoury character as Marsden for praise is a puzzle. The "flogging parson" stands out as a truly hateful character even in the rugged times he lived in. He had a particular hatred for the Irish, from whom the Archbishop is descended and Mr. Saclier offers us a specimen of the "bilious outpourings of hatred and fear which drop from the gentle parson."
Marsden refers to... "the Irish Nation, who are the most wild, ignorant and savage race that were ever favored with the Light of Civilisation" and demands a continued ban on the Catholic religion. If Dr. Loane is really proud to count such a man among the church's founding fathers in N.S.W., the rest of us can only say he is welcome to him.

MOST important of the new research articles in May, 1966, Labor History, bulletin of the Australian Society for the Study of Labor History, is the overdue re-telling by West Australian historian, B. K. de Garis of the story of "West Australia's Eureka."

On May 4, 1919, the Wharf Lumpers' Union of Fremantle defeated attempts by the Government, and an armed body of police, to unload a "black" ship with scab labor. They did this with the loss of Thomas Edwards, a waterside worker killed in the struggle. But they forced the resignation of the Premier (Sir) Hal. Colebatch.

Unskilled workers were able to score a clear-cut win over an anti-Labor Government and get rid of it. Such incidents are too rare in our history, and much too rarely talked about. As de Garis says, "Thomas Edwards was soon forgotten." One of Labor History's tasks is to see that such workers are not forgotten.

FIVE JOURNEYS FROM JAKARTA, by Maslyn Williams. Collins, 382 pp. $4.50.

INDONESIA, comprising 3000 islands, inhabited by some 100 million people, is our nearest neighbor in South East Asia. Most Australians knew nothing of these people until 20-25 years ago. Particularly since the mid 1950's, due to the Federal Liberal Government's foreign and domestic policies, we have been fed on a crude fare of "threats from the colored north" and the "civilised white outpost" concept.

Unfortunately there have been too few books, good, indifferent or even bad, to cast more than a glimmer of light on the subject. Certainly not enough to try and bridge more than a century of neglect.

Maslyn Williams gives us the opportunity to gain some understanding of the Indonesian people. Using Jakarta as a base, he travelled (in early 1965) off the by-ways to Sulawesi, Bali, Sumatra, Java, Irian Barat.

Written in a very frank first person, the author reveals a sincere affection for the people; "I felt a great love... and sense of oneness with this old man and all the people round about." He enjoys everyday conversation with the coolie, the vendor, the peasant, the new settler, their pride in living free from Dutch oppression; is amazed at the long standing and highly skilled culture. Comparing a performance of the classical Balinese Legong Dance, he ponders that, having recently seen high class western ballet (in New York) "I was vaguely ashamed that I had thought the others (western) graceful." The Balinese dancers were 12 years old!

The writer vividly brings to life the people's everyday activities—at the markets, on the streets, "gotong roy-ong" (communal efforts), cockfighting, a vicious bloodsport at the fair; the perseverance to overcome illiteracy, to build a widespread medical service, develop new industries.
What were Mr. Williams' reasons for such a trip? "I am going to look for a truth which will satisfy me" and "I do not wish to accept any more ready-made judgments thrust upon me by professional politicians and glib commentators."

Does he succeed? Find his truth? Shed the "ready-made judgments?" Nearly half way through the book (p. 166) he admits he still "becomes confused" and even on the last page bar one (p. 381) "I could see, miserably, only long bleak vistas of my own ignorance."

But one cannot completely agree with Mr. Williams' pessimistic appraisal of himself. His objectivity and humanity seem to be much stronger than this negative self-appraisal warrants. His journeys are not superficial but deep and probing, though, of course, correct, or clear and simple results do not always easily come even from such a basically sound approach. But come they do.

While he faithfully records, recognises and, I believe, condemns the retarding and oppressive 350 years of Dutch colonial rule, he either does not recognise or understand the advent of the newer, somewhat more subtle post-war colonialism that has developed from the very forces that spawned the now disintegrated colonial empires.

In Five Journeys a few communists are met, and a fair bit of anti-communism unveiled. Maybe some things have been even prophetic. For example, the surprise of the author, noting the strength and influence of the PKI, learning first hand accounts of the wrecking (by Islamic students) of the Communist Youth Organisation's building in Malang. And the communists were defeated in labor union elections (by well-organised Islamic groups) in Sourabaya's largest iron foundry.

A skin buyer comments: "The communists have some good ideas and they work hard, but they should not shame the rest of the Indonesian people with their childish demonstrations." (p. 261.)

General Nasution was then organisational head of the National Front, in charge of all the regular and volunteer fighting forces, police, organised work force and amateur spying systems. He thus became a symbol of strength, and well placed for the anti-communist forces. General Nasution is "a nice man, a religious man, generous and fair in all his dealings." The author meets Lukman, second top communist, who came from the Dutch hell camp in New Guinea during the war, to Australia with his mother, now buried in N.S.W. He revisited her grave in 1963. "A simple, decent man, more heart than mind." Now executed by Nasution's forces.

Are the communists crushed completely? For a movement that was primarily responsible for Sukarno proclaiming the 1945 Independence, that organised peasants for land reform and developed the largest national trade union organisations, there is still a base to begin anew. But there are bitter lessons to be learned.

Whatever the politics, the dreams and tensions, Maslyn Williams reveals the people of Indonesia. Getting to know them through his book can be a thoroughly enjoyable experience for everyone and stimulate desire for further knowledge and contact.

Mannie Burnham.

This book poses, and attempts to answer, some questions about the origin and purpose of the International Brigades, how they fared, how today's survivors view their participation in the fight of the Spanish people.

The author pays tribute to the motives of the thousands of mostly young men who flocked to Spain from many countries of the world to help defend the democratically elected Government. He acknowledges the heroic fight they waged in all the major battles—from the crucial defence of Madrid in November 1936 to the final struggle on the Ebro River almost three years later. Their numbers were small, their losses in dead and wounded in proportion huge.

Much is made all through the book of the difficulties and differences that existed between the various nationalities composing the Brigades, and between the Brigades and the Spanish Government and command.

It is certainly true there were differences, there was grumbling, there were opposing policies and ideologies. For the early months there was no unified command, no single strategy. In addition to that part of the old army which remained loyal, the Socialists organised and commanded their own militia forces; so did the Anarchists and the Communists, and it was only the urgent needs of the war that eventually brought a unified army and unified command. Had this existed at the beginning, the outcome could well have been different.

As the war dragged on disillusionment grew, the weak and the weary found continuing defeats unbearable, division and distrust grew. It was naive to think, as so many of us did, that the fine international outlook inspiring the Brigades automatically made for smooth and efficient running of armies. In spite of these handicaps, discipline remained high and fighting spirit good.

Much of what Brome records is obviously colored by his own beliefs. Perhaps the outstanding example is found in Chapter 2, “Origin of the Brigades”. He quotes from a book, I was a Spy for Stalin, written by one Krivitsky (alias Ginsberg), allegedly Chief of Soviet Military Intelligence in Western Europe. According to this, Moscow decided that movements of volunteers to Spain must be secretly policed by the OGPU, informers planted to weed out suspected spies, members whose opinions were not strictly orthodox eliminated, and reading matter and conversation supervised.

That any meetings made such decisions is extremely doubtful, but certainly the alleged decisions were not carried out, as can be vouched for by any Australian who saw service in the Brigade.

There are many similar unauthentic tales. One mentions Charlotte Haldane, who worked in a Paris recruitment centre, and this abounds with tales of secret addresses, passwords, cross-examinations, police shadowings, and other ingredients of TV secret service stories.

My personal experience was very different, I walked into Mrs. Haldane's office, told her my name and
that I wanted to go to Spain. I had no credentials, was asked no questions except whether I was a good walker, and told to come back in two days, when I set out with some English lads for our common destination—via the summit of the Pyrenees. No questions, no pass-words, either then or when we reached Spain.

La Pasionaria, the name of a heroine of Spain admired by millions throughout the world, is victim of an attack, foul even if true, about her private life which is dragged in without any reason other than besmirching her.

The last chapter "The Return Home," carries vignettes on the lives of some who got back safely to the United States and Britain. Most of those quoted were, but are no longer, communists, now rejecting their past associations and actions.

There are a very few notable exceptions. One of these is Alvah Bessie, one of the imprisoned Hollywood Ten. He told the author: "I have not changed my opinions, despite all attempts to debunk that cause, to slander the Spanish Republic Government and the USSR’s involvement in that fight."

For myself, I am 100 per cent, with him and am confident that the other Australians who participated in what the book calls "the last of the great crusades" are too.

As for Vincent Brome, his effort seems to be part of today’s not so sophisticated anti-communism, rather than an attempt at historical reporting.

SAM AARONS.

PENAL COLONY TO PENAL POWERS,
by J. Hutson. Amalgamated Engineering Union, 229 pp. $1.50.

THIS publication by the Amalgamated Engineering Union is a new departure in union activity.

The need for a study and analysis of the peculiar and complicated arbitration system, from the point of view of militant trade unionism, is well met by the author, who is a research officer of the AEU. The study covers the early period of settlement, briefly touches on the beginnings and the first activities of the trade unions, shows clearly the forces which led to the establishment of the arbitration system and critically analyses some of the practices of arbitration over the years.

This book is more for the converted, that is, for the active militant worker who takes more than a passing interest in the never-ending struggle under capitalism for a greater share of the enormous wealth produced.

This is not to deny the strength of the arguments presented, for example, against the theory that wage increases are the cause of price increases, or that the best way to raise wages is by a well argued and documented case before the court.

The author convincingly shows that the decisions of the court are influenced by the extent of mass agitation and activity outside the court.

He refers to the classic example of the court’s attitude to the claim for three weeks’ annual leave. In 1961 it was recognised in principle but refused because of over-full employment; in 1962 it was again recognised in
principle but refused because of increased unemployment; in 1963 it was granted following the biggest trade union campaign since the metal trades dispute of 1947, over-employment or under-employment notwithstanding.

The National Civic Council arguments for a wage adjusted according to a national productivity index are set out, analysed and annihilated in a fashion this reader has never before seen, and the positive alternative of a living wage very ably presented.

However, the most topical and indeed the most important section of the book is the latter part dealing with the penal powers and other repressive legislation.

Here the author sets out the truly massive legal apparatus established to ensure "maximum exploitation and that the big investment in modern plant does not lie idle, that the labor employed must present itself for work when required."

Such an assessment of the real nature of the penal powers is not the academic approach, a mere statement of the position, but a class approach to the problem and a militant demand for their removal.

"The first protest against penal powers took place in 1840 when public meetings in Sydney and a petition signed by 2,856 was instrumental in modifying the harshest features of a new Masters and Servants Act." So penal powers go back a long way in the history of the Australian labor movement and the struggle against their application, as the author shows, is a continuing one reaching high spots at particular periods of history.

Active opposition over recent years has been hampered by ineffective leadership from the right wing in control of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, but the author warns against seeking short cuts, or theories of the militants "going it alone."

Penal powers have been used to hold back the struggles of wide sections, and their removal, the author argues, is therefore a problem for the whole of the trade union movement including those sections which have not, as yet, felt the "legal lash."

In the present era of rapid technological change and automation, the need for removal of penal powers becomes still more pressing, as new demands for a union say in the control of industry and in the introduction of new processes are added to the traditional ones.

In such a serious, and at times involved discussion on these issues, the author's saving grace of a sense of humor makes the book extremely readable.

This is not a book to have on the bookshelf. It is more a tool of trade for the trade union activist. But that is not its limit. It is indeed a scholarly contribution to the small but growing literature about the history, traditions and perspectives of the Australian labor movement.

The author's scientific method of investigating the reality he is concerned with, and presentation of facts rather than declamatory opinions, makes this book an important one for marxist theoreticians to study.

The Commonwealth Council of the AEU, in authorising its publication, has set a precedent that could well be followed by many other unions concerned with the solution of some of the major problems with which history has confronted them.

Ray Clarke.