

## Reviews

*British Colonial Administration in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: the Policy-Making Process.* By John W. Cell. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1970. xviii, 344 pp. U.S. price: \$10.00.

DR CELL has traversed much well-trodden ground in this new book. But he has tried 'to look at some of the very familiar material — such as that surrounding responsible government — in the somewhat different perspective of administrative history'. Some of his material, too, is new and he makes some good new points.

The change in the point of view does not make much difference to the first chapter, on the Colonial Office. It has long been recognized that Stephen brought a 'more regular and more methodical' procedure into the Office but overworked himself because he would not delegate. On the other hand, Dr Cell hardly gives Stephen enough credit for the breadth of view and long-sightedness which he retained in spite of immersion for so many years in the details of administrative business. Merivale, he rightly says, lacked the personal force of Stephen and Rogers; but he is praised for having 'established a much more effective working relationship with other departments, most notably the Treasury'. It is more doubtful whether he is right in calling Rogers not only 'an impressive administrator' but 'from that standpoint probably the best of the three undersecretaries'. One of the main duties of an administrator of the British Colonial Empire was surely to keep it together: Rogers's 'acid pen' and pedagogical tone seriously alienated responsible men in more than one colony. As Dr Cell notes, it was with Lord Kimberley and Herbert that the real change came; and he makes an excellent point when he says that the most important factor promoting change was 'a rapid and indeed a revolutionary change of the base of communications itself' — from the monthly mail to the telegraph.

The second chapter, 'The View from Government House', is a gallant attempt to look at colonial administration from the receiving end, but it does not quite succeed. Towards the end of the nineteenth century one could speak of a typical colonial governor, one who had risen through the ranks of the colonial service. Such people were beginning to appear in Dr Cell's period — Philip Wodehouse and the Robinsons are examples — but there was hardly yet a 'colonial service'. Dr Cell's choice, no doubt suggested by his work in New South Wales, of Sir Ralph Darling and Sir William Denison, is therefore somewhat adventitious. His chapter does, however, underline the need for scholars to look at British colonial administration from the colonial end.

In the middle section of the book, on responsible government, Dr Cell has the advantage over most of his predecessors of writing in the age of 'sovereign independence'. But the fact that independence lay at the end of the road does not necessarily mean that 'Russell . . . was mostly right,

Durham mostly wrong' in 1839. If Russell's logic had been applied for many years longer, Canada would have broken away, with incalculable consequences for the Empire and the world. Dr Cell does not seem very much at home in New Zealand history. It is an exaggeration to say (p. 120) that Lord Grey became 'a backer of despotism' by suspending the New Zealand constitution of 1846: it was a case of *reculer pour mieux sauter*. And why should it be 'more difficult to comprehend why he [Sir George Grey] should have decided only four years later to frame a constitution himself'? The suspension was only for five years and, as Lord Grey explains in his *Colonial Policy*, but for the pressure of other business in the House, there would have been a bill in 1851: this does not suggest a 'successful delaying action' on his part. Dr Cell also omits to point out that Wynyard's 'de facto acceptance of responsible government' soon broke down. But despite all this, the chapter on 'The Transfer of Power in the 1850s' is a good one and the comparison with India and Africa in the 1940s and 1950s is stimulating. Its successor, 'The Working of Responsible Government', with special reference to Canada (where Dr Cell uses a book of Dr J. E. Hodgetts which I have not seen) and New South Wales, is one of the most informative and shows once again how much still remains to be done on colonial administrative history. The final chapter of the section, 'The Implications of Responsible Government', deals mainly with defence and proposals of federation — a more familiar field.

There is a concluding section on 'Interdepartmental Relations'. 'The Management of Eastern Communications: a Case Study in Treasury Control', though it has some bearing on Australian history, reads more like an independent article than a chapter in a book on British colonial administration. The last chapter on 'The Coolie Convention of 1861 and the Annexation of Lagos' is well done and much more to the point.

There are unfortunately a number of slips. Stephen became a regius professor at Cambridge, not Oxford. The New South Wales politician was Henry, not Joseph, Parkes. Stafford Northcote was not a permanent official of the Treasury. It is not true that colonial bishops 'often served . . . as magistrates'; so far as I know, they never did. It was Van Diemen's Land, not Hobart, that had a population of 66,000 in 1847. In short, the book is far from faultless and somewhat lacking in unity. But it is competently written, scholarly in approach and makes a very useful contribution to colonial history. It is also, as one would expect from Yale, very well produced.

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*A New Britannia. An argument concerning the social origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism.* By Humphrey McQueen. Penguin Books, Australia, 1970. 261 pp. Australian price: \$1.50.

A NEW BRITANNIA is a lively and very self-consciously provocative re-examination of some views on Australian radicalism and nationalism. It tries to show why Australian workers were integrated into the capitalist