

Our Young Men Snatched Away: Labourers in PNG's colonial economy, 1884-1942. By Rod Lacey. Occasional Paper in Economic History no.3, History Department, University of Papua New Guinea, 1983. 61 pp. Price K1.80.

ALL TOO often economic history is history with a plethora of numbers and no people. Happily this is not the case with Lacey's succinct but richly informed study. Like those of most tropical colonies the commercial economies of Papua and New Guinea depended on an indentured labour supply, either indigenous or imported. In the cases under review it was mainly indigenous. As his topic requires, Lacey first establishes the number of labourers involved — and where they came from and where and how they were employed. But he then goes beyond that to discuss (a) the labourers' experience of participating in the colonial (mainly plantation) economy and (b) the effect of the prolonged absence of many young men on village economies and ceremonial. The result is a fine example of 'history from below', much of it told in the words of participants.

The book, meritorious in itself, is also a good advertisement for the series to which it belongs. The cheap format is no indication of the worth of the contents but is designed to facilitate wide distribution at low cost. Other papers in the series are *Mining in the Economy of Papua New Guinea, 1880-1980*, and *A History of the Milne Bay District Workers Union*.

HUGH LARACY

University of Auckland

Settler Capitalism: The Dynamics of Dependent Development in the Southern Hemisphere. By Donald Denoon. Oxford University Press, 1983. 280 pp., index, 12 tables, 4 maps. U.K. price: £22.50.

THERE IS nothing new in comparing New Zealand with Uruguay, or Australia with Argentina, or in talking about 'colonies of recent settlement' as a distinct group of countries. There has, been however, surprisingly little systematic comparative scholarship on this group of countries, and what there is has tended to focus on one or another 'pair' of countries.

Denoon's excellent book provides a well-informed guided tour through the national histories of six white-settler countries: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. There is little material that is new in the individual national stories, for Denoon chooses to rely on the work of a couple of established historians in each country, supplemented only marginally by reference to monograph literature. The novelty and interest lie in the insights arising from juxtaposition and comparison. Denoon embarks on his voyage armed with a set of hypotheses about what it is that makes these societies distinct from the rest of the non-industrial world, and what forces have led their individual histories to diverge. Again many of the hypotheses are familiar, but it is a change (and a

pleasure) to see them discussed and tested so thoroughly over such a range of countries.

What, first, constitutes the common heritage of these six societies? All began their modern histories as peripheral outposts of the growing European empires, with strategic rather than economic roles in those empires. All six societies were subsequently built up by massive inflows of European migration and capital during the nineteenth century, impinging on large areas of land which were sparsely occupied (compared with the rest of the colonial world). In contrast with other colonial possessions, where large subject populations had to be mobilized for production and where direct metropolitan control tightened during the nineteenth century, the white settler societies displaced or absorbed local indigenous populations, and moved towards greater political autonomy. The continuation of close economic links with Europe (especially the United Kingdom) was assured by mutual self-interest, with no need for direct imperial control.

By the turn of the twentieth century all six societies had attained very high levels of material affluence, on the basis of large-scale exports of primary products for the European market. It was, Denoon points out, the prospect of that affluence, and the opportunity to participate in the production of the export staples, that attracted the migrants and the capital; he discounts theories which see causality running the other way — from European migration and capital to outstandingly successful development. This is not, however, to deny the creative role of the settlers in developing production systems and political institutions.

In the organization of staples production, two of the agrarian production systems characteristic of tropical colonies — plantations and peasantries — never took root in the white settler economies. Plantations, Denoon suggests, required not merely large masses of subordinate labour, but also an infrastructure of political support which was not forthcoming in the settler context. Similarly peasantries (understood to mean rural producers combining subsistence agriculture with market participation) did not fit the new societies. Where they emerged (most notably among some of the black peoples of South Africa around the turn of the century) they were swiftly — in the space of a generation or so — suppressed, by the conversion of the groups concerned into either proletarians, or pure subsistence existence, or a combination of the two.

A particular species of capitalism thus took root in the white settler states — a species to which Denoon attaches the label 'settler capitalism'. Its distinguishing characteristics, in Denoon's analysis, seem to be mainly external — very high levels of 'dependence' upon staples exports and foreign capital, accompanied by a conspicuous absence (in the early twentieth century, at least) of the dire consequences which some theorists of 'dependency' suppose to follow necessarily from such a situation.

It is when we turn to the internal structure of 'settler capitalism' that diversity becomes obvious, and the underlying stratum of shared experience becomes overlaid by sharp contrasts among the individual cases. Denoon tells each national story in terms of the interplay among the imperatives of staple production, the evolution of economic classes, and the central role of the state in these societies. In all cases, political intervention is seen as the key to understanding the particular direction each society's evolution took, and politics are seen as reflecting the evolving structure of class relations.

Denoon's agenda for investigation of what made each case specific begins by dividing his six countries into three pairs. Australia and Argentina fall naturally

into place as large agricultural/pastoral societies with enormous hinterlands; New Zealand and Uruguay are familiar as the smaller cousins of the big two. Most interesting of Denoon's pairings is that between Chile and South Africa, both countries where minerals became the leading export sector in the late nineteenth century; where the central problem in the organization of production was therefore the establishment and control of a sizeable proletariat of mine-workers, and where agrarian structure and agricultural production remained locked into low-productivity low-wage patterns, with a dominant landowning elite and large impoverished masses of landless rural families.

Denoon then puts the microscope on to each of his case studies in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Political struggles, and political decisions made at that time, were the key determinant of each country's subsequent development. In Chile and Uruguay the ancient regime, ill-suited to agricultural innovation, was reinforced, as was the dominance of foreign capital on the commanding heights of staple production. In Argentina, similarly, the political opening to the middle classes in the 1890s proved merely a means for coopting potential social critics while preserving the recently-established regime of extensive pastoralism and tenant-cropping on the pampas — an agrarian system which offered few rewards to those who raised productivity, and in which landownership was as important for the political power which it conferred as for the income generated.

In Australia and New Zealand, matters developed in an entirely different direction. These societies disestablished much of the power of large landowners, offered encouragement to small and medium-scale rural entrepreneurs, and were characterized by extremely rapid rates of technical advance and productivity growth. Lacking economic muscle in the key sectors, organized labour gravitated into parliamentary politics on the British model.

Developments in southern Africa led as in Chile to an alliance between large landowning interests and mining capital; the former maintained a conservative climate of social order and cheap labour, while the latter's prosperity funded the growing state apparatus.

Successive chapters develop these themes. A chapter on rural production emphasizes the importance of state intervention in determining economic performance as these societies attempted the transition 'not from feudalism to capitalism, but from frontier capitalism to more settled and intensive production'. The two societies which dropped out of this race first — Chile and South Africa — were those where frontier characteristics were strongest, and where the rise of mining permitted economic survival in the absence of an agrarian breakthrough.

A chapter on mining then asks whether mineral development exercised any strong, uniform, autonomous influence on the histories of settler societies, and concludes that it did not. A chapter on non-staple economic activities reaches the conclusion that in none of the settler societies at the turn of the century was there any role for manufacturing or service activities not 'either directly ancillary to the export staples, or at least tolerable to the managers of the staple exports'.

Denoon's conclusions are pithy and intelligent. Settler societies, he points out, clearly 'possessed a dynamic which differed from that of most of the tropical world, where dense agricultural masses survived the colonial intrusion. Equally, they differed from the metropolitan societies from which they were derived.' That distinctiveness was reflected in the self-images which these societies held of themselves at the turn of the century. 'Imperialism was a problem for much of the

world, but British imperialism seemed to protect rather than to threaten settler societies'; the result was a condition of 'unforced dependence', embraced by the settlers themselves with boundless optimism.

Political discourse in all the settler societies was dominated by ideas of consensus, and by rigorous suppression or exclusion of any discussion of class. ('Everywhere the state drew the line between acceptable and unacceptable opposition; and everywhere that line coincided with the division between populist associations on the one hand, and working-class aspirations on the other.')

Settler expectations at the turn of the century were that their societies would follow the same historical trajectory as the United States, from frontier pastoralism to settled agriculture and advanced industrialization. In fact, says Denoon, 'the United States was not only the first, but also the last settler society to industrialize and become a ranking power in the world'; the others were latecomers, and faced different conditions, in a world market where prior American industrialization helped to push later settler societies back towards specialization in primary staples.

How, then, can modern scholars best approach the history of settler societies? Denoon relegates to a secondary role those models which rely upon environment (which he thinks contributed to settler history but did not determine it), race, 'stages of development' (because of the latecomer phenomenon), and dependency (since too close a focus on international relations obscures the vital internal dynamics of settler societies). He settles firmly on the concept of modes of production as an analytical framework for organizing historical research into these societies, however much the marxian associations of this idea may 'stick in the gullets of all right-thinking historians'. In the interaction between capitalist production and markets on the one hand, and the evolving class structures in each society on the other, are to be found the keys to both the similarities and the differences of these societies.

Denoon's book is lucid, thought-provoking, and carefully argued; the comparative method proves fruitful; and the New Zealand reader comes away from the book with plenty to chew on. To put all this in perspective, one must record some reservations.

First, this is really an essay rather than a full-scale enquiry; dense with assembled facts, interpretations and ideas, but leaving many of the depths unexplored. (This applies less to the case of South Africa, where Denoon is able to report on a good deal of his own original historical research, than it does to Uruguay and Argentina, where he is the prisoner of the secondary literature). Denoon's voyage of exploration reveals how much remains to be done in this field by comparative historians.

Second, the choice of six societies permits neat pairing and has analytical convenience, but the absence of Canada is a glaring omission; the bibliography reveals not a single reference on Canada, and Denoon appears not to have encountered the work of, for example, the group of expatriate New Zealand geographers now working in Canada on problems of 'dominion capitalism' (a concept directly analogous to Denoon's own 'settler capitalism').

Third, the evidence deployed by Denoon does not always provide strong support for his arguments; this is particularly true of several tables which do not demonstrate (though neither do they disprove) what they are claimed to show. Per capita trade figures (Table 1) do not speak for themselves; nor do undeflated Chilean pesos (Table 3), nor badly-presented land-distribution data (Tables 7

and 10). Other statistical data are more helpfully presented and discussed.

Finally, the publishers have done Denoon a double dis-service, by producing a book which is poorly proof-read, and setting on it a price so astronomical in relation to its size that most potential readers will have recourse only to library copies.

I. G. BERTRAM

Victoria University of Wellington

John Hawkesworth: Eighteenth-Century Man of Letters. By John Lawrence Abbott. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin, 1983. 241 pp. U.S.A. price: \$22.50.

LITERARY SCHOLARS are familiar with John Hawkesworth (1720–1773) as a disciple of Samuel Johnson; historians know him as the first chronicler of Cook. It was a misfortune that Johnson failed to carry through his projected edition of Hawkesworth's writings and correspondence. Memories of his protégé might have prompted further reflections on the Vanity of Human Wishes; or, at a more practical level, his efforts might have preserved particulars well known to Hawkesworth's contemporaries but since lost beyond recall. Johnson might even have produced the kind of memoir he himself advocated: one that passed over 'vulgar greatness' to 'lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life'.

The opportunity was lost, probably through Johnson's notorious indolence, and Hawkesworth has had to wait more than two centuries for a biographer in the person of John Lawrence Abbott. Working in the exacting tradition of American humane scholarship, funded by the inexhaustible resources of American research foundations, Professor Abbott has probably gathered every fact about Hawkesworth now recoverable and has certainly made a thorough study of his publications. But minute details of his life are lacking, especially in the early years, and there are grey areas at all periods. The picture that emerges is of a young man with no advantages of birth or education rising through the still fluid society of eighteenth-century England to enjoy a brief and delayed fame.

His ascent was largely the result of his own efforts, but benign Providence took a hand at certain critical junctures. After being apprenticed to an attorney, at the age of twenty he found employment with Edward Cave who a decade before had established the *Gentleman's Magazine*. This unique periodical, a combination of literary review, news digest, political commentary, and court chronicle, was ideally suited to Hawkesworth's talents and gave him experience he could not have acquired elsewhere. Moreover, it introduced him to Cave's chief editorial assistant, Johnson, who became his mentor and model. They worked together until Johnson, needing more time for his dictionary and other enterprises, gave up his post. Hawkesworth succeeded him, to become the magazine's literary editor and a power in the world of letters.

Not long after settling into his new profession Providence again favoured him.