

Shuker's book is also curiously vulnerable to a criticism of quite a different kind, that its character as an 'official history' has led him to mute his ideological convictions in the interests of celebrating the traditions and successes of the WEA. He evidently feels obliged to spell out the perspectives and concepts which inform his work, and indeed criticizes earlier historians of the WEA in New Zealand for their 'lack of ideological articulation' (p.162). Yet his own 'explicit theorising' is oddly tucked away in an 'afterword', while the book itself is prefaced by a photograph of Shuker signing the publication contract in the distinguished company of WEA leaders. The author also shows a certain ambivalence in his treatment of different phases of the WEA's history. He is most trenchant in the first seven chapters of the book, on the WEA before 1945 — ground which has, incidentally, been well prepared by A. B. Thompson and John Colquhoun. By contrast, only two chapters are devoted to the perhaps less familiar period since the Adult Education Act of 1947, and in these the cosy scene of the book's opening photograph becomes the dominant image. Shuker's ideological concerns here dissolve into glowing descriptions of individual WEA workers and groups, and an orthodox account of the WEA's conflicts with other groups in the field of adult education. In fact, the book in its later stages becomes almost indistinguishable from the traditional type of educational history — celebratory in style and institutional in scope.

Shuker's book, then, may itself be regarded as a 'site for struggle' in which two opposing notions of the history of education are fighting for dominance. It is in general a useful contribution to the field, but the author's radical sentiments sit uneasily alongside the book's official function. Also, Shuker seems sometimes to confuse radical education with good history. The history of education will not be fully rehabilitated in New Zealand until it is recognized by historians as an important aspect of social history and by educators as an important aspect of education itself. Shuker's book is a promising development towards these ends, and deserves to be recognized as such by both types of audience; but there is a long way still to go.

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*International Labour Migration. Historical Perspectives.* Edited by Shula Marks and Peter Richardson. Maurice Temple Smith for Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, 1984, viii, 280 pp. U.K. price: £22.50.

THIS volume collects together ten of the contributions to a seminar on labour migration in the British Empire and Commonwealth held between 1977 and 1981 at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London. It is first and foremost an exercise in comparative history, touching on aspects of labour migration in an extraordinarily wide range of countries and historical circumstances. Focussing on the supply side of the international labour market are pieces by David Souden on early modern England, by Adrian Graves on the South West Pacific, by Peter Richardson on Northern China, and by Gill Burke on Cornwall, all dealing with the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the demand side, there are studies by Pieter Emmer

on Surinam in the half century before World War I, by Hugh Tinker on the sugar-producing islands of the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean since the abolition of slavery, and by Charlotte Erikson on the USA in the nineteenth century. The latter seeks to answer the question as to why a contract migrant labour did not, in fact, offer a solution to shortages in the US labour market. Also on the demand side are two overtly comparative studies by Donald Denoon and Colin Newbury, the former examining New Zealand, Uruguay, South Africa, Chile, Australia and Argentina, the latter looking at New Zealand, Northern Nigeria and Australian New Guinea. Finally Martin Legassick and Francine de Clercq provide a Marxian overview of the evolution of the migrant labour system in South Africa in terms of the history of capital accumulation in that country.

As is to be expected in such a collection the analysis is uneven and the range of theoretical perspective is wide. The collection reflects a common rejection of what Marks and Richardson describe in their introduction as the ahistorical, mechanistic migration models of economists and demographers. It is, they claim, 'only through a theoretically informed, historically specific approach that a more comprehensive and satisfactory account of labour migration can be produced' (p.3). There is, however, no consensus on the appropriate theoretical structure. The most that can be said is that the theoretical centre of gravity is materialist, but it is clear that Erikson, Souden and Newbury would share few views with Legassick and de Clercq, or the independent-minded Denoon.

The essence of a materialist approach to 'out migration' is that it focuses not on the decisions of individual migrants, but on the determinants of the constraints within which decisions are made. The contributions to this volume by Burke, Graves and Richardson are excellent examples of the genre. Each provides useful insights into the material conditions and institutional structures which paved the way for the decision to migrate: — the fluctuating market for industry-specific skills in nineteenth-century Cornwall; the passage masters' exploitation of the crises in the pre-capitalist Melanesian economy; and the collapse of the agricultural economies of the Chihli and Shantung provinces of late nineteenth-century China.

On the other side of the market Emmer's demonstration of the historical continuity in the demand for unskilled labour in the plantations of Surinam leads him to conclude that the experience of slave and indentured plantation workers was fundamentally similar. The structure and characteristics of inward labour migration were fixed by the specific political and economic requirements of the host country. For New Zealand readers, the most immediately 'relevant' contributions are the comparative studies of Denoon and Newbury, each of which offers a similar but more generalized interpretation of the particularities of inward migration in a range of historical circumstances. Denoon sets himself the task of showing that New Zealand, like the other societies he examines, operated a 'settler capitalist mode of production', characterized by a dominant agricultural sector based on capitalist, not peasant, production relations, a politically organized class of immigrant workers, and a typically 'settler' state. The fact that a high proportion of early immigrants enjoyed access to political power enabled them to prevent (or at least regulate) further imports of competitive (usually non-white) migrant labour. Newbury looks at the same phenomenon, but from a different perspective, seeking to *contrast* the New Zealand experience with that of other British colonies in which most immigrants were upwardly immobile and politically rightless. What all British colonies had in common was that labour markets were highly regulated by the state. What separated them was that not all migrants were able to influence government policy on migra-

tion so as to sway the market in their own favour.

In summary, the volume offers a disparate collection of essays united by a common focus on the problem of human mobility, and a common sense of the advantages of concrete historical inquiry over abstract theoretical models. The reader will, however, have to believe strongly in the importance of comparative history, if the succession of jumps in time and space is not to be jarring. To compensate, however, the essentially micro-studies of conditions on the supply side of the markets for indentured or contract labour seem to this reviewer to be very good history indeed.

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*The First World War.* By Keith Robbins. Oxford University Press, 1984. 186 pp., maps. U.K. price: £12.50.

THE aim of the series in which this book appears, OPUS, is to 'provide concise, original, and authoritative introductions to a wide range of subjects in the humanities and sciences'. The books are 'written by experts for the general reader as well as for students'. In Keith Robbins, Professor of History at Glasgow, and author of a book on Sir Edward Grey, OPUS have certainly an expert, but, in including the First World War in their series, the editors may have set him an impossible task. The author, sounding a rather rueful prefatory note, observes that this is not the first book on the war, 'though it is both one of the shortest and one of the most wide-ranging'. He opens up a great many topics, but does not always bring the one in hand to a conclusion before rushing on to the next. Some of the topics are indeed so thorny that he may be glad to extricate himself. But, at least to a reader aware of some of the literature on the topics, it makes for a tantalising inconclusiveness. It is hard to know what it would mean for a reader to whom the book really was an introduction. Elision piled on conciseness would surely make it hard to follow. The occasional flippancy would probably not help. Humour is not necessarily out of place even in the historiography of so grim a subject. But Taylorisms can be irritating, and for the general reader, some of those attempted here would surely be mystifying, if not misleading: they might seem like in-jokes, the tiresome kind of thing the author of a children's pantomime puts in for the adults.

To complain that the book attempts to be too comprehensive, and then to express the wish that it had covered additional ground, may at first seem perverse. Perhaps it is not so: a larger view may facilitate cohesiveness, even conciseness. The author does not succeed in putting the war, in terms of its origins, its course, or its results, in a world context. His opening account of the causes is, not surprisingly, primarily a European one, but it takes too little account of the shift in the world distribution of power of which contemporaries, in Europe and elsewhere, were in fact so aware. His account of the fighting of the war in turn gives too little explanation of American participation. Not surprisingly, Professor Robbins's account of war-aims and peace-feelers indeed says more of Wilson and the 14 Points. In his conclusion he rightly observes: 'it is not easy to draw up a convincing way of measuring the impact of war