

latter part of the nineteenth century was characterized by long-running disputes between the harbour board and the central government — or perhaps its more visible local arm, the Railways Department. The modern counterpart to this was the infighting to secure for the port the status of a container port, before the 'box revolution' swept away the existing pattern of New Zealand trade in the 1970s. The more local running feud between Port Chalmers and Dunedin for control of Otago's deep-sea trade is covered with clarity as also is the economic cost: the inhibiting of the progress of Otago's port as compared with that of other provincial centres where the port is more favourably placed geographically.

For those who imagine that the northward drift from Dunedin is a modern phenomenon it is salutary to read that the trend was already apparent in the 'depression' of the 1880s and 1890s. It may be later traced in the movement of the head office of that 'pearl in the crown' of Dunedin maritime enterprise, the Union Steam Ship Co., lost first to Wellington in 1921, then moved north again to Auckland in 1984.

This book has an attractive format, and both text and illustrations have been carefully presented. There are some minor errors. There are one or two literals. A caption to a photo dated August 1911 names one of the ships *Westmeath* while she was still the *Everton Grange* — the attributed name was not acquired until June of the following year. On p. 295 there is the statement that the *Progress* was a motorship when it was in fact a steam engine which was installed in 1922. But these are points for the purists which should not count against the undoubted achievements of the book.

This history will appeal on a number of levels — to those with an interest in the development of our trade and transport; to those who follow the often tangled skeins of our local authorities; and to those simply with a love of our maritime history and of the ships involved, who will find the appendices covering such matters as the Board's fleet, shipbuilding, harbour ferries, shipwrecks and hulks invaluable.

The Otago Harbour Board is to be congratulated upon giving the author a free rein to produce a 'warts and all' portrait of its endeavours over the years, as is Dr McLean to be congratulated for an invaluable and entertaining record of a major part of Otago's maritime history.

W. A. LAXON

Auckland

Settlers and the Agrarian Question. Foundations of Capitalism in Colonial Australia. By Philip McMichael. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 1984. xvi, 304 pp., end notes, maps, tables, bibliography. English price £25.00.

THIS BOOK attempts to place nineteenth-century Australian history in its 'world-historical' context and to show that major shifts in Australian history can be understood only in the context of international (and especially British) capitalism. The argument and the vocabulary are derived from the 'developmental' school of analysis associated with Giovanni Arrighi and Immanuel Wallerstein, among others. Marxism provides a major source of inspiration but it is the marxism of Paul Barran and Paul Sweezy and their *Monthly Reviews*.

The first and rather schematic chapter pre-supposes some knowledge of 'developmental' historiography but the rest of the book, despite some difficult prose, is more accessible. The book is divided into three parts. The first deals with the period from 1788 to 1830 and analyzes 'The transition from penal commercial colony' and 'the world economic origins of colonial wool growing'. Capitalist social relations were imminent in the Australian penal settlement but might have remained that way had it not been for the creation in Britain of a new market for Australian wool as a result of the industrial revolution. Even historians unsympathetic to McMichael's mode of enquiry are likely to find his detailed analysis of the mesh between British demand and Australian supply revealing.

Part two, which consists of four chapters on the 1830s and 1840s, discusses the consolidation of pastoralism in New South Wales and the developing mercantilist links with Britain. The process of consolidation and the on-going industrial revolution in Britain generated anti-mercantilist coalitions in both societies. In New South Wales the 'emancipists', in Britain proponents of 'free' trade and emigration, challenged the old orthodoxies. His account of the industry's structure, notably chapter five, 'Merchants and Growers', is extremely interesting in its own right and rests on thorough research in the primary sources. I have never seen such a detailed and thorough analysis of the development, commercial as well as industrial, of pastoralism.

Part three, 'Confronting the Agrarian Question', consists of three chapters. McMichael argues that the depression of the 1840s crystallized 'the barriers to capital accumulation...imposed by pastoralism' (here as elsewhere he provides judicious summaries of the relevant historiography). He allows the importance of an interruption to capital flows from Britain (Brian Fitzpatrick's position) and the role of labour shortages, caused by the abolition of transportation. But the shortage of labour, he insists, was symptomatic of 'the character of [pastoral] accumulation itself . . .'. In his own words (p. 190): 'The dependence of pastoral capital accumulation on mercantile advances reflected the speculative character of wool growing. This...placed pastoral capital accumulation on a primitive basis, where technical change was not integral to expansion, and labor was the fundamental constraint on accumulation. This constraint asserted itself decisively following the cessation of transportation; labor was sufficiently scarce and expensive to discourage further investment in wool growing and threaten the value of pastoral capital. A crisis of profitability was the outcome and the foundation of the 1840s economic depression.'

The crisis of the 1840s precipitated the agrarian question. There was a new awareness of the vulnerability of a staple economy and an expanding urban social base for its critics. The discovery of gold accelerated these tendencies. Once again his detailed exploration of the financial and commercial contexts is illuminating in its own right. As a result of the crisis wool production became fully capitalist and subordinate to urban capital. The pastoralists also saw their dream of a mercantilist social order dissolve. The rise of industrial capitalism in Britain not only created a demand for Australian wool but helped to ensure that the aspirations of the Australian pastoralists were defeated.

At times I wished that McMichael wrote more simply but I found much of the detail interesting and was persuaded that the development of capitalism in Australia, not to mention democracy, had been decisively shaped by the development of the industrial revolution in Britain. His detailed analysis of the wool market

and the wool trade also serve to remind us of the central importance of economic history.

The book contains several appendices, eighteen tables, various maps, and a full bibliography. Most of his primary sources relate to the pastoral industry in New South Wales before 1840, and it is here that some of his original material is most impressive. The rest of the book is organized in terms of his argument and is less thoroughly based on primary sources. There can be little doubt, however, that the main thrust of this book, and of 'developmental' historiography, is of great importance not only in understanding Australian history but New Zealand's as well. McMichael's book ought to be read by anybody who teaches either subject.

ERIK OLSEN

Otago University

Matanitū : The Struggle for Power in early Fiji. By David Routledge. University of the South Pacific, Suva, 1985. U.S. price: \$20.00 hard cover; \$9.00 paperback.

MATANITŪ is the latest of a number of recent publications on the history of Fiji. Its essential concern is with the hundred or so years from the late 18th century (just prior to the earliest widespread contact with Europeans) through to 1874 when an unconditional offer of cession from the Fijian chiefs saw the establishment of a British Crown Colony.

In the first third of the book, the focus is on developments within the Fijian polity, especially the emergence of *matanitū*, or large chiefly confederations, from which the book takes its name. While Routledge's major concentration here is on Fijian politics, this necessarily involves a consideration of European involvement in Fijian politics, the growth of trade, the impact of firearms, and the general implications of a small but nonetheless significant European presence. But the author concentrates on the fortunes of Bau, which eventually triumphed and had its pre-eminence legitimated by colonial rule; Rewa, Bau's main rival on Vitilevu; and Lau, which was the conduit for the growing Tongan influence throughout the first three-quarters of the 19th century. He also makes extensive use of Shelley Sayes's pioneering work using oral history from Cakaudrove; this adds to the discussion an additional dimension which is missing from other sections based heavily on the more conventional 19th century accounts, both published and in manuscript.

Having given the conventional description of 'traditional' Fijian society, tracing the hierarchy of political units up to the *vanua*, or federation, Routledge asserts: 'Towards the end of the eighteenth century, a new order of federation developed, as powerful chiefs increased still further the sphere of their influence by conquest and the formalization of tributary or even less dignified relationships for the conquered. *Matanitū*, as these 'confederations' were called, were flexible and fragile alliances, requiring to be held together by main force.' (p. 28)

While there is no doubt that the first half of the 19th century was a period of great turmoil, the case for a new scale of confederation has been asserted rather than proved and the author has thus missed the opportunity to probe deeply into one of the major issues facing historians of culture contact in the Pacific Islands. He shows how marriage alliances and *vasu* relationships (under which a man could claim assistance from his mother's family, especially her brothers) were exploited by ambitious chiefs, but this was not new. In the treatment of the 1850s and 1860s, Routledge spends a great deal of time discussing developments