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REVIEWS:

Australian Aborigines - Towards a History. J.B. (Bren) Barker. 1979, Revised 1980. B.Barker, Sth Caulfield, Vic. \$12.50.

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This is an expanded version of a trial course (text) first published in 1979. It contains an introduction which sets out its rationale, its philosophy of history and its philosophy of teaching. A brief Section One deals with origins. Section Two deals with the post contact period, covering in detail the contact with early European navigators and explorers, the experience with the first European settlers in New South Wales and Tasmania and concludes with a brief analysis of a few contemporary issues.

As this is still a trial version, there is a host of minor matters requiring attention such as spelling, grammar, the structure and the physical layout of the text.

Comments about this text can be made about the content as Aboriginal history and about the text as a history or social studies text designed for Year 9 classes of mixed ability.

The new and exciting field of Aboriginal history is expanding rapidly and the references and bibliography given by Barker are comprehensive and indicate a familiarity with most of the material published up to 1979-80. More recent work by H. Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, J. Wright, *Cry from the Dead*, and the chapter by N. Green in *A New History of Western Australia* (Ed. T. Stannage) would need to be incorporated in any future and more final edition.

More importantly, Barker has gone a long way towards adopting an Aboriginal perspective. He stresses the point that Aboriginal history should be taught and written by Aboriginal people. We certainly need much more Aboriginal involvement than has happened up to the present. However, I would argue that it is not desirable that only Aboriginals should be responsible for Aboriginal history any more than that only Russians should write Russian history or Japanese

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write Japanese history. History and anthropology are not just social comment. They are academic disciplines that have developed within a certain cultural context and out of nationalistic mythologies. Between the social science ideals of R.K. Merton and the political realities of T. Kuhn, there still exists a discipline, a philosophy of history and an historiography of Aboriginal history which should enable the historian to outgrow his/her particular cultural bias.

As a school text, I think that the material would be too demanding for all but the most intelligent of Year 9 students. It is a book that could be used with profit at Year 12 level and in particular units in colleges and universities. At all levels, it would be necessary to have well educated and sensitive and imaginative teachers handling the text, a situation which is not common and certainly could not be guaranteed.

The great merit of this text is that it represents one of the few examples of Australian cultural history and an excellent introduction to the study of historiography for students. The whole of the introduction is very necessary and commendable particularly for teachers and trainee teachers.

On the whole I found the text and the associated questions to be an exciting intellectual adventure and from the earlier periods that it covers in detail, it provides a sound basis for a more complete Aboriginal history coming right up to the present, as well as covering other geographic areas.

An analysis of the questions indicates that Barker knows the mind of the student. An indication of the potential of this book is the linking of certain historical incidents with the contemporary expression of the continuation of the underlying issues through skilful questioning.

The modern social studies teacher is concerned with something more than the development of concepts and skills. The social sciences and humanities form the basic means of values clarification and values education. I would recommend this book as an excellent example of the type of resource that is necessary if values education is ever to receive the supreme attention it deserves in the general education of the young.

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