

Review of James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002. 243 pp.  
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*From White Australia to Woomera* surveys the history of Australian immigration and settlement policies, though with an emphasis on the last 25 years. The author, James Jupp, is a well known writer on these topics and the editor of two editions of the magisterial encyclopaedia, *The Australian People*. The present volume provides an overview of some topics of current interest, such as ethnic voting, and is a useful record of a prominent observer's views of the policies discussed. But as a contribution to scholarship it is something of a disappointment.

The work is clearly written but it is hard to know what audience the author has in mind. It assumes too much background knowledge of history and political institutions to be suitable for school children but its level of documentation is inadequate for researchers and tertiary students. Large tracts of factual material lie undocumented. Where the material concerns numbers of migrants or changes in policy most specialists will know where to find the sources. But some of the facts are not common knowledge and their sources are not obvious. Examples include the following: under the bounty system of immigration in early NSW no bounty was paid to skippers bringing in immigrants who were unfit for work (p. 147); the dictation test was only used in 2000 cases (p. 9); Good Neighbour conferences in the 1950s used to display children's photographs and delegates had to pick the Australian (p. 22); Senator Bolkus' interference with a Bureau of Immigration Research conference helped persuade the director, John Nieuwenhuysen, to resign and indirectly led to the Bureau's abolition (p. 52); during the Hawke/Keating era Coalition supporters used to describe ethnic groups as 'rent-seekers' (p. 79); Helen Hughes once identified with the socialist left (p. 118); and fewer than 100 potential immigrants per annum have been denied visas on the grounds that they might be terrorists (p. 206). Even where references are supplied they are often unhelpful; most lack page numbers and, in the case of edited collections, names of authors.

Despite gaps in the scholarly apparatus, general readers keen to acquire an overview could find the book helpful, especially given its emphasis on recent developments. But they run the risk of being misled by its omissions. Immigration policy over the last 15 years has been dominated by conflict between the judiciary and the executive. (See, for example, McMillan 1999.) There is almost nothing of this epic struggle in Jupp's narrative; instead we are told that, in the early 1990s, the then minister, Gerry Hand, did not like lawyers and was prejudiced in favour of his departmental colleagues (p. 51). There are only two other fleeting references to the legal system and the challenges it poses to the executive (see pp. 59, 183).

To his credit Jupp devotes space to questions raised by environmentalists about immigration-fuelled population growth and their possible influence on policy. Together with his extensive treatment of the ethnic lobby this is a good start towards a sketch of the key interest groups. However, his picture of the environmentalists is out of focus; he assumes that by the early 1990s most were critical of high immigration (see pp. 166-69, 177). In fact, immigration has proved a divisive issue for them. Many activists have been more attracted to internationalist pro-immigration arguments than they have been to population stability within Australia, a policy goal which some environmental leaders have shunned on the grounds that it is tainted with racism. (See, for example, Moore 1991 and Warhurst 1993: 183-184, 199-202.)

Apart from one mention of business leaders wanting a large intake (p. 178) there is nothing on the growth lobby, the constellation of housing and development industries which profits from growth and argue for it. This is an odd omission. A reduction in the intake in the late 1990s provoked a storm of protest from this quarter, culminating in the establishing of the Australian Population Institute in November 1999, a business group dedicated to boosting the intake. Immigration politics do not consist of some environmentalists versus some ethnics; if business interests are overlooked a large part of the field is missing.

General readers hoping to find out more about the history of Australian immigration will also need to be careful of the book's inaccuracies. For example, Australia did not agree to take in more Jewish refugees at the Evian conference in July 1938 (p. 186); apart from the Dominican Republic, none of the nations attending this conference agreed to take more than a handful (Abella and Trooper, 1983: 16-32). We offered to take an extra 15,000 after Kristallnacht in November 1938 (Blakeney, 1985: 157-159). The second wave of boatpeople started in 1989 not 1990 (p. 47) (see DIMA 2001). Geoffrey Blainey did not claim that immigration policy was made in a secret room in Belconnen (or anywhere else) (p. 66). He was using a metaphor based on a cricket score board to explain how governments could manipulate the points system (Blainey 1984: 87-93, 101-102). John Howard did not wait until 2001 to say that he regretted his 1988 remark on Asian immigration (p. 121); he did this in January 1995 (Williams 1997: 19). The boatpeople rescued by the *Tampa* did not land on Australian territory and thus there was no need to pass legislation retrospectively deeming them not to have done so (pp. 194-5). (Parliament did pass legislation which retrospectively ensured that actions taken vis-à-vis the *Tampa* were legal but this legislation dealt with other matters: see McMillan 2002.) Bob and Tanya Birrell do not argue in *An Issue of People* that non-English-speaking-background migrants were brought in to be a low-skilled ethnic underclass (pp. 155, 38); on the contrary, they argue against this position. They show that government tried hard to recruit skilled workers and only took low-skilled applicants to top up the numbers; they also show that those migrants who did enter low-skilled occupations were not particularly disadvantaged (Birrell and Birrell 1981: 34, 50-54, 107-108, 117-121).

Novices may also be confused by the fact that Jupp sometimes writes as if the planned intake consisted only of the general immigration program, excluding the humanitarian program (pp. 160, 205), though elsewhere he argues that there is little difference between the two sets of visas as far as 'the reality of specific ethnic community life' is concerned (p. 185).

It is understandable that a book which aims to present a historical overview does not develop a single explanatory argument. But the theme that immigration to Australia has been closely controlled and that government has played a more active role in recruitment here than in other settler societies is well developed. Jupp himself supports immigration-fuelled growth (pp. 4, 178). This leads him to focus more on people who argue against it than on those who argue for it. He often resorts to explanations based on racism and xenophobia to explain the position of growth sceptics but is careful to define these terms. This is a welcome development in the pro-growth literature. However, he makes even more frequent use of the term *populist* but, unfortunately, does not define it. Thus readers are left to infer that a populist is a democrat who does share the author's values.

This book is an account of immigration by one who has worked in the field for a long time but its composition and presentation bear signs of haste. These cumulate to make it a less valuable addition to the literature than it could have been.

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