

balanced equity and efficiency concerns. There are numerous references to the need for savings. The higher education tax is pitched in terms of redressing 'middle class welfare' given that: 'Not only had they not benefited personally, but the majority of Australian taxpayers were, on average, less well off than those they were supporting through the provision of 'free' tertiary education' (111). The impetus for the child maintenance payment was the need to reduce sole parent pension outlays.

Edwards recognises that the HECS and child support initiatives were easily saleable to the taxpayer. The funding of labour market programmes in Working Nation was both more expensive and more contentious in terms of its effectiveness. Edwards describes these programs in terms of helping the long-term unemployed back into work 'within the framework of fiscal responsibility' (181). Perhaps because of

the difficulty in ascertaining their effectiveness, this spending on labour market programmes has been a point of major political contention.

In terms of the inputs into the policy process, Edwards makes much of the contribution of academics. While this is well placed, it is at the expense of the important contribution of the economic portfolios in impressing the need for savings. Given Edwards' characterisation of these social policies as enduring and innovative achievements, the role of Treasury and Finance in creating the competitive framework for this innovation should have received more attention. Such arguments are important as a rejoinder to Michael Pusey's *Economic Rationalism in Canberra*. Undoubtedly, the economic portfolios assumed great power and influence during the Hawke/Keating years, but as Edwards shows, this was largely to the improvement, not the detriment of equity.

Overall, Edwards and her co-editors are to be commended for an original text. Books on bureaucratic process are not known for their appeal, but this work

should prove useful for those interested in some of the major public policy reforms of the past 20 years. A rewrite might consider more attention to either the public policymaking literature or the actual conceptualisation of the policy reforms. Of course, this depends on the intended audience.

Reviewed by Richard Grant

Anti-Liberalism 2000: The Rise of New Millennium Collectivism

by David Henderson

Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 56pp, £7.50, ISBN 0 255 36497 0

I have always enjoyed David Henderson's company, both in person and in his writing, and the recent publication by the Institute for Economic Affairs of his 2000 Wincott Lecture, *Anti-Liberalism 2000*, provides an opportunity for us all to enjoy his company all over again.

In the lecture, Henderson once more revisits ideas familiar to us from his other writings: that claims about the dominance of economically liberal opinion are greatly overdone, that the influence of economists is easily exaggerated, that the course of events cannot be explained by a narrow interest-group view of public debate, that the persistence of what he calls 'pre-economic' ideas (or 'do-it-yourself economics') is very important in explaining the pattern of opinion, that economically liberal reforms have often come from governments of the centre-left, that the scope of such reforms is easily exaggerated, that the tide of opinion moves back and forth. He also sets out various propositions which he believes are typical of anti-liberal economic opinion.

Henderson points out that while there was a deterioration in general economic performance (particularly unemployment) from the early 1970s, this cannot be

blamed on economic liberalisation since that did not really get underway until the early 1980s. He also absolves liberalisation from (amongst other things) leading to greater volatility, noting that economic growth performance across the OECD as a whole is more stable after liberalisation gets underway than in the two decades beforehand.

What Henderson seeks to delineate is the coming together of interests and perceptions. In particular, the propagation of two propositions he judges to be characteristic of what he calls *new millennium collectivism*. The propositions are (i) 'a market economy, even a well-performing one, is heavily populated with *non-beneficiaries and victims*' and (ii) 'their well-being depends on *deliverance from above*'.

While he notes that the vision is not new, he identifies some new aspects—the rise of NGOs (non-government organisations), the widening circle of victims, the rise of new interventions in the labour market (regulation for equal opportunity, anti-discrimination, human rights and affirmative action in the workplace), the scare over globalisation.

He further identifies a common presumption in all this—the presumption of injustice—and the scale of the aspirations new millennium collectivism brings forth—nothing less than a desire to regulate the globe. Though his main concern is to delineate these ideas and associated interests, Henderson does provide some critique of these ideas and considers the state of opinion within the economics profession itself.

Geoff Harcourt's comments on Henderson's lecture, which are included in the IEA publication, would have undoubtedly been much more interesting if they concentrated on being comments on what Henderson said. Unfortunately, much of Harcourt's comments are taken up by clarifying his own position (by my count, in the space of 2,100 words he uses the word 'I' 60 times, 'me' 7 times and 'my' 5 times—that is, there is some reference to himself about once every 30 words or so).

Alas, much of what passes for public debate in the various Anglomorph





countries (as the late Frank Knofelmacher called them) is precisely aimed at showing that the writer/speaker is a virtuous sort of person. It is perhaps the most characteristic achievement of the baby-boomer generation that so many have turned public debate and much of what passes for scholarship from a public good (an attempt to find out the truth and to worry at what makes for a good society and a good life) into a private good (use of writing and speaking as moral display).

This may be the most powerful single impetus in generating the opinion conformity which is particularly stultifying in Australia but which has baneful effects right around the Anglomorph world (*The Shadow University: The Betrayal of Liberty on America's Campuses* by Alan Kors and Harvey Silvergate documents just how virulent and pernicious the attempt to restrict legitimacy in debate to being a prerogative of the members of the club of the virtuous can be).

The 'Club Virtue' approach to debate is particularly useful for anti-liberalism, because so much of that is concerned with good intentions—perfect for moral display. Much of anti-liberalism holds that the effect of policy (or, at least, the policy *they* agree with) can be inferred from its intentions. Economic liberals, on the other hand, tend to be concerned about consequences, a far more grubby business—and one more complex to talk about than simple intentions, a significant PR disadvantage in the age of the 20 second grab.

Another aspect of the culture of virtue is that status is a positional good, which creates a constant demand to have the status of being in the moral vanguard. An ever-widening circle of victims for people to be seen to be concerned about is a natural response to this ever-present demand.

The word 'neo-liberal' is a classic in the virtue genre, being a term of insult rather than analysis. The term has the great advantage of allowing the writer or speaker to signal that they, of course, do not share the 'neo-liberals' (sic) pernicious ideas.

David Henderson is a world away from such intellectual perversions. He concludes his comments on Geoff Harcourt's comments on a note that any genuinely

inquiring intelligence can surely agree with, at least regarding what philosophers would call contingent propositions: 'all our doctrines and ways of thinking are in a sense provisional: they have to meet the test of experience in a world that is both highly complex and subject to unceasing and often unforeseen changes'.

As long as the classical liberal cause can bring forth such ornaments as the clear-thinking and writing, yet subtle and sophisticated, mind of David Henderson, it will have intellectual riches indeed to draw upon. *Anti-Liberalism 2000* is another fine product of that mind for us to enjoy.

Reviewed by Michael Warby

The Culture Cult: Designer Tribalism and Other Essays

by Roger Sandall

Westview, 2001, 214 pp, Paperback \$55, ISBN 0 8133 3863 8

Bertrand Russell wrote an essay 'The Superior Virtue of the Oppressed', published in the collection titled *Unpopular Essays*. He exposed the silliness of the progressive intellectuals who supposed that all manner of wisdom and virtue could be found among the poor and downtrodden who were generally far away and out of sight. He noted that their illusions were generally destroyed by contact with the various groups and so they had to keep looking further afield, from the local poor, to the rural peasantry of foreign lands, to the noble savages of Africa and elsewhere.

Roger Sandall has brought this message up to date in this collection of essays, which is likely to be unpopular in the circles where it most needs to be read. Sandall is a retired anthropologist and filmmaker who had the remarkable opportunity during the 1960s to spend some time in the outback filming the tribal rituals of Australian Aborigines. Suddenly the film was literally put into

cold storage, not to be seen by human eyes for fear of giving offence to the tender hearted. He also observed at first hand the takeover of academic Anthropology and related social sciences by the new waves of political correctness and relativism.

The main theme of the collection is that all cultures and civilisations need to be judged by much the same set of standards, allowing for a tolerable amount of pluralism. This means that the violent and cruel initiation ceremonies and similar practices of tribal societies around the world need to be viewed with the same jaundiced eye as the sadistic rites of passage in some Western military academies. It means that the revival of the notion of the 'noble savage', originally popularised by Rousseau (and decisively criticised by Bertrand Russell), gets in the way of useful policymaking on indigenous issues.

The essays are grouped in three parts. Those in the first part, 'Romantic Primitivism: The Anthropological Connection', alert outsiders to some of the foibles of cultural relativists. These are the people who Ian Jarvie described as 'absolutists at home' (in condemning the sins and shortcomings of the western world) and relativists abroad (it's all relative really, however cruel and irrational). Sandall details his case with a study of communes and critiques of Rousseau's doctrine of the noble savage and the long tradition of 'designer tribalism', designed to pander to the ignorance and prejudice of urban intellectuals and bohemians.

The essays in Part II show how some selected academics participated in the march of relativism. Sandall has selected Karl Polanyi, Isaiah Berlin and Professor Ivan Sutherland, the ill-fated superior of Karl Popper at Canterbury College in New Zealand. Polanyi emerges as an almost unbelievable figure. Completely devoted to the quest for the communist utopia, he thought he had found an example in the West African slave-owning, large-scale human sacrificing kingdom of Dahomey. Evelyn Waugh would have been hard pressed to invent a character as deluded as this, a case of truth being stranger than fiction.

In the case of Berlin, Sandall argues that his intellectual error was more subtle and