

breeding regulations and resources wasted on regulation evasion and lobbying. The behaviour of Optus, the biggest beneficiary of the introduction of competition, who decided to take their bat and ball and go home when denied the monopolistic privileges over cable TV which Telecom had wallowed in for decades over the entire phone system, shows the fickle nature of industry participants faced with inadequate legal environments. It is time for the plumbers to get out of the operating theatre.

*reviewed by Peter Taft
who has worked for AUSTEL and on
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Australian Civilisation

*edited by Richard Nile
Oxford University Press,
Melbourne, 1994
260pp, ISBN 0 19 553504 9
\$24.95*

More than thirty years ago Peter Coleman edited a symposium entitled *Australian Civilisation*. The idea was similar to that of its 1994 namesake: to get a dozen or so intellectuals to survey the state of contemporary Australia.

Coleman's collection is the better of the two, but one reason for this can be found in Nile's volume. In his 1994 chapter on 'Intellectuals' James Walter calls for a 'renaissance of the generalist intellectual'. Intellectuals ought to stop hiding in their ivory towers and take their place in the 'public culture'. Eleven of Nile's twelve contributors are on university payrolls, so perhaps they are trying to

follow his advice. But some of them are not trying very hard. They remain locked into the deep specialisations encouraged by academic life. For example, a chapter entitled 'Culture' is mostly a discussion of obscure left-wing intellectuals. The chapter entitled 'Women' concentrates on women in the parliament and bureaucracy. 'Citizenship' makes scant reference to actual Australian experience. 'History' and 'Legend' are about Aborigines. These two chapters would have been good essays in another book, but are too narrowly focused in a volume setting out to examine the nation.

Nile's contributors miss opportunities, but they were also denied them by the choice of topics. Elaine Thompson on 'Cringers' and Chris Wallace-Crabbe on 'Strutters' give the reader a flavour of cultural life, but not the broad view possible with the chapters on 'Painting' and 'Literature and the Arts' in Coleman. The rough equivalent of 'Morals and Manners' in Coleman is 'Homosexuality' in Nile, leaving us with only one part of a big topic. Architecture, religion, the papers and business are as much worth discussing in 1994 as 1962, but they are all absent.



In the end *Australian Civilisation* leaves us little the wiser about Australian civilisation. There is not much about the way we work, what we believe, the major leisure pursuits, or day-to-day social relations. Even if 'civilisation' is defined as the preserve of the educated elites so many topics are missed that the book cannot possibly justify its title.

reviewed by Ann Yard

Developments in Australian Politics

*edited by Judith Brett, James
Gillespie and Murray Goot
Macmillan, Melbourne, 1994
446pp, ISBN 0 7329 2009 4
\$36.95*

'While designed with university students in mind, *Developments in Australian Politics* contains much that should prove invaluable to the interested general reader.' Well, maybe not 'invaluable', but in this case the blurb does at least approximate the truth. Much of this book is worth reading even if you are not facing exams at the end of the year.

The strength of the book is solid descriptive accounts of many aspects of Australian politics. Seventeen topics are covered: ideology, the Constitution, federalism, executive government, parliament, political parties, voting behaviour, aborigines, immigration, economic policy, industry policy, unions, social policy, foreign affairs, media policy, environmental politics and sexual politics.

Of these, I'd class the chapter on industry policy as the only dud. Win-