

the authors' generalizations and to develop their own, and give teachers opportunities to show that history is not all reading and photographs. Finally, any book that wishes to encourage readers to learn more could surely dare to provide suggestions for further reading, both fiction and non-fiction.

Thus *The Story of New Zealand* is an excellent book. It is very well researched, well presented, and well written. It can be read for pleasure, or used as a text, or as supplementary reading in schools. Its two faults are that its reading level is too high for younger children, and its content is too 'nice' and unchallenging for older children and adults. For all that, it deserves to be read widely by young people from nine to 90.

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The Working Class and Welfare: Reflections on the Political Development of the Welfare State in Australia and New Zealand, 1890-1980. By Francis G. Castles. Allen & Unwin Port Nicholson Press, Wellington, 1985. xiv, 128 pp. Australian price: \$13.95 paperback.

THIS IS an excellent book for beginning students of 'the Welfare State', wherever they may be found. But it does not begin auspiciously. It is born out of the author's identity as a Professor of Politics, and much time initially is taken up with debating over the usual abstract hypotheses concerning the welfare state. These prove to be a set of intellectual rivals each too narrowly framed to hope to capture the richness of social reality. But if Francis Castles's point here is that he is going to try to *overcome* the insufficiency of existing hypotheses concerning the comparative evolution of the Australasian, as of any welfare states, it must be said that in the end he succeeds marvellously.

For as the work progresses to discussing the history of the New Zealand and Australian versions of the phenomenon at hand, it becomes first of all a thoughtful lesson upon the intricacies involved in comparing specific welfare states at all. Each nation's history is so dynamic, the profiles of legislation involved in each so complex, and each set of legislation so dependent on the employment level and on the economic and even cultural context within the nation in question for its impact, that at times it seems as if meaningful comparison of welfare philosophies and levels across nations is almost impossible. This is a lesson all hypothesizers need to learn.

Out of all this realism Castles nonetheless brings a neat core of meaning. His comparison of New Zealand and Australia with European welfare states 'suggests that it may not be unreasonable to regard the Australasian centres' early social policy reforms in the form of minimum wage regulation through the arbitration system as a kind of functional alternative to the [European and parliamentary] strategy of extending citizenship rights by means of universal coverage of the social security system, as in the [classic] institutional model of the welfare state' (pp.84-85). In sum, the Australasian working class of necessity has tended to create its own, rather different, version of the welfare state, because it has been relatively unassisted (save by New Zealand's first Labour government) by a sustained social democratic power and vision in parliament. Their entire union-led emphasis on wage and job maintenance, in preference to wider social benefits, was inevitable in the absence of a strong social

democratic party organization, able to maintain itself in power for lengthy periods of time.

The advantage of this de facto system led by the unions is that workers are well paid, receive fringe benefits, and are well able to defend their jobs. The disadvantages are that citizens who are not part of the trades union movement, above all the poorest citizens, have to make do with whatever 'relief' the relatively reluctant state in these nations doles out to the least powerful. The idea of 'welfare' as a rich series of benefits that the social democratic state supplies to all citizens, workers or not, often regardless of their means — an idea found in its richest form in Sweden — was stillborn in Australasia. There the unions take care of their own, while the poorest citizens are singled out for state 'relief' and may suffer lesser benefits accordingly.

Another liability of the Australasian model, which Castles does not mention, is that, in general, in such a union-led welfare state, it becomes very difficult to eliminate jobs in inefficient industries, as workers who may lose their jobs persist to the bitter end, knowing that if they fail they will have only 'relief' to support them. In Sweden, by contrast, since that benefit system and philosophy is based not on union membership but on citizenship, a worker may be declared redundant and still retain a rich range of social benefits including retraining and relocation assistance. Such welfare comes primarily and in abundance not from the union contract but from the state. This makes for a more efficient economy in Sweden, as inefficient industries may more easily be allowed to die, or to restructure, since displaced workers may more easily consent to be moved into other sectors of the economy as needed, knowing the state will take care of them in the process. A healthy economy, in turn, pays for the rich range of benefits offered each citizen in this Swedish welfare state.

At the same time, we must remember that the Swedish (and to a degree European) welfare state bases its wider and deeper conception of citizen welfare in sources simply not accessible to the Australasian nations. In Sweden, an ancient tradition of social homogeneity and solidarity seldom found in 'ex-colonial' nations argues powerfully for such a broad conception. A social democratic party which appeals to this tradition is able to stay in power for long periods, and so has time to prove its skills in managing both citizen welfare and the economy — something rarely found in Australasia. And in Sweden, as occasionally elsewhere in Europe, some of the immense profits of a managed economy totally devoted to success in exporting valuable finished goods to the rest of the world can be siphoned off to pay for the truly comprehensive welfare state.

New Zealanders — who have a chance to do so — and Australians — who may not — must move in these directions if they are to travel beyond the limited, wage-and-job-oriented 'welfare' state which their unions, acting so largely alone, have been able to achieve. Such are the implications of this fascinating book. But, as Castles is the first to admit, all hypotheses are contestable. He explicitly notes that the Australasian model of the welfare state may not really differ all that much from the European model. Moreover, let this reviewer add, a case can be made for the advantages of the Australasian model.

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