

## BOOK REVIEWS

Hutton, D and Connors, L (1999)

**A History of the Australian Environment Movement**

Cambridge University Press, Melbourne. ISBN 0-521-45686-X. 324pp. \$29.95

In this extremely well researched book, Drew Hutton and Libby Connors draw on their wide-ranging experience as professional historians and environmental activists to analyse the development of the Australian environmental movement. While the author's focus is upon the history of the environmental movement as a social movement, there is much here to interest and stimulate a varied audience; indeed the relevance to environmental law and policy in Australia is clear enough, the movement has had a significant influence upon the direction and growth of legislation Australia-wide. The introduction of legislation for the establishment of national parks, for the protection of species, to regulate resource exploitation and to control pollution for example, is therefore helpfully placed within its historical, political, social, economic and environmental contexts.

The book is divided into five parts. Part I - The First Wave: 1860s to World War II illustrates that the present movement has drawn on issues and campaigns that go back a considerable period of time. Part II - The Second Wave Builds: World War II to 1972 emphasises both continuity with the past, and the tendency to adopt more radical practices in the face of increasing foreign investment. Part III - The Campaigning Movement: 1973-1983 considers the new generation of activists who mobilised through the use of left-wing strategies. Part IV - The Professional Movement: 1983 to 1990 considers the institutionalisation of the expert administrators of more recent times. Part V - Dancing in the Dark: The Movement in the 1990s evaluates the difficulties of the movement when faced with governments that have been increasingly hostile.

Each of the major environmental campaigns of more recent times are described and analysed in depth. From the Great Barrier Reef to Lake Pedder and from Fraser Island to the Franklin River the significant issues which have engendered support in Queensland, Tasmania and beyond are extensively considered. The Commonwealth - State conflicts which put the Constitution under the spotlight, and the use of the inquiry mechanism for resolving significant resource issues - and its failings - are examined within the context of each of these struggles. The differences between the Australian environmental campaigns and others in the western world - in particular the focus upon forests and wilderness here in contrast to the nuclear and pollution issues of the northern hemisphere - are also considered, giving the book a very useful international dimension.

The conflicts within the movement are discussed but not exaggerated, especially the past criticisms levelled at the Australian Conservation Foundation for its lack of activism. The development of The Wilderness Society, and the role of the local and regional groups in bringing about important legislative and policy changes, are also given the detailed attention they deserve. It is however emphasised that conflicts within the movement have rarely been of a philosophical nature; they have had far more to do with issue selection and strategy direction. Thankfully, the divisions that have bedevilled similar movements in Europe and the United States have largely been avoided in Australia. In the final analysis, this has perhaps been the movements main strength; it has ensured that it is quite possible for a diverse collection of national, regional and local campaigns to be seen AS a national movement, and in tracing the development of this, Hutton and Connors have achieved their objective and achieved it well.

Simon Marsden.