

multiculturalism with passion and wit. That is the Australian version of the ethnic racket, whereby old-fashioned political logrolling is dressed up with the rhetoric of compassion by political entrepreneurs. Various essays discuss the “new class,” the new establishment that still manages what Les Murray calls “the image of itself as a valiant downtrodden band bearing aloft the torch of enlightenment against all oppression.” He remarks nicely: “We have reached the age of privileged, often subsidized martyrs.”

Finally, Australia’s great satirist Barry Humphries, well known also in Britain but unfortunately little known in the U.S., offers a sketch of an Australian film producer, Phil Philby, speaking on receipt of a Gold Goanna Award for Outstanding Excellence in Australian Cinema: “I dunno what to say . . . but . . . you’re beautiful. I thank you. All of you. I’m knocked out. It’s just amazing. A lot of people have asked me how I came to make a two and a half hour documentary film on the subject of discrimination against lesbianism in an aboriginal women’s prison. The answer is a simple one: the New South Wales Film Corporation gave me one point two million dollars to make it.”

Peter Samuel

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The Media Monopoly, by Ben Bagdikian (Boston: Beacon Press).

The free press in America is being threatened by growing corporate control, argues Ben Bagdikian, a well-known media critic, Pulitzer-prize-winning writer, and former ombudsman at the *Washington Post*. In their race for short-term profits, he says, the newspaper, magazine, and broadcasting media are serving the interests of advertisers more than the citizens of the country. To these developments he attributes certain disturbing changes in the form and content of news reporting. Political news is often reduced to “personal melo-

drama,” for example, and irrelevant fluff pads the pages of many American newspapers.

Fifty corporations control the majority of America’s print and broadcast media, and twenty newspaper chains control more than half the daily newspaper sales. Mr. Bagdikian’s documentation of corporate ownership of the media is interesting. But the central problems in the media today are the herd mentality and double standards that prevail among the elite—issues that have nothing to do with corporate control, and issues that Mr. Bagdikian does not address. Why, for instance, do the media harp on human rights violations by America’s allies but give minimal coverage to the atrocities committed by the U.S.S.R. and its surrogates?

The book concludes with a strident attack on the “arrogance and greed” of corporate America. Mr. Bagdikian calls for a “drastic reordering of power in American society.” He challenges people to make their voices heard against the “dangerous military-industrial-media complex” and says change will come if people extend the work of those who produced the vote for the nuclear freeze.

Although Mr. Bagdikian sets out to critique corporate control of the media, in the end he fails to demonstrate how corporate ownership affects news content, digressing instead into his own anticapitalist diatribe.

Candace Strother

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Sweet Land of Liberty? by Henry Mark Holzer (Costa Mesa, California: Common Sense Press).

Henry Mark Holzer, perhaps best known as one of Walter Polovchak’s courtroom advocates, argues that the Supreme Court’s unwillingness to embrace personal liberty as an absolute value has compromised the framers’ commitment to “inviolable individual rights.” To his credit, Mr. Holzer is

consistent: In his view, conscription, wage and hour regulations, antisodomy laws, zoning, obscenity statutes, and antiabortion measures are equally bad. All these forms of power over the individual represent the Court’s use of “altruist-collectivist ethics to create a statist government in America.”

Although Mr. Holzer purports to find his principle of individual rights in the Constitution, his definition—“the only basis for relations between people is voluntary consent”—and its supporting philosophy (explicitly derived from Ayn Rand) are decidedly extra-constitutional. Ironically, despite Mr. Holzer’s libertarian viewpoint, he never acknowledges, let alone resolves, the philosophical objections to social contract theory.

Mr. Holzer’s position is unsupported by historical conceptions of the ideal state, in which certain forms of human behavior were unabashedly regulated to promote particular societal values. One can be consistent with classical liberal theory and still agree with conservatives who regard as an important right a majority’s ability to make collective decisions concerning community values and moral norms.

The human condition prescribed by the Constitution is not anarchy but ordered liberty. The mix of liberty and order in our society contemplated by the common law, and chosen by the framers, permits regulation in certain spheres. As Justice Robert H. Jackson stated, “This Court has gone far toward accepting the doctrine that . . . all local attempts to maintain order are impairments of the liberty of the citizen. *The choice is not between order and liberty. It is between liberty with order and anarchy without either.* There is a danger that, if the Court does not temper its doctrinaire logic with a little practical wisdom, it will convert the constitutional Bill of Rights into a suicide pact” (*Terminiello v. City of Chicago*, 1949).

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The populist tradition runs deep in the hills and hollows of West Virginia, strengthened by memories of the Mining Wars in the early part of the century. The state's voters learned on their grandfathers' knees how United Mine Workers organizers had to fight pitched battles against Pinkerton guards hired by management; one coal company went so far as to hire a private air force that dropped explosives on striking mine workers. Today there is still a strong antipathy to business, especially multinational corporations, which are associated in the public mind with coal barons and absentee ownership. And these historic resentments are preventing West Virginians and their elected representatives from coming to grips with their economic distress.

From "West Virginia's Rocky Road,"
by William P. Cheshire.

