

few pages it manages to instruct on the relevant economic theory, to set its exploration in the concrete world of Australian infrastructure industries, and to examine at some level of detail the policy documents and instruments – the Hilmer Report, governmental agreements and the legislation. On top of all this, it is lively and highly readable.

One would like to add that the book is timely. Australia needs this book now. It would have been even better if the authors had written something like this four years ago when the Hilmer Committee was still deliberating and the national competition policy was being shaped.

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*The Captive Republic: A  
History of Republicanism in  
Australia 1788-1996*  
by Mark McKenna,  
Cambridge University Press,  
Cambridge, 1996, 318 pp.,  
ISBN 0-521-57258-4 (Hb)  
\$90, ISBN 0-521-57618-0  
(pb) \$29.95.

Mark McKenna has written the first major history of republicanism in Australia. It is, however, a history of republicanism as understood by the Australian Republican Movement of the 1990s, which is to say a history of republicanism considered as nationalist republicanism that emphasises the need

for both 'independence' from Britain and an 'Australian' head of state. Considered in these terms *The Captive Republic* is both interesting and informative. It is most certainly far superior to Noel McLachlan's rambling *Waiting for the Revolution* that covers similar ground. But like McLachlan's book this work can be accused of being a political tract masquerading as history. McKenna states that in studying Australian republicanism it is important not to read the republicanism of the past through the spectacles of the present. In limiting his study to nationalist republicanism he falls into this very trap.

There are other ways that republicanism can be understood, in particular as a theory of government, and there are a number of varieties of republicanism. Ignoring these other possible ways of understanding republicanism makes this book unnecessarily narrow in its scope in two particular ways. Firstly it obscures the richness of Australian republican ideas, particularly in the nineteenth century. Secondly it prevents a proper appreciation of the place of republicanism in Australian political culture, in particular its relationship to liberalism.

Consider, for example, the republicanism of the 1880s and 1890s in Australia, the republicanism of the *Bulletin*. McKenna portrays it as being primarily concerned with independence and separation. There is enough evidence in his account to suggest that it was, in fact, primarily an element of a particular strand of British culture brought to Australia by working class English and Scottish migrants. Certainly its most strenuous advocates were not native born. Moreover it tended to be associated with other sets of beliefs, including socialism and secularism. Just as monarchy is part of the British inheritance in Australia so is republicanism.

David Hempton has recently demonstrated that there were at least half a dozen religious cultures existing in the British Isles during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. All of these cultures made their way to Australia, as did secularism, republicanism and many other strands of what was a pluralist British society. Even when considered as a form of anti-Britishness, Republicanism is essentially merely one of the many cultural traditions that Britain bequeathed to Australia.

In his account of the granting of responsible government in New

# The Captive Republic

*A History of  
Republicanism  
in Australia  
1788-1996*

**Mark McKenna**

South Wales in the 1850s McKenna also portrays republicanism as focusing on separation. This has the effect of drawing attention away from the significant role that republicanism, considered as body of political ideas, played in the political arguments of that decade. Republican ideas were employed by both sides in the political conflicts leading up to both the granting of responsible government and the Robertson Land Acts. What was at stake was not independence but the distribution of both land and political power within the colony. Colonial

conservatives deployed republican arguments – it was James Macarthur who claimed Polybius as an authority in the constitution debates – to argue against democracy and the distribution of land on the basis that a landed aristocracy was needed as the bearers of civic virtue if political stability was to be maintained. Colonial radicals used a democratic variant of this type of republicanism to argue that civic virtue did not require an institutional aristocracy for its survival and that land ownership should be spread as widely as possible.

This use of republicanism to justify particular distributions of power and property was a crucial element of colonial Australian political culture but is ignored by McKenna because it was not nationalist republicanism. Moreover he fails to recognise that separation from Britain was often seen during those years as the logical outcome of the victory of free trade. If the countries of the world were bound together by ties of commerce there was no need for Britain to exercise political control over the colonies. Commerce would help to cement the Brotherhood of Humanity thereby banishing war and the need for Australia to seek British military protection. There is a direct relationship between the fading of the free trade dream and the growth of imperial sentiment, both in Britain and Australia.

A final example of McKenna's restricted vision of Australian republicanism is his treatment of the fiery Presbyterian republican of mid-nineteenth century New South Wales, John Dunmore Lang. McKenna claims Lang as a republican hero who prefigures much of the republican debate of the 1990s. After mentioning Lang's Presbyterianism he proceeds to treat Lang as a secular political thinker. This is unfortunate as Lang's republicanism was an outgrowth of his Calvinist theology. Lang was heavily

influenced by Thomas Chalmers, and Chalmers' desire to turn England and Scotland into a collection of 'Godly Commonwealths', self-regulating and self-sufficient parishes. Chalmers pioneered a communitarian system of voluntary poor relief in his parish in Glasgow that sought to encourage an ideal of individual responsibility that was rooted very firmly in evangelical Christianity.

Lang, who hated both Catholicism and 'Puseyite' Anglicanism, hoped to establish a series of 'Godly Commonwealths' in Australia; he sought not only separation from Britain but the separation of the various Australian colonies from each other. Lang made no distinction between sacred and secular; he justified democracy on the basis of biblical precedent, believed that the British were an Elect people who had been chosen by God to colonise the world, and supported republicanism and opposed empire because he believed that there could be no fifth monarchy on earth – empire meant political popery. Lang's republicanism is much richer and more complex than the version of it presented by McKenna, but then the last thing the Australian Republican Movement wants is to be associated with Christian fundamentalism.

I have used the above examples to indicate how much more there is to the history of republicanism in Australia than just the desire to separate from Britain. It is only when we consider republicanism in this broader sense that we can address the problem of the ways in which republicanism has helped to mould Australian political culture. I believe we can say that two major varieties of republicanism have had a major impact on Australian politics. The first is what McKenna calls 'French Republicanism' which has as its aim the creation of a unified, solidarist state founded on the basis of what Benjamin Con-

stant termed 'ancient liberty'. This form of republicanism has linked up in Australia with utilitarianism and the desire to create an efficient society able to deliver a certain standard of living. The classic analysis of the shortcomings of Australia, W.K. Hancock's *Australia*, was essentially a Machiavellian inquiry that sought to explain why Australians had failed to maintain their *virtù*. This variety of republicanism has very little in common with liberal ideals of individuality and independent responsible action because its liberty is liberty gained through membership of an independent entity. Indeed it has quite happily accepted ideas of what was called in the eighteenth century 'police' regulation, i.e. the idea that the state is free to organise individuals as it sees fit in order to attain maximum productivity and efficiency.

The second variety of republicanism, Anglo-American republicanism, has also had an impact on Australian political culture. This form of republicanism has emphasised limited government and constitutional restraints, and is concerned to promote modern liberty, i.e. liberty to be left alone and pursue one's own interests. This variety of republicanism entered into Australia through the avenue of British and American constitutional thinking and the influence of such thinkers as Alexis de Tocqueville. It has clearly had an impact on the Australian constitution. It is also a variety of republicanism that has clear affinities with liberalism.

There is an irony that the influence of the French variety of republicanism was at its peak in Australia during those years when Australia was most devoted to the monarchy and empire during the first half of this century. During those years many Australians conceived their liberty in terms of their membership of the good ship Australia and its capacity to

deliver efficiently a certain standard of living. The most significant development of recent years has been the decline of this more collectivist ideal of republicanism and the growth of both liberalism and Anglo-American republicanism with their emphasis on modern liberty, individual responsibility and limiting the role of government.

Considered from this perspective a republicanism that emphasises national independence can be viewed as an attempt to revive an older collectivism. This is confirmed when one views the chest thumping patriotism of many of the supporters of the contemporary republicanism of the Australian Republican Movement. As in the past, to regard republicanism as a political doctrine emphasising national independence is to miss the main game. To consider the place that a republicanism devoted to constitutional and limited government has in strengthening the liberal elements of our political system is a far more pressing task.

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*Libertarians and Liberalism:  
Essays in Honour of Gerard  
Radnitzky*

by H. Bouillon (ed.),  
Avebury-Ashgate Publishing,  
Aldershot, 1996,  
ISBN 1-859-72-460-4, £40.00.

When twenty economists and practitioners including leading politicians from Britain, the Czech Republic and Italy, contribute essays to a *festschrift* for a philosopher, this signals that the philosopher has had unusual impact on people's minds. This volume by people, who all think in the classical liberal tradition, is indeed a worthy monument to one of the foremost contemporary European philosophers of liberty: Gerard Radnitzky, world-renowned epistemologist, emeritus professor and tireless freedom fighter.

Radnitzky was born 75 years ago in the first Czechoslovak republic into a liberal, multicultural civilisation that lingered from the Habsburg era. But the ugly nationalist tribalism of the 1930s and 1940s soon affected his life. He became a German fighter pilot before he absconded to Sweden in early 1945. There he studied statistics, psychology and philosophy. The drift of Sweden into corporatist collectivism probably influenced his intellectual path which led him to thinkers like Karl Popper and Friedrich Hayek, expatriates who, like he, had their roots in the cultural soil of Austria-Hungary. After moving to Germany, and rather late in life, he came to economic and political philosophy. In the face of the presumptuousness of those who claim to possess more knowledge than they actually have, but who nevertheless try all the time to command others, Radnitzky conceives of philosophy as the 'intellectu-

alised art of resignation'— yet, when his resignation to the 'fatal conceit' lapses on occasions, he is liable to wielding an incisive pen against the likes of mega-Europe's bureaucrats, politically correct censors and the statist in all political parties.

The twenty refreshing essays by his friends in this volume are filled with this spirit. Walter Block restates the key concepts of his libertarian-anarchist variant of liberalism; other contributors see more of a role for the state in protecting liberties. Arthur Seldon argues that democratic government has turned from a defender of liberty to its enemy. He shows how the rule of law could be resurrected in the face of parliamentary opportunism. On a more general level, it is startling how often and how vehemently parliaments and elected politicians come under fire in this book, and to what extent the leading minds of contemporary radical liberalism grapple with the causes of 'Demosclerosis'. This is probably the sharp intellectual edge of the worldwide spread of popular cynicism with politics and the welfare state, which has failed to deliver and has white-anted the rule of law. Castigating modern 'social-choice democracy', Anthony de Jasay contributes an insightful essay on how interest group politics promised to ease our burdens of self-responsibility, only to diminish our freedom.

Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus describes how Austrian economics helped to discredit socialism in eastern Europe and now offers guideposts for systems transformation. Herbert Giersch discusses how the constitution of capitalism unshackled forces of spontaneous innovation in post-war Germany, and Lord Harris of High Cross attacks the churches for their ignorant, lofty attacks on liberal capitalism, the best and empirically tested shield against poverty, inhumanity and tyranny.

