

their life and times. Each entry is accompanied by a short list of key sources and references.

Taken as a whole, the book shows that Australasian economists have made substantial contributions, notwithstanding their peripheral location ‘down under’ and their relatively small numbers, compared with economists in Europe and North America. Some have been mainly focused on local concerns – the important role played by ‘Nugget’ Coombs in Australian ‘nation building’ after the second world war comes immediately to mind. Others have contributed to global economic knowledge – an obvious example being the contribution of New Zealander A. W. Phillips, originator of the renowned ‘Phillips curve’ that was later used for justifying monetary policies in ways of which he personally disapproved.

Ken Buckley

***Buckley’s: Ken Buckley: Historian, Author and Civil Libertarian***

A & A Publishing, 2008, 374pp, \$29.95 plus \$7 postage orders online at [www.aampersanda.com](http://www.aampersanda.com),

This is a very interesting autobiography, completed by Ken Buckley just before he died, and steered into a handsome publication by his widow, Berenice. Justice Michael Kirby, who knew Ken well, contributes a characteristically charming and thoughtful introduction. Ken was on the staff of the Economic History department at the University of Sydney from the early 1950s until the 1980s. He worked closely with Ted Wheelwright who was in the Economics department there during the same three decades: they co-edited five volumes of *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism* and jointly wrote two volumes of what was intended to be a three volume work on Australian history from a labour perspective. Ken, like Ted, was involved in the struggle for political economy courses at the University, and there is an interesting chapter about that in the book.

Beyond the ‘groves of academia’ Ken was best known for his role in creating and steering the Council for Civil Liberties. Ken refers to the CCL as ‘my baby’ and many of the chapters in the book recount episodes from its development, its ups and downs, its relationship to the police,

the legal profession and the broader community. Anecdotes abound, as do personal disclosures, laced with plentiful wit. Ken writes engagingly and reflects honestly on his achievements and limitations. He quotes the assessment of his rugby skills in his old school magazine: 'He was very difficult to stop: A good tackler'. Indeed he was, in all respects. His autobiography will obviously appeal most to those who knew him. For those who did not, the book is of potential value in illustrating how Australia has evolved over the last half century, with particular emphasis on relationships between those in authority and those needing a good tackler on their side.

Geoff Boucher & Matthew Sharpe

***The Times Will Suit Them: Postmodern Conservatism in Australia***

Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2008, 256 pp, \$35

John Howard said 'The times will suit me' and they evidently did. Conditions of economic growth, coupled with concerns about terrorism on a global scale, created political conditions conducive to his style of politics. Simultaneously though, he re-shaped the times, through the use of spin-doctors, wedge politics, exploitation of the 'politics of fear' and fuelling 'the culture wars'. The last aspect – given strong emphasis in this book – was a means of making 'political correctness' appear alien to 'the Australian way' and creating an apparent division between 'the battlers' and 'latté-sipping intellectuals'.

It was the blend of neoliberal economic policies and cultural conservatism – exemplified by the 'white picket fence' imagery – that is distinctive. Whether 'postmodern conservatism' is an appropriate label for this political blend is debateable. Ultimately, of course, the strategy proved unsustainable, perhaps partly because the Coalition government overreached itself with the *WorkChoices* policies, so obviously in conflict with the interests of the working class 'battlers'. Perhaps also, as the authors note, incidents like the Chaser team's fake 'Bin Ladin' stunt during the APEC Summit in Sydney in 2007 also contributed to the government's loss of respect. The Howard government's Northern Territory 'intervention', ostensibly concerned with aboriginal child welfare, was evidently intended to be another of those 'wedge' issues