

F. King Alexander and Kern Alexander, eds. *The University: International Expectations*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002. Pp.138.

The Round Table, a group of ardent imperialists shaped by Lord Milner in South Africa in 1909 and later exported to other parts of the British Empire, seems to have faded away. But a new Round Table has emerged with links to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where Kern Alexander, one of the editors of this book, is a professor of educational administration. He is also Director of the (new) Oxford Round Table. Members of the old Milner-influenced Round Table, a self-chosen group of reasonably powerful men, worked fervently, especially between the two world wars, to bolster the influence of the British Empire and incidentally their own self-importance and careers. However, according to Leonie Foster, the historian of the Australian version of this Round Table, it simply did not occur to members of the society to invite women to join them, a tradition of neglect that is continued by this book, which has no women authors.

The Oxford Round Table, a discussion group convened in 1989 at Oxford University originally to consider issues in present-day educational issues in the United States, the United Kingdom, and other selected countries, has now given itself a wider warrant: it also considers matters related to human rights, law, economics, public finance, and politics. Clearly it is neither reticent nor lacking in ambition. *The University: International Expectations*, a product of Oxford Round Table, ranges over universities in five English-speaking countries, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and the United States, to take these countries in the order in which they appear in the book. No editorial attempt is made to dictate or to elucidate common themes, so that the book covers a variety of issues without seeking to impose a unity that the variety of topics and authorial approaches might have made tendentious.

Kern Alexander opens the book with a somewhat lumbering discussion of “the object of the university” in which he decides to do without John Henry Newman’s ideas. His conclusion – that public universities should advance the ideal of interdependence and commonality within and among nations and states and “arm humankind in its struggle against the natural primitive instincts of the Hobbesian state of nature” while glorifying and honouring the common interest and common weal – suggests that Alexander would have been wiser if he had enlisted Newman’s assistance.

Other contributions have a tougher intellectual tone. Michael Beloff considers the possible impact of Britain’s Human Rights Act

(1998), which has incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights. He suggests that the impact will be considerable and as a practising Q.C. he “casts a wistful eye at the scope for litigation” that is likely to arise. David Woods writes powerfully and optimistically of some of the procedures of the South African institution of which he is president, Rhodes University, an historically white university. To counteract the effects of the disadvantaged school system from which black students come, Rhodes provides differential access, which enables black students to enter the university in large numbers. It then offers specially constructed programs that concentrate on the quality of teaching and the learning environment for all students. This emphasis is continued by the assessment procedures, which adopt a random numbering system, not names, to identify examination scripts. That a university named after Rhodes should be taking such steps is itself a hopeful irony.

Hanging over all contributors, even the optimistic such as Don Aitkin, who bases an independent and lively account of Australian university education on his experiences as vice-chancellor of the University of Canberra, is the challenge of the market. F. King Alexander, a grimmer commentator, reviews performance-based accountability in the United Kingdom and the United States. He suggests that it has intensified the tension between policy-makers and those involved in actually delivering education, and he emphasizes the far greater willingness (indeed determination) of governments in all the countries under discussion to intervene in university education and to insist on attention being given to governmental priorities. The free market, it seems, may not be so free. Other studies – such as John H. Moore’s account of the problems facing small private colleges in the United States, or Stephen Greenwald’s analysis of the challenge being issued by the for-profit colleges to the traditional college – grapple directly with the advance of market values. The allied but independent issue of the use of technology to improve university experience and the dilemmas posed by foreign jurisdiction over defamation on the internet are well outlined by James Mingle and David Olien respectively. Their articles are valuable and important reading.

The collection therefore provides useful commentaries on a disparate series of problems, but it has no intellectual centre. For the most part the writers do not (and seem not to have been intended to) engage on common ground. They pass each other by – busy, sometimes valuably laden, ships in the night. Missing is the intellectual tension that might have resulted from an effort to evaluate the cargo the ships carry and to decide which is valuable and which, for the moment at any rate, can be ignored. *The University: International Expectations* reads like papers from a conference that

was not quite sure why it had been convened but got on with its business diligently.

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Alvin J. Esau. *The Courts and the Colonies: The Litigation of Hutterite Church Disputes*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004. Pp. 400.

In Canada in 2005 there is clear evidence of a developing debate about the extent to which as a pluralist society we should recognize and encourage particular cultural communities to apply their own internal systems of law, justice, and discipline. The most extensive and articulate challenges to assumptions about homogeneity of political and legal institutions come from First Nations communities. Pressure is also evident, however, among some immigrant communities, most notably among members of the Muslim faith who favour the introduction of sharia law to govern their internal social and familial relations. What we forget and Professor Esau reminds us in *The Courts and the Colonies* is that the existence of minorities seeking to insulate themselves from the values, governance, and law of the dominant community is of long standing in this country. One of the most intriguing examples is provided by the Hutterites, a group of German-speaking religious pacifists and communalists, most of whom came to Canada in the late 1910s after persecution for their pacifism in the United States. As a matter of faith the members of this community have chosen to live their lives apart and insulated, as far as possible, from the state, the dominant culture, and its temptations.

What this erudite and engaging study does is two-fold. In the first place, it demonstrates the strength of the traditional belief system of the Hutterites which requires that they forswear the ways of the world in order to venerate God, follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, and protect their communities from the corrosive values of the state and broader society. Secondly, the author expresses how difficult it has been in more recent decades for certain segments of this faith group to preserve their long-standing beliefs and internal system of government, law, and discipline, and to resist the temptation to resort to the external (Canadian) legal system to resolve their disputes.

It has been a long-standing cardinal precept of Hutterite belief that disputes within the faith community should be resolved by the