

THE ANZAAS Mercury

ANZAAS: Communicating Science to the Public

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Editor's Edict

In this issue of the ANZAAS Mercury we mow through the mountains of information on Science and Technology to bring you specially selected features on current issues in improving science and its social impact. We bring you a vibrant response to criticism of government science policy by Minister, Senator the Hon. Nick Minchin, in the ANZAAS Debate. Brand new is the first edition of our new youth magazine ANTENNA, enclosed in this issue. See our take on the Olympics and much more in News Analysis. We would like to hear from you, please send any comments on the newsletter or ideas for future articles to the Production Editor at d.rouch@landfood.unimelb.edu.au, or to the postal address in the box below. -

Duncan Rouch

Adam's Airing

Comment From The Chair By Paul ADAM

Taxing Times

The beginning of July saw the introduction of the GST and the New Tax System. It is not the role of ANZAAS to enter debate on the politics of the GST, but ANZAAS has always included economics amongst the sciences so discussion of the economic consequences of the GST could form a legitimate contribution to some future edition of the 'Mercury'. The GST will, at least initially, cause considerable extra work for the honorary officers of small societies, including many scientific groups.

The debate about the introduction of the GST concentrated on the collection of money. What we are yet to have a debate about is the expenditure side of the equation. What do we, the public, wish to see governments fund? For the last few decades western governments have tended to reduce expenditure on many previously traditional areas of government activity, and what was previously the province of government has been privatised.

Universities

There has been considerable media attention in recent weeks devoted to the funding of universities. The proportion of university budgets provided by the Commonwealth has fallen considerably.

However, few Australian universities have substantial endowments, so that the funding shortfall is met, not from investment income, but from direct earnings. This is not a basis for certainty and long term planning.

There are obvious benefits to universities in diversifying their income, and in promoting philanthropy so that endowments can be built up. However, the benefits universities provide to the nation are incalculable. If funding of universities is seen as an investment for the future, rather than a burden on the budget, then governments need to determine the size of the investment they are prepared to make and then make decisions as how to achieve the best return on the investment. Current levels of funding fail to support a healthy tertiary system, and, are in a sense a poor investment.

Salaries have declined relative to other first world countries, major research and teaching infrastructure is run down and staff-student ratios are continuing to decline. For most academics salary has never been the highest priority, one doesn't become an academic to make a fortune, but as the advantages of an academic life lessen then salaries become a further factor contributing to low morale. Mendicant universities are unlikely to be seen as attractive investments by the private sector, further compounding the problem.

Australian universities are not unique, similar difficulties can be seen in other countries. However, in other countries there are attempts to rectify the situation, with substantial funding initiatives, aimed particularly at science.

A vigorous public tertiary education system seems to me to be essential for the country's future, even if there is growth of the non-government funded sector. The difficult questions for government are how big the system should be, and what level of funding is required for the system to be vigorous. Once those questions have been asked and debated then the answers can be fed into budget formulation.

Federal Government

Governments also provide funding for science, both to government agencies and through research grants. Public science is necessary for a range of reasons, not least of which is the maintenance of public confidence. The public retains considerable respect for organisations such as CSIRO, and regards them as sources of expert and independent advice. It is interesting that Sir John Berringer, until recently Chair of the UK GMO regulatory committee, has argued strongly that the privatisation of Britain's plant breeding agencies makes it less likely that the benefits of plant breeding (involving GMOs or otherwise) will help the world's poor, as this is not in the interests of the now privately owned breeding companies.

Governments, over the years, have attempted to stimulate private sector research. Recent statistics show continuing decline in industry R & D expenditure, to well below that of our major competitors. While changes to tax concessions for research have been blamed for the poor performance of industry questions must be asked about the lack of initiative shown by our captains of industry. Research aimed at advances in profitability and competitiveness shouldn't be completely dependent on changes in the rate of a tax concession.

State Government

State governments have also played a substantial role in the scientific development of the nation. State museums and herbaria have a key role to play in exploring biodiversity, state departments of agriculture conduct research of the highest quality. Some state governments have expanded their involvement in research, most notably Queensland which has recently opened a new marine research centre and has made substantial investment in biotechnology. Others, such as NSW, spend much less on research. Under the new tax system revenue from the GST will flow to the states. It will be some years before the full benefits of the new arrangements are realised, but in the future there may be opportunities for greater involvement by the states in science.

No Peat at the Olympics

The editor and I have exchanged views on the importance of gardening as a means of spreading messages about the environment and sustainable environmental management.

The landscape and horticultural management of the Olympic sites embodies world best practice, but some of the initiatives have received little coverage. One of the features of the Olympics is that they are peat free. A condition of the standard contracts for landscaping and planting is that no peat be used.

Globally large volumes of peat are used in horticulture. Australia imports large amounts of peat for use in horticulture, although there is also limited extraction in a number of states. Peat mining is environmentally damaging and unsustainable.

Importantly more than adequate substitutes exist for all uses of peat, and many of these involve value adding to what would otherwise be waste (copra, rice hulls, pine bark, green waste etc). Australian companies have been active in the development of peat substitutes, but their efforts have not yet been fully rewarded in the market place. In northern Europe there has been a very active campaign to promote peat substitutes, and institutions such as the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, have been leading players. In Australia the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney has a policy of using peat substitutes and the decision of the Olympic Coordination Authority to go peat free has provided a strong message to the horticultural trade, but it is not a message yet taken up by garden centres and the home gardener.

I would welcome any comments and suggestions for issues that could be addressed (e-mail: p.adam@unsw.edu.au,

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ANZAAS NEWS

ANTENNA!

We warmly welcome Stephanie Looi from the QLD Division as founding editor of the brand new ANZAAS youth magazine, ANTENNA. You will see she has done a splendid job with the first edition, which is enclosed in this issue of the Mercury. Please pass it on to any young students you know!

Dr LW Weickhardt

ANZAAS Member Dr Len Weickhardt died on July 14th 2000, after a set of highly distinguished careers, as a scientist, business leader, university chancellor and internationalist. Len Weickhardt began his further education at the Workingmen's College (now RMIT University) and in 1928 moved to the University of Melbourne to complete an MSc in chemistry. He went to England for three years to learn the ropes at Imperial Chemical Industries and there he also met and married Florence Blenkhams, his equal companion for life. Back in Australia he became Executive and

Research Director of ICI Australia, from 1955 to 1972. In this role he was highly noted for creating cooperation between university scientists, CSIRO and business. Weickhardt was always interested in education and was appointed to the Martin Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education on Australia in 1961. He was elected to the University of Melbourne Council in 1963, became Deputy Chancellor in 1966 and Chancellor in 1972. He was a firm and fair leader of the University, and in this role thought and worked hard over a wide range of issues, especially including the creative areas of the Patents Committee and Melbourne University Press. Following his retirement from the university in 1978 he became president of the Royal Melbourne Hospital, nurturing its medical research. The wide range of institutions and causes that were addressed by his spirit testified to a life of diverse remarkable achievements. *(Edited version of the obituary by John Poynter, Uni News, University of Melbourne, 28-8-00.)*

The ANZAAS Debate:

Science And Technology — Being Innovative, And Staying That Way!

To promote debate about the requirements to support the role of science in Australian industry and culture your Editor asked the government to respond to criticism of its activity in this area of responsibility. In particular, it has been said that following a number of high-level inquiries into science education, research and its applications the government had not responded with much in the way of concrete proposals, despite earlier imposing severe financial cutbacks to universities. The Minister for Industry, Science and Resources, Senator the Hon. Nick Minchin, replies.

In this year's Budget, the Government increased its already strong commitment to science and innovation by providing a record level of \$4.5 billion for major science and innovation programs - that is an increase of \$167 million on the 1999 Budget. This funding commitment reinforces the Government's dedication to improving the science and innovation system.

To take advantage of Australia's considerable talents the Government must strengthen links between industry, science and the wider community. To do this we need to actively engage these different groups in order to create and maintain strong linkages. The National Innovation Summit is an example of a key event kick-starting a sustained and ongoing effort to enhance Australia's competitiveness through innovation. I attended the Summit myself and was deeply impressed to see so many different people from different organisations actively contributing to this key event. To maintain the momentum of the findings of the National Innovation Summit, an Innovation Summit Implementation Group (ISIG) has been established to set priorities for our National Innovation System.

Chaired by David Miles, the Group has honed over 120 recommendations into three main themes, from this, 34 recommendations have been identified that will raise the capacity to generate ideas and turn them into national wealth, and provide high

quality business and employment opportunities. The Group's final report was presented to the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) of Ministers by 30 August 2000.

In tandem with the ISIG process, the Chief Scientist, Dr Robin Batterham, has been undertaking a major review of Australia's science, engineering and technology base. The review is focusing on the current health of the science base and identifying any gaps in research support and funding.

Invitations to make submissions were publicly advertised, and over 100 submissions were received from the higher education and business sectors, government research organisations, professional associations, individuals, and the ANZAAS Inc. also made a submission.

From these submissions the Chief Scientist will put together a public discussion paper that encompasses the science framework. This is available for public consultation since 30 August 2000, and to be finalised by October 2000.

The Science Capability Review, together with recommendations from the Innovation Summit Implementation Group, will provide the framework for an action agenda on science and innovation that will maintain Australia's excellence in science, while also utilising new opportunities in innovative and emerging technologies.

The Government, in partnership with industry and the research community intends to announce the details of an action agenda towards the end of the year.

We know that a country's success depends on how well it employs its knowledge, and the quality of this knowledge stems from how well we support our science and technology base. It is also dependant on fostering a positive attitude about science in the community to encourage people to be aware and if possible involved in science. In the meantime, we are not standing still. In this year's Budget, the Government committed \$3.6 million to increase awareness and understanding of the central role science and innovation plays in contributing to, and improving Australia's economic and social well-being. This funding will enable us to continue to support highly successful projects, like National Science Week.

Coordinated and arranged by the ABC, the Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA) and the Australian Science Festival (ASF), National Science Week 2000 featured up to 1000 events involving schools, businesses, museums, science centres and industry.

There is also a new format for science prizes. The major prize is the Prime Minister's Prize for Science, which is open to all Australian nominees from any field of science, and has a value of \$300,000. There are also two young achiever awards of \$35,000. The Minister's Prize for Achievement in Science is directed at life sciences and the Malcolm McIntosh Prize is for physical sciences. The science prizes are to be awarded in October 2000.

Biotechnology is a good example. In this year's Budget the Government provided an additional \$31 million over four years to further support the development of a strong biotechnology industry.

We have a strong research foundation and an industry with the potential to provide significant economic returns and health benefits. Playing an active role early on

ensures there is effective regulation and well managed biotechnology intellectual property while maintaining up-to-date research and guaranteeing access to biological and genetic resources.

Biotechnology is a relatively new industry whose ethical boundaries are still unclear. Australia needs to play an active role in this industry early so we can be across the issues and deliver our ethical standpoint when it comes to genetically modified food for example.

We've ensured that biotechnology is also eligible for funding under the Pooled Development Funds Program (PDF) which is designed to develop the market for patient equity capital to Australian small and medium-sized enterprises. This has meant that more than \$440 million in capital has been raised and at 30 June 1999, \$215 million had been invested in 185 SMEs.

Another gap the government has already gone to great lengths to address is the limited availability of venture capital and seed funding, especially at the early stages of commercialisation. The Innovation Investment Fund (IIF) and changes in the taxation system are stimulating venture capital industry, and encouraging early stage investment. Together with private sector input, the \$221 million in funding provided by the Government over the ten years of the program will create an overall investment pool of over \$330 million for early-stage venture capital investment.

At the National Innovation Summit several independent commentators credited the growth in the number of seed, start-up and early expansion deals in Australia during 1999 to the IIF Program, with Australia seeing record levels of investment activity as a result.

Increased innovation and international competitiveness can be achieved through commercialising our research and development globally. The Commercialising Emerging Technologies Program (COMET) will help successful applicants attract capital and provide them with the skills necessary to turn ideas into commercial ventures.

This program was launched in November 1999 and has already approved funding worth almost \$5 million. Over the next three years around \$30 million will be provided through COMET to assist individuals, early-growth firms and spin-off companies from public research institutions to increase their chances for successful commercialisation.

Support is provided through two COMET schemes: Tailored Assistance for Commercialisation (TAC) and Management Skill Development (MSD). TAC will assist in establishing management teams, market research of a sound business plan, attracting capital, proven technology, working prototypes and intellectual property strategies. MSD provides up to 50 per cent support for successful applicants to participate in existing management programs offered by the private sector or tertiary institutions.

We have, through these initiatives, come a long way in creating a world-class innovation system. But there is no doubt we need to do more. From the outcomes of the Innovation Summit Implementation Group, and the Chief Scientist's Science Capability Review, we will map out a plan of action that reinforces our strong and

highly diverse science and technology base. It will help create a culture of innovation in Australia, encourage investment and strengthen the links between research, industry and government sectors.

**Please join the debate, by sending your response to Prof. Graham Johnston:
Email- grahamj@mail.usyd.edu.au; Post- Honorary Editor ANZAAS,
Department of Pharmacology, The University of Sydney, NSW 2006. Responses
will be posted on the ANZAAS web site.**

NEWS Analysis

Gold for Australian Science?

Duncan ROUCH & Paul ADAM

Federal Minister for Sport and Tourism, Jackie Kelly, announced in May that an extra \$5 million would be allocated to elite sport in Australia. "This announcement demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to backing Australian sporting achievement on the world stage," the Minister said. But what of nurturing Australia's scientific achievements on the world stage? Australian sport science and medicine has played a fundamental role in developing Australia's prowess in many sports yet this role is set to remain largely invisible during the sport and entertainment festival that is the Sydney Olympic games this September. Moreover, with the world focussed on Australia during the Olympic period has the government missed another opportunity to show to the world that science and knowledge is a key part of modern Australian culture?

Some of the international media coverage, however, may discuss the substantial input from Australian science in preparing the venues. There is a debate about whether the 'green games' have lived up to all the original expectations, (covered in the recent 'Australasian Science'), but there can be no doubt that the rehabilitation of the Homebush site has been a major exercise which involved considerable technological advances. The conservation of the green and golden bell frogs, not part of the original plan but dictated by circumstance, provided resources for research in conservation biology which would not otherwise have been available. Research has also been conducted on wetland rehabilitation and restoration.

Australian scientists have also been in the forefront of development of improved drug tests, unfortunately a necessary adjunct to sport.

For the rehabilitated wetland the era of Olympic Games will be a showcase of Australian scientific skill, inventiveness and lateral thinking. They will provide an enduring legacy applicable to the rehabilitation of seriously degraded land.

Elite Sport: a Model for Policy Success

Duncan ROUCH

Australian elite sport has come a long way since the debacle of the Montreal 1976 Olympics when Australia failed to win a single gold medal. This sporting disaster catalyzed long-term, bipartisan, federal government support, with cogent policies and

matching funding to nurture elite sport in Australia. The keystone of the new policies was the Australian Institute of Sport, which was established in 1981 to provide cutting-edge facilities, coaching, nutrition, sports medicine and sports science. Most state governments followed to set up their own sport institutes. Since Montreal Australian governments have spent over one billion dollars on elite sport. Australia's potential Olympians now have access to a comprehensive range of support services, and as a result the Australian Olympic Committee has firmly predicted a record catch of medals for Australia at the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Australia has also become a world leader in scientific research into athletic performance.

The rise in performance of Australia in elite sport, like a phoenix from the ashes, proves that long-term government commitment and funding to an issue can produce fundamental and long-term solution to a complex problem along with favourable political outcomes. Australian Prime Ministers have come to recognise the positive political value of being associated with successful sporting events and sports' people. What could occur if government applied the same level of commitment and relative funding to other problematic areas of responsibility that it has done to elite sport? Consider fundamental issues like health, innovation and the environment. Australia's health system costs billions of dollars each year to run and costs are spiraling, so does it not make sense to develop efficient sickness prevention policies to reduce the demand for health services? For example, greater participation in sport and other physical exercise would clearly help improve the health of Australians. Nevertheless, while the federal government is spending \$535 million on the Sydney 2000 Games, and allocated \$77 million for elite sport in the budget, it has directed only \$12 million to improve the participation of Australians in sport activities.

Successive governments have spent much time tinkering in the dark with Australia's system for producing innovation in industry, most notoriously in reducing the tax concession for industrial research and development from 150% to 125% in 1996. It can only be hoped that the recent run of government investigations into innovation and related higher education and research issues (see *Innovate or Perish?* and *Chance for Change* in this issue) will finally produce a cogent suit of integrated, adequately funded and effective policies.

"The Natural Heritage Trust represents the biggest financial commitment to environmental action by any federal government in Australia's history - \$1.5 billion," and, "The Natural Heritage Trust is about action," trumpeted the government web site. Three years later Australia's severest immediate environmental problem, soil salinity, continues to worsen. The Natural Heritage Trust was a good idea, but its impact has been diluted in a poorly integrated scattergun approach to environmental issues (see *Mercury*, March 2000). What price focussed leadership and effective long-term policies?

This report was based on "Gold for Australia: a lesson in successful public policy", by J. O'Dwyer, Sports Medicine Australia, in On line Opinion, August 2000;

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/Aug00/O'Dwyer.htm>

Trees: Key to Land Salinity Control

Duncan ROUCH & Paul ADAM

Farm forestry has a vital role to play in reducing the effects of rising water tables and consequent dryland salinity and soil damage in southern Australia.

Recently the cost of repairing land degradation, much of it due to salinity, in Australia has been put at over \$60 billion. One measure that may limit, and if carried out at a sufficient scale, may halt the spread of salinity is the establishment of plantations.

This is the conclusion from a Workshop sponsored by the CSIRO and other government agencies held in Melbourne July 2000 entitled, Plantations, Farm Forestry and Water. Participants included representatives from Federal and State agencies, catchment authorities, Murray Darling Basin Commission, universities, plantation companies and Greening Australia.

According to Dr Sadanandan Nambiar, Chief Research Scientist, CSIRO Forestry and Forest Products, ANZAAS member and Workshop Convenor, the Workshop discussions clearly showed that strategic placement of tree plantations on agricultural land could be significant in reducing the effects of rising water tables and consequent salinisation.

In flatter areas, such as the Western Australian wheat belt, plantations may have to cover a greater proportion of the land and be complemented by rotations of deep-rooted perennials incorporated into the cropping system. In the Murray Darling Basin, however, plantations will be most effective if planted in prime recharge areas, that is, in areas where most of the rainfall is absorbed into the ground. Recent research by CSIRO in the flatter rice growing areas of the Murray Darling Basin has indicated that trees planted over ancient river beds have the potential to be very effective in lowering water tables. Some eucalypt species are particularly suited to this.

The workshop participants agreed that to be effective tree plantings will need to be substantial and backed by commercial incentives if the necessary scale of plantings is to be achieved. In areas where annual rainfall exceeds 800 mm farm forestry is a viable commercial proposition in its own right.

In the 600-800 mm rainfall zone trees will grow at a slower rate but will still be capable of producing quality products. It is in this and lower rainfall zones that the environmental benefits of lowering water tables and allowing adjoining land to be used for agriculture will need to be taken into account when assessing the commercial viability.

Dr Nambiar points out that this innovative opportunity should not be dampened by the alarmist and poorly substantiated opinions in the media about plantation development being a threat to water resources. Judicious development of planted forests, with due care to the potential impact on water, is a way forward for both economic and environmental benefits.

Science Must Be More Open

Duncan ROUCH

In Australasian Science, May 2000, Peter Pockley discussed the loss of trust by public citizens of Britain about science, as represented by the House of Lords report on science and technology (see www.publications.parliament.uk). The key factor in this fall of science has been the obsessive secrecy in British government science as well as in industry. A major foundation of this fall was the government's handling of the BSE (mad cow disease) fiasco and its role in creating the conditions for outbreak of the cow disease over many years previous to its recognition. British government has also been blamed for the circumstantially related incidence of the incurable human disease Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) in Britain.

BSE and some other factors are peculiar to Britain, for example Australia has not suffered BSE and its robust public health system has not been compromised by the greed of commercial cattle feed operators as happened to its British counterpart. Nevertheless the global revolution in corporate responsibilities will pull Australian science in a similar direction to British science, in needing to be more open. This openness, or increased public-accountability, applies to the operation of scientific institutions as well as the increased availability of their knowledge. These changes will be far more tangible in effect than the old policy of 'increasing the public understanding of science', which is seen as a condescending and dated concept. A number of global companies, such as BP-Amoco and Shell recognize that they require a public license to operate, and need to work in ways that are socially and environmentally responsible if they are to remain competitive. This will mean pressure for greater public transparency of commercial operations, which will follow on to government and public science organizations. Greater public accountability will affect many institutions and countries around the globe. Clearly ANZAAS can play an important part in introducing the new era. Welcome to the 21st century.

Innovate or Perish?

Duncan ROUCH

'Innovation -Unlocking the Future', the final report of the Innovation Summit Implementation Group was released at the end of August, see ANZAAS Debate in this issue and http://www.isr.gov.au/industry/summit/isig/body_isig.html. The report makes a range of hard-hitting recommendations behind the call for government to act if Australia is to be able to punch at its weight in the knowledge economy. If the report is not acted on Australia faces disintegration into the branch-office country, in which business occurs through the local branch offices of global companies while real wealth is created elsewhere, according to chair David Miles.

Chance to Change

In recognition of the importance of the science, engineering and technology (SET) base to Australia's future, the Minister for Industry, Science and Resources, Senator the Hon Nick Minchin, requested the Chief Scientist, Dr Robin Batterham to assess its capabilities to ensure it can meet the needs of Australians in the 21st century.

See <http://www.isr.gov.au/science/review/index.html>

"A knowledge economy needs a knowledge base, and the Chief Scientist's proposals provide us with some highly effective steps we can take to boost our knowledge base in science education, research, development and commercialisation of technology," responded Prof Brian Anderson, President of the Australian Academy of Sciences, in an upbeat response.

ANZAAS is taking a considered view of the discussion paper and while strongly praising the general approach warns that a more detailed analysis of options is necessary to ensure critical implementation issues are addressed. For example ANZAAS particularly welcomes the recognition of the need to increase Science, Engineering and Technology literacy amongst the general public. However, it is not clear that we have the appropriate strategies in place to overcome what is clearly a widespread mistrust of science amongst large sections of the population.

Also, commercialisation is absolutely essential and necessary, but we would be concerned if the entire thrust of our science capability was directed at possible commercial opportunities. There are important areas of science for public good, which need to be sustained and developed, where commercial return in the short and medium term is unlikely.

A full response from ANZAAS to the draft paper will be broadcast in the near future.

Natural Heritage Trust

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator the Hon. Robert Hill, was asked to respond to criticism of the environmental programs of Natural Heritage Trust stated in the March 2000 issue of the Mercury. Despite an initial agreement of his office and a generous time line, however, we have received no response.

The Mercury Poem

No Miracle

Lanky Lecturer Lambert lay lazily at the late seminar
Then the simple question, like a fisherman dancing a fly on water
Another question follows and another, reeling in the speaker
The victim struggles to protect his pride, unaware of the hard hook
While the line draws an Oxford education for the expectant crowd
Finally the lethal blow as the victim feels earth beneath his fins
Lanky Lecturer Lambert laid-back live-wire in the laboratory
The meteor blizzard of academic tasks threatens quick shipwreck
Yet easy patience to teach students the modern mysteries of science
To dare lead disciples in the zestful quest to engineer enzymes
Like triangulating compass bearings on the dark side of the moon
We don't do miracles, simply the impossible, his boldly able motto
Duncan Rouch

Perrin's Points

News To Members From The General Secretary

Subscription renewal reminder!!

We thank those members who renewed their subscriptions after our request in the last issue. If you missed the notice, however, please use this opportunity to renew your subscription and support the important activities of ANZAAS. We need your support to help build a better future for Australia through community-valued use of Science, Technology and Innovation.

Sign up a Friend or Colleague!

If you have renewed your subscription, why not use this form sign up a friend or colleague?

With a larger membership we would be able to run more activities and better help Australia get to the forefront of the growing move towards the sustainable and equitable society. Science, Technology and Innovation will play a key role in building this future and ANZAAS has an important role in helping us get there.

Book Bite

Home and away with Douglas Mawson.

By Boston, P. 1988. Gascoyne Printers, Carnarvon (W.A.), 52 pages, \$9.95.

This little booklet is written by one of Mawson's granddaughters who shares his wife's name (Paquita). It was written to be read to or by the quite young but has a value beyond that age group. So little is written about Mawson the Man that any information such as that contained here becomes valuable. A great deal is written of what he did but little about *him*. Even his wife's book *Mawson of the Antarctic* is more about his adventures than about him.

The book begins with stories of the passage of the Mawson family from Britain to Australia, ostensibly as a transitory state on the way to the islands of the Pacific. One gets the impression that Mrs Mawson was the more realistic influence on young Douglas' education. It was not an easy existence with many setbacks until Robert (the father) obtained employment in Sydney, in a timber yard. The value was the chance for Douglas to attend Fort Street Public School. Robert went to Papua, again not successfully, leaving Margaret to work with the two boys on their way through university where Douglas, initially wanting to be an engineer, came under the influence of T. W. Edgeworth David and Douglas found his true interest in geology. He had to develop independently, with little of the father's influence. It then reviews briefly Mawson's involvement with the Shackleton trip of 1907-09 and the formulation and execution of the 1911-14 expedition, the latter the main part of the

book. There is very little comment on the 1929-31 BANZARE expeditions. Quite a deal of information about his desire for the conservation of Macquarie Island (he would be happy with it now on the World Heritage List) and the impact that South Australian geology had on him and *vice versa*. There are comments about Mawson's later life and relations with his grandchildren, which appear nowhere else.

As it was produced for the younger reader, or even to be read to the young, it has larger print than normal and has a few line drawings (cartoons) designed to lead children to explore further. It is not a scientific treatise and clearly romanticises the 'goodness' of everything that Mawson did. But then, it may be the sort of book we read when we were much younger that made us yearn to see the exciting places. A quibble right at the end: Gondwana rather than Gondwanaland.

It is perhaps not expected that a book about an Antarctic hero should be published in Carnarvon, but when one remembers that the Gascoyne Trading Company was founded by Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, the link with adventure becomes less tenuous.

The book is designed to produce, *inter alia*, funds for preserving and promoting the Mawson Collection at the University of Adelaide. I wish it luck in this quest.

Although painting Douglas as a bit more saintly than he may have been in reality, there is much here that should be of general interest. *By Patrick G. Quilty AM (My copy came from 'Antarctic Adventure', Hobart).*
