

Ritter, D.

The Native Title Market

University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2009, pp. 90, \$19.95.

David Ritter has written a short, thoughtful and well-informed account of what happens in negotiations between Aboriginal people and mining companies under the Native Title Act. He writes as an insider, having acted as a lawyer for parries engaged in such negotiations. As he points out, ‘simply preventing a project from going ahead is invariably not a realistic option for an Aboriginal group’ (p32). Agreements have to be hammered out. So the ‘new culture of agreement-making’ that has pushed land rights issues out of the political limelight in the last decade has in effect created the ‘culture of the bazaar’ (p2). It is a market process and, like markets in general, relative power and bargaining skills determine outcomes. Agreements may mean substantial income flows to traditional landowners – as well as safeguards against particular forms of damage – but indigenous disadvantage, as shown by an array of indicators, has usually changed little as a result. As Ritter points out, ‘the purpose of the doctrine of native title is the recognition of property rights, not socio-economic development: the latter was always in the realm of a highly-appealing, hoped-for by-product’ (p. 61). He writes from a lawyer’s perspective, infused by social democratic values, and the result is a useful introduction to what happens when mining companies need to negotiate with Aboriginal people to pursue their capitalist interests.

Walter, A. and Sen, G.

Analyzing the Global Political Economy

Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2009, pp. 275, \$90

The authors begin with the obvious question ‘why yet another textbook in international political economy (IPE)?’ Their answer boils down to an argument that the methods of mainstream economics have effectively colonised academic IPE, at least in the US, but have yet to do so at undergraduate level. The discipline continues to be taught as if different perspectives were legitimate, with liberals, realists and Marxists latterly joined by ‘constructivist’ and other ‘critical’ approaches. This, the

authors suggest, should stop. Consistently enough, they assert their interpretation through well informed, empirically based, discussions of trade, finance and foreign investment. However, this technique of excluding rather than engaging with alternative approaches overstates the consensus, even in the USA, where the economic rationalism the authors advocate remains fiercely contested. The book gives little indication of what an intellectually exciting place IPE can still be.

Book Notes by Frank Stilwell and Bill Dunn