

impact of this powerful work. On the surface, the book is an anthology of Murray-Smith's experiences on an Australian Antarctic resupply voyage aboard MV Icebird in 1985-86. Three landfalls were made, at Mawson's 1911-14 hut at Commonwealth Bay, and at Casey and Davis stations. This is not a travellers' tale which the diary structure might suggest. The reader is immediately involved in shipboard life, politics, and in Murray-Smith's interactions with companions who represent the cross-section of those involved in the Antarctic program. The descriptions and perceptions of shipboard and station politics, together with day-to-day situations, are entertaining and stimulating. The reader is skilfully drawn into personal (and at times frank) exchanges, mishaps and controversy. In addition, several press releases that Murray-Smith wrote during the voyage are dovetailed into the text as the end-product of the circumstance in which they were written. They are escapes or explorations of normal reaction to this splendid frontier.

At another level, Murray-Smith provides a lucid and frank investigation of the spirit, motives and operational sense of Australia's Antarctic program. Analyses are exposing and, with force, cut to the bone at several places. Each cut exposes a web of ideas and re-assessment. In his preface, Murray-Smith says he takes a more charitable view of shortcomings than he perceived at the time, but the published word will no doubt upset program administrators. However, *Sitting on penguins* is an analysis by an intelligent man whose Antarctic travel was at the request of Barry Jones, the (then) Australian Federal Government Minister responsible for the Antarctic Division. Murray-Smith knew the program's history and politics better than most involved; his target is the program's intellectual perception of Antarctica. The searching questions that vex him are relevant to other nations with Antarctic operations.

Hutchinson Australia have taken a great deal of effort to produce this book. Jan Sensberg's modern and busy sketches compliment the intensity of Murray-Smith's pen, although the combination might be too strong for some. Colour photographs of human activity, not wildlife, reinforce the human and political fabric that the author uniquely portrays. *Sitting on penguins* is expert writing and, together with its political, social and historical analysis, has immense literary value. It is an acquisition for all Australians with an eye on their Antarctic endeavour. In the longer term, I hope that the literary value of the book will be recognised in some formal way. (Peter L. Keage, Australian Antarctic Division, Channel Highway, Kingston, Tasmania, Australia 7050.)

#### ONE AUSTRALIAN'S ANTARCTIC

BREAKING THE ICE. Butler, R. Sutherland. 1988. Tring, Lion Publishing. 159 p. illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-7459-1189. £12.95.

Rowan Butler, a professional electronics engineer, has served with Australian National Antarctic Research

Expeditions (ANARE) since 1980. This book is an account of seasons spent at Mawson (1981-82), and Casey (1984) stations, a visit to Heard Island in 1985 on the Antarctic Division's BIOMASS Experiment (AD-BEX), and finally a trip to the Bunger Hills, Knox Coast, in 1986. Mr Butler's speciality was the setting up and servicing of automatic weather stations, but he also doubled as photographer and his professionalism in this field is exemplified throughout this well illustrated narrative. The photographs by no means eclipse the text, however, which presents a readable and exhilarating account of life on a modern Antarctic station. Daily routine has not fundamentally changed since Sir Douglas Mawson's time; the author succeeded in turning his hand to all manner of chores including scouring the latrines and acting as duty cook. His technical expertise found him frequently in the field sledging with dogs (an acknowledged favourite) or with skidoos, and on longer trips in tractor trains from whose heated cabins measurements of the ice sheet could be carried out.

The author has lurid tales to tell of the susceptibility of modern technology to the 'Antarctic factor', the dreaded jinx that plays havoc with electrical circuits and causes tractor engines to seize up. Amazingly, fatal accidents are few; heroics are not encouraged in present-day Antarctica. The nearest the author gets to being a polar hero is when he finds himself playing the part of Mertz in a production of 'The survivor', a TV film about Mawson's last famous trek in 1912, made on location. This involved some uncomfortable moments down a yawning crevasse, and the odd experience of listening to one's own burial service being preached.

Present-day Antarctic exploration has much to do with international cooperation as the good relations existing between Australian scientists and their neighbouring Russian colleagues make evident. The author quotes a message attached to a bottle of vodka left by the Russians at a cache: 'Accept our small gift please, as a symbol of friendship between Australia and Soviet people. For the peaceful world without wars'. The little note spoke volumes about Antarctica today. In conclusion, Mr Butler pays tribute in an appendix to *Nella Dan*, which for 85 voyages transported personnel and equipment safely between Australia and Antarctica. In December 1987 she sank off Macquarie Island greatly mourned by ANARE veterans. (H. G. R. King, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

#### POLITICS IN THE EASTERN ARCTIC

THE ROAD TO NUNAVUT: THE PROGRESS OF THE EASTERN ARCTIC INUIT SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR. Duffy, R. Q. 1988. Kingston and Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press. 308 p, hard cover. ISBN 0-7735-0619-5. Can\$35.00.

Duffy must have spent several years in the basements and archives of government, to have produced this very thoroughly documented history of development in the eastern