

Book reviews

Maritime Boundaries and Ocean Resources, Gerald Blake (ed.), Croom Helm, Beckenham, Kent, 1987, xiii + 284 pp., £27.50.

Ocean Boundary Making: Regional Issues and Developments, Douglas M. Johnston and Phillip M. Saunders (eds), Croom Helm, Beckenham, Kent, 1988, viii + 356 pp., £35.00.

Political Frontiers and Boundaries, J. R. V. Prescott, Allen and Unwin, London, 1987, xv + 315 pp., \$39.95.

Amidst the flood of political geography books of the behavioral and quantitative persuasion, it is gratifying to a traditionalist to see a trickle of books appear that continues the honorable and valuable tradition of examining real political-geographical problems and explaining them in plain language, illustrated by maps and understandable diagrams. One may hope that these three books signal a retreat from armchair theorizing and a return to the kind of studies that made political geography so useful and so respected among governments and ordinary people for the first half of the 20th century.

Gerald Blake has edited the nine papers presented at a meeting of the International Geographical Union's Study Group on the World Political Map, held in Reading in January 1986 in conjunction with the annual conference of the Institute of British Geographers, plus six additional papers. They address the 'six broad areas in which professional geographers might make valuable contributions', including defining the geographical terms used in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and devising techniques to measure objectively those geographical characteristics related to maritime boundaries.

Blake leads off with a brief overview of the problem and a general description of some maritime boundary agreements. This is followed by five papers on various aspects of maritime boundaries, including those of Patricia Birnie of England and Victor Prescott of Australia. The remaining nine papers consider maritime

boundaries in specific areas, including the British Isles (three papers), the United States (two), the European Communities, the Barents Sea, the Mediterranean and the Southern Ocean. Those authors with well-established reputations include Robin Churchill of England, Nurit Kliot of Israel and the Americans Fillmore C. F. Earney, Louis de Vorse and Gerard Mangone. Each paper contains endnotes with useful citations which are included in the 15-page 'selected bibliography' at the end of the book. The index is good, the maps and diagrams only barely adequate.

On the whole, the articles are substantial, well-written and well-edited. We may be grateful that the IGU has given recognition and support to that part of the field of marine geography that overlaps political geography. This book should help both to prosper.

The Johnston-Saunders volume has a similar format, but a very different origin and little overlap in topics and authors. This is one of three works produced under the Ocean Boundary Programme of the Dalhousie Ocean Studies Programme of Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. DOSP produced many splendid studies on various aspects of marine resources, maritime transport and maritime legal problems before its recent incorporation into Dalhousie's International Institute for Transportation and Ocean Policy Studies. Eight of the eleven contributors are or have been associated with Dalhousie. The others—Dolliver Nelson of the United Nations Secretariat, Victor Prescott of Australia and Sang-Myon Rhee of Korea—all have international reputations in the Law of the Sea. Of all the contributors, only Prescott is a geographer. Most of the rest are lawyers, but Johnston, a law professor with an outstanding record in marine affairs, has a geographical bent and frequently collaborates with geographers.

In their introduction, the editors give an overview of the subject, more legal than Blake's geographical approach. The next seven articles are case studies of particular regions: the Arctic, East Asia, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the Persian Gulf, West Africa and the Southwest Pacific. The concluding article, again by the

editors, is titled 'Ocean boundary issues and developments in regional perspective'. Although written by non-geographers, it is by far the best discussion of the region and regionalism this reviewer has seen in many years. It makes one wonder again why geographers generally have abandoned the region, their greatest contribution to scholarship, and left it to others to develop further.

The book has a good index, but no general bibliography; one must refer to the notes at the end of each article for sources. It has fewer illustrations than the Blake volume, but they are generally of better quality. Another irony, if not embarrassment: lawyers producing better maps than geographers! The two books, nevertheless, are complementary. Together they present a comprehensive, non-technical and extremely valuable discussion of one of the most important aspects of the new political geography of the sea.

Prescott's book is, in part, the third incarnation of his original slim work, *The Geography of Frontiers and Boundaries* (1965). This systematic study of the subject has been updated, greatly expanded and thoroughly revised. In addition, there are seven chapters covering boundaries in Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Oceania and Antarctica. At last Prescott has produced a comprehensive, mature work that actually delivers what its title promises. It is a worthy companion to his splendid *The Maritime Political Boundaries of the World* (1985). By remaining steadfast in his adherence to the tested traditions of political geography, and by writing clear, interesting and even colorful English prose, he has produced a work that will retain its value to students, scholars and practitioners for decades to come.

The first chapter is a general introduction to land, sea and air boundaries. It is a neat summary of the background necessary for an understanding of the subject. Succeeding chapters cover frontiers, the evolution of boundaries, international boundary disputes, maritime boundaries and border landscapes. Then follow the regional chapters. Each chapter contains numerous examples, some especially useful for their obscurity, and all with ample historical background. Each also ends with a brief conclusion summarizing the main themes or patterns that emerge from the discussion, sometimes comparisons with other areas or features, sometimes projections into the future.

In such a comprehensive and detailed work, one both broad and deep, it is easy for errors to creep in and evade the author's and editor's scrutiny. This book has its share of errors, both of fact and of spelling. Few are really significant, however, and all can be readily rectified in the next edition. More serious is the relative paucity of maps, only 37 (including some diagrams) or roughly one every eight pages. This, too, should be rectified in the next edition. There is a good index but no general bibliography, only citations at the end of each chapter. The text is nicely printed on slightly off-white paper, a treat for the eyes and the psyche, unlike the cold, computer-generated, offset-printed text of the two Croom Helm books. Those two are sturdy workhorses; this is a thoroughbred.

Martin I. Glassner
Department of Geography
Southern Connecticut State University

Comparing Voting Systems, Hannu Nurmi, D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster and Tokyo, 1987, 209 pp., £33.95.

Views on democracy differ substantially. To some people it is a perfect system for organizing politics, because it is equivalent to the market place, which is the perfect system for organizing economies. Others think it could be perfect, but is not, because it is not properly organized—the Electoral Reform Society is a good example of this category. Then there are the cynics, those who think that democracy is imperfect, but is still better than any known alternative: it is the 'least worst' way of organizing politics.

Of these three groups, only the last will draw any comfort from Nurmi's book, since it confirms their beliefs that democracy is imperfect—though it says nothing about the alternatives. Nurmi implicitly accepts the argument for democracy, that people should indicate their policy preferences—either directly (as in a referendum) or indirectly (when voting for a government)—and that decisions on policy implementation should reflect those preferences. Unfortunately, as the book makes clear, there is no voting system that will necessarily result in the preferences of the majority being represented.

Of course, many of us who have dabbled with social choice theory and the problem of constructing electoral systems are aware of Arrow's