

DIRECTIONS IN EDUCATION

VOLUME 19 NO 7 ■ 14 MAY 2010

ISSN: 1038-1368

Redraft the History Draft!

THE draft Australian senior Modern History curriculum 'is heavily focused on revolutionary struggles, colonial oppression and women's struggle for equality. It neglects Australia's British roots and institutions and its military history' (Sunday Herald, 23/5/10:4). The newspaper article continues: 'Historian Andrew Garvie said the course agenda should be altered to give a more balanced view of history. This appears to be a very trendy, right-on curriculum. It looks heavily influenced by a Marxist view of history - there's much about revolution and struggles against oppression. It seems to me students will be given bits of history to study. They may not gain an appreciation of the whole of an era or century. Education consultant Russell Boyle said the history curriculum was too selective. The ancient history curriculum spans the period from pre-history to 500AD, while the period of investigation in the draft modern history curriculum is from the late 18th century through to the end of the 20th century. There is much in the period in between that would deepen students' understanding of the events and issues that have shaped humanity and our contemporary world' (*ibidem*).

History is an interpretative discipline. So when the period of time under investigation is too narrow, as appears to be the case in the draft senior Modern History curriculum, students are likely to attribute levels of significance to the events and issues being studied that are disproportionate to their actual importance in a broader and deeper view of world events. It may be better to equip our students, at least in year 11, with a wider historical perspective and a more comprehensive picture of the past before asking them to interpret the significance of a particular revolution, social movement or struggle against oppression. Hopefully, the draft senior Modern History curriculum will undergo substantial revision before it is implemented in Australian schools.

Mr Russell Boyle, education consultant, Victoria

Website: www.russellboyle.com