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Inside the War Cabinet: Directing Australia's War Effort, 1939-45

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Scouting Squadron 8 is identified as "VSB-8"—a designation that never existed.

These and other glitches should not have occurred, especially by so prestigious a publisher as Naval Institute Press. That so many avoidable errors slipped past the author, reviewers, and editors indicates a lack of internal checks in that press's ambitious publishing program, which was a whopping ninety titles in 1995 alone.

Sadly, the book's illustrations also leave much to be desired. There are only nineteen photographs and one map, and some of the photos are generic, with no relation to CV 8. Amazingly, there are no pictures of either Captains Marc Mitscher or Charles Mason. Also, the captions of some of the *Hornet* shots contain errors. As further proof that the author simply does not know his subject, page 44 shows a TBD-1 Devastator identified as an SBD-3 Dauntless dive bomber.

On the credit side, Rose acknowledges *Hornet's* severe failings, particularly at Midway. And there is much to criticize—essentially, Admirals Frank Jack Fletcher and Raymond Spruance fought the battle with two and one-quarter carrier air groups against four enemy flattops. *Hornet* at Midway represents one of the least-appreciated command failures in American history. Vice Admiral Mitscher thought his career was over, but happily he had already been selected for rear admiral and performed superbly as CTF 58 in 1944–1945. If anything, Mitscher was too loyal to his subordinates, including an unsuitable air group commander and fighter skipper. Anyone acquainted with *Hornet* junior aviators appreciates the old axiom: Why let seniority lead when ability does so much better?

Rose justifies the book's title with the selection of a short period in October 1942 when *Hornet* launched ineffective strikes against Japanese bases in the

Solomons. He contends that by keeping the pressure on the enemy, "Horny Maru" held the line at a crucial phase of the Guadalcanal campaign. In truth, the strikes accomplished almost nothing. Partly due to poor weather, there was little air activity on either side, and combat had come to a near standstill. Navy squadrons claimed just twenty-one shootdowns in that two-week period.

Although the author finishes with a thoughtful and well written epilogue, even there his unfamiliarity with his subject trips him up. Rose states that in June 1944 off the Marianas only U.S. submarines sank Japanese carriers. In fact, carrier-based TBMs sank IJNS *Hiyo*.

Assuming that the first printing sells out, the Naval Institute Press should issue a corrected second edition. Surely, CV 8 deserves a better "obituary" than it has been given here.

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Horner, David. *Inside the War Cabinet: Directing Australia's War Effort, 1939-45*. New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 1996. A\$49.95 283pp.

The fifty-year rule is designed to allow historical figures to leave the world's stage before historians gain access to the papers, minutes, and logs they left behind. The Australian Archives have opened some of the papers necessary to write about the inner workings, discussions, and decisions of the Australian War Cabinet and its attendant Advisory War Council. *Inside the War Cabinet* looks at the work of these two bodies as shown by the recently opened archives. The author—an appropriate person to write the first history of these bodies and their interworkings—is David Horner,

a Fellow of Australian National University's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, and an accomplished author.

Horner does not write a chronological history in the strict sense of the term: this is not a complete history. What he does is provide segments of the history of decision making at the highest level in Australia's World War II effort. The book does begin at the beginning, and it ends at the war's end; however, the account strings together incidents, specific problems, and even particular days. The reader gains a picture of how the political bodies functioned, the role of their players (both permanent civil service and political), and what influences, especially American and British, played upon their deliberations.

Horner delves into a variety of recently opened sources. The chief papers employed are those of a little-known but influential figure, Sir Frederick Shedden. While the political decision makers might change with elections and the military chiefs shift with changes of command, civil servants like Shedden maintained the steady and consistent continuity so necessary for the running of defense matters. The minutes kept, the papers reviewed, and the discussions are all here. In an appendix are samples of the papers the author used to reconstruct events; even biographies of these unknown civil servants are provided. The paper trail becomes the cement that holds the story together.

Besides the organizational treatment of the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council, there are many tidbits that show the role Australia played in the war: discussions of just what Australia would commit where, and how much control Britain and the United States would have over Australia. As the war progressed, Australia shifted its contribution from Europe to the Pacific War. As its involvement declined in Europe, so did its influence there. It would be the

same story in the Pacific; as MacArthur's forces built up and the tide of war moved to western New Guinea, the Australian role and leverage decreased. Horner shows the political leadership's debates over what role to play in these circumstances. Another interesting discussion concerns problems of intelligence and security, especially the leaks from Australia to Japan. At first the blame was laid at the Nationalist Chinese door, but later it was discovered that the Russians were supplying Japan with the contents of the Australian weekly intelligence review.

The student of the Second World War will find many other issues, such as the "Germany First" debate, deployments into Indonesia at the war's outbreak, the problem of manpower in a small population, MacArthur's role, and the role of women. Biographies of the women who served as stenographers during the war are supplied. Once a stenographer married it was grounds for severance; in the archive files one can detect the changes in stenographers from their individual styles of writing. *Inside the War Cabinet* has many such jewels between its covers.

David Horner has done a fine job of showing the roles, mechanisms, and personalities at work during this period of Australia's history, and of showing non-Australians how the war was viewed from the "down under" perspective.

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Fanning, Richard W. *Peace and Disarmament: Naval Rivalry and Arms Control, 1922-1933*. Lexington, Ky.: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1995. 224pp. \$35

In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in pre-nuclear arms control.