Anyone who wishes to plot Australia's site on the chart of modern history will certainly be rewarded by meditating on the implications of Webb's major themes. He may conclude, for instance, that although the settlement of terra australis incognita was begun long after the heroic era of da Gama and Columbus had passed away, its final timing has considerable relevance to the boom hypothesis. First, because this was the only venture at formal empire-building consequent upon England's eighteenth-century penetration of eastern waters, which itself preceeded that country's hey-day much as the Portuguese and Spanish voyages had introduced the dominance of western Europe as a whole. Second, because within eighteen months of Arthur Phillip's landing at Sydney Cove, George Washington took office as first President of the United States, and the Paris mob seized the Bastille. Thus Australia's "European" phase corresponds with rare precision to a sharply defined period in modern history; the age of the American, French, and Industrial revolution. The three were to merge and interact in countless ways. If, to take one important example, the modern sense of liberty was defined in revolutionary France, industrial Britain was to be a greater exponent of its principles and effect their broadcast throughout the world. Indeed, the history of Victorian England provides the most dramatic illustration of Webb's link between expansion, prosperity, political flexibility, and intellectual adventure; the true archetype of the age was W. E. Gladstone, certain of realising a divine mission as he translated his passion for freedom into political reality. Freedom for Ireland from English misgovernment as for Bulgaria from Turkish atrocities; for workingmen to vote as for capitalists to pay the least possible tax.

Australia contributed a full share to the underlying boom of these years. Her wool, her gold, her acceptance of migrants, (often Britain's most lawless and dissatisfied subjects) are all significant in helping explain that Victorian harmony and confidence, often brashness, which appeared remarkable enough at the time and become less credible as each decade passes. So however fortuitous was the coincidence between Australia's foundation and the enunciation of "liberty, equality, fraternity", she may justly be considered to have facilitated their export from Britain throughout the world. Conversely, the rapidity of her own transition from a convict dump to a congeries of self-governing colonies must rank as one of the most remarkable products of nineteenth century liberalism.

Australian experience, furthermore, provides a useful case-study on which to test the validity of the Turner thesis, insofar as it is part of Webb's broader proposition. A warning has already been sounded against some aspects of Turner's method, especially his tendency to facile
'psychological' generalities, and we must remember that the Australian frontier was very different to the American. It would, nevertheless, be obtuse and wrong to deny that the positive facts of land settlement have crucially affected the course of Australian history. Their influence has not transcended all others, nor the pattern of cause and effect been always regular, yet scope remains for some positive assertions to be confidently advanced. One can be sure, for example, that the comparative suitability of South Australian land to small-scale farming helps explain why that colony often led her eastern sisters on the march towards complete political democracy. She counted no Henry Parkes and few militant gold-miners among her citizens; the tradition that every land owner had a right to participate in government was more potent than either in realising universal suffrage and the other chartist points. Liberalism in eastern Australia soon acquired much more than this wholly political aspect, however; protection of native industry, compulsory education, factory legislation, incipient social services were all added to radical platforms and the statute book in one or more of the colonies before Federation. Prior to all in origin, heat of controversy, and long duration was the question of land settlement. The attempts to establish compact, yeoman-style farming, and the constant disappointment of super-optimistic ideals is told often enough in the text-books to make any elaboration here unnecessary. So far as exploitation of the soil was concerned, Australia was repeatedly proved to be a 'big man' country, and were Turner's thesis rudely applied one would have to anticipate the development of conservative, oligarchic governments. Matters turned out very differently; those other liberal policies listed above may be correctly interpreted as compensations, often consciously devised, for the unhappy fate of closer settlement. Failing to secure its dearest aim, democracy turned to these palliatives.

The comparative insignificance of the Labor Party throughout South Australia's history supplies the converse of this argument; where the yeoman was settled, the pressure of political radicalism diminished, or, as Turner expressed the same point regarding the U.S.A., the frontier edge acted as a safety valve for the release of discontent. An equally interesting variation on the same theme is suggested by the early history of the Labor Party in Queensland and New South Wales; hence that organisation received its greatest impetus and distinctive quality. Both membership and ethos of the trade unions which sponsored the party derived largely from the nomadic rural worker, often bitterly remembering the fruitless rigours of selection farming. Andrew Fisher and W. M. Hughes were genuinely equipped to express the sympathies thus aroused, and the achievements of their pre-1914 governments fittingly capped the period in which Australia's 'socialism without doctrine' won general fame. She had helped found new standards of government intervention in pursuit of equal opportunity for all, that is to give liberalism a positive quality, lacking which Gladstone's philosophy had found incompetent to meet the social problems of the later nineteenth century.
Since 1916 Australian radicalism has enjoyed few formal victories, but the tradition of granting state assistance to those who must compete against natural disadvantages has been continued. Social services do this in one way; ever growing tariff walls in another; the greatest emphasis, however, has been on a subject of particular relevance to our argument, namely the continued cherishing of the small farmer. Soldier settlement schemes, the building of irrigation channels and railway branches, subsidised markets and guaranteed prices—all such policies were shaped to this common end, and the Country Party formed to represent the interests so created. The yeoman's relative prosperity over the past few decades may even be linked with the A.L.P's general trend towards conformity, and so with the increasingly obvious similarity between the American and Australian party systems. Whatever may be the truth and final implications of this suggestion, Australia appears not only to have promoted the development of European liberalism by simple virtue of holding a rich place on the great frontier, but in addition her grappling with the problems of a frontier edge produced conditions in which that liberalism has assumed a particular and unusual garb.

This concern of state activity with the welfare of the human unity relates Australian history to Webb's argument in a further sense. The Great Frontier is impregnated with a sympathy for the values and philosophy of the modern age; Webb is no advocate of a neo-mediaeval world order in which man submits himself to some omnipotent force, either divine or political. But we have already noticed that he sees, all too clearly, mounting and world-wide evidence of movement in precisely this direction. Although realising that science, technology, and even territorial exploration may henceforth increase physical wealth as rapidly as have new world resources since 1500, Webb fears lest men as individuals will have no perceptible role to play on these "new frontiers". In contrast to the pioneering of the United States' frontier edge, only great corporations and government authorities are suitably equipped to handle such problems as sinking mines in Antarctica or applying nuclear fission to domestic needs. The development of human personality and self-confidence are thus endangered, and likewise the philosophies founded upon them. If this argument be sound, any regret of humanism's present wane might appear both quixotic and futile. Nevertheless Professor Webb maintains that "a sheer act of will" could yet create "corporate individualism" through which the essential standards of the boom age could be preserved. For those sharing an attachment to the liberal ideal, and willing to assist the "act of will". Australian socialism's comparative freedom from any statist strain should give encouragement and guidance. If a country physically hostile to little-man effort can be coerced into becoming something like a land of egalitarian opportunity, then one may hope that the bounty of future science and discovery can be similarly adapted. Insofar as the task is to be tackled in Australia there should be a particular incentive to triumph in this way.
For some, then, the chief virtue of The Great Frontier will be its elucidation of a specific and overwhelmingly important socio-political issue. Others will be more impressed by Webb's co-ordination of new world and modern history, and their setting in a frame which comprehends mediaeval past and foreseeable future. We in Australia might receive the further benefit of a stimulus to widen our sympathies and research so far that all new world countries come within their range. In sum, The Great Frontier has several messages, each worth close attention.