

## Editor's Note

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UNTIL very recently most New Zealand historians could be said to have been, and certainly were seen by themselves as being, just that — general 'New Zealand historians', without either need or desire for additional qualifying labels to denote specialization. This issue of the *Journal* and the conference the proceedings of which it publishes are an indication that this situation is beginning to change, that there is emerging a consciousness of belonging to, and a belief in the value of recognizing and developing co-operative activity within, at least one sub-category within this broad and hitherto largely undifferentiated field. Those of us who took the initiative in organizing this conference were aware of a growing interest in New Zealand social history in the universities (as well as in the community at large, as evidenced by increasing concern for preserving old buildings and for reconstructing the past in 'pioneer villages', etc.). General survey courses are being increasingly supplemented by advanced-level seminar programmes on aspects of New Zealand history. More often than not these are social in orientation but are handicapped by the extreme paucity both of published work and of unpublished research in 'social' subjects.

There are various reasons for this trend. It reflects the influence of younger historians whose primary interest has been in European or American history and who are either now themselves turning to work in New Zealand history and importing into the study of it some of the themes and techniques that characterize modern European and American social history, or are asking their New Zealand colleagues some searching questions as to their apparently parochial lack of interest in the possible applicability of these to the study of New Zealand history. It is a trend which also reflects the impact of subjects such as sociology and anthropology. A surprising amount of historical research is being carried on in university departments other than history. One reason why in recent years there has been a growing demand for a conference devoted to social history has been awareness of a lack of communication amongst researchers working in many different places and failing to gain from one another the kinds of assistance (for example, with regard to methodology and source material) which are so necessary in an area which has been so recently opened up and which is as yet so scantily provided with literature.

'Social history' is itself a vast umbrella, and the topics which we chose for the conference were but a small selection of those 'social' themes in which there is currently a developing interest in New Zealand. But one has to begin somewhere, and we hope that through the publication of the proceedings of the conference a stimulus will be given to the much wider discussion not just of the topics specifically raised at it but also of the more general possibilities for the study of social history in New Zealand. In this connection an aspect of the conference which may prove to be of considerable long-term significance was the involvement in it of a large number of archivists. One of the major purposes of the conference was to bring together, on the one hand, social historians and, on the other, archivists who know that they can best serve the needs of those who use their archives if they are able to keep in contact with changes in those needs and be aware of what kinds of materials they should be concentrating on acquiring and providing. The support given to the conference by Mr J.E. Traue and the staff of the Turnbull Library is a significant and most welcome extension of the role of the Turnbull as a national focus of scholarly activity. The conference, and the substantial financial contribution made by the Alexander Turnbull Library Research Endowment Trust towards this issue of the *Journal*, are evidence of the desire of the Turnbull not merely to provide research materials but to enable researchers to make the best use of them and help them to communicate the results of their research. The long-term benefits of this are likely to be very substantial.

I wish to express my appreciation also to Mr Colin Davis who provided much of the initial inspiration and planning for the conference and to Mr Malcolm McKinnon for help with the summaries of the discussions.

It should be noted that the papers presented at the conference had, in most cases, to be substantially abbreviated for the purpose of publication. The commentaries and summaries of discussions may therefore refer to some points which are not as fully covered in the published papers as they were in the versions presented at the conference.

Because of lack of space two of the papers presented at the conference — 'Religion and New Zealand Society' by Ian Beward, and 'The Expansion of a Competitive Society : A Study in Nineteenth-Century Maori Social History' by Ann Parsonson — have been held over until the next issue.

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