

pecially the Malagasy and the numerous Indian or 'Lascar' element, died not merely of vitamin C deficiency, true scurvy, but of ordinary malnutrition. The rest, as Pottier de l'Horme suggests, were victims rather of 'fatigue and misery' and, as we may also think, chronic malaria, which unfitted them for any sea voyage of these proportions.

The voyage itself, as Dunmore shows, was essentially a mere speculative enterprise, more in the tradition of the seventeenth century than the eighteenth, and which was bound to fail. But there was another motive. The immediate objective of the venture was ostensibly Davis Island, approximately 102°W of Paris, 700 leagues W of Peru, in 27–28°S, which Dunmore, following Fleurieu, de Surville's first editor, suggests de Surville took to be Wallis's Island, that is, Tahiti. As Dunmore puts it, into Wallis's real discovery was 'infused a century of past speculation about an island or continental mass known as Davis's Land'. The real stimulus, then, was political rivalry; an ambition to establish a base on an island of real value in the central Pacific, which might form part of the famous continent — a continent which, as Bougainville already suspected, had never been more than a figment of Quiros's imagination. In any event de Surville, secretive to the last but increasingly concerned about the ill health of his men, finally decided to make for New Zealand first. And here the essential defects of the man as navigator and commander, as compared with Cook, stand out in sharp relief. In general, his seamanship was not bad. As an exponent of DR (dead reckoning) he ranks at least with Wallis and Carteret; that is to say, he had a rough idea of where he was. But he lacked the vital curiosity, the flair, the daring of Cook. At one stage he passed within 200 miles of the eastern Australian coast, perhaps closer, since he had the loom of the land for three days. He thus by-passed an indubitable southern continent, no doubt from fear of being embayed, and made for New Zealand, where he had no better hope of succour. Then, having recruited his people, he left behind yet another indubitable 'continent' without further investigation and proceeded east again to Peru, 'as being the place we could reach soonest'. In the end, on 8 April 1770, while attempting to get ashore to recruit help, he was drowned. It was to be another three years before the survivors got away again with a scratch Spanish crew and made for home, by way of the broad Pacific rather than the Atlantic. The voyage, if we may except the re-discovery of the Solomon Islands, had been an utter fiasco. The mapping of New Zealand, the charting of the east coast of Australia, the re-discovery of Torres Strait, the revelation of the Pacific as a whole were all left to Cook.

G. S. PARSONSON

*University of Otago*

*Three Party Politics in New Zealand, 1911–1931.* By Michael Bassett. Historical Publications, Te Atatu, 1982. 67pp. N.Z. price: \$7.50.

NOT SINCE the 1940s has a politician written a work of history. Unlike Downie Stewart, Michael Bassett was trained as a historian and for several years taught at

the University of Auckland. The rise of Social Credit in the early 1980s sent him back to explore more thoroughly our previous experience under a three-party system. Perhaps, too, his knowledge of the Liberal Party's fate may have added to his fascination. Extraordinary although it is, apart from R. M. Burdon's *New Dominion* (1965), little has been published about this period (R. M. Chapman's *Political Scene* provides a good account of the period 1919-31). It is therefore useful to have this small survey of elections and their results for the entire period. Better still, Bassett became sufficiently interested in Sir Joseph Ward to begin work on a biography of that extraordinary man. The first fruits of that research, given as a paper to the Historical Association's Conference, foreshadow an important biography. It is to be hoped that completion of this work will not have to await Bassett's political retirement.

Unfortunately in this present book, there are no footnotes, no index, and only a skimpy bibliography. Yet the text is enlivened with well-chosen photos and cartoons and is based upon considerable research in newspapers and in the despatches of the Governors General to London. Perhaps one of the most interesting points which Bassett makes is that the 1911 and 1914 election results were remarkably precarious. Indeed, with appeals and other legal proceedings, in each case the final result remained in doubt until six months after polling day. The convoluted negotiations between the 1911 election and the defeat of Thomas Mackenzie's Ministry in 1912 are well dealt with (although the final word will only be said when some historian also thoroughly explores archival sources). The discussion of the 1914 election is equally useful. When he turns to the elections of 1919, 1922, 1925, and 1928 his remarks are less useful if only because he has little to add to Chapman's analysis. For all that, much useful information is here conveniently brought together in short compass. And, throughout, there are crackling Bassetisms. 'Political in-fighting [during the First World War and before the formation of the Coalition in 1915] sounded more and more like flatulence in church [p.20].'

This is a piece for the times, but Bassett's wide knowledge of the published and unpublished work on our politics has enabled him to write something which should prove useful to students and teachers.

ERIK OLSEN

*University of Otago*

*The Fall of Singapore 1942.* By Timothy Hall. Methuen Australia, North Ryde, 1983. 223 pp. N.Z. price: \$24.95.

THE FALL-OF-MALAYA industry shows little sign of declining production. The run started immediately after the event in 1942 and has averaged about two volumes a year ever since. Some justification might seem in order for new products and the reasons for the present work are hard to find. It is not a scholarly book. The author is an Australian journalist with books on the Darwin air raids and the New Guinea campaigns to his credit. This book is undocumented and the bibliography