

## Reviews

*The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand.* Edited by Keith Sinclair. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1990. 389 pp. NZ price: \$59.95.

FROM THE BEGINNING of its short history of European settlement, New Zealand has abounded with observers, both imported and home-grown, who have tried to explain what the country was all about. Few, if any, nations in fact can boast more general histories per head of population. Many of these have been published quite recently, stimulated by the heightened interest in the national past resulting from the sesquicentennial celebrations in 1990. Indeed, the publishers of this volume had in 1981 previously brought out the comprehensive and scholarly *Oxford History of New Zealand*. Now, Oxford has had another go. Under its aegis, New Zealand's most significant historian, Sir Keith Sinclair, himself author of the best general history of the country, has brought together the work of fourteen leading scholars in this handsomely produced, superbly illustrated, general history.

Both the publisher and Professor Sinclair himself stress that this book has been written for the general reader, that its main purpose has not been to display the cutting edge of scholarship, but to produce a comprehensive narrative history for anyone 'seeking a greater understanding of the country's past'. For this reason the book is organized chronologically, with two chapters on aspects of the Maori history, and two on foreign relations (one dealing specifically with the Pacific) the only ones to interrupt the narrative flow. In general, the organizing principle works well. There is some overlap, some repetition, but nothing too obvious. There is also some diverting disjunction of perspective — it is clear that Professor Olssen, for example, writing about the depression and the first Labour Government, does not exactly share the revisionist views on the Massey era articulated by Miles Fairburn in the preceding chapter. Nevertheless, all the chapters are more than mere narrative; they are also competent descriptions of the main political and social characteristics of their particular periods or topics, and in the main they fit together coherently.

Some are more than that, they are original contributions to scholarship and understanding. James Belich's 'The Governors and the Maori', with his notion of New Zealand in the 1850s as being divided into Maori and Pakeha zones of influence, and his discussion of the New Zealand wars from that perspective, is rich in its scholarship and convincing in its argument. Fairburn's assertion that Massey's long period in power was a time of considerable achievement in the area of social reconciliation challenges the conventional view of the era, and again illustrates the need for a biography of New Zealand's longest-

serving conservative Prime Minister. Mary Boyd's overview chapter on New Zealand in the Pacific makes accessible much disparate material, as does Judith Binney in her fascinating and learned piece on the Maori prophetic tradition. Sir Keith Sinclair himself, in 'Hard Times, 1972-1989', provides an incisive commentary on the tumultuous Lange years, as well as displaying his obvious admiration and affection for one of New Zealand's 'forgotten' leaders, Norman Kirk.

Perhaps the most original of all the contributions, though, is that of Jeanine Graham, 'The Pioneers (1840-1870)'. More than an account of the first decades of European settlement, more than an account of the early history of photography in New Zealand, it is a fascinating discussion of the uses of visual evidence as an historical source. In her integration of narrative and theory, of written and visual evidence, Graham forcibly reminds us that this is an illustrated history, and that the illustrations no less than the text are there to be 'read', not as adjuncts to the story, but as central to it. There are more than 150 of these, chosen as Professor Sinclair says, to 'contribute significantly to one's understanding of New Zealand history'. There are pictures of leaders and of ordinary people, of signal events and of everyday life, of war, of sporting achievement, of Maori and of Pakeha, townscapes and landscapes, portraits, photographs, cartoons. Together they more than inform the text, they transform it.

This is a wonderful book, well written, well illustrated and well produced. It does not, of course, supersede the *Oxford History of New Zealand*, for that was never its purpose, but it stands beside it as an equally significant achievement.

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*Justice and the Maori: Maori Claims in New Zealand Political Argument in the 1980s.* By Andrew Sharp. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1990. 310 pp. NZ price: \$34.95.

THE TIME of writing of Dr Sharp's most important book was March 1989. It has only in minor respects been overtaken by events since then.

*Justice and the Maori* is directed to a wide readership that includes general readers, both local and overseas, for whose benefit Sharp summarizes the assured results of the work of revisionist historians that began substantially with Keith Sinclair's *The Origins of the Maori Wars* in 1957. Their work has established as the new orthodoxy a history of Pakeha injustice to the Maori, not least in the land confiscations that accompanied the wars of the 1860s and 1870s. Against the background of the new history, Sharp sets his account of the arguments of the present day: of the Maori (with important Pakeha support) for justice and of those Pakeha who argue either (against the evidence) that no injustice was done to the Maori or (against reason) that, if it was, nothing now need or should be done to redress it. At one extreme are the claims based on Maori sovereignty which, if successful, would leave the Pakeha an alien or at best a suppliant negotiator with newly dominant Maori. At the other extreme lies a concept of the sovereignty of the present