

inference that an 'imported' ideology and adaptation to environmental uniqueness characterize the New Zealand experience.

I admire Arnold's work for the fine prose and novel use of approaches derived from anthropology, and the Annales 'school' via Braudel, even if I do not accept all the underlying assumptions. Such injections can only be positive in an historiography that has all too often in the past been characterized by a narrow parochialism and a lack of interest in the possibilities of interdisciplinary exchange.

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Coal, Class and Community: The United Mineworkers of New Zealand 1880-1960. By Len Richardson. The University of Auckland Press, Auckland, 1995. 344 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-86940-113-1.

LEN RICHARDSON is a Coaster by birth. This book draws together a scholarly lifetime's work on the coal miners, places that story in its national and international contexts, and provides a model study of a major industry and its workers. His knowledge of the industry, and of the West Coast's geography and larger history, constantly inform his account. The work is also informed by other perspectives, such as social, family and sports' history, and is not confined by the perspectives of labour history

The book opens with a lucid discussion of the international literature relating to coal miners and deftly discusses the social balance between the 'earnest minority' (autodidacts and self-improvers) and the 'larrikin' element, the importance of women and family, and the ethos of the miners. He moves quickly to the establishment of the colony's first coal mines and the recruitment of skilled hewers. He sketches the struggle between the employers, with their vision of an industry without unions, and the miners' commitment to union. The early struggles on the Coast are dealt with, but he keeps a watchful eye on important events in other provinces. In this period coal miners were 'isolated from the mainstream of colonial life by both their occupation and their attitudes'. Ironically, as time passed they also became a predominantly 'immigrant' community, recruited from Britain and Australia. Yet problems at the pit-face no less than their commitment to unionism saw them increasingly involved in colonial politics. The rout of 1890 ushered in a period of great hardship. Richardson skilfully uses a wide variety of sources to portray this opening period.

In the next three chapters Richardson traces the recovery of unionism among the coal miners and the complex events which saw 'confrontation, challenge and conflict become synonymous with coalfields unionism'. In broad outline the story is well enough known. Until now, however, we have lacked an account of the coal miners and their struggle to establish a national union and a national set of conditions and wages. Yet they provided the drive and energy for 'The New Radicalism' and played a crucial role in the turbulent industrial history of the period from the Blackball strike until the 1920s. Richardson not only clarifies many contemporary issues which were rooted in local and pit-face complexities, but enlarges our understanding of the larger political context. Throughout he conveys the complex ebb and flow of opinion within the mining towns, the shifting balance between ideologues and militants, hewers and truckers (some of whom were more interested in drinking and gambling than any millennium). He also captures the

response of outsiders, such as Hurst Seagar (a fascinating section).

In the last three chapters we get a masterful account of a little-known period, the 1920s-1940s. The decline of 'King Coal', the growing importance of the Waikato, the complex jostle within the mining towns between the competing ideological stances of the period, the impact of long-term competition from alternative fuels, and the Depression's impact are all handled with unobtrusive skill. Biographical vignettes, lucid discussions of such complicated issues as 'tribute' and contracting, and sensitive use of quotations from the miners and their leaders create a powerful sense of the men and the times. The rise and fall of Communist influence and the final shift to Labour prepare us for the triumph of coal miners' unionism in the 1940s and their success in achieving their major aims. At the same time, like the watersiders, they also suffered from the consequences of the lean years. The grim reality of life in the mining towns and work in the pits contrasts oddly with their public image as irresponsible wreckers and organized predators who lived off the fat of the land. Richardson fully explores the contrasts and prepares for the final and abrupt denouement. The United Mineworkers' Union split in 1951 and the union never recovered. Open-cast mining also spelt the death of the hewer.

This work provides a full and comprehensive study of an industry and the men who worked in it. The achievement is the more remarkable because for many periods and mines there are few sources. Richardson has combed the world in his quest. His book — well illustrated and enriched by maps and graphs — makes a signal contribution to the history of both the labour movement and New Zealand. He also achieves his most difficult task, placing the miners and the Coast in their historical context, avoiding the tendency to exaggerate or romanticize. In achieving that he has skilfully balanced between the requirements of scholarship and loyalty to his origins. In the process — and not for the first time — he has paid his dues.

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Her Work and His: Family, Kin and Community in New Zealand 1900-1930. By Claire Toynbee. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1995. 260 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-86473-284-8.

THIS BOOK is the result of an immense amount of painstaking research and hard work. It began as a doctoral thesis in sociology in the early 1980s, and it has taken twelve years to produce the final book. No doubt this was done while teaching and leading a private life, and for all of that it must be acclaimed.

Yet I find myself in deep disagreement with the way Claire Toynbee has undertaken this vast and important task. She is a sociologist and I am a social historian, and she has trampled upon my temporal patch. This is a sociology exercise set in historical time, which uses sociological explanatory schema for social phenomena which were experienced between 95 and 65 years ago. That experience has been retrieved by oral history carried out in the early 1980s, and analysed by the dubious capacities of the NUDIST social science analysis software. Understanding and explanation have come from the theoretical constructs of other authors in other places often about other times. She has read widely and intelligently in the secondary and theoretical literature, but she has used scarcely any other form of primary evidence or historical investigation other than that