

On a larger plane, Battersby has a good many axes to grind. He is uneasy about the Crown's apology to Tainui, indeed about the very concept of 'the Crown', and has previously publicly accused academic members of the Waitangi Tribunal of being 'generally on the side of claimants'. He opposes many orthodoxies in the modern historiography of the New Zealand wars, from Paul Clark's 'pacifist' interpretation of Pai Marire to James Belich's accounts of Maori military 'success'. His classically reactionary positions are all arguable, but a single localized conflict is too small a grinding mill without authoritative discussion of historiography and evidence, which here is largely absent. Nor does he help his cause by sometimes misrepresenting his opponents. Revisionist historians have little to fear from this quarter. In the end the book works best as a local battle history of the experience of the militia and volunteers, who clearly engage the author's strongest empathy.

There are also technical failings. An excessive use of emotive language and literary devices, including passages unsupported by evidence or argument and compounded elsewhere by incomplete referencing, erode the book's historical credibility. In places the habit of invention extends directly into hypothesis-building in attempting to explain the 'how and why'. Battersby is also prone to overinterpret fragments that seem to point his way. These failings ill fit his neo-Rankean prescription that 'a historian's task is first to discover, then report the past — whatever it is'. There are also internal inconsistencies of evidence and argument; occasional inaccuracies in the use of primary sources; an incorrect portrait of Tareha; and a desperate need for decent maps.

RICHARD MOORSOM

Waitangi Tribunal

The Women's War: New Zealand Women 1939–1945. By Deborah Montgomerie. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2001, 203 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-86940-244-8.

SINCE THE 1980s New Zealand war histories have extended their focus from military tactics overseas to the experiences of civilians at home. *The Women's War* continues this trend, but overthrows one of the major premises of earlier feminist progressive history — that World War II was a turning-point in the emancipation of women. Deborah Montgomerie argues that the combined powers of government, unions and churches worked hard to retain the status quo for men. Despite war-time disruption of the labour force and family lives, traditional gender roles were maintained.

The Women's War valuably combines both labour history and family history, appropriate when women's lives are often a complex blend of activities. Chapters 1–5 deal with the workplace: with paid work, voluntary work, and responses to the government's manpowering of women. Chapters 6 and 7 focus on relationships and domestic life, and the final chapter covers attitudes to both home and work in the post-war era.

Montgomerie's analysis of the ways in which women were incorporated into the workplace makes fascinating reading. Statistics and contemporary comment support a strong thesis. There was nothing radical about the short-term practice and long-term effects of women's engagement in the war-time labour force, for the dominating goal of unions, employers and government was to retain women's secondary position in the workplace. Women were needed to replace men in an emergency for an interim period, but there was to be no risk of them displacing men in the peace to come. Montgomerie describes a range of industries and government departments to illustrate the ways in which differences between men and women were consistently upheld throughout the war.

Women's contribution to the war effort usually meant a move sideways, rather than upwards — a shift from shops and offices to factories, farms and service areas, often into hospital laundries, waitressing work and cleaning. Only a few women entered into new areas of engineering and heavy industries, and the number who gained meaningful work and training in the Women's Auxiliaries to the armed forces was small. Moreover, jobs were reclassified by unions and employers so that lower wages for women could be maintained. In one industry after another discriminatory regulations stipulated what women could do or earn. In the butchers' trade, for example, jobs were narrowly defined: women were excluded from training and skilled work; they could tie and sell meat, but not wield a knife. Even voluntary work was constrained by officials who disapproved of women undertaking parade drill, wearing uniforms and training in mechanics. The structured hierarchy within both workplace and voluntary services was undergirded by a patriotic mood of sacrifice that made it difficult for women to protest against discrimination: 'They serve . . . that men may fly.'

The chapters on mothers, wives and lovers illustrate how traditional ideals of a woman's role also persisted in the spheres of the home and the affections. Motherhood gained in status: producing babies and caring for them became even more essential in a time of loss. Public anxiety over possible changes to a mother's role moderated government's aim of providing crèches to enable mothers to go out to work; after opening two crèches in Wellington the government opened no more. At the same time women bore the burden of holding a family together in a time of stress while fathers were away, and in the difficult times when they returned. Montgomerie captures these tensions well. 'Mothers found themselves caught in tangled skeins of jealousy and obligations that often took years to unravel.'

Montgomerie builds on the work of Gaylene Preston and Judith Fyfe on relationships, although she also draws from oral histories which she undertook herself. These capture the continuity of traditional sexual mores: society made generous allowance for male desire in war-time, but, whilst the 'poignancy' of men's pleas heightened the temptations for women, a respectable marriage remained the goal and women were expected to maintain their traditional reserve. It is in this realm of relationships that the limitations of official documents are most evident. On important issues it is difficult to gauge an accurate picture — on the prevalence of extra-marital sexual behaviour, or the number of mothers who began work.

The Women's War contains many illustrations, although advertisements predominate; these are directive texts, and I would like to have seen more photographs reflecting the women themselves, even though (as the author notes), photographs can be ambiguous. However, this book is a fine achievement — a well-argued academic text which draws the reader into the daily life and heart of a different period.

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Breadwinning. New Zealand Women and the State. By Melanie Nolan. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2000, 386 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-908812-97-3.

MELANIE NOLAN'S big and detailed book is a welcome addition to New Zealand women's history. The author's preferred style is that of a school of revisionist New Zealand historians who proceed by argumentation. There is merit in this approach: issues are stated succinctly, possible explanations are given, and the author's position is staked out clearly. Part of the past is dissected for us and laid out. It is a sharp knife doing the dissecting.