

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.

The book investigates how the state shaped women's position. Nolan does not accept that a patriarchal state replaced 'patriarchal male breadwinners as a source of women's dependency' (p.13). The state, in fact, lacked any consistent policy on domesticity. Women's groups held a variety of opinions, which Nolan divides into two main groups: those who sought equality and those who wished to protect difference between the sexes. The book proceeds by a series of case studies which include: protective labour legislation; widows and 'grass widows'; the domestic education debate; family allowances; unemployment and single women; married women workers; equal pay; and the domestic purposes benefit. There is a wealth of information in these chapters based on an impressive amount of research in primary and unpublished secondary sources. The book will quickly become a useful reference work for those wanting detail on specific policies.

The focus on government policy works best when that policy, such as protective legislation, was firmly focused on women. Nolan traces the Liberal government's structuring of women's hours, conditions and wages in certain occupations over the period 1891–1912. This is the issue which sharply divided feminists between those who stood for complete equality and those who supported recognition of women's difference. We are reminded, however, that the state had no interest in regulating that main occupation for women, domestic service. Nolan might have said more here about the way the state resisted involvement in the home. Indeed, her arguments about domesticity would have benefited by more analysis of the state's unwillingness to encroach on the private sphere.

Just as the state sometimes justified interference in the domestic sphere in the interests of children, so too the rhetoric surrounding protective legislation drew on the need to protect women as the mothers of the human race. More might have been made, I would argue, of the problem of children. Children were not supposed to be a problem for the state because they had families to care for them. They needed to be fed and cared for, hence breadwinning and domesticity were central concepts in the state's desire for healthy citizens. Nolan addresses this issue in her chapter on family allowances but she is bent on showing how this policy helped, in the long run, to undermine the male breadwinner wage. This was indeed an unintended consequence but the state was caught between the need to provide for future citizens and the sanctity of the family. If it could not ensure the reliability of the male breadwinner, it could at least maintain his dignity by providing additional support for children (limited and meagre though it was in 1926). Perhaps it was essentially the problem of children which led the state to embody 'contradictory tendencies on domesticity — promoting it, bending and stretching it, undermining it' (p.36). While adopting some of the responsibilities of fathers, no government felt able to replace mothers.

Dissecting the past reveals the bare bones. The danger, however, is that any living breathing beings are less interesting to the author than the particular target of the scalpel. Despite its impressive research base, *Breadwinning* rarely invites us to view its chosen topic from the perspective of individuals. We glean most about individual responses and the wider social climate through the excellent use of visual material. In the few instances when the earnest text is relieved by an anecdote about experience, we remember it. The complaint of Mrs Ani Rikihana and more than a dozen other Maori women of Te Kao that they wished to receive their Family Allowances 'as other women are' and not have it paid to the Pakeha storekeeper puts a scene before us that we have not imagined before (p.138). Policy changed because of this complaint and we are reminded of the many steps between legislation, implementation and intention, and between providers and recipients.

There is more to breadwinning than a pay packet. The most powerful vignette I recall lies in the recollections of a woman born in 1900 who went out to work for a brief period after her marriage. As a consequence her husband gave up work and put on a pinafore until he shamed her into giving up her job.<sup>1</sup> Through this story we sense that state policy

was embedded in a wider cultural climate saturated with ideas about gender. Nolan's book gives us an excellent outline of some key policies to do with the interface between women and the state. Others, no doubt, will flesh them out.

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1 Wellington Branch Society for Research on Women in New Zealand (Inc), *In Those Days. A Study of Older Women in Wellington*, Wellington, 1982, p.52.

*His Way. A Biography of Robert Muldoon.* By Barry Gustafson. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2000, 545 pp. NZ price: \$53.95. ISBN 1-8694-0236-7.

MANY OF THOSE who lived through the Muldoon years and who disliked or even hated him at the time have mellowed somewhat in their assessment of the man. Chatter at dinner parties for the middle-aged sometimes degenerates into nostalgia for simpler and kinder times of the 1960s and 1970s. Given the free marketeers who followed him, perhaps Muldoon wasn't really such a bad chap after all. In retrospect, he is commonly seen as a badly flawed man who nonetheless was the last of the pragmatic socialists, the last defender of New Zealand's full-employment welfare state, the last supporter of the 'common bloke'.

Yet for others the legacy of 'Muldoonism' still has an edge. The common use of this term as a derogatory statement refers less to his personal nastiness as to the notion of him as symbol and scapegoat for the allegedly failed pre-1984 regulated New Zealand economy and lifestyle.

Gustafson is particularly well suited as Muldoon's biographer. He has been in the political world himself, on several sides, and has written extensively on both National and Labour politics and politicians, including a biography of M.J. Savage. Moreover, Muldoon gave Gustafson his blessing and extensive interview time, and provided unlimited access to his personal files. The biography has been many years in the making and is the fruit of painstaking research and discussions with participants. Its appearance now is appropriate. The hate factor has died down. Moreover, Muldoon can be assessed in the broader context of what has followed him — many of the fundamental economic problems he faced have never gone away. Thus there is now opportunity for a more measured assessment that escaped some earlier and less temperate efforts by other writers.

Muldoon had two major flaws, Gustafson argues. There was his abrasive personality and belligerence toward those who did not agree with him, and there was his 'innate conservatism' which prevented him from restructuring the economy 'more gradually, more rationally and more humanely than Roger Douglas and the Fourth Labour Government were partly forced and partly chose to do after 1984'. Gustafson believes Muldoon's failure to 'manage evolutionary change' was far more fatal to his becoming a 'great prime minister' than his personality defects. His biography thus attempts to reveal Muldoon's underlying values and policies as explanation, rather than resort to an easier and presumably more superficial explanation based on his belligerence.

The thesis that Muldoon's 'conservatism' was based on his intolerance of poverty and his support for 'ordinary' folk is constantly stated throughout this biography. But this does not necessarily confirm it. The divide between personality and policy probably does not exist other than as a literary device. Muldoon's 'conservatism', as Gustafson argues, obviously did stem from his wish to make New Zealand a better place (or at least no worse a place) for its citizens, and these humane values can be traced back to his earlier experiences in life. He believed that the fundamental fairness of the existing socio-economic structure could be maintained by using the management and regulatory