

## Lest We Forget?

### THE FADING OF NEW ZEALAND WAR COMMEMORATIONS, 1946–1966



IN *A MAN'S COUNTRY?*, Jock Phillips wrote that in the 1950s 'the nation's men basked in their wartime glories. The RSA was a force in the land and clubrooms were built throughout the country. Anzac Day parades were large and packed with bystanders; war memorial halls were put up in innumerable small towns; war movies filled the cinemas and war memoirs or novels were prominent in the bookshops.'<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Ian McGibbon wrote that the peak in Anzac Day attendance came in the 1950s and that Armistice Day was 'marked solemnly in New Zealand until the 1960s'.<sup>2</sup> While these accounts fit with the popular idea of 1950s New Zealand society and culture as monolithic and dull, they are not supported by the evidence of war commemorations. Following the end of World War II there was, in fact, a sharp drop in attendance at Anzac Day services and an immediate collapse of the other major war anniversary, Remembrance Sunday.

While the history of Anzac Day between the wars has received some scholarly attention, there has been little investigation of Anzac commemorations in the post-war era.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the entire New Zealand historiography of what could be called 'the other day of the year', Armistice Day, and its successor, Remembrance Sunday, seems to consist solely of a very short piece in the *Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History*.<sup>4</sup> Internationally, with the exceptions of Australia and to a lesser extent the Republic of Ireland, the post-World War II history of war commemorations has also been seriously under-researched. Even Australia's extensive Anzac Day historiography focuses primarily on inter-war commemorations, and with the partial exception of J.G. Pavils's history of Anzac Day in South Australia, the 1950s are particularly neglected.<sup>5</sup> Jenny Macleod and Graeme Davison have both examined Anzac Day's more recent revival without explaining the preceding decline.<sup>6</sup> This article will therefore help to fill a substantial gap in the New Zealand and international historiography of war commemoration. It will explore the nature of and reasons for the fading of New Zealand war remembrance after World War II by investigating the levels of support for Anzac Day and Remembrance Sunday from 1946 to 1966, and suggesting possible reasons for growing public indifference and antipathy.

Anzac Day 1946 boded well for the future of the day, with a crowd of 30,000 reported at Auckland's daytime ceremony and a larger venue required in Christchurch to cater for the large turnout.<sup>7</sup> In 1949 a new Anzac Day Act was passed, dedicating the day to the dead of both world wars (and the Boer War) and banning the granting of days in lieu when it fell on a Saturday or Sunday. From the early 1950s, however, Returned Services Associations (RSAs) across New Zealand complained of declining attendance by both returned servicemen and the general public. In 1951 the Auckland RSA altered the time of its citizens' service

from 11am to 3pm in an attempt to counter 'a regrettably large falling off in the number of ex-servicemen and women on parade and also a decline in the number of spectators'.<sup>8</sup> By 1958 the Wellington RSA had moved its citizens' service from 3pm to 10am, citing similar problems with attendance, and Christchurch made a similar change the following year.<sup>9</sup> The service at Te Horo in Otaki was cancelled in 1962 due to poor attendance, and the commemoration at nearby Manukau was also under threat, although in these two cases population drift from small towns to cities may have been a factor.<sup>10</sup> The Anglican Bishop of Christchurch, Alwyn Keith Warren, said in 1952 that 'fewer and fewer assemble on Anzac Day to pay their tribute to the fallen'.<sup>11</sup>

The shrinking crowds at daytime Anzac services was partially attributed, both at the time and since, to the growing popularity of the dawn service.<sup>12</sup> It is difficult to gauge the actual public attendances at Anzac ceremonies, partly because these were not always reported, but mostly because of the inconsistency of methods used to estimate crowds. For example, the *New Zealand Herald's* and the *Evening Post's* estimates of the crowd at the 1966 Wellington daytime service were 5000 and 2000 respectively.<sup>13</sup> However, it seems reasonable to assume that estimates were at least wrong in a consistent way within newspapers. The figures might not tell us how many people actually attended a particular service, but they indicate the relative turnouts at services within the same city. From 1950 to 1965, both Auckland and Christchurch showed a steady increase in numbers at the dawn service.<sup>14</sup> In Christchurch there was a corresponding decline in daytime citizens' service crowds, which was not compensated for by the increase at the dawn service. In Auckland and Wellington, reported numbers for the citizens' services fluctuated without any obvious pattern, and in Wellington the dawn service seems to have declined in popularity.<sup>15</sup> In all three cities the citizens' service usually attracted more members of the public than the dawn ceremony.

Assuming that the crowd estimates were broadly accurate in relation to each other, if not to the actual crowds, the idea that the dawn services were attracting the public at the expense of the daytime services is clearly problematic. It also appears that there was no serious overall decline in attendance in the 1950s and 1960s. There had been a post-war drop in attendance, but it had taken place in the late 1940s. In Auckland, for example, numbers at the citizens' service went from 30,000 in 1946 to just 5000 in 1948. After this numbers tended to range from 3000 to 6000; at most, a fifth of the 1946 turnout. This was in strong contrast to the period following the Great War; in the 1920s turnouts of both the public and returned servicemen had remained strong throughout the decade and even increased somewhat in the 1930s.<sup>16</sup> In 1929 the *Herald* had argued that 'the predictions of those who foresaw the solemn celebrations drifting gradually into disuse have been completely confounded . . . . The people want Anzac Day as they never wanted it before.'<sup>17</sup> In 1946, people wanted to commemorate the first Anzac Day of the new peace, but far fewer wanted to participate in or observe the ceremonies in subsequent years. The decline in attendance was followed by a decline in RSA membership from a peak of over 136,000 in 1947 to just under 93,000 in 1953.<sup>18</sup>

The 'problem' with Anzac Day in the 1950s was not just a matter of attendance at dawn or daytime services. It was also a question of attitude. As the 1950s and

1960s progressed there was increasing opposition to the restrictions of Anzac Day, and a growing feeling that the day was unnecessarily gloomy, or perhaps just unnecessary.

The most obvious triggers for antagonism towards Anzac Day were the restrictions placed on activities on the day. The Anzac Day Act 1949 required that 25 April be observed 'as if it were a Sunday'. Local councils banned virtually all organized leisure on the day. In 1953, when Anzac Day fell on a Saturday, thus ruining the week's main day for sport and other entertainment, there was widespread discontent.<sup>19</sup> The debate quickly petered out, but it emerged again with more force in 1959 when Anzac Day was again a Saturday.<sup>20</sup> This led to suggestions that Anzac Day observation should be moved to the nearest Sunday;<sup>21</sup> observance of the day should be restricted, the ban on organized recreation should be limited to the morning; and the public holiday should be cancelled. Although the morning-only idea had been suggested as early as 1946, by the Dunedin RSA, it did not become popular until 1959. It quickly received support from the *Herald*, the Auckland branch of the Labourers' Union, the Otago Trades Council, and the majority of people questioned by the *Otago Daily Times*.<sup>22</sup> In 1960 the Minister of Labour, Tom Shand, told an Anzac Day ex-service breakfast that the day should be solemn in the morning and joyful in the afternoon: 'We should think of our mates who have gone and act as if they were still with us. That is what they would wish us to do.'<sup>23</sup>

The apparent hypocrisy of some returned servicemen, who spent the day drinking and gambling while their organization campaigned to stop ordinary people from playing sports or seeing a film, was also criticized by many people, some of whom were themselves ex-servicemen.<sup>24</sup> From 1960, moves were made to liberalize Anzac afternoon, and by the middle of the decade this had been achieved in many parts of the country.<sup>25</sup> Sporting events and film screenings were organized, with profits usually donated to the local RSA.<sup>26</sup> By 1964 many RSA leaders supported liberalizing Anzac afternoon. The president of the Rotorua RSA felt that being able to play sport on Anzac afternoon would help young people appreciate the freedom won in war, while the secretary of the Devonport RSA said that many members wanted to go to the dawn parade in the morning and football in the afternoon.<sup>27</sup> Some continued to oppose the idea, which they saw as turning the day into 'just another holiday'.<sup>28</sup> Amongst this group there were views that it would be better to cancel the day than turn it into one of revelry.<sup>29</sup> A few wanted to get rid of the day regardless of how it was observed, with some veterans and people who had lost loved ones in the war telling the newspapers that the day caused them too much pain.<sup>30</sup> Others felt that the day had already become little more than an excuse for ex-servicemen to get drunk, and thought that if people still wanted to observe the day they could go to a dawn parade before work.<sup>31</sup>

The debate about the appropriate way to commemorate war also occurred within the RSA, and by the early 1960s many members felt that Anzac Day would die if changes were not made.<sup>32</sup> Referenda were conducted by various regional branches, showing that in Wellington about two-thirds of members supported change, with the overwhelming majority wanting to liberalize Anzac afternoon.<sup>33</sup> Other national organizations were surveyed, 11 favouring change and eight opposing it, with the most popular alternatives to the status quo being morning observance with a

more relaxed holiday in the afternoon, and shifting the day to the nearest Sunday. A large number felt that the decision should be left up to the RSA.<sup>34</sup> Local branches of the National Council of Women were much more likely to support change, perhaps because of the limited role of women in current observances.<sup>35</sup>

In 1965, the RSA Dominion Council asked the government to amend the Anzac Day Act to allow sport and entertainment in the afternoon, with Anzac Day Trusts set up to prevent commercialization of the day.<sup>36</sup> The idea of compulsory donations to the trusts was vetoed by the government, but in 1966 a new Anzac Day Act was passed, allowing activities normally permitted on a Sunday to be held on Anzac Day afternoon.<sup>37</sup> This Act was not passed without some opposition, with Timaru MP Sir Basil Arthur saying that 'as the sun rises over this country next Anzac Day, I hope we will all feel suitably ashamed that we thought one day a year for national commemoration was too much, and we saw fit to set aside only half a day'.<sup>38</sup> Sir Walter Nash quoted 'For the Fallen', and pointed out that 'in future we will not be able to refer to the "going down of the sun" because we end our services at midday'.<sup>39</sup> Wanganui MP George Spooner, however, asked where the respect was in an afternoon service which attracted only 150 people, primarily 'local V.I.Ps whose absence would be noticed'.<sup>40</sup> Editorializing on local liberalization before these debates, the *Evening Post* argued that if Anzac Day had not been changed 'it was surely destined to die not many years hence'. Sport and other respectable entertainment in the afternoon would fix 'the old, dour and inward-looking image that Anzac Day observances have come to assume'.<sup>41</sup>

Anzac Day, it seemed, had been saved. By this stage, however, nothing could be done for the other commemorative day, Remembrance Sunday. This had succeeded Armistice Day, which had been widely observed in New Zealand between the wars. It never achieved Anzac Day's popularity, and not every centre held the large public ceremonies characteristic of the day in Britain, but there were formal gatherings in many areas.<sup>42</sup> It was the second most popular date for the unveiling of memorials, after Anzac Day.<sup>43</sup> In common with the United Kingdom, two minutes' silence were observed at 11am, with the *Herald* reporting in 1919 that 'pedestrians who had been hurrying on their way stood still suddenly, as if turned to stone'.<sup>44</sup> The silence and stillness were particularly striking because Armistice Day was not a public holiday.<sup>45</sup> Other features of the day included special church services and fundraising for war memorials and ex-servicemen.<sup>46</sup>

Armistice Day 1945 followed the pattern of inter-war observances in both the United Kingdom and New Zealand, but in New Zealand the day's future was uncertain. The need for a day which would commemorate the dead of both wars was widely felt, but the truly global nature of World War II meant that there was no obvious date on which to commemorate the entire war, let alone one which could encompass the earlier conflict as well.<sup>47</sup> Eric Hobsbawm's concept of invented tradition implies that new rituals have a much better chance of acceptance if they appear to be based on tradition, and an instinct for this may also have deterred planners from simply inventing a new commemorative day.<sup>48</sup> In the United Kingdom, 'the eleventh of November re-emerged as the only date on which there was consensus, or at least a minimum of dissent'.<sup>49</sup> However, that date was still felt to be too closely linked to the Great War. Inspiration perhaps came from British wartime observances, in which church services continued to be held the

Sunday before the eleventh, while ceremonies on the eleventh itself had been cancelled. That Armistice Day 1945 was a Sunday must have helped enormously; when full Armistice Day ceremonies were reinstated they were on a Sunday, and from then on it would have been relatively easy to keep them there. New Zealand followed Britain's lead in transforming Armistice Day into Remembrance Sunday although, as it often fell on a weekday, Armistice Day continued to be observed in some schools.<sup>50</sup>

As Britain's only national day of war remembrance, Armistice Day survived its metamorphosis, although by 1948 members of the British Legion ex-service organization were already concerned about declining participation.<sup>51</sup> The two minutes' silence, which had interrupted working days and made Armistice Days so striking, now occurred at a time when most people were in church or at home. As a result, its observance faded and by the late 1950s it had generally ceased to occur except as part of formal ceremonies and church services.<sup>52</sup> In New Zealand the silence had been the main feature of the anniversary, so its demise was particularly damaging to the day. The problems with Remembrance Sunday in New Zealand went beyond this, however. A Remembrance Sunday ceremony in Wellington's town hall in 1946 attracted only about 200 people, most of whom were civic, armed forces or consular representatives.<sup>53</sup> The two minutes' silence was, at best, unevenly observed the following year.<sup>54</sup> By 1948 even the RSA was saying that Anzac Day was the 'one day of the year' set aside to remember the fallen of the world wars.<sup>55</sup> As a Sunday observance, Remembrance Day was kept alive primarily by the churches, but by 1958 even they were questioning the wisdom of having two commemorative days.<sup>56</sup> In 1950, only 25% of Wellington churches, 20% of Christchurch churches and 12.3% of Auckland churches advertising in the newspapers announced Remembrance services.<sup>57</sup> By 1960 the percentage had dropped further, to 7.7% in Wellington, 10.5% in Christchurch and 8.5% in Auckland.<sup>58</sup> Amongst the denominations, the Presbyterians were the keenest commemorators, with the Anglicans, Methodists and Congregationalists all marking the day in some of their churches. By 1960 Anglicans were barely keeping Remembrance Sunday in New Zealand; only one Anglican church in Auckland and one in Wellington advertised a Remembrance service. The evangelical churches appear not to have participated at all, meaning that many of the most passionately religious — and therefore the most likely to actually go to church — were also the least likely to go to a church which observed secular memorial days.

In 1956 an Internal Affairs report stated that 'Since the adoption of Remembrance Sunday in 1946 the general public has lost all interest in the day and what it was intended to represent. Services at local war memorials on this day are poorly attended, not only by the public, but by members of the Returned Services' Association.'<sup>59</sup> The government had continued to request that the two minutes' silence be observed and the traffic stopped for this, but the request was widely ignored.<sup>60</sup> On Remembrance Sunday 1952, for example, 'there were not twelve people present at the Wellington Citizens' War Memorial for the brief ceremony; the traffic was not stopped for the two minutes' silence; and the people wended their way without the slightest recognition of the fact that these two minutes' silence were meant to be for remembrance of those who served and gave their lives in the two World Wars'.<sup>61</sup> Efforts were made to improve observance, with

the wreath-laying at Wellington's citizens' war memorial expanded from an RSA-only affair to one in which various senior politicians, consular and armed forces representatives also laid wreaths.<sup>62</sup> The RSA felt that the day could be fully revived if it was transferred back to 11 November, efforts were made to stop traffic, and a new form of ceremony introduced. However, both Cabinet and Internal Affairs felt that the public would not be interested, regardless of the form or date of the commemoration.<sup>63</sup>

A survey of RSAs around the country revealed that in 1955 public ceremonies on Remembrance Sunday were held in Auckland, Dunedin, Nelson and Masterton, but in several other regions even the RSA did not formally observe the day. Only in Dunedin was there any attempt to halt traffic for the two minutes' silence, and even that only affected traffic near the cenotaph.<sup>64</sup> Even the Ministry of Defence did not organize or participate in any special ceremony.<sup>65</sup> The state of the day was indicated by a report on the record high attendance at Lower Hutt's public ceremony. Sixty people attended.<sup>66</sup> No ceremony was held at the Auckland cenotaph, and although the Auckland RSA organized parades to Anglican and Catholic churches, they had little impact and the local navy commander was unenthusiastic about participating.<sup>67</sup> In 1966 the *Evening Post* summed up the situation in an editorial: Remembrance Day's 'very name is contradicted. Much of the community does not remember it and there are far too many who do not have the slightest idea of what it is all about anyway'.<sup>68</sup>

There are many possible explanations for the demise of Remembrance Sunday in New Zealand. One is that the day was too religious, which would make sense if Anzac Day was, as it is sometimes perceived, an essentially secular occasion, its associations with Christianity being 'coincidental', and clergy being 'invited guests rather than essential elements of the whole celebration'.<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately for this theory, examination of post-war Anzac Day commemorations shows they were very religious occasions. Of the 21 locations hosting public Anzac Day ceremonies in the Wellington region in 1958, for example, all but two held some kind of Christian service.<sup>70</sup> In the Auckland region in 1960 and 1966, every reported Anzac Day event included a Christian service.<sup>71</sup> These typically included prayers as well as hymns such as 'Abide with Me', 'O God our Help in Ages Past' and 'All People that on Earth do Dwell', all of which convey specifically Christian messages. Clergy were the primary speakers at nine of the 19 Auckland events in 1960 in which a speaker's name was reported.<sup>72</sup> Anzac Day rhetoric was often very religious, with secular as well as religious speakers and writers stressing specifically Christian ideals.<sup>73</sup> On 24 April 1958, for example, the *Evening Post* built an editorial around the 127<sup>th</sup> Psalm.<sup>74</sup> Five years later Governor-General Bernard Fergusson concluded his citizens' service speech in Auckland with 'God bless the church universal and bring us all to the unity of Christ in truth, God save the Queen and her realms and give us peace through Jesus Christ our Lord'.<sup>75</sup> If New Zealanders were only nominally religious or did not like Christianity with their war remembrance, there surely would have been a movement away from religion during Anzac Day commemorations.<sup>76</sup> That there was not suggests that religion was not responsible for Remembrance Sunday's problems.

Another possible reason for the death of Remembrance Sunday is competition from Anzac Day. It could be argued that no country needs two memorial days,

especially if they come from the same war. Here the example of the United States is instructive. Officially, that country continues to have two war memorial days: Memorial Day and Veterans' Day, the first originally commemorating the Civil War dead and the second deriving from Armistice Day. According to Matthew Denis, neither is observed by the average American, with Memorial Day primarily marking the start of summer and Veterans' Day 'remaining pure but often forgotten every November 11'.<sup>77</sup> One country which has had more success in maintaining two days of war commemoration is Northern Ireland. There both Remembrance Sunday and the anniversary of the start of the Battle of the Somme continue to be widely observed by the Protestant population.<sup>78</sup> This example may suggest an answer for the New Zealand case, since the two Northern Irish anniversaries are observed in different ways and serve different purposes. Remembrance Sunday is a respectable, church-based commemoration in which Northern Irish Protestants can join with their compatriots in the mainland United Kingdom in simultaneous remembrance; in 1970 one minister in the village of Trillick in County Tyrone even brought a radio into church so that his congregation could hear the Last Post and Reveille from London, and join in with the national silence.<sup>79</sup> The Somme anniversary, in contrast, is a more local occasion and focuses specifically on the Ulster Division. There has always been strong participation from the sectarian Orange Order in these commemorations, and in the late 1960s the day evolved into a major date for large rowdy parades, often with only the vaguest of connections to war remembrance. Similarly, where Memorial and Veterans' Days are observed in the United States, the former tends to focus on the dead while the latter honours those who fought and are still alive. In contrast, New Zealand's two commemorations served roughly the same purpose and were observed in similar ways. In addition, New Zealand's distance from Britain meant that the simultaneous commemorations enjoyed in Trillick were impossible; while churchgoing New Zealanders observed the two minutes' silence, Britons were celebrating Saturday night. And while New Zealanders may have been 'recolonial Better Britons', to use James Belich's description, their need for a connection to the mother country was not as strong as that of Northern Irish Protestants.<sup>80</sup>

Although New Zealand's Remembrance Sunday died for various reasons specific to itself, there was a general loss of vitality in New Zealand war commemorations after World War II. In the 1950s and 1960s it was widely assumed that the decline was inevitable given the lengthening period since the last major war. As early as 1953 it was claimed, by Wellington's Rabbi Stransky, that young people had no understanding of the heroism and comradeship of the war years.<sup>81</sup> This issue was raised more and more as time went on, and began to be seen as affecting adults as well as children. In 1956 the *Evening Post* worried that knowledge of Gallipoli was receding, possibly because the history curriculum put emphasis 'not on martial history but on the sociological aspects'.<sup>82</sup> Wellington Mayor Frank Kitts told the 1962 citizens' service that the significance of Anzac Day was now more a matter of history than personal tragedy.<sup>83</sup> In a 1964 editorial, the *Herald* stated that as distance from 1915 grew it became easier for people to forget Gallipoli and what it stood for.<sup>84</sup> Likewise, Ombudsman Sir Guy Powles said in Dunedin that Anzac Day was no longer functioning properly, partially because it was impossible for most people to continue to feel grief nearly 20 years after the end of the last major war.<sup>85</sup>

The resurgence in interest in Anzac Day in recent decades proves that temporal and spatial distance from major wars does not necessarily render war commemorations obsolete. However, as the end of the war faded into the past, some of the functions of commemorations did suffer from lessening relevance. In 1964 Major General Lindsay Inglis, speaking at the Auckland citizens' service, explained what he saw as the purposes of Anzac Day: commemoration of all who had served in the armed forces, and an opportunity to remember the dead. He explained that the first had increased importance because most young people now had no experience of war, and so ceremonies such as Anzac Day were necessary to inform them of the sacrifices of those who had served. He also argued that since the vast majority of young people could not have known anyone killed in war, and it is impossible to mourn someone you have never met, their remembrance was a tribute rather than an act of mourning.<sup>86</sup> Although some young people attended Anzac Days in the 1950s and 1960s, a few of them voluntarily, it is unlikely that many of their generation, particularly those with no bereavements in the immediate family, would have felt the need to go out of their way for either of these purposes.

Some of the key purposes of Anzac Day faded even for those old enough to remember war. Most of those who had lost loved ones would have found the pain lessening over the decades, and by the 1960s the parents of men killed in World War I, who Dan Todman argues would have felt the strongest need to mourn, were few in number.<sup>87</sup> Scott Worthy argues convincingly that early Anzac Days were substitute funerals for those whose bodies remained in Turkey or France and which in some cases had never been found.<sup>88</sup>

Another major purpose of Anzac Day was the reunion of ex-comrades, and although this continues into the present day it probably grew less important as distance from World War II grew and as former soldiers found new identities in their careers and families. The steep decline in RSA membership after the 1940s supports this. In addition, the veterans of the Great War were now approaching old age and thus becoming less able to attend reunions or march in parades. A different set of purposes, including the affirmation of a positive Pakeha identity and the honouring of veterans while some still remained, motivated the resurgence in war remembrance in later years. But these purposes had not yet emerged, while the older purposes were needed less than in the past.

The most important factor in the decline of war commemoration in the post-war era, though, was the impact of World War II itself. The conflict irrevocably changed the meanings of World War II and therefore had a major effect on its commemoration.

The Great War was an unprecedented event. The carnage was dramatically different from anything that had happened to Europeans, and in particular to British citizens, in living memory. At the start of the twentieth century, changing patterns of mortality created optimism. Improvements in sanitation and healthcare meant that child mortality had dropped to the point where, for perhaps the first time in human history, parents could confidently expect to be outlived by all their children.<sup>89</sup> This expectation was reinforced by the relative peacefulness of the nineteenth century, after the fall of Napoleon. Although there were many opportunities for men in Britain and its colonies to fight in wars — not least in New Zealand — participation was a minority affair and casualties were relatively



few.<sup>90</sup> In 1914 there were few New Zealanders with first-hand experience of warfare. Veterans of the New Zealand Wars were now elderly men; Boer War veterans were not numerous, and most had returned home alive to a heroes' welcome.<sup>91</sup> David Cannadine argues that this distance from war led to the glorification of death in battle; the less likely it was to occur, and the fewer people who actually saw it happen, the easier it was to present in a positive light.<sup>92</sup> It also meant that when thousands of people were killed on a single day of battle, without producing any particularly glorious results, most people were completely unequipped to cope.

Coming after the horrors of the Great War, World War II was entered into in the knowledge that thousands of young men would die, often in squalid and horrible conditions. New Zealand's death rate in World War II was in fact lower than in World War I, and its fighting men generally lived and died in better conditions than the ghastly trenches of the Western Front and the fly-infested, dysentery-plagued cliffs of Gallipoli. While friends and relatives of World War II's dead would undoubtedly have felt deep grief, fewer civilians than in World War I experienced the loss of a close friend or relative. Knowledge of the atrocities perpetuated by both the Germans and the Japanese during World War II also prevented serious development of the idea that the war had been pointless, as many had believed of the Great War. It is therefore not surprising that World War II was not followed by the enduring mass mourning of the inter-war period. Not only had fewer people died, and with more obvious point, than in the earlier war, but the death of thousands was expected and thus easier to cope with. World War I was in many ways a unique event, and we should therefore not see the social and cultural innovations which followed it as the norm. Deviations from post-World War I patterns can be seen not as aberrations which need to be explained but as a return to the status quo.

World War II was the second global conflict in 30 years and was immediately followed by the Cold War, which threatened at several points in the 1950s and 1960s to turn into a nuclear war. It was abundantly clear that not only had World War I not been the war to end all wars, but World War II did not herald the end of warfare either. Instead the phrase 'war to end all wars' took on a new and sinister meaning as it appeared that any Third World War would bring an end to conflict by wiping out humanity. One of the most fundamental meanings of World War I remembrance, that conflict on such a scale could never happen again, had been irrevocably undermined. The implausibility of long-term peace made a return to the spirit of the inter-war period impossible. As Ken Inglis pointed out, memorial rhetoric of the inter-war period 'could now appear pathetically innocent'.<sup>93</sup> Ironically, given that war commemorations would be criticized from the late 1960s as glorifications of war and militarism, the damage done to the ideal of peace was a major cause for the decline in war remembrance. Although commemorations could still be used to remember the fallen, they could no longer be used to give thanks for the end of war, or to vow that warfare would never recur.

The impact of World War II on commemoration of World War I was particularly damaging to Remembrance Sunday in New Zealand. Scott Worthy has shown that inter-war Anzac Days were more about pride and sorrow than the desire for peace.<sup>94</sup> Armistice Day, however, was by definition about the end of violent conflict. It was

the anniversary of the end of the war; the Anglican liturgy emphasized redemption rather than victory.<sup>95</sup> Adrian Gregory has argued that it was mostly because of this that many Armistice Day commemorations in the United Kingdom were cancelled on the outbreak of World War II. If they had been patriotic ceremonies then their cancellation would have been inconceivable at a time when patriotism was most needed.<sup>96</sup> It is telling that Anzac Day 1940 went ahead as normal, and it was only after the fall of Singapore that any major change was made, namely the cancellation of 1942's dawn services.<sup>97</sup> In the United Kingdom, the fact that Armistice Day was the only national day of war commemoration perhaps ensured its survival, but in New Zealand the existence of Anzac Day, the meaning of which was not dependent on ongoing peace, meant that Armistice Day, now Remembrance Sunday, could simply be abandoned.

Although Anzac Day survived World War II, the fact that the meanings of this war were so different from those of the earlier conflict meant that many World War II veterans took some time to embrace Anzac Day. In the 1940s and 1950s it was frequently noted that in Anzac Day parades they were often outnumbered by veterans of the earlier war.<sup>98</sup> They also seem to have been more likely to favour the liberalization of Anzac afternoon; the first areas in which councils allowed sport and films on Anzac Day afternoon were those with a high percentage of young families, and in these places liberalization usually had the approval or active involvement of local RSAs.<sup>99</sup> This suggests that many who fought in World War II did not see Anzac Day as sacred to the same extent as their fathers' generation. It is also likely that they saw it as being more about the Great War, and Gallipoli in particular, than the war in which they had fought.

Gallipoli veterans often occupied a special place at Anzac Day commemorations: they sometimes headed Anzac parades while other veterans marched by battalion or branch of service, and from 1958 they held their own parade in Wellington.<sup>100</sup> When representatives of Turkey were in New Zealand, they were also given places of honour. For example, in 1954 several Turkish officers were present at Wellington's citizens' service, at which a Turkish flag was flown.<sup>101</sup> On the fiftieth anniversary of the battle a reunion parade in Rotorua was led by New Zealand and Turkish veterans.<sup>102</sup> It was sometimes necessary to remind people that the day commemorated the dead and returned of all wars, with at least one writer arguing that Anzac Day would not endure if the focus was exclusively on Gallipoli.<sup>103</sup>

With several of the World War I-specific meanings of war remembrance destroyed by World War II, and other purposes of the commemorations declining in importance, what purposes did Anzac Day continue to serve, and how compelling were they? The American sociologist Amitai Etzioni argues that there are two types of holidays or rituals: those which 'directly enforce commitments to shared beliefs', which he calls recommitment holidays, and those which provide a temporary release from normal rules of behaviour, which he terms tension management holidays.<sup>104</sup> The term 'recommitment holiday' recalls Robert Bellah's description of Memorial Day in the United States as a ceremony in a 'civil religion' involving 'a rededication to the martyred dead, to the spirit of sacrifice, and to the American vision'.<sup>105</sup> Virtually all war memorial days can be seen in this light, as sites of recommitment and rededication to certain ideals and

principles. New Zealand's commemorations were no exception. What, then, were they recommitting to?

An analysis of Anzac Day rhetoric from the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Evening Post*, 1946–1966, reveals several major themes. Perhaps the most common was the desirability of emulating those who had served and died in the world wars. Like secular saints or Jesus without the resurrection, the Anzac dead had shown qualities, most often named as service and self-sacrifice, which the living should emulate in order to make themselves worthy of having had someone die for them. These ideas were encapsulated in the Anzac Dedication which was recited at most dawn services throughout this period:

At this hour, upon this day, Anzac received its baptism of fire and became one of the immortal names in history. We who are gathered here think of the comrades who went out with us to the battlefields of two great wars, but did not return. We feel them still near us in the spirit. We wish to be worthy of their great sacrifice. Let us therefore once more dedicate ourselves to the service of the ideals for which they died. As the dawn is even now about to pierce the night, so let their memory inspire us to work for the coming of the new light into the dark places of the world. We will remember them.<sup>106</sup>

Typically, the crowd would echo this last sentence, committing themselves to the promise of the Dedication.

The suggested ways in which people could rededicate themselves to the spirit of Anzac varied. Only by living morally better lives, Commodore F.A. Ballance told the 1952 daytime service crowd in Lower Hutt, could those left behind truly honour those who did not return from war.<sup>107</sup> It was frequently argued that care and consideration for the less fortunate, especially elderly, disabled or impoverished ex-servicemen, would ensure that the Anzac sacrifice had not been in vain.<sup>108</sup> Other ways in which the living could honour the dead involved ensuring that the peace and freedom which the dead were said to have won were not lost in future wars. A regular theme of Anzac Day speakers, particularly those from the armed forces, was the need for military readiness.<sup>109</sup> If a new war caught New Zealand unprepared, said Brigadier F.M. Hanson in Wellington in 1949, 'then surely there will be no margin on the side of victory next time, and we shall have proved unworthy of the heritage handed down to us by those who we honour today'.<sup>110</sup> On a similar note, Anzac Day attendees were often warned not to underestimate the communist menace, and the necessity of the alliance with the United States was sometimes asserted.<sup>111</sup> Some speakers were concerned that young people had no discipline or sense of self-sacrifice, although in 1961 Air Vice-Marshal Malcolm Calder argued that if they were put to the test they would do as well in war as previous generations.<sup>112</sup>

These ideals of self-sacrifice, personal service and readiness for war would probably have been considered important by most New Zealanders of this period. The possibility of a new war, this time involving nuclear weapons, preoccupied editorial writers as well as Anzac Day speakers.<sup>113</sup> But protection was now seen as lying in the ANZUS alliance, not in the actions of individual citizens. Ideals of self-sacrifice and self-defence were somewhat abstract, especially for those too young to remember war. Nor, except possibly in 1951, did there seem to be any

serious internal threat. Communists and other radicals were few, and the young activists of later periods had not yet emerged. Especially after the crushing of unions in the 1951 waterfront dispute, there was no obvious dissident group threatening mainstream Pakeha New Zealand. This absence of threat also meant that New Zealanders felt no particular need to publicly affirm their identities or fundamental principles.

The recent revival of Anzac Day commemorations in New Zealand awaits serious study. Whatever the cause, the day's revival has created a sense that well-attended Anzac Days are the norm, and that the drop in numbers and interest during the post-war period is a strange aberration in need of explanation. This article has suggested that this decline was not simply the result of a baby boomer rejection of their parents' values or a consequence of the passage of time since World War II — although these both had an effect — because the most dramatic decline occurred almost immediately after the end of World War II. Nor were the problems with Anzac Day isolated. Rather, they were part of a broader decline in war remembrance, which also resulted in the complete and almost immediate failure of Remembrance Sunday in post-war New Zealand. The motivations behind attendance at Anzac Day in 2010 are vastly different from those behind attendance in 1920. The stagnation of the day in the post-war period suggests that by the 1950s many of the inter-war crowds' motivations had become meaningless, thanks to the impact of World War II and the passage of time. As for why so many attend dawn services in the early twenty-first century, research on probable causes has yet to be done.

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