

## Editorial Introduction

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THIS ISSUE SHOWCASES the work of recently graduated and currently enrolled graduate students. During the past 30 years there has been a remarkable increase in the number of PhD and Masters theses being written in New Zealand history. While we are all aware of the expansion of the field, I think few of us pause long enough from the demanding work of supervising, examining and reading the work of our collective graduate student cohort to appreciate the scale of the change. The October 1981 issue of the *New Zealand Journal of History* listed a single doctoral thesis completed in the preceding year, a study of Britain's post-war relationship with Western Europe. Seven New Zealand history PhD theses were in progress. Twelve Masters theses had been finished that year; five of them on New Zealand topics. The contrast with 2011 is stark: our October 2011 issue listed seven completed PhDs in New Zealand history with a further 53 in progress. The quantity of completed and 'in progress' MA theses on New Zealand subjects, or with comparative topics including a New Zealand dimension, also numbered in the dozens. This is a thriving field.

In 1981 the signs of change were there. If one looks closely, in amongst the names of the students with PhD theses in progress there are some familiar monikers: C.J. Macdonald, C.J. Orange, S.J.T. O'Regan, A. Green, M.A. Tennant, R.T. Lange, G.J. McLean, D.P. Page, M. Belgrave, P. Bunkle, M.A. McKinnon. These people and others lurking in the lists of early 1980s Masters and PhD students joined the generation of pedants that in 1950 Keith Sinclair famously — or in some circles infamously — called upon to delineate the minutiae of New Zealand history so that better 'big picture' histories could be written.<sup>1</sup> In a nice twist, many of these students went on to challenge key aspects of Sinclair's work in their own 'big picture' and 'big idea' histories and to forge new subfields in New Zealand historiography. Their students have challenged them in turn and will take New Zealand history in new directions.

This journal has a long and proud tradition of encouraging students to publish; indeed, for many New Zealand historians it has been their place of first publication. We intend continuing this practice. This issue brings together four articles by students who either have theses in progress or who submitted a thesis for examination between 2008 and 2011. A call for papers went out in 2010 with a deadline of early 2011; the articles went through the normal processes of peer review and revision. Like good yeasty dough the graduate student writers were hard to confine; submissions spilled over the borders of this issue into neighbouring volumes. Some beat the deadline so definitively their articles appeared early; graduate students wrote three of the five pieces published in our October 2011 issue. Several more have articles in various

stages of revision and resubmission for subsequent issues. The fields covered were diverse and reflected a wide range of research interests: Māori history, medical history, military history, environmental history, labour history, imperial history, the history of the law, of dance, immigration, education, religion and gender relations. We look forward to publishing more of their work as their research projects come to fruition. Together they bear witness to the vitality and diversity of New Zealand historical studies.

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#### NOTE

1 Keith Sinclair, *The Maori Land League: An Examination into the Source of a Myth*, Auckland, 1950, p.3.