

events and objects provide further supporting evidence for arguing how a collaborative (another challenging word) construction of settler Britishness served to underline differences between developed dominions and underdeveloped colonies, while creating a pastoral image of economic development distinct from its urban industrial metropolitan counterpart.

In the final three chapters, Barnes examines various facets of media — the press, film and television — that became highly influential in not only strengthening the connections between intimate others, but also eventually weakening their interdependence. Canadian Harold Innis's discussion of space-bridging techniques is effectively adopted to show how shifts in technology relayed images that maintained the lengthy partnership. Discussion of the influences of Fleet Street and the BBC Empire service, for example, coupled with the extensive use of film shorts local cinemas in the 1930s and 1940s, provides interesting glimpses of cross-national patriotism. This is followed by a lively appraisal of local radio and TV drama from the 1960s to the 1980s that will also ruffle the feathers of many area specialists. On balance, Barnes's critiques of those who have placed greater weight on American influence and (over)emphasised a 'cultural cringe' pursuit of overseas validation are reasonably convincing, but many may find them too selective to be conclusive.

Much the same can be said of the brief epilogue that, tantalisingly, hints at how the above-mentioned historical processes might play out in the twenty-first century. Here Barnes is noticeably more cautious and introduces some caveats that could have been addressed in greater depth in her introduction. She reminds the reader that there were 'Other Londons' (p.277); but what of Other New Zealands? The author acknowledges that London was not home for Scots in Dunedin, and some Australian and other overseas cities, let alone other spaces, were also important points in 'British' networks; if not necessarily commanding the same affection. But, if and how, did New Zealand's London figure in similar or different ways in the eyes of the local born of English/British ancestry and incoming Poms and Brits — and what of Māori and other minorities? This raises vexed questions about the constant dangers of eliding London, England and Britain and their relationship to a somewhat chimerical New Zealand, which the author never fully resolves.

But none of these reservations seriously detract from what is an impressive empirical monograph with a forceful argument that demands rigorous scrutiny. Given 'London', with its multifaceted mix of persons, objects and spaces, was a reality as well as a representation for many New Zealanders for much of settler history, the city still exists as a mecca or gateway for other places and peoples, who may or may not perceive it as a tangible or invented 'home'. Whatever one draws from that thesis, this stimulating, well-written and attractively produced book deserves a wide readership.

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Scrim: The Man with a Mike. By William Renwick. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2011. 308pp. NZ price: \$50.00. ISBN: 978 0 86473 695 6.

WILLIAM RENWICK takes a biographical approach to illuminate the remarkable career of New Zealand's first radio evangelist, the Reverend Colin Scrimgeour. Readable, well-researched and entertaining, this book considerably enhances our understanding of important interconnections between society, politics, religion and the media during the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Of Highland Scots ancestry, Colin Scrimgeour was born into a farming family in

Poverty Bay in 1903. His father liked drinking and gambling with his mates, so the family struggled, sustained mainly by his mother. Although this book is primarily a political biography, one of the many strengths of Renwick's rich narrative is the light it throws on popular religion — Christianity as lived by ordinary people. Young Scrim learned Tolstoy's faith from a foreman at the local freezing works and boxing from Tom Heeney. His mother gave him her Bible and wedding ring just before she died, and urged him to make something of himself. He started reading the Bible, found inspiring 'a pretty tough character called Jesus Christ,' and joined the nearest congregation, which happened to be Methodist. Inspired by the Reverends Edwin Cox and A.J. Seamer, Scrim joined the Methodist home mission in 1923. His first mission at Putaruru ended when he denounced a senior Methodist layman as a 'bloody hypocrite' from the pulpit. After successful ministries at Kaitangata and the Bay of Islands, where he learned Māori, he launched Auckland's Methodist city mission in 1927. During the Great Depression, Scrim made the most of his common touch and talent for publicity to build a flourishing and high-profile ministry. His Social Service Centre, supplied with money and produce by churches and Auckland businesses, attracted many poor people who did not go regularly to church. From 1930, hundreds flocked to Sunday evening film screenings in the Strand, which included a community sing led by Tom Garland and a sermon from Scrim. He worked with all sorts of people, including Auckland farmers, who donated tons of meat. A unionist, Scrim got to know Auckland Labour politicians such as John A. Lee and Michael Joseph Savage, and got caught up in the Queen Street riot of 1932.

Scrim launched his broadcasting career in 1930 by taking part in the IYA children's session run by Garland, a musical Methodist with a large popular following. Although Renwick does not discuss this, it is intriguing how significantly Methodists, less than a tenth of the population, shaped print, music and broadcasting cultures. While Garland and Scrim were building a vast radio audience, Scrim's friend Seamer and the Waiata Māori Choir were entertaining thousands in Australia and the United Kingdom as well as New Zealand, and A.H. and A.W. Reed were building a major publishing house out of a small business founded to supply Sunday School literature. Lewis Eady, founder of a big Queen Street music store and a strong Congregationalist, founded the IZR station in 1930. Scrim seized every opportunity to take part in its daily devotional services. Along with 'Uncle Tom' Garland, and 'Aunt Daisy' Basham, 'Uncle Scrim,' as he became known, won thousands of regular listeners. The country's first radio evangelist built a vast virtual congregation, the Fellowship of the Friendly Road. Like the Carpenter he emulated, Scrim told down-to-earth stories, eschewing theological abstractions. His warm, conversational and confessional style appealed to people of all classes and creeds. Although Renwick does not develop this point, popular culture during the 1930s and '40s does not appear, on this account, to have been highly secular. That probably helps to explain the emergence of a literary counter-culture deeply hostile to what it saw as a conservative, religious and puritanical mainstream.

Scrim's success, fame, income and social connections burgeoned during the 1930s. So did opposition. Some Anglicans disdained his populist theology. Scrim also crossed swords with powerful southern politician Adam Hamilton, a conservative Presbyterian. In the months leading up to the 1935 general election, Scrim criticised the Coalition government's lack of support for private radio broadcasting and praised the policies of its Labour and Democrat opponents. Fearing that Scrim would tell listeners to vote Labour, Hamilton and George McNamara, secretary of the Post and Telegraph Department, jammed his IZB radio station the day before the election, which Labour won in a landslide.

The following year, Savage, Minister in Charge of Broadcasting as well as Prime Minister, appointed Scrim director of the state-owned commercial broadcasting service without advertising the position. Scrim earned an annual salary of around £8000, appreciably higher than most other civil servants. Ignoring the controversy that

erupted when this became public knowledge, Scrim continued to commend the Labour government and to enjoy the perks of office. In his 'Man on the Street' Sunday evening radio session in April 1937, speaking as 'a Christian minister' as well as the 'controller of commercial broadcasting', Scrim attacked the press, especially *Truth*, for publishing 'filth'. *Truth* responded in kind to Scrim's 'lying, libellous attack'. Seven thousand Aucklanders packed major city venues to hear Scrim repudiate *Truth*'s charges. Soon he turned on members of the National Party, sparking further controversy.

Here I felt that Renwick could have explored an interpretive possibility that might make sense of Scrim's apparently gross breach of the political impartiality expected of civil servants. I think it entirely possible, in light of the evidence presented here and elsewhere, that Scrim, egotistical and prone to identify with the 'Carpenter' from Nazareth, saw himself not so much as making contentious political statements as expressing his religious convictions in the frank and forthright way to which he was accustomed. In other words, Scrim may have seen himself as exercising his religious freedom more than playing partisan politics. Renwick quotes Scrim as telling listeners, in a furious attack on National Party politicians in 1938, that he 'had never been the mouthpiece' of the Labour government and that, in attacking his enemies' 'filthy slanders' and attacks on his religion, he was following 'the same ideal now that led me to preach the gospel of the Stranger of Galilee' (p. 148). To suggest that Scrim might have meant what he said does not justify his behaviour. But it does suggest that trying to see things his way by taking seriously his religious self-understanding may enhance historical understanding. This was scarcely the only conflict over the blurry and contentious boundary between religion and politics in radio broadcasting during this period. In late-1937 a Redemptorist Monk from Wellington attacked Soviet Communism during a Sunday evening religious broadcast on 2YA, prompting James Shelley, head of the National Broadcasting Service, to state that religious broadcasts must stick to religion. But who has the authority to decide on what is religion and what is not? The state and its officers?

Scrim sided with John A. Lee and his supporters during the Labour Party infighting that took place during and after Savage's final illness. Renwick describes the deterioration of Scrim's relationship with the Fraser government in unsparing detail. The last straw came in June 1943, when in a letter to the *Evening Post* Scrim accused the Minister of Broadcasting and Prime Minister of victimising him. The government sacked him ten minutes before he went into army camp, making Scrim the only permanent head of a government department ever to be dismissed from the public service.

Scrim went to Australia in 1943, where he moved into film and television. He had been cheating on his wife, Lena, from the late-1930s, decided to divorce her in the mid-1950s, and married a much younger woman in 1958. Lena, confidence shattered, suffered years of depression. Scrim travelled to the People's Republic of China the following year as the only Western expert brought in to establish a national television service, lauding the Great Leap Forward as 'a most exciting and gigantic experiment' in 'social reconstruction'. Curiously, the text does not mention the 30 to 40 million Chinese that Mao's exciting experiment killed between 1958 and 1962. Scrim returned to New Zealand in 1968 hoping to play a leading role in television, but heart trouble in 1971 forced him to focus on autobiography. In *The Scrim-Lee Papers*, appearing in 1976, Scrim claimed that he 'never converted to Christianity', even though practising 'the politics of the Carpenter' was the secret of his success (pp.254–55). Scrim, like Sinatra, did it his way. Not surprisingly, he (and Lee) got on well with Rob Muldoon.

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