

odd. There is more to be said for the unfamiliar information about the movement for a Maori Parliament in 1893-4. But it is curious that there is nothing about the Young Maori movement of the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth. Who contributed more to racial adjustment than this group of old Te Aute students? To mention the prophet Rua and omit Ngata, the most eloquent speaker in the New Zealand Parliament, is an extraordinary inversion of historical values. The principal criticism of the section 'Political Developments, 1870 to 1919' has been made in an earlier paragraph. This section and the next contain good material, though one might comment that the able but egotistical and pernicky Arthur Gordon was not a typical governor of a self-governing colony.

So far this review has been concerned chiefly to direct attention to documents or aspects of the subject which might have been included or illustrated. But in the next section, 'Politics, 1919 to 1940', and in the last 'Some Political Landmarks since 1940' the opposite criticism might be made. There is too much about political programmes. Is the speech of Coates, an unimpressive speaker though a very able executive, worth including? The campaign documents which follow would suffice. Ward's speech is rightly included. The story that he meant, or was meant, to say seven millions and said seventy may be apocryphal, but there is clearly some room for doubting whether he kept to his brief. Maybe the speech won him the election — but do speeches or even party programmes win elections? In any case the Democratic Labour Party's programme of 1940 did not even win a seat and John A. Lee's point of view is already well represented. It is curious to begin 'The Diplomacy of a Small State' with the Labour Manifesto of 1919. It was a long time before Labour was in a position to conduct diplomacy and when it was it sang a different tune. The 'misnamed League of Nations' which 'would seem to have been devised for the purpose mainly of protecting the trading interests of the Allied capitalists' in 1919 (p. 358) had, in the view of Peter Fraser, one of the signatories, by 1945 'one of the noblest conceptions in the history of mankind' (p. 380). The set of documents which conclude this section is not impressive. What it chiefly illustrates is how a small nation has to trim its sails to the breeze. But that is a lesson worth learning. We then come back to party programmes and the like. Is there much point in including the National programme of 1943? The party did not win an election until 1949 and then perhaps rather because Labour had run out of ideas than because the National party had them.

It would be churlish to end on a critical note. On the whole Professor McIntyre and Mr Gardner have done a very good job. I do not know if they get royalties on this book, but they certainly deserve them.

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Industrial Conflict in Malaya. Prelude to the Communist Revolt of 1948.

By M. R. Stenson. Oxford University Press, London, 1970. x, 271 pp.
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ALTHOUGH a great deal has been written about what happened during the Malayan Emergency of 1948-1960, very little attention has been paid to *why* it took place. Debate on the causes of the rebellion has been devoted

almost exclusively to the extent to which it reflected decisions taken in Moscow and possibly transmitted to local Communists through the 'Calcutta Conference' of February 1948. It is a great boon to our understanding of the Emergency, in its international as well as its domestic aspects, that we at last have a thorough, balanced, and most enlightening study of the labour movement which provided the Malayan Communists with their principal source of strength.

Dr Stenson's main focus is on the activities of the radical labour unions and the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) in the 1945-1948 period, but he also provides a very good discussion of the colonial and wartime background of Malayan labour activity and a postscript sketching the development of labour movements in Malaysia and Singapore in the 1950s and 1960s. He devotes considerable care to portraying the social environment in which the labour movement developed, so that his detailed discussion of strikes, organizational campaigns, and dealings with government and plantation officials is not, as studies of Communist activities too often are, a mechanistic account of strategy, tactics, and manipulation. His great emphasis, naturally, is on the Chinese community, although Indian plantation labour also plays a prominent role in his account — indeed, Stenson makes it clear that, although Indian workers did not participate to any degree in the 1948 insurgency, they played a major role in the militant labour movement before that time. Almost completely absent from the book, however, are the Malays, who appear only at the end, and then as strikebreakers introduced into plantations during the events surrounding the outbreak of the Emergency. It was the Communists' failure to draw that population group in any way behind their effort which, in Stenson's view, constituted the Achilles heel of the MCP attempt to seize power, for it made possible an alliance between the British and the Malays which both deprived the Communists of sorely-needed rural support and legitimized a British effort at suppression which might have foundered had it not been possible to pursue victory in the name of independence and the protection of Malay rights.

One of the main themes of Dr Stenson's account is the considerable extent to which liberal elements in the colonial government were frustrated in their attempts to satisfy justified claims by the labour unions by the great influence on the colonial regime of the almost totally reactionary British business leaders in Malaya. He also finds that the Malayan Communist leaders, their Marxist ideology notwithstanding, discounted capitalist dominance in government decisions when they calculated their prospects after World War II. It seems the 'Party leaders really believed that as the loyal wartime ally of the British they would be recognized, in some sense, as partners in the post-war government' (p. 59). To that end, they devoted considerable effort to getting themselves and their unions accepted as bargaining agents in the colonial order. This search for legitimacy ran quite contrary to their doctrinal belief (and later practical conclusion) that their only proper relationship to the system was as its destroyers; in addition, it conflicted with the Communists' efforts to improve their labour support and to put pressure on the authorities by militant economic action. As a result, the Communists did not win the trust of the authorities nor the ultimate loyalty of the workers: the government saw them as troublemakers who ought to be suppressed as soon as the authorities had the strength and occasion, and the workers, having become attuned to the legality

campaign and disillusioned by the lack of effective labour action, did not back the ultimate revolt. Stenson suggests that the incompatibility between the search for legality on the one hand and, on the other, revolutionary ideology and the need for militant popular support, forms a contradiction common to Communist movements attempting to come to power by the 'peaceful road'. He observes in passing that this seems to have been a critical weakness of Indonesian Communist strategy in the Sukarno period (p. 208, note 1), and it seems to me he is right.

Because of the MCP's decision to seek recognition rather than revolution, the party used its moment of greatest strength, in the chaotic period following the Japanese surrender, to press for a place in the British-dominated order rather than to seize power. By February 1946, in Stenson's opinion, its chance had passed (p. 79); it had lost the initiative, and though during the rest of that year it made considerable progress in organizational and strike activity, it was moving toward a situation in which an increasingly strong government could afford to take an increasingly intolerant view of its activities, legal or otherwise. The decision for revolt in 1948 was taken, Stenson suggests, because there seemed literally no other choice for the MCP except resignation to total political defeat. In this context, the role of the Calcutta Conference is likely to have been supplementary at best: 'The conference message [of the inevitability of conflict between imperialist and revolutionary forces] reinforced the MCP's own fears of British intentions and, even more important, led it to believe that what was in reality an act of desperation and an admission of previous failure, was historically necessary and timed to occur at a genuinely propitious moment' (p. 217).

Dr Stenson has great sympathy for the Chinese and Indian workers on whose multitudinous grievances the Malayan labour movement was built, but little for the colonial regime or the MCP, whose battle he sees as a conflict between 'one form of authoritarianism and another' (p. 233). This being the case, his postscript chapter is discouraging, for it relates the postcolonial decline of real labour representation, the suppression of worker dissent, the soliciting of foreign investment at the expense of labour protection, and the development of a worker attitude of passivity and alienation. He concludes from this that the earlier flowering of the labour movement had been a 'precocious growth' (p. 250), which could exist only under colonialism: 'It was all very well to demand concessions from an essentially exploitative colonial regime, which could often enough well afford them, but it was a different matter to make continuing demands in an economically underdeveloped peasant society or an under-industrialized *entrepôt* port and temporary military base, both of which were faced with all the associated problems of rapid population growth, declining employment opportunities and lagging industrial expansion' (p. 251). It would seem that, in achieving independence, the workers of Malaysia and Singapore exchanged a rule that offered, however grudgingly, possibilities for improving their lot for regimes that neither would nor could do as much.

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