

Secondly, despite his impressive command of the sources, on at least one point Dr Stone does not sufficiently divorce himself from contemporary comment. He continues to use the contemporary concept of 'depression' (with linguistic variations) without distinguishing the various meanings which were attached to it. In places, it could refer to the state of business confidence, or to the state of the money market. In other places, it seems to refer to lower incomes or a distinct lowering of living standards. These are clearly different, and all of Dr Stone's work points towards a liquidity crisis and not to any diminution of incomes. Although he notes the importance of Logan Campbell's brewery profits in explaining why he was less troubled than other Auckland businessmen, and although he notes in passing the long-term benefits of the assets formed in the 1880s, Dr Stone nowhere clearly distinguishes between liquidity problems and the course of income streams. Dr Stone makes a few incidental comments on the insecurity of the 'long depression' interpretation of the 1880s — successful Auckland companies were formed in the 'good years' of the early 1880s and not in the depressed middle of the decade; the successful companies benefited from low capital charges as well as low wages, etc. — but he does not recognize that until income statistics are estimated in the manner of Butlin for Australia, the essential test of that interpretation cannot be made. And only when it is made, can the Auckland crisis be recognized as a liquidity crisis as a result of overtrading on an upward trend, or a liquidity crisis accompanying a stagnation of incomes.

Other readers would no doubt find their chief interest in other parts of Dr Stone's book. But few readers will find it other than stimulating.

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Decently and in Order: The Centennial History of the Auckland City Council. By G. W. A. Bush. Collins, Auckland, 1971. 637 pp. N.Z. price: \$5.00.

TO WRITE a commissioned, commemorative history of a self-important institution is a hard job.

An encyclopaedic coverage is often the result: no actor but must have his mention in the index, no committee but must have its paragraph. The work sags under the sheer weight of undigested fact.

Dr Bush has produced just such a book. It is only fair to mention that he is aware of this problem. In his preface, he states: 'with so great a range of topics to be covered over such a time-span, superficiality has been unavoidable' (p. 8); in the absence of any scholarly survey of the city's growth, his book 'makes no claim to fill this yawning gap. At most it may assist the courageous academic who finally accepts the gauntlet of synthesizing the development of Auckland as a whole' (p. 7). It is his opinion that no other institution, public or private, has a history which can throw so much light on Auckland's past.

In structure, Dr Bush has used nearly eighty per cent of the text to carry a chronological survey of the Council's role in Auckland's development. Each of these four sections (pre-1871, 1871-1918, 1919-1945, 1945-1971) embraces an enormous and repetitive range of municipal activities. The final section focuses on the Council itself as an institution: the administrative machine; the politics of elections; and a third chapter, entitled 'Of Men, Meetings and Institutions', which includes an assessment of some of Auckland's outstanding civic leaders.

I do not like this arrangement. The last section is by far the most readable and illuminating, discussing issues such as the role of councillors, mayor and committees, and carrying them right through the period. Its thematic approach gives continuity and cohesion. Some of the earlier sections tend to resemble chronological carry-alls, crammed with snippets and thumbnail sketches. The reader exhaustedly jumps back and forth among sewers, libraries, abattoirs, and shopping malls. Greater selectivity and the shaping of this vast mass of detail into key themes, such as transport and public health, would have given a much more satisfying structure.

The book is far too long. Most readers will feel oppressed by the 600-odd pages, voluminous appendices, and well over a thousand footnotes. One wonders whether the yearly listing of abattoir killings at Western Springs (p. 143), or voting figures, movers, and proposals for the reintroduction of wards in the 1950s and 60s (p. 500), really have a place in the text.

These two criticisms suggest that the author has not faced up to the main problem. He tells us *what* happened, but not *why*. The proliferation of local authorities in the Auckland region has long been a source of astonishment and ridicule. Why was amalgamation not achieved? How effective was the Council in coping with the enormous impact of the motor car? It brought new problems of congestion and emphasized the absolute imperative of overall town planning. Why was Auckland so long in getting its harbour bridge, first discussed a hundred years before? Why does it still lack a civic centre and a rapid rail transport system for a population of over half a million? Dr Bush discusses such questions, but it is narrative, not analysis.

Finally, the prose style is sometimes chunky, obscure, unpolished: 'If this cornucopia [£100,000 loan] transported the Council into cloud-cuckoo land, it was soon brought earthwards at high velocity' (p. 203); 'When seeking territorial rationalisation and the associated regularization of inter-authority relations . . .' (p. 188); 'Not everyone smacks his lips over the compute of consequences of Auckland's driving itself onwards in perpetual motion' (p. 562). But perhaps it is unfair to quote out of context.

The book is well illustrated, with interesting pre-1914 photographs, numerous contemporary cartoons, and maps.

The chief value of this work will lie in its usefulness to future historians as a vast body of detailed information, gathered from wide sources and based on intensive research. It is a solid reference work for the library shelves, a handbook on Auckland, but it is 'half-way' history.

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