

outlets in New Zealand. To have published a work of this kind would very suitably have honoured a man whose influence has been felt especially in the area of research supervision.

It is also a highly misleading reflection on the extent of Gardner's influence on New Zealand historiography that the editors should have assembled such a miscellaneous collection of items and issued it under the title, *Provincial Perspectives*, as if it represented the current state of understanding as to the meaningfulness and value of the 'provincial' unit of study in New Zealand history. The contributors show very little awareness even of the existence of a problem here. An opportunity has been lost to compile a work that would have honoured the historian by demonstrating in an explicit way the ongoing usefulness of the 'provincial' approach to New Zealand history of which he has himself been so strong a practitioner and advocate.

This volume consists of six essays. Russell Stone contributes a piece on the political opposition in Auckland in the Crown Colony period—very useful and entertainingly written, although it is by no means clear why it is in this book. W.D. McIntyre writes on Henry Sewell. Roger Robinson gives a brief commentary on Samuel Butler, celebrating an apparently hitherto little-noticed aspect of the novelist, namely his strenuous athleticism. Butler emerges as remarkably akin to Robinson himself—and indeed to Gardner and his running associates in the Canterbury History Department. Butler was, says Robinson, 'no pale scholar', and that might well be the motto for the Canterbury tradition commemorated here. Stevan Eldred-Grigg writes at rather greater length than in his recently-published book about the female members of the families of the landed gentry in Canterbury between 1880 and 1910. Len Richardson throws some light on the complex struggles within the Blackball Miners' Union in the 1920s. The only paper which tries to raise wider issues concerning colonial or frontier society is 'Gold Rushes of the Pacific Borderlands: A Comparative Survey', derived from a lecture given by P.R. May not long before his death.

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A Southern Gentry: New Zealanders who inherited the earth. By Stevan Eldred-Grigg. A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1980. 192pp. N.Z. price: \$16.95.

THIS IS a critical study of the great South Island landowners and the 'aristocratic tradition; which is revealed as 'yet another . . . unprepossessing' aspect of New Zealand's past. A South Islander himself, Dr Eldred-Grigg believes that New Zealanders have been too optimistic over their history, and his style recalls the polemical vigour of nineteenth-century pamphleteers. For him, the South Island was 'a frontier of capitalism', in which gentleman colonists, 'overwhelmingly English and almost completely upper class and upper-middle class' in origin (p.75), rose to power through their control of land. They bought or leased vast estates, and invested additional capital in mortgages, town property and local

industry. They built great houses and gardens, amply staffed by servants, from the pioneering period to the First World War, and even into the 1920s and 1930s. From their estates, they wielded social power in a variety of ways: education, justice, church life, charity and the militia. Dominant in provincial and local politics, they were also a major faction in national politics until 1890.

Dr Eldred-Grigg views the Liberal era as a genuine period of change, in which a mixture of economic trends, government policy and pervasive 'socialist' rhetoric led to the subdivision of many estates. Yet such change, he argues, only benefited a 'bourgeois' group of small farmers and businessmen, not the poorer farmers, labourers, shearers, Chinese and Maoris. These people remained almost as poor as they had been during the provincial period. By 1915, the great landowners themselves had lost their political power, but had retained much of their social prestige and their wealth, discreetly spread over a variety of investments. Their success, he concludes, is a sign that 'snobbery, guile and ambition' may count for more than 'equality, humanity and justice' in New Zealand culture.

A Southern Gentry is a reaction against the antiquarian and sentimental chroniclers of South Island history. Alert to arrogance and rapacity, it contains some harsh passages on land acquisition. Although South Island conditions favoured the creation of large estates, the process was influenced by economic circumstances as well as greed. Dr Eldred-Grigg's account of the plight of small farmers emphasizes how limited their prospects were before the advent of frozen meat exports. He does not devote much attention to pastoral finance, transport costs and changes in farming technology. Perhaps small farmers might have found some relief in a tenancy system on English lines, but the great landowners preferred contracting as 'an opportunity to enjoy' some of its advantages, without its duties (p.121).

Dr Eldred-Grigg is more cautious when he discusses the complex process of closer settlement. Fear, as he rightly points out, played its part in 'bursting-up', though not all family subdivisions were legal fictions. Few New Zealand landowners retained the legal structure of primogeniture and entail that had kept so many great British estates intact for centuries. Younger sons inherited, and farmed or sold, substantial properties on their own account. The investment of surplus capital is difficult to estimate. Some landowners lent large sums on mortgage to small farmers and rural businessmen. Although landowners did invest in a variety of 'urban and industrial enterprises' to reduce their dependence on farming, it seems less 'probable' that by 1915 such concerns had 'become the chief source of income for most of the old gentry families' (p.145). They would have considered capital in a freezing works or another food processing industry as a natural extension of their landed interests.

Social life is a more congenial subject for Dr Eldred-Grigg. Although he does analyse the role of the gentry, much of his book's appeal lies in its descriptions of station architecture, landscapes, hunts, races and weddings, often written in a more affectionate tone than his main argument suggests. He also writes well on other subjects: rural poverty, the role of women, popular entertainment (even the gentry had their raffish side here) and the origins of southern separatism. The gentry themselves emerge as an 'isolated, self-conscious élite', proud of their English ways but not quite at ease in Britain itself. They 'were caught between two worlds', just as the classes below them were caught between admiration and scorn. After their political defeat in 1890, the gentry retreated to a world of family, farming and local preoccupations, but they remained a model for aspiring

classes to follow. The 'bourgeois' people who profited from closer settlement gradually took up gentry institutions, just as newly-rich townspeople in Britain moved into county society. After all the sins of the gentry have been catalogued, and their often staggering wealth described, the uneasy feeling remains that if they had not existed somebody would have invented them as a model. It is also possible to wonder if the ferocious political rhetoric against the gentry really served a useful purpose if it drove them 'underground' to a minor social role in relation to their economic wealth. But such a question is only part of the interest which Dr Eldred-Grigg's argumentative book should provoke in a field still open to debate.

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Labour's Path to Political Independence. By Barry Gustafson. Auckland University Press/Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1980. 199 pp. N.Z. price: \$18.50.

SOME twenty years ago Dr Gustafson wrote a Master's thesis dealing with the same topic. His book is essentially a revision of this thesis although it incorporates some new evidence, notably from the papers of Arthur McCarthy, and a modified interpretation. In the first chapter he skims over the Lib-Lab coalition, the Political Labour League, and the first New Zealand Labour Party. The story up to 1911 is, I think, far more important than he assumes (I use the word advisedly because he has not consulted the minutes of the Dunedin Labour League or those of the Wellington branch of the first N.Z.L.P.). The second chapter deals with 'Red Feds' and Socialists, who receive more attention than he thought them worth twenty years ago. In the next six chapters he deals with the 1911 elections, W.T. Mills and the United Labour Party, the defeat of industrial action, the formation of the Social Democratic party, various by-elections, the 1914 general elections, and the formation of the still-extant Labour party. Dr Gustafson then devotes three interesting chapters to an analysis, focussed on the war years, of the economy, conscription, and sectarianism. The last, unfortunately, is somewhat inconclusive. The final chapters deal with the various elections of 1918 and 1919. It is a useful account, based on considerable research and very well illustrated, but by and large it confirms the standard interpretation. Material previously scattered in learned journals and dusty theses has for the first time been drawn together. Newer concerns of historians, such as the role (or existence!) of women, are ignored. Evelyn Cunningham and Emily Gibson between them get not one mention and the Alice Parkinson case, a *cause célèbre* for the Labour movement, is ignored. Women are also conspicuous for their absence from the otherwise useful biographical appendix.

In a book written by a political scientist it is not perhaps surprising that the more recent concerns of historians receive no recognition. It is, although even historians are prone to error, unfortunate that mistakes occur; the Dunedin Workers' Political Committee was formed in 1892; Professor Bedford ran for