

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

Reform in 1911 (or this is what everybody in Dunedin thought); J.A. McCullough is confused with his brother; the 1908 Arbitration Amendment Act is misunderstood. Neither individually nor cumulatively are such errors of major import. It is more regrettable that Dr Gustafson is so little interested in party structure, the debates over the 'pledge', the development of a caucus, and the other features which helped make the Labour Party New Zealand's first modern political party. The Auckland East by-election of 1910 urgently posed many of these issues. Nor does Dr Gustafson offer much in the way of psephological analysis. Yet P.J. O'Farrell's detailed study of voting returns in the Grey, which Gustafson relies on to explain Webb's victory in 1913, reveals the rich possibilities for this sort of intuitive-ecological analysis.¹ We never find out what proportion of Labour-Socialist candidates belonged to unions, which unions supported them, or which residential areas provided most support for these men. He never points out how completely Labour had vanquished the Liberals in Dunedin by 1911, or the relative failure of Labour in Auckland prior to 1919. Although he recognizes regional variations, I suspect that a radically different history could be written if these variations were made central to the story.

Even as a narrative of Labour's decision to pursue political independence this study labours under a severe limitation. Like a generation of scholars before him Dr Gustafson tries to compress this complex and dramatic story within a one-dimensional ideological framework. Moderates, he insists, battled with militants. Until 1912-13, he believes, they differed over policies. Then, after defeat on the industrial battlefield, the militants opted for politics. D.J. Crowley told this story many years ago and G.D.H. Cole summarized it skilfully in his *History of Socialist Thought* (unmentioned in the bibliography).² But if this were the case what is the importance of the war years? O'Farrell long since suggested that not all militants learnt the supposedly obvious lessons (although Dr Gustafson ignores his argument), anti-political strategies enjoyed renewed popularity among some powerful unions during the war years, and it may be that Guild Socialism helped to provide a better framework for unity but at a much later date than has been recognized. Despite adopting an ideological framework Dr Gustafson shows little interest in the complex socialist heritage. He presents the 'militants' as if they represented a single ideological stance, solves some of the more obvious problems by calling Red Feds such as Ted Howard and Joe Savage 'moderate', and even assumes that all Red Feds accepted a single position. De Leonites, industrial unionists, advocates of the Industrial Workers of the World (Chicago), and syndicalists are all treated as one. He is equally facile with the complex traditions which he conflates into 'moderation'. Like H.O. Roth, Dr Gustafson accepts the *Social Democrat's* interpretation of Mills' motives although Scott Bennett refused to countenance such accusations.³ Moreover Dr Gustafson distorts the evidence to fit his procrustean ideological rack and has Mills as the target for unanimous Red Fed abuse. R.S. Ross and the *Maoriland Worker*, although critical of Mills, understood that he was striving for their goal. It might also have

1 P.J. O'Farrell, 'The Workers in Grey District Politics, 1865-1913', unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1955.

2 Crowley, 'The New Zealand Labour Movement, 1894-1913', unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Otago, 1946 and Cole, 'New Zealand', *A History of Socialist Thought*, III, 2. *The Second International, 1889-1914*, London, 1956, pp. 885-908.

3 Roth, 'Buying a Labour Party: Fowlds, Mills, and the U.L.P.', *Political Science*, XX (July 1968), 27-39.

been helpful to have had an account of J.T. Paul's development as a revisionist. Compared to most previous historians, however, Dr Gustafson at least gives the so-called 'moderates' the prominence they deserve. Of the issue he deems central—politics—four strategies at least can be discerned; Lib-Lab, independent labour, de Leon's revolutionary strategy, and the anti-political views of the I.W.W. (Chicago). By not recognizing this he courts confusion.

The moderate-militant dichotomy distracts attention away from the political system and the society in which working men and women decided to pursue independent political power. It also over-simplifies a complex ideological reality and exaggerates the role of ideology. Like the others who have used moderate-militant as the key to understanding what happened, Dr Gustafson also gives too much attention to the 'militants'. In 1914, for instance, candidates put forward by the IRCs did better than those put forward by the Social Democratic Party and the electoral base for their success, and Labour's later growth, had been laid by 1911 everywhere but Auckland. This is not to say that the SDP has no importance, but that its importance must be more carefully delineated. Equally the de Leonites and the apostles of 'the Bummery' were important before 1913, but mainly because they discredited the Liberals as credible representatives of labour. By focussing on ideology Dr Gustafson ignores the complicated interplay of occupation, locality, tradition, sub-culture, and personality. Although he states that the Labour Party was 'based on the trade union movement' (p.16) he did not consult the records of any unions. Thus he also precludes the possibility that the decision to seek political power constituted only part of a broader strategy whereby working men and women, whether employed or not, hoped to shape New Zealand to their own ends. Similarly he excludes the possibility that his story might best be seen within the context of working-class history, or, more probably, the histories of the new society's working classes. The old-fashioned ideological dichotomy precludes such possibilities and themes. I suspect that, with greater speed than usual, a generation of revisionists will cut their teeth on *Labour's Path to Political Independence*.⁴ If that is so it will have served a very valuable purpose.

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The Journal of Henry Sewell 1853-7 (2 vols). Edited by W. David McIntyre. Whitcoulls, Christchurch, 1980. Vol. I, 510 pp. N.Z. price: \$40. Vol. II, 371pp., index. N.Z. price: \$25.

SEWELL wrote his journal for an audience. It was 'a running newsletter for his family and friends in England, especially Lord Lyttelton, the chairman of the Canterbury Association'. Sewell toyed with the idea of publishing it himself. But

⁴ The process has started; see Valerie J. Smith, ' "Gospel of Hope" or "Gospel of Plunder": Socialism from the mid-1890s up to and including the Blackball Strike of 1908', B.A. Hons. research essay, Massey University, 1976 and E.W. Plumridge, 'Labour in Christchurch: Community and Consciousness, 1914-1919', unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1979.