

dimensions as well as its style are quite inimitable. Uniquely memorable is probably the best description.

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*The New Zealand Political System, Politics in a Small Society.* By Stephen I. Levine. George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1979. N.Z. price: \$8.95.

DR LEVINE'S preface announces that 'the foregoing pages' [he appears to mean 'following pages'] seek to introduce readers to the New Zealand political system. A book of this scope has not hitherto been produced. . . . Having mentioned Lipson's *The Politics of Equality* and A.D. Robinson's *Notes on New Zealand Politics* as 'influential predecessors', Dr Levine goes on to explain that they 'lack the scope of this volume, which seeks briefly to encompass the entire political system in its salient, broad features. Moreover, these earlier works, and others even more limited in scope, are from an earlier time, when politics in New Zealand was seen to be more tranquil, and the New Zealand dream more secure of achievement.' Alas poor Lipson and Robinson, and even more so Keith Jackson with his *New Zealand, Politics of Change*, Austin Mitchell with his insightfully-chosen *Government by Party* and illuminating *Politics and People in New Zealand*, or R.S. Milne with his scholarly and authoritative *Political Parties in New Zealand*; all are left as casualties by advancing scope and contemporaneity.

However, before we are tempted to set aside such earlier books or retire any reference points like K.J. Scott on the constitution or R.J. Polaschek on government administration, it would be as well to consider just what scope brings us. In nine chapters and 176 pages the author tackles forty-nine topics, all systematically headed, led off by a chapter of nine pages on the role of political scientists and their modern differentiation into schools or approaches to their discipline. Naturally, with such an all-embracing agenda for the rest of the book, there is space only to open up each question before it is time to pass on to the next. That 'contemplation and understanding' called for on the outside cover are left with scant room to develop. This text displays one way of assessing and meeting 'the needs of first-year political studies students at university'. Others may—indeed will—prefer a more selective and intensive treatment.

On the other hand, there is careful selection of the references given at the end of each chapter. They draw usefully on a fair range of overseas writings to furnish comparisons and principles. By contrast, the references to New Zealand material rely strongly on contributions and contributors to the two readers which Dr Levine has edited, thus forming for the author-editor and his readers something of a self-enclosed yet collaboratively-supported system. Those political scientists and historians who remain interested in the relationship of present structures and problems to their previous development will nevertheless detect echoes of other years and other minds outside or antecedent to the system.

For instance, A.D. Robinson is quoted concluding that National is 'strongest in rural and small-town areas and in higher income suburbs, while Labour is strongest in central city areas and in lower income suburbs. Marginal seats are to be found in medium-sized towns (20-50,000 people) and in moderate income or mixed high/low income city areas'. It sets one pondering where one first encountered that analysis. A far more recent coincidence concerns the section on the political significance of by-elections from 1908 to 1977. Researchers could have been referred to the existence of my paper dealing with that precise period and topic which had been given to the Political Studies Association two years before this book appeared.

Authors of texts like Dr Levine require to maintain constantly a nice sense of balance if they are to use hop, skip and jump techniques to cover wide fields briefly. They can pass verdicts as on page 74: 'Nevertheless it is clear that Labour has not solved the problem of developing a philosophy, an organisational structure, a programme, and a team of activists capable of inspiring mass support and overcoming widespread distrust.' They can endeavour to evaluate and foresee as on page 81: 'This attraction for ideas makes the [Values] party distinctive in appeal and interesting to observe. It renders Values in this sense the driving force of New Zealand politics, without which New Zealand politics might have become mired in a miasma of vacuousness and fatuity.'

But textbook authors cannot afford a slip like that on page 173: 'New Zealand defence planning is centred on the ANZUS treaty, a brief though controversial document negotiated by a Labour government and developed from Labour's war-time co-operation with Australia and the United States.' It is true that ANZUS followed after war time co-operation but, as Professor F.L.W. Wood made plain in volume one of *New Zealand in World Affairs*, it was the changed strategic situation of 1950-51 which rendered ANZUS desirable for different reasons to each of the three partners, which dictated its form, governed its negotiation and secured agreement, and 1950 and 1951 were years of National, not Labour, government and diplomacy. Nor was it wise in the Appendix to iron out post-war Liberal developments into 'Liberal/United' for 1919, 1922, and 1928 alike, nor anachronistically to transform the Coalition candidates of 1931 into 'National'. But the real surprise was to discover 'Joseph G. Coates (Liberal/United)' as the Leader of the Opposition from 10 December 1928 to 22 September 1931. Recalling Gordon Coates's opinion of Forbes and his 'United' crew and remembering the pains Coates took to preserve Reform's separateness to the last possible hour, that was an unkind cut.

Blemishes apart, those concerned with political history will find *The New Zealand Political System* an intriguing set of snapshots of all sorts of aspects of the middle and late 1970s taken from a viewpoint which is itself an informative example of its times. Dr Levine has also contributed most usefully to debate on the political scene he reviews here by assembling his two collections of essays, articles and opinions. They will certainly be drawn upon by students and scholars and it is that inclusive and constructive impulse—the drive to explore all of, and add in depth to, what is really a very small body of political and historical knowledge—that deserves support.

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