

words: 'those who want to know the land in all its closeness. Only on foot can you become part of it and cross the centuries' (p.182).

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An Illustrated History of Taranaki. By Gail and Ron Lambert. The Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 1983. 192 pp. Price: N.Z. \$24.95.

GAIL AND RON LAMBERT both approach their chosen subject from a background of familiarity with things historical. From her work, *Peter Wilson: Colonial Surgeon*, Gail Lambert has experience of colonial biography, and Ron Lambert's position as director of the Taranaki Museum would lead to a close acquaintance with historical resources, many of which are utilised in this volume. Both, too, are committee members of the Taranaki Historic Places Trust.

With such a background, the Lamberts are in a position to appreciate, and respond to, the dearth of writing on Taranaki regional history. Their work surveys Taranaki from its geologic beginnings to the present. The brief initial chapters outline the development of the region's landforms, and review the changes in Taranaki's flora and avifauna; and indicate the pattern of pre-pakeha settlement.

The bulk of the text is devoted to the chronological narration of the province's post-pakeha development. This is done through major national and regional events and trends, from colonial settlement through the era of the province's farming growth, on to the age of large-scale petrochemical development. The authors have also tried to indicate major themes, most particularly Maori-pakeha tension, and the long tradition of innovative and persistent Maori protest in the province. The illustrations themselves, many published for the first time, are well reproduced and contribute much to the work, establishing a vivid impression of Taranaki's past. Lack of contextual information limits the historical value, however, of much of this illustration.

Furthermore, the illustrations depict a past almost entirely dominated by pakeha men. Without exception, every act of exertion illustrated in this book is made by pakeha males. Men clear the land, milk the cows, fight wars; men drive the cars, trains and aircraft; men play sport, break the law and work the machines, and men do the clothes for 'Sunday best' photographs. And the women? They feature prominently in only three of more than 130 illustrations.

These partisan impressions cast doubt on the authors' claim to have made a survey of Taranaki's history. Nor does the disclaimer that the work was intended not for professionals but for a general readership absolve the authors from responsibility.

There are notable gaps and deficiencies. For instance, there is no mention of the trade union or women's suffrage movements in the province. Nor is the location of certain valuable manuscript resources spelled out. This problem arises in part because of the authors' decision to have a select bibliography, believing it would assist those readers curious to 'delve further' (p.15). A perusal of what has

been selected suggests that particularly on matters subject to intense historical debate the reader will suffer because of omission and inconsistency in the bibliography. For example the Great Fleet is introduced as a myth, one which arose from 'initial misinterpretation and the unconsciously biased viewpoints of the recorders' (p.15). Yet those eager to 'delve further' into the matter are 'assisted' towards S. Percy Smith's *History and Traditions of the Maori of the West Coast of the North Island of New Zealand Prior to 1840* or J. Houston's *Maori Life in Old Taranaki*.

On the other hand, the authors' treatment of their theme of difficult Maori-pakeha relations is an encouraging aspect of this book. For the issue has been neither ignored nor idealised. The relationship is characterised as having 'never been a particularly happy one' (p.129), certainly until the confiscation grievances were recognized. This condition is attributed to the at first aggressive but later increasingly institutionalised pursuit of pakeha economic interests. As a theme it dwindles, however, after the 1920s. As they approached the present the Lamberts put their emphasis elsewhere. They consider initial modern economic enterprises, concluding with the petrochemical industry of 1980s. The decision to consider these contemporary developments was made because 'we have felt it inappropriate to subject readers to an arbitrary "cut off" point' (p.7). Why then is it not also appropriate to consider public reaction against these industrial developments? Here surely the organised and persistent objections of the Atiawa people evoke old racial tensions and issues.

There are several points of presentation that warrant comment. The practice of following the Maori terms used with a gloss in parenthesis has not been consistently followed. Nor is attribution of illustration clear and consistent, and it can irritate a reader for whom that counts.

In conclusion it would be fitting to set the reservations that have been discussed here against the state of Taranaki history prior to the publication of this volume. Doing so enhances the stature of Gail and Ron Lambert's work. It becomes significant as an attempt to explore relatively unknown territory. In this capacity it serves as a model for the display of initiative — for the willingness to respond.

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