

Democracy and Power in New Zealand. A Study of New Zealand Politics. By Richard Mulgan. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1984. N.Z. price: \$14.95 (pb).

FOUR years ago Richard Mulgan's review of Geoffrey Palmer's book *Unbridled Power* marked a rare and wonderful event for students of New Zealand politics. A real debate had emerged, grounded in philosophical and theoretical concerns, and with real political implications to boot. Palmer's interpretation of New Zealand's political institutions and constitution had arisen out of the high years of Muldoonism, and represented a liberal constitutionalism shorn of the economic luddism hitherto characteristic of that tradition in New Zealand.

Mulgan's response to Palmer, explicit in his review, and argued on a wider front in his new book, was that of a philosopher with debts to Aristotelian method and principles. If Palmer's approach was that of a liberal, Mulgan's is that of a conservative, although one grounded in the peculiarly democratic traditions of New Zealand politics.

Briefly, Mulgan outlines a model of democracy he claims to develop out of New Zealanders' ordinary understandings of the idea, and refines it in order to make it more coherent. The various political institutions are then described and analyzed in terms of their conformity with the principles embodied in this theory of democracy. Essentially, Mulgan restates in more explicit and elaborate form an understanding of New Zealand politics dominant from the early years of the academic study of political science in New Zealand, beginning with Lipson and summed up in most succinct form in the title of Austin Mitchell's book *Government By Party*. Of course parties were not the only political formations identified. Following the obvious example set by the American science of politics, organized interests or 'pressure groups' were also given much attention. Mulgan restores this focus, neglected over the last decade, by seeking to understand how institutions actually work in terms of what is demanded of them by those they serve, as opposed to their being found wanting because they do not conform to an abstract principle demanding the separation of powers.

Yet this is no crass attempt to be 'value-free'. Mulgan does not hesitate to evaluate the institutions he examines according to what is expected of them by those who consume the results of their actions and deliberations. Thus, as one of the key principles of New Zealand democracy is recognized to be equality, it is possible to identify failings in the institutions insofar as some individuals and collectivities are more equal than others, and, in particular, those with greater wealth and power are acknowledged to be more powerful than those with few assets and low incomes.

As an Aristotelian, Mulgan is careful to balance other values against the single-minded pursuit of a one notion of the good. As he puts it, 'we must recognise . . . that the search for democracy may bring us into conflict with other values, such as material comfort or personal freedom'. But influenced by modern analytical philosophy, Mulgan's goals are more limited than this, for he goes on: 'where the balance is to be struck between these competing values is a matter for individual judgement and a question on which reasonable people may disagree'. This is all very well, but it is society rather than the individual which determines a balance between these values, and the traditional role of the political philosopher has been to contribute an individual judgement on such important collective moral issues. By the end of the book, the patience of some readers for this judicious neutrality may be

wearing a little thin. A book on democracy and power in New Zealand worthy of the name still remains to be written, and its author will need a more tough-minded approach than this.

For political scientists, the strength of the book is in its fine and distinctive balance of theory, description, and analysis. Mulgan's premise is that 'the rejection of ideology in politics is itself ideological'. Students of political theory will find the book a useful application of this insight to New Zealand politics; and students of the political process will find among other things a broad overview of the making of agricultural policy, which helps to fill a hitherto yawning gap.

For those historians interested in matters theoretical, the book could contain some useful hints. Even staunch empiricists might consider the direction of some attention toward the historical study of the organization of interests in New Zealand. Farmers and unions, it is true, have had some attention. But what of manufacturers, employers, and other business groups? What of the role that the state has played in the organization of interests? Two examples of this remain largely unexplored: the first, the experience of World War II and 'economic stabilization'; and the second, the National Development Council experiment of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Perhaps historians could take up the concept of 'corporatism' as Mulgan has done with respect to agricultural policy and, incidentally, as Pat Walsh has done in a major reinterpretation of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. Finally, Mulgan's use of the concept of populism as a recurring theme of leadership in New Zealand, while repeating with more erudition an argument made by Tony Simpson some years ago, deserves the attention of the numerous army of New Zealand political biographers.

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Educating The Workers? A History Of The Workers' Education Association In New Zealand. By Roy Shuker. The Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 1984. N.Z. price: \$13.95.

IN THE last thirty years, the study of the history of education has been transformed. Formerly the province of educators celebrating the rise of compulsory schooling and the teaching profession, it has become recognized in many countries, including the United States and Britain, as an important aspect of social history. This rehabilitation has not yet been reflected in the New Zealand scene, however. Here, the history of education occupies an academic twilight zone between the territories of education and history. It has tended to be regarded as a decorative adjunct to the academic study of education, which is dominated by empirical psychology and largely abstract philosophical approaches. At the same time, it is treated as distinct from and inferior to 'real' history. Thus the classic paradigm of the history of education in New Zealand, a whiggish preoccupation with charting the progress of free, secular, national and compulsory schooling, has remained almost unchallenged. A. G. Butchers, its leading pre-war exponent, has been succeeded by Ian and Alan Cumming