

a surprising amount of information, photos, maps, a bibliographical note, and an index. Each book takes a different locality for its focus and so reveals the surprising isolation of communities which were quite close to Dunedin. Roads, rivers, and floods loom large. Taieri Mouth, not more than 25 kilometres from Dunedin, remained a world apart until the car became ubiquitous in the 1950s. Yet each community had some equivalent to Dr Wilson, keen to establish school, church, and library. Each had to locate some economic base for the community's survival, a task more easily accomplished in agricultural areas than in the gold-mining country; and a task more easily accomplished when, as in South Otago (and most of the South Island), there were few Maoris.

The books published by Otago Heritage Books are rich in local evidence and social insight. In some respects they are source materials, more for the historian of society than of politics. Indeed, politics and the law remain decently off-stage, an even more indistinct background than women and families. Yet together these works help restore a necessary perspective, reminding us of the extraordinary variety within New Zealand, and even of questions and areas that might usefully be explored. For instance, in two of these books the Cornish loom large. It is unclear, both at Hamilton's gold field in Otago and New Plymouth, what significance this had. And together these works also remind a careful reader that, at least in the nineteenth century, the two islands had different histories. Although none of the works focuses upon the Maori, quite clearly missionaries, militia, and war are major themes in the history of the North Island, although not at the same time everywhere. And in the South Island, where sheep and gold are major themes, there is in part another history. Yet there were areas of overlapping experience. Local histories, in their nature, convey much yet miss the larger themes and trends. A dialogue is needed, for the two modes really complement each other, although how both could be encompassed in one book remains a mystery.

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*Otago Harbour, Currents of Controversy.* By Gavin McLean. Otago Harbour Board, Dunedin, 1985. pp. N.Z. price N.A.

IT IS NEVER EASY to write a history on a subject already found in an earlier work; in this case A. H. McLintock's monumental *Port of Otago*, one of the Otago Centennial Series of 1951. But McLean's new book overcomes the difficulty. It is as scholarly as its forerunner, yet covers a further 35 years and employs a different approach. Whereas McLintock's emphasis was primarily political (the policies and personalities of the Otago Harbour Board), McLean also places stress on the economic forces at work, while bringing to life the ships that have been the *raison d'être* of the port. The later book, moreover, is abundantly illustrated with comprehensive and detailed captions, and has a lightness of touch which will widen its appeal to a general readership without compromising academic standards.

*Otago Harbour* brings home the extent to which decisions affecting New Zealand ports have been governed by political rather than economic considerations. The

latter part of the nineteenth century was characterized by long-running disputes between the harbour board and the central government — or perhaps its more visible local arm, the Railways Department. The modern counterpart to this was the infighting to secure for the port the status of a container port, before the 'box revolution' swept away the existing pattern of New Zealand trade in the 1970s. The more local running feud between Port Chalmers and Dunedin for control of Otago's deep-sea trade is covered with clarity as also is the economic cost: the inhibiting of the progress of Otago's port as compared with that of other provincial centres where the port is more favourably placed geographically.

For those who imagine that the northward drift from Dunedin is a modern phenomenon it is salutary to read that the trend was already apparent in the 'depression' of the 1880s and 1890s. It may be later traced in the movement of the head office of that 'pearl in the crown' of Dunedin maritime enterprise, the Union Steam Ship Co., lost first to Wellington in 1921, then moved north again to Auckland in 1984.

This book has an attractive format, and both text and illustrations have been carefully presented. There are some minor errors. There are one or two literals. A caption to a photo dated August 1911 names one of the ships *Westmeath* while she was still the *Everton Grange* — the attributed name was not acquired until June of the following year. On p. 295 there is the statement that the *Progress* was a motorship when it was in fact a steam engine which was installed in 1922. But these are points for the purists which should not count against the undoubted achievements of the book.

This history will appeal on a number of levels — to those with an interest in the development of our trade and transport; to those who follow the often tangled skeins of our local authorities; and to those simply with a love of our maritime history and of the ships involved, who will find the appendices covering such matters as the Board's fleet, shipbuilding, harbour ferries, shipwrecks and hulks invaluable.

The Otago Harbour Board is to be congratulated upon giving the author a free rein to produce a 'warts and all' portrait of its endeavours over the years, as is Dr McLean to be congratulated for an invaluable and entertaining record of a major part of Otago's maritime history.

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*Settlers and the Agrarian Question. Foundations of Capitalism in Colonial Australia.* By Philip McMichael. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 1984. xvi, 304 pp., end notes, maps, tables, bibliography. English price £25.00.

THIS BOOK attempts to place nineteenth-century Australian history in its 'world-historical' context and to show that major shifts in Australian history can be understood only in the context of international (and especially British) capitalism. The argument and the vocabulary are derived from the 'developmental' school of analysis associated with Giovanni Arrighi and Immanuel Wallerstein, among others. Marxism provides a major source of inspiration but it is the marxism of Paul Barran and Paul Sweezy and their *Monthly Reviews*.