

Maori and European influences, illustrates that the way ahead does not lie in xenophobia or rejection of the past, but in its absorption. It is all a more complex, slow business that most of us optimistically imagined. In *A Destiny Apart* Sinclair's perceptions and scholarship show us where we have come from and cast a look ahead. In that sense the book is as much a challenge to the next generation of historians as it is further proof of Sinclair's outstanding contribution to the history of New Zealand. Let us hope that the challenge will be taken up.

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The New Zealand People at War: The Home Front. By Nancy M. Taylor. Historical Publications Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Government Printer, Wellington, 1986. 2 vols. 1130 pp. NZ price: \$99.50.

1985-6 was a bumper year for historical publications on New Zealand in the Second World War by women and about women. Prominent is Nancy Taylor's *The Home Front*, originally planned as a social history to complement F.L.W. Wood's *Political and External Affairs* (1958) and J. V. Baker's *War Economy* (1965) in a trilogy, *The New Zealand People at War*. It completes the Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War. The other historical publications are really 'her-stories': Iris Latham, *The WAAC Story*; Eve Ebbett, *When the Boys Are Away*; and Lauris Edmond (ed.), *Women in Wartime*. They add a personal, human dimension to what present-day historians would describe as a total, rather than a social, history of New Zealand life in the war years.

Why has it taken so long for women to prove that they have the professional skills to write war history, not only do archival work, basic research, and sundry other menial tasks for men? Half a dozen or more women were employed in Army Archives and the War History Branch; they were classified as 'clerical assistants', and paid less than the men in the office doing the same work. No woman was originally invited to be the author of any of the campaign, service, unit or civilian volumes, not even *Women at War*, one of 24 booklets published in the *Episodes and Studies* series. The breakthrough came after Wood was published and Baker under way. Taylor was invited to write what was described as a social survey and, later, M. P. Lissington to revise for publication her war history narratives on 'New Zealand and the United States' and 'New Zealand and Japan'.

Taylor was a history graduate who had served a long apprenticeship in the Historical Branch of Internal Affairs. She worked on the ill-fated centennial (later historical) atlas and on the splendidly produced *Introduction to New Zealand* (1945), aimed at middle-brow Americans. Like many other young women who (to quote from her book) 'established bridgeheads in male-work territories' in wartime, she 'took on traditional full-time home-and-children life' in the 1950s, but found time to research, write, and edit for School Publications and the Alexander Turnbull

Library. She began work on *The Home Front* in the early 1960s, not long before the rump of War History became Historical Publications, and for many years 'beavered away', for the most part on her own. Only 'a kept woman', the Taylors joked, could have afforded to do this. Who else would have persevered to the end with so much dedication?

A number of narratives and departmental 'histories' had been compiled in the War History Branch, mainly under Wood's direction, for the use of war history authors, but they were uneven in quality and coverage, so Taylor embarked on her own research. She quarried the daily newspapers of the four main centres and several of the larger provincial towns, also the weeklies, magazines, and periodicals. *The Home Front*, meticulously documented, gives credence to Macaulay's remark that the only true history of a country is to be found in its newspapers. But Taylor is keenly aware of the problems of using newspapers as historical evidence. In her very thorough study of wartime censorship, she points out that while editors were thankful that their censor, J. T. Paul, understood newspapers, as he 'grew used to power and as pressures multiplied, he would become less patient, more anxious, more crabbed, his sense of proportion sinking under obsession with detail'. Moreover he was very close to Fraser, 'who, despite his intelligence, was often in his protective devotion to the Labour government as intolerant as a religious fanatic' (pp.977-8). Morale as well as security were important considerations. The public was made neither immediately nor fully aware of the 'tides and toll' of the Pacific war. Publication of bad news was delayed and cushioned; inevitably good news was inflated.

Newspaper research was complemented by a wide range of other sources, narratives and files of documents prepared by the War History Branch, official publications, a few files, books, and theses. Sixty-four photographs, mostly from the War History and Pascoe collections, and 15 Minnhinnick cartoons were selected for reproduction. Taylor, moreover, had the advantage of living and working with people who, like herself, were participant observers of *The Home Front*. Her way of looking at it is subtly influenced by the *mentalité* of her world, Victoria University College, the Department of Internal Affairs, her Thorndon home where young, liberal-minded friends foregathered, and Wellingtonians who cared about civil liberties and the life of the mind. She has, for example, more empathy with the spirit of dissent than ANZAC. But she is always fair and objective. As an explorer, like Cook in Dr J. C. Beaglehole's words, she leaves little for others to do but admire.

The contents and structure of her book remain quite close to the synopsis and list of subjects she was given after she began to work on it (see *New Zealand Listener*, 21 June 1986, pp.26-27). Broadly speaking, she records the major events of the war and the effects on the life of the people and defines their attitudes to the outbreak of war, the events of the war, and war measures. Into this narrative she injects, at appropriate times, wedge histories on many of the listed subjects, and since the list was neither exhaustive nor final, some of her own choosing, for example, 'Camp Followers' and 'The Arts Survive'. She has produced a rich mine of information, including statistics, but it is studded with wit. She chooses words with great care; she has an eye for revealing and amusing trivia. She can draw vivid pictures, such as that of the three weeks between Pearl Harbor and Christmas. Her best condensed chapter is on the American invasion; her longest and most detailed on home defence (the Home Guard and Emergency Precautions Scheme) and censorship. Her chapters on 'Pacifism', 'The Dissenting Minority', 'Conscientious Objectors and Defaulters', and 'Russia and the War' together provide a thoughtful, perceptive and judicious

study of those who thought differently from the government and the majority. On politics and industry, labour and strikes, she amplifies and, to some extent, overlaps Wood and Baker. Almost every facet of New Zealand life is covered, even the usually neglected history of music. The Maori and the Maori war effort are only briefly mentioned in the concluding pages. In this day and age, they would be the subject of a separate volume. But until the late 1970s they were, like women, 'submerged' history. Then, between them, two thesis writers, R. Ngatata Love, 'Policies of Frustration: The Growth of Maori Politics: The Ratana-Labour era' and Claudia Orange, 'A Kind of Equality: Labour and the Maori People 1935-1945', provided a history of the Maori War Effort Organization. Taylor includes a separate chapter on women at war plus other material useful for contemporary women's studies, for example, on prostitutes and unmarried mothers. Her book is a solid foundation on which others can build, a valuable resource book and work of reference.

The general framework or hypothesis needed to pull it all together is in the epilogue, an exceptionally fine piece of historical writing. The war, Taylor concludes, is a study in gradualism. New Zealanders entered it to support Britain in ending a detestable political system that threatened the civilized world, and emerged from it closer than they had ever been to seeing themselves as New Zealanders. They could not go home again; the world and the people were changed. New Zealand's contribution in manpower was not exceeded by any other Commonwealth country and 'it put its money where its young men were'. Nevertheless it was far from united by, or totally committed to, war. Rather, war intensified sectional differences within the government and the community, though there was determination not to allow dissent to impede the war effort.

'Three waves of elevation in spirit, independence and readiness for sacrifice' are identified: in September 1939 when people wanted to do their bit and were frustrated because there was so little to do; in mid-1940 after France fell when New Zealand was the first to introduce military conscription for overseas service other than Britain; and in the months following the Japanese attack when industrial conscription without precedent was introduced. The first phase subsided with little effect on civilian life. The second wrought some far-reaching changes. The third, channelled by the government, invaded most aspects of civilian living. Through all this New Zealanders carried on, doing what was required of them, in what Taylor remembers as grey years.

Sadly, *The Home Front* marks the ending of an age of government-funded research and publication which, to cite the Report of the 1986 Ministerial Review of the Historical Publications Branch, 'promotes a sense of national identity, has cultural value, and is used in policy development'. Nancy Taylor has devoted most of her working life to doing this. Her book is not only an indispensable tool for all future research on the war and postwar years; it is evocative reading for all New Zealanders who want to relive their war years and to understand themselves and their roots.

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