

Thompson's accounts of Te Whiti's monthly speeches in 1879 and 1880 are supported by another version. The Reverend T. G. Hammond also made translations of Te Whiti's speeches at this period. The texts are similar, but the variations also make it apparent they are not copies of each other. Both make clear the importance of Te Whiti's religious teachings and his refusal to accept the legality of the confiscations. And as a rational man, why should he not reject them?

Riseborough's book is, on the whole, a thorough and careful study of the European side of the Parihaka story in the years 1878–1884. It is a pity that she felt it inappropriate for a Pakeha to interpret the Maori side of the story. Her reluctance becomes an inhibiting constraint on both her research and her interpretation. It prevents the broadening of the portrayal of Te Whiti as a religious leader. It fails to give a full recognition of the importance of Tohu as the man who initiated the protests of the ploughmen. Tohu and Te Whiti shared the leadership on a rotational basis, as equals, and in May 1879 Tohu was the communal leader. But Riseborough decides neither to look at the members of the community nor at its leaders. She has also limited the time frame so as to exclude the other conflicts of Parihaka in the later 1880s and 1890s. The book leaves many questions unanswered, and these problems arise from the author's deliberately set limitations to her own work.

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Tarawera: The Volcanic Eruption of 10 June 1886. By R.F. Keam. R.F. Keam, University of Auckland, 1988. 488 pp. NZ price: \$169.00.

I HAVE had occasion to read this book twice over the past nine months. Each time I have found it enjoyable and informative — though upon each reading in a somewhat different way.

Tarawera deals with the greatest natural disaster in nineteenth-century New Zealand: the violent eruption of Mt Tarawera and the adjacent Rotomahana district. It led to over 100 deaths and to the disappearance and (presumably) destruction of the incomparable and irreplaceable Pink and White Terraces. Through what a layman would consider a natural freak, the sound of the volcanic explosions could be heard as far away as Christchurch in the South Island and Whangaroa in Northland. That perhaps one-third of the colony's population could hear these sounds had a rational explanation which Keam provides: material ejected from vents at supersonic speeds generated shock waves which, ultimately refracted downwards, became audible at ground level many hundreds of kilometres away from the actual scene of the disaster.

As a geophysicist of very good standing Keam could have elected to present his material, as he admits, in the form of a 'geological treatise'. He chose not to do so. He intended that his book be seen primarily 'as a record of the experiences of individuals and communities most closely involved' in the disaster, and 'the reaction of New Zealand as a whole'.

The book effectively falls into five parts: a description of the region before the eruption; the eruption itself as experienced by 'participants'; the aftermath — in which are recorded such things as the nature of the destruction, relief expeditions, widespread public interest, reports of observers, amateur and professional (e.g. academics), and the record of contemporary photographers; a somewhat briefer section on the dramatic

physical transformation of the region; and finally 21 appendices on varied topics occupying 50 pages.

Tarawera has admirable features. Though it has been exhaustively researched, it is always readable. And almost the entire credit for the exceptional standard of publication must go to the author himself who undertook most of the publishing single-handed. Printed on fine-quality art paper, the book has been laid out in such a way that almost all illustration has been placed on, or adjacent to, the page to which it applies. The colour reproductions of the work of nineteenth-century artists like Kinder, Charles Blomfield, and Kennett Watkins are sharp and true. Shots of the area taken by contemporary photographers such as Alfred H. Burton, Josiah Martin and Charles Spencer — the locating of which by the author was no simple task — are historical records in their own right and a feature of the book. Of the many excellent aids to this study, mapwork, a quick reference list of participants, and a thorough index stand out most of all.

There are some fine chapters; among them chapters 19, 20, and 24 which cover the inspection visits to the disaster site, and the varying, indeed sometimes contradictory, reports upon the eruption by Dr James Hector, S. Percy Smith, the Assistant Surveyor-General, and three university professors, of whom A.P.W. Thomas, tortoise-like in method no less than in physiognomy, by the thoroughness of his investigations and the authoritativeness of his report, predictably put his hastier colleagues to shame. For me, however, the high spot of the book was Section IV which, read in conjunction with Appendix Q, describes and explains from the standpoint of modern science, yet in terms intelligible to laymen, the eruptive processes that led to the disaster.

Yet after one has noted these many qualities one must also consider, in an historical journal such as this, *Tarawera* as history. And here I must express two misgivings, albeit minor. First, the book is longer than it needed to be: much of the information included was the progeny of Keam's enthusiasm rather than what was required to cover the subject adequately. The ability to know what to leave out is the touchstone of good history no less than of good writing: 'we must murder the little darlings' was Katherine Mansfield's sage advice. One tires of inconsequential detail. Of what historical significance is the Edwin Harrow-Gilbert Mair quarrel? Do chapters 3 and 5 really earn their passage? Some of the data in the Appendices could have informed the author's argument without ever appearing in the book. For instance, material in Appendix G on the S.S. *Vestnik*, which illustrated the prevailing Russophobia, would have been better presented succinctly in the text, thereby making the colonists' panic attribution of the explosions to the ship's cannonading both more explicable and interesting.

My second criticism is not unrelated to the first. There are occasions when detailed descriptions or citations of Victorian prolixity ousted analysis and a sense of context. After all, it was because the colony was overwhelmed by an economic depression (mentioned at best only obliquely) that the natural disaster evoked the response it did, making the sense of trauma all the greater yet acting, through the excitement it aroused, as a diversion from the prevailing gloom of hard times. There are philosophical grounds for regarding history as a record, not of what actually happened, but of what was perceived to have happened. But by taking this detailed approach Keam may have missed opportunities to analyse, to enlarge on the complex personalities of men such as Hector or S.P. Smith, or upon the ferocious politicking within the Native Department (which lay behind personal tensions displayed during the crisis).

But such strictures cannot diminish the achievement of the book. Neglect of the history of science, pure and applied, and of scientific thought, has been a conspicuous and

lamentable gap in our national historiography. *Tarawera* blazes a trail for other contributions in this genre. One also looks forward impatiently to the other two volumes upon the New Zealand thermal region Kream intends to publish.

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The Lucifer; a Story of Industrial Conflict in New Zealand's 1930's. By Dave Welch. The Dunmore Press in association with the Trade Union History Project, Palmerston North, 1988. 189pp. \$24.95.

THE DEFINING characteristics of New Zealand's history of industrial disputes is the relative freedom from collective violence. It is said that only one person has ever been killed as a result of a strike. A rare departure from this tranquil tradition was the Christchurch tramway workers' strike in early May 1932. Precipitating the strike was the decision of the Tramway board (the local authority controlling Christchurch's tramway system) to dismiss 12 men, including the Union president, as a cost-cutting measure. The strike lasted 13 days and involved a work-force of 465 people.

The main virtue of Dave Welch's account is his careful documentation of the physical conflict generated by the dispute. It produced 38 arrests (two-thirds of those charged were imprisoned, some for six months with hard labour), over six cases of assault (one contributed to the later death of a scab), at least seven cases of arson (principally the throwing of rocks at tram windows and damage to the shops of Board members and special constables), numerous attempts at industrial sabotage (including the laying of gelignite on a tram line), and two mass riots, the likes of which had never occurred before in Christchurch. Fifteen hundred special constables were recruited to help the police protect trams from arson and forcible seizure, and to clear obstructions from tram lines.

Why, apart from the 1912 Waihi miners' strike, was this the most turbulent industrial dispute between a single union and employer that New Zealand has ever experienced? On the face of it, the scale and intensity of the unruliness are surprising. The union was not a militant one (a go-slow in 1918 was its last previous act of militancy); only 40% of the rank and file had voted to strike; none of the other Christchurch unions struck in sympathy; the Depression years (unlike 1908-1913 and 1959-51) were not an era when doctrines of anarcho-syndicalism advocating violence inspired the working classes; and although the slump gave rise to many other strikes against wage-cutting and redundancies, all were peaceful. Welch's account is not sufficiently sophisticated to explain why the tramways dispute was uniquely violent. But from his narrative it is clear that the upheavals were mainly perpetrated by outsiders. In large measure the disorder was engineered by a handful of extremists and Communist Party members, who did not belong to the union but established an informal action group to help a few of the unionists engage in more aggressive forms of picketing. The two mass riots, he suggests, were spontaneous outbursts. Neither was fomented by the union's leaders or membership; instead the unruly were chiefly drawn from Christchurch's large population of unemployed. Aroused by the examples of the Queen Street riots and a successful strike by the local Waimakariri relief workers a few weeks earlier, the unemployed were quick to start, or join, any kind of crowd disturbance as a way of venting their rage against the system.

The Lucifer (the title comes from a contemporary brand of matches) is a well-told story