

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.

R.C.J. STONE

University of Auckland

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

based on comprehensive research. Without the assistance of the Trade Union Project, this book, on an extraordinary but little-known event, would never have been published.

This is not to say that the book is free of problems. The first is the author's attempt to brush a lot of 'colour' into the prose. This leads him to ascribe thoughts and conversations to his actors which could be fictional or could be factual — the distinction is never made clear. The second problem is one of context. The author (an active trade unionist) has many romantic notions about the possibilities of working-class revolt during the Depression. He says that, as a result of the levelling effort of mass deprivation, New Zealand was poised on the brink of wholesale social violence in 1932, and that the only reason it did not fall over it was that the Labour Party offered a peaceful alternative for social change. This is fanciful. We can agree that 1932 was one of the worst years of collective protest that Pakeha society has ever known. But the incidence of mob violence was very small, and the rate of unemployment and the fall in real wages were not as substantial as the author imagines and affected wage-earners very unevenly. As the Labour Party received only 33% of the total vote in December 1931, and its membership stagnated until 1935, it can hardly have provided a major safety valve for protest. If there was no wholesale breakdown in civil order, it was partly because the Left was so hopelessly divided that it was incapable of organizing it, and partly because the individual responses of working people to adversity were extremely diverse and focused on accommodation rather than political resistance. Finally, Welch quite forgets the ease with which the state crushed and deterred illegal protest with the Public Safety Conservation Act.

MILES FAIRBURN

Victoria University of Wellington

Transplanted Christianity: Documents Illustrating Aspects of New Zealand Church History. By A. K. Davidson and P. J. Lineham. College Communications, Auckland, 1987; 2nd ed., Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 1989. NZ price: \$37.50.

COLLECTIONS of documents can be a valuable teaching aid, by giving students access to formative primary sources and helping them to see the past with other eyes to assist them. In addition, some archival materials are scattered, very fragile, and relatively inaccessible to undergraduates. Davidson and Lineham have done a real service to the study of history in New Zealand by drawing attention to materials which are too little known and by making them so accessible. The publication of a second edition by Dunmore Press is an indication of the needs that this collection has met.

The selection of documents for such a collection is difficult. The editors have to ensure denominational and regional balance and decide whether to opt for a thematic or a chronological approach. Should the documents be allowed to speak for themselves, with the minimum introductory material, as in Bettenson's *Documents of the Christian Church*, or should there be quite substantial introductory and textual notes, as in J. Stevenson's *A new Eusebius*? Should the selection focus on issues that connect with contemporary (and popular) social and political history, or should the distinctive priorities of the churches shape the collection? That would mean a good deal of attention to worship, preaching, fund-raising, pastoral care, and theological and moral issues, which may appear to lie outside the mainstream of New Zealand life.

The authors have opted to touch only lightly on worship, music, and mission work. Architecture, specialist ministries, overseas aid, and refugee work have been omitted, as