

officers and men acted in unison. The Seamen's Union has already merged with the Cooks and Stewards Union, it is currently discussing amalgamation with the watersiders' and harbour board unions, and the formation of one maritime union including ships' officers and engineers is no longer an impossible dream.

Gavin McLean has written an impressive number of books on New Zealand maritime history. The present volume is, however, his first excursion into trade union history and it betrays a certain lack of familiarity with the available sources. The Guild's own archives go back no further than about 1924 and the only other internal record available was an old newscutting book of the Shipmasters Association. McLean has not apparently used the records of the Register of Trade Unions, which contain annual reports of the Shipmasters Association, and his treatment of the sequence of officers' unions before 1924, some registered under the Arbitration Act, others under the Trade Union Act, is somewhat confused. One admittedly very short-lived officers' union is not mentioned at all: the Masters and Engineers (River Service) Union founded in July 1890 with some 280 members who served on steamers and tug-boats in and around Auckland harbour. It expired in 1891.

There are also some unfortunate misspellings of personal names, both in the text and in the index (Dowds for Dodds, Gooseman for Goosman), but these shortcomings do not detract from a very readable and by no means uncritical account of a union which, in the author's words, made up for in interest what it lacked in size.

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The Southern Octopus. The Rise of a Shipping Empire. By Gavin McLean. Ship and Marine Society, Wellington, 1990. 239 pp. NZ price: \$44.95.

THE UNION Steam Ship Company was established at Dunedin in 1875, at the second attempt, to operate vessels in the coasting trade. Riding on the benefits of gold, assisted immigration, and the growth of New Zealand businesses, and guided by the entrepreneurial energy of James Mills and the commercial judgement of Peter Denny, the company rapidly became the largest and one of the most successful in the country before its absorption into the P & O empire in 1917. Gavin McLean provides a highly informed blow-by-blow account of the manner in which Union broke into and dominated one trade after another in Australasia and the Pacific, earning it the nickname, 'the southern octopus'. The company developed an armoury of weapons for defeating its competitors from freight wars and deferred rebates to takeovers. If all this failed there was still the possibility of pooling agreements and secret deals with the more resilient competitors to ensure freight rates remained buoyant. The result was that by 1917 the Northern Steam Ship Company of Auckland was the only significant firm working in New Zealand waters which retained a degree of independence and even it was tied into agreements with Union.

All the more wonder, then, that the company should have so rapidly surrendered its carefully plotted and protected shipping empire to Lord Inchcape's P & O. McLean attributes this primarily to the desire of the Union Company to remain independent and stable at a time of mergers, takeovers and the emergence of giant international corporations in the shipping industry. The New Zealand Shipping Company had been absorbed by P & O the previous year, but was allowed to continue to operate independently. Whether Union was initially granted similar status is not made clear but McLean describes the company as 'a mere cog in the vast P & O machinery' (p. 188), and certainly it failed to pursue its intentions of expanding beyond the Pacific basin. McLean also relates the events of 1917 to the alleged loss of dynamic expansion after the accession of Holdsworth

to the chairmanship in 1906. This analysis, however, does not seem to tie in very closely with the author's own description of the continued expansion of the company in the immediate prewar years nor the fact that Mills and Allan Hughes are cited as the main actors in the discussions with P & O. Lord Inchcape may well have been the critical figure in this story, although his role is given little attention.

McLean sets out to write an 'enterprise history' which, borrowing from Arthur H. Cole, he defines as 'the critical examination of an individual company history or organisation, with particular reference to the contribution made by its management' (p. 9). Judged from this perspective the work succeeds reasonably well and certainly stands far above the many sycophantic in-house histories of New Zealand businesses which exist. It provides, without doubt, a thorough, critical and lucid account of a major New Zealand corporation, indicating the basis of its growth, the policies pursued by the management and something of the structure of the firm. It is, however, also a missed opportunity to say something more fundamental about the changing nature of ship ownership and the development of large scale business enterprises. Ship ownership is discussed more generally in the introduction, but the remarks are based upon outdated opinions. Maritime historians no longer accept that the coming of steam was critical in the emergence of professional shipping management or the replacement of the partnership with the public company: professional shipowning predated steam, while partnerships and small shipping firms remained important features of the industry in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

Such monolithic assumptions about shipping management inevitably infect McLean's brief comments upon the position of the company within the framework of the growth of the modern corporation. A variety of management theorists are quoted in the conclusion, none of whom really provide an accurate analysis of entrepreneurship in the pre-1914 shipping industry. Nor is it clear how the Union Company fits into the Chandlerian-style analysis: on the one hand, McLean writes of the company as an example of a modern multi-unit enterprise with tiered professional management, on the other we are told of the critical roles played by Mills, Holdsworth and Hughes. Ironically, the company passed into the hands of a huge British shipping firm, whose chairman was all-powerful to the extent of being able to produce fictitious company accounts. It would have been interesting to have read more about the internal structure of the company, in place of some of the detailed descriptions of trade policies, in order to appreciate more clearly the significance of New Zealand's largest company of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the development of the business enterprise.

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Along the Hills. A history of Heathcote Road Board and the Heathcote County Council 1864-1989. By James Watson. Heathcote County Council, Christchurch, 1989. 274pp. NZ price: \$19.95.

LARGELY, one suspects, on account of the rather limited range of responsibilities granted to them, local authorities have attracted comparatively little systematic, historical study. In fact many 'histories' of local authorities are little more than mere catalogues of events deemed to have been significant, inventories of major public works, and listings of local notables. James Watson's *Along the Hills* is a welcome and important exception, one which should help establish an appropriate standard for further similar studies of the institutions which have helped shape both society and landscape.

Several features distinguish Watson's account of the Heathcote Road Board and later