

particular, should make extensive use of this material as there is a richness of resources to be tapped. Most importantly, this taonga will provide fascinating reading for the many, many descendants of these matriarchs of Māoridom.

My thoughts are often drawn back to the women's stories, the richness of life they experienced despite their poverty and most of all the determination and aroha which united them. The power of the women's voices is keenly heard and provides an incentive for us, who follow in their footsteps. *Te Timatanga — Tatau Tatau* is a taonga to be treasured. How better said than in the words of Te Arikiniui: 'What a precious legacy for our children of tomorrow'.

Nā reira, e kui mā, nā koutou anō te taonga nei i tuhi mai, i tuku mai mā ā tātou mokopuna. E tangi ana, e mihi ana te ngakau ki a koutou ko ngā pou whakaara o te Rōpū Wāhine Māori Toko i te Ora. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

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*Women Together: A History of Women's Organizations in New Zealand: Ngā Rōpū Wāhine o te Motu.* Edited by Anne Else. Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs and Daphne Brasell Associates Press, Wellington, 1993. 569 pp., indices, list of authors, list of names. NZ price: \$59.95. ISBN 0-908896-29-8.

HISTORIANS OF NEW ZEALAND, like those elsewhere in the English speaking world, long adhered to a definition of 'politics' which excluded one of the central political phenomena of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: women's voluntary associations. Before 1893 New Zealand women, like those in the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and doubtless many other places were denied access to most of the formal political institutions of their societies. One response to this exclusion was the development of all-women associations which allowed their members to shape a public role for themselves. At least fifty such organizations existed in New Zealand before parliament enfranchised women in 1893, and hundreds more were created in the decades that followed. The process still continues. In New Zealand as in the US the development of women's history as a field of study led to the recognition of the significance of women's associations. The process of uncovering and analysing their dynamics is still under way.

In recognition of the centenary of woman suffrage, the Historical Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs asked Anne Else to prepare a comprehensive history of the subject. She rounded up more than a hundred collaborators, and together they have created this important source book.

The earliest lasting organization treated here was founded in 1853; the latest are three new associations organized in 1993. In a succinct introduction the editor lays out the ground to be covered. The body of the book is composed of thirteen segments beginning with a chapter on Maori women's organizations and ending with recently formed lesbian societies. In between are chapters on politics, religion, welfare, education, employment, health, service, rural groups, literary and artistic associations. Each chapter begins with an analytical essay, generally written by a professional historian, and followed by (usually brief) descriptions of a very wide variety of organizations. Each segment concludes with a valuable list of sources. Analytical indices and lists of names are useful; identification of the authors by more than their names would have been a welcome addition.

The work of so many hands can hardly be 'reviewed' in the usual way. The introductory essays are uniformly well done, and most of the brief entries are informative (sometimes in ways the author may not have intended). Beyond suggesting that it might have been logical to integrate Maori women's groups into each substantive section rather than segregating them in their own chapter I only have space to reflect on a few general points that are particularly visible to a scholar of US women's associations.

Despite the pronounced differences in the colonial experience of the two countries, and the considerable difference in timing (the first lasting women's groups in the US were organized in the 1790s while suffrage was delayed until 1920), fascinating similarities emerge from the material collected here. With the change of a few words and a few dates many segments of this book would serve as an accurate description of counterpart American societies.

For a scholar who comes to this book after years spent in an effort to write an analytical study of American women's associations many such parallels jump out of these essays. One striking point is the fact that organizations which fill a need at one time will lose members and face extinction as times change unless they find a mission more in keeping with the contemporary scene. Evidence for this generalization is found in a number of the groups covered in this book. One example will serve for many: the League of Mothers and Homemakers reached its peak membership in 1955, and has been downhill since. A number of other organizations speak of 'declining numbers and aging membership', and in some cases one can imagine that they will, in no very long time, adjourn *sine die*. Others have moved with the times, taken on new responsibilities and experienced significant renewal of energy and usefulness. Meantime new organizations are constantly being created as new needs emerge.

The parallel between American and New Zealand women with respect to religious organizations is especially striking. On the one hand in both countries the second wave of feminism has had a significant effect on many women's thinking about theology and about their own role in the church. On the other, in both countries New Right church women have moved to quell any feminist tendency they can discern. In the United States such women played a large part in defeating the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution.

In both countries one sees a tendency of women's organizations to stray beyond the bounds of their avowed purpose. Thus we find benevolent groups taking political action, temperance organizations offering aid to people in need, an organization founded to protest the use of the Dalkon Shield evolving into a general society to promote women's health, and almost every kind of group turning political when it has a goal requiring state action.

These examples barely scratch the surface of the material available for a comparative study. Such a study which included the UK and Australia as well would be especially valuable.

The virtue of this volume is that it provides in one place the starting point for scholars interested in a particular organization or group of organizations, as well as the beginning point for comparative studies. Had a book of this order existed in the US in 1980 my *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (University of Illinois Press, 1992) would have been out years earlier and would have been stronger. New Zealand is well supplied with highly capable historians of women — many of whom are represented in these pages — as well as scholars of gender and of politics. With *Women Together* as a starting point all three have exciting possibilities before them.

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