

response of outsiders, such as Hurst Seagar (a fascinating section).

In the last three chapters we get a masterful account of a little-known period, the 1920s-1940s. The decline of 'King Coal', the growing importance of the Waikato, the complex jostle within the mining towns between the competing ideological stances of the period, the impact of long-term competition from alternative fuels, and the Depression's impact are all handled with unobtrusive skill. Biographical vignettes, lucid discussions of such complicated issues as 'tribute' and contracting, and sensitive use of quotations from the miners and their leaders create a powerful sense of the men and the times. The rise and fall of Communist influence and the final shift to Labour prepare us for the triumph of coal miners' unionism in the 1940s and their success in achieving their major aims. At the same time, like the watersiders, they also suffered from the consequences of the lean years. The grim reality of life in the mining towns and work in the pits contrasts oddly with their public image as irresponsible wreckers and organized predators who lived off the fat of the land. Richardson fully explores the contrasts and prepares for the final and abrupt denouement. The United Mineworkers' Union split in 1951 and the union never recovered. Open-cast mining also spelt the death of the hewer.

This work provides a full and comprehensive study of an industry and the men who worked in it. The achievement is the more remarkable because for many periods and mines there are few sources. Richardson has combed the world in his quest. His book — well illustrated and enriched by maps and graphs — makes a signal contribution to the history of both the labour movement and New Zealand. He also achieves his most difficult task, placing the miners and the Coast in their historical context, avoiding the tendency to exaggerate or romanticize. In achieving that he has skilfully balanced between the requirements of scholarship and loyalty to his origins. In the process — and not for the first time — he has paid his dues.

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Her Work and His: Family, Kin and Community in New Zealand 1900-1930. By Claire Toynbee. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1995. 260 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-86473-284-8.

THIS BOOK is the result of an immense amount of painstaking research and hard work. It began as a doctoral thesis in sociology in the early 1980s, and it has taken twelve years to produce the final book. No doubt this was done while teaching and leading a private life, and for all of that it must be acclaimed.

Yet I find myself in deep disagreement with the way Claire Toynbee has undertaken this vast and important task. She is a sociologist and I am a social historian, and she has trampled upon my temporal patch. This is a sociology exercise set in historical time, which uses sociological explanatory schema for social phenomena which were experienced between 95 and 65 years ago. That experience has been retrieved by oral history carried out in the early 1980s, and analysed by the dubious capacities of the NUDIST social science analysis software. Understanding and explanation have come from the theoretical constructs of other authors in other places often about other times. She has read widely and intelligently in the secondary and theoretical literature, but she has used scarcely any other form of primary evidence or historical investigation other than that

orally recollected in tranquillity 50 or more years after the event. I am not condemning oral history; I employ it constantly myself, but we must *never* regard it as sufficient.

I am sure that Claire Toynbee is a most able sociologist, but her otherwise most useful and even trail-blazing book, is marred by historical mistakes, misunderstandings and over-simplifications which apparently still receive intellectual currency in some sociology departments. She pits her modernizing New Zealand families against a pre-industrial society created in the northern hemisphere and imported to Australasia, which is nothing other than mythical — and in doing so, makes a nonsense of her binary oppositions. She makes generalizations about the way people negotiated urban life, while neglecting the urban context's own history. She makes all sorts of assumptions about what was happening and why it was happening which are just not right.

For instance, in her concluding theoretical discussions on power and control, a host of historical qualifications, nuances and factual contradictions occur at once to the historian. She has noticed in the course of her study that not all men and women fit gender stereotypes and that the power relationships in middle-class marriages can be quite different from those in working-class marriages, but she has not confronted those discoveries for what they really signify. This is because she sees class of such secondary importance to gender. The patriarchal family structure of the pre-industrial agricultural world just does not fit the facts as we now know them: a life of dreadful physical toil, of cold and darkness in winter, of hunger and dirt, of alcoholic stupor, of exhaustion beyond our imagining, of pain and suffering for both men and women, of relentless conception, miscarriage and parturition until disease, abstinence or malnutrition intervened as 'Nature's' own birth control. Even into the early twentieth century agricultural labourers and small farmers literally worked until it killed them. Likewise, looking back with our post-industrial, post-modern eyes, we forget that to 'be one's own housekeeper' was a point of pride for most poor women and the opportunity for domestic power. And among the urban and rural poor, the entire family, both immediate and extended, depended in the end on the competence, skill and moral strength of its matriarchs. A family could survive despite a feckless, selfish and even brutish father. But if the mother took to the bottle or fell sick or died, then, as William Lovett the chartist said, the children all too often went 'to the rags both in clothing and morals'.

If she had been more of an historian, and had attended to her informants more acutely, especially when they spoke of things which did not fit her theoretical positions, Claire Toynbee would have written a great book. Private family life is surely one of the most important studies for New Zealanders and Australians. We are both small, uneasily multi-cultural societies clinging to the southernmost rim of the inhabited world, communities which have been built from bloody conquest and immigration. The effect of immigration on family sentiment and culture is fascinating, particularly when you place it within the global context of the millions of people on the move around the world during the second half of the nineteenth century. New Zealand and Australian families are surprisingly fractured, and the family history epidemic has struck us largely because so few families talked of the past, and so many young men and women who emigrated alone, cut off their home kin for life. Keeping in touch meant writing, and writing needed literacy and confidence. (To glimpse some of the richness of family, gender, hope, and failure in an immigrant society, look instead to David Fitzpatrick's *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia*, recently published by Cornell and Melbourne University Presses.) But as the immigrants built new families, often with partners of different faiths and traditions, and participated in new communities both rural and urban, they revealed themselves to be greater than the sum of the gendered and economic and class and ethnic parts which were meant to make them.

Claire Toynbee has written an important book which everyone interested in Australia-

sian society and private life should read and I do regret feeling as I do. No doubt Dr Toynbee would find my books just as unsatisfactory in their own way.

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Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives. Edited by Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1994. xv, 368 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-86940-107-7.

IN THE CONCLUDING ESSAY of this collection, Carol Pateman points out that 'votes for women is all too often seen as a rather boring and insignificant matter. On the contrary, it is a fascinating and complex subject . . . that can teach us a great deal about political development and the structure of institutions.' It is a fitting conclusion to a fine collection of articles, reinvigorating and reassessing the campaigns and achievements of women's suffrage in various countries and different periods of time.

Inspired by the importance of the centenary of New Zealand women's victory in gaining the vote, a number of feminist historians gathered for a three-day conference at Victoria University of Wellington in August 1993 to evaluate the historical significance of women's suffrage. This resulting collection contains only 16 of the 54 papers presented but is a strong indicator of the strength and depth of scholarship in the area and the preoccupations of those attending the conference.

Internationalism is the key theme both as a judgement made of turn-of-the-century suffrage campaigns and as a position today from which to assess the significance of those campaigns. Readers are offered comparative histories as a means of re-evaluating significance, timing, representations; to explore the contexts of colonial pasts and post-colonial consequences; to reclaim politics from its dichotomized separation into men's space; and to invite further studies into issues of women's citizenship status.

Despite an unexplained absence of Maori women, it is an impressive collection, thought-provoking, challenging, informative and very interesting to read. Ostensibly organized geographically and thematically into five main parts it is at the same time broadly chronological. Appropriately, given the impetus for the conference, it thereby corrects an Anglo-American bias in the traditional timeline historians have used to chart women's suffrage.

On New Zealand Raewyn Dalziel explores how New Zealand women's suffrage was represented overseas and Patricia Grimshaw revisits her earlier definitive work to examine the paradox of women fighting as women for rights which had been defined as those of men. Placing New Zealand in the context of other American and Australian states where women also got the vote comparatively early, Grimshaw reasserts the primacy of the WCTU in the suffrage campaign and alerts us to the value not only of comparative studies but also to a gendered as well as a woman-centred approach to understanding political reform. The 'close interconnectedness of suffragists and male politicians, the nature of the relationship of women to men assessed widely in these societies is crucial', she writes; why some women campaigned actively for suffrage is an important question but we need also to ask why did enough male politicians decide to support it and why did other non-activist women and men outside parliament offer support and encouragement to the political actors.

Susan Magarey also looks at paradox: in the issue of women suffragists becoming