

Orbell is simply lazy when she claims that Tahu Potiki is the younger brother of Porourangi. What other view could Orbell have when she considers only one source? It is true that Ngāi Porou see Tahu Potiki as the younger brother. The writer does not question that particular whakapapa. However there are other East Coast whakapapa that differ from the 'standard' Ngāi Tahu and Ngāi Porou versions. The view of these tribes are not considered. Why not?

At times Orbell takes a global view of traditions and at other times, for no consistent reason, selectively takes the view of a single tribe. This lack of a consistent method applies throughout the book and I suspect it will be another decade before historians have established a consistent method for examining oral traditions.

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*'By His Own Merits': Sir John Hall — Pioneer, Pastoralist & Premier.* By Jean Garner. Dryden Press, Christchurch, 1995. 362pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-473-03543-X.

JOHN HALL was born in Hull in 1824 and exemplified throughout his long life many of the archetypal Yorkshire virtues and shortcomings: he was hard-working, often dour, unwilling to reveal deeper feelings yet driven by strong emotions and, above all, the determination to succeed. This he certainly did. For 40 years he was at or near the centre of New Zealand politics and Canterbury's public affairs, having built his distinguished public career on soundly organized business interests and a thriving pastoral estate. He survived the economic storms which sent so many of his contemporaries into bankruptcy, and he died in 1907 one of the most successful of all pioneer pastoralists, leaving an estate and a family which still holds a secure place in Canterbury life.

A biography of Hall has been long overdue, as an understanding of Hall is essential to understand two of the most important events of the 1880s and 1890s — Parihaka and the gaining of votes for women. He was the Prime Minister in 1882 who had to deal with Te Whiti's formidable resistance to the Taranaki surveys. It was not Hall's fault that his own and Rolleston's moderation was defeated by those uncompromisingly hard men, Bryce and Atkinson, and Garner is good on this, bringing a much-needed balance back into the continuing debate on Parihaka. She is also excellent on Hall's place in the campaigns for women's franchise. Her soundly researched and common-sense account must stand as a definitive summary of that triumphant story.

Other aspects of this biography, however, are less happy and the reasons are perhaps to be found in the genesis of the book in a doctoral thesis and its publication as, in part, a family celebration of an honoured ancestor. Academic theory often acts to the detriment of such a complex practical exercise as a biography; understandable family pride or misplaced defensive attitudes invariably act as distorting prisms for the historian. In this case the double impact is unfortunate because this book is skilfully and conscientiously researched and honestly written — powerful virtues with a subject for whom such a daunting mass of biographical material exists. John and Rose Hall kept every ledger, every bill, and every letter except some of their most intimate. They were indefatigable gleaners. Canterbury University has 99 bound volumes of speeches, reported debates, general articles, and contemporary obituaries — except, significantly, of Edward Stafford whom Hall always disliked, in spite of having formed with him between 1866 and 1869

the strongest powerhouse of political administration in our nineteenth century. The Hall papers at both the Turnbull and Canterbury Museum libraries have been mined extensively, and the Hall family itself possesses at least an equivalent mass of archival material. However, by adopting a topical rather than the far more difficult but more customary chronological approach to unravelling a life, Garner has sacrificed any chance to recreate the flow and highlight the interaction of private with public life that is so crucial a function of biography and must be central to explaining Hall's political career.

In Canterbury provincial politics he was a dominating force in several of the most effective executives which existed in any province. In the House of Representatives and Legislative Council he was always one of the readiest and best prepared (if not the most interesting) of speakers; a man others consulted in the cigar-smoke laden air of Bellamy's where factions negotiated and from which the coalition ministries of the pre-1890 period emerged. Garner has too little to say about this. She also, curiously, downplays Hall's very significant opposition role in the rump session of 1858. Nor does she enlighten us about Hall's uneasy relations with FitzGerald in the early Canterbury provincial councils. To FitzGerald, Hall was 'a mere clerk without policy, captious and egotistical, but he is the best man next to Tancred'. For Fanny FitzGerald, a very young woman then of quicksilver wit and strong opinions, Hall was 'the greatest boor and nuisance alive'. To the aristocratic FitzGerald Hall always remained the worthy but dull post office official of his Yorkshire and London youth. Unfortunately that impression is too often reinforced by this book.

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*The Women's Parliament: The National Council of the Women of New Zealand 1896-1920.* By Roberta Nicholls. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1996, 144 pp. NZ price: \$29.95. ISBN 0-86473-299-6.

NEW ZEALAND HISTORIANS sometimes accuse each other of a 'been there, done that' attitude to history-writing, traversing topics once only, and generating a thin literature on any given subject. This is certainly not the case with the historiography of women's suffrage, first-wave feminism and feminist organizations such as the National Council of Women (NCW). We have a healthy literature on these topics, stretching back to the beginnings of modern women's history in the 1970s. Roberta Nicholls' *The Women's Parliament: The National Council of the Women of New Zealand 1896-1920* is a further addition to this field.

Published to coincide with the NCW's centenary in 1996, *The Women's Parliament* traces the inception, decline and revival of the Council, shedding light on aspects of first-wave feminism in the process. Nicholls eschews a detailed recounting of the story of how the vote was won, focusing instead on the activities and aims of the Council in its first decade, 1896-1906, and in its revived form, 1918-20. Into this period of recess — 'The Interregnum' — she inserts a fascinating account of New Zealand suffragist Anna Stout's involvement with the militant wing of the English suffrage movement. Stout had an ambiguous relationship with the NCW, and her role in the revived Council after 1919 was eased because 'the focus on political subjects . . . had gone' (p.108); the relevance, then, both to the NCW and to this book of Stout's participation in a highly political organization