

in our history since the 1840s. According to the monetarist view, New Zealand people exist for the economy, rather than the economy for the people of New Zealand. Without explicitly stating it, the authors in this book are advocating the bringing together of humanity and economy. In recent years, Dame Miraka Szazsy proposed such an agenda when speaking to Maori graduands at Victoria University of Wellington. Concerned about the economic tendencies among the new Maori leaders, she argued for a new Maori humanism. Her plea also applies to the country as a whole, particularly to our political and business leaders. A renewed, revitalized New Zealand humanism, drawing on the creative diversity of cultures and peoples now living here, could be a basis for humanizing our current dehumanized economy.

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*Lands for the People? The Highland Clearances and the Colonisation of New Zealand: A Biography of John McKenzie.* By Tom Brooking. University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 1996. 363 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-877133-21-3.

JOCK MCKENZIE (1838-1901), the big Highlander who became Liberal Minister of Lands, is a part of New Zealand's folk myths, partly as a result of confusion with an earlier James McKenzie who rustled some sheep and found land in the upper Waitaki, also perhaps because of a gaggle of other politicians called M(a)cKenzie, of somewhat lesser significance. It was Jock who broke up (or 'burst' up as they said in the 1890s) the great estates — a land, rather than a sheep, stealer. And, if he only became acting Prime Minister while Seddon was in Britain, his near decade as Ministers of Lands and Agriculture made him a political force second only to Seddon.

Thus, 25 years ago, McKenzie seemed an ideal thesis topic for Tom Brooking. At last the work has come to the fruition of a full book, although the focus has moved. Certainly the book is a biography, especially of McKenzie's early life in the Highlands, where his family's status was somewhat higher than the myth's impression of a landless crofter. But for most of the book the private man gets submerged below the minister, although there are delightful glimpses of his family life in the penultimate chapters. Without being 'unwise' he was certainly the laird towards his children.

The first subtitle is the twist in the story. Certainly McKenzie, scarred by the Scottish Highland clearances, came to New Zealand and broke up the large South Island estates, giving lands to the people. But the North Island highlands were still possessed by Maori, and in a sense the Minister of Lands replicated the Scottish clearances there, a further 2.2 million acres being alienated from their native owners. The size of the loss is nicely illustrated by two *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* maps of Maori land holdings in 1892 and 1908, although regrettably they are reproduced on two non-facing pages, which makes visual comparison difficult.

The story of bursting up the land is central to the book, with over half the text devoted to it, and some useful detail in the appendices. This is not simply a report of the events, for a whole chapter is devoted to 'the land debate'. Land policy was at the heart of the nineteenth century's populist economics. Brooking unravels much of that debate, along lines similar to his recent *New Zealand Journal of History* article,<sup>1</sup> which in some ways is more satisfactory because it integrates the approach towards settler estates with those

towards Maori land. The book deals with Maori land in a separate chapter. Brooking argues that the alienation was not a matter of racism, at least on McKenzie's part, but in the words of the article's title it was a philosophy of 'use it or lose it', a notion of property rights based upon the Lockean notion of use. McKenzie was a complex mixture of economic radical and social conservative, but he was not markedly racist or sexist for his day.

McKenzie found a parliamentary coalition with a common policy, lease-in-perpetuity, and was in power long enough to implement it. However, the solution was not policy-stable, as subsequent events including the Reform government's freeholding policies demonstrate. Regrettably, Brooking does not pursue land policy after McKenzie's death. Without a 'Reform Party' perspective, despite Brooking's new insights, the field of the land policy remains a fertile one for scholars.

Perhaps Brooking does not draw enough from the consequences of this cobbling together of a coalition, especially when parliamentary discipline was much less strict. One consequence, surely, was that McKenzie could be little involved in matters outside his portfolio, for any taking of sides could alienate support. He was especially keen on loyalty to the party, in turn showing great loyalty to Seddon. Not that McKenzie was a threat to King Dick. His period as acting Prime Minister suggests limited premiership skills, exceptional minister that he was.

A nice touch is Brooking's acerbic observations about the sassenach misunderstandings of various events surrounding McKenzie. As we become more ethnically sensitive, the distinctions among the Brits need to be added. McKenzie's native language was Gaelic, he taught himself to read and write English when he was in his twenties, and in later life he seems to have been a good correspondent, although most of his correspondence seems to have been lost.

This is a book so rich in material that each reader will find much of specific interest. Allow this reviewer to discuss one of his concerns. McKenzie's policies resulted in the successful settlement of many Pakeha on the land. Apparently similar schemes before and after were less so. Why did those policies succeed?

Brooking argues that McKenzie understood small scale farming from his own experience, and so selected people with appropriate skills, putting them on potentially viable holdings. Admittedly, such obvious prescriptions were not always followed by others. Nevertheless, I would argue the economic context was unusually favourable. It had two key components. First, refrigeration changed dramatically the potential uses of land, increasing the economic viability of intensive mixed and dairy family farming, relative to extensive large estate farming for the wool clip. Arguably, the large estates would have been broken up anyway and, as Jim Gardiner's account of the Cheviot sales shows, the government's land policies were a vehicle for doing this, rather than the engine which drove the bursting.<sup>2</sup> Second, from the 1880s there was a steady rise in farm product prices relative to other prices.<sup>3</sup> Brooking reports the prosperity from the upturn in farm product prices from 1896, but falling general prices, which occurred earlier, also improved real farm finances. The point is that the changes in the economic environment favoured McKenzie's policies, although he deserves commendation for his successful conception and administration of them.

From this perspective of political economy other features of the period fall into place. McKenzie was only the second Minister of Agriculture and he founded the Department of Agriculture in 1892. This represents a shift in primary industry policy from acquiring land, land development, and extensive farming, which was the remit of the Lands Department, to intensive farming based on systematically improving methods, which was the concern of the Agriculture Department. Reeves wrote that McKenzie's stewardship of the agricultural portfolio should 'alone be enough to keep his name in remembrance'.

Perhaps — myths aside — he should be best remembered as the first great Minister of Agriculture rather than the last great Minister of Lands. And, in parallel with the declining significance of the Lands Department, the populist land policy debate also declined, reflecting the reduced significance of land in the economy.

As I argued in my 1994 Hocken lecture, we should not ignore the dramatic shift in the political economy when we judge the Liberal period.<sup>4</sup> Brooking is better than most in this respect, and historians have every right to complain that economic historians have not provided the framework in which the task can be done. Such a framework may lead to a major re-evaluation of the period. Just consider the ease of governing in the 1890s, when fiscal revenue was buoyant, compared to the misery of the 1880s, when the main fiscal activity was cutting government spending.

Even without a new political economy, one major biographical work remains to be done for the Liberal period: a successor to R.M. Burdon's *King Dick*, to go with the biographies of Ballance, Reeves, Tregear, Ward, and now Jock McKenzie. Certainly Brooking has done Jock proud with this respectful, affectionate, but insightful biography, an attitude nicely illustrated by the picture of the author on the back cover in a pose similar to the subject on the front.

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1 T. Brooking, 'Use it or Lose it. Unravelling the Land Debate in Late Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, XXX, 2 (1996), pp.163-181.

2 W.J. Gardner, *A Pastoral Kingdom Divided: Cheviot, 1889-1994*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1992.

3 B.H. Easton and S.F. Connor, 'The Terms of Trade: Past and Future', *Quarterly Predictions* (March 1980), pp.33-37. The data is reported in B.H. Easton and N.J. Wilson, *An Investigation of the Data Base of New Zealand's Terms of Trade*, NZIER Working Paper 84/10 (1984).

4 B.H. Easton, *Towards a Political Economy of New Zealand*, (1994 Hocken Lecture), Hocken Library, Dunedin, 1996; also *In Stormy Seas*, University of Otago Press (forthcoming).

*The Story of Suzanne Aubert*. By Jessie Munro. Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, Auckland, 1996. 464 pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN 1-86940-155-7.

*THE STORY OF SUZANNE AUBERT* fully deserves all the accolades bestowed on it. In this long, detailed study an immense scholarly apparatus is leavened by the grace and imagination with which the book is written. Munro has had the gift of a long and extremely rich life about which to write, but she displays a combination of skills which few other New Zealand historians could match in telling this particular story. Munro's fluency in other languages has enabled her to access vital archival material in France and Rome, and to place Aubert far more completely within national and denominational frameworks than any previous study. The book also has an almost poetic quality in its descriptions of places and evocation of atmosphere, from the sound of the angelus bell over the hills of Hiruharama to the smells of burnt bush, bitter medicine extract (and toddler ammonia) on the habits of Aubert's Jerusalem sisters. It is a beautifully crafted work.

Because Aubert's life was so varied, the book will appeal to specialists in many areas of New Zealand history, as well as to a general readership. Munro cuts a generous swathe