

support. The rapid increase in the number of beneficiaries caused widespread alarm — the cost of the Domestic Purposes Benefit doubled between 1980 and 1984. Unemployment, which had been near zero at the beginning of the decade, reached 100,000 at its end. The economy was in long-term decline, and the country had become a diverse society rather than a single community. Traditional lifetime marriage and the nuclear family, on which so much of past policy had been based, had collapsed. The aged were the only winners: half of social security expenditure went to this 15% of the population.

In 1984, Labour turned from the interventionist state and sheltered economy, and introduced 'a range of strategies to lighten what came to be called the welfare "burden"'. Universalist policies were now considered extravagant, and there was further targeting, a process extended by National. Social security was seen as unsustainable, and the economic and welfare arrangements of the past were regarded as failures. In 1990, National inherited a stagnant economy and growing expenditure. It saw the welfare state, with its 'culture of dependence', as the cause of the problems, and invoked a return to an idealized vision of New Zealand before the welfare state through a renewal of the work ethic. Contrary to its election promises, National tackled superannuation. It claimed that old age income 'is properly the responsibility of individuals and families, not the state'. There was a return to the earlier aim of the relief of poverty rather than social citizenship. McClure considers that the disappearance of the family benefit after 50 years marked the end of the social security ethos. However, 'both Labour and National governments found it difficult to reverse the spending on social security, difficult to edge the middle class "with their sharp elbows" out of social security entitlement, and difficult to oppose the electoral power of the old and reverse their dominance of the social security system'. The gap between rich and poor continues to widen, and future directions are uncertain.

McClure concludes that 'while social security did not alter the wide disparity in people's chances in life, it provided protection against the worst that could happen, and did so with more dignity, regularity and accountability than private charity could ever offer'. Her study gives a balanced summary of the past century of New Zealand social policy. Unlike previous authors, she examines the effects on women and the Maori segment of the population in some detail. The social and economic context, though somewhat restricted, is adequate to a book of this length. *A Civilised Community* is not a eulogy for the welfare state, but its underlying tone reveals the author's concern with meeting need and ensuring a decent life for all.

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Family Matters: Child Welfare in Twentieth-Century New Zealand. By Bronwyn Dalley. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1998. 447 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-86940-190-5.

FAMILY MATTERS is the latest in a series of official histories from the Historical Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs, and one of a crop of welfare histories to be published in 1998, the centenary of the Old Age Pensions Act in New Zealand. But as Bronwyn Dalley shows, there is more to 'welfare' than benefits and pensions. A major theme of this book is that 'child welfare' in the welfare state is overlooked in New Zealand history, and government initiatives in child welfare predated most state welfare schemes. Dalley's is a commissioned history, focusing on the work of the old Child Welfare Branch/Division in the areas of juvenile delinquency and offending,

residential care, ex-nuptial babies (adoption, foster care, supervision and prevention), child neglect and abuse. The book provides a narrative of the development of this institutional strand of public social work services for children-at-risk from the reform of the Industrial Schools Section of the Department of Education in 1902 to the establishment of the Child Welfare Branch in 1925 (Division in 1948), which became absorbed by the new Department of Social Welfare in 1972, until the formation of the Children and Young Persons Service in 1992 (now the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Service).

Dalley has structured her work around four periods. Part 1 covers the emergence of the child welfare system (1902–1925); Part 2, the preventive work of the Branch until 1948; Part 3 the subsequent focus on ‘social breakdown’; while Part 4 highlights the family-centred approach since 1972, with its renewed emphasis on family responsibility. The book documents how official perceptions of child-welfare problems have changed in response to social changes, such as Maori urbanization, and with shifts in attitudes to children and young people. It shows, however, that the dominant construction persisted of at-risk children as victims or threats, and sometimes both simultaneously. On one hand, the dual image of the child as a vulnerable innocent and yet a danger to national health influenced decisions about the admittance of children, especially girls, to institutional care. On the other, it underpinned more than one policy ‘innovation’ to separate children in need of care and protection from young offenders. As Dalley points out, problems of child abuse, neglect and offending continue obstinately, if at times some issues have received more exposure than others.

One shift revealed to be of key importance is withdrawal from the idea of the state as guardian, or, more precisely, father. This paternalistic notion led to Australia’s ‘stolen generations’. While New Zealand has no equivalent tragedy, Dalley does document the challenge from Maori from the late 1970s and the questioning about why children’s homes were full of brown faces. This led to the Maatua Whangai programme in 1983, which later evolved into an iwi-based preventive scheme as the Treaty of Waitangi re-entered official consciousness.

But the enduring impression conveyed by *Family Matters* is of persistent resort to the ideal of self-reliance by families. As the title of the book recognizes, family responsibility is not just *an* but is in fact *the* enduring theme. For this reason, readers would be advised to read this book in conjunction with David Thomson’s *A World Without Welfare* (1998), which argues convincingly that family responsibility marks out the colonial welfare experiment and encapsulates how New Zealand sought to be different from Britain. Despite the swings in approach from residential care to family-based care as a first option across the twentieth century, *Family Matters* demonstrates that the responsibility of families for ‘problem’ children is a continuity in politics which effectively eclipses contours of change. If we take such a longer view, it becomes questionable whether the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 was as innovative as claimed in prompting a ‘fundamental rethinking’ which placed families at the centre of decision-making. As Dalley observes, this Act formally recognized the mixed economy of welfare — family, state and voluntary sector — which had operated since the nineteenth century. The evidence presented in this book underscores that the ingrained principles of self-reliance and family assistance warrant further research.

To take one example, of ex-nuptial births: Dalley’s evidence shows that New Zealand departed from the United Kingdom in the extent and way it used the boarding-out system. In New Zealand, the Branch would sometimes ‘board out’ an illegitimate child to its birth mother. She then received the same payment as other women who took in boarded-out children. This was long before the Domestic Purposes Benefit. Boarding out saved lives, it was cheap and thought ‘the mark of a civilised

community' (p.45), or as J.G. Coates believed, 'the surest safeguard against future immorality' (pp.164-5). Not surprisingly, the majority of ex-nuptial babies stayed with their kin (often their mothers), even at the height of faith in an adoption system which at the beginning of the 1970s preserved the anonymity of mother and child.

Such evidence points to the value of this book. While there is more to be done in interpreting 'child welfare' more broadly to cover the health of the 'normal' child as well as social work services for the 'at-risk' child, in addition to income-support schemes, Bronwyn Dalley has fulfilled a difficult commission and at the same time thrown new light on how New Zealand treated its young.

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She Dared to Speak: Connie Birchfield's Story. By Maureen Birchfield. University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 1998. 215 pp. NZ price: \$29.95. ISBN 1-877133-53-1.

Never a White Flag: The Memoirs of Jock Barnes, Waterfront Leader. Edited by Tom Bramble. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1998. 256 pp. NZ price: \$29.95. ISBN 0-86473-344-5.

IN RECENT YEARS there has been considerable reflection and re-evaluation within the academic sub-discipline of labour history. Some writers have questioned the future of labour history and predicted the death of the genre. While the jury may still be out on the long-term future of labour history the publication of *She Dared to Speak* and *Never a White Flag*, in close proximity, seems to buck the trend. They both make a welcome addition to the literature on labour history. That they are biographical studies is even more pleasing. *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* has recently made a valuable contribution by telling the life stories of many important — and one must concede often relatively minor — labour movement figures, yet biographical studies remain a weakness in New Zealand labour history. While there are a handful of exceptions, most significant labour figures await in-depth study, and fewer still have attempted to tell their own story.

These two books, and their subjects, share a number of characteristics. Most obviously the books explore the lives of labour movement figures at the radical end of the spectrum. Connie Birchfield was one of the most important figures in the Communist Party of New Zealand from the mid-1930s until 1957 when she was expelled from the party, a victim of the bitter internal debate over the Soviet invasion of Hungary. Jock Barnes needs no introduction: he was the personification of the militant labour movement in the immediate post-war era.

The two subjects are also similar in that they were expressive and passionate about their chosen cause. This manifested itself in various ways, most obviously in colourful and highly successful soap-box oratory. One could also suggest that Birchfield and Barnes shared a naive reading of the political landscape at crucial moments, exhibiting a tendency to stare defeat in the eye when tactical withdrawal may have been more advisable. I think here of Barnes's uncompromising no-surrender perspective during the 1951 lock-out, a position still very much reflected in this volume. Time and distance have done nothing to shatter his self-confidence. Could it be he is even more convinced of the correctness of his position? On the night that Labour swept to victory in 1935 Connie Birchfield similarly refused to concede an inch and reasserted her belief that the Labour party had nothing to offer the New Zealand working class, despite her campaign on this platform securing a mere 70 votes compared to Bob