

faulty science did not necessarily make for unusable technology. The development of the belief amongst local scientists that the 'shower of fertility' from the rear end of sheep and cows would increase the productivity of New Zealand's pastoral farms, and the swing away from that understanding, are both described sympathetically, without any condescension towards those who developed the now scientifically unfashionable view. Galbreath takes a similar approach to the long resistance of many local geologists to theories of continental drift and plate tectonics.

A strength of this book is the way it relates science and technology to social and economic contexts. One important aspect of this relationship is the impact of war and preparations for war on scientific and technological developments. This is demonstrated particularly in the case of the fields of radar and nuclear physics. DSIR scientists played a significant role in both these areas in the 1930s and 1940s. However, the link between science and war also crops up in surprising places. For instance, we learn how the investigation of the geological structure of New Zealand (and other parts of the world) was advanced by the availability of vast quantities of war-surplus explosives for seismic surveys. The Royal New Zealand Navy obliged the geophysicists of the DSIR by engineering the equivalent of an earthquake of 2.0 on the Richter scale off Somes Island. The oceanographers and their geologist colleagues similarly benefited from the wartime development of sonar. The importance of the imperial link with Britain and the other dominions in the development of New Zealand science is brought out well, although Galbreath announces a shift to a focus on the United States rather earlier than can be justified by his own account as to where New Zealand scientists subsequently came from and went. In science, as in our export trade, immigration policy, military procurement and even the popular choice of television programmes, New Zealand's strongest focus remained on the wider British world for a long time.

This work is written in a clear and accessible style. Perhaps as befits a trained scientist, the emphasis is on accuracy and clarity rather than literary flights of fancy, although there are occasional flashes, such as 'The reformers came to bury DSIR, not to praise it' (p.254). It has been well edited and contains few of the blemishes that inevitably slip through in any major work. One exception is that header-harvesters were working in Canterbury from 1927, not 1930 (p.42). Where there is so little to complain about, the history of science in New Zealand is clearly in capable hands.

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Unofficial Channels: Letters between Alister McIntosh and Foss Shanahan, George Laking and Frank Corner 1946–1966. Edited by Ian McGibbon. Victoria University Press in association with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1999. 360 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-86473-365-8.

THIS IS an important addition to the literature on New Zealand's foreign policy. It is a companion volume to *Undiplomatic Dialogue* (1993), which published letters between McIntosh and Carl Berendsen 1943–1952. If Berendsen was the father of New Zealand diplomacy as Imperial Affairs Officer in the Prime Minister's Department from 1926 and head of the department 1935–1943, McIntosh was the midwife of the diplomatic service. Berendsen, as High Commissioner in Canberra 1943–1948, and Minister (later

Ambassador) in Washington 1948–1952, was technically McIntosh's subordinate, but his seniority in the public service ensured that their correspondence was unusually equal and frank.

Unofficial Channels is a selection of letters with the 'next rung' of officials. Foss Shanahan was McIntosh's assistant (later deputy) in External Affairs. After overseas posts in Southeast Asia and Ottawa (where he doubled as Permanent Representative at the UN), he returned to Wellington as Deputy-Secretary in 1961 before succumbing to a tumour in 1964. George Laking was Shanahan's deputy in the Prime Minister's Department. He was Counsellor in the Washington Embassy 1949–1956, succeeded Shanahan as Deputy-Secretary in Wellington, was Acting High Commissioner in London 1958–1960 (also Ambassador to the EEC), and Ambassador in Washington 1960–1966, before succeeding McIntosh as Secretary of External Affairs. Frank Corner was the first young graduate appointed to give diplomatic advice in 1943. He was First Secretary in Washington 1948–1951, External Affairs Officer in London 1952–1958, and Permanent Representative at the UN in 1962 (including a seat on the Security Council), before succeeding Laking as Ambassador in Washington 1967–1973. He was Secretary of External Affairs 1973–1980 and Head of the Prime Minister's Department until the split in 1975 under Muldoon. McIntosh, Laking and Corner gave continuity at the head of External Affairs (Foreign Affairs from 1969) for nearly 40 years.

Unofficial Channels, published by the Auckland University Press, was a sell-out and excited favourable comment around the world. In the funny ways that publishers have, AUP turned down the companion volume because someone thought it 'didn't work, as well', and so McGibbon has the satisfaction of his alma mater taking it up in its centennial year. It is difficult to understand the basis of the negative judgement. McIntosh's balanced, liberal, sceptical approach provides the central element of both books. If the excitements of the Second World War and Peter Fraser's leadership sustain the first book, the developing Cold War and crises of decolonization are of equivalent significance in the second. It is true that Shanahan and Laking have none of the readable, testy frankness of Berendsen, but this is more than compensated for by the lucid and thoughtful letters of Frank Corner. Along with despairing and devastatingly frank asides about personalities, he consistently focused on one grand strategic theme — namely the changing balance of New Zealand's relations with Britain and the United States to ensure New Zealand's security.

Ten of Corner's letters provide the historiographical core of the book. On 27 May 1946 his account of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings amounted to a rueful comment on Britain's straitened circumstances. On 31 May 1946 he saw Evatt trying to incorporate New Zealand in an Australian lead in the Pacific. On 1 July 1951, puzzlement about the commitment to help the British in the Middle East in a Third World War and about the growing Anzus relationship, led him to suggest that New Zealand was 'getting into a curious colonial status'. Returning to the same theme on 20 February 1953 while discussing Anzus and Anzam, he wondered if the aim was 'a kind of Dominion status with the United States'. By 13 July 1953 he was worrying whether New Zealand could make any military impact. The Middle East commitment 'seems to put us in the most "colonial" position'; Southeast Asia was a 'much more logical centre of New Zealand's interests'. By 28 December 1954 he realized that over the past few years New Zealand had 'moved a very great distance away from the U.K. and towards the U.S.' On 5 July 1955 he revealed how the British had fobbed-off the unsuitable cruiser *Royalist* on Sid Holland. British decline was also the theme of a letter of 5 February 1957, which recognized that 'only the U.S. straddles the whole world militarily'. On 4 February 1958 he sought a realistic role for the armed forces in a situation where global war was becoming unlikely. On 6 February 1963 he suggested a way New Zealand could make a splash on the world stage: 'How about being really

tough with the French on this nuclear test in our part of the world . . . and — to be really dramatic — sending up a couple of frigates . . .’ McIntosh’s letters are always more cautious than those of ‘that fathead Frank’. McIntosh disliked Middle East ‘irrelevancies’, but saw the commitment as a ‘useful alibi’. The Suez crisis of 1956, when Sid Holland took the old ‘Where she goes, we go’ stance, was regarded by McIntosh as ‘tragic’. On Vietnam, however, he was ruefully clear: ‘We can’t afford to be left too far behind Australia and we can’t afford not to support the Americans — though I have the gravest doubts about their coming out of this with any degree of success’. Sceptical though he was, his advice was that the essential objective was to keep the United States committed to New Zealand’s defence: ‘Any New Zealand Government must obviously be prepared to pay a high price to avoid such a disaster’.

This volume has one major advantage over *Undiplomatic Dialogue* in that the file references in the McIntosh papers are included. However, with four correspondents and the fact that McIntosh’s letters are carbon copies (not all of which were initialled), it is not evident who was writing to whom. Each letter could have had a heading like ‘Corner to McIntosh’. AUP’s earlier volume was printed in New Zealand, sturdily bound, with pleasant soft paper. VUP printed in Singapore, on a heavier paper, poorly bound, and this reviewer’s copy fell apart. VUP also has a quirk of style by which a mixture of Roman and Arabic numerals appears in dates, although, on the cover, they use the normal Arabic system.

These letters, Tom Larkin’s preface, Ian McGibbon’s introduction, and 121 short biographies all contribute to provide a fascinating insight into an era when New Zealand was very prosperous, yet governments were so meanly penny-pinching about representation abroad that Corner contemplated resignation in 1954.

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Queen Sālote of Tonga: The Story of an Era 1900–1965. By Elizabeth Wood-Ellem. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1999. 376 pp. NZ price: \$69.96. ISBN 1-86940-205-7.

THE BIOGRAPHICAL GENRE often sacrifices good historical context in its effort to provide an account of an unusually renowned individual’s life. In concentrating on ‘the life’, authors ignore the incidents and circumstances of history and society, except as they relate to the subject. This is not the case with *Queen Sālote of Tonga*, where Elizabeth Wood-Ellem makes a considerable effort to sketch the political and social history of the times. In fact, *Queen Sālote of Tonga* can be said to be a history of the Tongan Islands 1900–1965.

Wood-Ellem is uniquely qualified to offer us such a history. Her association with Tonga began early. She was born there, the daughter of missionary Reverend Dr Harold Wood and Dr Olive Wood, a medical missionary. Her father was well loved and respected in Tonga: he gave the oration at the Queen’s funeral. Although keeping up a personal connection with Tonga, Wood-Ellem, still known as Pesi Wood in the Islands, was a relative latecomer to academia. Not surprisingly, considering her genealogical connections, she chose the kingdom as her area of research for her PhD in history at the University of Melbourne, which she began in the 1970s. *Queen Sālote of Tonga* is largely based on her PhD thesis.

Queen Sālote of Tonga proceeds chronologically, beginning with the birth of the