

Scholars and Gentlemen Both: G.M. Thomson and Allan Thomson in New Zealand Science and Education. By Ross Galbreath. Royal Society of New Zealand, Wellington, 2002. 336 pp. NZ price: \$44.00. ISBN 1-877264-03-2.

ROSS GALBREATH has already contributed substantially to the history of science with his books on Walter Buller, on the Wildlife Service and on the DSIR, as well as through articles in scholarly journals and chapters in other books. This double biography of George Malcolm Thomson (1848–1933) and his son James Allan Thomson (1881–1928) is, like the previous works, an excellent example of careful research, considered judgment and fine writing, blending sound understanding of scientific activities, appreciation of institutional practices and biographical insights. The Thomsons, admirable people, very much more so than the calculating Walter Buller, are suitable subjects for the attentions of a historian: Allan, the first Rhodes Scholar from New Zealand, was an innovative Director of the Dominion Museum from 1914 to his death; George, ‘GM’, for several decades a high school teacher, took a leading role in reforming scientific organization in New Zealand after the era dominated by James Hector, and was in parliament (first General Assembly, later Legislative Council) for 20 years.

There are several significant additions to science history in this book, including background to the publication by GM of the *New Zealand Journal of Science* in the 1880s, further information on the debate in Dunedin about religion and evolution (GM was a believing scientist as well as an active Presbyterian), an account of GM’s on-going study of Crustacea (his catalogue is still incomplete and unpublished) and details of his efforts to establish and sustain the Marine Fish Hatchery at Portobello. After reviewing the documentary evidence, Galbreath also revises Michael Hoare’s assessment of the Board of Science and Art and of the influence of GM and Allan Thomson in carrying through major reform in the organization of science under the auspices of the Board. The Board, set up by Act of Parliament in 1913, met rarely, accomplished little and was not nearly as important as Hoare estimated in his 1984 study.

In addition to customary archival and published sources, Galbreath has made marvellous use of the diary GM maintained over some 45 years. GM recorded much about education and science, and the diary supplies personal dimensions to many scientific and educational activities. Galbreath also elicits from the diary an impressively detailed picture of middle-class sensibilities about respectability, income, family matters, relationships between men and women, illness and death. GM suffered many disappointments: he had insufficient opportunity to complete a degree, and then was overlooked for a university position. Much later, he was denied a cabinet post that he believed, rather unrealistically, might have come his way when Reform first formed a government. Another trial was more physical: supervizing some school cadets in 1882, he was accidentally shot in the foot; ten years later, infection meant the foot had to be amputated. Though GM lived to a ripe old age, very active in spite of the disability, his first wife, a daughter, and eventually Allan himself died from tuberculosis. Another son, John, a stretcher-bearer at Gallipoli and then in France during the First World War, had died, a friend of John’s told GM, as a consequence of being overworked by an officer who fancied a decoration for himself. Throughout, GM noted his hopes and disappointments, and expressed his grief in various ways: sometimes he seems almost maudlin. On the other hand, whatever we might think of his sentiments, these are valuable illustrations of male emotional responses to a wide range of circumstances in an earlier era. Allan’s much shorter life is less accessible, since he did not leave similar personal materials. Nevertheless, his time at Oxford is deftly depicted.

Galbreath’s writing is clear and elegant. He sets his subjects carefully in wider social, educational, scientific and political contexts. The study, which is fully documented, includes numerous photographs; two pages of GM’s diary are reproduced inside the

covers. In a concise foreword, Priestley Thomson recalls memories of father Allan and grandfather GM. Their scientific contributions are commemorated through the Thomson medal awarded each year by the Royal Society of New Zealand. As the author intends, this book ensures they will also be remembered for their human qualities.

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'A Fair and Just Solution'? A History of the Integration of Private Schools in New Zealand. By Rory Sweetman. Dunmore Press in association with the Ministry for Culture and Heritage and the Association of Proprietors of Integrated Schools, Palmerston North, 2002. 323 pp. NZ Price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-864694148.

IN HIS INTRODUCTION, the author describes this book as having told 'how New Zealand politicians and educationalists searched for and found a local solution to a problem that bedeviled much of the English-speaking world'. The 'problem' was the longstanding and perplexing question of state aid to private schools that had assumed major proportions by the early 1960s. The 'solution' was the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act, 1975, which permitted private schools to enter the state system.

'A Fair and Just Solution'? A History of the Integration of Private Schools in New Zealand is a timely account of the process of negotiation and legislation that produced the compromise solution of the 1975 Integration Act. There is much to commend in this book. The history of the state aid issue, particularly as it impacted upon the Catholic schools, is traced clearly and logically. The first three chapters trace the historical evolution of the state-aid controversy in New Zealand. Chapter one charts the lengthy period from the passage of the 1877 Education Act until the setting up of the Currie Commission in 1960. Deadlock between proponents of secularism and those who supported specific provision for some form of religious education resulted in an Act that rejected state aid whilst supporting compulsory education. Ironically, this ensured the growth of a separate Catholic education system along with rival lobby groups aiming to either overturn the 1877 solution, or to maintain it. Chapter two turns to the crucial decade of the 1960s, when the question of state aid became acute for the 12.5% of children attending private schools, the vast majority of whom were Catholic. The relative position of Catholic schools had worsened since the 1940s. A number of factors came together to precipitate a crisis in the 1960s. A.E.C.W. Spenser's unpublished interim report on the organization of Catholic education in New Zealand (1972) indicated that these included a diminishing pool of religious teachers, demands for increased provision of secondary schooling for Catholic children, and parental pressure to improve standards in line with developments in the state system. Many Catholic schools found themselves falling well behind state schools in terms of teacher-pupil ratios, buildings and facilities. The introduction of school fees and the increasing recruitment of lay teachers were but symptoms of an increasing Catholic educational dilemma in this period. Chapter three examines how the New Zealand Labour Party in particular became an unlikely champion of the integration concept, focusing particularly on the key roles of party leader Norman Kirk and education spokesman, Phil Amos.

Chapters four, five and six constitute the academic core of this book. Drawing upon significant archival material, they collectively focus on the making of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Bill, its passage through the House, and eventual reception in the community at large. Chapter four deals with the crucial State Aid Conference. As the author describes it, conference delegates faced and overcame a number of difficult and contentious issues, any of which could have derailed the process. These