

*A Sort of Conscience* is stylishly written, exhaustively researched and pleasing in format. It is the most satisfying monograph on New Zealand history I have read over the last five years or so.

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*Treasury: The New Zealand Treasury, 1840–2000.* By Malcolm McKinnon. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2003. 526 pp., NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN 1-86940-296-0.

IN TELLING THE STORY of New Zealand's Treasury, Malcolm McKinnon takes a sensible two-pronged approach: first, to show a government department's progression from a band of clerks, to accountants, to economists, to economic advisers; then secondly, to try to assess the contribution of the Treasury, as an institution and as a collection of individuals, to the economic history of New Zealand.

The result is a large volume that will provide historians with a useful reference for understanding the Treasury's changing character from colonial times to the present day. Its division of the story into three parts is logical. The nineteenth-century Treasury was primarily a counting house run by 'clerks', distant from any decision making role. From around 1910 the 'accountants' came to the fore and the department became involved in financial management. Investigating officers helped the government control expenditure. Then, from the time of Bernard Ashwin's tenure as Treasury Secretary (1939–1955), the 'economists' began to predominate in substance, if not in numbers. The first of these economists, heavily influenced by Keynes, were interventionist, the more recent group were intimately involved in New Zealand's reforms.

McKinnon's book summarizes Treasury insights into many of the key issues in the nation's economic history, and, in the later stages, adds some useful oral history to the record. One suspects, however, on the latter point that the transcripts of McKinnon's full interviews, if they exist, could be enlightening to future historians. There are moments of humour, such as Thomas Wilford, the High Commissioner in London, recounting the tale that the British government had 'consulted six of the world's greatest economists and received seven opinions — two of which came from Keynes', but for the most part the book reads a bit like a Treasury report. McKinnon's determination to be non-judgemental drains the life from a saga that raises passions in the ordinary heart.

One Treasury report from 1970 stated the obvious about the New Zealand economy then: 'the absence of effective competition for many classes of goods has erected an environment which has reduced employer resistance to attempts by unions to exploit more vigorously than in the past the shortage of labour' (p.257). The leading hands at Treasury were among the 'guilty men' who offered no resistance to the three big federations — farmers, manufacturers and labour — and did little to stem New Zealand's relative economic decline for a couple of decades. And yet there is no detailed explanation for the lack of rigour that was the hallmark of Treasury at that time. Why was there so little intelligent analysis of the issues the country was facing, for so long? Nor is there a deep insight into the increasingly fierce internal battles within Treasury that raged from the late 1970s. *Treasury* tells the story of the development of a think tank within the Treasury, Economics II, the new thinking that people like Graham Scott, Rob Cameron and Roger Kerr introduced and the debates that ensued. But there is little sense of the passion or of the deep inter-generational divide that arose around the 'Think Big' programme, for example.

McKinnon struggles with the fundamental issue that at the heart of the latter part of the story: exactly how influential was the Treasury in the key economic decisions taken

in New Zealand. He appears to have swallowed the line put about by Prime Minister David Lange post 1987 that 'the Treasury agenda' was all pervasive and all powerful. He begins the section dealing with the reforms of 1984–1993 with a quotation from Jack Nagel. It appears almost as a statement of fact; 'During the reform years, the conventional relationship between elected government and bureaucratic advisors in a Westminster system was to a great extent reversed. The Treasury became the principal initiator; to know what governments would do, one read the Treasury's briefing papers, not party programmes'. McKinnon concludes that by 1993 Treasury had secured most of the agenda that it had laid out in 1984 (p.357). The ascription to the Treasury of the key role was Lange's way of deflecting blame from his own role in the reforms. It was also a way for critics from the left to rationalize what seemed to be traitorous actions by their party. Instead they were victims of a conspiracy. However, the evidence seems to be to the contrary. The striking aspect is the extent to which all the major transformations in New Zealand's fiscal and monetary policies, and the decisions not to transform, were driven by the politicians. When a Finance Minister like Roger Douglas came along with a list of changes that he wanted, and the determination to make it happen, he did so with Treasury advice. Officials were often surprised by their Minister's boldness, not the other way round.

Nevertheless, this work, meticulously footnoted and referenced, rests on a great deal of primary research and effort. Alongside the many other departmental histories being produced, it adds a valuable layer to the sub-strata of New Zealand's historiography.

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*The Struggle Against the Bomb. Volume 3. Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1971 to the Present.* By Lawrence S. Wittner. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2003. 688 pp. US price: \$32.95. ISBN 0-8047-4862-4.

THIS SERIES ADVANCES the thesis that anti-nuclear movements have had a far greater role in preventing nuclear war than is realized by the public and argued by international relations scholars. An encyclopaedic approach is taken to prove the point. Other writers might have been content to study the clash between state and non-state actors on one side of the Iron Curtain, for instance, but Wittner has looked at both sides of that Cold War divide; and whereas others might have studied the superpowers only, Wittner has looked at powerful, middle-ranking and small states alike, using official and peace group records throughout. His series is therefore astonishing in scope and compelling in argument. Ebbs and flows of the movement are revealed over space and time, and deliberately so. The three judiciously told works sustain their creator's highly provocative argument, and show that a 'worldwide citizens' campaign' on this issue was indeed 'the biggest mass movement in modern history'.

This third work develops his theses from 1971 to the present. Wittner shows why the division between anti-groups mattered, despite the attempt by hawks in Washington, Moscow, London and East Berlin to equate 'aligned' and 'non-aligned' groups. The latter, in short, made history; the former were crushed by it. He shows why pro-nuclear hardliners in the Communist and anti-Communist blocs could not ignore the movement, and how, even as they continued to denigrate it, Western governments adopted many of its policies. Thirdly, Wittner more than proves his claim that progress in nuclear disarmament depends on public pressure. In making these points, moreover, Wittner offers repeated evidence of how activism in the West could shape policies in East and West, and sustain