

were British imperialists, which is how they came to be in New Zealand, and why there were so many like them all over the empire. Among them were the Mulgans, Church of Ireland Ulsterman, of whom Vincent O'Sullivan writes gracefully in an account of John Mulgan in Northern Ireland in 1940–1942. If Mulgan felt himself something other than a New Zealander, it was British, not Irish. Then again, 'British' and 'New Zealand' were not polarities; one subsumed the other.

The Catholic Church, Irish Catholicism, Ireland, the Irish of the diaspora, England, the United Kingdom, the British Empire — all these have their own historical trajectories, and it is at the intersections of these that real lives are lived. Donald Akenson reminds us in the final essay that national narratives tend to be Whiggish and aggregative but says that the work of future historians of New Zealand 'will be disaggregative and explosive', i.e. the parts will be given precedence over the whole. Maybe, maybe not. The 'History Wars' across the Tasman are an indication of why 'master narratives' persist: experience has to be made into story for it to become experience. If the 'story of the nation' was held together by the suppression of the parts, we need to be careful that the new version does not rest on the invention of them.

So who or what were 'the Irish in New Zealand'? Conscious of not being Irish, and that even his Irish-born father ceased to be Irish, Patrick O'Farrell yet wants to acknowledge that 'Irishness' might persist, sometimes as an emotional mis-remembering; sometimes as 'convenient allegory' for other battles, against imperialism or capitalism, but most of all in the spiritual dimension, the inner life, what is not said, the assumptions, the things understood but never expressed, the habits and sets of mind, the unspoken language of life, this Hidden Ireland, enduring when all other visible indicators and appearances disappear. This is, as he says, difficult terrain to map, but *The Irish in New Zealand* provides stimulating pointers for the task.

BASIL POFF

Massey University – Palmerston North.

British Capital, Antipodean Labour: Working the New Zealand Waterfront, 1915–1951.
By Anna Green. University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2001. 202 pp. NZ price: \$39.99.
ISBN 1-877133-99-X.

ANNA GREEN'S LONG AWAITED and much anticipated study of the New Zealand waterfront was launched amidst the (relative) blaze of publicity that accompanied the 50th anniversary of the 1951 waterfront lockout. This was a fitting environment for a book which delivers a substantially new interpretation of work on, and the politics of, the New Zealand waterfront.

The book's origins lie in Green's PhD thesis, completed at the University of Auckland in 1990. The anticipation for this book was heightened by the fact that the thesis was embargoed by the author. While Green did drip-feed some of the content through a series of innovative and well-received articles on nicknames, spelling and other workplace matters, interested readers were required to wait and see the sum of the parts. Was it worth the wait? Emphatically yes! On a number of fronts this is both an important and innovative work.

A longstanding mantra for labour historians has been the need to engage simultaneously with the history of both capital *and* labour, that is to say both sides of the class struggle. Yet in most work the employers are neglected, appearing on the stage as little more than bit-part villains. One of Green's greatest achievements is to bring the employers to centre

stage. One of their key characteristics is encapsulated in the book's title. The class struggle on the New Zealand waterfront was not simply a local affair. Green argues that the British shipping companies not only established a very profitable business but exercised unequal power in their realm. They achieved this position through the careful cultivation of local élites and government contacts; they also played on a broader sense of shared identity between New Zealanders and Britain. Yet, Green demonstrates, the benign image they cultivated was achieved at the expense of the New Zealand watersiders who endured highly casualized conditions of work with little attention to safety and security — it is sobering that such issues are still a factor in the industrial relations of the New Zealand waterfront. The bottom line on the balance sheet rather than any shared culture was the principal determinant of employer actions in the past — very little has changed.

A second major achievement is Green's exploration of the experience and practices of the watersiders themselves. Green moves beyond the all too common failing of portraying the workers' story entirely through the lens of their union officials. This could be a particular problem with the waterfront as two union leaders, Jim Roberts and Jock Barnes, were such larger than life characters. Rather than a top down view we get an often subtle grassroots account, drawing extensively on interviews with workers themselves. This is most clearly exemplified in the chapter on informal resistance. Here we see Green at her best, describing and explaining the intricacies of spelling, gliding away, and even theft, as informal political acts designed to undermine the power of employers and give some meaning to the demand for more formal workers' control of the workplace. This is a sort of workers' control by stealth, and was more collective and therefore in a sense 'formal' than the chapter title suggests. Such practices were often commented on by the contemporary media and used by employers to construct a very negative public perception of the watersiders. Green alerts us to the nuances and complexities of workplace relations and that the exercise of power and control can take many different forms. The cardboard cut-out image of the lazy and greedy waterside worker is successfully deconstructed. Yet, Green resists the temptation to romanticize her subject. Thankfully this is not collective hagiography. Not even the watersiders themselves would go that far, as many of their nicknames suggest.

As is often the case with something one enjoys, I found myself wanting more. It is a shame that this book could not have explored more fully some of the social aspects of the waterside workers at work *and* at play. Given the more than 30-year span of this history I expected more than a couple of pages on the social and cultural events of the watersiders, especially as they are generally credited with playing a key part in the creation of a strong union sub-culture, a necessary pre-condition to the industrial and political action of the union. Within the existing discussion the balance of treatment is also sometimes questionable. Do nicknames really deserve greater attention than welfare activities? Probably not. Yet these are perhaps relatively minor quibbles.

More fundamentally, I am sure many people would expect a much more extended discussion on the 1951 lockout itself. At one level this is a fair criticism. Given the author's time span of 1915–1951, there was an opportunity to add a subtle and nuanced account of the dispute. This opportunity was missed. I am sure Green could have achieved this and no doubt already has much of the raw material to write such an account. That she didn't is a major disappointment. Those hoping for a new and definitive account of the lockout will be disappointed and will need to continue to weave their own synthesis from the riches available in Scott, Roth, Bassett, Barnes et al.

Yet if Green had attempted such an account she may well have doomed her own book to a life as yet another account of 1951, albeit with some preceding chapters. In doing so her overall message that 1951 is not simply a result of cold war industrial politics, or the dominating personalities of Jock Barnes, F.P. Walsh and others, would have been lost. The emphatic message that there is more to the waterfront story than 1951 (and

more to 1951 than post-war dynamics) would have been undermined. We are far better off having the particular story that Green has provided than a half-baked attempt to retell the story of 1951. Let's hope that Green produces a companion volume exploring the social history of 1951. It is very much needed, and she is the person to write it.

KERRY TAYLOR

Massey University – Palmerston North

No Idle Rich: The Wealthy in Canterbury and Otago, 1840–1914. By Jim McAloon. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2002. 230 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-877276-23-5. Published with assistance from The History Group, Ministry of Culture and Heritage.

THIS IS A FINE EXAMPLE of scholarly social history, one of the best monographs in New Zealand history to appear in recent years. Based on the author's doctoral thesis, it retains the rigorous analysis of a thesis yet has been extensively rewritten for publication, and in some places revised (see p.199, n.60, for example). Exhaustive research in probate records, death-duty registers, company records and family correspondence produced a database of 1042 Canterbury and Otago settlers who at death left sums in excess of £10,000 (or £15,000 after 1918, to allow for wartime inflation). Landed wealth accounted for just over half of all estates; merchants and financiers comprised 13.5%; professionals and managers 9.7%; and manufacturers just 6.4%. Apart from 13% 'undefined' (including 56 'gentlemen') the remainder ranged from shipowners to newspaper proprietors. Canterbury's wealth was predominantly agricultural and pastoral, while Otago's richest estates were left by merchants and manufacturers. In Otago farmers made up 41% of the wealthy, whereas 56% of Canterbury's richest estates were based on farming.

Some readers may remark at these figures, 'Well, so what? We could have guessed that.' But the great merit of McAloon's book is that he has dug deep in the archives and found hard evidence instead of relying on guesswork, as so many writers of general histories of New Zealand have in the past (and still do). McAloon's argument is strengthened by careful definition of categories and explicit engagement with class theory in Chapter One. He emphasizes that this is 'not a study of a class as such, but rather of a stratum within a class' (p.24). He avoids the term *élite* because he is not convinced that the wealthy in Canterbury and Otago ever constituted a powerful, cohesive oligarchy, and he avoids the term middle class because that implies an upper class, and he doubts that colonial New Zealand ever had one.

The book's title squarely rebuts Stevan Eldred-Grigg's influential depiction of rich, colonial Canterbury landowners as an idle *élite* in *A Southern Gentry* (1980) and more recently in *The Rich* (1996). Such externals as large houses, servants and carriages led Eldred-Grigg to repeat an older Canterbury myth, of the Oxford-educated gentleman-pastoralist pioneers who did well in a new land. This myth has been repeated by Reeves and Sinclair, and more recently by Belich, but was long ago exposed by Scotter and Gardner. Only a scattering of Canterbury pioneers like Acland and Tripp ever fitted this stereotype. McAloon's detailed research shows that very few of the South Island's most successful landowners came from the upper class in Britain; in fact, a mere 3%. Two-thirds of the wealthy farmers had social origins in the lower middle class of tenant farmers, traders and master artisans. McAloon argues that they brought with them thoroughly bourgeois and Calvinist attitudes of hard work, thrift and moderation. Those who did best were the first on the scene, like the Rhodes brothers: 'Early arrival was the key to wealth' (p.33). This is a well-organized book, with sub-headings and summary conclusions at the ends of chapters. There are statistical tables and pie-charts as well as a small selection of photographs of some of the book's leading players. Chapter Two examines