

on 10 June 1886, the Fairbrothers had already signaled their intention to leave for the United States.

The Baptist mission at Te Wairoa thus lasted less than four years, without particular success. Its history and its broader significance are slight. This is implicitly recognized by Keam. The work of the mission itself takes up only a third of *Dissolving Dream*. The bulk of the book is biographical, first of the Snow family, with two chapters giving account of the American background. There are long extracts from William's record of travels in New Zealand. Attention then turns to Fairbrother and Anstis Snow, whose lives are traced until their deaths in the 1930s. These biographical details are a key strength of the book, providing a sympathetic picture of missionary motivation which is often lacking in modern studies. The text is engaging, organized and comprehensive. We are left feeling that we know pretty well all there is now to know of these individuals. Most of the illustrations have not appeared in print before. Self-published, the book is well presented, and supported by a glossary, a guide to participants, full references and a detailed index.

For all these qualities the question remains as to whether such an extensive study is necessary for this relatively minor venture, which was led by people whose lives only briefly involved New Zealand. For students of Baptist and local history the work is clearly valuable, opening up new sources and filling gaps in hitherto sketchy accounts. Insights into the contributions of the Auckland minister Thomas Spurgeon are especially useful. Spurgeon's unquestioned impact on late colonial religious life in New Zealand is yet to be fully explored. Also uncovered is the extent and origin of the Snow family's financial backing of ventures in New Zealand. American influence in colonial New Zealand is another area requiring further study. Yet, though detailed and in places original, the book does not integrate its findings with wider historiography. There is little engagement with broader currents of Maori, Christian and New Zealand history in the 1880s.

Perhaps that is an unfair expectation. The telling of small stories has its own logic. Ron Keam has successfully recovered a short missionary episode. Many others, bigger than this one, would benefit from similar careful treatment. A critical mass of such studies might then provide the raw material for broader attention to the role of Christian missions in cultural engagement in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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*The House: New Zealand's House of Representatives 1854–2004*. By John E. Martin. Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 2004. 390pp. NZ price: \$59.95. ISBN 0-86469-463-6.

WALK ALONG LAMBTON QUAY, turn left at the end and there it is: the world's ninth oldest national Parliament, meeting-place of one of its oldest democracies. The awkward, worker-unfriendly Beehive housing the Executive sits alongside the much more elegant Parliament and Library, both beautifully restored in the early 1990s. Right there, in the middle of the capital's shopping district. It is even accessible through a nondescript building on the Quay itself. Could there be a better symbol of an 'intimate democracy'?

Ninth oldest national parliament? Really? It first met in May 1854, authorized by an Act of the Westminster Parliament passed the previous year. Thus, in 2004, it celebrated its 150th anniversary; and to mark that, Parliament commissioned an official history, prepared by Dr John Martin. It is an elegant, big-format work, well written with plenty of photographs and those marvellous cartoons without which good political histories

would be incomplete (dominated by the *Herald's* prodigious and long-lasting Gordon Minhinnick, even though it misses a couple of his classics). Its 390 pages include extensive notes, a bibliography and a good index to enable quick research.

Martin briskly sets about his task. The very first sentence launches straight into the inaugural sitting in Auckland. It was not particularly auspicious. The day was wet, the premises makeshift and 'there was already talk of moving it south'.

Having set that scene, Martin moves quickly to outline the early tensions between the Governor and the new legislature. That pace is maintained throughout in a thoroughly readable narrative. He traces the move to Wellington and the extension of the franchise (not just to women in 1893, but also that of Māori males in 1867 by the establishment of four special seats, one of the earliest franchise extensions without any property qualification). Also highlighted, but not fully explained, are the instability of early, faction-based administrations (in the first 40 years, New Zealand had 14 Premiers and 26 administrations), and the development of political parties and the greater stability that resulted (in the next 40 years, to 1933, there were just five Prime Ministers).

In the twentieth century, there is a good account of how Parliament and government worked during challenging times such as two world wars and the Depression, and an interesting chapter, 'Reform, Efficiency and Accountability 1950-69', tracing important changes in that relationship. The emergence, in 1962, of a strong Public Expenditure Committee (replacing a previous 'inactive and powerless body') is a good and well-discussed example of Parliament's gradual moves to hold the Executive to account. Then, in the 1990s, came institutional reform and MMP, both usefully recorded.

The book's big format enables a succession of sidebar snapshots of events of particular interest and, most importantly, the House's personalities — not just Prime Ministers and Speakers, but lesser lights such as early Māori members and colourful characters like the younger Wakefield and, much later, West Coast MP Paddy Blanchfield.

In a single text covering 150 years, some matters are inevitably only lightly touched on. The well-educated background of the early MPs (many from prosperous, middle-class, English families), and the fact that some were relatively temporary residents, might have been more fully explored (Premiers Weld and Grey, for instance, both died in England). And changes to the debating rules in the 1990s (retrograde moves in this reviewer's opinion), while explained, are not critically analyzed. The fact (highlighted by Richard Prebble in his valedictory speech) that, in the last session, many current MPs had no more than 20 minutes' speaking time is not good for Parliament or for democracy.

In a tidy, one page, concluding 'essay', Martin suggests that the House's history 'tells us much about the changing relationship between the people of New Zealand and its political institutions', and that is undoubtedly correct. No matter how cynical New Zealanders might be about their politics, they can be justly proud of their Parliament and the democracy it represents, and Martin has done a fine job of explaining why that should be so.

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*Auckland*

*Lyttelton: Port and Town: An Illustrated History.* By Geoffrey W. Rice. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2004. 164 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 1-877257-24-9.

THIS VERY WELCOME NEW ACCOUNT is largely a history of the landscape and economic and institutional development of Lyttelton. The construction and (all too often) demolition of important buildings are faithfully recorded, major local events such as the construction of the rail and road tunnels, the building of wharves and the occurrence of disastrous fires, are well covered. Rice marks visits by royalty and by naval units, together with sojourns