

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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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

by Antarctic expeditions and the appearance of the flying-boat *Centaurus*. The impacts on Lyttelton of depressions, wars and major industrial disputes are noted. In each case the fact that it was a port meant that these developments were experienced differently than in most New Zealand small towns. Throughout the book side bars provide short accounts of the accomplishments of business people, professionals, local and central government politicians and some trade union leaders.

Rice conveys well the influence of changing technology and the provision of transport facilities on the development of both port and town. He highlights the replacement of sail by steam, of gas by electricity, of coal by oil, and (partially) of rail by road. In terms of transport facilities, it is tempting to see Lyttelton's history as a tale of two tunnels. The remarkably early construction of the rail tunnel, begun in 1860 and completed in 1867, solidified the town's position as the main port of Canterbury and enabled it to see off later rather optimistic proposals to develop an alternative over the hill. Although Lyttelton did develop a separate identity, based largely on its status as a port, the 'Moorhouse tunnel' meant that it was linked in numerous ways with Christchurch and the Heathcote Valley. The importance of the latter is perhaps somewhat overlooked here. It provided not only a water supply, but flat grounds for sport and homes for a number of port workers. Electrification of the line in the 1920s greatly increased the comfort of the journey through the rail tunnel and may have further encouraged commuting. As the author notes, by the early 1950s significant numbers of adults in Lyttelton worked on the Christchurch side, and a similarly sized group commuted the other way. The completion of the road tunnel in 1962 undoubtedly accelerated this trend, albeit at the expense of railway passenger services. An analysis of the occupations of those living in Lyttelton today would almost certainly reveal that far more of those in employment work in Christchurch than locally. While still a significant regional port, the town is now effectively a rapidly gentrifying suburb of Christchurch.

This is quite different from the dominant flavour of Lyttelton during most of its European history. The author forgoes any claim to 'ground-breaking social analysis' and presents the book as 'a preliminary sketch', dealing largely with 'the public face' of his subject. Nevertheless, there are occasional glimpses of the wider working and social life in the town. In particular, there are quite a number of references to a heavily male-dominated working-class culture on ships, the waterfront and the hotels. A previous historian of Lyttelton, W.H. Scotter, is quoted regarding 'fights between rival gangs of firemen (usually Shaw Savill versus New Zealand Shipping Company) [that] could leave Norwich Quay on some nights awash with "broken bottles, beer and blood"'. A photograph of the interior of Coronation Hall, where wharfies waited for work, conveys nicely how important fellowship must have been when spending hours in such spartan surroundings. Several deaths from accidents on the wharves are mentioned, and Rice notes that in the 1920s: 'There were no proper toilet facilities for the watersiders other than evil-smelling wooden platforms suspended between the wharf piles, flushed by a foot of sea water at high tide'.

One group whose contribution to the development of the town gains additional recognition here is the Hard Labour Gang from the Lyttelton Gaol. It was responsible for much of the filling of deep gullies, making of roads, construction of retaining walls, erection of defence works and land reclamation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There can surely be few towns in New Zealand that owe so much to unpaid (some would say slave) labour.

Lyttelton: Port and Town is written in a style that is very accessible to the general reader. It has suggestions for further reading and a substantial index, but eschews the academic trappings of notes and bibliography. Consequently it is not possible to follow up the evidence for the occasional controversial statement, such as observations that the strikes of 1890 and 1913 did not enjoy much popular support.

Geoffrey Rice has done Lyttelton and New Zealand history a great service by bringing

together so many illustrations of the town over the century and a half of its existence. In addition to hundreds of well-chosen monochrome photographs and sketches, there are several colour paintings and photographs. Even after this book, Scotter's volume and the publications of Baden Norris (fittingly recognized here), there is of course plenty of room for further research and writing about Lyttelton. Indeed, it is perhaps surprising that more postgraduate students in particular have not seen it as a convenient microstudy. If they do, they will find this volume an indispensable source of both written and pictorial information on the economic and institutional development of the town.

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Past Futures: The Impossible Necessity of History. By Ged Martin. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2004. 305 pp. US price: \$50.00. ISBN 0-8020-8979-8.

GED MARTIN USES A SWEEPING SURVEY OF IMPERIAL HISTORY, from sixteenth-century Scotland to Lord Palmerston, from pre-Confederation Canada to 1940 New Zealand, to uncover methodological historical conundrums that might cause a reviewer to regret his shameful lack of interest in the electoral politics of New Brunswick in the 1860s, and his unforgivable ignorance about the existence of a 'Grit'. Canada looms larger in this book than in any previous work on historical method because Martin, an English-born, Irish resident, British Imperial historian, used the 1996 Joanne Goodman Lectures at Western Ontario University to develop this interesting, if ultimately unconvincing, book. The revised text also retains the discursive weaknesses of published lectures. Martin contends that the partial survival of evidence, further distorted by assumptions that present values mark the triumphal end of history, makes historical explanation futile. Thus quarrelling more with Hegel than Marx, he insists that despite historians' defective methodologies and value-laden judgements, 'historical explanation must return to its rightful position at the centre of all studies of the world around us' (p.261). This requires replacing 'the knowing pretence of explanation' with assessments of 'significance', or 'the more subtle technique of locating events in time', which will emphasize the transience of present values (p.190). By 'significance' Martin means not privileging some events retrospectively through causal hypotheses, but identifying elements of the historical landscape basic enough to be overlooked, and recognizing 'the silent importance of what did not happen', then uniting both of these to identify underlying long-term developments recognizable in Braudel's 'social time'. Thus issues of duration, size and mortality in population history, the absence of violent revolution in London or the fact that World War II did not break out in 1942 or 1945, could all be utilized for a more intellectually democratic analysis than that currently practised in academic history. 'Significance' for Martin therefore involves 'locating events in time in relation to one another' so as to 'locate ourselves in the sweep of time' and make history central to the present. Not much to quarrel with there, then.

However, Martin's predicates raise a number of problems, quite apart from his unconscious emulation of post-structuralist posturings. His discovery in chapter two that past priorities differed from present concerns is hardly news — alert historians know just how 'foreign' that country is, and how misleading its language. Chapter three raises an apparently more profound problem, which the remainder of the book attempts to solve. Martin begins unconvincingly here by confusing narrative with 'the raw past', thus underestimating the analytical requirements of narrative, while introducing a rather strained argument about the impossibility of historical explanation. Seemingly denying Michael Oakeshott's claim that the only proper historical explanation is a complete account