

to shed light on the development of his intellectual interests. His activities in Australia as a collector of geological and faunal specimens for museums and learned societies in England, his published accounts of his explorations and his connections with some of the major scientific figures of the age, are the subject of a further chapter.

A large part of the book, however, is an exhaustive examination of Grey's collection building activities, his relationships with London and Auckland booksellers and dealers, prices paid and catalogues perused, long lists of his more expensive and important purchases. This is material for the specialist bibliographer and bibliophile rather than the historian, and could perhaps have been more usefully tabulated in an appendix, where the overall shape of Grey's interests and sources would be more apparent, and it would be possible to search for particular books and categories of book. Did Sir George buy any of Charles Darwin's works or Karl Marx's, for instance?

One of the author's goals is to use Grey's libraries to shed light on his character and beliefs. Grey appears to have been motivated by standard nineteenth-century visions of Christian duty, scientific progress, moral and material improvement, and the advance of civilization. He had a strong belief in the educational role of the public library, and his speeches at the official openings of the South African and Auckland Public Libraries are quoted at length. After the bulk of his books were transferred in 1886, and right up to his death in England in 1898, he continued to purchase more books for Auckland. Figures given show that he devoted a considerable proportion of his income to his book purchases and did not leave a large legacy to his adopted niece and heir.

Much of Grey's book purchasing appears to have been somewhat random. He arranged with one bookseller to be sent 120 of the best new books on history, travel, biography and fiction each year, sight unseen. Books sold by auction in New Zealand at the end of Grey's first term as Governor (over 1500 in all) might be replaced in later years. Kerr is sometimes inclined to credit his subject with more perspicacity and perseverance than he deserves, for sitting down with publishers' catalogues and marking up lists to send to London booksellers.

The book will be a valuable resource for historians of libraries, booksellers and book collectors, and a useful addition to existing biographies of Grey, which have very little to say on these aspects of his life.

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*No Left Turn: The Distortion of New Zealand's History by Greed, Bigotry and Right-Wing Politics.* By Chris Trotter. Random House, Auckland, 2007. 384pp. NZ price: \$36.99. ISBN 9781-86941-8090.

THIS BOOK PRESENTS A USABLE PAST, a history that instructs, inspires and warns. While this reviewer is in sympathy with Trotter's politics, the history that is traversed is more complex and more ambiguous than Trotter allows. His broad argument is that New Zealand has a robust egalitarian heritage, constantly threatened by the apostles of money and privilege. Naturally, this egalitarian heritage is most completely displayed in the organized working class.

The treatment of the nineteenth century is sketchy, with much omitted that would have assisted the argument. There is much more to the Wakefield settlements than conflict with Maori, as older and more recent provincial histories demonstrate. In a patchy discussion of the 1860s, Trotter omits the Taranaki war and concludes by arguing that the Maori world was changed forever, the result being a numerous population who 'think of themselves not as Maori, but as New Zealanders' (p.51). It seems not to occur to Trotter that overlapping

identities are possible. There was far more to the wars than Thomas Russell, even if the personal interests which he and Frederick Whitaker had in confiscation should not be forgotten. The 1860s were also the decade of the notoriously egalitarian goldminers, who do not appear here; nor do the tens of thousands of 1870s immigrants. Many aspired to become yeomen and ultimately to a property-owning democracy; egalitarianism was always torn between security and opportunity. And how, if only the middle and upper classes were enthusiastically pro-war in 1914, was a volunteer army created? We need an explanation going beyond flinching cowards, sneering traitors and the beguiling of honest workers.

Then Trotter moves onto much more secure ground. There is a robust and convincing description of the politics of 1916–1951. Thirty years of prosperity had created a liberal–conservative consensus which would only be shaken by the Depression. Labour’s cautious radicalism in office, and the hysterical opposition of the right, are well described. Thus Peter Fraser, Fintan Patrick Walsh and 1951 are explained, indeed defended, in terms of the need to preserve what had been won. Trotter’s demolition of the John A. Lee myth is compelling.

Yet this robust analysis of the need for democratic socialism to maintain realistic compromises with capital does not inform the rest of the book. The suggestion that there was a wave of enthusiasm for radical change in the immediate post-war years is hardly borne out by the 1946 election. The fifties and sixties are described in warmed-over ‘Fretful Sleepers’ terminology: ‘twenty years after marching, 70,000-strong, behind Jack Lee to the Domain, the Pakeha working class had slammed their ranch-slider doors on political participation and retreated into the noisy silence of . . . private suburban redoubts’ (p.225). So much for the noble egalitarian heritage, which cannot have been deeply rooted if it was that easy to defeat.

Robert Muldoon was indeed ‘Bill Pearson’s nightmare brought to life’ (p.227), but wedge politics do not happen in a vacuum. It is also too simple to say that Muldoon set out to destroy the trade union movement. He abused it widely but he also did deals and regularly took a Sunday morning gin with Tom Skinner and only abolished compulsory unionism in 1983 under pressure from Jim Bolger. It is absolutely correct that David Lange was ‘a curious combination of dazzling strength and appalling weakness’ (p.276). For all his wit and verve, Lange until 1988 was a thoroughly elitist politician, contemptuous of democratic participation, and lacking the skill to enforce his will after the breach with Roger Douglas. But the problem with the anti-Douglas group’s recipe of classical Keynesian reflation had already been illustrated by Mitterrand’s administration in France. What worked in the 1940s was much more difficult in the post-Bretton Woods 1980s; it was not just evil Treasury mandarins. The accounts of both the Lange and Bolger administrations, and the key figures in them, are sound and convincing, and the rebuilding of the left is well told by an influential participant.

Trotter’s manifesto is that we should look to our democratic and egalitarian heritage, defend it and advance it. This is admirable but the history is not so simple. The egalitarianism which Trotter defends was always based on some pretty rigid gender prescriptions and occasional expressions of deep-seated racial prejudice. This is not to dismiss the (white, male) working class as racist, sexist oafs, but naïve heroics do not get us very far either. And what is not explained is why such a compelling and attractive vision as egalitarianism has not been more consistently successful. Trotter’s argument has much to commend it, but a more robust and nuanced approach would leave fewer hostages to fortune and explain more.

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