

War and Class: The Diary of Jack McCullough. Edited by Melanie Nolan. Dunmore Publishing, Wellington, 2009. 407pp. NZ price: \$50.00. ISBN 978-1-877399-37-4.

MELANIE NOLAN HAS BEEN GOOD FOR TRADE UNIONIST JACK MCCULLOUGH. In 1985 she wrote a thesis based around his experiences as the workers' representative in the Arbitration Court between 1909 and 1921. In 1990 she composed a speech which was later published as 'Family and Culture: Jack and Maggie McCullough and the Christchurch Skilled Working Class' for the anthology *Culture and the Labour Movement*. She also compiled his entry in the third volume of the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* in 1996. This was expanded when she researched and published a path-breaking study of McCullough and his extended family in *Kin: A Collective Biography of a Working Class Family* in 2003. The final work in this series is this diary which Nolan has ruthlessly edited down from 250,000 words to less than two-thirds of that, and which covers his most important period as the workers' representative in the court. In between times she has given lectures, conference papers and seminars on McCullough and his work.

Nolan could be accused of being obsessively fixated on McCullough to the detriment of other issues in this country's far-reaching labour historiography. But that would be to take a narrow view. Nolan's work on McCullough, his work and his family, is very much a 'life and times' study. Therefore this diary is important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, McCullough's importance in New Zealand's political and industrial history is not in doubt. As the leading figure in Christchurch socialist-labourite politics from 1901 to 1909, then as the workers' representative on the Arbitration Court for such a long time, from the workers' point of view McCullough was the most important arbitrationist of this period, and one of the most important of all time. The 'times' component is equally significant as the Arbitration Court itself at this time traversed a dynamic period in its evolution as labour and political 'revolutions' swirled around it on the broader stage.

Secondly, diaries of working-class activists are very rare. Diarists tend to be literate, middle-class folk. Working people, as is recorded here, 'are communal, and in the past have tended towards oral, dramatic and ephemeral means of expression'. Further, McCullough's is the only diary yet found to have given a first-hand perspective on the important industrial and political events of the period and has the further advantage of being fulsome and detailed. With her extensive knowledge of New Zealand labour history and her diligence in research over many years, Nolan is able to assist in the process of 'understanding' with an illuminating introductory chapter and extensive notes — often biographical — on people to whom McCullough refers at the bottom of each of the diary's pages.

The broader question relates to the historical value of published diaries. Accuracy is suspect. A mixture of fact and opinion, they represent the uncritical perspective of one person. Word for word they are difficult to read *per se*; students tend to scan them for information pertaining to a subject in which they might be interested. Conversely, as primary source material they have a primacy and immediacy which is important in itself and they provide the data on which secondary, interpretative material is based. This diary also has a more pertinent value than most as it can be read and assessed in conjunction with Nolan's other work — particularly her thesis, which arguably should have been published, and *Kin*, the wider family story. The diary has other value. McCullough has insights which in themselves shed light on contemporary politics, help to document the formation of class in New Zealand and also provide, for the first time, an insider's viewpoint on the workings of the Arbitration Court.

The great bulk of the entries pertain directly to industrial issues in and out of the court. Disappointingly, you are therefore denied a fuller 'personality' picture of McCullough through these writings. McCullough's other life as a loving family man, as an anti-militarist activist opposing military conscription, and as a father who had one son killed

on the Somme in 1916 and two others running from the law as defaulting conscientious objectors receives scant mention, even though Nolan gives these aspects full coverage in her introduction. This is not necessarily a fault of the editor as the diary is essentially an account of his work, but it is frustrating nonetheless. There is another intriguing, one-off entry — which has resonance to one of this reviewer's research interests — where McCullough 'invests' (not gambles) £4 at the Addington Trots, wins nothing, and then feels 'disgust at his weakness'. Oh, the penance that a fallen Calvinist must endure.

My only other criticism relates to the poor quality of some of the photographs, particularly those replicated directly from newsprint. Their inclusion is debatable. The publication would have benefitted from more cartoons pertaining to industrial issues in general, and the Arbitration Court in particular, positive from the workers' and unions' point of view in the *Maoriland Worker* and the contrary view, often scathing, from the Blomfields and others in the *Observer* and *New Zealand Free Lance*. A wider, more serious concern is the paucity of labour history appearing from within the academies. Both Len Richardson and Erik Olssen, Nolan's mentors, have retired with a commensurate decrease in published volumes, and Nolan herself has decamped from Victoria University in Wellington to the Australian National University in Canberra where her focus is more international. Partly as a consequence there are far fewer postgraduate students in labour history than there were two decades ago. It is being left to public historians and members of the Labour History Project, which Nolan assesses as having been very important in her professional life, to keep the fires burning.

DAVID GRANT

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Field Punishment No.1: Archibald Baxter, Mark Briggs & New Zealand's Anti-Militarist Tradition. By David Grant [with paintings by Bob Kerr]. Steele Roberts Publishers, Wellington, 2008. 159pp. NZ price: \$34.99. ISBN 978-1-877448-46-1.

THE RIGHTS TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, freedom of association and freedom to dissent from political orthodoxy are all taken for granted in twenty-first century New Zealand. During times of war, however, these rights are easily swept aside. In New Zealand during the First and Second World Wars, for example, these basic rights and freedoms were at a premium and replaced by jingoistic patriotism and fervent nationalism.

The author of this book, David Grant, is the son of a prominent and distinguished New Zealand army officer. Because of his father he was exposed to the bravery and heroism of those who fought (often in appalling conditions) for New Zealand in a variety of theatres. Out of this family history he became interested in those who chose a different path — namely the path of resistance to the state in times of war. In his first book on this subject, *Out in the Cold: Pacifist and Conscientious Objectors in New Zealand during World War II* (1986), he documented the ways in which conscientious objectors to the Second World War were treated by the state and the community. The Labour Government of the time (many of whose members had conscientiously objected to the First World War) adopted a very tough stance with objectors and hundreds spent the war in detention camps or prison. The 'Conchies' and their families were ostracized by the community, vilified by the press and left in no doubt about the price of dissent in New Zealand.

In this book, Grant turns his attention to the First World War and the punishments meted out to two very prominent conscientious objectors — Archibald Baxter and Mark Briggs. The book was inspired by Bob Kerr's paintings of the First World War, all of which evoke the desolation, isolation and destruction of the war and the challenges facing those who sent so many to their slaughter. Grant decided that these paintings captured something