

identity and religion were much more complex and shaped significantly by ideas of empire and 'Britishness'. Jock Phillips's examination of Massey's Ulster background and migration to New Zealand casts light on the foundations of Massey's own identity and political viewpoints. In his chapter, Brad Patterson shows the centrality of freehold land tenure to Massey's political outlook; Ashley Gould's chapter on repatriation and land settlement for Māori soldiers after the Great War reaffirms this importance and challenges the body of scholarship that suggests Māori ex-servicemen were denied opportunities for repatriation assistance available to Pākehā. In other contributions Glyn Harper re-evaluates Massey's relationship with soldiers at the front, while James Watson examines Massey's role in the promotion of New Zealand trade.

This volume raises many questions, not the least why Massey and his Reform government have fared so poorly for so long in New Zealand historiography. It also highlights the inattention to Bill Massey's presence on the world stage — as Erik Olssen points out, with the exception of Massey, all British Empire prime ministers involved in the post World War I peace settlement process have been the subject of several biographies by professional historians.

A Great New Zealand Prime Minister? is an interesting contribution to scholarship on early-twentieth-century New Zealand politics and deserves to be widely read. Whether that will be possible remains to be seen. If the binding of the review copy (which was unable to withstand one thorough reading) is symptomatic of the production run as a whole, then regrettably this book will not survive long on library shelves!

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William Hughes: Australia. By Carl Bridge. Haus Publishing, London, 2011. 201pp. NZ price: \$30.00. ISBN 978-1- 905791-90-3.

W. F. Massey: New Zealand. By James Watson. Haus Publishing, London, 2011. 209 pp. NZ price: \$30.00. ISBN 978-1- 905794-83-5.

IN JUNE 2009 a significant ninetieth commemoration date passed with scarcely a mention in either Australia or New Zealand. On 28 June 1919, in the Hall of Mirrors at the grand palace of Versailles built by Louis XIV, the treaty ending the war with Germany was signed. It had taken six months of serious negotiations and not a little horse-trading to reach the point where this treaty could be signed. Some nations like China, upset at the loss of Shantung to Japan, refused to sign. The Treaty of Versailles was a significant world event and this compromise peace treaty would be unfairly blamed for the tragic path the twentieth century followed after 1919. In Europe and the United Kingdom, the ninetieth anniversary of the Paris Peace Conference and the treaty signing at Versailles received considerably more attention. Part of this commemoration included a 32-volume series entitled *Makers of the Modern World* by Haus Publishing. The aim of the series is to describe the personalities, events and circumstances surrounding the peacemaking process. It does so by examining the standpoint of key players from the 32 different countries involved in the peace talks. A volume of the series analyses the contribution of William Hughes from Australia and another does the same for William Massey of New Zealand.

The author of *William Hughes: Australia* is Professor Carl Bridge, head of the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies at King's College, London. Professor Bridge has written or contributed to numerous books on Australian and international history, including *Australians in Britain: The Twentieth-Century Experience* (2009), *Between Empire and Nation: Australia's External Relations from Federation to the Second World War* (2001) and *The British World Diaspora: Culture and Identity* (2003).

William Hughes (better known as Billy), the diminutive Welsh–Australian prime minister, has a well-established reputation in Australia. The ‘Little Digger’, as he is sometimes known, saw the First World War as a life-and-death struggle and was wholeheartedly committed to winning it. He became a national figure in the United Kingdom to the extent that he was offered a senior Cabinet post and was even seriously suggested as the next prime minister after Herbert Asquith. However, another colourful Welshman soon took that position.

At the Paris Peace Conference Hughes experienced ‘the political battle of his life’ (p.65), arguing for a harsh peace where Germany must be made to pay for the war and expressing Australia’s determination to control the strategically vital German New Guinea and resource-rich Nauru. Hughes also fought hard against the racial equality clause favoured by the Japanese, which could have jeopardised the White Australia policy. During the peace negotiations Hughes was articulate, aggressive, vocal and often downright rude. He famously clashed with US President Woodrow Wilson, stating that Australia was prepared to defy the whole civilised world if necessary. He tellingly reminded Wilson that he represented 60,000 Australian war dead. As Bridge acknowledges, it was a devastating argument (p.81). Little wonder, too, that Wilson despised Hughes, referring to him as a ‘pestiferous varmint’ (p.82).

There is much more to this brief biography than just Hughes’s six months in Paris. Bridge carefully traces Hughes’s rise to power from impoverished immigrant to Labor Party power broker. He looks at Hughes’s performance as a war leader. Here Bridge’s account of on why the two conscription referenda were defeated, despite Hughes’s at times vicious campaigning, is amongst the best I have read. Bridge also traces Billy Hughes’s career as an elder statesman. It is often forgotten that when Hughes died in 1952 he was still an Australian MP and had been so for 58 years. In fact Hughes had ‘sat in every Commonwealth Parliament since Federation’ (p.127).

While many Labor Party supporters in Australia never forgave Hughes for abandoning and dividing the Labor Party in 1916, he is a figure revered by many Australians. Every Anzac Day in Sydney a chair is placed near the Cenotaph in Martin Place and on it is placed ‘the Little Digger’s’ slouch hat. It is a touching tribute to a remarkable political career. This volume is an important study of Billy Hughes’s contribution to the Paris Peace Conference and to the making of modern Australia.

The New Zealand volume *W.F. Massey: New Zealand* is written by James Watson, who has a tougher job here dealing with Massey and his contribution to the Paris Peace Conference. Unlike the charismatic, articulate firebrand Billy Hughes, the Irish-born ‘Farmer Bill’ Massey did not make much of a presence during the peace process. Massey has been largely ignored by New Zealand historians too, apart from his crushing of the long-running national waterfront strike in 1913. Indeed the legend of ‘Massey’s Cossacks’ — the special constables who helped put down the strike, often with violent clashes occurring — remains Massey’s enduring legacy in New Zealand history. As to his performance during the Paris Peace Conference, the prize-winning historian of this process, Margaret Macmillan, has Massey making one ‘long and rambling speech on behalf of New Zealand’s claim to Samoa’, and then giving two inarticulate grunts while ‘following in Hughes’ wake’ over the six-month period.¹

But as James Watson skillfully shows in *W.F. Massey*, there was much more to his role at the Paris Peace Conference than this (as there is much more to Massey’s political career than just his strike-breaking action of 1913). Massey had a clear set of goals which happened to coincide with Australia’s. These included the punishment and future constraint of Germany, securing German Samoa as a C-Class mandate for New Zealand and obtaining a share in Nauru’s rich phosphate resources. While he returned to New Zealand ‘far from happy with the peace settlement’ (p.108), Massey had been

successful in achieving most of his aims. And, as James Watson shows, Massey was anything but Hughes's lapdog during the Paris conference, disagreeing with Hughes on several occasions and writing to a colleague that Hughes was 'very unscrupulous in his methods and requires careful watching'. He later told a different colleague that Hughes 'has been most unreliable and has done practically nothing to assist me in anything where the interests of New Zealand have been concerned' (p.104).

As with Bridge's *William Hughes*, Watson's *W.F. Massey* traces its subject's rise to power, his political career and legacy. Massey continued to serve as New Zealand's prime minister until his death in May 1925, and Watson examines in detail Massey's post-war years and his legacy from the Paris Peace Conference.

These books are important studies of two of this region's most successful and influential statesmen. Well researched, readable and scholarly, they add much to our knowledge of these two significant prime ministers. During the first six months of 1919, they represented their country's interests, mixing with presidents, prime ministers, royalty, generals and characters like T.E. Lawrence, John Maynard Keynes and Ho Chi Minh, to name just a few. This was both nations' first appearance on the international political stage, and both Hughes and Massey performed to the best of their considerable abilities. As both books demonstrate, Hughes and Massey were products of a time when it was possible to be both a nationalist and an imperialist. As Bridge so aptly says, they could argue for their own nation's interest with the clout of the British Empire behind them (p.131). The recognition of Hughes's and Massey's performance, contribution and achievements during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and beyond in this important series is to be roundly applauded.

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NOTE

1 Margaret Macmillan, *Peacemakers: Six Months that Changed the World*, London, 2003, pp.111, 113, 328.