

New Zealand and the United States 1840-1944. By M. P. Lissington. Historical Publications Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington. 1972. xi, 206 pp. N.Z. price: \$3.00.

New Zealand and Japan 1900-1941. By M. P. Lissington. Historical Publications Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington. 1972. xii, 114 pp. N.Z. price: \$5.75.

THESE TWO extremely useful additions to the literature dealing with the external relations of New Zealand in the twentieth century were originally 'narratives' written in 1949 to assist Professor F. L. W. Wood in the preparation of his admirable *The New Zealand People at War. Political and External Affairs*. In his preface and again in his bibliography Professor Wood paid tribute to the assistance he had received from five of his former students of Victoria University College without whose 'skilled help it would have been physically impossible to deal with the vast mass of official documents on which this volume is largely based' (p. v). While he named Miss Patricia Lissington as one of these students, he did not specify the narratives she had written. Now, some fourteen years later, the Historical Publications Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs, the heir to the responsibilities of the War History Branch, has published Miss Lissington's two narratives as revised and up-dated by the author.

For two to three decades after New Zealand became a Dominion in name this country remained virtually a colony in its outlook on the world. As Miss Lissington herself says in her introduction to the first of these volumes, 'Economics, sentiment and security dictated that for a hundred years New Zealand's major concern was with Britain. But in 1940 New Zealand was abruptly forced out of this preoccupation in order to obtain the security that Britain would no longer provide.' This last sentence provides the clue to Miss Lissington's main theme in her two books: in the Second World War Japan challenged New Zealand's national security which only the United States could guarantee in the difficult days after the fall of Singapore. Her story is important for New Zealanders and it is well told.

These two companion volumes are obviously complementary in subject matter. *New Zealand and the United States 1840-1944* should perhaps be read first because it goes so much further back in history and provides more background to both studies. Actually, one might cavil at the dates given in the title of this volume as they give the impression that the decades between 1840 and 1944 have been given more or less equal treatment. This was never the intention and is not the case. Miss Lissington was originally writing to provide background to a war history volume and the treatment is quite heavily weighted in favour of the years 1939 and 1944. The opening chapter, 'Early Associations', takes the story right up to 1939. In some ways, it has to carry too heavy a burden and too much history has been telescoped into a few short paragraphs. Naturally enough where only a survey was required, the author has not probed particularly deeply into primary sources. She has succeeded admirably in her main object which was to indicate that even in 1939 American claims to Pacific islands had revived rivalries which went back into the 19th century and that 'New Zealand, despite its pre-occupation with Pacific security, had drawn no closer to the United States'. The war was to change that situation and

outlook. Japan was to be the catalyst in producing a fundamental change. Nevertheless, as the author points out at the end of the chapter which takes her story up to Pearl Harbour, 'Suspicion of American ambitions in the Pacific persisted. There was, too, a feeling, difficult to define, that the establishment of relations with the United States was somehow disloyal to Britain and the Commonwealth.'

The chapters on 'United States Command in the Pacific' and 'New Zealand's War Effort in the Pacific' are excellent. Based as they are on study of documents not all of which are available even today, they provide an authoritative and readable account of the problems of command, supply, communications and campaigning in the early war years. They bring out, as does the concluding chapter of the other volume, the very great value to serious students of the subject of the New Zealand War History *Documents*, vol. III. Incidentally, Miss Lissington sometimes makes a very interesting comment in a footnote. For example, after explaining that New Zealand supplied United States forces with goods (mainly butter and meat made available only through the rationing of New Zealand civilians) and services to the value of £81,000,000 and that this sum went a long way towards offsetting the £105,000,000 of Lend Lease aid received by New Zealand from the Americans, she mentions casually in a footnote that 'there would have been much less difference had prices not been strictly controlled in New Zealand during the war'. In other words, the Labour Government's wartime policy of controlling prices was a very good thing for the people of New Zealand but it let the Americans buy some very cheap food by world standards of the day.

The second book, *New Zealand and Japan 1900-1941*, covers a shorter period but at greater length. In it we are more conscious of the fact that the original work was written in 1947, that is, only two years after the ending of the war in which Japan was the enemy and the United States the ally and friend. This is not to say that Miss Lissington is guilty of any marked bias, but there is nonetheless a tendency to read back into earlier years the natural attitudes of the war and early post-war era. Thus, in discussing Massey's anxiety to prevent Japanese entry into Western Samoa, the author writes, 'That New Zealand's best defence against the Japanese lay in neither the annexation of Western Samoa nor the C Class mandate, but in American misgivings about Japan's advance in the Pacific, does not appear from the evidence to have entered Massey's head.' Again, although she mentions that Massey favoured the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and spoke on more than one occasion in favour of its continuance at the 1921 Imperial Conference, she does not quite convey the strength of Massey's feeling of indebtedness to Japan. On 30 June 1921 at the 11th meeting of principal delegates of the conference, Massey stressed the need 'to continue to be the Allies of Japan after the loyal co-operation which she has afforded to us throughout the war' (P.R.O. Cab. 32/2). Furthermore, at that same meeting he showed some awareness of the value of an agreement with the Americans when he said, 'I think the Treaty should be renewed but at the same time I think we should do everything we possibly can to promote a friendly understanding with the Government and people of the United States.'

In assessing the merits of these two books, therefore, we should bear in mind both when they were originally prepared and the purpose for which the narratives were written. In addition, we should be very grateful for the

amount of fresh information on New Zealand external relations and policies which they contain. Miss Lissington has had access to all the relevant New Zealand files, several of which do not appear as yet to have been transferred to the care of National Archives. This alone gives her books considerable value but, in addition, she has shown considerable skill in interpreting the evidence and in detecting trends in policy-making. Some of her conclusions may possibly be challenged and some of her emphases modified as further work is done in this important field, especially with the aid of material released by the British, American and Japanese governments, but in the main Miss Lissington's views are so well supported by the evidence that she has sifted so thoroughly that her main points are sure to stand. But the present reviewer wonders how fully justified Miss Lissington is in claiming that George Forbes 'gave an entirely false impression of the Government's own view of the Far Eastern scene' when, as Prime Minister, he told the Commonwealth Prime Ministers gathered in private session in May 1935 that 'The Japanese question in particular was not a matter of special concern in New Zealand' and went on to refer to the 'consistently friendly' attitude of the Japanese to New Zealand. Now, Forbes was a comparatively simple unsophisticated son of the soil who had somewhat fortuitously secured his high office but he normally said what he thought and was not given to misrepresenting his government. Quotation from this and other speeches by Forbes might also give rise to questioning of the claim that the New Zealand Labour government, elected in November 1935, responded to Japanese attacks on China that year 'in a manner which was, in many respects, very similar to that of its Liberal and Reform predecessors when faced with a situation that could affect New Zealand security'. That Miss Lissington is well aware of differences in party outlook and policy is, however, shown by her further statement that 'the principal difference lay in the Labour Government's willingness to differ from Britain publicly, as well as privately, as to whether security for the Commonwealth in the Pacific lay in the appeasement of Japan or in collective security'.

In her chapter on 'Commercial Relations' between New Zealand and Japan, Miss Lissington gives a better and more up-to-date survey of trade than Ian Milner did in his earlier discussion of the subject. Her examination of press comments on proposals to increase the trade with Japan and of the Federation of Labour boycott of Japanese goods, and the watersiders' refusal to load scrap-metal for Japan, is brief but to the point. More detailed and just as much to the point is the discussion of the New Zealand reaction to British proposals which amounted to straight-out appeasement in 1938-40.

While the United States volume takes the story through to the Canberra pact which was concluded in early 1944, the Japanese volume stops short at the New Zealand proclamation of war against Japan on 8 December 1941. It is a mark of the readability and general attractiveness of these two volumes that the reader will wish that the author had carried her story on further in both cases.

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