

some elements of an explanation are provided. The sense of political and religious exclusion, which the Webbs see as impelling the movement for reform elsewhere, seems to have been less strong in Bristol. And certainly 1835 brought no radical extension of the municipal franchise. The burgesses still comprised only 20 per cent of the householders. The lower middle classes as well as the proletariat remained beyond the pale of municipal politics. 'Station' and 'Respectability' still counted.

Nevertheless, Dr Bush argues, 'the word "revolutionary" is not altogether inapt'. There were basic changes between the 'unreformed' and the 'representative' system as the labels imply: changes of attitudes, both in the way councillors viewed their role, and in the way the Council was regarded by the 'citizens'. Crucial to the change was the introduction of the elective principle. Elections shattered the domination of municipal government by a tightly-knit group of 'corporation' families and friends. A broader segment of the municipal élite was recruited to the new Council. 1835 also ushered in a new conception of local government. The old exclusive corporation had viewed itself as a private body which had obtained some public duties. Its main *raison d'être* was to defend its inherited rights and privileges. It was not accountable to the citizens. Irrevocably the confidence of the citizens was alienated. By contrast the 'representative' Council was sensitive to the 'public interest', albeit narrowly defined. And so where the attempts by the old Corporation to impose a county rate had been resisted, the new Council could levy a relatively high borough rate without causing a vigorous reaction from the ratepayers (before the 1850s at least). Dr Bush establishes his case with meticulous research.

In some measure then, Bristol stands in counterpoint to cities such as Birmingham and Leeds. It is a pity that comparisons are not sustained, despite the suggestive work on these cities of Gill, Hennock, and Fraser. A pity also that developments after 1851 are not glanced at. Even so this is a useful contribution to the mosaic of nineteenth-century urban history.

GRAEME DUNSTALL

University of Canterbury

The Loyalty Islands: A History of Culture Contacts 1840-1900. By K.R. Howe. Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1977. xvi, 206 pp. N.Z. price: \$13.60.

FOR the historian of culture contact in the South Pacific, the Loyalty Islands are a worthwhile field for investigation. During the nineteenth century the three islands of Mare, Lifu and Uvea, lying to the east of New Caledonia, were visited by a succession of European traders, labour recruiters, missionaries and colonial administrators, and by the 1880s, the Loyalty Islanders were regarded by European visitors as 'the most advanced of any natives in Western

Polynesia' (p.111). The population of the group (about 13,000 in 1870) is small enough to allow detailed analysis of local forces and the influence of individual personalities, and there is a wide range of source material.

The European penetration of the South Pacific has often been depicted as an unmitigated tragedy for the island peoples. Recent research on the subject has done much to disprove the crudities of the 'fatal impact' theory, but most of these studies are focussed on the activities of missionaries, traders and other identifiable groups of Europeans, and are to be found only in the form of scattered journal articles. Dr Howe's book is therefore important as an attempt to describe the total process of culture contact in one group of islands over more than sixty years, with the indigenous inhabitants 'firmly at the forefront' (p.xi). His conclusion is that the response of the Loyalty Islanders to Europeans was 'a constant process of selective acceptance, adaptation, and exploitation of the new ideas, activities, and material culture' (p.159). There is no evidence of 'cultural depression', 'bewilderment' and 'social dislocation'.

This is an admirable book. It is based on extensive research on English and French archival sources, the writing is lucid, the material has been judiciously organized and the subject is an inherently interesting one. The early chapters well illustrate the complex interplay of political, economic and religious motives which lay behind the conversion of Pacific Islanders to Protestant and Roman Catholic Christianity in the nineteenth century. Subsequent chapters deal with the religious (London Missionary Society *versus* Marist), national (British influence *versus* French) and indigenous political conflicts in the Loyalty Islands in the second half of the century, and the responses of the islanders to various aspects of European contact – trade, missionary education, etc. The chapter on 'Travel' is noteworthy for the evidence it supplies to reinforce the once unpopular view that labour recruiting for Queensland was essentially a voluntary emigration, well understood and willingly entered into by the islanders. The final section, which discusses the impact on the Loyalty Islands of firearms and European diseases, and the related question of depopulation, should stimulate other Pacific historians to look again at their sources for fragments of information which may throw light on these processes in other island groups.

There are few grounds for criticism. In a study of the interaction of alien and indigenous cultures, there would seem to be scope for a more sustained discussion of the religious-cultural outlooks which different groups of Europeans brought to the Loyalty Islands. European participants tend to appear from off-stage, without reference to those aspects of their social and intellectual backgrounds which may have influenced the course of their relationship with the islanders. In addition, the constant emphasis on indigenous initiative and cultural continuity may at times be misleading. To say this is not to deny that Dr Howe has made a strong case. It is certainly true, for example, that Christianity was 'not the intellectual and spiritual bombshell' that the missionaries had intended (p.121). However, the assertion that pre- and post-contact religious beliefs differed merely 'in degree rather than kind' (p.120) appears to ignore the long-term transformations produced by biblical narratives, Christian ethical teachings and new symbolic forms. It should also be stressed (though Dr Howe does draw attention to the point – pp.6, 161) that the success of the Loyalty Islanders in adapting to European

influences was due very largely to the fact that the islands were of no economic significance. Unlike neighbouring New Caledonia, they were therefore spared the potentially disruptive impact of large-scale European settlement, land alienation and government intervention.

This book supplies significant fresh evidence to illuminate many topics in the field of Pacific history and is a major academic contribution to the history of island Melanesia.

DAVID HILLIARD

Flinders University of South Australia

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