

the University of Auckland. The rise of Social Credit in the early 1980s sent him back to explore more thoroughly our previous experience under a three-party system. Perhaps, too, his knowledge of the Liberal Party's fate may have added to his fascination. Extraordinary although it is, apart from R. M. Burdon's *New Dominion* (1965), little has been published about this period (R. M. Chapman's *Political Scene* provides a good account of the period 1919-31). It is therefore useful to have this small survey of elections and their results for the entire period. Better still, Bassett became sufficiently interested in Sir Joseph Ward to begin work on a biography of that extraordinary man. The first fruits of that research, given as a paper to the Historical Association's Conference, foreshadow an important biography. It is to be hoped that completion of this work will not have to await Bassett's political retirement.

Unfortunately in this present book, there are no footnotes, no index, and only a skimpy bibliography. Yet the text is enlivened with well-chosen photos and cartoons and is based upon considerable research in newspapers and in the despatches of the Governors General to London. Perhaps one of the most interesting points which Bassett makes is that the 1911 and 1914 election results were remarkably precarious. Indeed, with appeals and other legal proceedings, in each case the final result remained in doubt until six months after polling day. The convoluted negotiations between the 1911 election and the defeat of Thomas Mackenzie's Ministry in 1912 are well dealt with (although the final word will only be said when some historian also thoroughly explores archival sources). The discussion of the 1914 election is equally useful. When he turns to the elections of 1919, 1922, 1925, and 1928 his remarks are less useful if only because he has little to add to Chapman's analysis. For all that, much useful information is here conveniently brought together in short compass. And, throughout, there are crackling Bassetisms. 'Political in-fighting [during the First World War and before the formation of the Coalition in 1915] sounded more and more like flatulence in church [p.20].'

This is a piece for the times, but Bassett's wide knowledge of the published and unpublished work on our politics has enabled him to write something which should prove useful to students and teachers.

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The Fall of Singapore 1942. By Timothy Hall. Methuen Australia, North Ryde, 1983. 223 pp. N.Z. price: \$24.95.

THE FALL-OF-MALAYA industry shows little sign of declining production. The run started immediately after the event in 1942 and has averaged about two volumes a year ever since. Some justification might seem in order for new products and the reasons for the present work are hard to find. It is not a scholarly book. The author is an Australian journalist with books on the Darwin air raids and the New Guinea campaigns to his credit. This book is undocumented and the bibliography

lists only ten other books. It omits the best short history of the campaign, Stanley Falk's, *Seventy Days to Singapore* (1975). It includes the Australia official army (but not air force) history, but omits the British and Indian official histories and also General Kirby's frank (unofficial) second thoughts, *Singapore; the Chain of Disaster* (1971). The author has talked with survivors in Australia and Malaysia and he mentions 'diaries and letters' though it is hard to see where he has used them. Many sources are unidentified. Thus we have some striking expressions of opinion from 'an Australian naval officer' or a 'surgeon with the AIF'. On civilian life, before and after the surrender, he got a good deal of atmosphere from Cynthia Koek, a former London actress and wife of a Singapore lawyer and legislative councillor.

The selection of material suggests that the book is mis-titled. 'Australia and the fall of Singapore' would have represented the contents better. Although 40% of the garrison came from the Indian army and the British troops outnumbered the Australians, Hall devotes more space to the two-brigade AIF 8th Division, its arrival, training, personality rivalries and battles. The successful ambush near Gemas and the initial fighting on the north-west shore of Singapore island get more attention than any other part of the fighting. Individual Australian units and personalities are covered; others are part of a shadowy background. Considerable space is devoted to Gordon Bennett, the commander of the AIF 8th Division, including several pages on the post-war Royal Commission into his controversial escape before capture. Hall seems to favour Bennett, but adds a revealing conclusion from his conversations with survivors: 'Canvassing the feeling today among Bennett's men, not one former private or NCO was critical of Bennett's flight, while not a single officer thought he did the right thing.' (p.204)

As an account of the fall of Singapore this book had great defects as military history because so much is left out and we get so little overall feel of the campaign, especially in its early stages and in the major disasters. Non-Australian personalities like Wavell (the Supreme Commander), Percival (the GOC), and Sir Lewis Heath (commander of III Indian Corps) who had been a successful divisional commander in Ethiopia and had a larger role in Malaya than Bennett, remain cardboard figures. While the book has some good 'atmosphere' on civil life, some good photographs and some interesting examples of the mixture of chivalry and brutality shown by the Japanese in victory, we get little of the overall strategy which explains the defeat. The comparatively small Japanese forces allocated to Malaya could have been stopped, as at Milne Bay or Imphal, or turned back, as in New Guinea and elsewhere, *if adequate resources* had been made available for the task. The reasons for the low priority given to Malaya were well explained by Raymond Callahan in *The Worst Disaster* (1977). Another important omission from Hall's bibliography.

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