

schemes in New Zealand or overseas. The book might have proved more interesting and less isolated in its approach if Quigley had espoused the comparative element more strongly in place of some of the narrative detail. It would also have helped to reveal how typical the BNZOPA has been of superannuation schemes in areas such as its investment policy and its response to inflation and government policy changes.

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Masters or Servants? By Gavin McLean. New Zealand Merchant Service Guild, Wellington, 1990. 96pp. NZ price: \$19.95.

THE MERCHANT Service Guild is the union of ships' officers. It was first registered under that name on 20 May 1904 (not 1901, as stated) (p. 34), but it had several predecessors. Gavin McLean's short volume is, in fact, a centennial history. The earliest officers' union, the New Zealand branch of the Mercantile Marine Officers Association of Australasia, formed on 23 December 1889, was one of the first private sector white-collar unions in New Zealand. Its only older rival was the ships' engineers' union, the Australasian Institute of Marine Engineers.

Located in space between the shipowners above and the seamen below, the officers' unions were often torn in their loyalties. Within their own ranks, moreover, there were differences between officers and captains, which the owners were able to use to their advantage. For most other unions the 'them and us' situation was clear-cut and provided the axis around which their activities revolved, but with the merchant service Guild it was always 'them and them and us'. The union had to choose not just between peace and war, but between peace with whom and war with whom; it had to come to terms with being both masters and servants.

In the 1890 Maritime Strike the officers' union sided with the seamen and their Maritime Council, but the owners sponsored a rival Shipmasters Association, which flourished while the old union disintegrated after the defeat of the strike. As its name implies, the Shipmasters Association was run by captains. In 1901 officers formed a new union, the New Zealand Mercantile Marine Officers Association, which evolved in 1904 into the present Merchant Service Guild and which was able to drive the Shipmasters Association from the field.

In 1910 Guild members for the first time took part in a strike, but in the 1913 Waterfront Strike the Guild sided with the owners. During a 1933 seamen's dispute it offered to sail with non-union labour, but its members were not spared the depression pay cuts. Subservience, notes McLean, brought no special favours from the companies. 'Loyalty counted for nothing . . . hard bargaining muscle was everything.' Once the Labour government came to power, moreover, the Guild found that the Seamen's Union, led by the redoubtable F.P. Walsh, was able to extract concessions, such as a 40-hour week, which was denied to ships' officers. A campaign of mass resignations in 1947 finally achieved the 40-hour week for officers, and in the 1951 dispute the Guild again sided with employers. It expected to be rewarded with the right of free selection of crew members, but the National government, which owed a debt of gratitude to Walsh, rejected the Guild's claims.

In 1961 the Guild for the first time called a strike, which won paid study leave and extra holidays. This marked a watershed in its history, notes McLean, for 'the myth of the uncomplaining officer and gentleman had been well and truly laid'. There have been other Guild strikes since 1961 and McLean provides much detail of the most recent major confrontation, the New Zealand Shipping Corporation reflagging dispute of 1988, when

officers and men acted in unison. The Seamen's Union has already merged with the Cooks and Stewards Union, it is currently discussing amalgamation with the watersiders' and harbour board unions, and the formation of one maritime union including ships' officers and engineers is no longer an impossible dream.

Gavin McLean has written an impressive number of books on New Zealand maritime history. The present volume is, however, his first excursion into trade union history and it betrays a certain lack of familiarity with the available sources. The Guild's own archives go back no further than about 1924 and the only other internal record available was an old newscutting book of the Shipmasters Association. McLean has not apparently used the records of the Register of Trade Unions, which contain annual reports of the Shipmasters Association, and his treatment of the sequence of officers' unions before 1924, some registered under the Arbitration Act, others under the Trade Union Act, is somewhat confused. One admittedly very short-lived officers' union is not mentioned at all: the Masters and Engineers (River Service) Union founded in July 1890 with some 280 members who served on steamers and tug-boats in and around Auckland harbour. It expired in 1891.

There are also some unfortunate misspellings of personal names, both in the text and in the index (Dowds for Dodds, Gooseman for Goosman), but these shortcomings do not detract from a very readable and by no means uncritical account of a union which, in the author's words, made up for in interest what it lacked in size.

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The Southern Octopus. The Rise of a Shipping Empire. By Gavin McLean. Ship and Marine Society, Wellington, 1990. 239 pp. NZ price: \$44.95.

THE UNION Steam Ship Company was established at Dunedin in 1875, at the second attempt, to operate vessels in the coasting trade. Riding on the benefits of gold, assisted immigration, and the growth of New Zealand businesses, and guided by the entrepreneurial energy of James Mills and the commercial judgement of Peter Denny, the company rapidly became the largest and one of the most successful in the country before its absorption into the P & O empire in 1917. Gavin McLean provides a highly informed blow-by-blow account of the manner in which Union broke into and dominated one trade after another in Australasia and the Pacific, earning it the nickname, 'the southern octopus'. The company developed an armoury of weapons for defeating its competitors from freight wars and deferred rebates to takeovers. If all this failed there was still the possibility of pooling agreements and secret deals with the more resilient competitors to ensure freight rates remained buoyant. The result was that by 1917 the Northern Steam Ship Company of Auckland was the only significant firm working in New Zealand waters which retained a degree of independence and even it was tied into agreements with Union.

All the more wonder, then, that the company should have so rapidly surrendered its carefully plotted and protected shipping empire to Lord Inchcape's P & O. McLean attributes this primarily to the desire of the Union Company to remain independent and stable at a time of mergers, takeovers and the emergence of giant international corporations in the shipping industry. The New Zealand Shipping Company had been absorbed by P & O the previous year, but was allowed to continue to operate independently. Whether Union was initially granted similar status is not made clear but McLean describes the company as 'a mere cog in the vast P & O machinery' (p. 188), and certainly it failed to pursue its intentions of expanding beyond the Pacific basin. McLean also relates the events of 1917 to the alleged loss of dynamic expansion after the accession of Holdsworth