

colonization or a purpose other than a drunken oblivion. Missionaries could be changed as much as they could effect change. Leaders could be charismatic and inspire admiration and devotion, yet have feet of clay.

Occasionally Tyrrell's vision narrows. The chapter on peace focuses almost entirely on the North American WCTU, losing an international dimension. And the chapter on suffrage engages first in a rather dated attempt to argue that WCTU suffragists based their claim for the vote on the grounds of both expediency and justice and then in a brief survey of the way the suffrage success in Australasia impacted back on the imperial politics. These chapters leave plenty of scope for further work.

Although the WWCTU may today seem a rather quixotic venture it was in its time quite extraordinary. One of the earliest of international organizations, aspiring to a universal order, and with 40 national affiliates at its peak, it must impress with its sweep and scale, and with its magnificent commitment in the face of almost constant failure. Tyrrell has written a very clever book, based on a huge amount of scholarship. He comes to fair and balanced conclusions, which, in the long run, do the WCTU more justice than most earlier writings on either the national bodies or the world organization.

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*A Question of Adoption: closed stranger adoption in New Zealand 1944-1974.* By Anne Else. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1991. 241 pp. NZ price: \$29.95.

ANNE ELSE has written a cogent and compelling study of the ideology and practice of closed stranger adoption in New Zealand during the middle decades of this century. The work must surely become essential reading for all whose professional interests in any way impinge upon the area of adoption; but it is also a book for all New Zealanders with a social conscience, and particularly for those oblivious to the key issues involved in the seven-year debate which preceded the passing of the Adult Adoption Information Act in 1985.

The strength of this work lies in its thorough professionalism. Although she is dealing with an area of social policy which has been extremely contentious in recent years, Else has not permitted emotionalism to intrude upon analysis. Right from an introduction in which the author reminds us that adult beliefs, desires and dilemmas are at the heart of the adoption issue (p.xiii), Anne Else engages her reader's attention with a skilful combination of good organization, clear style and thorough documentation.

There are 17 short chapters in this work, each dealing with a different facet of a complex issue. One of the most poignant is that entitled 'The Invisible, Unmarried Father' (pp.14-22) in which Else reveals that for many biological fathers denied all knowledge of their child and, frequently, of the fate of the mother of that child, the pain has been lifelong and intense. Thought-provoking too, are those sections which deal with the deficiencies of official policy during this period. Chapters 10 and 11 on 'Placing the child' (pp.93-112) contrast the model Child Welfare process with the reality. Through a judicious interweaving of oral and documentary evidence, the pressures under which departmental staff were forced to operate are sympathetically detailed and the consequences of such shortcomings outlined. While Else leaves the reader in no doubt about her criticisms of this situation,

she also provides, in chapters 6, 7 and 8, an understanding of the social milieu in which departmental officers had to operate.

Another undoubted strength of this book is Anne Else's survey (chapter 16) of the impact which a culturally insensitive adoption policy has had on traditional Maori values and practices concerning children. Legislation which had the effect of 'outlawing' customary adoption began as early as 1901 (p.178) and caused a great deal of distress during ensuing decades. The testimony of one part-Maori woman (pp.191-4) demonstrates that the mid-century insistence on secrecy of official information has been particularly devastating for those for whom the denial of any possibility of access to the knowledge of their whakapapa will continue to affect succeeding generations.

Above all, however, this study provides a moving and persuasive analysis of the impact of closed stranger adoption for those women most vitally concerned, the birth mothers. While chapters 3, 4 and 5 survey both the personal and the practical pressures which few unmarried mothers could escape, chapter 9 provides convincing evidence that the practice, so widespread in the 1960s, of not even allowing a birth mother to see her newborn child, let alone hold or care for it, was misguided in the extreme. So, too, was the insistence that the adoption consent form should be signed by the birth mother at this time. The longer-term consequences for these women of a strictly-controlled policy of no contact with the adoptive parents and no information about the adopted child are clearly documented in the final chapters.

'Closed stranger adoption can now be seen for what it was — a social experiment with unknown and uninvestigated outcomes, conducted on a massive scale' (p.197). With this opening salvo to a final chapter, Else moves the study from the past and present to the future in which the new conceptive technology poses even more complications in the quest for identity. Yet again the reader is reminded that an historical perspective is vital for effective planning and one can only hope that lecturers in social policy make this work required reading in their courses. Although the absence of an index is an irritation, the footnoting is clear and the select bibliography a helpful guide to students and researchers who may wish to pursue the additional lines of enquiry which this excellent study must surely stimulate.

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*The Forgotten Worker: the Rural Wage Earner in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand.* By John E. Martin. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1990. pp.240. NZ price: \$34.95.

LATE LAST CENTURY a tiny minority of owners, with holdings exceeding 1000 acres, controlled more than three-quarters of privately held land in New Zealand. If land held under pastoral lease or licence from the Crown is added, 8% or less of landholders controlled close to 90% of all land. These large estates required a substantial labour force. The rural economy last century gave employment to some 20,000 permanent and to the same number of seasonal workers needed for shearing, harvesting and threshing.

Much has been written about the runholders, but historians have paid little attention to the men and women whose labour made possible the often extravagant life style of the 'colonial gentry'. 'I was starting from scratch and unable to rely upon the foundation of existing published work', writes John Marton; 'Rural workers are the forgotten workers