

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

in New Zealand's history.' His book, *The Forgotten Worker*, is in fact based upon the foundation of existing published work, but nearly all of this is Martin's own research over the past ten years.

Labour on large estates resembled factory production, with a hierarchy of permanent staff from owner and manager down to general hands, supplemented by seasonal workers. Indeed, these were the largest 'factories' in nineteenth-century New Zealand. Apart from shearers (with 'knights of the blade'), they employed ploughmen, shepherds, boundary-keepers, rabbiters, musterers, harvesters, reapers and, of course, cooks. Martin describes each man's task and earnings. Work was labour-intensive and costly, but landowners were able to benefit from advances in technology. As early as the 1850s threshing mills began to replace flails, mechanical reapers took the place of sickles, and combined reaper-binders appeared in the 1870s. Martin graphically illustrates how mechanization increased productivity and deskilled the workforce. No such deskilling, however, accompanied the change-over from blade to machine shearing and no machine replaced the station cook.

A separate chapter deals with living conditions, including diet. This is excellent social history, though more could perhaps be said about off-station leisure activities, apart from several references to 'bursting' one's cheque in the nearest pub. Martin describes 'a distinctive male culture' but, while Pakeha shearers and other seasonal workers were male and hired individually, he points out that Maori shearers, who predominated in the North Island, were usually hired as family groups, with women and children assisting with shed work and cooking. Pakeha women and children, too, made an important contribution to the rural economy, but Martin unfortunately decided to exclude them from this study because their labour was unpaid.

In a final chapter, 'War in the Sheds', Martin deals with conflict and worker organization. He is not quite correct when he describes shearers as 'the only group to organise outside the urban-based craft occupations' in the 1870s, for seamen and watersiders (lumpers) were then also forming their first unions. The shearers, however, were by far the most active union, waging a determined struggle for a £1 per 100 shearing rate. The recruitment of Maori labour helped to break that strike. Martin gives examples in which employers set lower pay rates for Maori workers, but he also notes that Hawke's Bay Maori in 1863 made the first documented attempt to organize shearers in New Zealand. The shearers' union in turn made special efforts in the 1880s to gain Maori members by translating its rules into Maori and by employing Maori organizers. Until the urban migration of the 1940s it remained the only significant meeting ground between Maori workers and trade unionism.

A special feature of this book is a large number of clearly-reproduced photographs, many from private collections and not previously published, the informative captions of which greatly enhance the text. The bibliography is equally impressive, including a comprehensive list of station diaries and other records held in libraries and museums throughout New Zealand.

The Forgotten Worker, which was published with the support of the Trade Union History Project, is proof, if such was needed, that rural New Zealand last century was no workingman's paradise. Clearly written, the book is wholly accessible to the general reader and relevant to the present day. While it rescues the rural worker from oblivion, it also reminds us of pre-Arbitration Act industrial relations, when individual employment contracts were the rule, biased heavily in the employer's favour.

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