

*The Significance of the Commonwealth, 1985-90.* By W. David McIntyre. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 1991. ix, 305pp. NZ price: \$69.95.

IN THIS account of the contemporary Commonwealth, masterly in scope and detail, Professor McIntyre has added yet another distinguished volume to his distinguished list. His menu has varied. Southeast Asian historians are grateful for his early analysis of British intervention in the Malay states in the 1870s and for his later account of the British catastrophe in Singapore. But the table d'hôte is the Commonwealth. His 1977 account of its history, 1869-1971, in the University of Minnesota series, *Europe and the World in the Age of Expansion*, is indispensable.

Yet for many historians, and, perhaps, for still more students, Commonwealth history has assumed a musty air, not dispelled by the perfumed nostalgia of empire. To some extent that is no doubt an involuntary reaction from earlier compulsions: the statue of Westminster seemed dull as well as irrelevant. More significant, the Commonwealth itself was seen as an event or non-event in British history, a British sleight-of-hand that deceived the British more than others, the ghost of empire sitting Gregorovius-like on the grave thereof.

McIntyre's new book offers a larger view of the Commonwealth by pointing out that a larger view has been taken of it. He gives an account of its 'de-Brittanising'. That was initiated — as it could only be — by its non-British members, in particular by those who set up the secretariat, and the distinguished Secretaries-General who made it work. It was also achieved, not entirely paradoxically, by the British, in particular by Margaret Thatcher. Insisting that British policy could not be determined by other heads of government, she accepted that they had a realm of action, too.

Professor McIntyre divides his book into three main sectors. The first deals with structures and the second with issues, race, Africa, inequality, including Fiji as well as apartheid, the North-South dialogue, and security and small states. In general those issues were or are global, and not merely Commonwealth in focus, though Commonwealth initiatives and responses might provide useful examples and experiences. The third section of his book he devotes partly to regional organizations, but mostly to the functional co-operation in which many find the real meaning of the Commonwealth.

If the Commonwealth has become another internationalized body, the need for it might still be questioned. Are there not enough such bodies already? McIntyre stimulates at least two possible answers. First, it is an international body with special features of its own that facilitate interchanges others find it even more difficult to facilitate.

Second, it might be said that there is plenty of room for such international bodies. Indeed they have become more important in the 1990s. Another large empire has deconstructed, and other countries are breaking into smaller 'national' units. The Commonwealth may give examples of the way in which the civilities of international society might yet be maintained.

One advantage it has — and others have not — is undoubtedly the British monarch. Whether or not countries are or become republics, it is clear that the head of the Commonwealth has played an important role, always devoted and at times courageous, promoting its continuance and giving it meaning.

Professor McIntyre laments the adverse impact of full-cost student fees regimes in four developed countries. He is right. A final reflection is more personal. I sit on the Commonwealth Scholarships Committee in Wellington. It would be good to be sure that the New Zealand government will sustain it as an aid programme, but also an exchange programme. It would be indeed very welcome if the majority of Commonwealth

governments offered scholarships, and not merely the rather limited number that currently engage in the practice.

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*Vietnam: War, myth and memory.* Edited by Jeffrey Grey and Jeff Doyle. Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992. 176pp. NZ price: \$19.95. *An Anzac Muster: War and Society in Australia and New Zealand 1914-19 and 1939-45.* Edited by Judith Smart and Tony Wood. Monash Publications in History 14, Monash, 1992. 175pp. NZ price: \$10.00.

WITH THE COMPLETION of the last volumes of New Zealand's official history of World War II New Zealand's academic discussion of the nation's military history has concerned itself less and less with operational, tactical and soldier experience assessments and increasingly with a study of the political and social origins and implications of war. War memorials, war brides, anti-war movements, post-war rehabilitation, the political influence of allies and xenophobia, have been the stuff of most academic interest. Only a few academics have laboured on with operational studies, albeit with well-received works. James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars* (Auckland, 1986), Vincent Orange, *A Bibliography of Air Chief Marshall Sir Keith Park* (London, 1984), and *Coningham: A Biography of Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham* (London, 1990), and Christopher Pugsley, *Gallipoli: The New Zealand Story* (Auckland, 1984) and *On the Fringe of Hell: New Zealand's Military Discipline in the First World War* (Auckland, 1991), are the best known of these operational studies.

Among the most recent New Zealand contributions to war and society history are those included in two Australian publications, *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory* and *War and Society in Australia and New Zealand 1914-18 and 1939-45*.

In the former, Robert Rabel discusses 'the most dovish of the Hawks' in his analysis of New Zealand's alliance politics in the Vietnam War. Rabel succinctly outlines United States' pressure and the limits of New Zealand political resistance. Given his Australian readers it is surprising that there is so slight attention to Australian political pressure, particularly from the Australian Defence Staff, for a vigorous New Zealand presence in Vietnam, a matter of increasing interest to Australian military historians. His clear summary of events sits well beside assessments of Australia's role in the war. But to balance the books, to assure an analysis of New Zealand's operational role in Vietnam, readers must await the publication of Pugsley's history of New Zealand's post-World War II involvement in South East Asia, and Shane Capon's doctoral thesis on the work of the New Zealand army training teams in South Vietnam.

Digging over the much disturbed soil of World Wars I and II's social impact, the contributors of 'An Anzac Muster' have less to offer New Zealand readers — not through any defect in scholarship but because their contributions, with one exception, are already familiar. There is little of the sweet smell of fresh research in this compilation. Keith Sinclair's 'Australia-New Zealand Relations, 1901-51: A Background Paper', is just that: a useful introduction for Australians of points made in his *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988* (Auckland, 1987). Jock Phillips's, 'The Great War and New Zealand Nationalism: The Evidence of War Memorials', is well known to attenders at history conferences, and to readers of Chris MacLean and J.O.C. Phillips, *The Sorrow*