

acceptable means to achieve these goals. The domestic ideology and consumerism of the 1950s rested on a rigid construction of separate spheres for men and women. Judging from interviews conducted with this earlier generation of women, societal prescriptions on sexuality, gender roles within marriage, and the rearing of children did significantly influence women's lives in the postwar period. May strongly argues, however, that many women from the 1950s quietly subverted the ideology of domesticity and sought to achieve a degree of autonomy by undertaking part-time or voluntary work. Most commentators state that the incidence of married women in paid work was relatively low during the 1950s, and May concedes that women's paid work was generally undertaken to supplement the family income. Thus the contention that women's involvement in paid work can be seen as evidence of their desire for self-determination remains open to debate.

Nonetheless, a greater social acceptance of women working outside the home during the 1970s and 1980s forms the most cogent indicator of change between the two generations. In contrast to the domestic ideology of the 1950s, where women's paid work was hidden beneath the facade of the family income, a strong expectation that married women would work outside the home had emerged by the late 1970s. This new paradigm was reinforced by the concerns of Second Wave Feminism and by the desirability of two incomes in a period characterized by economic recession.

Changing attitudes to women and work were accompanied by a new fluidity pertaining to women's traditional roles as wives and mothers. May asserts that, in the 1970s, women of child-bearing age began to see motherhood as only one of a number of activities that they might undertake, while others chose to remain childless. May states, however, that continuity rather than change characterized the life experiences of the women she interviewed. Throughout the period under scrutiny, women retained primary responsibility for child-rearing, and women continued to adhere to the belief that economic security within a heterosexual relationship was desirable.

While many of May's conclusions are convincing her thesis is undermined, to some extent, by her methodology. The study is based on the life experiences of a small group of women (12 women from the 1940s and 1950s and 13 women from the 1970s and 1980s were interviewed) and to ascribe generational representativeness to such a limited sample seems somewhat injudicious. Furthermore, May makes little attempt to analyse the effects of socio-economic status and levels of education on the life experiences of the women she interviewed. Nonetheless, May's study combines oral history with thoughtful commentary and *Minding Children, Managing Men* represents a valuable addition to the growing body of writing on women's history in New Zealand.

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*Sir Joseph Ward: A Political Biography.* By Michael Bassett. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1993. xi, 330 pp. NZ price: \$39.95.

POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY is a hard taskmaster/mistress. It may involve up to ten years from start to finish, as it did for Michael Bassett. Sustaining interest in a single life over that period involves something like mental RSI. The writer has to maintain sympathy with his subject across the gaps created by differences of time, temperament, personality and

ideology. The adjustments entailed carry the risk of over-commitment, and perhaps what some others may regard as loss of objectivity. Yet an unsympathetic biography in the first round is just not on.

I have to declare an interest — or the lack of one. I write as the failed biographer of W.F. Massey, whose dour character created a formidable barrier which I could not break down in the long run. Yet I would still have preferred Massey as a subject to Sir Joseph Ward, who seemed nebulous and even hollow compared with the impenetrable bulk of his chief opponent. Indeed, many historians have tended to pass by Ward on the other side, averting their gaze as much as possible. Others have delighted in sending him up yet again as a vain, verbose obfuscator.

Bassett has achieved what I thought was impossible: a sympathetic biography of Ward which sets out his achievements, and yet paints him with all his warts. It is not enough to say that only a politician could see a politician like Ward in a favourable light. Bassett completed his book after a long career as MP and minister, and uses that as his point of reference. He compared both his own frustrations and achievements with those of Ward. On the first count, he found that Ward had even more to put up with; on the second count, he could only admire what he considered Ward's 'greater impact on so many aspects of the country's development' than that of any other politician. Weighed in that balance, vanity and verbosity can be forgiven, or at least discounted. Bassett admits 'to having fallen under the spell of this ebullient political magician', and fully sets out the attractive side of Ward's character. However, many of Ward's tricks did not come off, and Bassett is far from being spellbound by them. He is the first academic historian to bring political experience to political biography, and this has added a new element to his book. One can only wish there was more of it.

Bassett modestly claims that he has not 'radically' altered the accepted picture of Ward and that he has only filled it out with new details. Nevertheless, there are new interpretations, and new emphases, along with new aspects of Ward's career. Some of them may be briefly outlined. The foundation of Ward's long career was his regional base. As promoter of Bluff harbour and Invercargill's champion against Dunedin he was impregnable. Even after he unwisely lost contact, Southland memories were longer than he deserved.

Ward entered Parliament in 1888, made an immediate impression and became a minister in 1891. The swift promotion may not have been as straightforward as Bassett suggests. After the maritime strike, which he disliked, Ward hedged his bets. He told W.R. Russell that he was independent, with an inclination to Russell's side. Ward did not commit himself to any leader in his election campaign, but Ballance (or more likely, his colleagues) wanted this rising star more than Ward wanted him. Ward exacted his price: he ran his department for most of the year from his Invercargill office.

Bassett shows convincingly that the classic Liberal leadership was a triumvirate of Seddon, McKenzie and Ward. The third man was so indispensable that his two co-equals put the Liberal government in considerable danger to save the bankrupt Ward from political eclipse in 1895. McKenzie, a close friend of Ward, compelled Seddon to take him back into the cabinet in 1899.

Ward's Liberalism was unaggressive, divested of most of its 'masses v. classes' image, and based on 'natural identity of interests' and his own business experience. All social strata, even the top echelons, could support and benefit from Liberal rule. The wealthy in farming, industry and business could take their place in colonial democracy provided they recognized the rights of others, were good employers and paid their taxes. In 1893 Ward refused to disturb, let alone expropriate the estate of G.H. Moore, the owner of Glenmark, the colony's most valuable run. If Moore chose not to improve his estate, that was his business, but he must expect to pay a little more tax.

Ward was, in the early 1890s, the leading colonial business-politician, allowing his private and public affairs to prime each other. Having reached the heights, he overreached himself in the usual way. The tangled affairs of Ward's business and its dubious connection with the Colonial Bank are covered in what can be regarded as the first attempt at a full and fair account. The exercise is rather like trying to untie the Gordian knot, and perhaps Bassett too easily applies the knife in Ward's favour. How can one cut a line between 'deception' and 'fraud'? However, Bassett's conclusions are broadly in line with those of R.C.J. Stone concerning Thomas Russell and the Bank of New Zealand: Ward's speculations with other people's money was common practice. I am not convinced by Bassett's argument that Judge J.S. Williams was biased against Ward.

Bassett's brief outline of Ward's legislative achievements is impressive. Indeed he can now be seen to have a claim to be regarded as our chief lawmaker. However, one would like to know more of how the credit should be shared. Bassett praises Ward's administrative record, but does not survey his departmental role, and the sources of his ideas. Only five of his officers are mentioned — briefly, though approvingly. Somehow, administrative history with a strong element of biography must be written to balance political accounts.

Seddon had removed himself quickly and effectively from Ballance's shadow; Ward could not perform the corresponding feat in 1906-1912. Ward was forced to put up with unflattering comparisons, and partly deserved them for his floundering and skulduggery. But the basic cause of Liberal decline, as Bassett shows brilliantly, was the rise of sectionalism in town and country. It is pleasing to see that the author gives due credit to the seminal thesis of R.K. Newman.

The crisis of the First World War brought Ward back into power, but not into the power role he coveted. In 1915, Ward exacted an even higher price for his entry into cabinet than in 1891 — this time with Massey. It was poetic justice that Ward paid even more dearly for equality with Massey, and for untrammelled power as Minister of Finance. He had to leave it to Labour to make political capital out of wartime shortages and dislocation, which could be sheeted home to Ward; by insisting on accompanying Massey to Europe, he became fully identified with the grievous sacrifices of European war. His contrived attempt to escape in 1919 with a radical programme could not erase his wartime record. Bassett gets to the heart of Ward's decline as a Liberal leader: urbanization made his programme of rural development irrelevant to the great majority of New Zealanders.

The last stage in Ward's long career appeared to be a second premiership in 1928-1930, unique in the twentieth century. In fact, it was almost a non-event. Ward was soon too decrepit to exercise power, but compelled his colleagues to pretend he was. Bassett's treatment of the episode is rightly brief. Its central figure was not Ward, but A.E. Davy, and Davy's behind-the-scenes manipulations in 1925, 1928 and 1935 merit a definitive account. When I interviewed him in 1957, he told me that his papers were intact, and they may still exist.

It is not quite clear why Bassett calls his book a 'political' biography; he ranges widely into Ward's private and family affairs. Ward's first success up to 1895 and his determination to rebuild his career after bankruptcy owed much to two remarkable women: his mother, Hannah, and his wife, Theresa. Ward's Irish-Catholic-Australian background made him an 'outsider' and the social crown of his life was acceptance as an 'insider', replete with honours — for which he schemed mightily.

Bassett states that religion was 'central to Ward's character', and adds elsewhere that he 'worshipped daily'. The implications of these remarks are not, probably cannot, be elaborated in a secular biography. Ward's experience in Bluff and Invercargill made him a tolerant Catholic, ready to accept and be accepted by, Protestant voters. He also accepted the secular state, which made his elevation to head of government possible. Yet the secular

state had only been erected by overruling great areas of denominational feeling in society. Ward became both reluctant agent and target of these unresolved tensions, which rose to their climax during the First World War. In a sense, the secular state both made his career and helped to destroy it.

Bassett's book is well illustrated, but it is frustrating that so many photos are simply rows of faces without names. The illustration on p.127 has special significance in 1993: in the centre of its unidentified figures, next to Ward, stands Ethel Benjamin, the first New Zealand woman lawyer.

Like Keith Sinclair's *Nash* and Raewyn Dalziel's *Vogel*, Bassett's book lacks a proper conclusion. Yet scattered through the text, there are penetrating comments and comparisons that might have been put together to help round off the work. However, like an experienced politician (rather than an historian), Bassett has preferred to make his thrusts where they hit hardest: in the heat of debate. He does not gather them up in a kind of post-session address.

In reviewing Dalziel's book (*New Zealand Journal of History*, 20, 2 (October 1986), p.191), Colin Davis argued that political biography can not expand from its present pragmatic form until we have an [agreed?] 'historical political sociology'. That seems too tall an order. However, as a step forward, future political biographers should be encouraged to make comparative reflections on what has made their subject and other leaders seek power, how they gain it, how they use, abuse and lose it. Bassett has shown the way.

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*The Chapman Legal Family.* By Peter Spiller. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1992. 282 pp., illus. NZ price: \$34.95.

PERHAPS Chief Justice Eichelbaum, in his preface to this volume, has said it all: 'It is a valuable contribution to New Zealand legal history, offering insights into the early development of New Zealand law, so heavily dependent on inherited English tradition but demonstrating from the outset the ability to shape itself to the needs of the new land.' Yet there may be some merit in assessing how well Dr Spiller has incorporated his other aim, a valid picture of the times in which his three leading characters lived.

The origins of the family receive scant attention. Henry Chapman's father is shown as a Barrack-Master, which actually places him in the Ordnance Department of the Army. But Dr Spiller's 'one of four' such ranks isn't very helpful — there were in fact four classes with equivalent ranks ranging from Lieutenant to Major with a consequent significant range in pay. The important thing is that Henry's father was determined that Henry should get a good education, which meant school from the ages of eight to 16 years. (The name of the school has to be found in Scholfield.) Then clerical experience in London and Amsterdam, then in 1823, aged 20 years, the important move to Canada as a commission agent. Here he began to flourish as an advanced liberal acquainted with leading radicals Louis Papineau and A.J. Roebuck. On visits to England he met John Stuart Mill and he began North America's first daily newspaper to discover that wealthy advertisers did not like liberal ideas. Chapman read for the Canadian Bar. By 1832 he was