

Organization histories are demanding, and written within the constraints of time, commission brief and publishing needs. The NCW represents 250,000 women. It has a regionalized branch structure and successive presidents have become national figures in the wider sense. It also has a strong international dimension. It is, as Page comments, a 'do-everything' organization. To convey all of this and yet retain a coherent narrative structure is an achievement in itself. Interesting potted biographies of the presidents are spaced at intervals throughout the text, and a careful selection of photographs enables the presentation of further information and interpretation. Room has been found for the activities of local branches. Westland, for example, is noted for its strong presence. Throughout the 1950s it made regular radio broadcasts, and celebrated the province's centenary in 1960 by publishing *Women of Westland and their Families*, which was joined by two further volumes in 1977 and 1990. One member was on the editorial committee of all three volumes, typifying the long loyal service of many members.

Academics will of course want more; here is the rich material with which to ask further questions.

BRONWYN LABRUM

Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

The Next Generation: Child Rearing in New Zealand. By Jane & James Ritchie. Penguin, Auckland, 1997. 248 pp. NZ price: \$24.95. ISBN 0-140-26604-6.

The Discovery of Early Childhood. The development of services for the care and education of very young children. Mid-eighteenth-century Europe to mid-twentieth-century New Zealand. By Helen May. Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, co-published with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Auckland, 1997. 244 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-86940-166-2.

THE PROFESSORIAL AUTHORS of these two works relating to children and childhood are well-known social scientists whose academic interest in their subjects has been enhanced by perspectives gained from parenthood, political activism and professional association. *The Next Generation* is an informal but well-informed essay in which two committed campaigners against inadequate and violent child-rearing practices survey the findings from their 40 years of research into the methods by which New Zealand parents since the 1960s have sought to raise and control their children. This newest publication is 'more an integration than a summary, reflecting with hindsight, projecting with foresight, in the hope that . . . future generations of children will be better served' (p.8). *The Discovery of Early Childhood*, a carefully-structured and tightly-written text, surveys the intellectual roots of early childhood practices and policies as these have evolved since the mid-eighteenth century. The New Zealand case studies concerning crèche and nursery care services, kindergartens and the plight of abandoned and unwanted youngsters are explored within this wider historical context. The Ritchies move easily in a bicultural world for their research has long been inclusive of Maori, Pakeha and Polynesian. May awaits the published findings of Maori colleagues but signals that the interplay of Maori and Pakeha attitudes towards early childhood policy and practice will be much more apparent in a projected volume dealing with post-1950 developments in New Zealand, the period on which the Ritchies have focused. Several of Helen (Cook) May's earlier

publications have been cited in *The Next Generation* and the origins of the 'pre-formative' child-rearing tradition referred to by the Ritchies (p.205) can be traced in May's new work. Earlier studies by the Ritchies are now virtual source materials in themselves, and their retrospective overview provides a valuable guide to changing family dynamics in a multicultural society. Both works affirm that family patterns have evolved in response to social change, with the emergence of the 'traditional' nuclear family being a relatively recent development.

These complementary books make explicit the interrelationship between teaching and research, a practice which is common amongst social scientists and one which more of New Zealand's academic historians might be encouraged to employ. At Waikato and Victoria universities, May has established archival collections relating to early childhood and parenting. The first-year students enrolled in the course which was the genesis of this book researched activists or organizations whose stories were as yet untold (p.xvii). The Ritchies constantly engaged their senior students in both the intellectual and practical aspects of the research process, providing training in the gathering and processing of data and offering for critical assessment the emerging text of these collaborative works. Opportunities for further investigation into areas of New Zealand family, childhood and women's history are clearly indicated in these studies.

Also apparent is the failure of successive policy-makers to benefit from the insights provided by academic researchers, the absence of any social impact report before the introduction of the Domestic Purposes Benefit being cited as an obvious case in point (*Next Generation*, p.73). As May's work demonstrates, inadequate and reluctant funding of policies to benefit youngsters and their families has been a long-term problem and one that is closely intertwined with perceptions of women's roles within our society. *The Next Generation* charts a significant shift in such attitudes but reinforces the politically unpopular message that more positive strategies of intervention and prevention are necessary to counteract the detrimental effects of poverty and abuse, overcrowding and poor health amongst Maori and Polynesian families in particular (ch.12). The Ritchies document the impact of urbanization on Maori child-rearing patterns, showing that increasing severity of discipline has been one of the results: 'Nothing we know of in Maori society endorsed striking the child' (p.100). Policy anomalies are outlined in both texts. May shows how the persistence of an artificial distinction between care and education has hampered the provision of early childhood services for most of this century. The Ritchies expose the inconsistency of official adherence to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (New Zealand became the 131st signatory in 1993) and retention of Section 59 of the Crimes Act (1961) whereby any parent or caregiver 'is justified in using force by way of correction towards any child under his care, if the force used is reasonable in the circumstance' (p.111). Both the historical and the contemporary perspectives point to one central conclusion: that the crucial importance of the pre-school years in children's development and wellbeing has yet to be fully appreciated and appropriately resourced. A perpetuation of the cycle of violence is one of the consequences of this neglect.

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