

through denunciation of them. It was only the irreversible weakening of some of these institutions, particularly the Empire/Commonwealth, which lead eventually to the cocktail of 'nationalisms' referred to in Malcolm McKinnon's essay. The ANZUS dispute displayed these often contradictory political emotions of lingering loyalty to established allies; the fear of isolation; and the determined advocacy of some interests which pitted New Zealand against its closest allies.

A concern with *New Zealand in World Affairs III* is that too many of the essays appear to be a narrative of events, rather than an explanation of the shifts and continuities in New Zealand's foreign policy. What is of interest to the reader is not the minutiae of how CER was negotiated, for example, but why it came into being at all, given the historical — and mutual — aloofness in trans-Tasman relations.

Given that the book is an ensemble of issues and contributing writers there are, perhaps not surprisingly, different interpretations at times about the same event. This is a strength, not a weakness, and marks the area out for future debate. In his excellent analysis of New Zealand's defence policy, Ian McGibbon sets out the circumstances of the coups in Fiji in 1987, and the insistence of Prime Minister David Lange that New Zealand's defence forces — including an SAS detachment — be on stand-by to intervene if required. In his essay, John Henderson (head of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet at the time) argues that any military involvement contemplated was limited, and would only have been with the permission of the Fijian authorities. The question of whether any armed incursion, if that was required, would have been opposed or not, is obviously a matter for further scrutiny and debate.

Overall, *New Zealand in World Affairs III* works well as an introduction to some major themes in New Zealand foreign policy, many of which are still with us today. It is to be hoped that some of these issues will be taken up in further research. New Zealand has a proud history of involvement in world affairs that deserves greater attention than it often receives from professional historians. In the context of opening the debate on New Zealand's recent international history, the editor and contributing writers have done a good job. Of course, like great wine, it will take many years yet for that debate, and the historiography, to mature properly.

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Wellington

Victoria University of Wellington 1899–1999: A History. By Rachel Barrowman. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1999. 432 pp. NZ price: \$69.95. ISBN 0-86473-369-0.

IT WILL be left to future historians to ponder the bitter ironies of Victoria University of Wellington celebrating its centenary as angry and demoralized staff and students stood by its gates protesting against the university's divisive management style. For many, 1999 was Victoria's *annus horribilis* — to use a term popularized by an heir of the institution's namesake — with an unprecedented vote of no confidence by staff in their senior managers, a series of strikes, and threats of boycotts and lockouts.

It was in the midst of this turmoil that Rachel Barrowman's impressive history of Victoria was launched. While some wondered what there was to celebrate, others searched for a 'useable past' to contextualize their present troubles. Many gained strength from Victoria's night-school roots (it was to be a 'People's University'), strong tradition of protest (from the von Zedlitz affair to Vietnam) and democratic forms of administration (the first New Zealand university to have student representatives on administrative committees). This knowledge was used by critics to charge university management with

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compromising Victoria's democratic and egalitarian conventions. Victoria, the critics contended, should stand by its own traditions not replicate those of others.

A closer inspection of Barrowman's work would have shown that Victoria has always been more a university of the middle classes than one of the 'people'. Nonetheless, I doubt other university histories have found such immediate practical use as this one. That the book was so quickly referred to is a credit to Barrowman's accessible structure and lucid writing style. Institutional histories are often weighty and deadly affairs, in which the hapless author formulaically relates the institution's 'remarkable progress' and uncritically celebrates its 'great people and their deeds'. At over 400 pages, Barrowman's work is weighty but far from deadly. It is also considered rather than celebratory. She deliberately dispenses with the university's first 50 years in four chapters — on the basis that J.C. Beaglehole's jubilee history of the same period was still relevant — to concentrate on the last 50 years. From here she takes a thematic approach with chapters dealing with the growth and administration of the university, the buildings and site (poor and inadequate buildings were a perennial problem), the academic departments and the students. The final chapter deals with the introduction of managerialism and student fees at Victoria, on which Barrowman (perhaps not surprisingly) is editorially silent.

The chapters on the academic departments make up the largest part of the book and are filled with engaging and often quirky characters, including 'the accountancy lecturer who discoursed to his class on numerology and distributed religious tracts'. Most other academics were more orthodox. Some made significant new findings in their chosen areas of study. Among these was the geologist Harold Wellman, who received the university's first personal chair for his work on plate tectonics and the 'discovery' of New Zealand's alpine fault — a topic of obvious relevance to earthquake-prone Wellington. A sore point for Victoria's science community, however, was the failure to secure a medical or engineering school, not least because of the status and research funds that such ventures attract.

This left the way open for Victoria to develop expertise and generate funds in other areas. Wellington's position as the nation's political capital had a significant influence here. The establishment of Victoria's School of Political Science and Public Administration in the 1930s was, writes Barrowman, 'an expression of the prevailing liberal-left belief in the power of an educated democracy, and a response to the demands of a rapidly expanding public service'. The demand has remained. Victoria's academics constantly advise governments on issues of public policy, and hundreds of public servants clamber up the hill from town to pursue studies relevant to their work.

If there is a weakness in the book then, it lies in this connection between 'town and gown'. So often universities are dismissed by the ill-informed as living outside the 'real world'. Here was an opportunity to challenge this absurdity by examining the university's role in wider society. For example, historians have made much of the 'Chicago School' of economics and its impact on American (and Western) society. Does Victoria have a similar school, with a more localised impact? Some who watched the divisions of fresh-faced Victoria commerce graduates filling the lower (and then higher) echelons of the Treasury from the mid-1980s might say that it has. How did the education these graduates received at Victoria inform the types of decisions made in the Treasury?

This aside, I found Barrowman's history a highly satisfying read. The book is well designed and liberally illustrated. My favourite photographs were of a graffiti-covered lecture bench (surely ripe for analysis) and a 1950s 'Martha' pouring tea for earnest Christians in the pokey but central Student Christian Movement cabin. Victoria's staff and students have already found value in the publication of their institution's history. I am sure that others, scholars and general readers alike, will find it equally rewarding.

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