

of the 1940s. It is hard to believe that no interviews with any of the key figures from the 1940s onwards exist, and Hunt does not explain whether he searched for any. So although the book occasionally offers glimpses of Walsh's private and business life, it fails to offer similar glimpses of Walsh the union leader and economic statesmen.

By now he was a champion of the organizations that formed the key structures of the syndicalist state, the party and the federation. Discontent was dealt with as a form of disloyalty. His ability to smell a difficulty long before anyone else, and (by New Zealand standards) his lack of scruple, made him both feared and formidable. He saw off every challenger and every threat, including that of Catholic Action (a side of his life I was unaware of before reading Hunt). In the 1950s, as he built the country's largest dairy herd, he also skilfully used all of his formidable abilities to maintain the wages and conditions of unionized workers and to smash the 1951 strikers and their organizations and played a key role in negotiating access to British markets after the war. In the 1950s he got along well with key figures in the National Party, but became estranged from Nash and Nordmeyer. By the late 1950s he was under challenge on several fronts, not least from his own health (he suffered his first heart attack in 1944). He hung on until 1963, remaining President of the Federation until the end.

Walsh never married. His only daughter, Una, was very dear and close to him. By and large labour's mission was his lifetime's commitment. It is unclear why Hunt decided not to use footnotes or endnotes; their absence weakens the usefulness of this otherwise valuable book.

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On the Left: Essays on Socialism in New Zealand. Edited by Pat Moloney and Kerry Taylor. University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2002. 260 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-8772-7619-7.

ON THE LEFT focuses on the history of socialist and left-wing ideas and organizations in New Zealand, and will appeal to the specialist reader. The authors define the 'left' in broad terms, 'as any critical response to industrial capitalism offering collectivist solutions aimed at minimizing inequalities' (p.15). The essays cover more than a century of activism, ranging from the Knights of Labour in the 1890s to Te Roopu Rawakore o Aotearoa, the national movement for the unemployed, in the 1990s. Some chapters focus upon fictional writing, including the poems of 'Billy Banjo' in the *Maoriland Worker* and a brief survey of utopian literature in New Zealand (which inexplicably leaves out a classic text, the Guild Socialist *New New Zealand*). In a complete change of pace, two interviews explore the intellectual and experiential trajectories of left-wing academics Gay Simpkin and Erik Olssen.

This is, therefore, an eclectic set of essays, not uncommon among edited collections. One of its strengths is those studies that explore the tension, still evident among contemporary activists, between socialist and Marxist theories and the perspectives of other disadvantaged groups, such as women and Māori. Kerry Taylor's interesting chapter, for example, describes the attempts by the Communist Party of New Zealand to engage with, and recruit, Māori. Serious attention to Māori issues began in 1928, with the first critical analysis of the Treaty of Waitangi. In 1935 the party issued a pamphlet in Māori, *Ki te Iwi Maori*, and intermittently discussed ideas about Māori self-determination over the next decade. As Taylor suggests, these policies, radical for their time, should have created the basis for a productive engagement with Māori. That this happened

infrequently — and only then as the consequence of links between particular individuals — he attributes to the failure of the party to reconceptualize its own role as the vanguard of the working class: ‘the party’s role was to lead the working class to revolution. If Maori were not working class, then the CPNZ was not their party’ (p.115).

Turning to the book as a whole, most chapters follow a conventional empirical approach, and there is little evidence of the ‘linguistic turn’ in these pages. Nonetheless, even within these methodological parameters it could be argued that some chapters take a very one-dimensional approach to their subject. Triangulation may have gone out of fashion (has it?), but certainly more interesting questions and answers might have emerged if some authors had looked beyond single collections of archival documents reflecting invariably limited perspectives.

The editors begin their introduction with the assertion that ‘the left in New Zealand has not received the scholarly attention it deserves’ (p.11); the book is an attempt to rectify this neglect. The point is surely debatable: certainly large areas of labour history remain unexplored — for example major trade union histories — but on the whole the left has received far more consideration by historians than the right. While this collection includes some new and interesting case studies of left-wing thought and activism, there is little attempt to integrate or relate these to the broader currents of New Zealand history. Kerry Taylor poses precisely this question in the interview with Erik Olssen. He asks, ‘What place would the socialist movement and socialist tradition have in a general history of New Zealand?’ Olssen replies, ‘It’s not an unreasonable question’ (p.195). Quite right, but the answer is not to be found here.

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The Mediator: A Life of Richard Taylor, 1805–1873. By J.M.R. Owens. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2004. 352 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-86473-464-6.

‘THIS IS AN ADMIRABLE BOOK — the mature product of long and vigilant observation, a clear intellect, and a variously accomplished mind.’ So wrote a reviewer of Richard Taylor’s scholarly work, *Te Ika a Maui*, when it was first published in the 1850s. The same assessment could be made of Owens’s biography of Taylor, the product of exhaustive research among the primary material generated by Taylor, his family and the CMS mission, and also of Owens’s long and deep study of New Zealand history.

The central thesis of this biography is that Taylor was a mediator, a missionary who represented and explained Maori to Pakeha and vice versa. He sought to create a colony in which both peoples would live side by side, under the just execution of the Treaty of Waitangi. Owens also argues, however, that the Treaty was doomed to failure. One of the themes which he develops throughout the book is that missionary political influence and humanitarianism were at their zenith in the production of the Treaty. Once settlers controlled the colony, however, the influence of missionaries like Taylor was gradually eclipsed. Owens gives detail of Taylor’s many attempts to influence governors, ministers and premiers. Like the settlers relegated to the fringes of the Waitangi hui on 5–6 February, though, Owens argues that Pakeha New Zealanders were essentially outside of the Treaty between the Crown and Maori. Taylor tried to get Premier Fox to soften his stance on the confiscation of land from Ngati Ruanui. ‘But Taylor represented those who had persuaded Maori to sign the Treaty of Waitangi, Fox represented those who had been excluded from the treaty. There could be no meeting of minds on Maori issues from these two viewpoints’ (p.280). Neither Owens nor Taylor were as fatalist as this