

1958. However, his term ended in 1950. He says Rex Mason was excluded from the first Labour cabinet. In fact Mason was a senior minister in both the first and second Labour governments. He says Labour had only a one-seat majority after 1946. However, it held 42 seats to National's 38. Bennett claims that Savage's origins in Australia have been all but forgotten and cites the fruitless search by New Zealand historians for a memorial in Savage's Victorian birthplace, Benalla. However, Savage is now remembered in Benalla's Pioneer Museum and the Albury-Wodonga campus of La Trobe University hosts an annual lecture in Savage's honour. These criticisms aside, James Bennett's book is an excellent piece of scholarship. It deserves to be widely read.

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Living in Utopia: New Zealand's Intentional Communities. By Lucy Sargisson and Lyman Tower Sargent. Ashgate, Aldershot, Hants., 2004. 211 pp. UK price: £45.00. ISBN 0-7546-4224-0.

I CAN REMEMBER WALKING down Wanganui's Victoria Avenue with my mother 30-odd years ago and seeing a scruffy group of people standing outside a shop: women with long hair and flowery dresses that almost swept the ground; men with hair just as long, with beards, jeans and bare feet. I was wide-eyed; Mum was unimpressed. She muttered something like 'James K. Baxter and his bloody hippies from up the river', and dragged me across the road. I knew they were a bad lot: everyone said the Baxters were the worst family in our street. Years later I realized who Baxter and these people were. And I knew that he had nothing to do with the meanest kids on the block.

Communities such as those that formed around Baxter are the subjects of *Living in Utopia*. Lucy Sargisson and Lyman Tower Sargent have studied 'intentional communities' in New Zealand since the mid-1990s, including visiting and talking with people who have lived or still live in such places. There is a healthy literature on communities, and the authors lead us through various labels before settling on a 'simple and inclusive' working definition: 'intentional communities are groups of people who have chosen to live (and sometimes work) together for some common purpose Their *raison d'être* goes beyond tradition, personal relationships or family ties' (p.6.).

People form and join these communities to realize a desire for a better way of life — a utopia. That may be spiritual — the Centrepoin community (1978–2000) — or religious — the Bodhinyanarama Buddhist Monastery (1985–). It may be for environmental reasons, such as at Otamatea Ecovillage (1997–) or the communal organic farm of Gricklegrass (1973–). Other communities want a cooperative lifestyle: the separatist lesbian feminist community of Earthspirit (1985–); the Earthsong co-housing project (1995–). These three broad types of community form the core chapters, which outline their general elements and then give case studies: who founded the communities and when, how they operate, their aims.

Whatever their basis, these communities are, the authors argue, a search for utopia. New Zealand has more than its fair share of these 'concrete utopias'. Sargisson and Sargent believe that there are more intentional communities per capita here than elsewhere, including a high number that have survived for several decades. As well as discussing around 50 of New Zealand's intentional communities, the authors' aim is to explore the reasons why utopianism plays a 'central role' in New Zealand history.

Broad chronological chapters set the scene. Several special settlements were mooted or established in the nineteenth century, some of which had strong religious themes, including the Scots settlement at Waipu, and the Brethren 'Rootsites', based at Halcombe

for a time. New Zealand's first 'commune' was formed during this time, on the banks of the Avon River. The Federative Home or Wainoni was established in 1896 by Alexander Bickerton, Professor of Chemistry at Canterbury College, renaissance man and local eccentric whose income maintained this short-lived experiment.

The nineteenth-century legacy notwithstanding, Sargisson and Sargent identify three key contributions to New Zealand's communal experiments: the government-sponsored ohu movement of the 1970s; the communities that formed around Baxter in the late 1960s and early 1970s; and 'Beeville'. This extraordinary community, established in either 1927 or 1933, began life as a beekeeping business. It shortly took on all the hallmarks of the 1970s counter-culture, interwar style, but still sustained by honey production, among other things. It was variously and at the same time anarchist, pacifist, secular and vegetarian; there was an interest in Eastern religions and Theosophy, and a liberal attitude towards sexuality and 'free love'. Beeville was known internationally, and although it wound up in the early 1970s, it left a lasting legacy on New Zealand's intentional communities.

The authors also examine the nuts and bolts of community living: issues of conflict and longevity; and the 'lasting lessons' from studying New Zealand's intentional communities. This reads more as a guide for communal living generally, including advice on balancing the needs of individuals and the group, maintaining personal space and so on.

Living in Utopia is both a snapshot of intentional communities in New Zealand today, and a history of communal living in this country, with more of an emphasis on the former. It is focused tightly on the communities, and I wasn't clear about their contribution to our wider history. The authors see New Zealand — 'surely, one of the most beautiful countries in the world . . . an earthly paradise' (p.15) — as particularly attractive to dreamers, and offer this as a reason for the large number of intentional communities. This 'land of plenty' provided people with an opportunity to realize utopia, whether that was in the organized settlements of the New Zealand Company in the 1840s, or the ecovillages of the 2000s, the fastest growing type of community in New Zealand today. Remote New Zealand seems to attract the social dreamers, they argue, who find the 'modern world' too fast, too busy, too crowded, too materialistic.

I was not convinced by this, and not only because it seems a romantic, almost quaint view of New Zealand. New Zealanders do not necessarily consider their country remote (from where?), and it is not clear how that plays a part in the formation of communities by people already living here or how important it has been in attracting community builders from overseas. Other 'New World' countries were also settled by people trying to make a better life: were the dreams of those who came to New Zealand distinctive? A temperate climate, a comparatively small population, opportunity to get away from the 'mainstream', and 'beauty' — in its many guises — are not unique to New Zealand, and how these things have influenced many of the communities discussed in this book is not always evident. This is the first study of its kind, and as such, it provides an interesting insight into the aspirations of New Zealanders, now and in the past, who chose to live in separate communities.

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Creating a National Spirit: Celebrating New Zealand's Centennial. Edited by William Renwick. Victoria University Press, 2004. 294 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-86473-475-1.

THE SUBTITLE OF THIS WELL-ILLUSTRATED and attractive volume indicates its tone. This is to be both celebration and official record: exhaustive and packed with empirical detail. It was fascinating to learn, for example, that by 1928, when the number of