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.

BRONWYN DALLEY

Ministry for Culture and Heritage

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

international exhibitions 'grew in frequency, cost and political significance', many nations signed a convention on the use of the term 'international' for exhibitions and adhered to the Paris Secretariat's standards and scheduling arrangements. Clearly this demonstrates how significant nations thought that international exhibitions were. If the tidal wave of books and articles on world fairs and international exhibitions is any indication, increasing numbers of scholars have also seen these as important occasions to analyse. New Zealand did not sign the convention, however, which begs the intriguing question of why it demurred.

International exhibitions were glamorous and multi-faceted mass spectacles, which live on in aspiration if not achievement in the increasingly competitive opening ceremonies of Olympic and Commonwealth Games. As this book shows, the exhibition at Rongotai in Wellington was only one component of a feast of events for the eyes and ears. There were also memorials and ceremonies all round the country, radio broadcasts, plays, music, books, dictionaries, a planned atlas (which did not materialize) and a film. *Creating a National Spirit*'s rather brief chapters were originally presented at a Stout Research Centre conference to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the exhibition's opening. Many contributions appear to have altered little since the verbal presentation. Asides about current developments on Wellington's waterfront have remained, for example. This suggests that the editor's role was one of compilation rather than reworking and refining for publication.

Given that the centennial surveys G.H. Scholefield's *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, the *Making New Zealand* series, the film *One Hundred Crowded Years* and selected aspects of the exhibition have dominated existing accounts, it is valuable to read about the State sponsorship of theatre and music events and also the business and commercial aspects of the exhibition, to take just two examples. In regard to the latter, author Gavin McLean notes that the exhibition company knew that it 'had to put on a good show in the fullest sense'. This acknowledgement that most visitors went to the exhibition for its fun-fair aspects and avoided the more high-minded pretensions of the centennial year needs more exploration. Bernard Kernot makes an intelligent assessment of Apirana Ngata's contribution to the exhibition. His 'masterly display of public relations' and 'counter-colonisation' enabled him to appeal directly to the public in an attempt to vindicate his cultural renaissance programmes centred on the School of Arts and Crafts. Most of the contributions in this volume focus on the (high) cultural and intellectual features of the exhibition courts, memorials, books, radio programmes, film and theatre. Apart from a 'hurrah for playland', popular culture and understandings are not discussed, which is a pity, particularly in terms of thinking about widespread understandings of history, the nation and cultural nationalism. Among the many well-chosen photographs are images of the workers at the exhibition site and the vast audiences who flocked to see and hear various events. Were the historical pageants and re-enactments of the first landings of Pakeha on local beaches the extent of community and popular involvement?

Each chapter is written by a well-known scholar in their field, which makes it all the more inexplicable that they did not situate their topics in the context of the international literature on exhibitions, nor in the context of recent reassessments of New Zealand culture and cultural nationalism by James Belich, Peter Gibbons and others. Footnotes are few and most do not appear to have been updated from first outing in 1999. The focus is on description rather than analysis. By and large the exhibition is discussed in its own terms. Chapters by John Martin, questioning the extent to which the much-vaunted 'social laboratory' was actually on display in the government court, and Rachel Barrowman, dissecting the more complex narratives of history and romance provided in the centennial surveys, do point to wider developments in New Zealand's history. It is as if many of the authors are imprisoned within the world view they seek to explain, reproducing the cultural nationalism espoused at the time as if it is natural and inevitable. Questions of cultural maturity, the 'birth of the nation', 'national feeling' are surely inadequate for the

range of meanings the exhibition and associated events contained and expressed. Is it a peculiar articulation of the local or a sign of cultural maturation if most other countries are also mounting their own extravaganzas? New Zealand had hosted other national exhibitions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so how did this one differ, if at all? How can we ascertain what the majority of New Zealanders thought and felt about it?

Jock Phillips's afterword 'reviews these events from the perspective of a present-day historian'. Subtitled a 'reading' of the centennial, it performs a much-needed function in the volume as a whole by bringing together many themes and commentary of individual contributions. He focuses on the values espoused amidst the conscious national stock-taking. He begins by acknowledging the smaller audiences that attended many of the events discussed in this volume, in contrast to the exhibition, and how it was those Pakeha in authority who self-consciously promoted this soul searching. The major themes of the 1940 centennial are no surprise to him nor to most readers: 'a century of good race relations; praise for the pioneer combined uneasily with tributes to material progress and New Zealand's natural beauty; an emphasis on the woman in the home; a view of government as beneficent and wide ranging; and a sense of New Zealand's identity as forged within the Empire'. He concludes that 'the enduring interest of the occasion is the balance between what is different and what remains the same'. With the rich and suggestive analyses of other national expositions now available we can surely go beyond the familiar change versus continuity dialectic.

Creating a National Spirit is a useful compendium, as was the earlier volume on the 1906 Christchurch Exhibition. Indeed, the Stout Centre is to be congratulated for supporting these and many other important history conferences and the resulting publications. Yet this book does not make the most of its opportunities to speak to wider historical issues in both New Zealand and international contexts. Nor does it tackle head on such cherished concepts as cultural nationalism and cultural maturity within a broader framework.

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Downstage Upfront: The First 40 Years of New Zealand's Longest-Running Professional Theatre. By John Smythe. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2004. 512 pp. NZ price: $49.95. ISBN 0-8647-3489-1.

LOOKING AT THE ROLE OF THEATRE in a particular society and the evolution of dramatic performance as an expression of its fears and aspirations is a useful way of judging how that society thinks about itself. One aspect of this is the eagerness with which ordinary people perform, something we can see in the proliferation of dramatic societies from early colonization; another reason is the eagerness with which they stay away from other people's performances, meaning that the degree to which they do in fact attend is a reasonably accurate calibration of what they value. Shakespeare from the first, naturally, and touring productions from overseas, but, much earlier and more often than might be expected, local writers, too, using British and European models to express local and regional themes, often in rambunctious, well-attended shows featuring 'sensation scenes' — fires, volcanic explosions and balloon rides somehow simulated onstage in violation of all known public safety laws. By the time of the Centennial in 1940 a familiar landscape had emerged of amateur urban repertory and more ambitious projects like the Unity Theatre in Wellington and Auckland's People's Theatre, which quivered on the edge of the professional.

All this by way of introduction to John Smythe's excellent account of Wellington's