

Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand. Edited by Melanie Nolan. Canterbury University Press in association with the Trade Union History Project, Christchurch, 2005. 318 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 1-877257-40-0.

THIS COLLECTION OF ESSAYS is the product of a conference organized by the Trade Union History Project in November 2003. It follows hard on the heels of *The Big Blue: Snapshots of the 1951 Waterfront Lockout* (2004), an assemblage of papers presented to the TUHP's 2001 Conference, 'Lockout '51: fifty years on'. On this occasion there has been a shift in nomenclature between conference and publication; a 'general strike' has become a 'great strike' and the question that preceded it, 'A Laboratory or a Battleground of Democracy?', yields to the single word, 'Revolution'. Thus a label that reflected the expectations of the activist few, if not the industrial reality, and a degree of uncertainty gives way to one that suggests both less and more. In purely industrial terms, the events that preoccupied New Zealanders in the final months of 1913 are seen as 'a remarkable feat of working-class solidarity'. They took New Zealand as close as it 'has ever come to a general strike' but fell somewhat short of producing one. Conversely, the 1913 strike is presented here as more than an industrial struggle over arbitration or power. It was also part of a wider struggle over the kind of democracy New Zealand would be in the twentieth century. In short, the great strike of 1913 helps bring down the curtain on the social liberalism that had provided a political consensus of sorts for nigh on 20 years. After 1913, Melanie Nolan writes in a succinct and agenda-setting introduction, a 'class-based political system' became entrenched. Similarly, Jim McAloon argues that the 1913 strike represents 'the culmination of a prolonged period of class re-formation' that saw a political merger between large and small property around conservative themes of imperialism and hostility to militant organized labour (or, indeed, organized labour of any kind). It was a merger cemented in the Reform Party where, as McAloon puts it, 'John Grigg's erstwhile farmhand, the South Auckland cow-cocky, and the Canterbury patrician happily co-existed in defence of their interests'.

As a chapter in our industrial history the 1913 strike raises important questions about the dynamics of trade union militancy and the relationship between industrial and craft unionism. Whatever their particular focus most authors address aspects of these issues. Erik Olssen, whose path-breaking study of the Red Feds looms large throughout this collection, sets out his argument that the strike was fundamentally rooted in rank and file militancy. It left in its wake a labour movement in better shape than after the 1890 Maritime Strike and committed to both organization at the point of production and to the quest for industrial and political unity. Miles Fairburn raises a number of important questions about the dynamics of trade union behaviour and the nature of rank and file militancy. Peter Franks calls for the moderate majority to be put back into labour history and begins the process by examining the response to 1913 of three craft unions — Dunedin's Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the Wellington Typographical Union and Auckland's Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners. He endorses Jim Holt's conclusion that the arbitration system rather than industrial unionism won out in 1913. The craft unions did not rush to endorse new and more radical forms of industrial organization. Such transformation as did occur came primarily in response to the great depression. Melanie Nolan discusses the gender dimension of the radicalization that preceded and encompassed the events of 1913. She finds much evidence of class solidarity, some examples of the experience launching individuals into more prominent and public roles but little transformation of gender roles. David Grant's chapter on the Federated Seamen's Union explains how the union's ageing Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin membership took their cues from entrenched local leaders whose personal and often petty agendas worked against a unified response. Only in Wellington did a younger

generation more in sympathy with the new radicalism assert itself and push a calculating leader to adopt a more militant stance.

A cluster of contributors focus on the state's role in shaping the events of 1913. Miles Fairburn and Richard Hill wrestle with the motivations and machinations of the Massey government and, to a lesser extent, the employers. Fairburn rejects what he calls the conspiracy theory that the government and employers acted in concert and with deliberation to destroy the UFL and thus nip militant unionism in the bud. In his view, the evidence is too thin to sustain such an interpretation and the confrontational aspects of the government's handling of the strike belong to the category of 'cock-up'. Richard Hill's chapter clearly demurs: if the evidence of direct government/employer manipulation falls short of yielding a 'smoking gun', the 'cock-up' view of events withers before sustained analysis of the evidence. An examination of the role of the military in Wellington and Auckland by John Crawford adds to this record. He concludes that the regular and territorial forces were crucial to the outcome of the strike. By providing logistical support and operational advice and by facilitating the enrolment of territorials as 'special constables' the military forces ensured control in the streets and allowed the government to achieve a resumption of work on the wharves with arbitrationist unions.

Whatever the role of the state in 1913 there was no recourse (as there was to be during the 1951 lockout) to muzzling the press. James Taylor samples the attitudes and assumptions of the *Dominion*, the mouthpiece of the Reform Party, the *Maoriland Worker*, the voice of militant labour, and the populist *Truth*. To the *Dominion*, bent as it was upon upholding the central tenets of 'colonial bourgeois ideology', the strikers quickly became foreign agitators outside the pale of mainstream New Zealand society. The *Maoriland Worker* and *Truth* were equally unambiguous in their portrayal of the class nature of society. Taylor concludes that the rhetoric of class was more widely diffused than has been generally acknowledged.

A number of contributors deal more specifically with the ideas that helped shape events. Mark Derby discusses the influence of syndicalist thinking and especially that of William E. Trautmann, a founder of the IWW. He sees the writings of this New Zealand-born activist of German descent as providing an important conduit by which syndicalism reached New Zealand. This syndicalism was more pragmatic and flexible in its strategies and less wedded to the general strike than commonly thought. In a chapter on the revolutionary left and the waterside workers Kerry Taylor directs our attention to those sections of the labour movement who rejected the compromises involved in the increasing preoccupation with winning state power via Parliament. He traces the radical industrial and political alternative to labourism offered by the New Zealand Socialist Party, the New Zealand Communist Party and a range of Marxist groups. In different ways each laid claim to be the rightful heir of the Red Fed revolutionary tradition. In a chapter that examines the ideological temperament of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British trade unionism, Donald MacRaild provides a snapshot of the cluster of ideas and experiences that loomed large in the thinking of a sizeable slice of the New Zealand trade union movement. He emphasizes the comparative weakness of revolutionary or syndicalist impulses and describes a labour movement in which most workers 'were bargainers, concerned with the world as it existed, not as it might be'. The same pragmatism dominated the labour movement's attitude to politics; most workers were open to the notion of independent political action but thought the Liberal Party the best bet if reforms were to be achieved here and now.

Revolution continues the high standard of earlier collections published by the TUHP. Well illustrated and handsomely produced, it comes with a useful chronology of events and bibliography. As a conference-generated collection it is a model of its kind. Focused on a coherent set of themes and set firmly in the existing literature by an editorial

introduction, it makes a compelling case for the need to re-examine the position of the great strike in our history.

LEN RICHARDSON

Christchurch

City of Enterprise: Perspectives on Auckland Business History. Edited by Ian Hunter and Diana Morrow. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2006. 272 pp. NZ price: \$49.99. ISBN 1-86940-351-7.

BUSINESS HISTORY IN NEW ZEALAND has experienced a reinvigoration of late, facilitated largely by the establishment of the Auckland Business History Project at The University of Auckland. The objectives for this project included developing business history as a discipline and helping to facilitate a broader historical understanding of New Zealand's commercial sector.¹ *City of Enterprise: Perspectives on Auckland Business History* is the first book published as a result of this project.

Concentrating on a range of commercial activities in Auckland since 1840, *City of Enterprise* acknowledges Auckland as the 'commercial capital' of New Zealand, and seeks to show the role of different industries and individual businesses in its development as such. As a collection of wide-ranging and diverse works by 12 authors, the book reflects the broad scope of business history as a discipline. Editors Ian Hunter and Diana Morrow explain in the introduction their intention to set Auckland business history within a broader context, and the structure of the book reflects this approach. The first chapter by John Singleton sets the national and international context for Auckland's economy since 1840. Chapters two and three respectively explore how Maori enterprise and maritime activities contributed to Auckland's commercial development. The chapters that follow each take a narrower focus. Some observe the activities of single firms, such as Ian Hunter's study of innovation in business development and market strategies in Farmers Trading Company. Others take a broader look at the operations of several actors in a particular industry, such as Diana Morrow in her study of Auckland newspapers. A reprinted address by Russell Stone provides an afterword which sums up themes of myth and reality in Auckland's business history.

The interdisciplinary nature of business history is reflected well in this collection. There are a variety of techniques in historical method evident throughout the chapters, and the sources used cover a wide range. Hazel Petrie, for example, employs social history techniques, including in her sources personal correspondence and travellers' recollections to help develop her account of Maori enterprise in early Auckland. Michael Keenan, in contrast, makes use of the Auckland Gas Company's financial records and annual reports to explain the financial management strategies used in that company's development. Gordon Winder employs historical geography techniques by exploring street directories to illustrate the development of manufacturing clusters in Auckland from 1889 to 1908.

The experience of Auckland business endeavours within the wider national and international context is effectively shown at various points. John Singleton's chapter provides a useful backdrop. Gavin McLean demonstrates how Auckland's port development related to shipping activities elsewhere in New Zealand. Ian Hunter gives an overview of the development of New Zealand retailing in his chapter. Simon Ville's chapter on stock and station agents and wool brokers focuses on how these served as a conduit between New Zealand's rural and urban commercial sectors. Rachel Morley shows how internationalization forces in more recent decades have structurally and culturally affected change in Auckland accounting businesses. Diana Morrow, on the other