

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

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*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.<sup>1</sup> *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

hand, highlights how within Auckland the dynamics of different business and political relationships shaped the commercial and social environment, especially in relation to the newspaper industry.

While most chapters consider how Auckland became the 'commercial capital' of New Zealand, progress is not always the focus. Failure is also explored. In his chapter on the timber industry, Ken Jackson analyzes the unsuccessful strategies of the Kauri Timber Company to dominate the timber market to its own advantage. Steve Jones charts the rise and demise of warehousing and manufacturing firm Ross and Glendining, and the effects of company decisions made in response to the political, economic and business context in which it operated.

This book not only reflects the complexity of the study of business history in its subject matter, approaches and range of experience, but also highlights the diversity of commercial activity that has risen (and declined) in Auckland since its inception. The photos and illustrations peppered throughout provide useful visual evidence of changes that have taken place in Auckland's commercial activities and landscape, and contribute a level of nostalgia. These factors should create wider audience appeal.

Russell Stone's afterword offers some thought-provoking ideas about broader perceptions of Auckland within New Zealand, and makes some interesting conclusions about its exceptionalism. These ideas are fitting for a conclusion, but it is somewhat disappointing that at this point in the book such ideas do not engage more explicitly with different aspects of the preceding chapters. This could have brought common themes and actors more to the fore and integrated the collection more effectively.

When the Auckland Business History Project was established, debates arose about how business history should be researched and presented in New Zealand in relation to the wider international context of the discipline. Prominent ideas included the challenges of achieving interdisciplinary integration in business history, the importance of relating New Zealand business experience to the wider international context and making business history accessible to a wide audience.<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, *City of Enterprise* meets these challenges well, and is a welcome contribution to the renaissance of business history in New Zealand. This is not a comprehensive history of Auckland business, but it is a good start. It explores some key elements of business history and highlights important factors and characters that contributed to the creation of New Zealand's premier enterprise city. As the editors note, it provides a good platform for a variety of business history studies in New Zealand; it seems that for every gap the collection fills, more opportunities for future research are highlighted. This book therefore gives good reason to be optimistic for the future of the discipline in New Zealand.

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#### NOTES

1 'About the project', Auckland Business History Project, <http://www.businesshistory.auckland.ac.nz/archive/index.html>.

2 This debate was evident in various articles developed as a result of the 1991 ARANZ symposium on business archives and business history that were published in *Archifacts*, October 1993; Ralph Hayman, *Towards a Definition of 'Business History'*, Dunedin, 1992.