

**NEW
ZEALAND**
between the
WARS



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EDITED BY RACHAEL BELL



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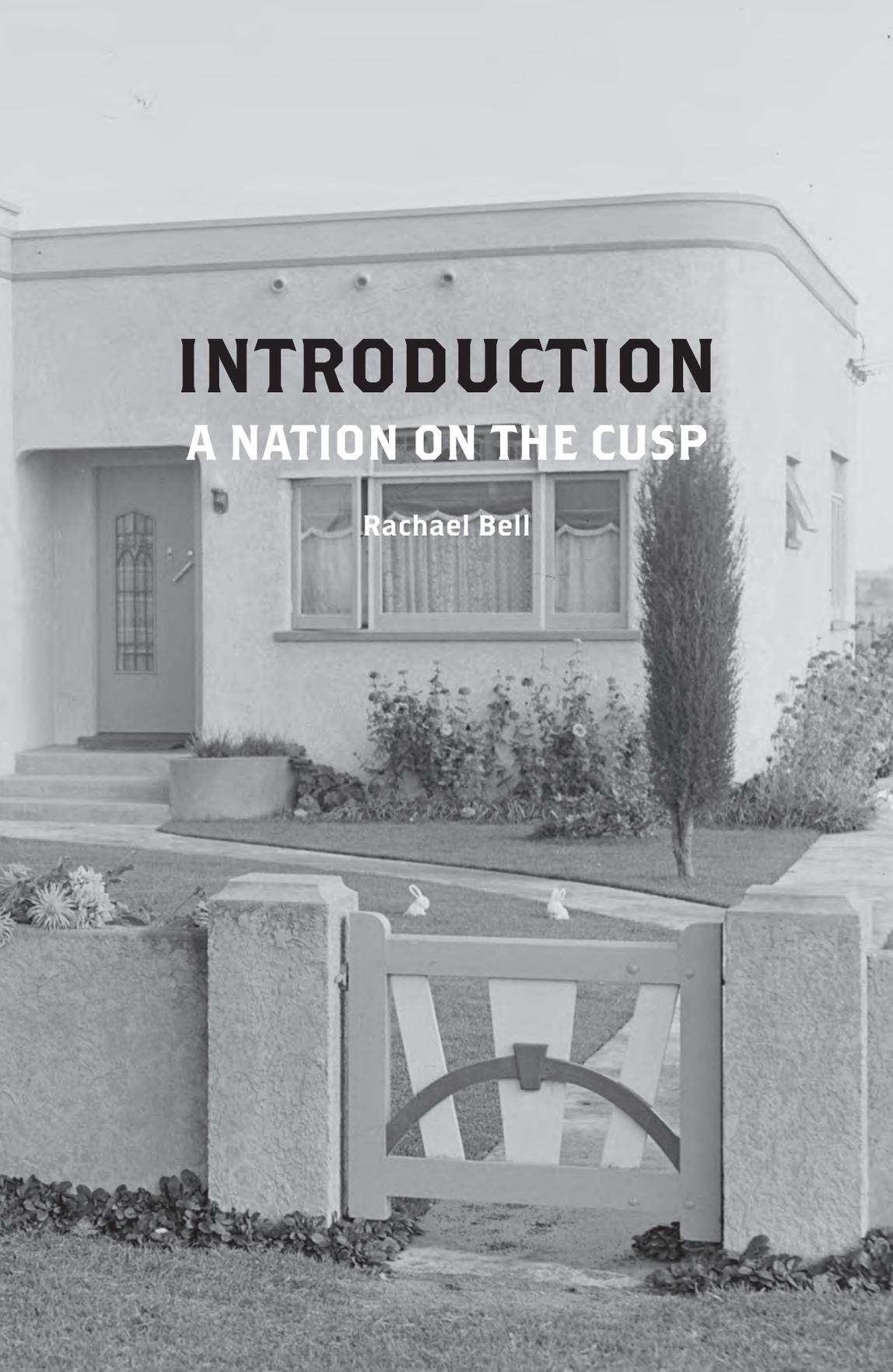
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A black and white photograph of a single-story house. The house has a light-colored exterior and a dark door with a decorative window. To the right of the door is a window with curtains. In front of the house is a garden with a concrete gate and two white rabbits. The gate is made of concrete pillars and a wooden frame with a decorative arch. The rabbits are sitting on the grass in front of the gate. The house has a flat roof with a decorative cornice. There are three small circular vents on the wall above the window. The overall scene is a quiet residential setting.

INTRODUCTION

A NATION ON THE CUSP

Rachael Bell

PREVIOUS PAGES:

A new style for a new era: the clean, modern lines of art deco characterised the rebuild following the Napier earthquake of 1931.

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If, as has often been suggested, World War I was the crucible that forged an independent New Zealand identity, then the two decades following would surely be the years in which the foundation for the new nation was laid down. In shedding the last vestiges of the colonial social pattern in exchange for the trappings of a modern dominion, the 1920s and 1930s in New Zealand set a blueprint for state intervention and assistance that remained largely unchallenged for the next 50 years.

Along with the vast technological and infrastructural changes of the period, many of which were state-funded and state-controlled, came new forms of communication, transport, entertainment and employment, which in themselves were accompanied by changing expectations and reform in areas of education, health, welfare, home ownership and commerce. From the depths of economic depression to the bright promise of the welfare state, the interwar decades transformed New Zealand society, consolidating trends established before World War I and initiating a slew of changes in attitude and practice which, as markers of modernity, set New Zealand firmly on its current course.

Even with so much change and development, the period between the wars was a paradoxical one. It has often been criticised, historically, as a time of stultifying conservatism, yet there was also enormous social change. If up until this time, as reforming educationalist C. E. Beeby suggested, New Zealanders may have been 'little given to self-examination', the experience of war, epidemic and finally the Great Depression meant that 'institutions, practices and beliefs, long taken for granted, began to crumble at the base',¹

both in the experiences of individual New Zealanders and in paradigmatic shifts within society as a whole.

The pace of change was uneven, however, across time and place. Some people's lives were opened up to the world by communication technologies or their experiences overseas. Others continued with what we might now consider to be small and quiet lives, bordered by family, farm or small town, despite living through the aftermath of and the build-up to the two greatest and bloodiest conflicts in human history. Some families' lives were torn apart by the Great Depression. Yet the images of sugar bags and soup kitchens, so ubiquitous that we now think of those Depression experiences as universal, were, as historian Malcom McKinnon suggests, 'partial' at least.² Many lives, while affected, were not substantially damaged by it. Some people even did quite well.

Some historians have regarded the interwar years as shutting out women from developing notions of citizenship and state provision. Yet, by the end of the period, the fact that New Zealand women 'didn't have to work' and were recognised for their contributions to home and family was seen as a mark of social advancement and a source of considerable pride.³ New Zealand also promoted its advances in infant and child health internationally during this time, declaring that it had had 'for many years the lowest rate of infant mortality in the world'. However, Māori infant death rates, had they been included, would have suggested a very different story.⁴

Although the period contained our darkest financial days, by its end New Zealand had the highest GDP in the world,⁵ and a portrait of Labour Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage hung over the fireplaces of many New Zealand homes (indeed, one of my history students told me that as a child she had always assumed he was a relative!). Yet, paradoxically again, many of the steps leading to New Zealand's early recovery from the Depression were put in place well before the First Labour Government came to office, and can be attributed to the very politicians popularly blamed for their handling of the Depression in the first place.⁶

Along with the contrasts and paradoxes, much of the historical richness of the interwar period lies in the enduring beliefs and expectations it generated, and these continue to colour our assumptions about what it means to live in New Zealand today: the expectation of state assistance in health and welfare; the ability to find and hold down a full-time job; the

ability to afford and own one's own home. As the frequent references in the media show, these remain the benchmarks by which we assess the quality of our national life.

For many or most of us, New Zealand's interwar history is also our family history: the story of our parents or grandparents and, for some people reading this book, the story of their own lives, too. Until very recently, the people who were born in or lived through the interwar years controlled many of our social institutions; their values are still the values to which we attribute or compare our current situation. They brought up the parents who raised us, set up the schools in which we were taught, ran our communities, operated our health and justice systems, and institutionalised through their conditioning and legislation what it meant to be a male or a female in New Zealand and what was expected of each. They represented us in Parliament. Whether we rail against their values or accept them as fact, their perspectives have defined our lives. As historian Jock Phillips writes: 'history matters because it helps people understand the world they inhabit'.⁷ The interwar period has profoundly shaped that world.

To bring these ideas together, I would like to introduce you to my grandmothers. Through writing and teaching about the interwar period I have come to think about their lives more carefully and can now see the extent to which they encompassed — and were encompassed by — the great range of experiences over those years. My father's mother, Sarah Elizabeth, was born in England. She sailed to New Zealand with her parents in 1886, and on her third birthday helped the captain steer the ship. She was the eldest of what were eventually nine children, and she herself had seven — all sons. Sarah's family took up land for dairy farming at Toko in Taranaki, and after her marriage at 27 she never lived far away, first in Midhurst and then in Stratford.

Sarah was part of a large, stable and loving family in the late colonial style: 'hyper-fertile' in terms of the number of children produced, conservative, I think, but hardworking, supportive and very close. She is pictured overleaf in late 1931 or 1932 with her parents, George and Georgina, her brothers and sisters, some of her nephews and four of her sons. You will notice the conservative dress, the high-ceilinged villa with its papered-out windows

and picture rail. Sarah is seated at the left of the photo; the bump being discreetly covered in her lap is my father.

In contrast to Sarah is my maternal grandmother, Amy Kathleen, or Chick as she was popularly known. Chick was born in New Zealand, one of only two children in her family, and she herself had only two. She lived in the city, played the piano at parties and had, at various times, a band that toured the district for dances. She was in the fast set, a fashionable flapper in her day (I still have the beading from one of her dresses) and, even late into her life, a very snappy dresser. While Sarah was walking herself into town and back well into her seventies, Chick and her husband zipped around on a motorbike with a sidecar.

They later lived in a beautiful home built with money my grandfather made helping to rebuild Napier after the earthquake of 1931. Airy and two-storeyed, it had a fabulous kitchen that included a refrigerator with a door veneered to match the rest of the cabinetry, something that would still be avant-garde even today. They held parties, some of which reputedly lasted several days. With her great zest for life, Chick was vivacious, popular and very, very modern. She lived nearer to the edge than many, perhaps, and bore criticism from more conservative sectors of society as a result.

Between them, these two women cover a wide range of values and lifestyles in interwar New Zealand, from late colonial family patterns to the 'modern girl'. They demonstrate many of the trends characteristic of the era, as diverse as the rise of dairying and the rapidly falling birth rate. And, as outspoken as they both were, I can see ways in which their lives were determined by — and also ways in which, each to a small extent, they themselves helped to determine — the times in which they lived, how they each exemplified what it meant to be a wife, a mother, a good citizen, a good New Zealander, in the interwar years.

While we may now consider the decades of the 1920s and 1930s as being 'between the wars', it is important to remember that for New Zealanders living at the time, World War II was yet to come. Rather than 'between' the last war and the next, they were decades marked by the recovery following one major conflict, certainly, but equally and also by other challenging and traumatic events: the 1918 influenza pandemic, the 'rollercoaster' economy



Traditional values: Sarah Elizabeth (seated far left) and family, 1932 or 1933.

AUTHOR'S COLLECTION



Fast young set: Chick, kneeling in the front row, centre, rings in a new year and a new era. **AUTHOR'S COLLECTION**

of the 1920s⁸ and its culmination in the 1930s Depression. These were followed by the raft of changes brought in by the 1935 Labour Government; changes which, after years of uncertainty and despite tensions building in Europe, seemed to hold the promise of a new kind of security.

While World War I brought horror and destruction on a scale largely beyond the comprehension of those not directly involved in it, for New Zealanders who stayed at home the war years may have dragged on with a strangely incongruous sense of 'business as usual'.⁹ The influenza pandemic of 1918, on the other hand, generated almost half of the New Zealander mortalities of World War I within a matter of weeks, not years, and brought death to the doorsteps and bedrooms of everyday New Zealand homes on an unprecedented scale. For community patrols and folk dealing with the corpses of family and neighbours, the deliriousness of the ill, the cyanosed or blackened bodies of the dead, and the temporary morgues and coffins stacked three and four deep awaiting burial¹⁰ may have presented a horror of a far more tangible nature. One must wonder about the limits of human endurance for those returning nurses and servicemen who had experienced first-hand both the war *and* the epidemic.

A decade later, New Zealanders were dragged into a global event of another kind with the collapse of markets during the Great Depression. Prices slumped, government spending was cut, lending and construction virtually ceased, and by 1933 unemployment had reached 75,000.¹¹ Again, without our benefit of historical hindsight the people of the early 1930s did not know when or even if the Depression would finally finish, and whether their financial situation would ever improve, or their earlier aspirations be met. While the Depression and reactions to it were in many ways extensions of the financial hardships, state responses and welfare services already in place, they were on an unprecedented scale and cast a long shadow over the lives of those who endured it.

Backgrounding these specific events, however, were many technologies, opportunities and sensations that were genuinely new in the lives and homes of interwar New Zealanders: the convenience of electricity, the wonder of radio, the ever-increasing speed and ease of motor travel, and talking images at movie theatres across the nation. There were new ways of living in town, new ways of farming in the country. Even if people could not yet access these services and technologies themselves, they knew they were out there and, as

the national grid expanded and roading improved, they came within reach of increasingly more New Zealanders.

The flip side of the calamities, the insecurity and pace of change in the interwar period, then, was adjustment: of returning soldiers to civilian life; of partners and families to the absence of loved ones lost at war or in the flu epidemic; and the wax and wane of small rural communities in the face of technological advancements that consolidated services and brought them into greater competition with provincial towns and cities. There was the adjustment of those raised in the country to living in town; the adjustment of those living in town to living in the new outlying suburbs. In response to both technological advancements and state legislation, there was also the adjustment, for many urban dwellers at least, to the increasing division between home and work and work and leisure. And for parents everywhere, there was the adjustment to the changing aspirations and behaviours of their children, born into an age substantially different from their own, with new styles of education, new opportunities, new ideas, fashions and expectations fed by exposure to overseas films and print media, and a new pace of life. It is both the challenges and the adjustments of the interwar period that form the basis of this book.

For so seminal a period, New Zealand's interwar years have attracted surprisingly few dedicated publications, being rather incorporated either in the chronologies of general histories or as sections within monographs. For many years Randal Burdon's *The New Dominion* (1965)¹² served as the principal reference, until it was replaced in 1981 by a substantial section in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*.¹³ Geoffrey Rice's second edition of this text corrected some not insignificant errors concerning the interwar years and expanded our understanding with an additional chapter covering external relations.¹⁴ Included within the broader context of the 1890s and early 1900s, this aptly named section — 'A Time of Transition' — remains a core text today.

A certain defensiveness in the preface of Rice's 1992 edition, however, which anticipated criticism from a number of quarters, reflected a move within New Zealand history generally that also impacted on studies of the interwar period. A shift from 'grand narratives' of the *Oxford* style toward a

greater number of finely worked in-depth studies had coincided with a move toward 'bottom-up' or people's histories intended to give voice to those marginalised within conventional political and institutional perspectives. For the interwar period, studies by Barbara Brookes, for example, on the 1938 Commission of Inquiry into Abortion (1986),¹⁵ Margaret Tennant on charitable aid and on children's health camps (1989, 1994)¹⁶ and Philippa Mein Smith on the medicalisation of childbirth (1986)¹⁷ not only brought women's interwar experiences to greater historical attention but, informed as they were by feminist perspectives, also emphasised the often contested relationship between women and the state. Within Māori history, also, Michael King's biography of Tainui leader Te Puea (1977)¹⁸ and Ranginui Walker's *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* (1990)¹⁹ brought challenging new perspectives on the interwar and surrounding decades to a general readership, and again tested mainstream assumptions of a benign and benevolent state.

A wealth of other biographical studies during the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s added to understandings of the interwar period, augmented by autobiography, as those born or who came to adulthood during the 1920s and 1930s reached the age of historical reflection. Political biographies of key figures such as Savage, Coates and Fraser, and later revisitings of Ngata and Rātana,²⁰ were increasingly supplemented by accounts of life on the fringe, such as those of Ormond Burton (1986)²¹ and Robin Hyde (2002),²² and of those whose ordinary lives were rendered extraordinary by the challenges of the times. Important works in collective biography such as Judith Binney and Gillian Chaplin's *Ngā Mōrehu* (1996)²³ and later Melanie Nolan's *Kin* (2005)²⁴ broadened understandings and, along with studies such as Caroline Daley's *Girls and Women, Men and Boys* (1999)²⁵ highlighted the potential of oral history in studying the interwar period. Expansion of the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* in 1998 to cover those who came to prominence in the 1920s and 1930s also greatly expanded this base.

The return to favour of broad historical overviews following the impact of James Belich's two volumes (1996 and 2001)²⁶ and particularly Michael King's hugely popular *Penguin History of New Zealand* (2003),²⁷ saw the interwar period again included in chronological narratives such as those by Philippa Mein Smith and Paul Moon.²⁸ The publication of Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney and Aroha Harris's award-winning *Tangata Whenua*²⁹ in 2014 and Barbara Brookes' comprehensive study of New Zealand women³⁰ in 2016 has

given full voice to those early challenges to New Zealand's historical canon. Recent publications in recognition of the centenary of World War I have offered substantially greater context to the years that followed³¹ and, again in 2016, Malcolm McKinnon's study of the Depression, *The Broken Decade*, has fulfilled the need for a comprehensive analysis of one of the most defining, yet peculiarly under-published, phenomena of not just the interwar period but also of New Zealand's economic history as a whole.³²

These publications, along with a wealth of journal articles, chapters in edited volumes and theses, provide a rich understanding of the interwar years. But the material remains scattered, and a single-volume overview of the period in the manner provided by Jenny Carlyon and Diana Morrow's *Changing Times*,³³ or Bronwyn Labrum's *Real Modern*³⁴ in terms of material culture, for the postwar decades remains to be written. To some degree this volume fills this gap, in that it is a dedicated collection on the interwar period that both complements existing literature and also offers a fresh and occasionally oblique view on unchallenged or readily accepted aspects of the times.

To provide a framework for exploring the interwar years, the essays in this volume are structured around four themes, woven through the chapters to illuminate key trends and link them to points of interest or expectation today. These themes are modernity, the role of the state, citizenship and gender. Of the four, it is modernity, perhaps, that requires the first explanation and consideration.

Modernity is so broad a concept, and one that fluctuates so much in emphasis and interpretation across academic disciplines, that it is hard to define succinctly. Yet it is all-encompassing in its assumptions and effect. So familiar is the notion, in fact, that as American historian Susan Keefe argues, 'it seems natural to believe that life and society will steadily improve if we apply our rational knowledge and human capacity to the task'.³⁵ In its broadest sense modernity arises from, and is intrinsic to, the Western beliefs and practices of industrialisation, capitalism, enfranchisement and the nation state: the markers of an assumed progress along the historical continuum from feudalism to the modern democratic and consumer-based societies that we recognise today.

Central tenets of modernity include rationalism; the application of

universal laws, science and technology to affect progress and the betterment of the human condition; universal education; freedom of the individual and individual rights; and increasing secularisation. On a practical level, through technology and the patterns of mass media come the separation and distinction between work and family spaces, urbanisation, increased consumerism, increased leisure time and the transport and amenities with which to use it: all indices or aspirations towards bourgeois or, in the New Zealand context, middle-class Pākehā values. These patterns of rationalism, technology, progressivism and aspiration underwrote what for many New Zealanders seemed to be a remarkable achievement by the end of the interwar period: the move from a pre-industrial and pioneering culture to a thriving modern nation in only — to quote the title of the government's centenary celebration film — *One Hundred Crowded Years*.

In this volume, Catherine Knight's chapter traces the material basis to modern expansion through the use of rivers, both as channels for the removal of mining and industrial waste and for the generation of electricity. It also shows, however, how the supposition that nature was to be the service of man came to limit, beyond the designation of the scenic, broader understandings of ecological systems: the concept of rivers as structures in need of 'improvement' remained dominant until the 1970s. Janine Cook, on the other hand, maps the extent to which subscription to natural systems through the use of biological models within health and education extended to, and took their cues from, animal husbandry in the days before antibiotics. 'Human bodies,' as Margaret Tennant notes — 'their measurement, monitoring and shaping'³⁶ — came under intense scrutiny during the interwar period, and Cook traces the analogies created between animal and human biology that both informed and confirmed new concerns over nutrition, worker fatigue and environmental factors in determining constitutional health. In both chapters, Knight and Cook tap into the modernist assumption of science as a tool of progress on the path to healthier, happier and more efficient lifestyles that was so characteristic of the interwar years.

The aspirations and progress of some, however, came, and continue to come, at the expense of others. As the chapters on Māori communities and rural life suggest, progress could be uneven and, as Peter Meihana's work on the harvesting rights of Ngāti Kuia shows, profoundly unjust. Using



State subscription to biological models in health and education came together in the school milk programme begun in 1937, which ensured a daily boost of nutrition to all New Zealand primary school children.

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Changes in work patterns and increased mobility led to new leisure opportunities in the interwar period. **AUTHOR'S COLLECTION**

the example of his own iwi, Meihana demonstrates how, outside of the triumvirate of Ngata, Te Puea and Rātana, and beyond the gaze of Pākehā, tribes campaigned desperately as lands slid further from their grasp. In Ngāti Kūia's case the burgeoning of the modern Pākehā aesthetic, in the very process of valuing of lands as 'scenic', served only to further estrange Māori from their lands and traditional practices, representing not progress but merely another tool by which to continue, or accelerate, the alienation of the preceding decades. Hence, as described in Knight's chapter, while the preservation of scenic reserves could be seen as a bulwark against environmental exploitation by some groups, it could spell despair for others.

A key marker of modernity, and one of particular relevance to New Zealand in the interwar period, was the increasing role of the state, both in the provision of infrastructure and in what is now readily accepted as the centralised provision of services such as health, education and welfare. In the immediate postwar period, much of the state's energy was directed toward the rehabilitation of returned servicemen through schemes which, historically, have come to be condemned for their somewhat ill-thought-through generosity. The inflated land prices and purchases of marginal farms under the soldier settlement schemes have come in for particular criticism.

In this volume, however, Michael Roche's careful reading of statistics over the long term and inclusion of a range of case studies gives a more nuanced and, ultimately, more sympathetic view of these forays into state-funded reintegration. Rather than flat rates of 'persistence' or financial outcome as a measure of the 'entirety of success and failure', Roche suggests less binary approaches that acknowledge systemic contributions to men's experiences, such as internationally driven falls in prices for primary products and the 'physical and mental damage' that many had to contend with on their return from the war. Credit should also be given, Roche argues, to the quality of family and home life and the persistence of soldier settler communities overall, despite individual farmers leaving their farms. Such readings would show mixed farming abilities and mixed outcomes: the years of toil and the many levels of success attained before — and this despite the many forms of government assistance — ultimate financial failure. It is this frustrating mix,

Roche suggests, of both success and failure that presents the real tragedy, should there be one, of the soldier settler schemes.

In the area of welfare provision, the move from a general expectation of independence and self-help as a remnant of the colony's all-prevailing concern over pauperisation to a comprehensive package of state assistance as a right of citizenship was one of the most profound and enduring changes of the interwar years, and one which remained largely unchallenged until the era of intense neoliberal reform in the 1980s and 1990s. The increasing faith in rational and proactive state intervention, framed, again, in progressivist terms as the 'science of government',³⁷ formed a crucial part in the tussle for hearts and minds in Labour's 'long march'³⁸ to victory in 1935.

Much contested historically, Labour's win is reviewed in this volume by David Littlewood in terms of state investment and the 'avenues of opportunity' initiated by Massey but later curtailed by the Depression. As Littlewood concludes, the Coalition Government's failure to protect urban workers' interests with the same diligence as they did those of farmers during the Depression led to a betrayal of what was now an expectation of state support, and hence a swing in the voting pattern toward the high levels of assistance promised by Labour. This was particularly so among skilled manual labourers. By offering the incentive of a quality of life just above what New Zealanders might reasonably expect to obtain for themselves,³⁹ Labour capitalised on the growing tolerance for state intervention, which they couched in terms of progress, security and modernity.

State expansion in the area of human services required negotiation, however, and a range of voluntary and special-interest groups sought to direct and influence state initiatives as they unfolded during the interwar years. The small scale of New Zealand society⁴⁰ and lack of deep-seated philanthropic tradition made working alongside the growing machinery of state a more practical option than attempting to oppose or supplant it. Yet, in the misery of the early 1930s, with unemployment becoming a central dynamic in the face of government inaction or ineptitude, new forms of opposition seemed to be called for.

After outlining the landscape of religion in New Zealand generally, Christopher van der Krogt's chapter shows how some churches and clergy extended their already existing sensitivity to the needs of workers to forge new ground in the application of the 'social gospel' and increasingly overt

alliances with the political left. In seeking to reconcile traditional church roles with the exigencies of the Depression, their choice to 'openly endorse a change of government' in 1935 added weight to the introduction of the welfare state, which could in itself be seen, as van der Krogt suggests, as a constructive 'expression of the Christian conscience'.

Both the expanding role of the state and its culmination, toward the end of the period, in the 1938 Social Security Act were based on changing concepts of citizenship: the balance, that is, between 'duties owed to the state and rights expected from it'.⁴¹ While Labour is often credited with the major expansion in the view of citizenship with its move toward universal benefits, as with many aspects of the late 1930s changes were afoot well before Labour's ascension to power — although frequently, as in the case of the 1926 family benefit, for example, partially as the result of campaigning by Labour MPs.⁴² These earlier changes have often been 'eclipsed', Margaret McClure argues, by Labour's reforming zeal and the elevation to 'secular saint' of leader Michael Joseph Savage after his death in 1940.⁴³ The chapters in this book tease out many notions of citizenship as they occurred across the period, from the government's intense sense of responsibility toward returned soldiers and the rising opposition to government policies during the Depression discussed above to education initiatives, youth organisations and developments in sports.

Education in the interwar period was in a state of flux, moving from community-based to centralised administration, and from proficiency exam-based teaching to pupil-centred, civics-based models. Such changes reflected a shift in emphasis from children as future contributors to the economy to children as future citizens in their own right, contributors not just in monetary terms but also to the quality of national life as community members, parents, homemakers and workers. As Roger Openshaw's chapter shows, the shift from 'subject mastery to pupil development' was one of the most significant changes for interwar education, with a much wider adoption of New Education or child-centred methods at primary school level than has previously been acknowledged.

Similarly, the incremental upgrading of the curriculum for native schools and the greater emphasis on tikanga Māori sought to equip pupils for civilian

life across two cultural worlds and the transition, if necessary, to urban living. At secondary level, the move toward greater attendance at high school was under way before the interwar period but increased over this time, and greatly so following Labour's education reforms in 1936. Characteristic of this movement was the heated debate over the implementation of differentiated education — that is, the streaming of children into technical subjects in anticipation of fulfilling particular roles within the future workforce. As this was opposed to the right to a more academically grounded 'comprehensive' education for all, conflict was evident between the notion of the citizen as a tool of the economy and the view of education as contributing to the development of a well-rounded, critically informed community member. The dissatisfaction of the parents of Māori children, girls and — as outlined in the chapter on rural modernity — country pupils with the notion that their children should receive anything less than the full curriculum points to the perception of education as a ticket to the meaningful participation of a citizen in society.

The development of the citizen is also closely analysed by Helen Dollery in her chapter on the construction and shaping of childhood in the interwar period, and specifically the Girl Peace Scout and later Guiding movements. Under conditions of 'increased scrutiny of their lives by the state through schooling, health and welfare provisions', New Zealand children were shaped not only by classic tales and derring-do narratives of Empire, but also by the 'popular grassroots demand' for active outdoor programmes to absorb youthful energies and develop citizenship skills. Yet while the Boy Scout and New Zealand's homegrown Girl Peace Scout movements developed rapidly, the contestation between Baden-Powell's British scouting model and the local variations initiated and fostered by New Zealand leaders points to a clear sense of independent identity and a belief in the specific requirements of a New Zealand citizenship model outside that of Empire. The tale of the takeover of the Girl Peace Scouts by the imperially orientated Girl Guide movement — whereby 'Pohutukawa Patrols became Primroses' — suggests that the British model prevailed. Yet movement within the ranks to reincorporate New Zealand material and to capitalise on the uniqueness of the environment through camping and outdoor education continued to add a specifically local flavour, and to nurture the 'wild' New Zealand child within.

For adults, the valuing of healthy outdoor activity as part of effective

citizenship was also a feature of the interwar period. Indeed, as historian Charlotte Macdonald suggests, it was an entitlement with strong links to modernity: 'Greater leisure was a sign of modern times, a benefit won from "scientific development" such as mechanisation and a right guaranteed to working people.'⁴⁴ In his chapter on the expansion of sport, Geoff Watson shows the ways in which stronger sporting connections were developed both nationally and globally and, using Palmerston North as a model, how local body funding and involvement helped to foster a sense of community and local identity within suburban centres, schools and workplaces. Sporting values of teamwork and fair play were conflated with notions of citizenship, along with the development of infrastructure such as transport and playing fields to enable more citizens to participate in sport and outdoor recreation. Community tensions, however, over the exclusion of Māori in the 1928 rugby tour to South Africa, for example, or expectations by which women's sport was subjugated to male codes, and through which married women rarely participated in sport, showed weaknesses within the New Zealand citizenship model that would be worked through with much passion in the subsequent decades.

As the examples in these three chapters show, understandings of citizenship in the interwar period were based on strong elements of gendering and the notion that 'girls and women and boys and men brought complementary talents to the world and that these talents would be played out in very different ways'.⁴⁵ Military contribution, physical labour and financial provision were tasks assigned to males; mothering was the presumed destination for girls. Hence returned soldiers were believed to have a natural affinity toward farming and the land; Girl Peace Scout programmes were designed to enable girls to 'participate in nation-building at the same time as preparing for household management as wives'. Patterns that affirmed traditional gender roles, especially for women, and others that markedly challenged them are both evident in this volume.

The explosion of the 'modern girl' onto the cultural scene in the 1920s overturned many of the straight-laced ideals of Edwardian femininity, tapping instead into the fashions and lifestyles portrayed in Hollywood movies, the booming economies of Britain and the United States, and the trappings

of fast-paced or, as Lady Baden-Powell condemned it, 'breathless' modernity. Open, 'easy', heavily made-up, given to drinking, smoking and hedonistic self-expression, modern girls represented new levels of provocativeness for women and new targets for consumerism in the interwar years.⁴⁶ But as the earlier example of my very modern grandmother suggests, there were tensions also between the aspirations and glamour suggested in promotional literature and advertising and the everyday working girl's ability to pay for them, for example; and more specifically in the case of New Zealand girls, the tensions of negotiating a path between the images and behaviours suggested by Hollywood and the more conservative practices and standards of local society. Adventurous and fashionable though she may be, social condemnation could still await a girl who overstepped the mark or ended up in 'trouble'.

It is the exploration of these 'contradictory spaces' of modern girlhood that Natalie Smith provides in her chapter. Using the example of Dale Austen, Miss New Zealand 1927, Smith shows the ways in which Austen's image of New Zealand wholesomeness was used to promote her as a novelty, the antithesis of Hollywood tawdriness, while she was in America as part of her prize package; but how, conversely, her American experience also positioned her as a model of sophistication and modernity on her return to New Zealand. However contradictory the messages, and however glamorous the path that laid the plot in Hollywood movies, as Smith observes, the ultimate conservativeness of the goal — the true love of a man and a fulfilling home life thereafter — remained the same.

Tensions between modernity and conservatism form the basis for my own chapter also, wherein Hollywood-styled images of glamorous living were seen to combine with economic factors and increased urbanisation to potentially undermine rural life and agricultural production in New Zealand during the interwar period. Using American experience as an example, concern over the 'emptying of the countryside' in the face of urban competition called into question the quality of New Zealand country life and, through an emphasis on home life in particular, the experiences and satisfactions of rural women.

Here solutions were found in tapping modernity of a different sort, turning not to glamour but back to the hard science of Cook's chapter, focusing on the constitutional health of the family and on technologies that would

rationalise, render more efficient and, ultimately, ease the load of the rural housewife. As this chapter shows, however, science and efficiency were not enough to be considered attractive on their own, and education in the field of fashion and aesthetics in order that rural girls might achieve a 'feeling of ease and assurance' among their urban peers formed a popular and important part of rural education programmes. Research by W. T. Doig in 1937, on the other hand, suggested that, in the lives of some dairy-farming women, time for pursuing the aesthetic qualities of life was still a good way off.

The recurring patterns, then, of change and adjustment and the themes of modernity, state intervention, citizenship and gender are woven throughout this book in ways that enhance a feeling for and an understanding of New Zealand national life. The interwar years are significant also for laying the foundations for many scientific, social and academic disciplines and for bringing about profound changes among existing ones. Within this volume may be found the genesis of professions as diverse as social work, veterinary science and sports management, along with developments in those already established professions such as education and engineering. As such, it is hoped that it will be of use to students of many fields, not just of history, and of interest to educators and the general public alike.

The chapters do not presume an extensive historical knowledge of the period, but rather provide a broad introduction to the topics, followed in many instances by case studies that illuminate trends and provide examples. Throughout we have tried to capture the excitement and sense of growth and progress characteristic of these decades, while being attuned to the costs, both environmental and social, that such changes exacted. In doing so we present a fresh look at many aspects of New Zealand life and of a nation on the cusp.

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- 4 *The Official New Zealand Year Book, 1938* (Wellington: E. V. Paul, Government Printer, 1937), 114–20, 134–35, 115.
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