

## *Hikurangi to Homburg: Hikurangi ki Homburg*

Helen M. Hogan, Clerestory Press Christchurch, 1997. 140pp, \$39.95.

**H**IKURANGI TO HOMBURG: *Hikurangi ki Homburg* is not as innocent as it seems on first appearance. In 1902 two young Ngati Porou cousins, members of the Maori contingent of a military detachment, travelled to England to represent this country at the coronation of Edward VII. The cousins, Henare Mokena Kohere and Terei Ngatai, arranged with Henare's older brother Reweti, who was editor of the Maori periodical *Te Pipiwharauaroa*, to send him reports of their travels for publication. The sudden postponement of the coronation shortly after their arrival in England extended their sojourn by several months, and enabled them to visit parts of the United Kingdom and the Continent not originally on their itinerary.

On a casual reading the book is more like a family chronicle of the cousins' travels in faraway places. It includes their whakapapa down to present day descendants, photographs from family albums, vignettes of life in Rangitukia at the turn of the century, and it carries a Foreword by the grandson of one of the

subjects. There are however other readings of the text that give this volume an unexpectedly interesting insight into Maori, colonial and imperial attitudes of the time.



*A reversal of roles: a buggy race. Captain Taranaki Te Ua riding on a rickshaw in Durban. Photo from the collection of P.P. O'Shea.*

The letters, six from Kohere and two from Ngatai, were written and published in Maori, and they appear here in the original text with side by side translation. They pick up the narrative at the selection procedures in Wellington and follow through each stage of the journey, ending at the return to London from Homburg, Germany, immediately prior to embarking for the return voyage. The texts are broken up with the author's helpful commentaries on literary style and historical context.

As the author comments in the Introduction the emphasis is not on the coronation itself but how two Maori lads from the country saw the European world in their first ever experience of it. In this she succeeds admirably. We see the unfolding world through the eyes of two homesick young men from Rangitukia, a world which in some

ways is only Rangitukia writ large. At one level the experiences are overwhelming and evoke sentiments of longing and nostalgia for the familiar. At another level they are true and loyal Edwardians, transported suddenly to the imperial centre for the grand occasion, and even to meet the King. In this they were no different from other New Zealanders of the

time, Maori or Pakeha This was the great age of Empire embraced by both races. At a further level they are young Maori rangatira representing their people before the world, noting with pride how much more popular the Maori are with the English than other colonised peoples, how enthusiastically their well-drilled hakas are received, and how hospitably they are welcomed in Scotland

Naive innocence is clearly evident in the way they interpret the world as they discover it. One

example was their first major encounter with colonised people in Durban. Seeing rickshaws for the first time was a fun occasion which the Maori soldiers turned into a buggy-race, making the rickshaw pullers become their 'horses'. They were later to recognise the indignities of life for the 'black people', and counted their blessings as Maori.

For many readers the colonial and imperial subplots will hold as much fascination as the main story. Neither Canada nor Australia sent representatives of their indigenous populations out of deference to Colonial Office policy that would not countenance 'coloured' colonials fighting for the Empire. It transpires that the official Maori presence with the New Zealand Contingent was simply a Colonial Office sop to Maori sentiment for refusing pressing Maori offers of military support in the Boer War. They had not been officially included in the 1897 Jubilee celebrations and it was not originally intended they be present for the coronation.

The 30 men and two officers of the Maori contingent had been carefully selected for physical stature, whakapapa and tribal representation. They were from the best rangatira families throughout the country. Given the nervousness here and in the Colonial Office in having to host a Maori party there was huge irony in the farewell address by James Carroll who urged the contingent to 'Behave well. Do not set off on the undisciplined path of the Pakeha, you should not touch the inebriating liquor of the Pakeha'. When one of the Pakeha

soldiers chundered unceremoniously in the chapel of Windsor Castle the point was not lost on Henare Kohere who commented: 'he vomited and the vomit went all over the place, for right inside him beer and champagne fought over which was to have ascendancy'.

Maori language readers will enjoy having the Maori text to work

with. *Hikurangi to Homburg* is enjoyable reading, well illustrated and with useful commentaries and appendices. It helps illuminate an interesting period in colonial relationships. ❧

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BOOK REVIEW

by John R. Martin

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## *The Constitutional Implications of MMP*

Alan Simpson (ed), School of Political Science and International Relations, VUW (Dunmore Press), 1998. \$29.95.

IT IS NOT SO LONG since Northern Hemisphere political studies texts could describe New Zealand as the 'purest Westminster democracy'<sup>1</sup> – within a predominantly two-party configuration political power was exercised by the single party commanding a majority in a legislature elected by the first-past-the-post (FPP) system. And Alan Simpson, in his Introduction to this collection of papers, speaks of the 1950s and the 1960s as 'rather benign constitutional decades'. Looking back, however, the introduction of that Scandinavian institution, the Ombudsman, in 1962, and the Official Information Act in 1982 – Sir Robert Muldoon's 'nine day wonder' – were not insignificant constitutional innovations. In the 1980s Geoffrey Palmer's reforms of parliamentary process, the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, and the Courts' tendency to activism seemed in the eyes of some to be taking us along

the road to 'Washminster'. In the 1990s the collective wisdom seemed – by a small majority in the 1993 referendum – to wish us to move towards the Scandinavian 'consensual' model. Five years later a farming spokesman could identify as a major cause of our current discontents the decision to adopt the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system 'which has created political instability, economic stagnation and a lift in interest rates'.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, a political scene featuring multiple parties and coalition and minority governments is a far cry from the political arrangements which marked the post-World War Two half-century. (Marie Schroff, the Secretary to the Cabinet since 1987, in the volume under review, reflects interestingly on the changes in central government decision making 'across two governments and four Prime Ministers').

There is a burgeoning literature