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BOOKS

NEW ZEALAND AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD

NEW ZEALAND AND THE WORLD.

By F. L. W. Wood. Centennial Survey, Number 11. Published by The Department of Internal Affairs, printed by Whitcombe & Tombs. 133 pp., with a bibliography and an index. (5/-) E. H. McCormick, editor.

THE praise of critics since his book appeared has been the real measure of the success of Professor Wood's book, as a book. But more than that: it has been a measure of its success as a timely document, and a measure of what might fairly be called the unconsciousness of New Zealanders of the subjects Professor Wood discusses.

Professor Wood deserves praise for his simple statement of these subjects — New Zealand's occasional collisions with the outside world. He has seen his subject as a whole, examined it objectively, and given us a survey of it in the true sense of the word. It may be argued that simplification of such a subject was in itself a simple matter. But that is not the case. Only a small and not very vocal minority in New Zealand takes more than mercenary notice of the fact that the world is smaller than it was. New Zealand's foreign policy has not much history behind it, because there has been so little foreign policy to make history. But Professor Wood leaves no suggestion that he suffered from a dearth of material. He has in fact found just enough material for the book, and provided just enough book for the material.

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IT was natural, therefore, that his survey should be well received; but it was surely strange that so many reviewers should have found it so interesting that one, for example, suggested that some readers might be shocked by it. That was Mr. Luxford, S.M., reviewing it over the air. Mr. Luxford was not precise about which passages might be shocking, but it appeared from his context that he thought it might be a shock to some people to realise that there was a time when New Zealand quarrelled most vehemently with the "Mother Country." Whatever Mr. Luxford meant, the greatest shock in Professor Wood is making New Zealand realise that she is entitled to a foreign policy of

her own and, on a few occasions, has had one. Quite apart from its merits as a sound job of work, this is the really interesting thing about the Professor's achievement.

* * *

HIS history, stripped of comment and elaboration, can be put into a paragraph. New Zealand raged at the Colonial Office when support in the Maori Wars was withdrawn. Raged again when the Colonial Office refused to countenance Vogel's little imperialism in the Pacific and Seddon's later. And then, as Professor Wood puts it neatly: "the fire of colonial indignation died down to a warm imperial glow; the prodigal had returned." From then, during, and after the Great War, until 1935, New Zealand's "marked 'mother complex' developed strongly."

The new Labour Government rebelled against this policy. Professor Wood says we were no longer willing to act merely as a dutiful echo to the United Kingdom. However, the rebellion was a spasm. It has been forgotten even quicker than we have forgotten that "Grey, Vogel, Stout, and Seddon ever hurled abuse and complaint at an unsympathetic Colonial Office." The new Labour Government "progressively abandoned its independent point of view as the actual danger of war approached, and, whatever the Ministers may have thought of Britain's previous policy, the Dominion's attitude towards foreign affairs was increasingly dominated by the admitted necessity of accepting London's ultimate decisions in times of crisis."

* * *

PROFESSOR WOOD rounds off this thesis with a great deal of useful detail. He has written a book which New Zealanders should read, and a book which New Zealanders will read if they are at all conscious of nationality. If they are not conscious—and there is good reason for supposing that ninety per cent. of them are not—then the book should be planted in front of them. Once started, they will read with interest and easy understanding, and perhaps when they have read it they will revive by degrees from their stupor.

Meanwhile as samples of his quality take these three extracts—(a) dealing with the Maori migrations, (b) with the confusion of counsel in the late 'eighties, and (c) with New Zealand's attitude to the League of Nations:



S. P. Andrew photograph
PROF. F. L. W. WOOD

(a) Maoris and Englishmen alike came to New Zealand because home conditions encouraged the enterprising to seek a fuller life elsewhere. The colonists who left Tahiti in the fourteenth century, like those who left England in 1840, set out on a bold, though not a desperate venture. They had faith in the skilled navigators who would guide them to their destination by knowledge of stars, the sun, and currents—as well as of the mysterious spirits who ruled the universe. They went to a land which had already been found, and to some extent settled, by men of their own race.

(b) Thus in 1887 New Zealand spoke with two voices. That of Vogel was the voice of the past. It was confident and independent, willing if need be to face the world alone because in a sensible universe reason and not sentiment governed politics. But Atkinson spoke with the voice of the future: conscious that New Zealand was small and weak in a world full of potential menace, but conscious also that she was safe behind the shield of British power. In the years that followed, the spirit of Vogel was gradually ousted by the impulse towards uncritical loyalty which was fed by sentiment, by trade and finance, and by the slow decay of the sense of unshakeable security.

(c) It was common knowledge that New Zealand's campaign for collective security was disliked by the British Government. The crowning discomfort of public dissension between two British countries at Geneva was indeed avoided, but there was an obvious contradiction between the avowed policies of Britain and of New Zealand, and plentiful rumours of plain private speech between Englishmen and New Zealanders in the galleries of the *Palais des Nations*. The main criticism of New Zealand's stand came, however, from within New Zealand itself. Conservative critics were shocked at the mere fact that the Dominion had publicly criticised the Mother Country. In their view, New Zealand should have said her say at the Imperial Conference (as she did) and then remained silent as befitted one so unimportant; for, to them, foreign affairs were a matter of power politics, in which a nation was entitled to a voice in proportion to its might, not to the rightness of its cause.