

# "HE TAUGHT US TO VALUE OUR OWN HISTORY"

*A Tribute to James Cowan, by A.M.*

JAMES COWAN, who died the other day, full of years and achievement, should be honoured by New Zealanders, because he taught them, as no other writer has done, to value the history of their own country. Our wistful mothers who taught us to call old England "Home," were admirable pioneers, but their background remained English. Everything English was best. They tried to make this country another Britain. Their children and grandchildren had to learn to be New Zealanders, to root themselves in the soil, absorb its past and dream of its future. In a long list of books and newspaper articles without number, James Cowan helped them to understand that past. There may have been greater Maori scholars; there has never been anyone who combined his wide and deep knowledge of the Maori people with his literary style.

The public has a short way with the battle between the "scientific" and "literary" schools of historians; it just doesn't read the scientific. James Cowan, like his contemporary Trevelyan in England, belonged to both. He had a proper reverence for facts, and could make the past live. It wasn't only that he knew Maori. He knew the Maori. He had hundreds of friends among them. Working often on the spot, he studied and wrote their songs, their lore, their tales of adventure and battle long ago. He re-fought fights with many a European and Maori veteran of our wars.

## I WAS DEFEATED

*(Continued from previous page)*

three votes when the numbers went up a fortnight later.

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IN general, however, I got very few boos, and that was my downfall—or at least the advance proof of it. Audiences were respectful, attentive, surprisingly good-natured and polite, and that, of course, was a fatal sign. It meant that minds were already made up and that I had no chance. This I fully understood; but although it necessarily cramped my style, I was not quite prepared for some of the things that happened. For example: I addressed a meeting that was not merely friendly but demonstrative. Though I protested, it insisted on moving and carrying with loud "acclamation," a motion of confidence as well as of thanks. There were 73 present, and not one of the 73 voted for me 10 days later! I was prepared to be last—in a field of three—but what is the answer when you are nowhere at all; just wiped off and wiped out? I leave it to the 240 candidates who are going to be rejected next week.

Yes, the first seven are the worst of the years afterwards—I am well past them—and the first seven the worst of the booths on election night. I knew that I was licked before I started. I was prepared to grin and bear it when the gradually rising totals revealed my failure before it was finally announced.

No one has approached him as a chronicler of those conflicts, and frontier life in this country. To those who said we had no exciting pioneer and frontier history, he gave the best answer in his own true tales of bush and coast. New Zealanders brought up on tales of Red Indian warfare found from James Cowan that following the trail in the Urewera country required the same skill as in the backwoods of America—there were similar hardships and perils. When after perilously long delay, the Government decided in 1918 to have an official history of the Maori Wars written, James Cowan was commissioned for the work. This was by far the best choice. He had been brought up on the site of Orakau, while the Armed Constabulary still patrolled the Waipa frontier, and had absorbed the Maori tongue and Maori history from his earliest years. He knew veterans like the Mairs and Preece, Roberts and Goring, and many a bonny fighter on the other side. When he undertook the history, he visited every battlefield and interviewed many more survivors. He even got a story from the last survivor of that disastrous red-coat charge at Ohaeawai, way back in 1845. The result was a two-volume history of priceless value, packed with information and delightful to read.

There is enough romance and adventure in this history to point the way to a library of imaginative books. As New Zealanders develop their national consciousness, they will surely go more and more to this unique quarry.

In other words, I expected to be an "also started" after two or three hours. But I was down and out and an object of derision within 45 minutes, and I advise the 76 bottom candidates now to practise laughing before a mirror. If they don't recognise themselves in advance, they will have to do some quick thinking about 10 or 11 on the night of the 25th.

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STILL, there were bright spots, and I shall end with one. My electorate included a Public Works camp, whose inhabitants were "tough"—too tough, my opponents thought, to be addressed. But adventurers rush in where the experienced fear to tread. I did address them, but I was very lucky that they did not address, and perhaps undress, me—there was a river only a hundred yards away. Were you ever as a child surrounded by frisking steers which kept closing in on you with the most terrifying breaths and faces? I was that child. I felt that anything would happen at any moment, when suddenly I had a brain-wave. We had no chairman. That would not do at all. They must elect their chairman. It was their meeting and not mine. I was there to talk to them if they wanted me to talk, but that rested with them. Who was their leader?

It worked. They started nudging one another, then naming one another. Finally, one man agreed to be the b—y chairman, and I was safer than with 10 policemen. When someone asked a quite innocent question, but at the wrong

## Election In Wartime

THE barrage opens. The long words rumble  
Like guns on the shattered ear. The claim  
And the counterclaim ramble  
Over the No Man's Land of the home.  
The radio is the listening post.  
Every station is the enemy.  
The parties are locked fast like armies.  
They are not friendly; they are not themselves  
By a fireside, talking; they are belligerents  
Wading deep in the mud of their hate.  
They are parched in the deserts of their ambition.  
They fire words like bullets into the bodies  
Of their victims. Abuse is a wound.

AND yet it's all so easy!  
It is so easy to give to the extraordinary lie  
The simple truth.  
For what we want  
Is neither remarkable nor strange;  
Nothing that you have not already heard.  
Listening at midnight to the tick of your heart,  
To the noise of the traffic in Parliament Square,  
To the memory of the turned furrow following the plough  
On the farm where you were born,  
Of the day you took your first job  
In the office or the engineering shop,  
Or followed sheep round the lazy road where the horse stopped,  
Tired in the hot afternoon of the noise and dust.

ALL we want is to live.  
To live decently. Not just to exist.  
To live securely, with food in our mouths and houses  
That the sun can enter without making us ashamed;  
To have a job to do that we can do proudly.  
To be able to rear children decently.  
To have leisure.

THAT'S all we want.  
And if you can't give us that  
You can keep your figures and your long words  
And your ballyhoo. You can keep your incomes  
And expenditures and your blah blah.  
You can juggle your astronomical figures  
to Kingdom Come.  
You cut no ice.

THAT'S something you've got to remember.  
That's the meaning of Democracy to us.  
The unit of Democracy is not a figure,  
it's a man;  
A free man, with food in his belly and clothes on his back.

BUT in the meantime, don't fight each other.  
We have enemies enough.

—Anton Vogt

time, the chairman turned on him with a roar:

"Shut your b—y mouth, you! Who told you to speak?"

He not only shut his mouth; he elbowed his way backwards out of sight, and there was not one further question until the chairman said before he moved a resolution:

"You're against those b—s up there (Wellington)? Right. That's good enough for us. Mates, I move a hearty b—y resolution to—what did you say your name was? . . ."

They did not vote for me, but they did not say they would, and long before I had finished talking to them they furtively dropped into their pockets the onions and potatoes I had seen in a dozen or more hands.

## Democratic Soldier Labour Party and THE WAR

(NOTE.—It will be seen that there is no reference to the future of the Division. This will be referred to in Candidates' speeches).  
THE WAR

Democratic Labour stands for complete victory for the democratic way of life over Fascism and Nazism, for an economic as well as a voting democracy. We assert that the defeat of the enemy is not victory. Victory for men who fight and for nations which endure can only be won by the establishment of a new world order in which the human family has peace without a world war every 20 years, and wherein leisure, education, the enjoyment of prosperity made possible by the mass production age in which we live, is brought within reach of all.

### MANPOWER REVISION

Democratic Labour asserts that New Zealand's military commitment embarked upon by Labour and supported by the Nationalist Party imposes too heavy a tax on our manpower. We do not believe it possible to maintain divisions in action in the Mediterranean and in the Pacific at the same time while maintaining essentials of life for our people and for troops based on New Zealand. Having our existence in the Pacific, we will not be able to contract out of the Pacific war until the conflict ends. We have not been in favour of sending reinforcements to the Middle East for over a year; indeed, Mr. Lee was opposed to conscription for other than the Pacific zone in 1940. Only in such a way can we maintain the industrial manpower reserve necessary to avoid economic collapse.

It becomes obvious that if we are to maintain our present war commitment in all theatres, it will be necessary to reduce the age for overseas service to 18 or 19, and probably to raise the overseas age at the other end, with a complete breakdown of our social and family life.

Democratic Labour therefore stands for:—

- (1) A realistic revision of our manpower commitments.
- (2) No conscription for overseas below the age of 21.
- (3) Opportunity for 18-year-olds and 19-year-olds to complete education and training courses.
- (4) No overseas service for parents of large families.

## VOTE Democratic Soldier Labour



ONE SOAP FOR ALL  
THE FAMILY—THAT'S  
MY IDEA OF ECONOMY  
AND WE ALL LOVE  
KNIGHT'S CASTLE

"It's June's ambition to grow up as pretty as big sister—so I'm seeing she gets a proper start with Knight's Castle. Knight's is a favourite with Jim, too. As he says, that rich peppy lather is a real pick-me-up after a tough day's work."



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