

and mercilessly underlines passages confirming his preconceptions and ideals. This was because Holland compensated for his lack of schooling through a heavy and sustained reading programme, but one which was severely one-sided. Understandably enough, he confined his reading to literature agreeable to his own opinions—those of a militant socialist—and nearly all of his 1515 pamphlets emanate from the pens of ‘progressive’ left-wing writers. His annotating and also his writing was thus scarcely critical or perceptive as Holland was possessed with ‘the self-educated man’s naive respect for congenial intellectual authority’.⁵

Some further less obvious points could be kept in mind when evaluating Holland’s annotations. In the first place one ought to distinguish between Holland’s first hand experience and his second hand knowledge. He was not a widely travelled man, his world-experience being limited to an Australian upbringing, adult life in New Zealand and a visit to Fiji and Samoa with a Parliamentary Party in 1920. An aloof man in any case, his peculiarly insular existence was aggravated by a retiring nature. When Parliament was in recess he tended to shut himself away, there to find solace in his reading, writing and correspondence. Seldom, therefore, did Holland annotate on the basis of a first hand acquaintance with the issue at hand.

A distinction might also be drawn between Holland’s general interests and the issues with which he was passionately concerned. The greater his interest (and presumably his knowledge) in a particular issue, the more heavily he would annotate a pamphlet on that subject. Take, for instance, indentured labour, an issue which aroused his deepest feelings.⁶ He could invariably be relied upon to mark out such passages in his pamphlets⁷ and his copy of the Apia Citizens’ Committee’s *Samoa’s Problems* (Apia 1920), which contains a sizeable section on indentured labour, was annotated with gay abandon. Yet despite the excessive underlining it will be apparent to anyone already conversant with Holland’s views on the subject⁸ why certain passages were underlined in preference to others. Despite initial appearances to the contrary there is some rationale behind the manner in which Holland annotated and once this is appreciated his annotations usually make sense and attain at least some value to the researcher.

The value of Holland’s annotations will vary for different researchers. At best they will yield only a marginal return for the time spent in consultation. The manuscript material, by contrast, is of unquestionable importance and richly merits being examined by those interested in the New Zealand of Holland’s day.

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References

¹ The Holland Papers were given by Roy Holland to Patrick O’Farrell so the latter could make a political biography of Holland the subject of his doctoral