

In Anne Else's analysis, it is the labour provided for minimal wages by the 'functional underclass' that keeps the economy going, makes modern life possible, and supports the 'favoured community'. To protect this system strategies for reducing unemployment and so called 'dependency' on the welfare state are designed to make people desperate enough to take any paid work, regardless of its effects on them or their families. Tired of hearing 'culture of dependency' rhetoric, I welcomed access to the experiences of real people trying to negotiate complex systems, and escape the poverty and hardship that result from inequitable policies, increased job insecurity, inadequate benefit levels, strict targeting and eligibility criteria, and punishing abatement regimes. *False Economy* provides a grounded assessment of the New Zealand experience and a refreshing alternative to the views expressed by David Green in 'From Welfare State to Civil Society'.

Despite the grim tale this book has to tell, it is surprisingly optimistic and full of the determination and hope of the people who contributed to it. Else is able to see the silver lining and present alternatives which could stabilise jobs, acknowledge the contribution of unpaid work, and move society towards a future that is in the interests of all citizens. The erosion of jobs is considered an opportunity to get priorities the right way around and value human work. However, the move away from full-time work will only benefit everyone if the core concept of what works means is altered and our systems reflect this. The strategies proposed by Else include flexible employment and family-friendly workplace policies which benefit employers and employees alike, and alternative tax and social welfare mechanisms.

At the base of Else's vision is the radical concept of Universal Basic Income (UBI), a form of social wage. It is through this mechanism that Else considers it possible to generate security and well-being for all, and acknowledge the contribution of unpaid work. Given that UBI is a platform from which Else recommends building a more equitable society, the brevity of discussion provided on it is disappointed. For instance practical insights into how UBI would work are not offered. Because UBI is not outlined more fully, there is the danger that it could be mistaken for and used as an argument for 'workfare' by those who are all too eager to create a workfare state. Else's reliance on UBI also prevents discussion of other practical recommendations which could reduce the stress she documents throughout the book. This aside, the UBI is one position from which New Zealand can move beyond the 'dependency to contribution' debate which is central to current welfare discourse and policy. This book will undoubtedly encourage further discussion on the topic. Anne Else's ultimate challenge is for policy makers to acknowledge the contribution that is already being made through

unpaid work and to promote policies which will support and enable this contribution to continue in the future. She reminds us that without unpaid work there is no real future to look forward to.

Without families and communities, the economy means nothing. It has no life of its own. Its only purpose is to enable us to live, to care for one another and to raise our children to take our place. If we lose the power to do that, no matter how fast the GDP rises or how much the budget surplus grows, we will have no future worth working for.

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#### COMMENTARY

## What chance for Cultural Studies in New Zealand?

Rolf W. Brednich

Currently a Research Fellow at the Stout Research Centre at Victoria University, investigating German immigration to New Zealand, I am a teacher of folkloristics with a special focus on European anthropology and ethnology at Georg August University of Göttingen. The fact that this discipline is not represented in New Zealand universities gave me cause to consider my own approach to cultural studies, and to what extent my discipline could contribute to a better understanding of New Zealand's multiplicity of cultures and traditions. In sharing some of my conclusions, it seems useful to begin with definitions of *folklore* and *folkloristics*.

The word *folklore* was coined in 1846 by the Englishman William John Thoms to represent the 'lore of the people', as 'manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc, of the olden time'. Folklore studies or folklife research became a distinctive field of study in Europe and North America around 1900. The discipline of folklore, which is devoted to the identification, documentation, explanation, and analysis of traditional expressive forms, processes, and behaviours, is defined as *folkloristics*. Folkloristics is now well established at universities, archives, museums, and institutions in many countries and has its own assumptions, concepts, hypotheses, theories, lexicon, issues, and international organisations.<sup>1</sup>

I will try to show that, although New Zealand does not have folkloristics as an academic discipline, it has a lot of folklore and that due to the distribution of this field amongst several disciplines at New Zealand universities (New Zealand studies, Pacific studies, Maori studies, social history, popular culture, anthropology, sociology, art history, and so on) a number of topics worthy of investigation are in need of scholarly study.

As a rule, folkloristic research in 19th century Europe started with the study of folk literature, that is

folktales, legends, anecdotes, jokes, folksongs, ballads, proverbs, and proverbial sayings. Most countries in Europe, Asia, and the Americas hold large folklore archives in which collections of oral tradition are kept and organized according to international standards, such as Arne-Thompson's "The Types of Folktales", a classification scheme for some 2500 tale types of international distribution. A step towards modernization of this traditional source of folklore studies is the inclusion in the archives of historical and modern media such as reading material and popular imagery (that is, magazines, novels, cartoons, comics, moving images). Other traditional areas of investigation are customs, beliefs, and popular religion. A broad area of folklorists' competence is in people's material culture: housing and dwellings, agriculture and forestry, mining, crafts and occupational folklore, folk art, food, clothing, folk costumes, and folk medicine. New fields of folklore studies include organization of leisure time, tourism, associations, and sport. To stay with the latter, I had great pleasure in reading an article by Ron Palenski on the recent All Blacks success in the Bledisloe Cup in the *Dominion* of 22 August 1996, in which he said: "John Hart ... will forever be in rugby folklore as the man who guided the All Blacks through an incredible 1996".<sup>2</sup>

A very original society developed during early colonial settlement. Now however we are being globalised. Scholarly attempts at dealing with the 'important question of what in fact comprises a New Zealand culture and how a national identity can be based on it' are beginning to appear.<sup>3</sup> Otherwise, apart from Maori Studies, not very much has been done for the investigation of New Zealand culture in New Zealand. We could almost speak of New Zealand as a 'developing country' in folkloristic terms – a New Zealand Folklore Society did exist for a short period in the 1970s and produced a few issues of a journal.<sup>4</sup> However, scholars are increasingly coming to terms with the fact that the country has distinctive peculiarities in the way its people live, in the way the country looks. As Kurt Sanders puts it: 'There's more freedom, we're more open, we discuss things, we tolerate more and a wider range of lifestyle is accepted'.<sup>5</sup>

For the discipline of folkloristics, New Zealand offers a wide range of investigative possibilities which could contribute to a better understanding of the way New Zealand was, both by better awareness of the past and of its changing identity, and by accepting the process of internationalization which is on its way. In spite of this process, which means New Zealand will increasingly become a greater entity than merely Aotearoa, more than a Pacific rim country, there is enough evidence of a specific Kiwi culture. Maybe, through the eyes of a European visitor, it appears more obvious. Certainly, there is a growing trend towards conscious-

ness and concern for the traditions and specifics of Kiwi lifestyle, as I found in such books as *A Man's Country?*, *New Zealand! New Zealand!*, *New Zealand's Traditions and Folklore*, and *Putting Our Town On The Map*.<sup>6</sup>

To conclude, I feel the time has come for the institutionalisation of folkloristics as a discipline in at least one of New Zealand's universities. The main focus for folklore studies to be initiated in this way would be 'knowledge systems ... to be built up to show what is happening to people, especially in the day-to-day conditions they ordinarily experience'.<sup>7</sup> A department of folklore would contribute to ongoing debates about what is distinctive in the New Zealand identity, a matter that becomes the more urgent as internationalisation of economics and communications proceeds apace.

#### NOTES

- 1 Robert A. Georges and Michael Owen Jones: *Folkloristics. An introduction*. Bloomington/Indianapolis 1995, p 1.
- 2 Cf. Geoff Fougere: 'Sport, Culture and Identity: the Case of Rugby Football'. In: David Novitz and Bill Willmott (eds): *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*. Wellington 1989, pp 110-122.
- 3 Bill Willmott: Introduction. In: Novitz/Willmott (see note 2) pp 1-20, quotation from p 2.
- 4 *The Maorilander*, Journal of the New Zealand Folklore Society 1-6. Wellington 1970-1972. Cf. Frank Fyfe: *A Shanty or Two*. Wellington: New Zealand Folklore Society, 1970.
- 5 Kurt Sanders: *The Way We Were*. Auckland 1996, p 7.
- 6 Jock Phillips: *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male. A History*. Auckland 1987, revised edition 1996. Stephen Bennett/Richard Wolfe: *New Zealand! New Zealand! In Praise of Kiviana*. Auckland 1969. Gordon Ell: *New Zealand Traditions & Folklore*. Auckland 1994. Claudia Bell/John Lyall: *Putting Our Town On The Map. Local Claims of Fame in New Zealand*. Auckland 1995.
- 7 Steve Britton/Richard Le Heron/Eric Pawson (eds): *Changing Places in New Zealand. A Geography of Restructuring*. Christchurch 1992, p 2.

#### COMMENTARY

## Rau-mata-nui's waiata

Margaret Orbell

*From the seminar 'The Tapu Geography of Raukawa (Cook Strait)' given at the Stout Research Centre in September 1996.*

Thousands of songs recorded by 19th-century Māori writers form a rich poetic heritage from which much can be discovered about traditional Māori experience, values and aesthetics. Landscape and the ocean are constant presences, inseparable from the events and emotions of which the poets speak. In a group of songs composed mainly in Te Upoko o te Ika (the southernmost part of the North Island), Raukawa (Cook Strait) appears as a barrier that separates the poets from their relatives – or husbands, or lovers – who have made the voyage over those dangerous waters and are now far away in the south.