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Contents

Abbreviations

vii

Introduction | *Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum*

i

1
Imagining Our Pasts:
Writing Our Histories | *Michael Reilly*

14

2
Mā Pango Mā Whero Ka Oti:
Unities and Fragments in Māori History | *Danny Keenan*

39

3
Surveying Space:
Constructing the Colonial Landscape | *Giselle Byrnes*

54

4
Domesticating the Land:
Colonial Women's Gardening | *Katherine Raine*

76

5
Body and Soul: Heroic Visions of Work
in the Late Nineteenth Century | *Margaret McClure*

97

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6	Textual Museums: Collection and Writing in History and Ethnology, 1900–1950 <i>Chris Hilliard</i>	118
7	The Cultural Remains of Elsie Walker <i>Bronwyn Dalley</i>	140
8	Opening the Wardrobe of History: Dress, Artefacts and Material Life of the 1940s and 1950s <i>Fiona McKergow</i>	163
9	Persistent Needs and Expanding Desires: Pākehā Families and State Welfare in the Years of Prosperity <i>Bronwyn Labrum</i>	188
10	Street-Level Chemistry: The Past in the Present at Historic Places <i>Gavin McLean</i>	211
	Contributors	231
	Index	233

Abbreviations

<i>AJHR</i>	<i>Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives</i>
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington
DFPP	Deans Family Papers
LINZ	Land Information New Zealand
NA	National Archives, Wellington
<i>NZJH</i>	<i>New Zealand Journal of History</i>
<i>NZPD</i>	<i>New Zealand Parliamentary Debates</i>

Persistent Needs and Expanding Desires: Pākehā Families and State Welfare in the Years of Prosperity

| BRONWYN LABRUM

Our conventional view of post-war New Zealand and similar countries centres on 'social optimism, prosperity, naivety, and innocence'.¹ Add conformity and conservatism and the list of defining terms is settled. New Zealand – so the story goes – was dull and boring, but also 'small, rich and complete.... The most comfortable place in the world to grow up'.² Recent studies have begun to question these enduring characterisations. As the historian Mona Gleason suggests, such clichéd views say 'more about the tendency to look back at this period with nostalgic eyes than about the period itself'.³ By examining such varied topics as gender roles, sexuality, new teenage cultures or domestic design, 'the other fifties' – and another sixties – are emerging.⁴ Rather than being exemplified by comfort, uniformity or dullness, post-war societies were riven with contradictions, tensions, and ambiguities, all of which were experienced differently by groups and individuals.

My focus is on the prevailing marker of prosperity. I investigate a particular form of social assistance – discretionary welfare – and argue that post-war New Zealand and its welfare state are more complicated than they are often shown to be.⁵ Problems maintaining the suburban family home, including the adequacy of benefits, were material issues with which increasing numbers of families needed assistance; they constitute the focus of the essay. The growth of discretionary welfare services demonstrates the continuing existence of need over a period

when the adequacy and success of the social security system as a whole was never revisited.

By viewing the relationship between families and the state from the perspective of families, my approach differs from that taken by other welfare historians. The importance to families and the state of the distinguishing features of this period – the suburban home, women as mothers and men as providers, consumerism and domesticity focused on the household – is clearly evident in the case files compiled by social workers which comprise a key source in this essay. Yet the familiar representation of a contented, domesticated society was not as simple as historians have often made out; there was greater nuance in these concepts and social roles. I sketch a more fluid and contradictory picture of a time that was not necessarily abundant, satisfied or complacent for everyone, and of a society which had persistent needs and a growing range of desires.

The changing post-war world

For Pākehā the period from 1950 to about 1967 has been described as New Zealand's golden age; the 'fat, satisfied years' after the lifting of war-time restrictions in 1950 were a time of 'unsurpassed prosperity and social tranquillity'.⁶ In the ensuing decade, an agricultural revolution dovetailed with the growth of sales of farm produce to Britain and a boom in wool sales following the Korean War. Increasing overseas sales and the appearance of a wide range of consumer goods from 1954 stimulated local spending. Full employment, new cars, a larger range and number of household appliances, increasing electricity consumption, more telephones, more roads and highways – the list of positive indicators for post-war New Zealand society is lengthy and gave the country the second highest standard of living in the world.⁷ These trends continued until 1967, when full employment ended and the economy headed into recession.⁸

Prosperity held out the promise of security, stability and the 'New Zealand way of life' for everyone.⁹ Not only had the family 'triumphed', but the post-war period was also the heyday of what Gael Ferguson aptly calls 'the New Zealand Dream': living in a family home in the suburbs. The attainment of this dream drove government policy throughout the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁰ The dream was founded on an idea of the family as a 'privatised collective identity based on the assumed

mutuality of interests and the natural and essential source of affective ties and sense of belonging'. The normative, nuclear family was highly gendered, and comprised a working provider father and housewife mother who had 'innate qualities of motherhood' and played the 'happy housewife consumer' role. All family members were important and interdependent, even if their relationships were unequal, although an apparent egalitarianism stressed the complementarity of husband and wife roles.¹¹

The national population increased from 1.7 to 2.9 million between 1945 and 1972, and there was a boom among the Pākehā population. As marriage became virtually universal and occurred at a younger age, the percentage of the population under 15 grew from 27 to 34 per cent in the same period. The greater number of births allowed the primary school population to double between 1945 and 1970; the secondary school population increased three and a half times over the same period as more children attended school at a younger age and remained for longer periods. At the same time there were geographic shifts, particularly urbanisation and the drift north. Between 1936 and 1976 the rural portion of the population dropped from one third to one sixth and urban areas contained two thirds of all New Zealanders. By the 1970s the North Island contained 73 per cent of the population. Suburbanisation, particularly in Auckland, mushroomed.¹²

As a number of writers have noted, not everyone benefited from the good times.¹³ The downturn in construction during the Second World War and the marriage and baby boom left lingering problems in housing the population. By the end of the war there were 47,000 unsatisfied housing applications. Surveys in Invercargill in 1946 and Auckland in 1951 revealed a housing shortage that remained acute throughout the decade.¹⁴ It was not only housing that was in short supply; there was more generally tremendous pressure on public services and facilities, such as schools and hospitals. Urbanisation and suburbanisation produced raw, monotonous and sprawling instant communities in areas such as the Hutt Valley. Social problems persisted, to the perplexity of many community leaders and politicians, and more worryingly, appeared to symbolise underlying difficulties. Anxious perceptions of 'juvenile delinquency', especially in urban areas and the new suburbs, more unmarried mothers, and ongoing revelations of inadequate family life, suggested that all was not well.¹⁵

Wages stagnated for many New Zealanders, and even though they grew as a proportion of total private income, inflation ate into them; in

these years of prosperity, it was more commonly the élite that prospered. The gaps were most noticeable in the cities, as the 'social gradient lengthened and social distance increased'. Differentiation was to some extent masked by the growing number of two-income households, as more women entered paid work. The gap between single- and double-income households had lengthened markedly by the 1970s.¹⁶

The expansion of discretionary welfare

New Zealand's wide-ranging social security system, which included universal family benefits, low-interest housing loans, and unrestricted access to education and health care, was intended to support the increasing population, the spread of consumerism, and the focus on suburban homes and families. As with housing, education and other services, however, social security was also circumscribed and under mounting pressure. While many individuals and families enjoyed the welfare state's benevolence – and this is the view with which we are most familiar now – new studies have emphasised social security's limitations and its uncomprehensive nature. Margaret McClure concludes that continuing tensions resulted in a system that 'did not alter the wide disparity in people's chances in life, [although] it provided protection against the worst that could happen'.¹⁷ Spending on social security fell steadily as well. Benefits declined as a proportion of gross national product, from nearly 8.5 per cent in 1947 to 6.83 per cent by 1971, at a time when the number of dependants (children and the aged) was an increasing proportion of the population. The universal family benefit, often cited as the benchmark of the welfare state, decreased in value because it was not linked to the cost of living or wage rises.¹⁸ The insufficiency of statutory benefits was recognised in 1951 by the establishment of additional 'special assistance' grants, which encompassed 10 per cent of all beneficiaries by 1971.¹⁹

Discretionary welfare services attempted to fill the gaps for many families. Discretionary welfare is an umbrella term for an extraordinarily wide variety of non-institutional services. These range from the tangible provision of material aid – money, food, blankets, or rent assistance – to matters more concerned with quality of life and family relationships, such as behavioural problems, adoptions, assistance for unmarried mothers, or advice. Discretionary welfare programmes can be contrasted with the assured rights and clear statutory guidelines of benefits and

pensions which we usually think of when we evoke the 'welfare state'. Welfare officers or social workers from the Child Welfare Division of the Education Department and the Social Security Department were the principal providers of discretionary services. Even in terms of need and assistance which were primarily material, specific programmes and forms of aid were developed as part of discretionary welfare services.²⁰ Before the Second World War, financial need and monetary transactions were a very small part of such services. In most cases of material need before the introduction of the social security system in 1939, families turned to the Pensions Department, charitable aid boards or other local agencies. Child welfare officers sometimes assisted families financially – fostering illegitimate children with their birth mothers so that they could receive payment, for example – but such forms of direct financial aid were rare.

The social security system included provision for discretionary emergency benefits in cases of hardship. These could be granted for reasons of age, physical or mental incapacity, domestic circumstance, or for any reason which prevented applicants from earning a livelihood sufficient for them and their dependants. The emergency benefits were granted at the same rate as the type of benefit for which the applicant most closely qualified. Compared with other benefits, the criteria for emergency benefits were uncertain and unreliable, and once granted, these benefits were kept under constant review. Applicants had to disclose their circumstances and perhaps a life history, and make a case for their need in a process that entailed more inquiries than applications for other benefits.²¹

From the early 1940s, Child Welfare became more directly associated with the disbursement of money and other forms of direct material aid, as it participated in a low-profile, inter-departmental scheme to assist large and needy families living in poor housing. Child welfare officers investigated referrals from the State Advances Corporation or Social Security and made recommendations for future action. Depending on whether the family was deemed to need ongoing supervision, either Child Welfare or Social Security would take over the case. Recommendations could include assistance with rent, or small grants for removal expenses or food vouchers, in order to tide a family over a difficult period. Families could also receive money, grants for food, clothing and bedding, or budgetary advice; supplies of blankets and clothing were kept on hand in Child Welfare offices for emergencies.²² Child Welfare's involvement in the Needy Families Scheme was a

continuation and elaboration of its emphasis on 'preventive work'. Preventive work was based on the general principle of working with whole families, as much as with individual children. Initially couched in terms of heightened efficiency and the prevention of delinquency, its primary aim in an era of deinstitutionalisation was to prevent the committal of children to state care. Preventive work also exemplified Child Welfare's policy of preserving the family unit first and foremost. Effecting 'social adjustment' by keeping the child under review for a period and visiting the home reworked the meanings of welfare in terms of constructive alterations in social and family relations. Personal intervention and ongoing assessment of the success of re-negotiated family relations were integral to the new definitions. By the Second World War, preventive work extended to a range of activities for other government departments and agencies: assessing housing applications for the State Advances Corporation and family situations for the Social Security Department, acting as marriage conciliators, or reporting on custody and maintenance disputes for the Magistrate's Court.

In 1951 Social Security began a second discretionary programme of 'special assistance' to provide financial aid. It was intended for those who had commitments that could not be met out of the basic benefit, who had insufficient other means available to them, or who had no possibility of helping themselves. The grant – either a lump sum or continuing payments – was to be used for the essentials of life such as food, clothing, or shelter.²³ The establishment of the programme, renamed supplementary assistance from 1958, was an official recognition that statutory benefits were insufficient.²⁴ Even so, the programme was seldom publicised, it involved greater targeting than statutory benefits, and its criteria for assistance could be rigid.²⁵

The total number of discretionary cases rose from 7150 in 1950 to 39,759 by 1965.²⁶ Caution is necessary in interpreting these figures as they greatly underestimate the amount of assistance distributed through discretionary services more generally. The number of cases refers to individuals only and not to other family members who were also involved in a particular case; if all family members were included, the total number of people in contact with social workers would have been much higher. The numbers give only a snapshot of total cases or payments in each year; they do not reveal the number of inquiries conducted nor the number of cases processed in any single year, let alone those matters that were investigated but did not become cases in an agency's files.

The statistics do not reveal which category of need was involved in any one case. Social Security's special assistance programmes may have often been about financial and material need, but this was not always the only factor. The impact of internal family dynamics or the need for information could occur in these individual family situations as well. Apart from the figures supplied specifically for the Needy Families Scheme – which was never a large programme – it is almost impossible to specify which of the Child Welfare cases relate primarily to material need.²⁷ Child Welfare's preventive cases, many of which involved tangible forms of assistance, increased spectacularly from 938 in 1950 to 15,948 in 1965.²⁸ Preventive work ensured that Child Welfare, perhaps even more than Social Security, had become, as Bronwyn Dalley notes, a 'general welfare agency catering to the spectrum of need'.²⁹

Discretionary services were delivered through casework based on personal visiting, home investigation and individually tailored assistance. Families often had highly personalised and localised, and sometimes lengthy and demanding, interactions with social workers. The discretionary welfare relationship relied on cooperation, rather than the force of statute. The Needy Families Scheme, for example, operated on two basic principles: the preservation of the family unit wherever possible, and assistance given to be 'of a helpful, social, constructive character, and not merely a monetary grant'.³⁰ Inquiry was wide-ranging: information was taken about the dependent and non-dependent children living at home, the family income, rent or mortgage payments, and any special circumstances including household expenditure and debts.

The emphasis on casework influenced the ways families came into contact with social workers. Their route to assistance was extremely varied. Sometimes family members – usually mothers, less frequently fathers, and occasionally children – initiated contact directly with welfare officers and social workers. There was often a degree of reluctance and ambivalence on the part of family members, who could be mindful of the potential cost of opening up personal situations to scrutiny. When child welfare officer, Miss Charman, mistakenly visited a house on the basis of a complaint of child neglect, she tried to explain to the occupant that 'it was not necessarily a disgraceful thing for a Child Welfare Officer to call'. Displaying an unusual lack of appreciation of the occupant's position, Charman was at a loss to understand why the woman should have felt embarrassed; after all, Charman had previously visited others in the street about board applications, adoptions and needy

family assistance, and believed that only the closest neighbours would have noticed anything anyway.³¹ Most officers acknowledged that they were, to many, an 'agency of last resort'.³²

Yet by the 1950s members of the public knew that they could go to Child Welfare and Social Security for a broad array of services and all kinds of information and advice.³³ More people were doing just that as a burgeoning sense of citizenship and entitlement, and the proliferation of an increasingly professionalised group of social workers, encouraged the articulation of need. Greater district and rural social facilities enabled the public to demand 'on the spot' services as the welfare state expanded throughout the country.³⁴ Publicity drives, particularly in the wake of the 1954 Mazengarb Report on delinquent teenage behaviour in the Hutt Valley, stimulated increasing use of these services. During 1958, for example, Child Welfare staff gave 500 public talks and lectures to groups up and down New Zealand.³⁵

Some family members wrote to their local Members of Parliament, who then passed on the inquiry to an official to investigate. A few applicants, such as Mrs Leute, went straight to the top. 'Having heard of the wonderful work you have done for the welfare of women and children', she wrote to Hilda Ross, Minister in charge of Child Welfare, 'I make an appeal to you in the interests of humanity'.³⁶ Many such letters were written directly to Ross, who was also Minister for the Welfare of Women and Children (1949–57), and to Mabel Howard, who assumed these portfolios in 1957, as well as being Minister of Health (1947–49). The women who wrote to these female ministers hoped – sometimes ineffectually – that they would identify with their plight as women and act accordingly.

Not only did welfare officers have an increased ability to assist women such as Mrs Leute, but they also had a widening regulatory and inspectorial role that brought families into contact with the discretionary welfare system. By the 1950s there was more chance of families encountering welfare officers as individual government programmes expanded and inter-departmental cooperation grew. Many families had existing contact with other state departments and once they were in 'the system', there was more likelihood of other issues and needs being discovered. 'The system' could also include social and community mechanisms. Neighbours, teachers, priests and ministers, voluntary welfare and community groups all referred family members to welfare officers. The delivery of discretionary welfare services also reflected what others believed family needs to be; there was a *continuum*

between self-identified need and observed problem, and discretionary welfare fell in the area between.

As the encounters with welfare officers and the pleas to female cabinet ministers indicate, discretionary welfare was largely a female world, in which women predominated as recipients and as providers. Mothers at home had the greatest contact with visiting social workers; they were also the ones who were believed to have most interest, and most expertise, in children's and family welfare. Such beliefs highlight the dominant contemporary gender notions and representations of a woman's role as in and for the family, and a mother's relationships to children and the house (as housewife) as naturalised and taken for granted. It was thus assumed that women social workers would be more attuned to and experienced with domestic issues and spaces, and family problems. Their work took them into people's homes more frequently than male officers'; women social workers dealt with infants, children of both sexes under the age of ten, and older girls, while male officers had responsibility only for older boys.

Discretionary programmes generated case files and a large amount of supporting documentation, which passed back and forth between head office, district officials and individual social workers. Most family situations revealed a number of problems simultaneously, regardless of which programme or form of assistance was utilised. Not all of these predicaments were financial, but material need of various kinds was increasingly in evidence. When Charles Peck, the Child Welfare Superintendent, looked back on 27 years of child welfare work in 1967, he believed that society's problems were those of affluence and prosperity, rather than of poverty: 'Prosperity brings its own social problems, and greater skill and understanding can be required to deal with these than with the problems of poverty and illegitimacy'.³⁷ The nature of some of the 'problems of prosperity', the tensions between need and desire, and changing nature of discretionary welfare in the 1950s and 1960s form the remainder of this essay.

Families' needs and desires

The material needs of families were a mixture of longstanding needs that had intensified in changing social and economic circumstances, and new requirements that emerged from the hopes and optimism of the post-war world. Needs surrounding the suburban home in particular

exemplify the combination of old and new issues; they also point up the inherently gendered premises of family problems and the solutions that welfare agencies offered. Such needs underline the complexity of post-war society and its welfare system.

In reaching for the 'New Zealand way of life', the attainment of a family home in the suburbs was the goal. As Graeme Dunstall has argued, home-ownership was a 'central motif in the post-war social pattern . . . [and] expressed the ruling ideas about family life and child-rearing; the need for privacy and space'. Dunstall concludes that housing patterns reflected Pākehā characteristics of 'possessive individualism, equality, [and] cultural homogeneity'.³⁸ Yet many families faced recurring problems of either a lack of, or inferior, accommodation, or they had difficulties in meeting their rental payments.

Accommodation issues increasingly centred on the desire for a private family house, rented or owned by its occupants. Families became the focus of state lending provision with the 1935 Labour Government, and the detached family house was the desired norm.³⁹ State houses were built from 1937 for rental to those on middle and lower incomes. Subsidised housing was still out of reach of the poor and destitute and there was little decent, cheap, private rental housing throughout the post-war period. Workers on moderate incomes benefited from state houses with, in effect, subsidised rents. The criteria for the balloted allocations consisted of level of need, insecurity, number of dependants, ability to afford rent, and the suitability and respectability of the family concerned. From 1949 the National Government's policy of encouraging home-ownership further reinforced the equation of house with home. State rental housing was limited to those on low incomes, who were given the option of buying their houses. By now, the criteria in order of weighting were congestion, inadequate services, length of time spent in poor conditions, housing costs, health, and dispersal of family members. The National Government also started a programme of cheap lending through the State Advances Corporation and private organisations. The subsequent Labour Government (1957–60) continued this policy direction with 3 per cent building loans through State Advances and the opportunity for parents to capitalise the family benefit from 1958 and put a deposit on a house.

A specific vision of young, small families lay at the centre of successive government housing policies, despite the official and public emphasis on population growth. Such a vision precluded the building of houses for larger families and existing houses were converted instead.

Few private rental houses were available for larger than 'normal' families, who could often find themselves having little choice about where to live. The Shadwell family, for example, was disadvantaged by the emphasis on small families. When Mr Shadwell applied for a four-bedroomed house for his large family, he was told that an application specifying a three-bedroomed house with a built-in porch would get him one more quickly. The welfare officer noted that 'Mrs Shadwell assures me that they have no need whatever of financial assistance and their problem is one of accommodation only'.⁴⁰

The ironic tension between the post-war desire for a greater population, and the social and economic realities faced by many families is clear in some housing situations. For the Dickson family, the tension was experienced in acute form. Mr and Mrs Dickson and their four children aged between seven months and ten years had moved from the West Coast to Christchurch in order to improve Mrs Dickson's health. Their accommodation did not improve, however. They lived in a bach with a large living room, one bedroom, a kitchenette and a sun porch. The kitchenette contained an open fire and a small sink. Only one of the stove elements worked, and the bach had no water connection – and neither bath nor handbasin. Mrs Dickson had to carry the water up four wooden steps and heat it on the open fire. Mr Dickson had consistently attempted to improve his family's living arrangements, and had unsuccessfully approached various land agents and answered numerous advertisements for rental houses. He had also investigated the possibility of working in forestry simply to obtain a house for his family, but there were no vacant positions with married quarters. His family's case was passed to Child Welfare to consider as a needy family after he had applied for a state house. The child welfare officer noted that the family 'appear to be clean and hardworking and I consider them suitable tenants for a state house'. The case was classified as urgent. Mrs Dickson tried other channels to obtain accommodation. She wrote to Hilda Ross: 'At present I am a worried and desperate Mother and am not a bit agreeable to the statement that New Zealand wants a larger population'. Knowing that large families were not popular with rental agencies, she informed Ross that she had considered fostering out her children, but could find no suitable homes or institutions for them.⁴¹ The Dicksons both focused on the risks of their current situation for child-raising. Yet the different channel each parent took was also apparent. Mr Dickson, in his provider role, tried to change his place of employment and to find a rental accommodation. Mrs Dickson, on the other hand, approached the government directly, 'woman to woman'.

PERSISTENT NEEDS AND EXPANDING DESIRES

Large family size also had other ramifications: it prevented parents from being able to save or put aside money for regular outgoings or household expenses and thus compounded already tight financial circumstances. Sometimes married siblings with children were forced to reside in the same household or adult friends of the family formed part of the household. This enabled costs to be shared, but in the view of the welfare officers, it created the potential for overcrowding and contributed to a lack of privacy and possible conflict within families.

Even where families were not large, the case files show extended family situations. Several cases refer to grandparents (particularly the grandmother) living together with children and grandchildren. In some instances this was a positive move, such as when divorce was pending and a woman wanted a state house so that she could have the children to live with her. Her mother would also reside there and provide child care.⁴² Some families used discretionary welfare to get out of unhappy situations. One couple had been living with the husband's parents but wanted a new house in a completely different city to 'avoid bad family relationships'. Moving 'right away' 'would be less likely to cause dissension than a move to other board or one room in the same city'.⁴³

Even for families with suitable accommodation, there was the threat of eviction if they fell behind with the rent. Evictions were often the result of the loss of the breadwinner, either by illness or desertion. Lack of a male breadwinner put many mothers in a vulnerable position in a period when the male-breadwinner family was the basis of social, political and economic policy, and when access to benefits was difficult for sole women attempting to support their families. Desertion often masked a further desperate situation. For example, Mrs Austin's husband had left and he had no intention of supporting her or their two children. The child welfare officer was involved because of the housing situation and problems with the children, even though Mrs Austin was receiving the emergency unemployment benefit and the family benefit. Her mother, who was living with them, received a pension. Mrs Austin was 'in a financial mess, nervous and upset' because her husband accused her of abusing the children. The five-year-old was 'uncontrollable' and the seven-year-old was 'afraid of the Father'. The older girl said that Mr Austin 'tried to get her and her friends to take their bloomers off in a paddock. He threatened to kill them if they told'. Mrs Austin's mother also testified to his violence. Although the officer advised Mrs Austin to go to the police, she privately thought that Mrs Austin was 'so bitter against her husband that she will make up any possible story against

him'. In an era that gave scant recognition to domestic violence or incest and the power some husbands held over their wives, the officer chose to doubt Mrs Austin's story.⁴⁴ Mrs Austin's predicament shows that many of these cases contained more than one problem and illustrates how discretionary services dealt with matters outside the scope of other services.

Difficulties arising from rental arrears figure more frequently in the case files than eviction or other problems arising from desertion. One woman whose husband was in hospital with tuberculosis fell behind in her rent and requested assistance in meeting her payments. She was receiving benefits for herself and four children aged between six months and eleven years, but these were insufficient to cover her outgoings. The State Advances Corporation asked Child Welfare for an appraisal and a rental subsidy was subsequently recommended. In common with other cases, the welfare officer's investigations discovered other difficulties; the children's beds had insufficient cover, and the local Mayor's Fund was called on to supply four single blankets.⁴⁵

Getting behind in rent was partly a consequence of not having enough money but it could also result from difficulties with budgeting. Handling of money and budgeting were integral to many discretionary welfare cases, and home management – in the sense of stewardship of resources – became a more pressing issue during this period. Overwhelmingly, financial over-commitment was the critical problem for families provided with discretionary welfare services. It was a predicament that was intimately bound up with the temptations of an expanding consumer society.

From the early 1950s, family housing needs extended beyond basic material and financial issues. The furnishing and care of houses and gardens also became a matter of discretionary welfare; in post-war New Zealand, 'welfare' was as much to do with desires, as with needs or problems. It was also based on a broader set of meanings than in the late twentieth century; when narrowly targeted income support came to dominate welfare policies.

The housing needs and desires were propelled by the growing range of consumer goods available. Almost inevitably, budgeting and hire purchase arrangements became part of the problems families faced. Post-war prosperity held out the promise of security and stability for all, but such goals were not necessarily in everyone's reach. New Zealanders used hire purchase or other forms of credit in order to obtain consumer products and to realise the aspirations to a higher standard of living. At

the end of 1955, £9,663,000 was owed under hire purchase, and this figure increased to almost £15,000,000 by the end of 1960.⁴⁶ Easy hire purchase terms and the facility with which many families could acquire new homes under family benefits capitalisation could spell disaster if their circumstances changed.

Hire purchase, especially furniture buying, recurs repeatedly in the case files. The big-ticket items, such as electric ranges, refrigerators and washing machines, were within reach of many families, and by 1956 just over half of all households had these three major appliances.⁴⁷ With the availability of more consumer goods and the development of the mass market, standards of living rose; the 1950s housewife could come into her own. As Helen May notes, the image of the housewife as improviser, held over from the war, gradually shifted in the 1950s to that of the home-maker and all the connotations that term carried. Magazines reinforced the shift; the *Woman's Weekly* 'Economy Hints' page became 'Surer Shopping'. The 1950s housewife had skills in shopping for 'the house, the table, the family', and could choose from a range of new household products with which to decorate the home or ease her domestic work: plastic tablecloths, sponge mops, pegs and coloured baths, radios, louvre windows.⁴⁸ Time saved with new vacuum cleaners, for instance, was to be focused on home decorating, as Anne Elise recalls: 'I picked up the message very early, mainly from the pages of my mother's fat weekly bundle of magazines, showing fascinating floor plans of the right and wrong way to arrange furniture, or ten bright ideas for trimming lamp shades.'⁴⁹

Escalating material aspirations – or simply keeping up with the neighbours – sometimes outstripped the ability to pay. In the view of the welfare officer who investigated the case, the Williams family had overspent on a range of goods. Mrs Williams admitted that she could not stop herself from obtaining items for her family of seven children aged between one and 21. If she saw her children in need of clothing she would purchase it; Mrs Williams was not one to 'make do'. The family was reasonably well off. Mr Williams, a carpenter, earned £21 a week, and gave his wife £15 with which she easily covered the household bills.⁵⁰ For the welfare officer handling the case, the Williams's income should have been sufficient to support the family. Mrs Williams's aspirations were evidently higher than simply 'managing', as she sought to acquire the type of material goods for her children that post-war society had made available. Perceptions of need clearly diverged between families and officials.

Other cases revealed difficulties caused by buying cars or other goods on time payment, accumulating Building Society debts, or running up popular sources of credit such as that offered by the Farmers' Trading Company. The mounting desires of children for new clothing, shoes and other items could be met by the system of revolving credit of a small deposit followed by weekly payments, and often used at several stores at once. Children and young people sometimes used such credit without their parents' knowledge, and the discovery was made only when families had to foot the unpaid bills.⁵¹

Hire purchase commitments and lack of money skills sometimes added to existing difficult family circumstances. The Reid family budgeting troubles emerged after they had been under Child Welfare supervision for several years. The family consisted of four children aged between two and thirteen years, with another child on the way. Welfare officers considered both Mr and Mrs Reid to be 'sub-normal'. Mr Reid had a drinking problem and, unable to control his temper, beat his children. In turn, the children experienced problems at school, and one child had committed suicide. Mr Reid had been declared an undischarged bankrupt but brought in an average of £14 a week with overtime. He gave his wife £10 for housekeeping and family benefit added another £2. The family also received 10s a week from the Mayor's Relief Fund in groceries, meat and vegetable orders, and assistance with rent arrears. The family's weekly outgoings were almost £4, excluding food. The debt collectors from a local department store regularly approached them for payments on an outstanding debt of more than £55 owing on a sewing machine. The family had lived in unsuitable accommodation for a number of years, but had finally obtained a state house. Welfare officers found the living conditions, clothing and feeding of the children to be satisfactory, and concluded – perhaps with some justification considering the difference between income and outgoings – that mismanagement of funds was the main issue facing the family.⁵²

Many families did not have the means, contacts or skills to do the kind of planning and sacrificing often required to live the New Zealand dream. This was particularly so for women without a male breadwinner. Deserted by her husband and left with four children aged between two and eight years, Mrs Newbold struggled to cope with the basic requirements to maintain her family and house, as well as paying off accumulated debt. She received the deserted wives' benefit as well as the family benefit, and was given a monthly sum from the Social Security Special Assistance Fund. Together, these benefits were insufficient to

sustain her family and cover her debts which included outstanding payments for rent, clothing, groceries, meat and vegetables. She also owed money to various stores for furniture, linen and bedding, and a vacuum cleaner. The child welfare officer recommended that the State Advances Corporation accept a lesser amount each month for rent arrears.⁵³

Budgeting and simply managing the household finances were major issues for many families. The provision of government-funded budgeting services was one way of helping families out of trouble. Community family budgeting services were introduced first to Kaikohe in 1960, and by the late 1960s, were to be found in most major towns. In 1968 in Hamilton alone the service handled more than half a million dollars a year for 200 families.⁵⁴

Other government policies exacerbated – or even encouraged – family financial woes. One commentator believed that family benefits had become part of the wage structure in New Zealand and thought that wives were in particular danger, 'as they were often expected to [pay] household costs out of the family benefit, while the husband's income was spent on something else, possibly buying a house'. In 1960 the number of families capitalising their family benefits peaked, and between 1960 and 1964 45,330 families took up this option. Newspaper editorials warned that the capitalisation scheme had 'brought hardship to those most in need of the weekly payment of the child allowance'.⁵⁵

Accommodation continued to be an issue during the 1950s, but welfare workers believed that 'the question of insufficient finance from Social Security benefits to cope with present day costs' was more evident.⁵⁶ As one officer noted, 'family budgeting has been seriously affected and it is a difficult problem. It is becoming increasingly noticeable that people on a benefit can hardly manage to feed and clothe themselves and have few pleasures, if any, which can only be at the expense of food and clothing.' Yet the varying ability of families to cope was also recognised: 'It would seem that in many cases people would benefit by learning to buy food and clothing economically and plan for their needs. However, it seems characteristic of people in economic distress that their ability to plan is very limited and because of their personal anxiety their use of money is usually chaotic.'⁵⁷ A broad definition of welfare that encompassed pleasure as well as need is apparent, as is the recognition that distress and emotions were part of the problem; social workers attempted to give effect to social security rather than just economic security.⁵⁸

There was continual tension, however, between what the state and families defined as prosperity or security, whether social or economic. This difference was manifest in only some needs and desires being catered for in welfare programmes. Families had to show that they were making an attempt to manage wisely and well. In the process, women had to be good housekeepers and mothers and men good providers. The case of Jack and Mary Bauer and their family shows what was considered desirable, in contrast to the Williams family's overspending and mismanagement. The Bauers and their five children (including twins) aged between eight and seventeen years, had rented an old three-bedroomed wooden house for nineteen years. The welfare officer investigating their circumstances noted that the house was very well kept – 'beds all made with sheets and pillowcases' – and that Jack had made much of the furniture himself. Jack had worked on the wharves but ill health meant that he was no longer in paid employment. The family received a combined weekly income of about £9, which included board payments from the eldest child who was working; an age benefit and the family benefit. Basic outgoings on rent and essential foodstuffs totalled almost £4 a week, and the family also owed over £45 for items of clothing and bedding and a dining suite. There was little opportunity to meet their regular commitments as well as to purchase necessary items, such as clothing for the children. The welfare officer judged that Jack appeared to 'manage his affairs in a methodical way'. Mary was described as 'a sensible Scottish woman and has all her monies planned each month trying to pay a little here and little there until her debts are cleared'. There was nothing in the family situation to warrant supervision, so it was recommended that Social Security assist with clothing.⁵⁹

A good deal of flexibility is apparent in the assessment of family situations. In the Hunter case, for example, welfare officers took the unusual step of paying off debt. Assistance was not generally given for this, but the principle could be waived where 'the effect would otherwise be a struggle for many years and this would in turn affect the welfare of the children'.⁶⁰ As the welfare officer investigating the Hunters' case argued, 'the fact that Mr Hunter has over the past 2 years been able to pay small deposits on a Frigidaire does not mean he is thereby less deserving of a rental subsidy when he is genuinely £2.5.6 below the Needy Family formula'. In order to cement the justification for taking this unusual step, the officer continued: 'Many of our clients spend more money on drink and the TAB each week than Mr Hunter

has contributed to his Frigidaire. He spends nothing on these things.' As with the Bauers, time payment was seen as good organisation. There is also a sense that the male provider was doing well, and should be rewarded rather than penalised. The officer wanted to encourage his recent good behaviour: 'Instead of a cruel sadistic man whose thoughts dwelt on how he could punish his children and his cruelty not be detected by the "welfare" he now spent much of his time mending toys for children's homes'.⁶¹

Casework methods reinforced the post-war emphasis on homes and consumerism, and underscored traditional gender roles in the process. Not only were housekeeping, feeding the family and cleaning the focus of welfare officers' questions, but the officers' duties extended to advising on furnishings and care of the house, supervising the purchase of household goods and clothing, and overseeing repayments. These duties most frequently centred on the actions and values of wives and mothers. A woman's lack of interest in her home was taken as a negative sign. One welfare officer wrote that 'Mrs Roberts has tended to lose interest in the home because of the long period of friction with the husband and uncertainty. She has not maintained a satisfactory standard of housekeeping, and the furnishings are worn, and with the interior, [they] have been damaged at times by the husband in fits of temper.'⁶² Domestic violence was yet to be recognised as a social problem that could and should be challenged; it was Mrs Roberts's housekeeping role and level of interest in maintaining her surroundings that were at issue.

Yet within the consumer home and family context of post-war New Zealand, women could and did challenge or manoeuvre around unequal power relationships, and particularly gender relationships. Welfare agencies could consciously or inadvertently assist them in doing this. Appealing to welfare agencies, as other historians have discovered, was one way that weaker individuals within a family could attempt to deal with their problems.⁶³ In the context of material needs, discretionary welfare could be a means of dealing with (or more often bypassing) struggles between spouses over who should be the financial manager and how the family finances should be handled. In 1951, for example, an ill woman called at the office of the State Advances Corporation in Christchurch about rent arrears. She had been in bed three weeks and had spent the rent money on her children's clothes. She told the welfare officer that her husband was unaware of rent owing, and that she could not manage the house on his wages. A subsequent report from a welfare

officer noted that a good portion of the family income went towards her husband's drinking, and that there was little co-operation between husband and wife. The officer had gradually taken over the household accounts because she believed that the woman was such a poor manager of finances and home affairs.⁶⁴ This case is also an example where, to get herself out of one controlling situation at the hands of a man, a woman finds herself in another, even if the controller in this case was a female welfare officer. Welfare for such women was often a double-edged sword.

Male control and tyranny over family finances is a recurring motif in the case files, and women continued to bear the burden of housekeeping and putting up with husbands' 'rights' while attempting to attain the New Zealand dream. Mr McKenzie, for example, did not give his wife sufficient money to meet their rent and other expenses. They were given notice to quit their accommodation, but Mrs McKenzie 'came to the rescue' with lump sum payments. She used moneylenders at high rates of interest, which only caused her to slide further into debt. Welfare officers noted that 'Mr McKenzie does not seem to concern himself very much with regard to the financial management of the home'. He spent 10s a week on beer, 'which he feels entitled to', as well as gambling – unsuccessfully – at race meetings. He gave his wife sufficient money only when Child Welfare intervened. Mrs McKenzie had not wanted to approach Child Welfare for fear of losing the children (she was a former state ward herself). She had, however, contacted a solicitor about her husband's 'ill-treatment' of her.⁶⁵ Male drinking was a frequent catalyst in this and other situations. As officers complained, 'it is a wasted effort trying to assist the family if the father drinks more than his share of the family income or where the father finds he can spend more because his family is being assisted'.⁶⁶ Contemporary gender ideology and the focus on keeping the family together, as well as the reluctance of wives to confront husbands, contributed to their ongoing dependence and vulnerability.

In the prosperous post-war years discretionary welfare programmes co-existed with an extensive system of pensions and benefits. These services demonstrate the continuing existence of material need and the appearance of new problems and desires of a tangible kind. Reaching for the New Zealand 'way of life', increasingly identified with a house in suburbia replete with new consumer goods, created spiralling aspirations, bred discontent, and strengthened social inequalities.

The delivery of discretionary services through casework reinforced a home and consumer focus. A successful family household meant managing well, even if that included incurring debt and paying off goods. Social workers helped families in the post-war world negotiate an increased range of responsibilities, such as debt, hire purchase, household budgeting, and the varied uses of family benefits. Rather than taking over many family functions, the post-war state's delivery of discretionary welfare services supported families: families and the state created each other.

Provision on these terms also shored up the gendered basis of discretionary welfare. Thorough investigation and home visiting emphasised the role and values of mothers in the household economy – their housekeeping, their impact on children, and their furnishing of the house. Fathers were encouraged to be providers; their daily impact on family relationships was secondary. Welfare officers focused on preserving the family unit and the traditionally differentiated roles within it, even if that sometimes meant aiding wives in their battles against husbands, or more frequently helping them avoid such conflict. Family units consisting of mothers and children were also assisted, because of the contemporary identification of the mother with the children's interests.

Above all, discretionary welfare epitomises the contingency of need, the changing nature of adequacy, and the 'problems of prosperity' in an era when Social Security benefits lost ground. Case files show families who were not just the poor and downtrodden, although their experiences are to be found there. A widening range of families wanted, and required, assistance, particularly since economic, social and emotional security were not considered to be separate issues. Even when the discussion of discretionary welfare is restricted to issues of material need, the unpredictable nature of family situations and growing expectations meant that tangible notions of adequacy could never be measured in precise or absolute terms. Post-war definitions of welfare were broad and flexible; they dealt with desire as much as with need, and welfare officers helped boost families' expectations in the face of static and inflexible statutory provision. The growing number of families who used discretionary services reveals another side to the 1950s and 1960s. Contentment and domesticity lay behind the twitching lounge curtains but so did disparity, pressure, and discontent.

- 1 Mona Gleason, 'Psychology and the Construction of the "Normal" Family in Postwar Canada, 1945-66', *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 78, no. 3, September 1977, p. 450. My thanks to Charlotte Macdonald and Edward Dickinson who supervised the original research from which this essay is drawn and to Bronwyn Dalley for her perceptive and useful comments.
- 2 A journalist quoted in Michael King, *After the War: New Zealand Since 1945*, Hodder and Stoughton with Wilson and Horton, Auckland, 1988, p. 45.
- 3 Gleason, p. 450.
- 4 Julie Glanuzana and Alison Laurie, *Parker and Hulme: A Lesbian View*, New Women's Press, Auckland, 1991; Helen May, *Minding Children, Managing Men: Conflict and Compromise in the Lives of Postwar Pakeha Women*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1992; Sally Parker, 'A Golden Decade? Farm Women in the 1950s' in Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant, (eds), *Women in History 2*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1992, pp. 205-24; *New Zealand Home & Building, Souvenir Edition: The Newstyle 128 1950s Show, Auckland City Art Gallery*, Associated Group Media Ltd., Auckland, 1992; Redmer Yska, *All Shook Up: The Flash Bombie and the Rise of the New Zealand Teenager in the Fifties*, Penguin, Auckland, 1993; Fraser Andrewes, 'Representations of Masculinity in Postwar New Zealand, 1945-1960', MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1995. Useful overseas examples include Wini Breines, *Young, White and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1992 and Joanne Meyerowitz, (ed.), *Not Just Clever: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1994.
- 5 A much more extensive and strikingly different form of discretionary welfare was delivered to Māori families by welfare officers in the Department of Māori Affairs. For an introduction see G. V. Butterworth and H. R. Young, *Māori Affairs*, Iwi Transition Agency/GP Books, Wellington, 1990.
- 6 Margaret McClure, *A Civilised Community: A History of Social Security in New Zealand 1898-1998*, Auckland University Press/Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Auckland, 1998, p. 7; Parker, p. 205.
- 7 Jock Phillips, *Royal Summer: The Visit of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip to New Zealand 1953-54*, Daphne Brasell Associates Press/Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1993, p. 17.
- 8 Graeme Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', in Geoffrey W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edn, Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1992, p. 451; King, p. 91.
- 9 This phrase was the 'antipodean cousin' of the notion of an 'American way of life': the house in suburbia with car and consumer goods, which had to be defended against communist subversion during the Cold War era. See Mark Rolfe, 'Far Away Fordism: The Americanisation of Australia and New Zealand during the 1950s and 1960s', *NZJH*, vol. 33, no. 1, 1999, pp. 73-4.
- 10 Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Injuge of the Pakeha Male: A History*, Penguin, Auckland, 1987, p. 226; Gael Ferguson, *Building the New Zealand Dream*, Dunmore Press/Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Palmerston North, 1994, *passim*.
- 11 As early as 1926 about 50 per cent of wage and salary householders owned their own homes; see Miles Fairburn, 'The Farmers Take Over', in Keith Sinclair (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1990, p. 206.
- 12 *Illustrated History of New Zealand*, The Canadian Family and the State in the Postwar Period', *Left History*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1993, pp. 26-9.
- 13 Dunstall, pp. 454-5, 467.
- 14 Yska, p. 45. See also May, pp. 2, 21, 64.
- 15 See Child Welfare (CW), Series 1, 2/9/26, pt 1, NA, and Health Department (H-A), A43, 19/1, National Archives Records Centre, Auckland.
- 16 Dunstall, pp. 469, 470, 472.
- 17 McClure, p. 257.
- 18 The value of family benefit was increased only once between 1945 and 1972.
- 19 Dunstall, pp. 473-5 and Table 1.1.
- 20 For other Child Welfare and Social Security programmes see Bronwyn Dalley, *Family Matters: Child Welfare in Twentieth-Century New Zealand*, Auckland University Press/Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Auckland, 1998, *passim* and McClure, *passim*.
- 21 Royal Commission of Inquiry into Social Security, *Social Security in New Zealand: Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry*, Government Printer, Wellington, 1972, pp. 88-9, 91.
- 22 For a more extended discussion from the point of view of Child Welfare policy, see Dalley, pp. 154-63.
- 23 *AJHR*, 1953, H-9, p. 26. A similar fund was set up at the same time for recipients of war pensions and war allowances. See also Circular to all registrars and district agents, 30 Nov 1951, Social Security (SS), Series 7, 7/7/13, NA.
- 24 *AJHR*, 1958, H-9, p. 38.
- 25 Evan N. Simpson, 'The Supplementary Assistance Scheme: A Short History', 1969, SS 7, 35/13/2, pt 1; Registrar, Wellington, to Director, Social Security Commission, 1 Oct 1954, SS 7, 7/7/13.
- 26 All figures are as at 31 March each year, derived from the Child Welfare Division's and Social Security Department's annual reports, *AJHR*, 1950-65. Child welfare officers were the principle providers of this type of assistance. Social Security's contribution, while it grew steadily over the whole fifteen-year period, was small overall. The number of Social Security discretionary payments grew from over 2277 in 1950 to over 11,713 in 1965. Child Welfare cases, on the other hand, leapt from 6873 to 28,046 by 1965. Most of this increase occurred in the 1950s with only a small rise from 1960 to 1965.
- 27 Nedy Families cases grew from 125 families involving 562 children in 1950 to 283 families and 863 children in 1965, with the biggest increases occurring in the decade from 1955 to 1965.
- 28 This later figure includes 10,537 'miscellaneous' cases, a 'short-term' and 'less troublesome' category, which was added to the long-term preventive work from the mid-1950s. *AJHR*, 1956, E-4, p. 4 and Dalley, p. 250.
- 29 Dalley, p. 175.
- 30 Memo to child welfare officers, 19 Dec 1941, Education Department (E), Series 2, 1950/25b, NA.
- 31 Child welfare officer (CWO) to District child welfare officer (DCWO), Auckland, 21 May 1957, CW 1, 2/10/2, pt 2.
- 32 Brian Harrison, 'Foreword' in Dugald J. McDonald (ed.), *Working for the Welfare: Stories by Staff of the Former Child Welfare Division*, The Social Work Press, Christchurch, 1994, p. vi.
- 33 *AJHR*, 1955, E-4, p. 8.
- 34 C. E. Peck, 'A Superintendent Looks Back', *New Zealand Social Worker*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1969, p. 19.
- 35 *AJHR*, 1959, E-4, p. 17. See also the press clippings in CW 1, 8/9, pts 1-3 and 8/9/1, pts 1-2.
- 36 14 Mar 1955, CW 1, 4/7/1, part 1. As a condition of access to the files all names of clients have been changed to preserve confidentiality.
- 37 *Dominion*, 28 Oct 1967, clipping in CW 1, 8/9, pt 1.
- 38 Dunstall, p. 458.
- 39 Ferguson, pp. 155-7.
- 40 DCWO, Christchurch to Superintendent, 10 Jul 1950, CW 1, 4/7/1 pt 1.
- 41 DCWO, Christchurch to Superintendent, 30 Mar 1950, P. E. D— to Minister of Social Welfare, 15 Jun 1950, CW 1, 4/7/1, pt 1.

- 42 DCWO, Wellington, to Superintendent, 26 Jan 1951, CW 1, 4/7/1, pt 1.
 43 DCWO, Wellington to Branch Manager, State Advances Corporation, 4 Mar 1955, CW 1, 4/7/1, pt 1.
 44 CWO to Senior CWO, Auckland, 16 Oct 1956, CW 1, 4/7/1, pt 1.
 45 DCWO, Palmerston North, to Superintendent, Aug 1952, CW 1, 4/7/2.
 46 *New Zealand Official Yearbook*, 1961, p. 631, cited in Andrewes, p. 2.
 47 Jean-Marie O'Donnell, "Electric Servants" and the Science of Housework', in *Women in History* 2, p. 177.
 48 May, p. 111.
 49 Anne Elise, 'Edmonds Cookery and Bernadine', *Women's Studies Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1986, p. 75.
 50 CWO to DCWO, Lower Hut, 3 Oct 1957, CW 1, 4/7/1, pt 1.
 51 CW 1, 4/16.
 52 Case 1048, CW 1, 4/7/3.
 53 Report dated June 1955, CW 1, 4/7/1, pt 1.
 54 See various press clippings in CW 1, 8/9.
 55 *Evening Post*, 22 May 1964 and the *Press*, 5 Jun 1964, press clippings in SS 7, 5/3/6a.
 56 Welfare officer (WO), Christchurch, return of work for April 1958, SS 7, 7/7/27.
 57 WO, Christchurch, report on welfare work Aug 1959–Jul 1960, SS 7, 7/7/27.
 58 See for example, *AJHR*, 1964, H-9, p. 18.
 59 CWO to DCWO, Auckland, 3 Sep 1952, CW 1, 4/7/2.
 60 Circular, Oct 1952, CW 1, 4/7/3.
 61 Case 1478, CW 1, 4/7/4.
 62 Case 1986, CW 1, 4/7/4.
 63 Linda Gordon, 'Family Violence, Feminism and Social Control', in Linda Gordon (ed.), *Women, the State and Welfare*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1990, pp. 191–3.
 64 Manager, State Advances Corporation, Christchurch to CWO, Christchurch, 19 October 1951; CWO's report, 10 January 1952, CW 1, 4/7/1, pt 1.
 65 Manager, State Advances Corporation, Napier, to CWO, Napier, 19 December 1950; DCWO, Napier, to Superintendent, 16 January 1951, CW 1, 4/7/1, pt 1.
 66 DCWO, Hamilton, to Superintendent, 26 June 1944, CW 1, 4/7, pt 2.

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Street-Level Chemistry: The Past in the Present at Historic Places

| GAVIN McLEAN

While touring the Far North in December 1997 to promote his latest book, ACT Party leader Richard Prebble posed for the camera in front of Kemp House. He had been drawn there by a fight over a fence. The New Zealand Historic Places Trust wanted to reinstate a boundary fence swept away by floodwaters sixteen years earlier. By 1997, however, locals had become accustomed to their unobstructed view of the old house and opposed a fence of any description. Backing local opponents of the Trust, Prebble told *The Chronicle* that 'if historical accuracy was the yardstick overseas, most of the Royal palaces would have been pulled down'. Alleging that the Trust had been captured by a small group of experts, Prebble warned that 'they must remember who they are doing these things for'.¹ An earlier *Chronicle* editorial entitled 'Precious Approach to History', had asked similar questions about historical accuracy, property presentation and ownership.² Some locals agreed. Yvonne Skudder used *The Chronicle* to attack Trust Conservation Adviser 'Fergus Clunie's arrogant statement that "the locals seem to think they own the Stone Store Basin area and Kemp House", the answer is yes, Mr Clunie, we do. We have put our money on the line to buy expensive properties in this area, pay exorbitant rates and generally support the larger Kerikeri area and businesses with our custom.'³

Arguments about the ownership of history are not unique to historic places of course. Frequently, however, they are sharpest at historic places, where much of the material evidence from the past is owned and occupied by individuals, private companies and public organisations.