

Keeping Men on Track:

The Management of Single Male Employees by the New Zealand
Government Railways Department 1923-1940

By

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Abstract

The New Zealand Government Railways Department undertook a wide range of reforms in the 1920s as a result of concerns about the threat of road competition and the longevity of New Zealand's railway infrastructure. Some of these reforms were structural and financial, but many were motivated by desires to create a more efficient, modern and useful workforce. Unmarried men made up a third of the NZGRD's workforce in 1927 and this thesis is an investigation of how the management of the NZGRD attempted to mould them. By investigating and analysing the ways in which the New Zealand Railways Department communicated with its workforce, this study will address how the New Zealand Government Railways Department used soft power to affect its worker's lives. From the designs of railway houses through the range of publications given to employees the New Zealand Railway Department had indirect influence on almost every aspect of the lives of their employees, from their physical existence to what art and literature they were exposed to.

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Abbreviations

ASRS	Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants
NZGRD	New Zealand Government Railways Department
YHYH	‘Your Hut Your Home’

Chapter One: “A More Satisfied Staff”

Between 1923 and 1928 the New Zealand Government Railways Department (NZGRD) went through a series of fundamental changes, which included a new approach to managing the railway workforce. Influenced by the ideas of scientific management, the Minister in charge of the Railways, Gordon Coates, initiated changes that encompassed the life of men at work and at home. This thesis will focus upon the particular attention paid to the lives of single railway men from 1923 to 1940. The department’s approach to its workers was influenced by ideas of scientific management, national identity and the construction of an image of the desirable modern railwayman. While these motivations affected the way all employees of the railways were employed and approached by the NZGRD, the single male employees present a point of difference. They were affected in the same ways by the ethos that drove the changes, but the ways that those motivations translated into actions by management were very different for these men. The ways they were housed, the cultural products provided to them and the physical locations they were placed in were all different for those men who did not have spouses or families. They are also a neglected dimension in the history of the railways in New Zealand. The work that does exist on railway workers is mainly concerned with the men who worked in the railway workshops and who lived in railway suburbs in Christchurch, Dunedin and Frankton Junction.¹ Similarly, histories of railway housing have focused on the houses provided to families and the huts which single men lived in along the railways have received little attention.²

¹ Erik Olssen, ‘Railway Workers and Scientific Management’, in Martin, John and Taylor, Kerry (ed.) *Culture and the Labour Movement*, Dunmore Press Limited, Palmerston North, 1991, Jim McAloon, ‘Workers’ Control and the Rise of Political Labour, Christchurch, 1905-1914’, in Martin, John and Taylor, Kerry (eds.) *Culture and the Labour Movement*, Dunmore Press Limited, Palmerston North, 1991, Anna Green, ‘Coffee and Bun, Sergeant Bonnington and The Tornado: Myth and Place in Frankton Junction’, *Oral History*, vol.28, no.2, 2000.

² Laura Kellaway, *The Railway House in New Zealand - a Study of the 1920s New Zealand Railway Housing Scheme*. M.Arch. Thesis, University of Auckland 1994.

In 1923 the NZGRD was the largest single employer in the country.³ This project aims to investigate one particular social, cultural and gendered context and use the findings to make claims about that group. By investigating and analysing the interactions of the management of the NZGRD with its unmarried male employees from 1923 to 1940, this project seeks to properly understand a moment in New Zealand history in terms of how labour, social practices and gender were viewed and engaged with. This project aims to contribute to the railway history of New Zealand, focusing on the intent of the management of the NZGRD. There are case studies of workers in particular locations in New Zealand and there is extensive coverage of the ministers and of some of the managers of the NZGRD.⁴ Where this project differs is in the parameters it uses to locate the subjects of the case study and in its investigation of the interaction between management and employees. By using a gendered demographic within one employment context as a defining tool rather than geographic area, a more detailed picture can be drawn of the social and cultural history of railway workers. Unmarried male employees made up roughly a third of the NZGRD's workforce in the 1920s and therefore occupied a significant amount of the NZGRD management's attention. The ways they were housed and the use of soft power to influence their behaviour at work and at home presents a fascinating case study of how government employers translated their intent into actions in trying to craft a male workforce that they considered fit for purpose.

Establishing the numbers of unmarried men in the NZGRD is a difficult proposition because while some individual dispatches contain these numbers, the marital status of employees does not appear to have been one of the recorded pieces of data in the lists of railway employees. However, by marrying the information from different sources a rough

³ Neill Atkinson, *Trainland: How the Railways Made New Zealand*, Random House New Zealand, Auckland, 2007, p.99.

⁴ Michael Bassett, *Coates of Kaipara*, Auckland University Press, Auckland 1995.

estimate can be garnered. In June 1927 the NZGRD publication *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* created a new section of the magazine which was titled “Of Feminine Interest”.⁵ The editorial of the first issue to contain this section page emphasised why the addition was being made. The initiation of a column written specifically for, and sometimes by, women is an important moment in the history of New Zealand periodicals, but the editorial of the June issue also reveals a clue about another demographic that made up a significant section of the audience the department was attempting to reach. The editor G.G. Stewart noted that the section was intended for the eighty five “lady member of the service” but would also be beneficial for the wives and daughters of the “twelve thousand married members”.⁶ In 1927 there were eighteen thousand and fifty six employees of the New Zealand Government Railways Department (NZGRD) and the records kept for individual employees are remarkably accurate.⁷ However the collation of information on the marital status of employees is much more difficult to track down. This editorial by Stewart is an indication of the demography of the employees of one of New Zealand’s largest employers. Taking away the twelve thousand, and the eighty five, what is left is a demographic of unmarried men numbering more than six thousand, making them roughly one third of the NZGRD’s workforce at that point. The female workforce of the NZGRD, presumably many of them unmarried, grew during the period this study addresses, but this project is focused on the single male employees.

In the regulations book for the Government Railways Act the unmarried members of the railway service are mentioned in detail. The Act had been edited and redrafted constantly

⁵ Unattributed, ‘Of Feminine Interest’, *New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.2, Iss.2, June 1927.

⁶ G.G. Stewart, ‘Editorial’, *New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.2, Iss.2, June 1927 in Stephen Derek Hamilton, ‘New Zealand English Language Periodicals of Literary Interest Active 1920s-1960s’, PhD Thesis.

⁷ Railways Statement, *Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives (AJHR)*, 1927, Session I, D-02.

between 1908 and the late 1930s.⁸ A copy printed in 1922 but with additions made throughout the twenties provides a story of how people were employed by the railways as well as how management presented these provisions to their employees. The most pressing concern in the Railways Act regarding single men was how they were to be remunerated in comparison to employees who had spouses and families. The regulations in the Act stipulated markedly different levels in payment considerations for men who were married and those who were not. While there were also differences in the payment provisions for employees less than twenty two years old and for “work of a more than ordinarily dirty nature”, single men make up a separate group throughout the provisions laid out for the remuneration of employees of the NZGRD.⁹ The period between 1923 and 1940 was one of significant change in the way that the NZGRD employed people. Theories of scientific management, self-improvement, nationhood and masculinity all affected a series of reforms by railway management to influence and re-organise their staff to be more productive and to make the railways in New Zealand a longstanding success both economically and in terms of its importance to society. Nineteen twenty three was the year significant reform began in the way the NZGRD employed people as is discussed in chapter two. Nineteen forty has been drawn as the end of this study because the NZGRD changed again in response to the Second World War and signalled the end of one of the major cultural products used to communicate ideas to employees, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*.

By investigating how the unmarried members of the railway service were engaged with by their employer a nuanced picture can be created of how the actions of the state in the inter war period reflected their intentions. Through the management of physical space with

⁸ ‘Regulations Under the Government Railways Act, 1908’, *Gazettes*, W.A.G. Skinner, Government Printer, Wellington, 1922. This booklet has been extensively modified by unknown parties. Updates and amendments have either been pencilled in or pasted over outdated regulations. In this capacity it functions as a map of the reforms that were made throughout the 1920s in how members of the railway service were employed.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.51.

housing programs and daily management and mental space through publications and cultural products like the manual “Your Hut, Your Home”, the NZGRD attempted to create workers who were both efficient and had a sense of pride in their work. This thesis is an attempt to craft a social history looking at the context of these men, but focusing on how the Ministers and managers in charge of the NZGRD went about trying to create and propagate their image of the perfect New Zealand railway man. Cultural history, social history and the discourses surrounding both nationhood and masculinity are all important for the grounding of this project.

Society and Culture

In his 2002 article ‘Colonial Culture and the Province of Colonial History’ Chris Hilliard writes that one of the problems of the cultural history of New Zealand is that much of it has been obsessed with finding, or has assumed the existence of, a “chimerical real New Zealand”.¹⁰ His argument centres on the issue of always having to refer back to one particular image and the assumption that underlies that image, that New Zealand had one particular culture. Hilliard’s commentary notes how this approach to cultural history can be damaging and looks to other schools of thought from history, gender studies and literary studies to argue for a more careful, reasoned and holistic approach to the narratives of New Zealand’s past. One of the combinations he sees as being especially beneficial in the case of New Zealand is of cultural history and social history. By viewing the hierarchies, conflicts and organisations of the economic history of New Zealand alongside the lives of individuals and the rituals and practices of communities, a complex and accurate perception of the evolution of the culture of this country in the 20th century can be achieved. This thesis engages with this argument by being based in the methodology of

¹⁰ Chris Hilliard, ‘Colonial Culture and the Province of Cultural History’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.36, no.1, 2002, p.7.

social history while acknowledging the effect of cultural communication and investigating the ways in which unmarried railway workers were engaged with by their employers in the period 1925-1940.

In her book *Cultural History* Anna Green grapples with the etymology of culture and what historians and others have meant when they use the word.¹¹ Green addresses the methodological debates surrounding cultural history and what constitutes it, concluding that “cultural history is more than a sum of its parts”.¹² This said, Green does posit the question “is it possible to distinguish cultural history from social history, or are cultural historians in general interested in the material or social context, and in various forms of social analysis just as social historians are aware of the influence of ideas?”.¹³ While Green argues in her book on the subject that cultural history is its own field, which at “various junctures, departs from social history”, she also highlights the multiplicities that exist in discussing social and cultural history. This thesis engages with debates surrounding gender history, social history, architecture and transport history. It is important at this point to define those terms and track the effect of those discourses on the way that this subject matter has been approached in the past.

Social history as a 20th century school of analysis represents an earnest effort to question the status quo of the historical narratives presented to academics and the general public. The British Marxist historians challenged existing social histories that focused on organisations and movements rather than the people who were involved. When explaining the theoretical basis which the British Marxist historians were working from, Harvey Kaye states that their “Core proposition” was “that class struggle has been central to the

¹¹ Anna Green, *Cultural History*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke and New York, 2008, pp.2-3.

¹² *Ibid*, p.4.

¹³ *Ibid*, pp.3-4.

historical process”.¹⁴ In writing a history from below Thompson, Hill and Hobsbawm were attempting to write about working class people as subjects rather than objects of change in the history of the early modern and modern periods. This approach to writing history was very closely linked with production and with the position people were placed in under different economic systems. While their work did serve to restore agency to many figures and groups left out of mainstream historical narratives, the work of this school of historians also marginalised other facets of the story in doing so. The lack of attention paid to gender and race weakened the validity of much of their work as a way to present the past of a society.¹⁵ They did however provide a number of excellent tools for other historians to utilise in the construction of histories which do not ignore the importance of economic relationships and are not blinkered by having top-down analysis as their methodology.

Braverman’s critique of the British Marxist historians in the 1970s was not based on concern about race or gender, but rather on the omission of an important aspect of the economic relationship from their analysis. One of Braverman’s focal points is analysis of the “processes of production” that he saw as being “incessantly transformed under the impetus of the principal driving force of that society, the accumulation of capital”.¹⁶ The key difference between Thompson’s work and Braverman’s analysis is the recognition of the fluid nature of economic relationships, and the impetuses that drive change in these relationships. While Braverman may be overstating slightly the importance of capital, his observations about how businesses change the way they operate, the way they employ workers and the way that they view themselves according to how their product is being

¹⁴ Harvey Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵ Joan W. Scott, ‘Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis’, *The American Historical Review*, vol.91, no.5, 1986, p.1055.

¹⁶ Harry Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital; The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1974, p.9.

consumed are useful. Braverman's careful and meticulously researched coverage of the way in which people like Frederick Taylor and Lyndall Urwick sought to adapt the processes of work, and the demeanour of the people who carried them out, in order to generate more capital in a more competitive and globalising market is of great use when addressing the context of the NZGRD as an employer.

Braverman's analysis focuses on scientific management and the process of employment and management, but other academics have provided colour to his argument, utilising the tools of biography and post structuralism. In his investigation of the links between stereotypical representations of masculinity and the writings of Lyndall Urwick, one of the founding fathers of scientific management, Michael Roper, uses Urwick's biographical details to frame his argument. By analysing the personal context of Urwick, Roper is able to draw deft conclusions about how the life of an individual can affect a movement, and how in turn that movement can affect a life. Roper's analysis relies on the conceit of those writing scientific management manuals that what they were recommending was something "not shaped by personal experience, but which constituted objective knowledge".¹⁷ Roper phrases this desire held by the men who wrote the first treatises on scientific management as one for a "truth which transcended the individual", an approach which could be presented and viewed as universal.¹⁸ Roper's findings reveal how the lives of Urwick and Taylor affected the philosophy and practices of what Taylor referred to as "management of the initiative and the incentive" and provide a useful template for the investigation of the psychological contexts and the narratives of memory which affected the drafting of a system of thought which would come to prevail in the

¹⁷ Michael Roper, 'Masculinity and the Biographical Meanings of Management Theory: Lyndall Urwick and the Making of Scientific Management in Inter War Britain', *Gender, Work and Organisation*, vol.8, no.2, April 2001, p.182.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.183.

western world.¹⁹ Roper's use of psychoanalytic analysis, biographical investigation and interpretations of epistolary networks adds depth to the historical discourse addressing scientific management and emphasises the role of the personal influence in this narrative. Roper is not the first to emphasise the importance of the individual, bookshelves could be filled with the biographies published of Urwick and Taylor, but his approach is refreshing because it focuses not on the influence of these men but the influences that they experienced. While Roper is still addressing the economic history that Braverman's work is concerned with, this article transforms the discussion into something more than social history. The mentalities of the individuals involved in the formulation of these theories are an important aspect of understanding the effect of the cultural products they were instrumental in creating.²⁰

In a chapter in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* Melanie Nolan further investigates the complexities and possibilities that social history provides in New Zealand. She focuses on the ideas of egalitarianism and social mobility by approaching the "structures" that have been used to define them and "refracting occupation, community and social mobility through the prisms of social groups".²¹ Nolan conducts a survey of the different approaches that have been taken to social history but possesses a more critical eye than Hilliard. Nolan charts the impact of the shifting gender roles in work, the changes that have taken place in demographic analysis and the strength of viewing a specific context within wider narratives. She cites the work of the Caversham project as being one way in which New Zealand historians have adapted their work to suit the archives that

¹⁹ Taylor, Frederick Winslow, *Scientific Management: Comprising Shop Management, the Principles of Scientific Management and Testimony Before the Special House Committee*, Harper and Row, London, 1911, p.34.

²⁰ Roper, pp.199-200.

²¹ Melanie Nolan, 'Constantly on the Move but Going Nowhere? Work, Community and Social Mobility', in Gyselle Byrnes (ed.) *New Oxford History of New Zealand*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2009.

they have had at their disposal.²² However, Nolan also notes that “while it is important to have systematic and aggregate occupational data, we should also be aware of the shortcomings of this type of information”.²³ She explains that a study of an urban area, in decline, with a predominantly male formally employed population meant that it did not provide an accurate picture from which to generalise about New Zealand and that “place and periodicity need contextualising within the nation”.²⁴ Of particular relevance for this project is that Nolan states that “many New Zealand historians have concentrated upon these issues in the arguably broader context of a local community”.²⁵ The investigation of the way unmarried male employees of the NZGRD were viewed and managed by their employers is not one which can focus on one particular geographic area. While there is useful information in the railway archives regarding particular places where there was a concentration of single men lodging huts, such as Otira, this project is investigating the way a social group was being engaged with by an employer with a very strong interest in the way they lived their lives.²⁶

One of the ways the NZGRD management communicated their attitudes and expectations to their employees was through the use of cultural products such as shop organ periodicals and manuals for specific parts of its workforce. This section from the *New Zealand Railways Magazine* reveals a further layer of personal involvement in what is often viewed as a form of management based only on economic imperatives: “Modern industrial managements realise that in absolute fairness to the men, there needs to be some system, whereby they may pay a man, for that extra output that he is capable of giving, if

²² Ibid, pp.362-363.

²³ Ibid, p.364.

²⁴ Ibid, p.364.

²⁵ Ibid, p.367.

²⁶ ‘NZ Railway: Huts – Otira’, 1921-1971, AAEB, Box 45, Record 21/1553/2, Archives New Zealand (ANZ)

there is the extra incentive there for him to give it".²⁷ The personal and professional contexts of the men who drafted the founding documents of scientific management are being interpreted and used by a manager in the NZGRD according to his own personal context and how he wants the principles of scientific management to be interpreted by his readers who were employees of the department.

The aspects of social history of most use in this project are those surrounding the relationship between the manager and the employer, changes in the processes of production and how workers were viewed by management. Analysis of Taylor's principles of scientific management, Braverman's careful exploration of the effect of the changes that took place in those processes and exploration of the nuances of these historical moments by historians and economists like Roper provide a platform on which to address a social history that does not ignore the economic impetus, but acknowledges the effect of other influences.

In New Zealand historiography this conversation has been taking place for decades and the balance in social history between economic analysis and investigation of other contexts and influences has been at the forefront. In his review of the practice of social history in New Zealand Chris Hilliard identifies *Culture and the Labour Movement* as a pivotal shift in the discussion of working class politics and culture.²⁸ The issue that Hillard has with much of the social history that came before this, a concern shared by Jock Phillips, is that by only addressing the economic imperatives and the political organisations of the working class, the culture and nuances of the individuals that made up the working classes were lost.²⁹ A good example within *Culture and the Labour Movement* is the difference in approach and opinion between Erik Olssen and Jim

²⁷ E.T. Spidy, 'Premium Bonus System', *New Zealand Railways Magazine*, V.1, Iss.3, 1926, p.40.

²⁸ Hilliard, p.4.

²⁹ Hilliard, pp.4-5 and Jock Phillips, 'Of Verandahs and Fish and Chips and Footie on Saturday Afternoon', *New Zealand Journal of History*, V.24, No.2, 1990, pp.130-133.

McAloon. In 'Railway Workers and Scientific Management' Olssen argues that the main shifts that occurred in the railway workshops during the 1920s were the use of time and the regulation of a worker's time by management, but that these changes were less obvious amongst the proportion of the workshop employees who were "skilled men".³⁰ His analysis focuses on the organisations formed by workers, outside the union structure, inquiries made by the railway department into the effectiveness of management principles in action and the resulting arbitration and negotiation. His tools of analysis are exactly what Hilliard refers to as being a weakness of social history, the investigation of the political structures of the working classes while not addressing the cultural practices and personal contexts of the people involved.³¹

McAloon's article 'Workers' Control and the Rise of Political Labour, Christchurch 1905' utilises similar methods of documentary analysis to Olssen, but augments that analysis with investigation of motivation and how individuals acted within organised labour.³² The difference between the two authors in this collection could be described as a result of their different focuses; Olssen is looking at the wide trend of the insinuation of modern management theories into practice, while McAloon is focused on a particular geographic and temporal context. But this difference in focus is exactly the distinction that Hilliard is calling for in his 2002 article. While still addressing the organisations that existed within the working classes, a focus on the interplay of individuals and a narrow focus in terms of the group that is being addressed makes for a more compelling and more useful historical narrative. Olssen uses his findings from south Dunedin to make claims about the trends of interaction between employers and the

³⁰ Erik Olssen, 'Railway Workers and Scientific Management', in Martin, John and Taylor, Kerry (ed.) *Culture and the Labour Movement*, Dunmore Press Limited, Palmerston North, 1991, p.138.

³¹ Hilliard, p.4.

³² Jim McAloon, 'Workers' Control and the Rise of Political Labour, Christchurch, 1905-1914', in Martin, John and Taylor, Kerry (eds.) *Culture and the Labour Movement*, Dunmore Press Limited, Palmerston North, 1991, p.159.

employed across New Zealand in the 1920s.³³ This approach is far less convincing as an argument and as a way to generate insight than the approach that McAloon takes by basing his assertions on one particular context to create a cardboard piece of the puzzle, rather than a rough sketch of the picture on the box.

Another chapter in *Culture and the Labour Movement* provides a second level of the analysis of the cultural practices and rituals of working class communities in New Zealand. Anna Green's chapter 'The Double Edged Sword; Nicknames on the Waterfront' investigates the language used by waterfront workers and the significance of the choices made in the formation of that vernacular.³⁴ This approach represents a methodological shift as well as one of focus. Green's use of oral history adds a level to her discourse that would be impossible to achieve with Olssen's documentary approach or McAloon's use of personal documents and government reports. Green's methodology and focus also provides insight into the way in which workers absorbed attitudes regarding work from their employers and generated their own as well. This is a useful facet of the relationship between the manager and the employee to keep in mind. Whilst this project is mainly focused on the actions of the NZGRD towards their single employees, and the intent behind those actions, the way they were received is also important. What Green's book reveals is one way of charting that side of the relationship through oral history and investigations of subjectivity. The analysis of language and the effect and intent of language provides a very clear and nuanced picture of both life on the wharves and how that community is remembered by people who were part of it.³⁵ In terms of social history Green, McAloon and Olssen all represent different approaches as well as different ways of

³³ Erik Olssen, *Building the New World; Work, Politics and Society in Caversham 1880s-1920s*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1995, p.226.

³⁴ Anna Green, 'The Double Edged Sword; Nicknames on the Waterfront', in Martin, John and Taylor, Kerry (eds.) *Culture and the Labour Movement*, Dunmore Press Limited, Palmerston North, 1991.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.126.

discerning what the most useful focuses of enquiry are. While there are many other social historians doing excellent analysis in working class contexts in New Zealand the narrative between their approaches in a collection of essays over twenty years old sums up well the way that social history has operated in New Zealand and makes obvious the options that exist in that investigation. This project will not follow to the letter any of these approaches but it is important to view the conversation being had among their projects to see what other focal points there could be in analysis. This project's focus on process of management, influenced by Braverman's analysis of work processes, combined with an investigation of a social position which is also gendered, borrows from all three of the New Zealand approaches outlined above.

While it is important to address how social historians have used cultural analysis, it is also important to investigate the work of cultural historians and understand the contribution their methods have made to the outlook of this project. When investigating the crossover between social history and cultural history the clue is very much in the title when it comes to *Fragments; New Zealand Social and Cultural History*. Bronwyn Dalley's chapter 'The Cultural Remains of Elsie Walker' is in the main a piece of cultural history focusing on a particular family and the personal context which she predicts Elsie Walker was surrounded by.³⁶ The strength of Dalley's article lies in the dovetailing of the personal and familial context of the wider Walker and Bayly families and the wider social and economic context which they were affected by.³⁷ Dalley's approach is not overt, the two strands of analysis work in symbiosis rather than as separate entities within the same chapter. A striking comparison to this is found in Olssen's analysis in *Building the New World* where he struggles to integrate the narratives of the individuals he has selected with

³⁶ Bronwyn Dalley, 'The Cultural Remains of Elsie Walker', in Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum (eds.), *Fragments; New Zealand Social and Cultural History*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2000, p.142.

³⁷ *Ibid*, pp.158-159.

his excellent coverage of the economic hierarchies of Caversham.³⁸ The difference appears to be that while Olssen can see the benefit of cultural history in augmenting social history, Dalley sees the two as being the same. The careful and considered approach to a local and personal context is not of use if not contextualised economically and socially, nor is economic and hierarchical analysis if it does not address the cultural and personal practices of individuals and communities. Dalley's approach echoes Nolan's and Green's in that the place which is being addressed is recognised as a vital part of the history of a group that lived or worked within it. Nolan's concern about the relationship between historical periods and place in social history is a flaw which investigations of culture can help alleviate.

Sober yet Capable

The anxiety surrounding the use of class labels extends into the discussion of gender and gender role. In both areas the solution used by many academics is to accept the pluralities of their subject matter and abandon the analytical surety of definite labels. Braverman argues in 'The Degradation of Work in the 20th Century' that any real discussion of members of the working class is undermined by trying to "unify ... under a single heading" an amorphous group with so many different facets.³⁹ Braverman's appeal to focus the discussion around classes rather than the three pronged analysis of classic Marxism, influenced by Weberian thought, is paralleled by Worth, Paris and Allen when they discuss "masculinities" rather than trying to provide a definition for masculinity or the worryingly often used descriptor "masculine".⁴⁰ While a plethora of categories could be seen as a weakness in the clarity of an argument made using these definitions, they

³⁸ Erik Olssen, *Building the New World; Work, Politics and Society in Caversham, 1880s-1920s*, pp.80-86.

³⁹ Harry Braverman, 'The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century', *Monthly Review*, V.41, No.5, 1989, p.35.

⁴⁰ Heather Worth, Anna Paris and Louisa Allen (eds), *The Life of Brian: Masculinities, Sexualities and Health in New Zealand*, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2002, pp.11-12.

represent a strength of analysis in both fields. Seeing one person's gender position in the context of their race, ethnicity, sex, class position and family context allows for the recognition of the importance of the agency and position of the individual. As Davidoff and Hall argue in *Family Fortunes* we cannot discuss gender without class, or vice versa.⁴¹ Class is always gendered and gender is always affected by class. Viewing one without the other creates an artifice, an inaccurate reading. By looking at how the two systems of thought interacted with each other a better understanding of the life of unmarried males during this time period can be gleaned.

In New Zealand the discussion of masculinity has grown in the last 30 years but the first large scale study of the myths surrounding masculinity was Jock Phillips' book *A Man's Country?* This text holds as its central thesis point that stereotypes of Pakeha masculinity are the result of the enduring nature of the dichotomy of expectations placed on males in New Zealand. Phillips begins this discourse with the myth of the pioneer male, the pragmatic, rough and self-sufficient colonial man who was capable of succeeding outside the urban environment.⁴² Phillips' idea of the stereotype of the Pakeha New Zealand male is one constructed by the desire for the raw power and innovation of the pioneers tempered by limits of respectability.⁴³ Phillips sketches the two figures of masculinity as violence, pragmatism and authority on one side and patriarchal beneficence, respectability and sobriety on the other.⁴⁴ Phillips' discourse surrounding rugby and physical education is useful for providing a lens into the changes in the contemporary discussion of masculinity throughout a period where modernisation, and

⁴¹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes; Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991.

⁴² Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country?; The Image of the Pakeha Male, A History*, Penguin Book, Auckland, 1987, pp.5-7.

⁴³ Ibid, p.86.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp.96-97.

urbanisation in particular, were causing concern about the future of manhood. At the turn of the century, a time when many of the railway workers of the 1920s and 1930s would have been at school, military and regimented approaches to education were being firmly enforced in the quickly growing secondary schools of New Zealand.⁴⁵ Phillips' investigation into the details of the two stereotypes of masculinity is of great use in this project. In particular, his investigation of what the word "character" meant in contemporary discourse in the 1920s clarifies the language that was used by Stewart and his colleagues in the *New Zealand Railways Magazine* when insinuating what made a good railway employee.⁴⁶ If Phillips' theory of male uneasiness based on leaving the pioneer lifestyle behind is correct, then the itinerant and solitary nature of the lives unmarried male railway employees lived can be seen as both a challenge to the hegemonic ideal and as an example of how it could be avoided.⁴⁷ The constant tension in terms of masculinity in this period was between the image of the tough, hardened pioneer male and the compassionate, caring and providing figure of the husband and father. This dichotomy of ideals presented little room for escape, and perhaps the railways were one avenue left for a lifestyle not centred on a domestic ideal.

Internationally the discussion of masculinity in the twentieth century has broadened significantly over the last three decades. In his article 'The Domestication of the Male' Martin Francis conducts a survey of the way historians have approached masculinity in British history, particularly the attention paid to the Victorian male. His approach is thorough and details the different ways this subject can be approached. He identifies the strength of John Tosh's approach as investigating masculinity outside of

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.107.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.103.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.228.

homosocial spaces.⁴⁸ Tosh utilised “etiquette manuals” to look at how Victorian males were instructed to behave and looks at whether or not those manuals were effective.⁴⁹ This is a useful comparison for the study of unmarried male railway workers as they were also issued a manual about how to comport themselves domestically. This manual, *Your Hut Your Home*, is discussed in length in chapter five. The investigation of masculinity for both Tosh and Francis is one that lies in liminal spaces. Francis identifies that “male responses to domesticity remained complex and ambivalent throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and that it was possible simultaneously to both embrace and reject the attributes of domestic manliness”.⁵⁰

Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell has published extensively on ideas of masculinity and how gender order defines, positions, empowers and constrains men”.⁵¹ Her 2005 book *Masculinities* and a series of journal articles ranging from understandings of homosexuality to the interplay of class and masculinity create a body of theoretical and practical work which helped to establish this kind of investigation within the school of gender studies.⁵² Her treatment of masculinities as a varied and complicated series of ideas rather than a monolithic concept is of particular use for this project.

While Francis and Tosh are both addressing a British context, their ruminations on the difficulties of studying masculinity and the sources they utilised are both of use to this project. In her article ‘Unstitching the New Zealand State’ Melanie Nolan investigates the role of the state in the domestic patterns and habits of New Zealanders.⁵³ While her focus

⁴⁸ Martin Francis, ‘The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Masculinity’, *The Historical Journal*, vol.45, no.3, 2002, p.652.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.639.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.639.

⁵¹ R.W. Connell, ‘Studying Men and Masculinity’, *Resources for Feminist Research*, vol.29 no.2, 2002, p.43

⁵² R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, University of California Press, California, 2005

⁵³ Melanie Nolan, ‘Unstitching the New Zealand State: Its Role in Domesticity and Decline’, *International Review of Social History*, vol.45, no.2, pp.251-277.

is mainly on Government instruction and regulation of female roles, Nolan's article reveals how interested the state was in the role of domesticity and was actively interventionist, if somewhat half-heartedly, in the domestic actions of New Zealanders in the first half of the twentieth century.⁵⁴ This interventionism was also a part of the way the NZGRD attempted to mould the behaviour of its single male employees and is discussed chapters four and five of this thesis. The international and New Zealand conversations surrounding the history of masculinity are nuanced and often fraught with the lack of sources available. One way that has been tackled in New Zealand is through the use of oral sources.

In her article tracing stories from oral histories of Frankton Junction, Anna Green notes how, in the memories of the people who lived there when it was a railway town, "a sense of place, and of community, appear to be inseparable". One of these themes that arose in many of the interviews Green and her students conducted with former residents of the town was the personage of Sergeant Bonnington who had walked the Frankton beat in the 1940s.⁵⁵ Green pulls together the different narratives offered about Sergeant Bonnington and presents a remembered figure who was "an archetypal patriarchal figure exercising discipline and control over the next generation of younger men".⁵⁶ While Bonnington was represented in the stories as a respectable figure of authority he was also one capable of the use of violence in his pragmatic application of the law. Bonnington is remembered as both being a pillar of the community but possessing the capacity for violence and a relaxed attitude when it came to following the rulebook. In the way he is remembered by the interviewees from Frankton Junction, Sergeant Bonnington allows an insight into the conflict surrounding

⁵⁴ Ibid, pp.275-276.

⁵⁵ Anna Green, 'Coffee and Bun, Sergeant Bonnington and The Tornado: Myth and Place in Frankton Junction', *Oral History*, vol.28, no.2, 2000, pp.30-31.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.31.

masculine roles that Phillips focuses his book on. In the stories about male resistance to authority and the high regard with which his style of justice was held in, this article illustrates the tensions that surrounded masculinity in the first half of the nineteenth century. Another important element from this article is the relationship between memories of a place and impressions of it. Green interprets the stories as having a moral element; the style of policing provided by this figure was seen as better than the system in place in the early 1990s when the interviews were conducted. While this is a useful piece of analysis as to how memory operates, it allows us to see that the roles of the sober respectable figure and pragmatic, humorous and forceful male weren't mutually exclusive. A kind of cognitive dissonance occurs in these memories where the good aspects of both figures have been remembered while the negative aspects have been forgotten. We see a similar thing occur in a series of stories about Mackechnie in *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*.⁵⁷ The ideal male worker fits somewhere between these two types, inhabiting the positive elements of two stereotypes in an impossible position. Green's article is useful because it provides context to the discussion of railway communities and adds to the discussion of masculinity and work by providing examples from oral history about how gender stereotypes operated in a railway town, and how it was remembered.

Tracts about Trains

The three theoretical approaches of social, cultural and gender history all inform this project but it is also important to ground the investigation of unmarried railway workers in the historiography of both the railways and the historical period that this project addresses. The largest and most thorough historical study of the NZGRD is *Trainland* by Neill Atkinson. Atkinson's book is an excellent survey of the growth and

⁵⁷ Fishplate, 'How Mackechnie Bumped a Borrower', *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.1, iss.5, September 1926, p.15.

development of the railways as a physical force and as a part of the constructed mental image of New Zealand as it progressed from being a Dominion to a nation. While his focus is not on the staff who worked on the railway, Atkinson's monograph charts the attitudes and culture of the NZGRD during the period this thesis is addressing and is useful touchstone for how the management operated before and during the reforms of the 1920s. Atkinson's book is well researched and therefore a very useful starting point of more intense interrogation of this period. *Trainland* is of most use to this project in its discussions of the reforms of the 1920s driven by Gordon Coates and the implementation of the *New Zealand Railways Magazine*, both of which are crucial topics in the understanding of the interactions between the NZGRD and its unmarried workers. The selection of Coates as the Minister of Public Works in 1920 was a pivotal moment in the history of infrastructure and state intervention in the management of commerce.⁵⁸

Atkinson's research is useful here because he paints a very clear picture of the motivations that lay behind Coates' sweeping reforms of the Railway Department in his roles as Minister of Public Works, Minister of the Railways and eventually as Prime Minister.⁵⁹

Atkinson outlines that the initiatives that went in under Coates were informed by a growing concern over the competition that rail was beginning to face in the 1920s. The growing popularity of motor vehicles was beginning to present a serious threat to the dominance of the train as a means for transport and commercial freight.⁶⁰

The reforms of the Coates Government were designed to have a dual effect. The first was improving the business model of the NZGRD in order to make it more viable and profitable.⁶¹ The second was to create a culture surrounding the railways that made it an

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.99-100.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.95.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.15.

⁶¹ Ibid, p.98.

appealing option for travellers and potential freight clients.⁶² These two aims were approached in different ways but both desires and the steps taken to achieve them by the management of the department profoundly affected how employees of the department were viewed and treated. The introduction of scientific management principles in the carrying out of work and the initiatives aimed at railway employees outside of their hours at work were results of the Coates reforms and were born out of an anxiety about the longevity of state infrastructure and the need to modernise New Zealand's economy if it was to compete on a world stage.⁶³ Gordon Troup describes the New Zealand railways as being "shaken and galvanised by the electric discharges of Gordon Coates", writing in the 1970s in a tone that would not have been out of place in *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*.⁶⁴ Troup's edited volume *Steel Roads of New Zealand* reads like a love song to the railways of New Zealand and the people who ran it, but included with the apotheosis are segments which carefully record the interactions between the New Zealand Railway Department and the groups which represented different parts of its labour force.⁶⁵ Troup and Atkinson both identify the Coates administration as being the catalyst for change and the attention that they give to those reforms is useful in the endeavour of knowing where to look for primary sources, and for crafting a wider narrative of the relationship between the management of the NZGRD and their employees for this small, more specific, study to fit inside.

Andre Brett's 2013 article 'A Limited Express or Stopping All Stations?

Railways and Nineteenth-Century New Zealand' focuses on the New Zealand railways

⁶² Ibid, pp.100-102.

⁶³ Michael Bassett, *Coates of Kaipara*, Auckland University Press, Auckland 1995, pp.60-72.

⁶⁴ Gordon Troup, 'Railways Off The Leash', in *Steel Roads of New Zealand*, Troup (ed.), A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1973, p.132.

⁶⁵ Gordon Troup, 'Main Trunk: Where Men and Mountains Meet', in *Steel Roads of New Zealand*, Troup (ed.), A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1973, p.143.

in the 1870s and before, arguing for a reassessment of how the discourse of infrastructure is weakened by using Vogel's reforms as a "year zero" starting point.⁶⁶ While this article is addressing an earlier context in New Zealand history and is more concerned with the institution itself than the people who worked for it this article provides depth to the discussion of why the history of infrastructure and its effect is important. Brett asserts that because New Zealand was founded after the invention of railways there is a much closer set of relationships between politics, society, national development and the rail system itself.⁶⁷ He also outlines how, in his view, much of the commentary on the railways in New Zealand has been written by well-meaning amateurs, unkindly referred to as "anoraks".⁶⁸ He provides a succinct survey of the case studies on New Zealand railways by academics, crediting Atkinson and Olssen as the main proponents of quality railway history. Brett's article is not entirely convincing in its main argument centred in the 1870s context but his idea of the very close ties between the concept of the nation and the railway system in New Zealand is one which resonates in the pages of the *New Zealand Railways Magazine* and in the letters sent from the Railway Minister's office to the general manager of the railways. For this idea alone Brett's article is a useful reference point. His point about "anoraks" may be harsh but he is not incorrect about the number of railway publications that have been written and compiled with the best of intentions, but which are of almost no use in terms of understanding the place of the railways and the people involved with them in the past of this country. *The Railways of New Zealand; A Journey Through History* provides very detailed descriptions of the trains themselves and the nature of the gradients on the major corners of the main trunk line, while *New Zealand Railway Memories* is

⁶⁶ Andre Brett, 'A Limited Express or Stopping All Stations? Railways and Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, no.16, 2013.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.131.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.131.

essentially a personal annotated photograph collection.⁶⁹ There is nothing wrong with these publications and for railway enthusiasts they would be of great use, but in terms of trying to write a social and cultural history of a particular group in New Zealand's past, these collections are not particularly helpful.

Men in the Mines

Another industry in New Zealand which was being forced to undergo serious change in the way it conducted itself in the 1920s was New Zealand coal mining. In his book *Coal, Class and Community* Len Richardson charts the history of organised labour and people who worked in the coal mines of New Zealand as well as addressing some of the failings of the history that has been written about the industry in New Zealand and overseas. Coalminers were also affected by the influence of scientific management on government reforms. But as Nolan noted in her chapter, the influence of place and communal context made the impact of the ideas of Taylorism very specific in their case. In 1909 the owners of coalmines in New Zealand were presented with a difficult conundrum. On one hand they wanted to implement the "new doctrines of scientific management" but found that the elements of that school of thinking were difficult to apply to a New Zealand mining context.⁷⁰ The tenets of scientific management that stipulated absolute control of decision making by the employer and widespread systemisation of work processes did not work in an industry which was so variable in terms of terrain and working requirements.⁷¹ Approaches which could be applied to factory or maintenance work could not be so easily transplanted into the New Zealand mining industry. Richardson relates how employers

⁶⁹ Geoffery Churchman and Tony Hurst, *The Railways of New Zealand; A Journey Through History*, Collins, Auckland, 1990 and J.D. Mahoney and Geoffery Churchman, *New Zealand Railway Memories*, IPL Books, Wellington, 1999.

⁷⁰ Richardson, p.118.

⁷¹ Harry Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital; The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1974, pp.85-138 in Len Richardson, p.118.

responded to this issue by peeling back the piece rate system and utilising a contract system that they argued offered “equality of opportunity”.⁷² By using the contract system and promoting self interest in miners Richardson argues that the “contract system was presented as the very basis of efficient and scientific management”.⁷³ Richardson’s observations about the desires of employers for the implementation of the principles of scientific management and the way they were forced to adapt for the workforce, organised labour institutions and the physical landscape they were confronted with, is a useful counterpoint for the similar desires but very different applications undertaken by the NZGRD a decade later.

The other useful aspect of Richardson’s book is that he is directly addressing an industry which employed a large number of men. Gender is an important aspect to keep in mind when investigating social groups and the influences that were exerted upon them. Richardson writes that “a less frequently noted aspect of the migrant status of most coaltown inhabitants is that, despite the disproportionate number of males in the community, many miners came with families”.⁷⁴ Richardson’s approach to the role of gender in his monograph is limited by the records that he had access to in its writing, but he does inject discourse about the perception of gender roles when he can. In a discussion about what was considered a “respectable mode of protest” he highlights the dichotomy discussed at length by Phillips.⁷⁵ He states that “part of the difficulty in trying to isolate the ‘respectable’ and ‘larrikin’ modes of behaviour from the jostle of events on the coalfields is that they frequently merge”.⁷⁶ While his concern in this discussion is how

⁷² Ibid, p.118.

⁷³ Ibid, p.119.

⁷⁴ Len Richardson, *Coal, Class and Community; The United Mineworkers of New Zealand 1880-1960*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1995, p.3.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.13.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.13.

modes of protest were approached by miners, governments and historians, the notion of respectability in a working class culture with a vast majority of male employees draws a direct parallel with the discussion of masculine character discussed above. Richardson, almost by accident, hooks into the discourse surrounding the dichotomy of the expectations placed on masculinity in the first half of the 20th century. He also echoes the language of the NZGRD in the letters and memos sent between the different branches of the department and the annual Railways Statements presented to Parliament. Anxieties about masculinity and workers often blended together in both the railways and the mines. The idea of a good, respectable but capable man was interlocked with a capitalist ideal of a productive and efficient worker. In later chapters this relationship and its implications will be unpicked. The major difference between the relationships between these two ideals in the mines and the railways was that for the state owned industry ideas about nationalism were also very important to managers attempting to change the behaviour and work habits of their employees. The idea of the nation was closely imbricated in the naming and function of a national railway system. Ideas about national identity were infused in the cultural products which the NZGRD gave to its employees in the 1920s and 1930s.

This thesis utilises the methodologies of social and cultural history to investigate why the NZGRD made efforts to moderate and influence the work and home lives of their single male employees from 1923 to 1940. It looks at the use of soft power rather than direct instruction to try and create a male workforce that the managers of the NZGRD were comfortable with and saw as a proper investment in the future of New Zealand's rail infrastructure. By looking at the intent of management as well as how that intent was expressed, this project is an examination of the material communicated to single men and the provision of single men's huts by the NZGRD and seeks to answer why they thought it was necessary and what influenced the ways they went about it. To begin this

investigation more needs to be known about the management of the NZGRD and the anxieties they were facing in the early 1920s.

Chapter Two: Managers, Ministers and Scientific Management

The Cleaner and the Chain of Command

In November 1922 the relationship between Cleaner W. Morrison and Fireman W.F. Bridge would have been fraught. The correspondence recorded in the New Zealand Government Railway Department files reveals a situation instigated by Morrison through the official channels of the department that placed the two employees at odds. While this is a story of two men and their understanding of their tenancy agreements, their tale presents an excellent introduction to the lives of the railway men who lived in single man huts. It also reveals the extent to which their affairs were the concern of the highest levels of management in a department which in the inter-war period was New Zealand's biggest single employer.¹

On the 13th of October 1922 Cleaner W. Morrison of Paeroa wrote a handwritten note to his "Loco Foreman" in Frankton:

With regard to pot + pans & equipment of huts. From every source available I have been told that huts should be supplied with, pots, pans, kettle, two lamps, meat dish ect (sic). Will you kindly give this matter your attention please. I am referring it to union.²

The note was written on a scrap of paper in thick blue pencil. Morrison was expressing concern about the equipment of his single man lodging hut but his request to the locomotive foreman was poorly informed. The response from acting Locomotive Foreman in Frankton on the same day is sharp and terse.

¹ Neill Atkinson, *Trainland: How the Railways Made New Zealand*, Random House New Zealand, Auckland, 2007, p.99.

² 'Design and Equipment of Railway Huts', 1896-1938, ADQD Series 17422, Box 71, Record 1916/1097/1, Archives New Zealand [ANZ].

With regard to your 'note' re equipment of hut, I would inform you that you have inquired from every source but the correct one. The instruction reads "Sleeping vans and huts when occupied by members permanently as residences are only equipped with stove, wire mattress, stool, and meat safe. When occupied by two persons - 2 mattresses, and 2 stools". I would again remind you that unless you can forward your correspondence on proper form in future no notice will be taken whatsoever of these notes.³

Cleaner Morrison was not satisfied with the manner in which his complaint has been dealt with and decided to address his concerns to the Locomotive Foreman's superior. On the 26th of October Morrison wrote a memorandum, on the proper paper, to "General Manager Railways Through Loco Foreman":

Dear Sir,

I beg to apply for equipment for hut 253. All I have received is 2 mattresses, 2 stools, 1 stove = 1 meat safe. I have made several application (sic) to Loco Foreman, I enclose my last reply from him. I think when a fireman known by myself personally, can get his hut equipped that it is only fair that myself a cleaner should have my hut equipped.⁴

What follows is a slow shunting of the problem of hut 253 up the chain of command of the NZGRD. The locomotive foreman had reached the end of his patience and ability to control Morrison and sent the formally written letter to the Locomotive Engineer. Along with the original letter he included his own findings on the matter; "Fireman W.F. Bridge, Waihi, is no doubt the Fireman to whom he alludes" and that "Morrison is apparently obsessed with

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

the idea that he is being unfairly treated”. The foreman has not lost the bitter tone found in the correspondence he had with W. Morrison and you can taste the satisfaction when he reports that “as Morrison is the sole occupant of hut I informed Foreman of Works to take away the extra mattress and stools”. In turn the Chief Engineer, G.J. Bertinshaw, writes to the General Manager of the NZGRD, R.W. McVilly, laying out all the correspondence and asking “will you kindly instruct what reply is to be given to Morrison?” The head office took advice and instructed that Morrison was to be informed he had all that he was entitled to. It also became apparent that the equipment that had been provided to Bridge’s hut had been done so in error. Orders were passed back down the hierarchy for the extra materials to be returned to the department. The matter then disappears from the epistolary record, the management satisfied that the rules governing the occupation of railway huts had been followed to the letter. One can only imagine that Fireman W.F. Bridge must have been much less happy as he had lost almost all of his daily living equipment overnight, due to the complaint laid by Morrison. After the whole exchange the man who thought he was owed more, had lost half of his equipment.

While this may seem like a very specific case it highlights the use of hierarchies in the inter war railways department and provides clues into the daily reality of living in a rented railway hut. The problem points to a proliferation of regulations. How many windows should a single room have? How vital is a wood splitting axe to daily life? How many saucepans does a man need? These questions and many others like them fill the documents, memoranda and letters of New Zealand’s railway management from 1922-1935. The management of their single male employees had been an ongoing concern of the New Zealand Government

Railway Department since the early 1920s and the letters between General Manager R.W. McVilly and his chief engineer G.J. Bertinshaw show that it remained a pressing concern.⁵

Despite the concerns voiced, the responses made by the department were still firmly entrenched in the practices and habits of the 19th century. The real changes that took place in the way that the Railways Department interacted with their employees began in 1923, motivated by the growing competition of motor transport and a desire to ‘modernise’ the NZGRD in line with developments in overseas railways. The systematic reform of the department was based on the ideas of scientific management and was influenced by thinkers and managers from overseas and in New Zealand.

Taylored for the Dominion

The story told by the letters from Cleaner Morrison reveals a department that was actively interventionist in the lives of its employees through direct instruction and regulation. The findings of the inquiries of the 1920s led to a change in approach as the NZGRD tried to move from external control to internalising the goals of the department and standards of behaviour amongst the workforce through the use of a combination of regulation and cultural products. The findings of the inquiries into the railways and the reforms they suggested were based in ideas that were not entirely new, but were being constantly developed. Known generally as scientific management in New Zealand these ideas were often referred to as production engineering or scientific arrangement. At the base of these ideas was the notion that there was a more efficient way to run business, production and employees.

In his 1915 text *Scientific Management and Labour* Robert Hoxie pointed out to potential adopters of the methods he was discussing that “scientific management in theory is

⁵ ‘Design and Equipment of Railway Huts’, 1937-1945, ADQD Series 17422, Box 71, Record 1916/1097/1, ANZ

not a single, consistent body of thought”.⁶ Robert Hoxie was an Associate Professor of Political Economy at the University of Chicago and was also a “special investigator for the United States Commission on Industrial Relations”.⁷ Hoxie published extensively on the theories of scientific management and the many different ways they were put into practice over the turn of the 20th century.⁸ Hoxie’s book is a survey of the different approaches and theories which he combines under the banner of scientific management. Although Frederick Taylor referred to his system as the “principles of scientific management” Hoxie sees his approach as one of many.⁹ He cites Harrington Emerson and H.L. Gantt as being the proponents of major deviations from Taylor’s principles but uses Taylor’s approach as a basis of comparison. Hoxie picks apart “the labour claims” of Taylor’s approach and highlights the major point useful for analysis of his approach.

The General Definition of Scientific Management.- Scientific Management is a system devised by industrial engineers for the purpose of subserving the common interest of employers, workmen and society at large, through the elimination of avoidable wastes, the general improvement of the processes and methods of production and the just and scientific distribution of the product.¹⁰

Hoxie also notes that Taylor’s approach was centred upon “attempts to substitute in the relations between employers and workers the government of fact and law for the rule of force and opinion” and a desire to exchange “exact knowledge for guesswork”.¹¹ Hoxie’s discussion of Emerson and Gantt treats them as points of difference in detail, but in accordance with Taylor in principle. This discussion is interesting because he places Gantt as

⁶ Robert Hoxie, *Scientific Management and Labor*, Augustus M. Kelly Publishers, New York: [1915] 1966, p.7

⁷ Hoxie, Cover Page.

⁸ ‘A Tentative Bibliography of Robert F. Hoxie’s Published Works’, *Journal of Political Economy*, vol.24, no.9 November 1916.

⁹ Hoxie, p.7.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.8.

¹¹ Frederick Winslow Taylor in Robert F. Hoxie, *Scientific Management and Labour*, p.8.

a theorist who agreed with Taylor but did not see the principles laid out as being “a great code of laws” which would allow complete control.¹² He also portrays Emerson as a theorist who didn’t necessarily think the system was watertight. The picture that Hoxie portrays is one of a group of theorists who had come up with a system of thought to drive reform but who were not in complete accord about what the effects of those reforms would be.

Management theorist Horace Drury wrote in 1918 that as well as the essential aspects of making the employee a more efficient asset for the employer, Taylor’s approach was also concerned with “changes in organisations” to make them more efficient and informed employers.¹³ Drury emphasises in his text *Scientific Management: A History and Criticism* that “scientific management is essentially a standardisation both of methods and processes, and the mechanism is simply the system found to be best adapted for maintaining the standards”.¹⁴ Drury focuses on the effects of scientific management in the rest of his text but his first two chapters emphasise how important the organisation is in the operation of scientific management. Reminiscent of Richardson’s anecdote about the problematic application of management principles in New Zealand coal mines, Drury notes the importance of pragmatism in the application of the principles of scientific management.¹⁵

The texts that Hoxie and Drury wrote in the 1910s are a useful summary of the attitudes surrounding scientific management in the first decades of the 20th century and also present examples of the texts that were being read by the managers of the NZGRD, railway Ministers and overseas consultants when assessing and attempting to reform the railways in

¹² Hoxie, p.12.

¹³ Horace Bookwalter Drury, *Scientific Management: A History and Criticism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1918, p.25.

¹⁴ Drury, p.30.

¹⁵ Len Richardson, *Coal, Class and Community; The United Mineworkers of New Zealand 1880-1960*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1995, pp.71-72.

New Zealand.¹⁶ In their article ‘The Power of Shop Culture’ Erik Olssen and Jeremy Brecher trace the impact of different approaches to the application of scientific management of the railway workshops in Addington from the 19th century through to the 1920s.¹⁷ Olssen and Brecher provide a narrative of a long term contest between the different railway unions and the management of the NZGRD. Olssen and Brecher discuss the implementation of scientific management in the New Zealand Railways and evaluate the effectiveness of the intent of the management in terms of practical gains. They investigate the issue of the premium bonus system and how the normally mutually opposed railway unions responded unanimously against it.¹⁸ They also observe that when consultants were brought in from overseas they were surprised by the approach to the use of time in work in New Zealand and how difficult it was to change the status quo.¹⁹ Both Richardson and Olssen and Brecher discuss attempts to implement the ideas of scientific management in New Zealand and their studies indicate that the existing labour organisations of the mines and railways were difficult contexts for the time and motion men to engage with. New Zealand’s labour market in general, and the workers and organised labour groups of the mines and railways in the country, presented a real challenge for time and motion men.

The Men Who Managed

In order to assess the influence of the theories of scientific management and self-improvement on the management of the NZGRD it is important to grasp when they began to have an impact. While management of the railways had been evolving steadily throughout the early 20th century its vertical management structure had remained unchanged. A series of

¹⁶ Report of the Railways Commission, *Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives [AJHR]*, 1925, Session I, D-02a, pp.1-2.

¹⁷ Erik Olssen and Jeremy Brecher, ‘The Power of Shop Culture: The Labour Process in the New Zealand Railway Workshops 1890-1930’, *International Review of Social History*, vol.37, no.3, pp.350-375.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp.371-372.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp.370-371.

General Managers ran the department under the instructions of the Minister of the Railway up until 1924. From 1895 until 1914 the department was run by Mr. T.E. Ronayne, who was succeeded by E.H Hiley.²⁰ Hiley's tenure of the department made him the General Manager for the Railways for the duration of the First World War and most of his actions revolved around New Zealand's response to global conflict.²¹ With the end of the war came the end of his administration. Hiley provided his last report as General Manager in 1919 and in 1920 he was succeeded by R.W. McVilly who was in control until the annulment of the position of General Manager in 1924.²² McVilly was in place at the beginning of the major reforms that took place in the railways, but his position was one of the first casualties of the changes. From December 1924 until 1928 the NZGRD was run by a "Railway Board" made up of three members and a secretary.²³ The board was chaired through this period by F.J. Jones and most of the major reforms motivated by scientific management were instigated during the period of the Railway Board's management.²⁴

The documents retained from the Office of the General Manager in the period until 1924 reveal a vertical power structure with problems pushed up and solutions pushed down.²⁵ McVilly in particular was anxious that any issue or request regarding the running of the department should at least be drawn to the attention of his office. While the records folders entitled "Control and Management of the New Zealand Railway" present a litany of the matters that were drawn to the attention of the General Manager's Office they also contain dozens of instances where the General Manager himself seeks advice from his officers in

²⁰ Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1914, Session 1, D-02, p.iii.

²¹ Gordon Troup, 'Railways on a Budget 1900-1923' in in *Steel Roads of New Zealand*, Troup (ed.), A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1973, pp.67-68.

²² Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1919, Session 1, D-02, p.viii and Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1920, Session 1, D-02, p.vii.

²³ 'Control and Management of New Zealand Government Railway', 1922-1929, ADQD Series 17422, Box 182, Record 1909/2645/1, ANZ.

²⁴ Neill Atkinson, *Trainland: How the Railways Made New Zealand*, Random House New Zealand, Auckland, 2007, pp.100-120.

²⁵ 'Control and Management of New Zealand Government Railway', 1922-1939.

relation to a minor issue. Ronayne and Hiley both feature as controlling employers, but McVilly in particular stands out as a manager who wanted to be informed of every aspect of the running of his department. In his address to Parliament in the 1923 Railways Statement Railways Minister Gordon Coates alluded to areas where the status quo of railway management was undermining the success of the enterprise. He commented in a section titled “General” that “unfortunately, pressure of business has hitherto prevented the General Manager from moving about the dominion as much as might have been desired to come personally into contact with the department’s customers”.²⁶ While not a direct criticism of McVilly, in the context of the rest of the report this sentiment is a critique of the way that the department had been run both by McVilly and the previous Minister of the Railways, William Massey. In the next breath Coates hints at the changes to come under his purview by saying that “the arrangements in train will enable this to be done”.²⁷

While the role of leadership in the Railways Department was instrumental in the changes made in the 1920s, it was always at the behest of the Minister of the Railways. The names of most the ministers responsible for the major infrastructure of the state will be familiar. From 1919-1921 William Massey held the position but after the 1921 election the position was given to Joseph Gordon Coates, who at the time was one of the youngest members of the Reform Government.²⁸ Coates was the Minister who would oversee the raft of changes that took place in the 1920s, which railwaymen lived with until the Second World War.

²⁶ Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1923, Session I-II, D-02, p.v.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p.v.

²⁸ Troup, p.132.

The Looming Threat of Motor Transport

After the end of the First World War the NZGRD entered into a period of anxiety about its financial future. Only a decade after the final spike had been struck on the main trunk line in 1908, the expected traffic by both passengers and freight was dipping and revenue was falling accordingly.²⁹ While traffic and revenue were growing again by the early 1920s, the anxiety felt by management was palpable. The Railways Statement presented to Parliament in 1923 included a section titled “Motor Competition” which outlined that “the subject of competition from road-motors is one that calls for comment”. This section of the document emphasises that the reason that road transport as competition was unsettling was a result of the fact that motor users did not bear the cost of the upkeep of the roads. This meant that not only was the Railways Department still having to pay for the upkeep of the railway infrastructure, but the Ministry of Public Works was picking up the tab for the affordability of the shipping of freight by road.³⁰

The final letter by McVilly in the General Management file addresses the worry that road transport was causing the Railway Department problems already in the 1920s, but that the major concern was the potential for growth in that industry. Therefore, instead of trying to compete with motor competition in the present moment, McVilly advised building the capacity of the railway so that it would be able to compete not with what motorisation was, but what he saw it becoming. Coates too ruminated on the problems of the growing industry and saw the solution as planning to compete with something which in the 1920s was still a hypothetical threat. Coates was wary about proceeding with reforms without having a full understanding of how the railways ran. He commissioned his own study into the management of the railways and made sure that he personally had direct contact with as many of its

²⁹ Atkinson, p.100.

³⁰ Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1923, Session I-II, D-02, p.iii.

operating parts as possible. He also ordered a Commission of Inquiry into the New Zealand railways system and made sure that the people involved were from overseas railways systems. It was important to Coates that the New Zealand infrastructure became part of a modern international culture of railways. His desire was not only to make the NZGRD competitive with road traffic, but with every other transport system in the Commonwealth.

By 1928 the phrase road competition was no longer used as a subtitle in the Minister's Railways Statement. In its place the heading "Road Motor Services" was used which reflects the changes that NZGRD adopted in response to growing road traffic. More importantly it was seen as no longer a hypothetical threat. Road transport was now on par with the railways and was being approached through assimilation rather than direct competition.

Railway Statements and the Efficiency of Reform

The NZGRD underwent a series of fundamental reforms from 1923-1928 under the ministerial oversight of Joseph Gordon Coates. While the re-structuring of management from a General Manager to a Railway Board mentioned above was the most obvious, the tendrils of Coates' modernising mission touched every aspect of the railways infrastructure. From the nature of the management structure to the way individuals were employed by the state, Coates and his advisors radically altered the framework of the major state infrastructure in an effort to bring "modern methods to staff matters".³¹ The Railways Statements were provided annually by the Minister for Railways to Parliament and analysing the opening addresses from the statements during Coates' time as Minister provides a clear narrative not only of the reforms that were enacted between 1923 and 1928, but also of the motivating factors at the highest level.

³¹ Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1926, Session I, D-02, p.xviii.

Over the course of Coates' tenure as the Minister for Railways, reforms were carefully researched and then very quickly applied. Much care and attention was paid to researching and consultation in the planning phases, but once a decision had been reached the Minister expected it to be carried out in the most efficient way possible. This desire for efficiency was not limited to how the reforms were carried out, it underpinned almost all of the changes made to the railway under the Reform Party Government of the 1920s.

It appears that from the moment Coates became the Minister for Railways he was earnest in his concern for the future of the railways and in his efforts to reform the department. In his Railways Statement at the end of 1923 Coates informed Parliament that “the railways in New Zealand have never been regarded, or run, as a profit making concern” but that in order to “hold its own with the very real motor competition, which is increasing, concessions both to the users of the railways and to the staff will have to be subjected to very close investigation”.³² These two passages from the first three pages of the exhaustive document that Coates presented to his colleagues in Parliament contain the three concerns that underpinned Coates' treatment of the NZGRD. The need for the railways to run as a self-sustaining economic enterprise was clearly a driving impulse, but Coates also emphasised the need for the department to be run as more than simply a business investment. The minister stressed the “numerous other benefits that have been conferred upon our citizens” by the railways outside commercial interests and within this statement he charts the advantages that the railways are able to provide to society outside of the balance sheet.³³ The third concern that Coates' use of language reveals is that any reform or change made to the running of the department and the treatment of its employees must be grounded in “careful study”.³⁴

³² Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1923, Session I-II, D-02, p.iii.

³³ *Ibid*, p.i.

³⁴ Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1923, Session I-II, D-02, p.i.

Coates' first Statement as Minister of Railways is primarily concerned with the balance between accommodating the public interest and building the finances of the railways to the point where they can operate as a successful business. Coates' statement that many of the benefits provided by the railways would "not be available if the railways were run on purely commercial lines" is a sign that he understood social management as well as structural was needed to make a business perform. While Coates' interventionism could be seen as an aberration in his wider approach to politics, the opening pages of his 1923 statement read as if written by a businessman who is convinced that a more nuanced approach to management and perception is better than one that is focused on solely financial yields.

The reforms motivated by apprehension about road competition and the desire to create a modern railway system fitting of a modern country were focused on two main aims. The first was to improve the efficiency of the service and the second was to make the service more appealing both to employees and clients of the railway service. The first recommendation of Coates' inquiry was that the makeup of the "Head Office" was in need of "reorganisation".³⁵ Coates reported in the 1924 Railways Statement that the changes in management would "result in a much more satisfactory apportionment of the work and responsibility of the management than existed hitherto, speed up routine, and enable the time of the General Manager to be exclusively occupied in matters of prime importance".³⁶ This announcement appeared in a section titled "Reorganisation" and the word that stands out most in the two paragraphs dedicated to such a major overhaul is "decentralization".³⁷ In *Steel Roads of New Zealand* railway historian Gordon Troup refers to Coates' strategy in rearranging management as "masterly" and describes the railways department as

³⁵ Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1924, Session I, D-02, p.i.

³⁶ *Ibid* p.i.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.i.

“galvanised” by the actions taken after Coates’ inquiry.³⁸ In *Trainland* Atkinson also credits Coates with quickly and dramatically altering the nature of the railways from the top down.³⁹ Both of these books address the significance of the reforms and pass judgement on their effectiveness, but due to their respective focuses do not delve into the detail of what those reforms were. Coates’ findings from his inquiry led him to see “Reorganisation of Staff” as one of the most effective way to modernise the railways service.⁴⁰

As alluded to earlier, Joseph Gordon Coates was a man who cared greatly about investigation and showing reasoning for proposed changes. In continuing his justification for changes to staff organisation in 1924 he stated “In my opinion there has been in the past insufficient incentive given to the staff to qualify for the higher and more responsible positions in the service”.⁴¹ He went on to provide a raft of solutions to what he had identified as the problem. These included training programs, continuing education initiatives and more communication between the management and their employees. But in the same breath the minister also identified that “it is fully recognised that a system of this kind cannot be built up in a day” but that “formulating the policy now will act as a very strong incentive to officers to improve their position and incidentally become of more value to the service”.⁴² The major statements of intent in the 1924 Railways Statement are based on the findings of Coates’ own year long inquiry but at the conclusion of those remarks he announces that “Sir Samuel Fay and Sir Vincent Raven” had been requested to conduct a further inquiry in the last three months of the year.⁴³ Both of these men were described as “railway experts” but perhaps more importantly they were English. Coates is adamant that their investigation will be of

³⁸ Gordon Troup, ‘Railways Off The Leash’, in *Steel Roads of New Zealand*, Troup (ed.), A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1973, pp.132-133.

³⁹ Atkinson, pp.101-102.

⁴⁰ Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1924, Session I, D-02 p.xi.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.xi.

⁴² *Ibid*, p.xi.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.xi.

benefit to the “Dominion” and it is difficult to miss the tone that New Zealand is still lagging behind its colonial homeland in terms of how it runs its affairs and infrastructure.

Fay and Raven

Coates’ desire for an inquiry run by external figures took shape near the end of 1924 in the Railways Commission Inquiry. Fay and Raven were charged by Governor General Jellicoe to “be a Commission to inquire into and report as to the financial arrangements, management, equipment and general working, including the administration, control, and economy, of the railway service in New Zealand”.⁴⁴ Fay and Raven were given thirteen directives to investigate. These directives were wide ranging but most pertained to the economic running of the department and how the department was organised structurally. The seventh matter drawn to their attention had a different flavour from the others. The Commission was asked to look into “the general viewpoint of the staff in dealing with department’s business”.⁴⁵ The Fay and Raven report agreed with Coates’ findings but as the Minister had predicted it included many suggestions about improvements that had been made in railway systems in “the Old Country”.⁴⁶ They emphasised the lack of training that was provided to railway workers and suggested that “nearly all railways have realized the need for the systematic training of their employees in order to develop a more enlightened personnel”.⁴⁷ In terms of understanding the wide range of reforms and how they were informed by research this report has enough detail to satisfy dozens of bureaucrats, but it also holds these few examples of how the attitude and character of employees were seen as being vital to the success of the railway service. “Enlightened personnel” is one of many phrases that appears in the *AJHRs* of the 1920s as a euphemism for a particular kind of masculine

⁴⁴ Report of the Railways Commission, *AJHR*, 1925, Session I, D-02a, p.1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.65.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.64.

character that the railways department attempted to encourage in its workforce. Fay and Raven's report stated that employees need to be managed differently and it constantly hints that there are ways to improve the workforce. The report also emphasises that for a "great railway" to run "in modern practice" is "a matter of scientific arrangement".⁴⁸ The ideas of modernity, production engineering and scientific management were important to Fay and Raven and Coates took their suggestions on board with gusto.

Coates' Findings

The 1924 Statement carries an anxiety about whether the reforms being carried out are the correct ones, but there is also a security in Coates' approach of confirming his own research through the evidence and experience of overseas experts. The 1924 Statement is one of intent. It's informed by the sentiments of 1923 and the year of investigation that Coates and his management had carried out. The 1925 Statement continues this narrative of positive growth geared towards a more efficient modern railway and a better level of service provided both to and by its employees.

The 1925 Railways Statement provides us with a record of how Coates' reforms fared in their first implementation and also how they were tempered and altered by the suggestions of Fay and Raven's Royal Commission of Inquiry. While "the proposals in regard to finance" were in "accordance with the system now in place" the Royal Commission recommended that the General Manager structure should be undone and replaced with a Railway Board made up of "a Chairman, an Operating Member, and a Commercial Member".⁴⁹ This management triumvirate took over from McVilly at the end of 1924 and represents probably the most structural of the reforms put through under the Coates Ministerial warrant. The 1925 statement goes on to outline the final findings of both inquiries

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.54.

⁴⁹ Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1925, Session I-II, D-02, p.ii.

and the reforms which had been approved as a result of the previous two years of investigation. The reforms included the establishment of Commercial Branch, excursion tickets and the “institution of liberal family tickets”, improved methods of staff administration and the provision for “sending officers abroad to study at first hand methods applied to the solution of railway problems in other countries”.⁵⁰ These reforms are mainly focused on financial yield, but all of them carry a social subtext. What affected the employment of the members of the railway service affected them and their families as well. The dual approach to reform through financial and social change was no accident. Coates concluded his 1925 Statement thus; “I would like to express my complete satisfaction with the splendid response made by the members of all branches in bringing into operation the many changes necessitated by the reorganisation of the Railways Department, and the whole hearted co-operation accorded the administration in the effort that is being made to maintain the Department in that position in the economic and social life of the community that its importance warrants”.⁵¹

“Useful Citizens and Capable Business Men”

The 1926 Railway Statement is also full of talk of reform, but now much of it is in praise of what has been achieved rather than ruminations on intended benefits. Coates employs the language of Taylorism when he sums up how the efforts at improving efficiency in the Railways have fared. He reports to Parliament that in the steps taken up to that point “I aim at greater efficiency, in the Department not only by providing the staff with better facilities” but “also providing for them the means of becoming more efficient railwaymen in themselves”.⁵² While much of the justification for reforms of staff organisation in previous

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.xvi.

⁵¹ Ibid, p.xvii.

⁵² Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1926, Session I, D-02, p.xviii.

Railway Statements was focused on efficiency the 1926 section titled “Staff Relations” is much more concerned with how reform would affect the social lives and organisation of railway employees. Coates praised the “beneficial nature” of applying ‘modern methods to staff organisation” and emphasised how this will “assist the administration” in ensuring every employee was “employed at such work as by training and ability he is best fitted to perform”.⁵³ The statement lists the details of the application of modern methods of staff relations which include a comprehensive training system in new ways to carry out the individual tasks of the different roles within the railway department. This fits neatly into the language of modernisation and efficiency used to instigate reform but they merit less time and attention than the initiatives focused on character and behaviour outside of work. The 1926 Statement announces that “also included are special talks on business-getting, courtesy, behaviour, health habits, self-reliance, and ambition” and that the aim of the training program is to create “useful citizens and capable business men, with sustained interest in and enthusiasm for the welfare of the service”.⁵⁴

The inauguration of a system of “acquisition of information from abroad” and the establishment of *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* are also listed as being major parts of workplace and social reform. Coates said in this statement that he had noticed a “tendency” that management had to “become insular” in its thinking.⁵⁵ The Minister emphasised the need to be “kept in closest touch with modern thought” and the Inventions and Suggestions Committee and the magazine represent two earnest efforts to engage with the global modernising trends in infrastructure.⁵⁶ The Statement recognises that in-house shop organ magazines “are now quite an ordinary feature of all progressive businesses” and recommends

⁵³ Ibid, p.xviii.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.xviii.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.xxi.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.xxi.

that New Zealand should follow the example of Commonwealth and American railways and create one. Coates finished his discussion of reform in the statement by underlining that the magazine would work to “strengthen the bonds of interest between the commercial community and the Railway Department”.⁵⁷ The final comment on the matter states that this relationship was not just necessary for the railways but for “the general welfare of the country”.⁵⁸ The reforms targeted at employees rather than facilities reflect a desire to manage what Jock Phillips referred to as masculine “character”.⁵⁹ Politeness, education, the ability to interact with different classes of people and connection to a wider context than their own physical location and role were all being named as tools by Railways Department to both increase the value of the service and how it was perceived. The two fold aim of the reforms was as vital in 1926 as it was in 1924 which shows that the two investigations which Coates instigated appeared to him as informing and backing up his original suspicions. To improve the service of the railways and survive long term competition with road transport the Railways Department had to invest in its assets, and the 1926 Statement clearly shows that they considered one of their most important assets to be the men that they employed.

The reforms of the Railways Department from 1923-1928 could be seen as being entirely about the profitability and longevity of the service. In the eyes of scientific management increasing the happiness, civility and health of employees also increased the service they provided to customers.⁶⁰ While the railways reforms could be viewed through this lens it is a cynical way to approach the motives of the men who managed and paints a picture in black and white rather than a messier one with blurred pigments. While Coates

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.xxii.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.xxii.

⁵⁹ Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country: The Image of the Pakeha Male- A History, Revised Edition*, Penguin, Auckland, 1986, p.86.

⁶⁰ Harry Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital; The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1974, p.9.

emphasised the results of reforms for the financial survival of the department he also laboured the point that he had a “desire to give every employee in the Department equality of opportunity”.⁶¹ The files and letters of the management of the Railway Department and the Railway Statements from Coates’ tenure as Minister show an approach based in research, primarily motivated by economic factors but with a real regard for the welfare and outlook of the people whom they employed. “For Better Service” was not just an edict passed down the line but a concept that the management took seriously in their own work.

For Coates, the management staff of the Railways Department and the commissioners of the Royal Inquiry, it was clear that in order for the Railways to be a success they had to benefit the balance sheet, the individual employee and the nation. To be a modern and progressive infrastructure it had to learn from other railways systems around the world, especially those within the same Empire, but also remain firmly located in the Dominion to which the Department owed its greatest obligation. The “members” of the railway service were seen as an essential part of the reality of the department in the 1920s and how it was to develop. The management of the men who worked for the railways was of utmost importance and concern.

What’s in a Hut?

The reforms of the Coates administration were born out of the direct competition of motor transport in 1923 and the fear that that competition would grow immensely in the years to come. It was also informed by an intent to provide New Zealand with a modern and efficient railway befitting the kind of New Zealand that Coates and his management wanted the Dominion to be. What this meant for men like Cleaner W. Morrison and Fireman W.F. Bridge was that things were about to change. Not only was the chain of command for letters

⁶¹ Railways Statement, *AJHR*, 1926, Session I, D-02, p.xix.

and memorandums about to alter drastically, but the way they were being housed and treated by the department was going to shift. They would be under more scrutiny regarding what equipment they had, and they would probably be moved more often than they had been under the old system of control.⁶² While railway huts for single men and for men away from headquarters had existed before the reforms of Coates, the lives that were lived in them changed radically throughout the 1920s. The management of the huts and equipment was made much more direct and transparent, many more huts were built and provided, the cultural products that these men received from the department increased in number and became much more focused and most importantly of all they were treated differently as people and employees by the department which employed them. While the equipment provided in the hut was important to W. Morrison in 1922, by 1928 the most valuable piece of equipment for the Department in a single man lodging hut was the employee himself.

⁶²'Inspection of Houses and Huts when Changes of Tenancy Occurs', 1918-1957, ADQD Series 17422, Box 37, Record 1918/2520, ANZ.

Chapter Three: “For Better Service”: *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*

The New Zealand Railways Magazine was first published in May 1926 and ran until June 1940. It was a magazine published by the NZGRD, was “originally intended as a shop organ for the department’s 18,000 staff and major customers, and was delivered free to all NZR employees, MPs and the ‘leading firms, shippers and traders doing business with the New Zealand Railways’”.¹ While articles about culture and the New Zealand landscape were included, the magazine’s focus was on aspects of working on or using the railways in New Zealand. Fiction and comment were contained in the magazine but they were focused on presenting the railways as a positive force for the employees and users of the NZGRD. During the early 1930s, and in 1933 particularly, the magazine underwent serious change in its intended audience and consequently in content.

The one constant through the changes that took place in the content and direction of the magazine was its editor, G.G. Stewart. Stewart was a combination of two trends that qualified him well for the post: he was both a writer and a railwayman. He began his career in 1898 when he started work as a cadet for the NZGRD in Westport.² He worked in many roles including as the stationmaster at Thames. In 1924 he was appointed as a commercial agent and in 1925 he was appointed as the editor for the planned magazine. In 1926 he was also appointed as the head of the Railways Publicity Branch which was one of the new elements of the Railways Advertising Studio in the Coates reforms.³ He was a conservative editor but had a real enthusiasm for written expression. He wrote much of the material for the

¹ Neill Atkinson, *Trainland: How the Railways Made New Zealand*, Random House New Zealand, Auckland, 2007, p.116.

² Unattributed, ‘Retirement of ... - Railways Publicity Manager and Editor of the “Railways Magazine” – Forty-Two Years of Varied Service’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.15, no.3, June 1940, p.13.

³ Stephen Hamilton, *New Zealand English language periodicals of literary interest active 1920s-1960s*, PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 1996, p.526.

magazine, especially in its first years when the staff was smaller. Stewart's approach to the content of the magazine shifted during its fourteen year run, but the intent of the magazine remained constant. It was a monthly magazine which was intended to provide advice, information and advertising regarding the railway service in New Zealand to the people who worked on them, or used them for passenger and goods transit.

The magazine provided a training ground for many now well-known New Zealand literary figures including Katherine Mansfield, Robin Hyde and Denis Glover. It was also a magazine which benefited from a burgeoning advertising department which employed talented illustrators. The magazine was a modern, well laid out production which utilised colour printing and black and white photography extensively in its content and covers as well as in its advertising. Many covers were designed by graphic artist Stanley Davis, but a

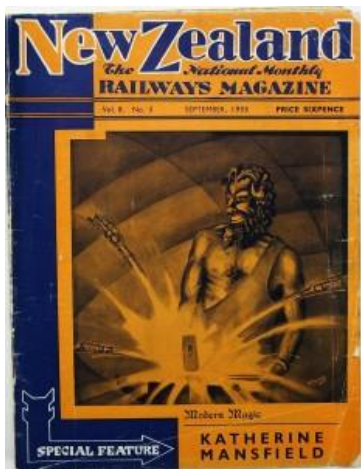


Fig.1



Fig.2

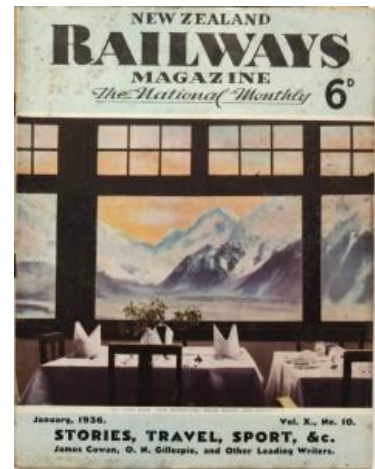


Fig.3

plethora of illustrators and typesetters were involved during the magazine's run. The magazine was set out in columns that were thematically joined. Advertisements and photos pertaining to the written content were included at the bottom of the page. Columns were often accompanied at the beginning and end by small quotations from classical literature which were framed as providing advice to the reader and often had no bearing whatsoever on the

material they framed. The magazine greatly changed over its run but throughout it remained a tool that the management of the NZGRD had at its disposal to communicate their views and agenda to the employees and customers of the railways.

The New Zealand Railways Magazine was given free to all employees, including the unmarried employees living in railway huts alongside the railway lines in the main islands of New Zealand. While there was not a large amount of content directly addressed to these men, the magazine was a cultural product which was utilised by the management of the NZGRD to communicate ideas about deportment, education, work practices and mental approaches to work and home life. The magazine was a direct result of the inquiries made by Coates and Fay and Raven and is an important document to address when looking at how the intent of the NZGRD's management in terms of altering the behaviour of its workforce translated into actions. This chapter will investigate the different ways the intentions of the NZGRD management manifested themselves in the pages of the magazine and will provide context for the way in which the NZGRD used soft power to influence the actions and mental states of single male employees.

The different sections of the magazine are worth consideration in their own right, but of particular interest for this study is the attempt by railway management to influence the behaviour of the railway workforce both on and off the job. In an attempt to map out this pattern of intent this chapter will focus on three sections of the magazine: "Production Engineering", "Among the Books" and "Editorial". There were three major aspects of the magazine which appeared as different forms of appeal: respectively the objective, the subjective and the directive. Spidy's column "Production Engineering" in the first four years of the magazine presented facts about the reforms that the management of the railways was trying to put in place. These columns also presented arguments about why these reforms were both necessary and objectively the correct approach to take. Meanwhile in both the pages

dedicated to reviewing literary content and those containing literary content the mind-set of the employee was approached in a subtler fashion. The editorials of the magazine present the third major way the mental states of employees were approached.

For Better Service

An initiative that was seen by the Fay-Raven Commission as having been beneficial in other Railway systems was the shop organ; a magazine written for an audience of employees and customers of the service.⁴ While the 1926 Railway Statement reveals an interest in railway shop organs overseas, there had already been an industry magazine regarding infrastructure published in New Zealand. *The Red Funnel* was published by the Union Steam Ship Company in Dunedin and its tenure lasted from 1905 to 1909.⁵ *Red Funnel* presents a useful comparison to *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* because while it was a shop organ for an industry of infrastructure, it also bestowed a higher purpose on itself. In the first issue of the magazine the editorial by A.A. Brown emphasised that the publication did not intend to be “a guide book, time-table, or a handbook of excursion routes”. Instead the editorial insisted that *Red Funnel* was “intended to be more than a local production” and that “its success means much for New Zealand”.⁶ *Red Funnel* was not a long lived publication but it does serve as the starting point of a narrative of transport industry magazines that are concerned with the ideas of the nation in New Zealand. We still have the remnants of the tradition in the Air New Zealand magazine *Kia Ora*, but there is little poetry left in their volumes.

The opening statement of intent in *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* was blunter than that of its earlier marine counterpart. In his first editorial Stewart emphasised that “our

⁴ Report of the Railways Commission, *AJHR*, 1925, Session I, D-02a, p.65.

⁵ Hamilton, p.519.

⁶ A.A. Brown, ‘Let us Understand Each Other’, *Red Funnel*, vol.1, no.1, August 1905, In Hamilton, p.519.

first business is to help sell railway transport; our next to make it better worth buying. To do the former there must be firm faith in the quality of the goods we have to sell”.⁷ Stewart’s mission statement is business driven but this editorial also addresses the need to cultivate a positive culture amongst the workers and the customers of the New Zealand railways. What differentiates Stewart from Brown is the more specific approach to the cause and effect nature of his magazine. The focus is not on New Zealand as a whole, although that surfaces over time, rather he was concerned explicitly with the service the railways provides and how that service was presented and perceived. While nationhood was implicitly wrapped up in the volumes of *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* the actual purpose of the magazine was much more specific than *Red Funnel*’s. Another difference between the references used in the two publications highlighted by the opening editorials is the frankness with which Stewart wrote about his aims. He bemoans the way that in New Zealand the modernising of business practices had led to “the human element being excluded” and that under his eye he hopes that the magazine will “fill that gap by interesting the staff in safety first movements, in health and general welfare matters, in education, in co-partnership, efficiency, and in points of social development and progress”.⁸ Similarly in his first column in the magazine Railways Minister Joseph Gordon Coates comments that he sees the magazine as an endeavour to create a “better means of intercourse and closer community of interest” between “the Public, the Administration and the Employees of the Department”(sic).⁹ These opening statements from the two men most in charge of the formation and make-up of the magazine at its beginning reflect a desire for the magazine to be useful for the financial position of the railways and to have a positive effect on the mental state of the employees and customers of the service. When extrapolated further and married with Brown’s idea of a magazine always

⁷ G.G. Stewart, ‘The Trial Run’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Vol.1 Iss.1, May 1926, p.2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

reflecting a facet of the place where it is produced, the magazine's aims can be seen as being nationalist as well as service focused.

Ministerial Intent

The run of *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* provides a clear record of the methods that the management of the NZGRD used to try and modernise the service. The editorial direction and the messages from the General Manager and the Minister of the Railways represent a blueprint of the way the management of the railways saw their employees, and how they planned to alter the way their employees saw themselves. While the magazine does not focus exclusively on single men, the language used about masculinity, family life and domesticity is indicative of the attitude towards these men by management and from staff writing in the magazine themselves. While it is always hard to know to what extent the single male employees of the railways were affected by the way they were represented and spoken to in the pages of the magazine, what the record shows is that there was a clear image of these men and a concerted effort to communicate 'better practice' to them.

Coates expressed a desire in his papers for the magazine to inspire a sense of "esprit de corps" and he repeats this message in a statement to the employees of the department in the first issue.¹⁰ This was both a tactic to head off the growing strength of organised labour and rings true as wanting to both improve the profitability and the culture of the department. Many of the early issues of the magazine are concerned with the tenets of "Industrial psychology" and how each employee could better themselves in order to improve the quality of the service provided by the department. Included in the early issues are railway news, domestic and international technical articles, travel stories, photo spreads, advertisements and

¹⁰ Ibid.

accommodation listings around the country. However, as Atkinson notes the magazine “soon expanded its menu”.¹¹ In 1933 Pat Lawlor was appointed advertising manager for the NZGRD and Stewart broadened the reach of *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* to make it a “general interest” magazine for the New Zealand public.¹² While Coates and other Ministers for the Railways wrote often for the magazine, it was the constancy of the editor which provides much of the tone of the magazine’s run. Coates had an idea about what he wanted the magazine to be. It was Stewart who was charged with implementing it.

Editorial

The underlying idea of the New Zealand worker and man being wrapped up in a national identity is emphasised heavily in the editorial writing of the magazine as well. In 1927 an editorial titled ‘unity’ emphasises “that we New Zealanders are a united people has never been more strongly evidenced than during the wonderful tour through this country of Their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of York”.¹³ While still very much based in a colonial sense of nationhood the editorial goes on to relate how the department and the magazine are trying to improve the character and nature of the New Zealander, and how appreciative they are of the efforts made by members of staff towards that goal. The article argues that “in a world confronted with so many complex problems” a unified approach to “the multitude of questions which concern public welfare” was required “if progress is to be as rapid as the changing conditions of the time demand”.¹⁴ The language of nationalism is used in association with the language of scientific management. Phrases like “forward movement”, “progress” and “increasingly efficient instrument” are married with others

¹¹ Atkinson, p.116.

¹² W.S. Broughton, ‘Lawlor, Patrick Anthony’, Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, *Te Ara-The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, updated October 2012.

¹³ ‘Unity’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Vol.1, Iss.10, March, 1927.

¹⁴ Ibid.

regarding “New Zealand trained men” and “people of the dominion”.¹⁵ The third motif in this editorial is one of education. The writer states that “railwaymen are reading more” and “discussing more” which allowed them to see that “there is a right way of approaching any problem”.¹⁶ The language of nationalism, efficiency and self-improvement are all wrapped together in this editorial.

In 1928 Stewart wrote an editorial that equated a nation’s railway system with its intelligence and level as a progressive state.¹⁷ The editorial also talks about the usefulness of the railways as an educational tool in an era of mass production, transportation and consumption.

Much has been written and said upon the value of railways for developmental and commercial purposes, but their capacity for assisting in the education of a people has not been so fully considered. The facilities they provide for gaining general knowledge regarding the geography of the districts they serve is, of course, easily appreciated, but that is a function which the motor can also (though to a more limited extent) perform. But the special educational value which the railways possess is in their adaptability to the purpose of mass movements of people and things—at low prices. In this the rail has no land competition. The extent to which this facility has been used in the past is the measure of each nation's educational progress—the most backward countries being the least railroaded. But, although Bacon understood travel “in the younger sort” to be a part of education, it is only in comparatively recent years

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ G.G. Stewart, ‘Educational Value of the Railways’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Vol.3, Iss.6, October 1928, p.6.

that an effort has been made to turn to practical account—as a definite objective—the educational value of railways.¹⁸

Stewart wrote in a flowing and sometimes quite pompous style, but he also simplified arguments down to their key tenets. The connection he drew in 1928 between progress, education and the force of the railways is one example of how he would craft abstract ideas in flowing language, and then connect them bluntly and simply. Ten years later in 1938 Stewart was effusive with praise about New Zealand and the people who lived in it. He enthused that “one thing that New Zealanders can be truly thankful for is that they have the good fortune to live on the choicest portion of this lovely world”.¹⁹ He went on to link this nationalistic sentiment with what the railway could provide, urging his readers to “Consider the sense of motion, a sense that has developed more in recent years than those of taste, smell, touch, hearing or sight”.²⁰ Without baldly stating it Stewart was able to connect ideas about nationalism and progress both of the nation and the individual. His editorials were an exercise in adopting lofty ideals and using simple language to connect them. His main themes were those of the nation, what correct behaviour was and how the railways and the men who worked on them were a force for good. Nationalism, modernism, self-help and loyalty to the workplace were all presented by Stewart as aspects of what the railways department was trying to create with products like *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*: the modern railwayman.

E.T. Spidy – Production Engineering and Scientific Management

From the first issue of the magazine in 1926 until the May issue of the fourth volume in 1929, one of the heftier sections of the magazine was titled “production

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ G.G. Stewart, ‘This Lovely World’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Vol.13, Iss.9, December 1938, p.2.

²⁰ Ibid.

engineering”. It was written by E.T. Spidy and appeared intermittently throughout the first four years of the magazine’s run. E.T. Spidy’s appointment was one of the results of the Fay-Raven Commission of Inquiry that Coates requested which was discussed in the previous chapter. The Fay and Raven report found that the workshops in New Zealand were both poorly designed for modern management techniques and were not being run well enough to provide efficient service to the department. One of the recommendations they made to address the perceived issues in production was the appointment of a long term employee with knowledge of scientific management practices, to invest in and reform the production systems of the department.²¹ The man who was appointed was E.T. Spidy. Olssen describes him as a “New Zealand born production engineer” who had been working for the private sector railway Canadian Pacific.²² Spidy was appointed as the “Superintendent of Workshops” and began a role which required him to reform the workshops convince and to the men who worked in them to accept the changes. The second part of this role is the one which infuses his column in the magazine. While the “Suggestions and Inventions” page is interested in the feedback of the readers, Spidy’s column is very much a monologue. The way his columns were written implied that railway employees would have been aware of who he was. The ongoing column began as an exercise in explanation and justification. Spidy was the mouthpiece of a management structure that was aware that it was making drastic changes to the way it employed people and was anxious to ameliorate the fight back against those reforms.

Each iteration of “Production Engineering” was accompanied by a subheading describing the specific focus of that month’s column. In the first ever issue the title of the

²¹ Report of the Railways Commission, *AJHR*, 1925, Session I, D-02a, p.66.

²² Erik Olssen, ‘Railway Workers and Scientific Management’, in Martin, John and Taylor, Kerry (ed.) *Culture and the Labour Movement*, Dunmore Press Limited, Palmerston North, 1991, p.136.

column read “Production Engineering – What It Is”.²³ This column’s intent was ostensibly to make the reader aware of what the department was referring to when it used the phrase production engineering, but the subtler undertone is that the concept was one that had been around “since time immemorial” and that it was indisputably the correct approach to management. Spidy provided a concise definition that he had borrowed from Canadian railway manager H.L. Grant; “The scientific management of industries, the object of which is to do the right job, at the right time, on the right machine, by the right man, at the right cost”.²⁴ The idea of production engineering being tied up with what is objectively “right” is at the heart of this first column. Spidy was not only explaining the tenets of scientific management, he was also attempting to provide a rational explanation as to why these had become so influential in the re-organisation of the railways department since 1924. The other aspect of this column that is of particular interest is his insistence that production engineering was not a recent development. Spidy opened the piece by saying that when asked “is it something new?” he responded “it is what all factory managers and engineers, from time immemorial, have included as part of their many duties”.²⁵ This first column linked the words “scientific”, “modern” and production” which would have left the reader in little doubt about the attitude of the department towards reform based on these principles.²⁶

The production engineering column continued strongly throughout 1926 and 1927, approaching topics ranging from ‘The Foreman’s Chequebook’ to ‘Getting Together’.²⁷

The columns all appealed to the employees of the railways department to work together to

²³ E.T. Spidy, ‘Production Engineering: What It Is’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.1 iss.1, May, 1926.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ E.T. Spidy, ‘The Foreman’s Chequebook’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.2 iss.3, July 1927 and E.T. Spidy, ‘Production Engineering: Getting Together’ vol.1 no.8, January 1927.

achieve common goals. The constant subtext behind these urgings was that at the current point in time members of the railway service were not doing all they could to benefit the service, the nation and themselves. In 'The Foreman's Chequebook' employees are exhorted to "think on this a bit, fellow members; it's a bit hard, perhaps, but it's a fact. If in your best judgment you would issue that cheque yourself-go ahead. Use the judgment though -the cheque book is real".²⁸ The emphasis on treating the department as an extension of yourself was one that was employed commonly by Spidy, attempting to draw parallels with what his readers would regard as aspects of home life and work life. In the September 1926 issue Spidy attempts to make his readers see the investment and debts of the railways department in the same way they would view their own mortgage obligations. "If any one of us borrows £1,000 to build a house, we have to pay interest for it. Similarly, if we carry over one million pounds worth of material in stock, and we do, we lose the interest on that amount of money while it is in stock, and it doesn't earn us a penny in return until we use it, until we make it do its work".²⁹

The male employees of the railways department were undergoing significant changes in this period both in the work they were doing and how they were being remunerated for that labour.³⁰ While these changes reached from accommodation provisions to apprentice structures and the ways in which hierarchies operated at work, the two major changes were much harder sells. Firstly changing the way in which employees were paid had far reaching consequences for the men who worked for the railways department. He was also tasked with trying to influence the mental states of employees to make them more loyal members of the railway service. The premium bonus system was a

²⁸ E.T. Spidy, 'The Foreman's Chequebook', *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.2 iss.3, July 1927.

²⁹ E.T. Spidy, 'Production Engineering: Production Views on Material Stocks', *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.1 iss.5, September 1926.

³⁰ Jim McAloon, 'Workers' Control and the Rise of Political Labour, Christchurch, 1905-1914', in Martin, John and Taylor, Kerry (eds.) *Culture and the Labour Movement*, Dunmore Press Limited, Palmerston North, 1991.

way to make people work as individuals in competition with one another.³¹ While it was presented as a way of making workshops more efficient, what it also did was define work and craftsmanship by time rather than by production.³² This fed anxiety surrounding the reforms being made to the railways department and Olssen argues that many “skilled tradesmen” saw the premium bonus system as “the long hated piece-rate in new garb”.³³ The premium bonus and compartmentalisation of tasks meant that one worker could be trained to do one specific task over and over rather than have mastery of a particular trade.³⁴ What made Spidy’s task doubly tough was that he also had to sell the new ethos of the department, centred on co-operation, with a remunerative policy that encouraged individualism. It is in this context that the phrases “think right”, “getting together” and “thinking for ourselves” come into play. Spidy, presumably at the behest of railway management, was attempting to convince his readers that to embrace the reforms, and the principles that they were based on, was the only correct solution. In different iterations of his column differing strategies are used. Sometimes the connecting factor was health and wellbeing, sometimes it was profit, and occasionally it concerned the longevity of the positions that the railway employees held. Language surrounding national pride, masculine character and objective correct thinking are used throughout and create a narrative in the 4 years of Spidy’s column that fits with the main message of the magazine as well as crafting a well realised image of how the New Zealand male railway worker should think.

Spidy’s job was to reform the workshop production efficiency of the New Zealand Railways, but a large part of his job in the 1920s centred on making the reforms he wanted

³¹ David Nye, *America’s Assembly Line*, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2013.

³² E.T. Spidy, ‘Premium Bonus System’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.1, iss.3, July 1926 .

³³ Erik Olssen, ‘Railway Workers and Scientific Management’, in Martin, John and Taylor, Kerry (ed.) *Culture and the Labour Movement*, Dunmore Press Limited, Palmerston North, 1991, p.137.

³⁴ *Ibid*, pp.134-135.

to put in place palatable to the employees of the department. The male employees who lived in the department's single lodging huts were not the focus audience that Spidy was attempting to reach, but the ethos that the column was being used to try and impress upon the employees of the department would certainly have impacted upon them. In his final column in 1929 Spidy wraps up a four year campaign in a piece titled "The Service Idea".³⁵ While this column is extremely dry and is essentially a re-hashing of columns from 1926, the title of the final piece by Spidy is telling. The tag line of the magazine "For Better Service" is conjured up but so too is the difficult dichotomy that Spidy had been navigating for four years. The service that Spidy writes about in 1929 is not the service provided to the customer, as is emphasised by Coates and Stewart in 1926, but rather the service that the employee can provide to his employer by using "responsible" judgement.³⁶ The magazine was one way in which the department could try and influence not only the way their employees worked, but also how they viewed themselves and what their proper roles were. E.T Spidy's column was an integral part of this strategy in the first four years of the magazine's run.

A Literary Page or Two

Pages such as production engineering presented an obvious argument to the employees of the railway service. While some of the messages and subtexts were subtle, the point of the page was clear and often stated. The magazine's objective to create better service was indicated in more subtle and ephemeral ways by other parts of the magazine, those concerned with fiction and creative non-fiction. Much attention has been paid by literary historians and critics to the patchwork tapestry of writers' origins in the pages of the magazine. Stephen Hamilton's PhD thesis *New Zealand English Language Periodicals*

³⁵ E.T. Spidy, 'The Service Idea', *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.4, iss.1, May 1929.

³⁶ Ibid.

of Literary Interest Active 1920s-1960s includes a chapter on the magazine's impact on the literary scene in New Zealand. Hamilton is concerned with who wrote for the magazine, who was selected to write for it and the effect of the exposure the magazine provided for New Zealand writers in the 1920s and 1930s. Hamilton notes that "*The New Zealand Railways Magazine* played an increasing role as an outlet for both budding New Zealand literary talent and for numerous freelance journalists".³⁷ Hamilton's main focus is the pieces that were published in the magazine, the motivations behind what was published are less important to the focus of his research. Having said that, in comparing the magazine to other periodicals of the time Hamilton highlights several differences that are important in understanding the objectives and editorial direction of *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*. Hamilton highlights the differences between the author indices of *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* and the "radical periodical *Tomorrow*" to indicate how conservative the former was in spite of occasional inclusion of voices that were radical elsewhere. Hamilton also notes that the literary editor of *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Pat Lawlor, dismissed Curnow's *Not in Narrow Seas* as "an expression of youthful complaint".³⁸ Hamilton sums up his discussion of editorial direction by stating that Lawlor was more "interested in encouraging mainstream literary activity than in supporting ...the use of prose or verse as outlets for political protest or social criticism".³⁹

The "Among the Books" page appeared in the first volume of the magazine but in a very rudimentary form. The page was dedicated to reviews of management texts with titles like "*The Secret of High Wages*" and "*Control on the Railways*".⁴⁰ This section of

³⁷ Hamilton, p.522.

³⁸ Pat Lawlor, 'Among the Books: A Literary Page or Two', *New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.14, iss.2 May 1939.

³⁹ Hamilton, p.538.

⁴⁰ 'Among the Books', *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Vol.1 Iss.4, August 1926 and 'Among the Books', *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.1 iss.10, March 1927.

the magazine was a review page and it took that role very seriously. The virtues of the texts surrounding management practice and railway techniques were sung by the anonymous editor of the page. While some criticism was directed at these two texts the reviewer was mainly concerned with what New Zealanders could learn from the international discourse. An emphasis was placed on the changing nature of work and how the members of the railway service would also have to change in order to help the railways service continue to be a successful enterprise. The magazine's literary content was quite distinct from the reviewing which occurred on the Among the Books page. In the first years of the magazine all of the literary content had either a very obvious moral message about work and character, or was directly associated with the world of the railways. In the early volumes the stories are mostly one to two pages and were mainly either fictional pieces regarding railway work or non-fiction pieces detailing railway excursions or holidays that it was possible to take on the New Zealand railway service.

The two forms which dominated the early volumes reflect the dual audience that the magazine was attempting to influence. The stories by "Fishplate" such as 'The Morning Train: A Manawatu Reminiscence' were targeted at the railway workers reading the magazine.⁴¹ Fishplate's stories appeared in the first volume of the *New Zealand Railways Magazine* and in the dry atmosphere of the first year of the magazine they stand out as moments of humour and character. In the first volume of the magazine there is very little fiction or poetry, and the snippets that are included all concern train travel or a moral message about the best ways in which to work. Fishplate's stories are all set either on the railways or based on the lives of employees of the railways but the subject matter is used as a jumping off point. Fishplate's stories are about friendship, diversity and the humour

⁴¹ Fishplate, 'The Morning Train: A Manawatu Reminiscence' *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.1, iss.2, June 1926.

that can be found in daily working life. Camaraderie is important in these stories, but the value that the author places above all others is the ability to spin a yarn.⁴² Storytelling and the respect given to storytellers feature heavily in the works of Fishplate, but another abiding theme in these works is the respect due to those who work hard.

The pieces describing the tourist opportunities afforded by the railways were aimed at potential customers of the railways. It's important to note that these two groups were not mutually exclusive, railway workers were encouraged to take their holidays on the railways with staff fares and excursion fares. While the magazine was trying to foster a stronger "esprit de corps" and better sell the services that the railways could provide, both of these aims contributed to a wider goal. The stories about New Zealand working culture and the pieces acclaiming the unprecedented beauty and ease of experiencing what New Zealand had to offer via rail both contributed to a wider national narrative. The non-fiction essays constantly emphasised that New Zealand was a paradise that possessed natural beauty that was superior to anywhere else in the world.⁴³ Combined with the stories of camaraderie and egalitarianism within the workforce, New Zealand is presented as a place where a man can both be a competent, modern and efficient worker as well as being able to appreciate the wonderful natural beauty of the landscape around him. The message presented in the first seven years of the magazine's run is one aimed at a holistic 'man of character': one who possessed the traits required to turn New Zealand into a modern and progressive country whilst still carrying a sentimentality that allows a wider scope for understanding. In 1939 the General Manager for the Railways wrote in his column that "character, helps to produce an equable mind, and is the source of courage and enterprise

⁴² Fishplate, 'How Mackhenchie Bumped a Borrower', *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.1, iss.5, September 1926.

⁴³ J. Cowan, 'Enchantment Of Rotorua. — Lakeland, Geyserland, Storyland', *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.2, iss.6, October 1927.

in the things that are worth while”.⁴⁴ This attitude sings through the pages of the magazine for its whole run. While there are the overt messages from the Ministers and General Managers there are also quotes which appear almost at random in the pages of the magazine. Drawn from classical poetry, Shakespeare and Victorian writers they all emphasise moral rectitude, intelligence education and duty. Work and the way it is carried out is constantly emphasised in the rest of the magazine, but the classical quotes along with the fictional and creative non-fiction pieces provide the answer as to why those aims were desirable.

This message continues in a more subtle way in the literary content of the magazine after 1933. The emphasis on modernity and a progressive nature is not as overt, but the messaging about what makes a good worker, what makes a good citizen and what makes a good man was still very much present in the editorial policy of the magazine. Modern progressive masculinity, being a good New Zealander and being an efficient worker were all wrapped up tightly in the idea of the New Zealand railway worker, and the literary content of the magazine allows us to see how G.G. Stewart, Pat Lawlor and the management of the railways imagined that figure being. While not strictly literary there were other sections of the magazine which used literary techniques to communicate messages about work and masculinity.

“Hard Shelled Bachelors”

While there were no sections of the magazine explicitly directed at single men, there were pieces scattered throughout the magazine’s run which provide background in how men were encouraged to view themselves at work and in the domestic sphere. They were usually couched in humour and represented subtle suggestions about masculine roles rather than

⁴⁴ H. Mackley, ‘Railway Progress in New Zealand’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.13, iss.12, March 1939.

direct instruction. In a short piece titled “culinary athletics” a joke is made about a man attempting to fill a domestic role.

“R. M.” sends us the story of a young bride who asked her husband to copy off a radio recipe she wanted. He did his best, but got two stations at once, one of which was broadcasting the morning exercises, and the other the recipe. This is what he took down:- Hands on hip, place one cup of flour on the shoulders, raise knees and depress toes and mix thoroughly in one-half cup of milk. Repeat six times. Inhale quickly one-half teaspoonful of baking powder, lower the legs and mash two hard-boiled eggs in a sieve. Inhale, breathe naturally and sift into a bowl. Attention! Lie flat on the floor and roll the white of an egg backward and forward until it comes to the boil. In ten minutes remove from the fire and rub smartly with a rough towel. Breathe naturally, dress in warm flannels and serve with fish soup.⁴⁵

This short extract presented as a story sent in by a reader makes assumptions about the feckless nature of men when it comes to domestic tasks, but does it in a tongue in cheek way designed not to cause offence. It also satirises the same kind of domestic advice which was delivered to single men living in railway huts in *Your Hut Your Home*. In another story published in the magazine the nature of boarders and the reality of living with other bachelors is approached at length in a story titled “Two Men and a Maid”.⁴⁶ This is a long piece which details the failed attempts of two “hard shelled bachelors” who were attempting to woo the same woman. The opening of the story reads:

A cynic has said that all boardinghouses are the same boardinghouse, that all sausages are the same sausage, that all hashes are the same hash, and that all

⁴⁵ Unattributed, ‘Culinary Athletics’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.2, iss.5, September 1927, p.45.

⁴⁶ Unattributed, ‘Two Men and a Maid’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.3, iss.3, July 1928, pp.22-25.

boarders are the same boarder. It is true that history does repeat itself in boardinghouses and in boarders. In a team of eight there is usually one who does his own washing, or some of it, in the bathroom on a Sunday morning; one who puts several strata of vegetables on a gobbet of meat till the prongs are all well buried—and then the face opens cavernously; one (the most experienced) who knows how to juggle twice his fair share from a dish of delicacies; one who goes to every dance within a radius of ten miles; one who brings a crayfish home on Saturday night; one who adorns the walls of his room with photographs of “flappers” and magazine and post-card pictures of actresses and vaudeville “stars”; one who bores everybody before and after meals; and one who has travelled the world.⁴⁷

While this story is not addressing men living in railway huts it is an interesting piece in that it suggests that the reality of single men living and working along New Zealand’s railways was acknowledged at the time. As well as being a comic story, there is an inherent sadness to it. The male lack of domestic knowledge is presented as laughable, but it hints to a deeper concern about the ability of men to look after themselves. There are few other mentions of these men and the way they co-habited in the magazine or in the files of the NZGRD. This story is also humorous and celebrates the bond between single men working for the railways, but it also reveals tensions about what a bachelor was. The few mentions of single men in the magazine appear in stories and jokes. While this is frustrating for a study trying to investigate how cultural products were used to target these men, when they are combined with the general ethos of the magazine surrounding masculinity and work a portrait of intent can be crafted.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Conclusion

The New Zealand Railways Magazine is a fascinating periodical that provides insight into many aspects of inter-war life in New Zealand. The “Of Feminine Interest” section is a window into a world that included dress designs and cake recipes, but also rifle clubs and separate railway organisations run by the women whose lives were affected by the railways. The “Wit and Humour” section allows an understanding of what was considered funny by the management of the magazine, but also reveals what was considered allowable to laugh at. The vast number of travel writing articles reveal both a period where travel was possible and becoming more and more popular. At the same time the pieces that revolved around holidays and excursions made possible by the railways expose the anxiety felt by railways management about the future of the service as a viable financial organisation.⁴⁸

Spidy’s work in the first four years of the magazine presented facts about the reforms that the management of the railways was trying to put in place. These columns also presented arguments about why these reforms were both necessary and objectively the correct approach to take. Meanwhile in both the pages dedicated to reviewing literary content and those containing literary content the mind-set of the employee was approached in a subtler fashion. The editorial policies of Stewart and Lawlor focused on literary products that sang the praises of the railways, the nation, the empire and the men who served all three. Even those stories and reviews which did not explicitly address the establishment in New Zealand, none were published which criticised it or attempted to use literary forms for social or political critique. Accompanying these two forms were the editorials of the only person to edit the magazine, G.G. Stewart. In these editorials Stewart

⁴⁸ There are examples of the travel writing espousing the virtue of the railways as a tourist service in almost every issue of the magazine. They were sometimes written by railways staff, freelance journalists and purported customers of the railways. A good example of the form is by a Petone Workshops employee; A.P. Godber, ‘A Delightful Round Trip’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Vol.3, Iss.6 October 1928.

made direct appeals to employees to behave in particular ways, in their relationships with each other, the department, railway customers and their own wellbeing.

The three approaches discussed in this chapter all interact with each other but are presented as being separate in the magazine. While Atkinson's approach to the motivations for the magazine and Hamilton's investigations of the literary content are excellent, by taking one section of the magazine without the others the impact the magazine was intended to have is lost. What these three aspects of the magazine show is the intent of the magazine and the ways in which that intent manifested itself. They reveal where it worked, such as the suggestions and inventions page married with Spidy's advice, and they show where it didn't, as in the selling of the premium bonus system. They reveal attitudes about gender, class and nationhood which resonate throughout the pages of this publication. The re-structuring of the way the department ran did not stop with the re-division of control in the New Zealand Railways. The advice of the Fay-Raven report was taken on fully and the New Zealand Railways Department attempted to restructure the way their employees behaved, and more importantly how they perceived themselves. *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* was an essential component of this approach.

Chapter Four: Bunks and Burners; Railway Lodging Huts

“There is No Social Life”

The lack of housing and provision for single male employees was a cause for concern for the NZGRD. In 1926 a memorandum from “the Divisional Superintendent, Auckland” recommended that “three houses be erected at Huntly to enable three single members now located at the station to be replaced by married men”.¹ There was shared concern within the management of the NZGRD about how the placement of single male employees around the country affected them, and in turn how that affected the department. In 1929 the issue of where huts and single men were being utilised was still a vexing problem. The railway huts at Greatford, near Shannon, became a troubling matter in February 1929. Mr. E. Casey was the Divisional Superintendent responsible for the small Manawatu settlement, and the tablet porters who lived there were beginning to give him cause for alarm. On the 13th of February he wrote to the office of the General Manager and expressed that “a single clerk is stationed at Greatford and he has to live in a hut owing to board and lodgings being unobtainable in the vicinity of the station”.² Casey’s worry was not just that the employee in question had to live in a hut, but that the isolation experienced by single men living in wide flung spots could have a detrimental effect on them and the service they provided to the department. He went on “there is no social life at Greatford and the single clerks stationed there invariably make application for a transfer after having resided there for a short time”.³ General Manager Sterling was also concerned about problems relating to single employees and finding suitable places to lodge them. He wrote to Casey in 1929 that “single tablet porters are located at the undermentioned tablet stations and it is desired to replace 5 of these members with married

¹ ‘House Building Programme - Numbers - Locations etc’, 1926-1931, ADQD Series 17422, Box 233, Record 1911/1981/4, Archives New Zealand (ANZ).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

men”.⁴ The lack of social life in isolated pockets of the country meant that the department preferred to locate more socially self-sufficient families in far flung locations, rather than a man alone. While single men served in many isolated parts of the country the management of the NZGRD were aware of the effect of geographic and social impacts on the individual. Their concern was for the single men as individuals, but also as assets in which the department had made an investment. It cost money to train and transfer men and the NZGRD was achieving two goals by replacing single men with families. They were alleviating the concerns regarding the individual, but more pertinently they were creating a longer term solution which would save the NZGRD both money and time. The case of the hut at Greatford, and the others addressed by Sterling, show the difficult tension at the heart of the management of single male employees. There was a genuine desire to create housing solutions which benefited the individual, but the main goal was always to create the most efficient solution to a problem of the business, not just the problem of an individual. While the personal lives of these men were noticed and considered by NZGRD management, for the people in headquarters the department’s bottom line was the major concern. The Railway Housing Scheme and the huts which were included within its remit were motivated by these not entirely compatible goals.

Family was important to NZGRD Chief Engineer F.W. Maclean and by the 10th of March 1923 he had had enough. One of his Gangers, a W. Foster, was being continually moved and relocated due to a lack of fit and appropriate housing.⁵ While Maclean expressed sympathy for the housing shortages that were occurring in the early 1920s, this particular case gave him cause for special judgement as Mr. Foster had a wife and five children.⁶

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ ‘Railway Departments House Building Programme’, 1921-1955, ADQD Series 17422, Box 232, Record 1911/1981/1, ANZ.

⁶ Ibid.

Maclean was exasperated at the way Foster was having to live and asked for special dispensation for the problem to be sorted out immediately. Two months later a letter from the head of the Architectural Branch, George Troup, to General Manager McVilly reflected the confusion felt by the Architectural Branch as to what their role was, and what the scope and scale of the housing scheme was to be. 1923 was a difficult year for the NZGRD and the Housing Programme in particular. While there had been consensus that railway housing was needed, little direction was given to Troup as to how he was to go about it. These cases required attention because while there appears to have been a certain level of pragmatism in looking after those with larger families, Maclean's concern revealed that the priorities of the approach to railway housing from management were based on the welfare of their employees. As well as showing how important consideration of family commitments was, these sets of letters are useful in another way, they show how pressing the housing crisis was for the state run departments as well as detailing the fact that the state was prepared to get involved to solve it, if haltingly.

The Railway Housing Programme and Architectural Branch of the Department predated the Coates reforms and were reactions to a housing crisis that was placing the running of the railways in jeopardy. For an industry that was the nation's biggest single employer and trying to expand operations, this was a major concern for the department and the state. Something had to be done. The Railways Housing scheme was a concerted effort to construct a system which could provide housing for the employees of the railways that was affordable and fit for purpose. The programme provided for men with five children like Mr. Foster, but there were thousands of men without families who the department needed to provide for as well. This chapter is an investigation of the physical reality of living in a railway hut in the inter-war period and what NZGRD's management's aims were in designing and regulating those spaces. This research is heavily based in the records of the NZGRD, specifically the

records of the management, equipment and constant attention given to the railway huts. This chapter also introduces the wider context of the railway housing scheme and identifies why the huts are such an important example of a different type of social housing in 20th century New Zealand.

Dwellings of all Kinds

State and social housing was a continuous and vexed issue for Liberal and Reform Governments alike. Ongoing debates had been occurring since the 19th century about how the state could intervene in a market starved of supply and very difficult to regulate.⁷ The Worker's Dwellings Bill presented to Parliament by Richard Seddon in 1905 presented a major intervention by the state into the housing situation in New Zealand. While it passed into law, the leader of the opposition William Massey, who would later become the Minister of the Railways during the Railway Housing Scheme, objected. His concern was that while the scheme proposed by the Prime Minister would lead to the construction of homes for New Zealanders, it did very little to make it easier for them to own their own homes.⁸ The Workers' Dwellings scheme was designed to look after New Zealand workers who were not able to live in a state anywhere near to comfort, but it led to the construction of dwellings which were not desired by the people they were designed to house.⁹ One of the major problems with this approach to worker's housing was that it ignored the need for workers to be close to the spaces in which they were employed. The focus on suburban planning meant that the dwellings built in this period were not accessible for people who worked in factories or on the railways.¹⁰ One of the real advantages of the railway housing scheme was that

⁷ Ben Schrader, *We Call It Home; A History of State Housing in New Zealand*, Reed Books, Auckland, 2005, pp.14-30.

⁸ *Ibid*, p.24.

⁹ Schrader, p.25

¹⁰ Gael Ferguson, *Building the New Zealand Dream*, Dunmore Press Ltd., Palmerston North, 1994, p.66.

houses, and dwelling huts especially, were very close to the railways workshops and tracks.¹¹ While this could be seen as a disadvantage in terms of public health, for employees who worked long and arduous hours the distance from home to work was an important consideration. Also by housing employees close to where they worked, employers could exert more control and construct a more reliable workforce. Railway huts were usually placed directly next to the railway lines or in the yards, meaning that staff were close to work, but also under scrutiny. Kellaway notes in her discussion of the architecture of the huts that “standard workmen’s huts” were “transported along the rail”. They were more mobile than railway housing, and less attention was paid to where they were placed.

The railways housing scheme is a notable exception in the pre Labour Government history of New Zealand’s relationship with state housing. A departure from the approach of what Schraeder refers to as a policy of “state-sponsored private housing” the railways department set out to build dwellings for their workers to live in that would be owned and managed by the department.

Chief Architect

The most instrumental figure in the implementation of the NZGRD’s housing scheme was architect and engineer George Troup. Troup was born in England in 1863 to Scottish parents and was raised and educated in both countries.¹² He attended Robert Gordon’s College in Aberdeen from 1874 to 1879 before beginning an apprenticeship with an engineer and architect in Edinburgh. Alongside his vocational training Troup also studied art and architecture at the Royal Institute and began what was to be a lifelong relationship with the

¹¹ Laura Kellaway, *The Railway House in New Zealand - a Study of the 1920s New Zealand Railway Housing Scheme*. M.Arch. Thesis, University of Auckland 1994, p.32

¹² James Veitch, ‘Troup, George Alexander’, *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara – The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, Updated March 2014.

Presbyterian Church.¹³ In 1882 Troup had finished his apprenticeship and began his working career as a draughtsman in Edinburgh. In 1883 Troup's mother passed away, following his father who had died when George was a child. At the end of 1883 Troup followed two of his siblings and emigrated to New Zealand, arriving in Dunedin in 1884.¹⁴ Troup then worked for the Otago Survey department until 1888 when he moved to Wellington to begin his career at the NZGRD in the Head office as a draughtsman. Troup worked for the NZGRD in a variety of roles, designed and executed many of the larger structures and was the head of the architectural branch from 1919 until he retired from the NZGRD in 1925.¹⁵

In his biography of his father Gordon Troup titled the third chapter "Architect of Manhood" and chronicled the development of his father's career in the NZGRD and his work at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Wellington. Gordon Troup describes his father as concerned about "the problems which young men had to grapple with in the closing years of the Victorian age".¹⁶ George Troup was heavily involved in St John's Young Men's Bible Class for the rest of his life and according to his son saw the group as a force that could holistically guide and shape young men to make better decisions.¹⁷ Gordon Troup relates this concern to his father's interest in the railway housing scheme. He outlines that after the First World War thousands of railwaymen returned from conflict zones and that the work that did exist was far flung. Gordon Troup charts this narrative and explains that "the plight of these men concerned my father, who had long been worried about the effects of country service on railwaymen".¹⁸ While Troup's book is a hagiography his impressions about his father's

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Gordon Troup, *George Troup; Architect and Engineer*, Dunmore Press Limited, Palmerston North, 1982, p.14.

¹⁵ Veitch, 'Troup, George Alexander'.

¹⁶ Troup, p.26.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp.26-27.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.78.

motivations for his approach to the NZGRD's Housing Programme provide a clue that economy and domestic functionality were not the only goals in mind.

Troup was an instrumental figure in the re-organisation of the NZGRD's approach to housing both in practical and ideological terms. His programme and his approach to the housing issue in terms of architecture and ideas about living formed a major part of how railway employees and their families were housed throughout the 1920s and 1930s. His experience as an architect and an engineer as well as his belief in the role of the church in society all influenced the way the railway housing scheme developed. Troup's ideas and how he went about executing them established the blueprint for how many railway workers would live right up until the 1970s.

Railways Housing Scheme

The NZGRD had been providing housing solutions for its employees since the end of the 19th century. However, railway housing in the 1890s was mainly concerned with the welfare of station masters and was a very small operation.¹⁹ There was also some consideration given in the late 19th and early 20th century to housing the men who were building the permanent way. McVilly made this clear in a letter to the Labour Department's Superintendent of Workers' Dwellings in a letter on the 29th October 1919 in which he explained "All railway houses are erected in accordance with standard drawings. The majority of houses have been built by the Public Works Department at the time the railway lines were being constructed".²⁰ In 1919 the scope and capabilities of the NZGRD's involvement in workers' housing began to enlarge rapidly and the 1920s and 1930s would see

¹⁹ 'Railway Departments House Building Programme', 1895-1921, ADQD Series 17422, Box 232, Record No. 1911/1981/1, ANZ.

²⁰ Ibid.

the biggest concerted building of social housing in New Zealand until the first Labour Government.

George Troup was appointed as architect to the Railway Housing Scheme in 1919 and in 1920 he became the first head of The Railway Architectural Branch. Troup was an engineer as well as an architect and he was a fond admirer of the garden suburb theory that was gaining popularity in the USA and Britain.²¹ One of Troup's major assignments was to come up with a strategy for the mass production of standardised railway housing. He was in charge of the erection of a house building factory and sawmill complex at Frankton Junction, at that time just outside of Hamilton. Troup was given leeway to devise the scheme but there was a lot of concern about how it would operate at a management level, within organised labour and in Parliament. In 1919 a letter from the ASRS to the office of the General Manager read "Hundreds of men have gone out of the service rather than transfer. They refuse to take their wives to Wellington, Palmerston North or Frankton Jct. owing to the housing question. It costs the department hundreds to train the men and they leave the service. In another few years you will have a new staff altogether".²² This letter highlights the immediate problem that the department was facing but it also reveals how issues of domesticity and suitability of housing were part of the debate surrounding the Railway Housing Scheme from its very beginning. Pressure was also mounting in 1919 in the House of Representatives. Questions from MPs Peter Fraser, Harry Ell and Thomas Wilford were recorded in Hansard of September 1919 asking questions of Mr. Massey about when and how the Railways Department was going to provide adequate housing for railway workers.

²¹ Ferguson, p.96.

²² 'Railway Departments House Building Programme', 1895-1921.

Massey responded that “the question of providing housing-accommodation for railway employees was at present under the consideration of the Railway Department”.²³

On the 5th of November 1919 the NZGRD’s General Manager McVilly wrote to Massey laying out his concerns and his commitment to changing the status quo in railway housing for reasons relating to financial sustainability, moral concerns and anxieties about the longevity of the NZGRD.

For a considerable time past the Railway Department has been greatly hampered in connection with its staffing arrangements by the difficulties of the staff in securing house accommodation. As a consequence of the shortage of houses the Department is compelled to spend large sums in transfer expenses annually, and the railway staff is disinclined to accept transfers to meet the requirements of the Department. Apart from the direct savings in the cost of construction, the Department will ultimately make a very large annual saving in respect of the cost of transfers, while the members of the staff - by reason of the fact that the houses will be standardised in respect to the accommodation provided in the different types - will be saved the expenditure that now results from the unsuitability of their belongings to the various classes of houses they have to occupy, and in addition it will be practicable to let the houses at a lower rental than would be charged by private owners. This will make for greater contentment of the staff, and will probably act as an incentive to the men remaining in the services of the department.²⁴

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

This letter outlined the three major aims that the NZGRD had in the formation of the Railway Housing Programme. Firstly McVilly addressed the cost that the lack of a housing scheme was causing the NZGRD. The financial burden that the department was carrying due to the lack of affordable housing around New Zealand and the reluctance of employees to relocate was emphasised by McVilly as it presented an objective reason that it would make sense for the department to become directly involved in the housing of its staff. The second motivator was the benefit of standardisation. By creating housing where employees' belongings would always be suitable, as the dwellings they were moving between were identical, the department would create an environment where staff would be more amenable to being transferred. Standardisation would alleviate costs and issues for employees, but by making the transfer process easier the department would also make a saving by having more employees willing to transfer. The third aspect was phrased by McVilly as making a "greater contentment of the staff". McVilly proposed that by being charged cheaper rents than private providers, staff would be more willing to remain "in the services of the department" and this final point draws a neat thread between the first two different motivating factors. The contentment of employees was a consideration of McVilly's in approaching the housing scheme, but its importance was based in what that contentment meant financially for the department. The desire to invest in railway housing from the NZGRD's point of view was a business decision with a slight social policy hue. The way the programme developed reflects this uneven combination of motivations.

By 1920 Troup was working to create the Frankton Junction sawmill and house building factory that were essential to produce pre-fabricated housing and joinery at the most efficient pace and expense.²⁵ As well as being noticed and discussed by railway management and politicians, the scheme had also captured the attention of periodical publications. In

²⁵ Ibid.

December 1920 *Building Progress* dedicated an issue to the Railway Housing Scheme and “The Soldier’s Loan” scheme which was also so an issue for the housing of men in post World War One New Zealand.²⁶ In this issue the author stated that “although our readers will not find in the designs anything startlingly novel, they will at once realise that the Department’s architect has given a ground plan which makes for a convenient house on one floor, and that rooms are reasonable in size, and well arranged”.²⁷ This issue charts the genesis of the programme as well as commenting on the figures that informed its inception in its modern form.

The General Manager of Railways, Mr. R. McVilly, who has taken a direct personal interest in the Department’s housing scheme, deserves credit for adopting a liberal policy, which will have a far reaching effect in promoting content among those of his employees who are fortunate enough to procure a railway dwelling for their accommodation.²⁸

The emphasising of contentment as a goal of the housing scheme is an important one in terms of understanding what motivated the management of NZGRD and the way in which they managed housing stock and the people who inhabited it. Suitability of housing was not only influenced by what was practical in terms of physical space, it also pertained to how it affected the people who inhabited it.

The *Building Progress* article stressed the importance of new housing initiatives to relieve accommodation shortages and also commented on how reasonable the design was while not being radically new.

²⁶ Unattributed, *N.Z. Building Progress*, Vol.xvi, No.4, December 1920, NA, Railway Departments House Building Programme 1895-1921.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

The Railway Department has inaugurated and is engaged on a house building scheme on a large scale. The present programme involves the erection of 400 houses as a commencement. The scheme involves the establishment of a factory equipped with modern machinery for cutting timber to standard lengths. This will enable rapid progress to be made with the construction of the houses and at the same time materially reduce their cost. The houses will all be built to standard type, and will be provided with modern convenience.²⁹

This article was mainly a description of the scheme and how it was intended to work throughout the 1920s. But it contains kernels of the other ideas which permeated the creation and continuation of the Railway Housing Programme. The author concluded the article on railway housing by commenting that the:

Department intends to work on sound town planning lines, where practicable each settlement will have its reserves for recreation. Tree planting will be carried out by experts on a well thought out plan. Natural features of landscape will be taken advantage of, and the general conveniences required in such a settlement will be provided.³⁰

The issue of *Building Progress* from December 1920 reveals that there was a growing public interest in the housing policies of the New Zealand Government. It also shows that curiosity about the programmes was based in practicality just as much as in ideology. The author of the piece wanted to communicate to his readers that the new housing would not create slums and would at least attempt to create some kind of relationship with their surroundings. But more important than that were the facts about the housing. How big were the houses? Where were they going to be? How were they being constructed? What were they going to be like to live

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

in? While that last question has a foot in both camps, the main concern for the writer of this issue is to re-assure his readers that the housing was going to be fit for purpose.

The programme was well underway by 1921 and the Frankton Junction housing plant was creating stock.³¹ However, there were still concerns about the scheme from managerial and ministerial perspectives. On the 18th of March 1921 Minister for Railways J. Coates wrote to McVilly asking for a detailed account of the housing scheme's progress and what it could be expected to achieve in the future. McVilly in turn passed this request on to Troup with a request for it to be handled as quickly as possible. The New Zealand railways records contain many such instances, requests passed up and down the chain of command. Troup responded weeks later on the 2nd of April with a detailed summary of what the Railways Architectural Branch had achieved and what they could realistically go on to do.³² Troup wrote that the branch had constructed, or was in the process of constructing, one hundred and forty houses.³³ Troup also commented that "In addition to the 140 houses referred to, the following buildings have been constructed during the year or are now under construction:- 2 Stores, 1 Stable, 9 Railway Huts, 1 Addition to office building, 1 Large Hostel for Single Men, 1 Large House Building Factory, 1 Band Sawmill".³⁴ Troup's report is a useful insight into what was happening in the programme, but it also reveals much about what was considered important by Troup and his superiors in the carrying out of the scheme.

Near the end of his report Troup states that "tenants will be encouraged to make gardens, and to keep them, when made, in good order. It is intended to offer annually, prizes for the best kept front garden and the best kept kitchen garden in each settlement".³⁵ This interest in encouraging personal investment in environment and general tidiness and order is

³¹ Ferguson, p.96.

³² 'Railway Departments House Building Programme', 1895-1921, ADQD Series 17422, Box 232, Record No. 1911/1981/1, ANZ.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

both a symptom of the influence of the garden suburb system of thought and an indication that railway housing was intended to be more than just roofs and walls. New Zealand housing debates in the early 1920s were very concerned with public health, the garden suburb ideas were seen as being both beneficial to physical health and mental health.³⁶ These ideas endured in the NZGRD and in 1926 *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* extensively covered the “Station Garden Competitions” which took place in Otago.³⁷ The competition was for station gardens rather than personal ones but the ethos remained the same. The magazine commented that:

We tender our thanks to Lady Fergusson and the members of the Otago Women’s Club for the splendid example they have set in this important matter, and again to members of the staff concerned for the interest and enthusiasm with which they worked to make the surroundings of their stations a delight to the travelling public and themselves.³⁸

The garden suburb ideas had grown out of an international context of garden city concepts, but in New Zealand they were adapted to suit the social and physical landscapes.³⁹ The Railway Housing Programme was clearly influenced by these ideas, profit and anxiety about retaining staff were not the only motivators for the scheme. The housing programme was primarily targeted at alleviating the housing crisis in New Zealand and in the process saving the NZGRD both time and money resulting from the loss of trained employees due to a shortage of accommodation. But the way the programme was executed by the department and

³⁶ Ferguson, pp.71-74.

³⁷ ‘Station Garden Competitions’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol. iss.2, June 1926, p.33.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p.33.

³⁹ Caroline L. Miller, ‘Theory Poorly Practiced: The Garden Suburb in New Zealand’, *Planning Perspectives*, No.19, January 2004.

the Architectural Branch was influenced by ideas about garden suburbs and concerns about the moral character of employees and citizens.

“A Great Profit”: McVilly’s Purported Purpose

The files kept by the Railways department concerning the housing scheme contain a staggering amount of information. Amongst the numerous letters, chain memorandums and newspaper cuttings regarding the scheme are the minutes of public meetings held by the department with railway unions. Interestingly the housing scheme doesn’t appear hugely in the minutes of these meetings and when it does the union representatives are concerned about whether or not the scheme will be financially viable for the department. On the 21st July 1923 there was an “Interview between the Executive of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants and the General Manager of the Railways”.⁴⁰ In this interview McVilly responds sharply to questioning of the motivations of the housing scheme

If you run away with the idea that we are going to get a great profit out of the housing scheme it is wrong. What we going to do is give satisfaction to our staff, and that is worth a lot: but it is not going to be a huge profit-making machine as some of you think.⁴¹

The idea that housing was not just a financial investment was one that the department stayed true to throughout the tenure of the housing programme. In 1925 a letter from the office of the minister to the “Chairman Railway Board” regarding the “Housebuilding Operations of Architectural Branch” hammers home the point that “the comfortable housing of the men must always be a factor to stable conditions, making, as it does, a more satisfied

⁴⁰ ‘Railway Departments House Building Programme’, 1921-1955, ADQD Series 17422, Box 232, Record 1911/1981/1, ANZ.

⁴¹ Ibid.

staff”.⁴² In a similar vein to the recommendations made in Coates’ and Fay and Raven’s reports an interesting line was being walked here. While there is genuine concern for the welfare of workers and their families it is always tied back into the language of efficiency and the effect on the business that the employee’s welfare has. The 1925 letter emphasises that the creation of satisfied employees leads to stability for the department. This mirrors Spidy’s work in *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* in that by making employees see their work and personal lives as being fulfilling they will be more tractable to the needs of their employees. This letter easily fits in with Spidy’s exhortations for employees to “work together” and think for themselves. The appeal to the employee to look after themselves is always tinged with what that self-care means in terms of an investment for the NZGRD. Stability was important and employee welfare and employee tractability were important elements of that stability. When McVilly said in his meeting with the ASRS that satisfaction “is worth a lot” he could have been talking about value to the employee, but it likely that he also had his mind on what that was worth for the department. While it is easy to be cynical about the motivations of railway management, especially after reading the Railways Statements and the commission reports, there are moments in the narrative of the Railway Housing Programme that reflect a real desire to look after their employees. In an extract from a report of a deputation from the executive of the New Zealand Railway Tradesmen’s Association to the associate general manager of railways on the 13th October 1937, Mr Ingram emphasises the lack of support for married members moved around the country, but he also provides an interesting anecdote regarding the hut allowance.⁴³

Recently I dealt with the case of one of our men who is getting very close to retirement, a leading carpenter, who unfortunately, is a widower now and quite

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ ‘Design and Equipment of Railway Huts’, 1937-1945, ADQD Series 17422, Box71, Record 1916/1097/1, ANZ.

recently has given up housekeeping and the interpretation placed upon his case now is that he has given up housekeeping he is treated as a single man. This man claims that for all other Governmental purposes, such as filling in forms, etc., he is required to show himself as a widower and we think that in this case the hut allowance should have continued.⁴⁴

This was agreed to and the hut occupant in question was granted the rights of a widower rather than as a single male. The main distinction was that he would continue to be paid the hut allowance which was provided to family men travelling away from headquarters, single men in a similar position lost that allowance after six weeks.⁴⁵ This is very much a special case. The Railways Act was very clear about what the rules regarding allowances were and this is the only request in the letters of the Railway Hut files to have been accepted. However, it does show that while the management's rules were firm, they were not absolute. The welfare of their members, especially long serving ones was taken into consideration. Railway hut management was clearly motivated by desires for usefulness as well as consideration given to the welfare of the men who would inhabit them. These intents manifested themselves in a myriad of ways in the form of the railway hut which would line the tracks in the 1920s and 1930s. While profitability and the enduring success of the NZGRD were always the primary motivating factor for the Railways Housing Programme, other more personal motivations accompanied them.

The garden suburb ideas and concerns about the future domestic patterns of New Zealanders permeated the Architectural Branch's approach to railway housing in New Zealand. But these concepts had much less of an impact on the design and management of

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ 'Regulations Under the Government Railways Act, 1908', *Gazettes*, No.46, 15th June 1922; No.76, 26th October, 1922, W.A.G. Skinner, Government Printer, Wellington, 1922, p.72.

railway huts and their occupants. The concern with single men and their housing was approached with care and attention but the motivations and outcomes were drastically different to the ones that influenced the houses provided for men with families. Garden suburb plans did not include the railway huts. While they were part of the same housing scheme, their purpose and the amount of attention paid to them were significantly disparate from the Class A and Class B houses provided for railway families. The railway huts provided to unmarried men and men travelling away from their homes present a point of difference from the rest of the housing scheme. Male employees with families were provided with significantly more than their single colleagues but the men living in huts were managed and controlled as much if not more. The management of the physical space of railway huts and the way single men interacted within it were a constant concern for the NZGRD.

Four Walls and a Roof

In 1923 there was a standard hut provided to male employees, but there were two formal arrangements regarding their lease. Huts were provided “in lieu of house” or as a stopgap when workers were away from “headquarters”.⁴⁶ The huts provided to men without families were the same as the ones given to those who were travelling temporarily for work along the railways but the equipment provided and financial requirements were very different. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s discussions were had about what the huts should contain and by 1929 the equipment provided had changed to reflect attitudes about what was deemed necessary for a reasonable quality of life. A memorandum to the Minister of Railways on the 17th December 1929 includes a description of the standard railway hut, costing “in the vicinity of £70: plus £10: for equipment”.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ ‘Design and Equipment of Railway Huts’, 1896-1938, ADQD Series 17422, Box 71, Record 1916/1097/1, ANZ.

⁴⁷ ‘Sleeping Huts for Staff’, 1923-1939, ADQD Series 17422, Box 147, Record 1908/2471/1, ANZ.

14'0" long, 7'6" wide and 7'6" high with a curved corrugated iron roof and substantially made, braced, and match lined, to render them weather and draught proof and to prevent them from racking while being loaded or unloaded to or from trucks. Ventilators with sliding panels are provided in each end to cool the huts in hot weather. Two opening windows also assist with the ventilation. They are also provided with one door, two bunks with wire mattresses, two shelved cupboards with table tops, a Dover stove and stove pipe, two shelves, 12 hat and coat pegs, 2 stools, 2 blinds, one meat safe, one kettle, 2 saucepans, one frypan, one broom, one scrubbing brush, 2 buckets, two tin wash basins, one axe and two oil wall lamps, etc.⁴⁸

Single male railway employees who were renting huts as residences did not receive such an exhaustive amount of equipment. They were provided with mattresses, stools, stoves and lamps but were expected to provide their own domestic equipment. Correspondence between the NZGRD and the railway unions contained concerns regarding the need for proper inspections of tenancy properties both when vacated and when re-occupied. An examination of railway tenancy agreements shows that apart from fixtures all railway dwellings were provided unfurnished if they were being rented from the department.⁴⁹ Garnet Hercules Mackley, the General Manager at the close of the 1930s, was driven to distraction by debates regarding what should be supplied to railway huts, delivered a clear definitive answer to what the department would provide its single male tenants.

Dear Sir,-With reference to your letter 172/38 of 18th July requesting that the new type of one man huts that are now being supplied by the Department be provided with equipment in the shape of cooking utensils and bucket, broom

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ 'Design and Equipment of Railway Huts', 1896-1938, ADQD Series 17422, Box 71, Record 1916/1097/1, ANZ.

and scrubbing brushes, I wish to inform you that I have been pleased to look into the matter. I find that huts of the type mentioned are provided with stove, mattress, stool and meat safe but it is expected that occupants will provide their own cooking and cleaning utensils. In this connection I may say that the articles mentioned in the preceding paragraph are the standard equipment in the case of huts rented to employees for residential purposes, additional equipment for cooking and cleaning purposes being supplied only in the case of huts provided in lieu of lodging allowance. If, as stated in your letter, additional equipment has been provided for residential huts it would therefore appear that this has been arranged under a misapprehension.

I have given very careful consideration to the request of your Society in the light of the new representations made but regret that I am unable to see my way to vary the existing arrangement at the present juncture.⁵⁰

The management and equipment files relating to railway huts are exhaustive and detail hundreds of requests for equipment or clarification about said equipment. The equipment of the huts mattered to the single male employees of the NZGRD because in a railway hut the equipment provided could make a significant difference in quality of life. The space of railway hut was one which was carefully considered by management, and with good reason.

Living Space

To the modern eye a railway lodging hut is a very tight space. Architect Chris Cochran has one in his backyard and has lovingly restored it according to architectural plans he has recovered. The ventilation hatches, windows and fittings for transport on rails are all still there, but the iron stove is long gone. The first thing that arrests attention upon entering a

⁵⁰ 'Design and Equipment of Railway Huts', 1937-1945, ADQD Series 17422, Box71, Record 1916/1097/1.

dwelling hut is how little space there is for actual movement. Once the two cots at either end, the stove and the dwellers' stools had been accounted for moving inside a hut would have been a matter which required constant attention. The roof is also low enough that a man who was taller than average would have had difficulty standing upright. The windows provide beams of natural light, but it is not quite enough and the hut feels dark even in sharp winter midday sunshine. One of the ventilation hatches mentioned in dispatches about the equipment of railway huts is visible at the top of **fig.4** the hut is a still a very close environment when it comes to the freshness of the air.



Fig.4



Fig.5

The overwhelming feeling inside a railway hut is one of cosy tightness. While it is not austere or cold, the light, air and height of the hut all create a claustrophobic sense for a modern visitor. It's hard to say whether this would have also been the case for the men of the 1920s and 1930s, but the space was much tighter and smaller than the houses their married colleagues were offered to rent by the NZGRD. It is worth noting though that while it was a very limited space, it was also a manageable and quite comfortable one. While nowhere near as luxurious as a Class B railway house, these huts were clearly designed to be lived in. Inhabiting the physical space now is a difficult thing to historicise. To the contemporary New Zealander these huts seem constricting and difficult to imagine living permanently in. However, they were dry, sheltered, heated and affordable. For single men in the late 1920s and 1930s, and particularly during the economic depression, these huts would have been a secure domestic option.

Requests Made

The reformation of the management structure of the NZGRD and the daily life of a Line Erector on the Auckland section of the New Zealand Railways do not appear to be closely related, but the changes made by the Coates administration had a clear and demonstrable effect on the way that unmarried men working for the railways lived their lives. Under the administration of the newly instated Railways Board a system of committees and subcommittees was established to garner clearer information and to de-centralise the decision making process.⁵¹ A memorandum from April 1926 details the establishment of several committees which generated an unprecedented level of compartmentalisation of management within the NZGRD.⁵² Fifteen subcommittees were proposed by P.S. Roussell, who at the time

⁵¹ 'Control and Management of New Zealand Government Railways', 1922-1929, ADQD Series 17422, Box 182, Record 1909/2645/1, ANZ.

⁵² Ibid.

was the Secretary of the Railway Board.⁵³ These committees were a direct result of the reforms proposed by Fay, Raven and Coates. They match the suggestions made by the Fay and Raven report for simplifying the day to day decision making process. While the committee system appeared to be a more complex system, it was intended to work as a way of de-cluttering the desks of the Railway Board members and make it easier for employees to know who to go to with problems and ideas.⁵⁴ One of the committees which grew out this process was the Suggestions and Inventions Committee which was a mechanism for interaction between management and employees that grew out of the reforms of the 1920s.⁵⁵

One of the elements of the NZGRD's approach in *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* was the public documenting of the "Suggestions and Inventions Committee".⁵⁶ The page listed which suggestions had been taken on board by the management of the NZGRD and solicited employees to write in with their own suggestions and inventions to improve the running and service of New Zealand Rail. Members of the Railway Service who submitted a successful idea were thanked and sometimes paid a small amount for their input.⁵⁷ On the sixteenth of September 1929 the Suggestions and Inventions Committee turned down a suggestion from "K. Wilson, Line Erector, Newmarket" but noted the "suggester should be thanked for his interest in the matter".⁵⁸ This particular suggestion had been that every single lodging hut owned by the railways should be equipped with a fire extinguisher. This piece of advice was not considered essential by the Committee, chaired by E. Casey, but there were many considerations about the equipping and management of railway huts that received close

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Railways Statement, Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives (*AJHR*), 1927, Session I-II, D-02, pp. ii-v.

⁵⁵ Design and Equipment of Railway Huts', 1896-1938, ADQD Series 17422, Box 71, Record 1916/1097/1, ANZ.

⁵⁶ The Suggestions and Inventions page was near the end of the magazine in almost every issue. It usually was accompanied by an index of promotions and relocations. Taken together the two pages provide a snapshot of the contact between the department and its employees.

⁵⁷ 'Suggestions and Inventions', *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.1, iss.1, May 1926.

⁵⁸ Design and Equipment of Railway Huts', 1896-1938, ADQD Series 17422, Box 71, Record 1916/1097/1, ANZ.

attention. In 1932 a letter was sent to Chief Engineer Casey by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants which contained a recommendation that all huts should be provisioned with meat safes both for “sanitary reasons and to alleviate a hardship”.⁵⁹ This request was considered by several members of railway management before being quickly and simply agreed to. The request and the brief but careful way it was considered and accepted provide a way of understanding how the single men huts were treated and managed and also what was considered important in that management. “Sanitary reasons” really speaks for itself. One of the driving principles of the 1920s housing scheme was that dwellings were to be provided which would be safe, healthy and promote longevity and physical health amongst the department’s employees. But the other half of the phrase implies a desire to make sure that these dwellings were not only serviceable, but also habitable and to a certain extent pleasant to live in. The New Zealand Railways Tradesmen’s Association also made efforts on behalf of their members living in huts to request that a wood splitting axe be provided for members living in huts so that they would be able to chop wood easily to provide heat for their dwellings as well as having enough fuel to cook their meals and boil water for cleaning and washing clothes. This request was also agreed to readily, the department acknowledging that this fell under the obligations of the department in providing dwellings for their members.⁶⁰

There was a second half to the NZRTA request which was also granted and it provides more context about the huts that were occupied by two employees of the NZGRD. As well as the axe the delegate requested that wall lamps be provided so that both inhabitants of the hut could read in comfort.⁶¹ This request was also acquiesced to and over the next few years lamps were added to most railway huts.⁶² This request reveals two things. The first is

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

that occupiers of railway huts were literate and interested in reading for pleasure. The second is that the NZGRD considered the ability to read at night as part of reasonable expectations for a lodging. The New Zealand Railways was also embarking on a series of programmes for education of employees, recommended by Coates, Fay and Raven, and emphasis was placed on employees pursuing knowledge in their own time.⁶³ The pattern of requests regarding huts from railway unions being granted or denied portrays what the NZGRD was most concerned about in terms of the housing and day to day management of its single male employees. Sanitation, education and ability to live comfortably yet simply were all emphasised and requests pertaining to those issues were accepted. However, the ones which were denied reveal what was not considered so vital.

Fire Sale

The New Zealand railways were not a particularly safe place to work in the inter war period. Accidents were common and often fatal.⁶⁴ Single men appeared prominently in newspaper reports about railway fatalities, and their marital status was always acknowledged. While there were many causes of injury and death the most common cause of injury to single New Zealand railwaymen was hut fires. In 1928 the Evening Post reported:

A tragedy occurred at Pukerua Bay during the night when a railwayman's hut caught on fire. The sole occupant of the hut Archibald, James Amundsen, single, aged 26 years, a railway tablet porter, received injuries from which he died this morning.⁶⁵

⁶³ Report of the Railways Commission, *AJHR*, 1925, Session I, D-02a, p.65.

⁶⁴ Geoff Conly. Graham Stewart, *Tragedy on the Track: Tangiwai and Other New Zealand Railway Accidents*, Grantham House Publishing, Wellington, 1986, pp.87-104.

⁶⁵ 'Fire in Hut', *Evening Post*, vol. CVI, iss. 63, 16th March 1928, p.11.

In 1936 the New Zealand Herald had a similar story to communicate to its readers. It reported that “fire this evening enveloped a railway hut in the Oamaru yards” and the man who lived in it “ran outside with his clothes burning”.⁶⁶ Put in the context of the reports of fatal and near fatal hut fires which appear throughout the 1920s and 1930s the rejection of the 1929 suggestion that fire extinguishers be provided for railway huts is thrown into new light. It raises the question if health and safety, sanitation and reasonable housing were so important, why wasn’t personal safety? The NZGRD and the Architectural Branch had set goals for housing. Creating more “satisfied” staff that would stay in the railway service was a main concern, as was the suitability of housing to the purpose it was required for. Railway huts were designed to be extremely mobile and to provide basic domestic comforts for the employees who travelled with them around the New Zealand permanent way. But the line was drawn at the domestic decisions and habits of the members in terms of direct instruction. Soft power was used to influence the way men lived at home but the NZGRD was reluctant to strongly regulate their personal actions through regulations.

There were similar distinctions made regarding how involved the NZGRD could be in the domestic affairs of its tenants. The Railways worked hard in the 1920s to secure commercial freight business and prevent it from moving to road competition. Special rates were combined with an aggressive advertising campaign which emphasised that the railways were the superior option and that using them benefitted the nation as well as the individual business. In 1930 a store represented by a Mr. Butler made a request of the NZGRD that since they were a firm which patronised the railways the department should encourage or

⁶⁶ ‘Clothes On Fire’, *New Zealand Herald*, vol. LXXIII, iss.22488, 4th August 1936, p.8.

insist their employees shop with them.⁶⁷ Railways Business Agent Mr. Pawson wrote to his Commercial Manager with his findings on the case and how he had handled it.

I explained to Mr. Butler that the question of where Railway men did their shopping was entirely their own private business and that the management could not in any way interfere with the domestic arrangements of their employees.⁶⁸

Pawson's statement is interesting in that, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, although manuals and handbooks provided very explicit advice about domestic affairs, this advice was not direct instruction. But in the mind of the NZGRD's Business Agent direct instruction about how railway employees should conduct their day to day living was inappropriate. Pawson refuses to interfere in domestic decisions through regulation or instruction.

Single male tenants of the NZGRD were expected to look after themselves once living in the hut. The distinction drawn by what the department agreed to supply and what they denied was based around personal responsibility. While the NZGRD accepted responsibility for basic comforts and equipment provided for hut dwellers, they refused to take the responsibility for the actions of the men who lived in their huts. In Chapter Five the efforts made by the department through the use of soft power to influence the way hut occupiers acted are investigated, but the case of the burning huts and requests denied reflects how reluctant the department was to use hard power to manage the personal actions of their single male employees.

⁶⁷ 'Attitude of Railwaymen to Firms Using Railway Transport', 1927-1938, ADQD Series 17422, Box 46, Record 1915/4135/9, ANZ.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Their Hut Your Home

The New Zealand Government Railways Department Housing Programme was an initiative based on anxiety about the future and current needs. The management and politicians responsible for the department were concerned that the housing stock in New Zealand was directly hampering the department's potential to generate a profit and remain as a significant part of the infrastructure of New Zealand. The housing scheme constructed by McVilly and Troup was designed to alleviate the pressures of a housing crisis while also encouraging railway employees to remain in the service of the department. However, as well as providing housing that was fit for purpose the scheme was also influenced by ideas about what appropriate housing was and what it should be in the 20th century. Concerns about public health and mental health were addressed in the planning and execution of the scheme. But while these factors all influenced the scheme, it was profitability and the endurance of the railway service which informed every decision made in relation to the providing of dwellings for the employees of the department. In the management of the NZGRD throughout the period of mass re-organisation, ideas about standardisation, worth to the department and the consideration of employees as assets all featured. The idea of the housing scheme predated the Coates reforms, but the way it unfolded and the way the occupiers of single huts were treated and communicated with was managed by a department undergoing great change in a desire to adopt a more modern system of management.

The huts provided for the single men employed by the NZGRD were products of the scheme but came with their own set of expectations and concerns that made their construction and management distinct from that of the five and six bedroom houses provided to men with families who worked for the NZGRD. Their management and equipment regulations were suffused with a desire to provide for these employees while not becoming involved in their personal actions through direct interference. The way that huts were constructed and the

physical space designed to be occupied by single men reveal assumptions about what was considered necessary for single men compared to their married colleagues. But that compact and measured social space also indicates a genuine concern about how to house the roughly four thousand single employees of the NZGRD. These men were a distinct group and the ways they were discussed and dealt with by the NZGRD show this clearly. While the department was wary of becoming involved with their single male employees' personal actions, the way they managed their domestic space was a major concern for the management of the NZGRD. There is no greater reflection that there was a desire to influence the personal and domestic lives of their employees than the writing and publication of the manual *Your Hut Your Home*.

Chapter Five: Words to Live By: Your Hut Your Home

The NZGRD used what is now called soft power to influence and moderate the behaviour of their unmarried male employees in order to promote an image of the New Zealand railwayman that was palatable to employers and to the public. While the magazine and the management of the amenities provided to these employees composed part of that strategy, the most obvious strategy was the publication of *Your Hut Your Home* (YHYH) by the Staff Training Section of the NZGRD's Staff Division. This was a manual which contained advice on how to live in a railway hut and more general advice about how railway employees should conduct themselves at home and at work.

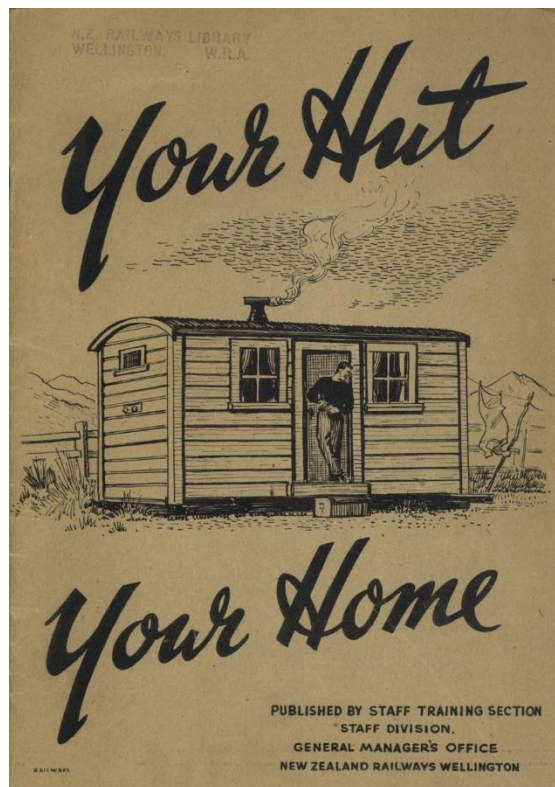


Fig.6

The timing of the publication of this document is difficult to ascertain. There is no date attributed for its publication and as much as you might search the publication records a

date does not reveal itself. However an educated guess can be made. It was published after 1923 because it refers to aspects of hut design which were not standardised until that point.¹ It is also most likely not published after 1940 because the hut pictured on the front cover has a rounded roof rather than the angled roofs that were used on huts constructed after 1940. The tone of the manual, the theories it alludes to and the list of equipment it contains indicate that it was probably published in the last years of the 1920s or the early years of the 1930s. It is frustrating to not be able to date such a unique document, but what it contains is worth examining nevertheless. The pamphlet was framed as a guide for “the member who adopts hut life” and provided thorough and specific advice for men living alone in railway huts. This advice ranged from diet to laundry etiquette and provides fascinating insight into the way that railway workers away from major centres lived. This booklet can also be used as a guide to how the NZGRD viewed its employees who were unmarried or who were moved away from their families for their work.

The welfare of the single male employees was a real concern for the NZGRD but their definition stretched much further than physical wellbeing. The NZGRD attempted to involve itself in the working and non-working lives of its employees, from cultural products to equipment which was allowed in the dwellings provided. While cultural products like *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* were important in terms of communicating an ethos and system of thinking to employees, the use of manuals and instruction books was a vital part of the NZGRD’s approach to managing the mental state of their employees. YHYH is a manual of suggestion rather than of instruction. While the imperative voice is used intermittently throughout the publication the material is always couched as advice. This aspect of YHYH is the major point of difference between it and other manuals given to railways staff in a similar

¹ ‘Design and Equipment of Railway Huts’, 1896-1938, ADQD Series 17422, Box 71, Record 1916/1097/1, Archives New Zealand (ANZ).

period. Before delving into the text and illustrations of YHYH it is worth placing it in the context of the other manuals distributed to staff working for the Maintenance and Refreshment branches of the NZGRD.

Manual Labour

In the 1920s and 1930s many “manuals/handbooks” were issued by the NZGRD and they ranged from advice about shunting methods to strict instructions regarding the preparation of a properly brewed pot of tea in railway refreshment rooms.² A manual which would have been given to many of the men living in railway huts was “Code of Special Instructions for Workmen in the Maintenance Branch”.³ This was an exhaustive indexed document which provided instruction rather than advice. Where YHYH was couched as advice and was an expression of the use of soft power to influence hut dwellers, this manual was a list of rules and regulations. The Code of Special Instructions for Workmen in the Maintenance Branch contained several regulations about the use of departmental dwellings and railway huts specifically. Instruction 324. makes clear the expectations that the NZGRD had of its employees in the maintenance branch when living in railway housing.

Members occupying departmental houses will be held responsible for taking proper care of the houses and fittings belonging thereto, and when vacating the premises must leave them in good order (ordinary wear and tear accepted), and clean and fit for incoming members to reside in. If the houses are not clean and ready for occupation, outgoing members will have to bear the expense of cleaning them.⁴

² ‘Refreshment Branch Instruction Book’, Manuals and Handbooks, 1938, ABIN, Box 77, (ANZ).

³ ‘Code of Special Instructions for Workmen in the Maintenance Branch’, Manuals and Handbooks, 1928, ADQD 17559, Box 3/18, ANZ, p.74.

⁴ Ibid, p.74.

This regulation made clear that employees living in railway housing were required to maintain railway dwellings to a high standard. While this is to be expected it is interesting that this is emphasised specifically in the instructions for maintenance staff. This instruction is followed by two more regarding the members of the railway service living in lodging huts. The first regards the placement of huts and informs the reader that “No lodging hut or portable dwelling may be erected within 100 ft. of any permanent station building”.⁵ This is a useful moment of clarification on the part of the NZGRD because it reveals that employees may have had some choice where the huts were placed, but it also indicates that huts were not to be placed in the main complex of stations. As mentioned in the previous chapter huts were often placed in the least desirable parts of a station area, near the tracks but not by the station. The maintenance branch instructions also informed the hut dweller about how their living situation would be regulated financially by the department when it instructed that “when two members of the staff occupy a railway hut the rent will be charged pro rata to each member”.⁶ This manual was published in 1928 and presents a counterpoint to YHYH in that it is an informative publication, but also one which contains direct instruction regarding housing and habitation. The maintenance branch instructions provide an account of what the NZGRD expected of its employees. YHYH’s intent was to make the hut dwellers expect certain things of themselves.

Your Hut Your Home

YHYH begins and ends with summaries regarding what elements were essential for hut living. The opening of the manual addresses why men may have found themselves living in a lodging hut. It referred to hut life as something that someone “adopts” and informed the man who had done so “either voluntarily or as the result of his inability to obtain board or

⁵ Ibid, P.74.

⁶ Ibid, P.74.

lodgings” that the way he lived would have a direct impact on his current and future health. It then went on to outline the most important considerations for men living in them. The many concerns boil down to three main areas of focus: cleanliness, the storage and preparation of food and modes of rest. Future health is referred to as the most important justification for paying attention to the way hut dwellers lived, and general cleanliness and a positive attitude towards it are presented as the foundation stones for building towards that goal. Health is inextricably linked with hard work. YHYH instructs its reader that “discipline” is “conducive towards healthful living” and warns that the surest way to “fall into an unhealthful mode of life” is through “careless habits”.⁷ This connection between disciplined domestic behaviour and the welfare of the individual is a theme which permeates the whole manual. The message that the Staff Training Section was trying to impart is one which links the mental and physical states. The tidy hut equals a tidy mind. YHYH was a manifestation of the attempt being made by the department to encourage their employees to adopt best practice in every element of their lives. While the regulations of the Railways Act and the strict rules and guidelines applied to work habits and actions of men at work were explicit, this line of reasoning in YHYH is an attempt to encourage tidiness and strictness in clarity of action in the home. Discipline and care taken in domestic life were presented to hut dwellers as ways to protect their own interests. But these habits and practices were also beneficial for the employer. By encouraging healthy modes of life the employer risked losing fewer employees to short or long term illness, but the NZGRD also gained a way to justify their involvement in their employees’ and tenants’ lives. Discipline and good personal hygiene were important for an employer attempting to sell a service as well as an infrastructure. The “For Better Service” tagline of *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* appealed to employees to work better together and to think right while at work. This form of soft power exhorted employees to

⁷ ‘Your Hut Your Home’, Manuals and Handbooks, Unknown Date, ABIN Box 76, ANZ, p.1.

practise these habits in their home lives. The suggestions in YHYH constituted a programme of instruction built around what the department's management wanted. While the Staff Training Section could write as much as they liked the benefits that the hut dweller would glean from following the advice held in YHYH, this was a manual written to benefit the NZGRD as much as it was to benefit the individual.

The instructions contained in YHYH are continually linked back to central ideas that are presented as being the foundations of a "decent life".⁸ One of these concepts is summarised early in the document where the author informs hut dwellers that "the management of a house is both an art and a science".⁹ Throughout the manual these two terms were alluded to with the effect of emphasising that the correct way to live in a hut was based in objective ways to best run physical management and in the adoption of the correct attitude to domestic matters. This approach creates a tone of carefully considered advice in the manual. The reader was reassured that the advice contained was of use in the physical management of the hut, and its surrounds and the ways to see yourself in relation to your surroundings. Discipline, health and living a "civilised" domestic life are all themes that permeate the pages of this manual, but cleanliness and an approach of clean living is presented as being the foundation of all the benefits of these concepts.¹⁰

"Cleanliness"

In a section early in the manual titled "Environment" the author concludes that the advice given will "transform your hut from a mere shelter to a home IF YOU KEEP EVERYTHING CLEAN AND TIDY."¹¹ While the imperative voice is used throughout the text, this is the only capitalisation in YHYH. On the page it makes a real effect. The text

⁸ Ibid, P.26.

⁹ Ibid, P.2.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.24.

¹¹ Ibid, P.3.

stands out bold on the typewritten page and even if a hut dweller were simply skimming the document that had been passed to him, this sentiment would have been very difficult to miss. Cleanliness is referred to in YHYH as the “first essential” of hut life.¹² The message given early in the document is that without cleanliness any other advice would have little effect.

The advice given on cleanliness also focuses on the areas around the hut, which depending on the position of the hut in question would quite often have been highly difficult if not impossible to incorporate.

Dirt breeds flies and these are the most objectionable feature of hut life. Keep the surrounding of your hut clean and tidy. Bury all refuse that will not burn. Dig a trench somewhere handy and cover each deposit immediately.¹³

The discussion of how sewerage and personal waste should be disposed of raises some interesting points as to where the manual provides advice, and what it omits. Huts were usually very close to the tracks, didn't necessarily have a lot of space around them and were sometimes left loaded on wagons while being inhabited.¹⁴ The hints given provided general advice about what should be done for best practice in terms of cleanliness, but did not account for the details of the day to day life of a railwayman living in a hut.

Once inside the hut the advice about cleanliness becomes more specific and the language of surrounding morality was used to drive home the connection between good domestic habits and good character. Flies are once again the antagonist of the hut dweller, but their presence is framed as a failing of correct habits in hut management. The description of the methods to deal with flies is concluded with the admonishment “flies are the most deadly

¹² Ibid, p.4.

¹³ Ibid, p.4.

¹⁴ 'Design and Equipment of Railway Huts', 1896-1938, ADQD Series 17422, Box 71, Record 1916/1097/1, ANZ.

contaminators of food. Don't encourage them by leaving food around".¹⁵ The flies are referred to as the problem initially, but the main culprit in the eyes of the Staff Training Division was the habits of the men living in the huts.

This concern about slackness in domestic undertakings is brought up again in a section later in the manual addressing cleaning up after cooking a meal.

This is the bugbear of cooking and the longer it is left the worse it becomes.

Get straight into it as soon as you have had your meal. While you are cooking remember there is always the washing up to be done afterwards.¹⁶

The advice in this section is detailed and precise. In terms of cleaning pots the manual recommends that if "if you place a little hot water in each pot" then the "steam will keep the food adhering to the pot soft till washing".¹⁷ The manual also recommends the purchasing of more advanced cleaning tools like "sand soap and a pot-mit", and explains what those tools are as well as their uses.¹⁸ The cleaning advice in itself was very factual. While it is interesting to note the amount of equipment the manual assumes hut dwellers will purchase and use regularly, the language is mainly that of practical explanation. Passages like this in YHYH serve as a reminder that while there was an intent to influence the mental state and approach of the hut dweller, there was also a clear intent to provide domestic advice which was useful to the reader. This latter intent comes through much more in this section when the discussion turns to what is considered necessary to create conditions conducive to health and cleanliness after cleaning up.

¹⁵ 'Your Hut Your Home', p.4.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.20.

¹⁷ Ibid,p.20.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.20.

After the specific advice comes the more general; “ample hot water is the main essential in washing up. It is impossible without it”.¹⁹ While this is good advice, it didn’t take into account what a difficult proposition this was for a railway hut dweller in the late 1920s and through the 1930s. Many huts didn’t have good access to water sources, in some cases they had to travel far and across the tracks.²⁰ Hot water is referred to earlier in the manual as the “basis of cleanliness” when “in good supply” but for hut members that supply was not always guaranteed.²¹ Even if water was close to hand it then had to be heated on the one fuel fired stove in the middle of the hut. Not only would this have taken a significant amount of time, it also implied having enough spare pots to heat water in to then wash the pots that had been used in the cooking process. Perhaps this is why hot water and the links between it and cleanliness is so emphasised. If the heating of water for cleaning was a process which seemed off putting, by emphasising its importance the Staff Training Division could have been attempting to encourage more hut dwellers to do it by writing about it as being essential. This is a tool used throughout the manual. The habits which are seen as antidotes to “unhealthful living” are referred to as being objectively the correct thing to do.

Interestingly the emphasis on cleaning the vessels of cooking does not extend to the utensils.

Knives should not be put in hot water. It will discolour the handles and perhaps loosen the blades. Wiping the blades with a dish cloth is about sufficient. Keep your dishcloth clean. It should always be washed and wrung out after each washing-up.²²

¹⁹ Ibid, P.20.

²⁰ ‘NZ Railway: Huts – Otira’, 1921-1971, AAEB, Box 45, Record 21/1553/2, ANZ.

²¹ Your Hut Your Home, p.20.

²² Ibid, p.20.

For a document which contains a lot of advice which would still be accepted today this is an interesting departure. YHYH is a product of its time and reflects the accepted knowledge of the time. It seems strange to the modern eye to emphasise cleanliness in cooking and then just wipe blades down regardless of what they had on them. There was much stronger language used regarding the use of tea towels, once again located in an anxiety about lax habits.

Your tea towel is important. You should have several and each should be used for only a short time. A dirty tea towel is an abomination. You will help to keep the tea-towel clean if you wash your dishes thoroughly. See, that all grease is removed before drying. Don't fall into the habit of pushing the grease off on the towel.²³

The biblical use of the word abomination hammers home how important cleanliness was for the Staff Training Section. The useful aspect of this section is the pre-prohibiting of a habit. The wiping of grease with the tea towel was something the Staff Training Division was clearly concerned about. The warnings not to do specific things reflected an anxiety that poor domestic habits were already being practised by unmarried members, or that they would have a propensity towards those habits when in charge of their own domestic affairs.

Different sections of the manual focus on cleanliness in specific areas of the railway hut, but the dweller's attitude towards cleanliness is continually referred to as the most important aspect of hut keeping. While most of the advice is about specific ways to keep the hut and its surroundings clean, there is a moment where a moral dimension is injected into this discussion. In the section "Environment" the reader was informed that "everyone is influenced by his home surroundings. If you allow your hut to become untidy, the rest of your

²³ Ibid, p.20.

actions will probably be the same. Therefore, take some pride in your hut”.²⁴ YHYH was exhorting the men living in railway huts to have pride in their actions, and that the basis of that was in cleanliness and correct approach to the way that they managed their domestic space, however limited it was. ‘The hut maketh the man’ was one of the messages of YHYH, but the attitude of the hut dweller to tidiness and pride in his actions made the hut. The two were intertwined in the message contained in this manual.

“A Final Thought on Cooking”

The majority of the material in YHYH is dedicated to advice and instruction on diet and the preparation of food. From how much salt to put with your coffee and how long to boil your meat to the importance of a balanced vegetable intake, YHYH was heavily concerned with what and how their single male employees ate. Food and cooking are discussed as complementary forces which if approached correctly lead to a balanced diet, and therefore a balanced body.

A meal is a good deal more than merely filling the stomach. Some meals can be definitely harmful. The body is composed of many substances all in fairly rigid proportions. These are expended by bodily exertion. It is the function of food to replace these substances and not all of them are found in any one particular form of food. A fairly wide variety of foodstuffs is required to ensure that all the necessary substances are assimilated. A surplus on any on any one particular substance can be as harmful as the absence of it. Some of the bodybuilding substances in food can be destroyed by cooking. Cooking becomes therefore, as important as food itself.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid, p.3.

²⁵ Ibid, p.3.

This passage contained advice about selection of foodstuffs and skill in preparing them. The idea of balance is one that is emphasised throughout YHYH. Whether it was in regards to cleanliness, consumption or rest, moderation and balance were held up as habits which were conducive to a healthy and proper lifestyle. The section on diet and food preparation elaborated these ideas. The idea of balance was explained as one which required planning to be effective and forward preparation was presented as being one of the cornerstones of good domestic patterns. Under “The Preparation of Meals” the manual used the imperative voice to tell hut dwellers that:

All meals should be planned. You must work at least a day ahead to ensure that you have the necessary materials on hand. A meal may be spoiled through being short of an ingredient that cannot be obtained immediately.²⁶

Planning in domestic management was presented as an essential aspect of hut life and this thread is extended in the discussion of the storage of foodstuffs and in the explanations of the different methods of cooking recommended.

In the discussion of food and food storage the physical realities of a railway hut appear yet again not to be recognised by the Staff Training Section. The hut dweller is advised that “the storage of perishable foodstuffs is one of the most important factors in hut management” and that “cool, airy conditions are essential”.²⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapter there was precious little room in a railway lodging hut, especially with the stove and meat safe installed. Furthermore, although there were ventilation hatches, and more added in the 1930s, creating cool airy conditions would have been extremely difficult. YHYH advises that “meats keep best when hung” but does acknowledge how difficult that would be by adding that “but as you may not have room for this, place the meat on a clean plate in such a

²⁶ Ibid, p.6.

²⁷ Ibid, p.5.

way that it receives the maximum amount of air all round it'.²⁸ This advice is difficult to reconcile with the other instructions given in the manual. Flies are to be discouraged, but meat should also be exposed to the cool air as much as possible. In a hut next to the railway track, heated by a wooden stove with very little room, YHYH sets a near impossible challenge. This is one of the sections which suggests that perhaps the manual was written by a group of writers doing different sections. While the conceit of the manual is that a previous hut dweller has written it, segments such as the one about perishable foodstuffs hint that YHYH may have been designed by committee.

The concept of balance is also referred to as being important when preparing and cooking meat. The hut dweller is advised that "Meat is the principal item of cooking and in hut life, unfortunately meat and bread form many meals. Meat and bread is a badly balanced meal".²⁹ The concept of a balanced body and a balanced mind being tied up together is reinforced in this passage and is married with a further iteration of the concern about hut dwellers lapsing into lazy behaviours. The manual acknowledges that "no doubt, there will be many occasions when time does not permit of anything else" but urged in that "if a sufficient supply of vegetables and fruit are not included in the diet, the hut dweller is heading surely for trouble later in life, if not immediately".³⁰ This advice about health is linked again in the following advice about cooking methods to concerns about hut life allowing for dwellers to lapse into lazy habits through complacency and ignorance.

The continual use of the frying pan in hut life arises apparently from the lack of knowledge of how to prepare meats in other ways. Perhaps the frying pan is, on the whole, the quickest method and time is often a factor to be

²⁸ Ibid, p.5.

²⁹ Ibid, p.6.

³⁰ Ibid, p.6.

considered; but there are many other ways and some of these will be outlined briefly.³¹

The recipes and advice regarding the cooking of food attempt to reinforce this message about balance, but a lot of attention is also given to practicality regarding space, and more importantly, time. There is also an effort in the recipe section to ward off habits which would make hut life drab and mundane and replace them with practices that promote healthy living.

“The National Beverage”

The advice in YHYH swings from being very descriptive and practical to discourse regarding nationhood and moral fibre within two sentences. In a section titled “Beverages” the author writes

Notwithstanding that tea is the national beverage of the New Zealander, there is an inordinate amount of bad tea made. It is just as easy to make it properly. This is how it should be made; but first remember that you cannot make a good cup of tea from a low quality article. Therefore pay the few extra pence and buy tea of good quality.³²

The emphasis on tea as a national beverage reveals an opinion in the document that New Zealand had its own culture in the eyes of the NZGRD. This segment mirrors the language in *The New Zealand Railways Magazine* in the intent to create an image of the correct New Zealand railwayman. The links drawn in this small part of the manual connect good domestic habits and being a good New Zealander.

There is also some domestic advice pertaining to how money should be spent. Paying extra for an “article” of better quality is advised, both for a better result for the individual and

³¹ Ibid, p.7.

³² Ibid, p.21.

because in doing so the hut dweller would avoid making the tea improperly. This short segment about the brewing of hot beverages manages to contain domestic advice which also has a moral instructive element. Not to invest what is considered the proper amount by the NZGRD in domestic affairs the hut dweller was letting himself down, as well as the department and the image of his nation. The extra investment is not just in the tea, it is in the image of the hut occupier as a self-reliant, proper domestic operator. The emphasis on quality of product was repeated in the following section on the correct brewing of coffee. YHYH acknowledges the ease of the simpler product but emphasises that the extra effort is worth it. “Coffee is a little more troublesome to make unless coffee essence is used, but coffee essence falls far short of the ground coffee in flavour”.³³ The advice for brewing coffee which follows is similar to that regarding tea, but the suffix of this careful advice changes tack. Coffee is referred to as “a good drink” but its main virtue in the eyes of YHYH is that it can present “a welcome change from tea”. While coffee, and to a lesser extent cocoa, are addressed, it’s the national beverage which receives the most attention.

In the magazine Britain was referred to as a touchstone, but it had New Zealand in its title and emphasised the relationships between the men who work on the New Zealand railways and the landscape and culture they worked in. In YHYH there was no mention of Britain or of empire or royalty. Instead the focus is on the relationship between the domestic context and the national one. Tea was the beverage of the New Zealander. While coffee and cocoa were seen as viable alternatives, they were presented in relation to tea, rather than separate from it. One of the ways this relationship was set up was through the use of the reported advice of experts. The segue between tea and the other beverages reads “dieticians say that tea should not be taken with a meal especially if meat forms a portion of the meal. It

³³ Ibid, p.22.

should be taken afterwards. The amount of tea consumed should be in moderation”.³⁴ The advice regarding something as simple as choosing and preparing a hot beverage is infused in this manual by ideas about nationhood, moderation as a form of correct behaviour and the importance of carrying out one’s domestic affairs properly. While the national beverage concept was not hammered home, it does reveal that the people writing this document at least considered New Zealand to have its own culture and identity, however rudimentary. Combined with the language concerning moderation and proper domestic behaviour this section is an excellent example of how the management of the NZGRD were employing soft power to try and influence the daily behaviour and mental state of their single male employees. Direct orders and instructions couldn’t create a sense of belonging in a national context, but the way hut dwellers viewed what they put in their mugs and how they prepared it meant they could be influenced by carefully written advice. The domestic world of the hut was once again being used as an allegory for how hut dwellers carried themselves at all times: proper, moderate New Zealand railwaymen.

“Is It All Worthwhile?”

The final pages of the manual turn their attention to the money and time required to make hut life approachable. This discussion too was framed by vocabulary reflective of how the authors wanted hut dwellers to view themselves and their relationship with their abodes. The manual reads “if you want to live a decent life in a hut, you will have to spend quite a considerable sum in setting yourself up”.³⁵ The author wrote in his first main body paragraph of the manual that “wrong living, particularly in the case of a youth or young man, may not present any immediate ill-effects; but, unfortunately, the foundations of serious illness in future years can be laid”. Health was used as a byword throughout this document for the state

³⁴ Ibid, p.21.

³⁵ Ibid, p.26.

of living that the department would prefer its employees to adopt. In this opening salvo of instruction the idea that “wrongful living” can impact on future health is emphasised especially for younger members of the railway service. This overarching message linked the advice provided in YHYH with leading a proper existence as a railwayman living alone or with another single man. At the conclusion of the manual the Staff Training Section make this connection explicitly for their readers.

Now is it all worth while? Well you may have no other option; nevertheless, hut life can be a good life. It all depends on how much time you are prepared to devote to it. Let it be said here that the writer of this booklet has had long experience of hut-life and found it the best life of all for a single man. Let it be said also that there is nothing in this booklet that the writer has not done for himself in a railway hut. It is all quite practicable.³⁶

The conceit of the manual having been written by a hut dweller compounds this document’s effectiveness. Whether or not it was true outside the space of YHYH does not matter in terms of the intent of this final passage in the booklet. YHYH was represented in its conclusion as well meaning advice from one hut dweller to another, rather than as a document which holds instruction from the management of the NZGRD relating to how it wanted its single employees to deport themselves. The final sentences of the manual create an image of fraternity. They create a sense at the end of the document that this is not an instructional set of rules, but rather a fraternal expression of what could make hut life more appealing.

Their Huts, Your Homes

The advice contained in YHYH represents a strategy on the behalf of the NZGRD to reform and remodel the behaviour of their single male employees outside the workplace as

³⁶ Ibid, p.27.

well as within it. While booklets of direct instruction were provided regarding how to behave and what to do at work, the approach to the domestic sphere was much more subtle. The advice contained in YHYH was practical in terms of what it recommended, but those recommendations were couched in the language regarding moral character, national pride and above all personal pride.

The reforms that took place in the 1920s were motivated by ideas about scientific management and while this document is not a direct expression of Taylorism it does represent a tool in the armoury of a management trying to mould their employees into assets that were fit for purpose. YHYH was a manual which was designed to make the behaviour of hut dwellers more conducive to good health and good presentation. Both of these aspects fitted into the wider approach of the NZGRD in the 1920s and 1930s to make the New Zealand Railways both more effective and more appealing. Coates, Fay and Raven and the managers of the NZGRD have their fingerprints all over this manual. YHYH represents a desire on the behalf of the NZGRD to influence their employees' mental states. It is also a document which provides step by step advice to what we would now consider to be basic domestic processes. It assumes almost no level of domestic knowledge on the part of its single male employees and seeks to address the deficiency. The pamphlet reveals the anxiety felt by the NZGRD's management regarding the ability of their unmarried employees to run their own domestic affairs. The Staff Training Section's expression of concern and desire to provide a solution for that issue adds another dimension to the intent of the manual.

YHYH was a manual issued to address concerns about male employees living without families as well as moulding the behaviour of these men to suit the tastes and attitudes of management at the time. It represents the use of a subtler form of media to provide messages the department wanted to inculcate in its single male workforce. The "civilised life" that the

manual referred to was one defined by the management of the NZGRD.³⁷ It is difficult to ascertain the effect this document had, but its intent was one which came from the reforms of the 1920s. Education and improvement of single male employees' attitudes and the service they provided to the public were all influencers of the magazine and the housing program, but in YHYH they are the most clear.

³⁷ Ibid, p.24.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Unmarried men, men without families and the men who lived in far flung parts of New Zealand are often missing from the stories we tell about this country in the 20th century. This project grew out of a desire to examine these men and try and understand how their lived experience was different from men with spouses and families. It is a difficult group to address and this became a project focused on managerial intent because of the sources available.

The single men who worked for the NZGRD were employed differently from their married colleagues. They were remunerated and treated by allowance schemes separately and the housing they were provided with by their employers was unlike that provided for married railwaymen. The way they were employed was informed by ideas about scientific management and an anxiety about the future of the New Zealand railways. This thesis has investigated the methods which were used by the NZGRD to influence their single male employees in their work habits, and their behaviour outside of work.

Analysis of the Railways Statements of the 1920s and the files of the office of the General Manager of the Railways reveals what motivated the changes in approaching employees that the NZGRD underwent from 1923 to 1928. This story of intent is useful as it explains why the reforms happened and also what concepts from New Zealand and overseas influenced the nature of them. The NZGRD reforms were intended to create a workforce which was better presented, better educated and capable of providing a better service to their employer, and by association, the nation. While instruction and regulation were used to control behaviour at work, the NZGRD relied on methods of soft power to influence the behaviour of their unmarried male employees both in the workplace and outside it.

The New Zealand Railways Magazine was designed to influence the entire workforce of the NZGRD, single males included. It disseminated messages about nationhood, proper behaviour and what was desired in the ideal railway worker. Through its discussion of scientific management principles, its editorial policy on literary content and the advice of Stewart in his editorials, the magazine created an image for its railway worker readers of what they should be.

The railway huts were a specific element of the management of single employees and the examination of how those spaces were designed and managed reveals clearly how differently unmarried workers were treated in comparison to their married colleagues. The huts can also tell us a lot about what life was like for these men. Tight spaces designed to be liveable for the employee yet practicable for the department's financial and logistical needs. The huts needed to be fit for purpose, but so too did the men who lived in them. 'Your Hut Your Home' is a particularly telling source. Not only does it provide insight into how people lived in railway huts, it more importantly reveals how the NZGRD wanted its single male employees to comport themselves at home. Managerial soft power through the magazine and *Your Hut Your Home*, was designed more to ensure an efficient and healthy workforce inculcated with good time management outside work as well as inside. There was a contradictory nature to this advice. Single men had little time to shop for fresh food regularly, to cook, to collect wood for fires, to bury their own waste. Also, in its assumption of almost zero domestic knowledge on the part of unmarried male employees, the manual provides more information about perceptions and realities relating to gender roles in the home in the 1920s and 1930s.

This project has traced the story of the translation of managerial intent into actions by beginning with the wide context of the NZGRD management and then progressively narrowing to focus on the single men and how they were engaged with. The magazine was

provided to all railway employees but only single men and men travelling from their homes lived in railway huts. These men were the only ones also to receive the remarkable domestic advice manual *Your Hut Your Home*.

All of these different sources provide a narrative of an employer utilising soft power to influence the lives of their employees inside and outside of work. The NZGRD used manuals, magazines and the management of physical space to constantly message its unmarried employees about how they should try and be. This ideal worker was seen as necessary by the NZGRD for their survival, but in the actions of the management the figure of that ideal worker was presented as being essential for the worker themselves. The NZGRD was attempting to use subtle methods to improve the service provided to them by their employees, but sold the advice it provided as being designed to aid the worker to become the best they could be.

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Appendix A

Image Credits

Fig.1: *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Vol.8, Iss.5, September 1933

Fig.2: *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Vol.10, Iss.1, April 1935

Fig.3: *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, Vol.10, Iss. 10, January 1936

Fig.4: Restored railway hut interior, Courtesy of Chris Cochran, Photograph credit Anna Green

Fig.5 Restored railway hut, Courtesy of Chris Cochran, Photograph credit Anna Green

Fig.6: 'Your Hut Your Home', Manuals and Handbooks, Unknown Date, ABIN, Box 76, Archives New Zealand (ANZ)