

BOOK REVIEWS

Crime in New Zealand

(By Greg Newbold, Dunmore Press, 2000)

Crime in New Zealand, which builds on the author's earlier publication, *Crime and Deviance* (1992), is a robust analysis of many aspects of criminal offending in New Zealand. The book is trifocal, beginning with an examination of the various deviance theories that try to explain why it is that certain behaviours are regarded as anti-social and outside the norms expected by society at large, and thus deserving of punishment. In chapters two to seven, which form the main body of the book, the author identifies and critically analyses six key areas of *deviant* behaviour: property crime, women's crime, sexual deviance, violence, drugs and organised crime. The focus is again shifted in the last two chapters. Chapter eight considers the potential for injustice within the criminal justice system, and chapter nine goes on to suggest that the unequal distribution of money and power within society have a significant effect on the type of justice meted out to individuals charged (or *not* charged) with criminal offences.

In a descriptive context, the book presents the reader not only with statistical data on a wide range of offences, but also the gender, socio-economic and racial profiles of the perpetrators of particular types of offences. For those readers not specifically searching for statistics the inclusion of vast numbers of facts and figures can seem tedious at times. That said, the work's style is accessible and far from clinical. Newbold has drawn together material from many different sources and has included enough changes in pace and subject to avoid getting bogged down in information overload. Individual chapters are liberally flavoured with references to the cases of New Zealand's more notorious offenders, at times lending an almost intimate feel to the discussion. In addition, Newbold includes a variety of other morsels that, either by design or happy coincidence, must surely whet the appetites of most readers. For example, who among you knows the genesis of the term "faggot" to describe a homosexual? (For the curious, turn to page 95). Or, who would have thought that so many New Zealanders receive prescriptions from medical practitioners for drugs designed to act on the central nervous system? (For the alarming figures see page 186).

Analytically, Newbold attempts to put the collected data into perspective in terms of New Zealand's economic, social and cultural climate, noting the ways in which society has altered in recent decades. He offers his own views about the likely winners and losers in the criminal justice system, and often gives opinions that swim against the current tide of orthodoxy. Nor does Newbold hesitate to point out what he perceives to be the inconsistent treatment of some offenders and the over-representation of Maori and Pacific Islanders in crime statistics.

The examples he examines in the chapters concerned with particular substantive offences (chapters two to seven) are too numerous to mention in

full. Among the more controversial are the relative lack of attention paid to white collar crime (chapter two) and the "gender-bias" in favour of female offenders (chapter three). In respect of the former, the author suggests that part of the problem is due to the close relationship between business and politics, and the consequent unwillingness of governments to intervene to strengthen the stand against corporate offending (page 32). As for the latter, Newbold argues that the state's paternalistic (and patronising) attitude towards women has resulted in their being regarded differently and often more leniently when they offend than their male counterparts.

Chapter eight looks at the machinations of the criminal justice system, and at first appears oddly disjointed when set against the preceding chapters until the author ties together the potential for miscarriages of justice within the system with reference to particular case studies. The discussion of the Peter Ellis case (page 235) is particularly interesting in this respect, as is the more general examination of police misconduct (page 244).

Whether or not one ultimately agrees or disagrees with Newbold's stance, *Crime in New Zealand* is refreshing in its lack of deference for the current trend of masking social problems in politically palatable euphemisms. The book will be of interest to a wide range of readers, and should be a valuable resource not only for those looking for specific data on offending, but also for anyone interested in the social history and development of New Zealand.

Margaret Briggs
Faculty of Law
University of Otago