

## THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF NEW ZEALAND

### a comment on policy, projects and personnel

J.D. Pascoe, Chief Archivist, has set out this statement of his policy about access. He found departments, such as Foreign Affairs, both sympathetic and reasonable when scholars of undoubted integrity require special consideration. Sometimes he has been able to gain access for scholars to material of more recent vintage than 30 years but the circumstances have to be carefully justified. He says that while regulations and a 30-year rule would be easier to operate than his *ad hoc* efforts, he prefers to have some flexibility in negotiations even though it adds to his burden of responsibility.

‘The Archives Act 1957 provides for regulations to be made for the use of public archives deposited in the National Archives. None has yet been promulgated. In practice, public archives which have ceased to be of current usefulness to their department, are transferred to the custody of National Archives for permanent preservation if they show evidence of the functions of that department; evidence of public or private personal property, or civic rights or which contain information which will be of historical interest to scholars.

The Archives Act requires that archives should be deposited after 25 years but deposit may be deferred – or, if not deferred, may be made subject to conditions as to access determined by the appropriate minister. In fact, there is no statutory 30, 40 or 50 years’ rule, when records must be made accessible to the public. The 30 years’ rule is however a good talking point when arguing with another Government department. The Foreign Affairs papers are the most carefully safeguarded.

Under the circumstances, the Chief Archivist operates under the general direction of the Department of Internal Affairs and treats each request for access, on its merits. He is mindful of his dual role: statutory obligation to give the public access; administrative obligation to keep faith with the Government and its departments by a responsible attitude to records of a recent period. The Chief Archivist negotiates special permission for certain scholars to have access to recent files or to have restrictions eased by his direct contact.

The whole question of access is tricky. As Chief Archivist I realise that National Archives has to sustain the confidence of the Government, of which it is a part, and of scholars who are the most important customers, as it were.’

### Accessions

The most noteworthy accessions of recent times have been:

- (1) The papers of the late Rt. Hon. Sir Walter Nash, (Prime Minister or Leader of the Opposition, from 1950 until 1963). These papers date even before when Nash first arrived in New Zealand. This is a most important source, covering as it does over 40 years of the career of a very active figure on the New Zealand scene.
- (2) A small collection of papers of the Hon. T.P. Shand, Minister in National Governments between 1957 and 1969.
- (3) Of the archives of the government departments those from the Treasury Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and files of several Commissions of Enquiry, have been the most significant.

### Arrangement and description

The major arrangement and description project has been that for the archives of World War I, which have now been arranged and a series list made.

### Staff Notes

Miss Rosemary Collier has resigned. She will continue overseas travel and further study in archives in London. Miss Pauline Jenkins is on a year's leave of absence for travel in Asia and Europe. Mr Paul Zilch (M.A. Michigan State University) has joined the staff. Mr Pascoe has had his 16th book published in Wellington: EXPLORATION NEW ZEALAND (A.H. & A.W. Reed).