

THE MAKING OF A STATE EDUCATION SYSTEM. The passing of the New Zealand Education Act, 1877, by John Mackey. *Geoffrey Chapman*. 298 pp. 50s.

During the 19th century the struggle against Victorian individualism and religious division in England was so inconclusive that T. L. Jarman, writing of the attempts to provide a national system of elementary schools, says: 'Every effort of the voluntary organizations was exhausted, every individual demand in parliament defeated, before the legislators were prepared to act—and those acts were so hesitant and so widely spread that it was not until 1902 that anything like a complete system was produced.' And yet, by 1877 New Zealand had produced an Education Act which in principle laid the foundation for a system which was state-controlled, free, secular and compulsory. How this could come about in a community so completely British in culture and origin is the question to which Dr Mackey addresses himself in this scholarly book. In doing so he traces the provincial antecedents and steers the reader through the incredible tangle of argument surrounding the legislation, making good his claim that New Zealand's early educational history presents a précis of the developments that were taking place on a larger scale in other parts of the world.

He concludes that there were two major factors contributing to the structure of the 1877 Act. The first arose from the fact that in 1876 the provinces were abolished and it became necessary for the national government to produce an educational system which would be acceptable, in the context of the old provincial population units, scattered round the coastline and isolated from one another. The physical dispersion of the people proved a stronger incentive than their English upbringing, and national unity was bolstered by giving the state full control of education. Religious claims, particularly those of the Roman Catholics for aid to denominational schools, formed the second and more basic influencing factor, simply because matters of conscience

are not amenable to compromise. If there was to be any hope of accommodating Catholics in the state system, even the teaching of 'non-sectarian' Christianity had to be rejected since they, probably rightly, saw this as Protestantism under another name. Acceptance of the secular principle appeared to be forced upon parliament by the demands of national unity, and although unsatisfactory, the majority of members did not consider it unfair to either Protestant or Catholic, because the education offered did not obviously challenge the religious conscience.

Even so, the Catholics opted out of the state system, and in 1959 had 269 primary schools and a considerable number of secondary schools. Dr Mackey is in no doubt that they were right and gives grounds for seeing the secular clause of the Act as contributing to the growth of agnosticism among New Zealanders. Just how big a contributory factor it is difficult to say, but my own prejudice is that the prevailing 'zeitgeist' is what secularizes the schools rather than the other way round. Religious instruction is the norm in state schools in this country and yet Englishmen are not notably less agnostic than other people, and even the strength of Catholicism, which is frequently attributed to the schools, can also be explained in terms of the peculiarities of our sub-culture.

The text of the book was originally presented as a dissertation to the university of Notre Dame, Indiana, and in places bears the stamp of a man writing to please examiners, but on religious issues in particular he is at his best and his enthusiasm permits him to relax his style. Professor Beales rightly records in his preface, 'the author's charity and objectivity in his handling of controversies so deep and (still today) so enduring'. It is likely that this work will become a standard text for students of comparative education. DAVID HAY

OBJECT RELATIONS, by David Holbrook. *Methuen*. 21s.

The power of David Holbrook's poetry lies in its honesty and its faithfulness to experience. He is not a word-magician and very far indeed from being a romantic, so that one does not get, and learns not to expect, phrases or images of breath-taking beauty or memorability: instead, in almost every poem there is a slow build-up of sense data and indications of

mood to leave a total impression. An impression of what? A man, a husband and wife, a family, a farm or at least a country establishment, the day-to-dayness of married life, of country life. It could be as flat as the fens, but it is here that his saving honesty enters and through it that he reveals his most interesting side, for he is a puritan with no qualms about sexuality. The