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A Study of Rational Opportunism

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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JOCELYN G. JESSON

1995

A Study of Rational Opportunism

July 1 1992 - Defiance at the Expiry of the Contract. (NZH. photo)
Abstract

This thesis using oral historiographic techniques examines the changing role and function of a teachers' union during changes in the nature of a national State which can also be related to changing forms of capitalism. The teachers' union is New Zealand Post-Primary Teachers Association (the secondary school teachers' union) and the period of particular focus is between 1983 and the beginning of 1993. This is the period of a crisis in the New Zealand State during which the character of the national State was moved from what has been described as a 'wage earners' Welfare State towards a more residual form providing a 'modest safety net'. The financial and the labour market were deregulated to become more free of direct State involvement. The administration of education was changed and the individual schools' elected Boards of Trustees were made responsible for the provision of schooling. The role of PPTA in the State is moved structurally in this time. As a professional association before the changes, PPTA had both opportunity for input into the mandate of education, as well as the possibility of creating implementation pressure through political action. As a bargaining agent, the input role of PPTA to decisions in education was limited to addressing members' concerns at the school level.

The restructuring of education and of the labour market, PPTA was both an object to be acted on and a participant obstructing the changes. This thesis presents what is a PPTA view of those changes. PPTA formed a central part of the education structures which were to be transformed by the economic liberal project. The survival of PPTA demonstrates the extent to which the project was not completed and the resistance of PPTA was one of the reasons why the project in education could not be completed.

The thesis is in three parts. Part one is a regulationist-derived periodisation of the historical development of the New Zealand wage earners Welfare State and education. This is followed by a consideration of the economic-liberal challenge to this State. Part two considers the development of PPTA's professional project and the possibilities presented through different arenas. Part three focuses on the changing nature of the State labour market policy and PPTA's activity in that. The changing strategies and tactics of PPTA's 'professional project', the thesis argues, occur under changing political conditions and are an example of Offe's concept of rational opportunism.
Acknowledgements

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A special mark of gratitude is made to the memory of Rae Munro who died suddenly on January 5th 1995. Rae's ideals have contributed to PPTA projects and to secondary teacher education over a number of years. Rae's critical support and friendship have been a part of this thesis. There are still many unfinished conversations.

Kia ora koutou nga rangatira ma.
Kia kaha, kia kaha, kia kaha.
Kia whātai tonu matou. Tena koutou, tena koutou tena koutou katoa.
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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS THESIS

ASTE Association of Staff in Tertiary Education
ATTI Association of Teachers in Technical Institutes
AUT Association of University Teachers, now AUS
BRT Business Roundtable, also NZBRT
CECUA Combined Early Childhood Workers
CEC Collective employment contract
CR The Curriculum Review
CSSO Combined State Service Organisations.
CSU Combined State Unions
CTU Combined Trade Unions, also NZCTU
Dept Ed Department of Education
EDC Education Development Conference
ECA Employment Contracts Act
ERO Education Review Office
FOL Federation of Labour
ICA Industrial Arbitration and Conciliation (Act)
IEC Individual employment contract
LRA Labour Relations Act
MoE Ministry of Education
NEQA National Education Qualification Authority, now NZQA
NZCTU New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, also CTU
NZEF New Zealand Employers' Federation
NZEI New Zealand Education Institute
NZQA New Zealand Qualifications Authority, ex. NEQA
PPTA Post Primary Teachers Association, also NZPPTA
SCG Schools Consultative Group
SGM Salaries Grant, Management
SSA State Sector Act
SSC State Services Commission
SSCC State Services Co ordination Committee
SSCE State Servants Conditions of Employment (Act).
TRB Teachers Registration Board, also NZTRB