



1985  
2016

(Phillips, J., 2009c)

The New Zealanders

## Ordinary blokes and extraordinary sheilas

### A changing people

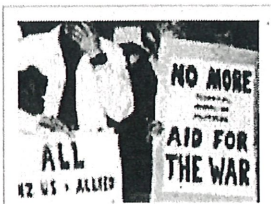
From the mid-1960s social change brought the stereotypes of men and women into question. As higher education expanded and cities grew, the backblocks image became an anachronism. New Zealanders were exposed to wider influences through education, television and travel. In the early 1970s the satirist John Clarke created the popular television persona of Fred Dagg, a laconic farmer in black singlet and gumboots. People laughed at the caricature, in part because it was of an earlier era.



Fred Dagg

### Decline of British power

The sense of belonging to the British Empire faded as British power diminished and the empire disappeared. When Britain entered the European Economic Community in 1973, New Zealanders confronted the reality that the empire would no longer pay the bills. In 1975 assisted immigration from Britain was stopped, and by then New Zealanders had one of their own as governor general rather than the traditional lesser British aristocrat. Although Prime Minister Robert Muldoon sent off a New Zealand frigate to support the mother country in the Falklands War in 1982, many greeted the move with derision.



Demonstration against the Vietnam War

### Peacekeepers, not war heroes

When, at the request of the United States, the New Zealand government sent troops to fight in the Vietnam War, widespread protest erupted on the streets. Some proposed that New Zealand assert itself as a small independent country with a role as peacemaker in the age of nuclear warfare. This vision grew during the 1970s and early 1980s with protests against visiting American nuclear ships, and climaxed when New Zealand became nuclear free in 1985. In that year Prime Minister David Lange won the argument for an anti-nuclear world at the Oxford Union Debate, presenting a very different stance from the traditional, triumphant hero of the battlefield. Since 1985 New Zealanders have served as peacekeepers, travelling to trouble spots in the Pacific, Europe, Africa and the Middle East.



Protestors and rugby fans in conflict, 1981

### Protesters, not rugby players

As late as 1975 a book entitled *The New Zealanders* featured an image of the All Black rugby forward Colin Meads carrying a sheep under each arm. But this stereotype was being challenged. The catalyst was the attempt to isolate South Africa for its apartheid policies. In 1973 Prime Minister Norman Kirk cancelled a proposed tour by South



Silvia Cartwright is sworn in as governor general



Billboard, Wellington airport, 2004

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Africa's Springbok rugby team, but a subsequent leader, Robert Muldoon, appealing to the 'ordinary bloke', determined that rugby would proceed and refused to stop the 1981 tour. The result was 56 days of conflict. At one level the argument was about playing sport with apartheid South Africa. At another level it was about what it meant to be a New Zealander: defined by feats on the rugby field, or an example to the world, a fighter for racial justice?

## Women's changing role

A strong feminist movement emerged in the early 1970s. Women questioned the definition of the New Zealander in exclusively male terms, and promoted a fuller and more public identity for themselves. In politics there was a concerted effort to increase women's representation – until 1970 there had only ever been 11 women members of Parliament. By 2004 there were 34 women in the House. The prime minister, the chief justice, the governor general and the head of the largest company were also women.

In sport at this time it was women who were carrying the nation's pride. The rowing duo of Caroline and Georgina Evers-Swindell and cyclist Sarah Ulmer won gold at the 2004 Olympics, and the Silver Ferns netball team beat Australia – a feat which their rugby-playing brothers could no longer regularly achieve.

New Zealanders could no longer think of themselves as living in 'a man's country'.

### **Burn your aprons**

The feminist magazine *Broadsheet*, which ran from 1972 to the 1990s, challenged gender stereotypes, including the domestically resourceful New Zealand woman. The cover of a 1981 issue featured the headings 'Kiss cake baking goodbye', 'No colour schemes for the little house', and 'No fireside handicraft supplement'.

There was a significant move to uncover women's contribution to New Zealand life. This was especially strong in 1993, the centenary of women's suffrage in the country. If Edmund Hillary was on New Zealand's \$5 bill, the suffrage leader Kate Sheppard was on the \$10 bill.

## City culture

Urban culture flourished. By the end of the 20th century a small minority of New Zealanders worked on the land, while almost half were living in Auckland, Wellington or Christchurch. The city was a place of educated specialised workers, many of whom had travelled widely. They spent their weekends going to museums or films as much as watching rugby. As increasing numbers of women entered paid employment, people were more likely to eat in restaurants. Wellington was known as the 'coffee capital'. New Zealand gained recognition for its wines, not its beers, and horse racing became less popular. Film maker Peter Jackson became perhaps the world's best-known New Zealander, and a series of awards were established to promote the achievement of writers, artists and musicians.

From the 1990s the boom in tourism helped shape a sense of self. The fact that millions of outsiders appreciated certain aspects of the national character – friendliness, tolerance, inventiveness, creativity – heightened New Zealanders' own awareness of these qualities.

Many New Zealanders still treasured the outdoor life. They tramped and skied. At the end of the 20th century a focus of national pride was the America's Cup yachting competition, which at one level was an expression of Auckland's urban culture – of money and technical expertise. But at another it was a reworking of the old characteristic of being good team men, modest and physically strong.