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H-Diplo has commissioned reviews of the Makers of the Modern World Series (Haus Publishing), which concerns the Peace Conferences of 1919-23 and their aftermath. The 32 volumes are structured as biographies in standard format or as specific national/organizational histories. *http://www.hauspublishing.com/product/229*

H-Diplo Review Essay on:

Carl Bridge. ***William Hughes: Australia (Makers of the Modern World Series).*** London: Haus Publishing, 2011. x + 201pp. Notes, chronology, further reading, index. ISBN 978-1-905791-90-3 (hardcover, $19.95).

James Watson. ***WF Massey: New Zealand (Makers of the Modern World Series).*** London: Haus Publishing, 2010. xiv + 209pp. Notes, chronology, bibliographical note, index. ISBN: 978-1-905791-83-5 (cloth, $19.95).

URL: http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/essays/PDF/Haus-Australia-NewZealand.pdf

Reviewed for H-Diplo by **Philippa Mein Smith**, University of Canterbury

We know much about the principal players at the Paris peace conferences of 1919-23: US President Woodrow Wilson, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau and Britain's Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Each has his own volume in the "Makers of the Modern World" series on the peace conferences and their aftermath.

These twin volumes examine the contributions by two small players: the prime ministers of Australia and New Zealand, William Morris (Billy) Hughes and William Ferguson (Bill) Massey, whose countries' wartime sacrifices for the British Empire secured them seats around the conference table. The Paris Peace Conference in 1919 represented a landmark for both in that it was one of the first occasions when the then British Dominions had separate representatives at an international conference beyond the confines of the Empire. Significantly for their national histories, Hughes and Massey appended their separate signatures at Versailles for their own Dominions.

Though H-Diplo might regard these as twin volumes in the series, and that is how I propose to review them, these titles are not written as such but as separate, potted histories of the "personalities, events and circumstances" relating to the "makers" – the countries and their leaders – implicated in making peace after the Great War. The volumes follow the same broad structure – the life and the land; the Paris peace conference; and the legacy – because that presumably is the template set by the publisher to examine the standpoint of different countries' leaders around the table. As reviewers of other volumes in this series have noted, it would have helped to have a general editor's introduction to each book on the peace conferences that explained the relationship between each volume and the series. I am not the first reviewer to be confused by the book covers, which in this case suggest they contain biographies of Hughes and Massey, when the volumes are hybrids of biography and abridged segments of national narrative, placed in a suitably imperial context.

That said, it is timely to reappraise both Hughes' and Massey's careers. Hughes is better known than Massey because Australia's wartime leader was vituperative and a propagandist, who benefited in Britain from a high media profile crafted by the first generation of the Murdoch press. The mercurial Hughes at least earned biographies, if they now appear dated in this era of transnational scholarship, and Carl Bridge's volume is a useful update of Laurie Fitzhardinge's classic life of the "Little Digger".[1] Bridge argues the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 was Hughes' "finest hour" (p. ix), since the concessions he won made him Australia's most important twentieth-century politician and a foremost imperial figure. While this claim may be overstated, it is worth making in order to invite debate.

Massey, by contrast, awaits a full biography. Though James Watson depicts him as a warm character, New Zealand historians have not found him sufficiently endearing to publish a full account of his life, so this volume fills a gap in the historiography. New Zealand had two representatives at the Paris conference, the other being Sir Joseph Ward, who was one of an extra ten delegates representing the British Empire. As Watson explains, Massey was the delegate who spoke for New Zealand. He argues that Massey has not received his due from historians of the peace conferences and seeks to revise understanding of the New Zealand Prime Minister's contribution, especially where he diverged from Hughes. Notably, Massey supported a compromise over the Japanese demand for a racial equality clause in the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Watson's volume exposes divergences in Australia's and New Zealand's circumstances: Massey arrived late at the 1919 peace conference, delayed by the Spanish influenza epidemic, which struck earlier in New Zealand than in Australia. Reading these volumes

[1] L. F. Fitzhardinge. *William Morris Hughes: A Political Biography*, vol. 2 *The Little Digger, 1914-1952*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1979.

in parallel also exposes divergent personal and geopolitical approaches: while Hughes and Massey were both accustomed to dealing in, and with, a British world, and unaccustomed to American and French diplomacy, Hughes' approach was more pugilistic. Massey owed his separate voice at the table to Hughes and to Robert Borden of Canada.

Who the intended audience for these volumes is puzzled me when perusing the biographical sections. We learn that both Hughes and Massey were migrants – Hughes was a Welshman from London, Massey an Ulster Scot from County Londonderry – with different politics, as leader of the Australian Labor Party and New Zealand's non-labour Reform Party respectively. Bridge portrays Hughes in Keith Hancock's terms as an "independent Australian Briton": a nation-builder in a British imperial context, an advocate of compulsory military training and a citizen army and an independent Australian navy equipped to defend Australia's coast. Deeply suspicious of Japan despite the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Hughes was an outspoken advocate of the White Australia policy, for whom World War I was a life or death struggle. Massey equally favoured a White New Zealand policy, though Watson does not describe it as such, noting instead that the Immigration Restriction Act 1920 reinforced New Zealand's policy of racial exclusion. This was more covert than the White Australia policy, but a direct parallel in practice.

Bridge's national history begins with Australian federation in 1901 and Watson's with New Zealand's late discovery by Europe and late colonisation. Bridge's approach is more successful because the historical context he provides is more specifically related to these volumes' core subject: how these British Dominions responded to the Paris peace treaties.

Reading the two volumes in parallel offers a particular advantage in this respect, by providing an accessible means of understanding the contrasting national stories over conscription in the Great War: New Zealand introduced conscription, like Britain, Canada, Newfoundland and the United States, whereas Australia did not, like South Africa and Ireland. Both Hughes and Massey supported the British model of conscription. But Hughes, unlike Massey, could not introduce conscription by Act of Parliament because the Australian federal system was against him. Australia said "no" to conscription twice, in referenda in 1916 and 1917. The result split the Labor Party because Hughes walked out taking 25 MPs with him. Hughes formed a new coalition party, the Nationalists, who won the federal election in 1917. Consequently, the Australians remained a volunteer force in World War 1 while at home Hughes became a divisive figure. New Zealand, on the other hand, legislated for conscription in 1916, while the conscription issue helped create, as opposed to split, the New Zealand Labour Party.

When we compare Bridge's and Watson's accounts of "dividing the spoils" (to use Bridge's term for the treaty negotiations) we learn that both Hughes and Massey sought mandates over the German colonies to their north: Australia over New Guinea and New Zealand over Western Samoa. Massey shared Hughes' aim to exclude Germans from the Pacific and shared suspicions of Japan, though Hughes was blunter. According to Bridge, Hughes

made his mark debating what would become of the former German colonies in the Pacific, and famously clashed with Wilson over the mandate (annexation) issue. Australia and New Zealand gained the substance of what they wanted, that is, to be rid of the German empire in the Pacific especially where that intruded south of the equator into what the southern Dominions regarded as their neighbourhood.

Bridge shows how Hughes was uncompromising in opposing the racial equality clause that Japan sought to have included in the League of Nations covenant. Both volumes could have made more of the comparative context whereby these white settler states around the Pacific Rim perceived the Japanese proposal as a threat to their restrictive immigration policies; for Massey also opposed the idea, as did Canada and the western United States. On the issue of reparations, Hughes was equally truculent: "'Germany must pay'" (Bridge, p. 88). Massey sought a tougher peace as well, but this view failed to secure British and American support.

What Australia and New Zealand did gain was the tiny former German island of Nauru and, with it, access to a century's supply of phosphate for agricultural fertiliser. In the aftermath of the peace conference, Britain, Australia and New Zealand shared the administration of Nauru's mandate. But Massey clashed with Hughes over Nauru because he wanted the mandate assumed by Britain, not Australia. Massey also wanted the British government to take control of the British graves (including those of New Zealanders) at Gallipoli, which he saw as a sacred site for the British race, especially the Anzacs from Australia and New Zealand. Overall, despite such comparisons and contrasts invited by this joint review, Watson portrays Massey as distrustful of Hughes rather than subservient to Australia's "Little Digger". Both Bridge and Watson demonstrate how Massey and Hughes advanced their separate national interests.

Comparing the volumes themselves, Bridge's is the more successful in style and zest, and in locating Hughes within a broader British world. He interprets "the legacy" of Hughes' participation at the conference table largely in biographical terms, arguing that participation made Hughes a leading figure in the British Empire. For Bridge, the legacy is Hughes's as an elder statesman, rather than the legacy of the peace conferences. This exposes an inherent tension: for the series' sub-title suggests the aftermath of the peace conferences will be discussed. Instead we learn that Hughes remained in Australia's federal parliament for another 30 years, but after 1923 he never again served as Prime Minister. Indeed, he lived long enough to experience the war against Japan that he had predicted. Bridge's conclusion is a pithy summing up of Hughes as both a nationalist and an imperialist: "The British Empire literally made him and in so doing he and it did much to make modern Australia." (p. 131)

Watson, however, is to be commended for his useful short chapter reflecting on the legacy of Versailles from a New Zealand perspective. He outlines and explains the lack of public awareness about the Paris Peace Conference in New Zealand compared to Anzac Day, the anniversary of the landing by Australian and New Zealand forces at Gallipoli in

April 1915; the long-run implications of securing the mandate for Western Samoa; and the boost to New Zealand farming from using Nauru's phosphate as fertiliser. He proceeds to argue that the perception of a "faulty peace" (p. 154) helps to explain the New Zealand first Labour government's conciliatory attitude towards Nazi Germany in the late 1930s. He also outlines the change of attitude that saw New Zealand become a foundation member of the United Nations in 1945.

In sum, both authors have tried valiantly to write to a series template that contains inherent problems for the reader because of unresolved tensions between the different genres of biography and concise national histories, and the history of international relations, which remain unaddressed by a general editor. As a result each volume transitions awkwardly between chapters within the specified parts. Nonetheless, individually and comparatively, these works are useful additions to our understanding of the role that the broader empire of settlement played in imposing peace terms at the end of World War I. Each contains useful notes and a chronology. But a rationale is not given for the "culture" timeline in each volume. Are the works included relevant to the biographical subjects' lives? I suspect the answer is no. More signposting is required, as for the series as a whole.

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