

This article is a tribute to the late Auckland historian Dick Scott, whose 1954 *The Story of Parihaka* became one of the most influential historical works published in this country. Scott's other best-known works are left-wing exposés of historical events, such as *Would a Good Man Die? Niue Island, New Zealand and the Late Mr Larsen* (1993). Others are local histories, including *Seven Lives on Salt River* (1987), an account of the watery district of Pāhi on the Kaipara Harbour. The remainder are industry or company histories, and particularly histories of New Zealand's wine industry.

The Weapon beneath the Woodpile— A Tribute to Dick Scott

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The Auckland historian Dick Scott, who died this year at the age of 97, was self-taught, oblivious to the judgements of academia, and unashamedly partisan in viewpoint.¹ Yet several of his books remain in print decades after their first publication; one of them, *Ask That Mountain: The Story of Parihaka*, has been rated among the most influential works published in this country. The following survey of Scott's writing career is as predisposed as the most polemic of his own works. I knew Dick as a friend, inspiration, and mentor for more than 40 years, and make no claims to objectivity in his regard. Rather, by recalling our past conversations as well as Dick's 2004 autobiography and his other works, I have aimed to survey the subject matter, and where possible the social impact, of his books, to draw attention to lesser-known as well as iconic titles, and to briefly sketch the course of a professional writer's long life on the Left.

I first met Dick in the mid-1970s, when I was a very young and ingenuous student and had just encountered a battered copy of his first book, concisely titled *151 Days* but with the compendious subtitle *An Official History of the Great Waterfront Lockout and Supporting Strikes, February 15–July*

1 All titles referenced are by Dick Scott, unless otherwise noted. An earlier version of this article appeared in the *Labour History Project Bulletin* no. 78 (2020).

15, 1951. It was a punchy, polemical history that amazed me—the kind of book I assumed could only originate in countries with a much larger and more established left-wing culture. It was also eye-wideningly informative. Who knew, in the complacently liberal society I grew up in, that just 20 years earlier unionists had been banned from even presenting their case against their employer, or that their supporters had been legally prohibited from giving food to the children of those taking part in the dispute? Dick's book set out the details in vehement but indisputably factual terms. He also noted the courageous, ingenious, and sometimes very funny ways these exceptionally repressive prohibitions were circumvented.

Industrial actions of various kinds were a constant feature of life in 1970s New Zealand, and were routinely misrepresented and widely deplored. I quickly decided that more people my age should read this book to understand the consequences of earlier anti-union prejudice, and also the inspiring struggle to resist it. However, copies of *151 Days* were by then rare and fragile, and I hoped the book could be reprinted. I put together a naïve proposal along with a better-organised Christchurch friend named John Christie and, to our astonishment, the author agreed to it without hesitation.

I travelled from Wellington to Auckland to meet him (probably by hitch-hiking) and arrived at a spacious two-storied Mt Eden villa wreathed in subtropical garden. Dick was a spry, wry figure with a zealot's chin and a bohemian's heart. On all the walls and shelves of his house were artworks in every genre, from tacky folk art to modernist paintings so notable that even I could recognize them. I remember a life-size, framed photographic portrait of the Taranaki prophet Tohu, although at that time I had never heard of him or his companion Te Whiti. Over a glass of wine from an unlabelled bottle, we agreed on a plan for a facsimile of the book's first edition and Dick gave me one of his precious remaining copies, since I didn't own one. John and I would organise to reprint the book and recover the cost from sales. There was no written contract and Dick didn't mention royalties, nor did it occur to me at that time to offer them. The enthusiasm that his modestly produced, 25-year-old publication had aroused in

a new generation seemed to be all the reward that the author required. He suggested that we republish his book under the invented name of the Labour Reprint Society, raising the optimistic prospect that we might do the same with other historic New Zealand titles in future. That plan never eventuated, sadly, but Christie and I, despite a chronic lack of publishing experience, sold enough copies to recover all our costs and, in the process, I established a friendship with Dick that lasted to his death.

Over several convivial evenings (Dick gave up drinking eventually, but when I first met him, he was always quick with the corkscrew), I learned that he had come to his nonaligned-leftist views by a winding and unpredictable route. He was raised in a conservative family on a Palmerston North dairy farm, and veered left under the influence of a high-school history teacher with a PhD from the UK and an admiration for the Chartists, the early 19th-century movement to reform Britain's rickety political system through a charter setting out six primary demands. Many Chartist leaders were deported as dangerous agitators, and a few ended their days in far-off New Zealand, as revered pillars of the local labour movement.² Typically for this instinctive outsider, as a high-school student Dick also struck up a friendship with the school handyman, who was 'widely read in radical literature and willing to offer alternative education whenever I skipped a class'.³ At Massey University he dutifully studied agriculture while energetically editing the student newspaper. A stint in the Home Guard during the Second World War meant a posting to Wellington where he could visit the Communist Party's Unity Centre in Willis St, and meet comrades who became lifelong friends.⁴ The newly formed Labour daily, the *Southern Cross*, gave him a start in incendiary journalism and led to editorship of the *Public Service Journal* during the torrid era of arch-foes Jack Lewin and Fintan Patrick Walsh. 'If there was toil and trouble,' he later wrote, 'I was often there'.⁵

2 See, for example, William Edward Vincent: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1v2/vincent-william-edward>

3 *A Radical Writer's Life* (Auckland: Reed, 2004), 42.

4 See, for example: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/6b3/bailey-rona>

5 *A Radical Writer's Life*, 137.

Dick took on an additional, and almost unpaid, role as editor of the *Transport Worker*, the large-format, impressively produced newspaper of the Waterside Workers' Union. Once the do-or-die 1951 waterfront dispute erupted, and Holland's government introduced union-bashing regulations of historically unprecedented severity, the paper's paying advertisers withdrew their support; Dick nevertheless continued putting out issues regularly, running their ads for free to give an appearance of normality to the pages. Any article attacking the non-union workers, or 'scabs', who had taken over the waterfront, would have shut down the paper immediately but, by reprinting a Health Department pamphlet on the dangers of rodents, the same message could be delivered within the narrow parameters of the regulations. At the end of the dispute, with the union temporarily inactive and his editing job over, Dick went back to his office and rescued a complete run of back copies of the *Transport Worker* dating back to 1916. He gave them to a friend named Bert Roth, an anti-Nazi refugee newly arrived from Austria, who later became a highly regarded historian of this country's left-wing and labour movements, and who credits this gift with sparking his interest in that field of study.⁶

With time on his hands, and still reeling from the savagery of the state's attack on the once-mighty watersiders' union, Dick sat down and compiled his impressions and those of other union members and their many covert supporters into a history of the dispute. *151 Days* appeared the following year, published by the 'New Zealand Waterside Workers' Union (deregistered)'. It is a remarkable effort for a first book, filled with early examples of the author's flair for vivid images and telling quotes, which he was to refine in his later books. Some of its photographs and other illustrations were produced illegally, in defiance of the Holland-era regulations, and can be found nowhere else. As with almost all of Dick's later publications, public demand for *151 Days* exceeded supply and a reprint was required two years later. Money was tight and the new edition was significantly smaller than the first, but it included press comments on the original edition, not only from New Zealand ('may be read as a "cops

6 See: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5r28/roth-herbert-otto>

and workers” thriller, difficult to lay down as the eyes become gummed and bleary’), but also from union publications in Britain and Australia (‘No ship’s library can afford to be without a copy’).⁷

This ‘new cheap edition’ of *151 Days* was produced under the imprint of a new publisher, Southern Cross Books, Dick’s own company, which remained active for the next half-century. The back cover carried an advertisement for a forthcoming title, *The Parihaka Story*, describing it as ‘A dramatic and moving story of a noble and exciting episode in our nation’s history’.⁸ When that notice appeared in 1954, the name ‘Parihaka’ was unknown to almost the entire Pākehā population, and it may have been Dick’s work, more than any other single factor, which overcame that calculated historical amnesia. The introduction to *The Parihaka Story*, published by Southern Cross Books (and therefore at Dick’s expense) later in 1954, admits that until that same year he was as ignorant as anyone else about the events the book describes. His eyes were opened by chance, while he was staying with the panoramically cultured Eichelbaum family, whose members included a distinguished New Zealand judge and whose Wellington home therefore had an extensive legal library. He happened to open a copy of the evidence in a famous 1886 libel case, *Bryce v Rusden*, and there were the astounding details—of a great dissident settlement beneath Mt Taranaki, attracting supporters from as far away as the Chathams; of its destruction for resisting the confiscation of tribal lands; of the imprisonments and forced relocations that followed. Before he had finished four pages of this aridly phrased, legalistic account, Dick told me, he knew that Parihaka and its visionary leaders would be the subject of his next book.

Its opening pages describe the journey he made to Parihaka to talk to the handful of Te Whiti’s followers then still resident. ‘I had arrived at the pa at dusk, unknown and unannounced. I walked the grass streets past empty doorways and blank windows, past sagging verandahs and a fallen roof,

7 *151 Days* (Auckland: Southern Cross Books, 1952), blurb comments.

8 *151 Days*, back cover notice.

until I had reached a house which was inhabited'.⁹ Three generations of a family lived there, in a household headed by a woman who was hospitable to this Pākehā stranger, but guarded when he asked about the past. He reassured her about his purpose for doing so:

'I know what we did here,' I said. 'You won't offend me if you put the blame where it belongs. I know we sent troops and police to destroy your homes and steal your land. That is the story I want to write – what we did to an unarmed people and how they fought back, how the women and children still fought back after the men were jailed.' 'Yes,' she said. 'This is where it happened.'¹⁰

The next day, Dick went to a tangi in Oeo, 20 miles south, for a woman who 'had been in Parihaka, a girl of ten, when the troops marched in to destroy the town. Several of the mourners wore the white feathers of Te Whiti's brave republic'.¹¹ He combined first-hand impressions such as these with meticulous archival research, claiming that 'No dialogue, speech or incident in this book has been invented by the author. They have been drawn, in the main, from the capacious written reports of Government agents – the security service of a pre-telephone-tapping era'.¹²

As with every work by this inveterate collector of overlooked cultural curios, *The Parihaka Story* incorporates material not generally available elsewhere, including the lyrics of the song 'Tangi a taku ihu e whakamakuru ana', sung at Parihaka since Te Whiti's time. His text takes aim at earlier Pākehā writers who had, in his view, misinterpreted the actions of the towering figure of Te Whiti, perhaps deliberately:

One of the most persistent myths built around Te Whiti is that he was some sort of Christian pacifist whose tactics sprung from an abhorrence to violence. Pākehā sympathisers have spread this view as evidence of his

9 *The Parihaka Story* (Auckland: Southern Cross Books, 1954), 11–12.

10 *The Parihaka Story*.

11 *The Parihaka Story*, 14.

12 *The Parihaka Story*, preface.

‘harmlessness’, enemies have encouraged it as evidence of his ‘fanaticism’. But his was no sentimental or mystical objection to the use of force in a just cause. His teaching was based on hard-headed, highly developed tactics of resistance in the face of an overwhelmingly strong enemy . . . which bear remarkable resemblance to militant land movements the world over.¹³

Unlike the splendid-looking later titles from Southern Cross Books, *The Parihaka Story* is a small and modestly produced volume with a scattering of black-and-white illustrations, indicating the author-publisher’s limited resources and his low expectations for its sales appeal in the bleak political climate of mid-1950s New Zealand. It must have come as a pleasant shock when a Russian translation appeared a few years later from a Moscow state publishing house.¹⁴ That edition of 15,000 copies is even more cheaply printed in all-caps Cyrillic, with a silhouette cover image of a cannon mounted on a hill above Te Whiti’s settlement, and armed troops preparing to invade it. This was the first New Zealand book to appear in the Russian language. It faithfully reproduced Dick’s original text, apart from the sentence quoted above, referring to surveillance by government agents—evidently an idea that the Soviet Union, in the early years of Khrushchev’s regime, preferred to keep from its citizens.¹⁵ From these small but promising beginnings, Southern Cross Books persisted and expanded until its idiosyncratic, beautifully designed titles became fixtures in school and university libraries, and on the nation’s bookshelves. The company remained a one-man operation, with Dick carrying out all the research and writing, and also the design and production.

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Dick’s books can be grouped into three categories, with some overlap

13 *The Parihaka Story*, unpagged endnotes.

14 *Rasskaz o sobytiakh v Parihake*, trans. S.M. Raskinoi (Moskva: Izd-vo Inostrannoi Lit-ry, 1957).

15 *A Radical Writer’s Life*, 209.

between them and one or two anomalous exceptions.¹⁶ The best known are radical exposés of deplorable historical events. His first two books fall into this category, and they were followed by two studies of New Zealand's sorry record as the colonial administrator of Pacific territories: *Years of the Pooh-Bah: A Cook Islands History* (1991) and *Would a Good Man Die? Niue Island, New Zealand and the Late Mr Larsen* (1993). *Years of the Pooh-Bah* is dedicated to Dick's Cook Island grand-daughters, whom he calls 'heirs to a new South Pacific'. It was published in association with the Cooks Islands Trading Corporation, a company founded in the 19th century to market the islands' produce locally and internationally, which was then celebrating 100 years in business. This reputable corporate backing did not restrain Dick from excoriating numerous failures of governance by successive administrators, while also acknowledging their occasional qualities. Captain J. Eman Smith, resident commissioner 1909–1912, is described as 'one of New Zealand's more inoffensive colonial rulers', while Frederick Platts (1916–1921) was told by local leaders: 'you have held the lamp of light before our eyes, and have made our schools places where our children can learn the ways of the white man, have made it possible for us to trade on an equal footing with our white neighbours'.¹⁷

The tourist trade to the Cooks was in its early stages when this book appeared, and New Zealanders tended to blithely misunderstand the country they had governed throughout the 20th century. Its people were widely regarded as child-like and indolent, living in a tropical paradise where the essentials of life could be gathered without effort. Dick's book supplied corrective impressions such as one from the Cook Islands' medical officer, Peter Buck (Te Ranghīroa), who was also carrying out anthropological fieldwork in Rarotonga.¹⁸ Dr Buck described the arduous work of picking oranges in steep gullies, carrying them to packhorses on the ridge, and then

16 *Inheritors of a Dream* (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1980), a large-format pictorial history of New Zealand, does not fit comfortably within any of the above categories.

17 *Years of the Pooh-Bah: A Cook Islands History* (Rarotonga/Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), 167.

18 See also: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3b54/buck-peter-henry>

down to the shore to load onto whaleboats for export to New Zealand. Each whaleboat was steadied against the side of the reef by its crew, and the pickers had to time a gap between waves to rush their cases out to it:

The carriers are naked save for shorts or a loincloth. They wear bark sandals to protect their feet from the coral. Over the right shoulder they wear a pad of dried banana leaves to protect them from the edges of the boxes. . . . I wonder what rate of pay a labour union would demand to face the heavy work and danger. No Europeans would do it.¹⁹

The Cooks Islands Progressive Association arose in the late 1940s to press for improvements to conditions such as these. It was backed by sympathisers in New Zealand who published a pamphlet history of the islands, *Frontier Forsaken*.²⁰ Dick's book reveals that the unnamed author was the poet and Communist Party member R. A. K. Mason, with help from a former Cook Islands director of agriculture, W. T. Godwin, also a communist.²¹ Dick's old newspaper, the *Southern Cross*, gave the pamphlet a favourable review, earning the editor an angry reprimand from Prime Minister Peter Fraser.²²

In 1993 the even more remote and disregarded Pacific territory of Niue was presented to unwitting New Zealand readers through *Would a Good Man Die? Niue Island, New Zealand and the late Mr Larsen*. Forty years earlier, while he was writing *The Parihaka Story*, Dick had taken part in a campaign to save the lives of three young Niueans sentenced to hang for killing their resident commissioner. In this new book he told their story with undiminished fervor. At the time of the killing, in August 1953, Larsen had ruled Niue for ten years, and he was mourned by the New

19 *Years of the Pooh-Bah*, 191–192.

20 R.A.K. Mason, *Frontier Forsaken: An Outline History of the Cook Islands* (Auckland: 'Challenge', 1947).

21 According to Mason's biographer, Geoffrey Henry, later premier of the independent Cook Islands, appears also to have played a significant role in the writing of *Frontier Forsaken*. 'Asclepius' [John Caselberg], *Poet Triumphant: The Life and Writings of R.A.K. Mason (1905–1971)* (Wellington: Steele Roberts 2004, p. 186.

22 *Years of the Pooh-Bah*, 252–253.

Zealand government as ‘an outstanding officer’. The Department of Island Territories declared that his death had ‘robbed New Zealand of one of its ablest island administrators’.²³ Dick told the story differently. The three young men had escaped from prison with the aim of ‘ridding the island of a brutal tyrant. Theirs was a political assassination – New Zealand’s first’.²⁴ Public outcries stalled their executions three times while these bewildered young men, speaking little English, were held in Mt Eden Prison. One of them served a total of 16 years, twice as long, according to Dick, as his actions warranted.²⁵

Richly and eclectically illustrated, like all Southern Cross books of this period, *Would a Good Man Die?* provides a bitter summary of the entire colonial history of this small island, such as the episode in 1862 when Peruvian slave ships carried 109 Niueans to their death in guano mines and plantations. At Dick’s funeral in early 2020, a dignified and elderly Niuean woman wearing her country’s distinctive pandanus boater hat turned to the coffin and thanked ‘Mr Scott’ for the international attention he had brought to her tiny country, then sang him a song in her language.

The second group of books under Dick’s name are local histories of areas where he was living, or knew well for other reasons. The first of these, published in 1961, was *In Old Mt Albert*, and bore the sonorous and presumably tongue-in-cheek subtitle *Being a History of the District from the Earliest Times, More Particularly the Struggles of the Pioneers to Bring Civilization to the Wilderness, Published on the Occasion of the Borough’s Golden Jubilee*. Although ostensibly a standard and earnest historical record, produced on behalf of the Mt Albert Borough Council, it dealt with the questionable transactions that converted the district from Māori to general land with an insight and sensitivity unusual for that period.

In 1979 Dick produced *Fire on the Clay: The Pakeha Comes to West Auckland*, a vivid and eccentric portrait of a region he loved. It unsparingly

23 Quoted in *Would a Good Man Die? Niue Island, New Zealand and the Late Mr Larsen* (Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton/Southern Cross Books, 1993), 85.

24 *Would a Good Man Die*, frontispiece.

25 *Would a Good Man Die*, 151.

records the devastation inflicted by kauri loggers on the steep seaward hills, but is affectionate, admiring, and informative about their successors, the clay potters and wine growers who developed their backyard operations into major industries. Few other historians would have chosen to illustrate this material with examples of outrageous folk art from his extensive personal collection. Probably none would have included a detailed account of the Titirangi visionary Tom Skeates, who lived alone for 30 years in a cottage where he bred monarch butterflies:

From his bush retreat Tom Skeates began travelling down to Auckland by bus carrying specially made wooden boxes. He visited schools and parks, lifting the box lids to release great clouds of copper-gold wings. To the children who flocked about him he handed out chrysalises and swan plants and explained how to care for them.²⁶

Those singlehanded, unfunded efforts saw this migratory species grow from extremely rare to commonplace in this country.

An even more ambitious labour of love, *Seven Lives on Salt River*, appeared in 1987. A local history in the form of a multiple biography, it traces the lives of seven families who lived in and around Pāhi, ‘that isolated network of waterways in the northeast Kaipara that is Jane Mander territory’.²⁷ Dick himself had become a part-time resident and fierce enthusiast for this region after he bought a decrepit wooden hut on the shore of the sprawling harbour as a holiday and writing retreat. He wrote in the introduction that, ‘It has been necessary to travel thousands of kilometres . . . in search of oral history and it was only the co-operation of old Kaipara hands that made it possible to flesh out the story’.²⁸ His version of Pāhi’s history places titled French aristocrats alongside fishermen, and forgotten pioneers like Henry Scotland alongside national figures such as Gordon Coates, an interwar

26 *Fire on the Clay: The Pakeha Comes to West Auckland* (Auckland: Southern Cross Books, 1979), 160.

27 *Seven Lives on Salt River* (Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton/Southern Cross Books, 1987), 7.

28 *Seven Lives on Salt River*, 7.

prime minister. They are treated fairly but without deference, and details of Coates' early personal life, in particular, differ sharply from the genteel image he later liked to portray as a statesman. Two years after this book appeared, a full-length biography of Coates, by the former Labour minister Michael Bassett, was published.²⁹ This gave no hint that in his Kaipara youth Coates had sexual liaisons with various Māori women, and acquired some of their lands but failed to provide for the children who resulted. The disparity between these two versions caused much consternation and even suggestions of legal action, but Dick's account has not been disproved.

In the foreword to this book, surely one of the greatest regional histories ever produced in this country, Dick deals directly with the widely held view that deceased notables deserve to have their reputations left undisturbed. 'Dead victims have the right to be heard too,' he responded, and quoted an 1878 passage by former Pāhi resident Henry Scotland:

The high-polite style has also been introduced to New Zealand. Unless prepared to praise up extravagantly any person or thing he may have occasion to speak or write about, a man in the colony will soon be given most unmistakably to understand that the sooner he holds his peace or withholds his pen the better for him. The same consequence has resulted . . . that praise, indiscriminately showered upon everything and everybody, has become almost worthless, and in most cases an object of suspicion.³⁰

Refuting the high-polite style of history was Dick's life's work.

The remainder of his dozen or so books fall into the loosely defined category of industry or company histories, and particularly histories of New Zealand's wine industry.³¹ From 1964 he edited the country's first wine-industry periodical; he lived for many years in the wine-making district of West Auckland, and he retained great admiration for the Dalmatians, Lebanese, French, and other far-flung migrants who imported

29 Michael Bassett, *Coates of Kaipara* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995).

30 Quoted in *Seven Lives on Salt River*, 9.

31 Other titles in this category include *Stock in Trade: Hellaby's First Hundred Years, 1873–1973* (Auckland: Southern Cross Books for R&W Hellaby and Co. Ltd, 1973).

their vines and fermentation techniques to this country, and slowly overcame the local prejudice for industrially brewed flagon beer. Southern Cross published an elegant and sepia-toned short history of New Zealand wine-making in 1964, ranging from James Busby's efforts at Kerikeri in 1819 to vineyards which are still household names today.³² He followed it with a history of the Corban wine-making family, whose members had become personal friends.³³ I remember him showing me a newly printed copy, and I admired the full-colour, gold-embossed wine labels glued into the back pages. Dick explained that while hunting through the chaotic Corban archives, he found cartons of outdated labels in a warehouse and immediately conceived this new use for them. He also told me a story about the Corbans which, despite his disdain for the high-polite style, he chose not to include in this company-sponsored history. During the 1951 waterfront lockout, Auckland wharfies were quietly informed that they could take a truck out to the Corban estate after 10pm on certain nights, when they would find the warehouse unlocked and unattended so they could load up with any grapes, sugar, and cartons of wine they found inside. By means such as these, the Holland government's harsh regulations were constantly thwarted, yet the company retained its good name within the tightly regulated liquor industry.

Several more books about wine later appeared, including one, in 2002, with superb black-and-white photographs by Marti Friedlander.³⁴ For Dick, wine meant companionship, internationalism, tradition, craft, and local production, and he was always willing to place his expertise at the service of those who made it.

A freelance writer and solo publisher is compelled to promote his books as vigorously as possible, and Dick was always happy to see an earlier title return to print, often in a revised form. Most of his books had more

32 *Winemakers of New Zealand* (Auckland: Southern Cross Books, 1964).

33 *A Stake in the Country: Assid Abraham Corban and His Family, 1892–2002* (Auckland: Southern Cross Books, 1977).

34 *Pioneers of New Zealand Wine*, photographs by Marti Friedlander (Auckland: Reed/Southern Cross Books, 2002).

than one edition and some had four or more, such as the 50th-anniversary edition of *151 Days*. Six of his titles have been recorded as audiobooks and one of those, *Seven Lives on Salt River*, also published in Braille. None of Dick's books, however, has had such a long and multifarious existence as *The Parihaka Story*, which, at the request of the people of Parihaka themselves, reappeared in 1975, greatly expanded and revised, as *Ask That Mountain: The Story of Parihaka*. Its effect on a society waking up to its colonial past was dramatic, and it was reprinted seven times by 1998, when a Māori-language edition appeared. Among the diverse crowd who attended Dick's funeral in Auckland in January was a high-level deputation from Parihaka, who paid tribute to the political and cultural impact of *Ask That Mountain*. In an exceptionally rare appreciation, they farewelled its Pākehā author with karakia once sung by Te Whiti and Tohu themselves at the tangi of distinguished elders.

The people of Parihaka have little reason to feel grateful towards Pākehā even today, and in 1954, when Dick first met them, they had less still. Yet he won their gratitude and retained it even after his death, through his willingness to meet them on their own ground and their own terms—in lamplit kitchens, at tangi, helping to build a traditional whare—wherever his informants felt most comfortable. From the very first of those meetings, as described above, he made his intentions clear: to uncover and record 'the truth of New Zealand's history, no matter how ugly'.³⁵ He also stated publicly, not long after *The Parihaka Story* first appeared in print, that 'when the definitive story of Parihaka is written, it will be written by a Maori'.³⁶

I once visited Dick at his small wooden cabin at Pāhi. I noticed the rusty remains of a small handgun on the mantelpiece, and he told me he had found it many years earlier under a woodpile in Central Otago. Few other historians would have troubled to look for their material in such unlikely places. Dick did so repeatedly and discovered episodes from this country's past that had been well-buried and long forgotten, and then brought them to light in unflinching and unforgettable terms.

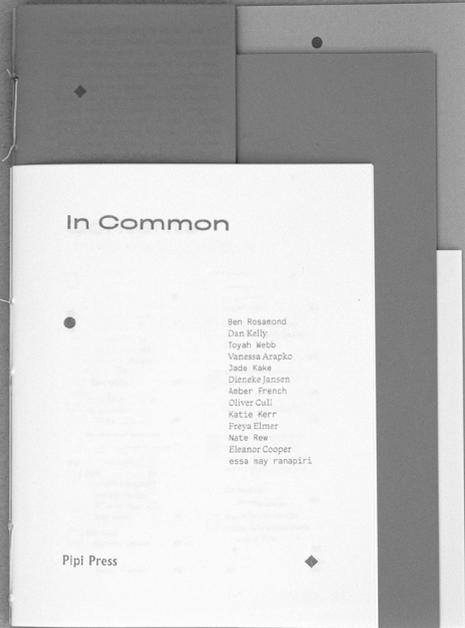
35 *A Radical Writer's Life*, 208.

36 Quoted in *A Radical Writer's Life*, 205.

In Common

A multi-format,
section sewn,
art form publication
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Commons are often understood as land and resources shared by all members of a community, historically these were areas where people could forage and hunt food, graze livestock and gather together. However, this way of conceptualising the commons risks detaching the term from what is immaterial and not so easily measured. Perhaps the value of the commons is in what lies beyond this limit: an entanglement of living systems, human and nonhuman, where honouring interconnection prevails over principles of ownership, exchange and profit.

In Common gathers together thirteen pieces in the form of poetry, essays, photographs and interviews by Ben Rosamond, Dan Kelly, Toyah Webb, Vanessa Arapko, Jade Kake, Dienneke Jansen, Amber French, Oliver Cull, Katie Kerr, Freya Elmer, Nate Rew, Eleanor Cooper and essa may ranapiri. These contributions enquire into colonisation and land dispossession, management of resources, conservation and kaitiakitanga, urban planning and gentrification, housing, gender and containment.

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