

THE JAMES GIBB AND JEANIE GIBB PAPERS

The Alexander Turnbull Library has recently been presented with two manuscript collections that should be of considerable value to students of Australasian social and religious history. The James Gibb Papers, a collection donated by the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, and the Jeanie Gibb Papers, presented by Mrs Phyllis Gibb of Melbourne, provide new insight into the persistency and style of Australasia's ethical crusaders from the 1880s through until the mid-1930s. Together, the collections reveal that the leaders of the crusades to introduce the teaching of the Bible into the state schools in New Zealand were also leaders of crusades against gambling, permissiveness on the stage, opium smoking, Sabbath recreation, public bars, and (a few of them), against rearmament in the mid-1920s and early 1930s.

These collections paint a clear picture of the involvement of James Gibb, a Presbyterian minister, dubbed by Richard Seddon 'more of a politician than a parson', who undoubtedly led the lobbyists and propagandists who crusaded to persuade politicians that the Kingdom of God should be brought to New Zealand by act of Parliament.

Of the two collections, the Jeanie Gibb Papers is the more limited in usefulness. Consisting of two books of newspaper cuttings this collection deals mainly with Gibb's Scottish youth and the milieu of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland wherein he spent his childhood and youth. One section of cuttings deals with the theological strife that divided the Presbyterian churches of Australasia in the 1880s and 1890s.

The James Gibb Papers form a much more extensive collection, consisting of :

- (a) A large collection of correspondence dealing with Gibb's involvement in Australasian church life and social crusades, from 1882-1935. (There is some correspondence between Seddon, Ward, Massey, Semple and other notable New Zealand political leaders.)
- (b) Gibb's correspondence with soldiers during the First World War and replies.
- (c) Gibb's correspondence as Home Mission Convenor of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.
- (d) Minutes of several meetings of the New Zealand Anti-Opium Association.
- (e) Two books of press cuttings concerned with Gibb's crusades and preachings.
- (f) Some family correspondence.

A small collection of pamphlets includes uncommon titles such as: Fussell, J. H., *Mrs Annie Besant and the Moral Code: a Protest*, Point