

The death of Alister Donald McIntosh takes from our midst one of the strongest friends of influence which the New Zealand library movement and, more particularly, the National Library with Turnbull, has had. Although the summit plateau of his distinguished career was bounded by his 23 years as Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department and Secretary of External Affairs, his professional life concluded, as it had begun, in the service of libraries. With characteristic generosity and modesty he referred to his 'retirement' duties as Chairman of the National Library Trustees and of the Turnbull Committee as an opportunity to repay some of the undischarged debt which he felt that he still owed to the profession because of his move along the passage after a mere eight years in the General Assembly Library.

He was born in Picton on 29 November 1906, the eldest of a family of three boys and a girl to parents who were both members of pioneer Marlborough families. His father, a Post and Telegraph Department telegraphist, then postmaster at Seddon, had been frustrated in his own hopes for any advanced education but young Alister, with quiet Scottish determination, passed his matriculation examination and a section of his B.A. degree before being appointed to a cadetship in the Labour Department, early in 1925. Carl Berendsen was then Chief Clerk and about to move to the Imperial Affairs Office of the Prime Minister's Office. Young McIntosh, after a year, was fortunate in obtaining a position in the General Assembly Library where he was able to confirm his qualities of application, industry, insight and circumspection. If he was perhaps the first to find that for the ambitious and capable the Library was a corridor to the sanctums of power he approached the threshold quite unwittingly to reach the point of decision with mixed feelings.

Meanwhile he attended Victoria University College, part-time as was then customary, to complete his degree and graduate with honours in history in 1930, mid-term in his library career. He married in 1934. His wife, née Doris Pow, was also a history graduate, although of a different university generation, and she sustained and assisted him through his challenging task of writing the main text (13 chapters) and of editing the complete text of *Marlborough* (1940), one of the most distinguished Centennial histories; and this at a time when the preoccupations of the Labour Government in its second term and a deteriorating international situation were closing in on any leisure he might have.

McIntosh's library years coincided with a professional revival. Tremendous stimulus was given to the thin ranks of full-time staff by the decision of the Carnegie Corporation of New York to extend to New Zealand its policy of granting travel-study fellowships to a