

Spectroscopy, and on Upper Atmosphere Irregularities. These meetings in New Zealand have paid a dividend of local stimulation from the investment in international research.

### ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON INFLUENCE

Like the Royal Society of London two centuries earlier, the New Zealand Institute originated from rather informal clubs providing for debate among people with common interests. Even in 1868, the Auckland Institute's first President hoped that the New Zealand Institute might "become to New Zealand what the Royal Society is to England"<sup>27</sup>, and adoption of the present title underlined this hope. But institutions, like organisms, can seldom grow in new environments without adaptive change, so we find many differences in the original, and even in the lately modified constitution, between the Royal Societies of London and of New Zealand. There is, of course, no constitutional link between separate Royal Societies—they are sister academies.

In general, our Society has rejected suggestions (for instance, by Cockayne in 1927) to model its rules on those of the Royal Society of London, while endorsing the philosophies on which they are based, for instance by avoiding the adoption of corporate opinions on scientific matters. Even our Fellowship differs from that of London in embracing certain of the human sciences and in receiving nominations from outside its ranks. We would not have persisted in these and other differences if we did not believe in them. This is perhaps a reflection of the seeking for self-sufficiency, for independence in tackling local problems, that has characterised the history of a distant colony from pioneer days.

The Royal Society of London's influence through the century has generally been exerted through individuals. Gideon Mantell, F.R.S., sent forth his son, Walter, to the Antipodes; William Swainson, F.R.S., pioneer colonist, influenced the boy Buller. Colenso, Haast, Hector and Hutton corresponded with Darwin, Lyell and Hooker before they themselves became Fellows. Nine of the 34 Presidents have been Fellows of the Royal Society and the subtle influence of individuals has proved to be the best form of liaison.

Indeed, the history of the Royal Society has been called the triumph of individualism. I make bold to claim, as my final subjective interpretation of a century of endeavour, that the prime function of corporate bodies for the promotion of science is directed towards the individual. By this I mean that the most important task of a Royal Society or academy of science is the discovery, the nurture, the protection, the encouragement, the cultivation, the enlistment, and the turning to use (if not the exploitation), for the benefit of the scientific community and ultimately of humanity, of a minority of rare individuals, from whom spring the original ideas, the heresies, the germinating concepts of interpretation that give rise to all advances in science. The more successfully the Royal Society of New Zealand does this basic task, the more profitable will be its work for science and for New Zealand's future.

### REFERENCES

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2. BASTINGS. *Trans. roy. Soc. N.Z.* 80: 359 (1951).
3. VON HAAST. *The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast* (Avery Press, 1948).
4. R. L. HOLMES. In a letter to Haast (Von Haast, *op. cit.*: 511).