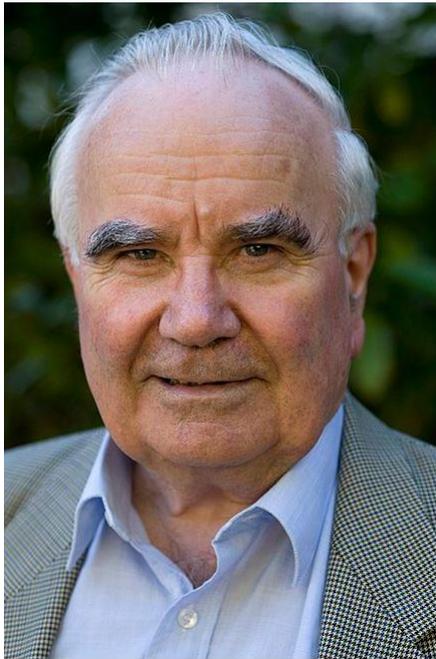


JB Munro – A Tribute



John Baldwin Munro QSO JP, known to everyone as JB, was a remarkable man. He made a huge contribution to the lives of many New Zealanders.

JB suffered from polio as a youngster and he was a foster child from birth. Coping with these setbacks was not only to reveal JB's enormous courage and strength of personality but also to ignite his inexhaustible drive to help others in the community and particularly those with disabilities. He truly understood the wish of people with both intellectual and physical disabilities to be able to lead normal lives in the normal community. JB had huge empathy with the disadvantaged in our society and he worked

tirelessly to help them overcome their challenges. In turn, they thought the world of him.

In her biography on JB, "JB Munro Community Citizen" 2019, Hilary Stace encompassed the great diversity of the contributions JB made to New Zealand and New Zealanders. He played leading roles in local, national and international forums across a wide spectrum of important organisations, all of which are represented in this biography. JB's crowning achievement was of course to lead a huge improvement in political and community attitudes towards those with disabilities and to enable them to lead normal lives in normal communities.

This required unswerving commitment, great energy, strong leadership, warm people relationships, and high quality communication skills, all of which JB had in abundance. Throughout his life he devoted his wonderful set of talents to the service of others. Hilary's book captures that life in all its fullness. It tells the story of the challenges and the setbacks, of the successes and the way they were achieved, of the people and the organisations, all the elements of a life lived to the full and with an endless devotion to others. In all of this JB was supported in so many ways by Val, his wife and lifelong partner. Some extracts follow from Hilary's excellent biography on JB.

JB was a wonderful man and a truly outstanding New Zealander.

Sir Roderick Deane
Wellington

Extracts from Hilary Stace biography – “JB Munro Citizen Volunteer” 2019

Extracts from Chapters 6 & 7 “Leadership of IHC”

As illustrated in earlier chapters, JB’s career was often marked by the development of significant relationships with people who became valuable philosophical and practical allies.

Working with Roderick Deane

One of the significant relationships JB developed in his time as National Director and later Chief Executive of IHC was with Sir Roderick Deane who served on the IHC NZ Finance Committee from 1977, and then on the Executive Board as Vice President 1982-1988 and President and Board Chair from 1988-1994. He was a strong advocate for the economic liberalization of the 1990s in New Zealand, and as Chairman of the State Services Commission implemented major state sector reform. He also served as Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, Chief Executive of the Electricity Corporation of New Zealand and later CEO and then Chairman of Telecom. He had earlier been an Alternate Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund. Sir Roderick was also Chairman of Te Papa Tongarewa, the Museum of New Zealand, and some of NZ’s other largest companies including Fletcher Challenge which became Fletcher Building and the ANZ NZ Bank. He was on the boards of several companies overseas in Australia and Canada.

On the surface it might seem that JB and Roderick would have little in common and few shared values. But through their shared passion for improving the lives of people with intellectual disability and their strong belief in the worth of the IHC they developed a deep respect for each other, and a strong working and personal relationship. As JB simply says, “Roderick Deane was Chairman for so many years. He was great”.

Roderick and his wife Gillian had a daughter Kristen who was born in 1968. She had a condition which was first thought to be autism. But it was eventually diagnosed when she was 16 as the neurodevelopmental disorder Rett Syndrome, which is related to autism, almost exclusively affects girls, and is degenerative. The Deanes went to the United States for two years in 1974 as Roderick had been appointed to the Board of the International Monetary Fund. Although Kristen was severely disabled, they readily found schools and support for her. But when they returned to New Zealand there were no services for her, and no school would take her. He was surprised: "People thought there was free education for all children in New Zealand but there was not". They approached the IHC for help and met with JB soon after he started with IHC in Wellington. The entrepreneurial networker JB spotted someone who could be useful.

Sir Roderick recalls:

"He came to see me with Ray Matthews who was General Secretary of IHC and asked would I give them a helping hand, and I asked, "How much time might be involved?" because I was the Chief Economist at the Reserve Bank and busy, and they said, "Well, come on the Finance Committee, it only meets for a couple of hours every couple of months".

Well I soon realised I could not understand the accounts and everything was in a very unfortunate order so I took several days of holiday leave from the Reserve Bank and worked full time at IHC National Office. There was such a mess that a couple of hours a month was just a joke, and that is where I first got to know JB. He had huge energy and drive and was a bit uncontrollable and had an unconventional management style, but everybody liked him and he was a very good public speaker. He and some of his colleagues lined me up – without having gone through the traditional branch network. I became a member of their top team, then Vice President for 6 years then President for another 6 years. Then I retired. It was time for a change as we had been through some demanding times. And I was very keen to see Barbara Rocco become our first woman President.

A little while later they asked me to go back on the Board of Governance. After JB left I became Chairman of the IHC Foundation which was a Foundation without any funds. Today we have over \$30 million. JB and I had put it together many years before but there was never any money, so I later helped Ralph Jones resuscitate it.

I was associated with JB for almost all of his IHC CEO career. I was asked by my colleagues to keep a close watch on him, so to speak, and that was to make sure that whatever he was getting up to that we could deliver the finances around it. On many occasions we got around the white board together – some of the senior staff and members of the Executive and Finance Committees – and they would take me through the finances. In those days it was not so easy to work out just where the problems were. The 50 or so branches had a lot of autonomy and at any one time about one third of the branches would be in a dire financial state and they would need to be rescued and helped out by the central organisation.

Although I was a lay person everyone said, 'Roderick, it is your job to make sure we are OK financially'. So many of the major decisions would not be taken without my OK. JB and I learned to work together without a cross word between us – wonderfully well. He was very tolerant even though sometimes I had to restrain him.

His political interactions with people were great. He was a natural politician. I was not but I had access to top politicians. We would always talk about our strategy and we would do things in unison. We were a good team but we were forever arguing over our funding.

Education Act 1989

The push towards inclusive education was a major lobby ground. The founders of the IHC wanted free education for their children but they envisaged special schools or units rather than expecting their children could attend regular schools on the same basis as other youngsters. This was another area where understanding of educational potential and expectations of inclusion changed over the decades. In 1980 IHC adopted the policy that children with intellectual disability such as autism or Down Syndrome should be educated with their peers in mainstream schools. This policy has been controversial at times with some parents still preferring specialised or segregated education for their children. But access to mainstream school with their age peers from that time became an important principle for the IHC.

But Prime Minister Sir Robert Muldoon, New Zealand Prime Minister from 1975 to 1984, was firmly against it. Roderick Deane recalls:

“Muldoon threatened withdrawal of funding for IHC in the years before the 1984 election if we did not shut up about changing the Education Act. Muldoon said to me: “You are the ringleader and if you don’t lay it to rest we will withdraw funding”. That was about 1983. Then I had a call from Merv Wellington, Minister of Education, who said: “I have been told to tell you that the Boss is serious”.

The reforming Labour government of 1984-1990 led by Prime Minister David Lange wanted to change radically the education system giving more control of schools to local communities. The reforms known as Tomorrow’s Schools implemented the overhaul and was enshrined in the 1989 Education Act.

Roderick Deane, by then Head of the State Services Commission, was passionate about IHC’s principles of inclusive education. But it required a great deal of lobbying to achieve the landmark Section 8 of the Act which legislated for the right of all children to attend their local school from 5 to 19 years. There was widespread discrimination against disabled children and negative attitudes from other families, schools and education officials. The politicians were worried about the resources required. Roderick Deane’s personal relationship with Lange proved the key to change. He tells the story:

“I became Chairman of the State Services Commission in 1986 but I could not get people like Cabinet Ministers Stan Rodger, Roger Douglas, Geoffrey Palmer, David Caygill and Richard Prebble to shift on this issue. I saw them all frequently as the state sector reforms we were undertaking were huge. I could not get them to budge. I often saw David Lange, and he hated being confronted one on one with difficult issues like this but then I wrote a letter to him summarizing the issues and he said come over and talk about it. Then he said the Government would fix it. And Section 8 of the 1989 Education Act was the final result. We did facilitate a change to the Act and Lange was critical to that happening. I very much liked David Lange and had a huge admiration for him but he was sometimes difficult to keep on track. It all took much time and effort and persuasion despite his support and the merits of the case.

Of course, I did not do that alone – everybody throughout the IHC was on the case. JB was also actively lobbying the MPs. But as it happened, I was the one who saw them often and had one on one access. I still remember some prominent cabinet ministers worried about the cost and me standing there giving them a hard time on the issue. “

Roderick Deane envisioned a system whereby the money would follow the child. He hoped that if schools would not take disabled children then the Director General of Education:

“Would ring them up and give them a flea in the ear and tell them to jolly well tow the line, it is government policy. Take the worst of the headmasters, those excluding disabled children, and discipline them because they are breaking the law. You would only have to make a few examples.”

Unfortunately, this part of his approach was never wholly implemented and despite the change in legislation some schools found numerous ways to exclude disabled children, to the extent that IHC took a court case against the Ministry of Education in 2009 which has yet to reach the Human Rights Review Tribunal. In 2010, when the special education system was undergoing yet another review as parents continued to report school exclusionary practices, Roderick volunteered to help run the Education Ministry for six months. The Minister did not take up his offer.

Financial crisis

In the late 1980s a financial crisis was looming that would test the IHC to its core. The share market crash of October 1987 and the resulting economic hardship had a severe effect on many businesses and forced much restructuring, including by 1989 at the IHC. As President, Roderick Deane had to announce a deficit of about \$7million at the 1990 AGM. Dr Michael Cullen, Minister of Social Welfare and Associate Minister of Finance, promised to help with additional subsidies but they did not appear in the 1990 Budget. When reminded of his commitment, he promised to put them in the supplementary estimates. But then there was a general election, the government changed and the debt crisis deepened. The new Minister of Social Welfare, Jenny Shipley, and the National Government chose not to deliver on the previous government's promise. JB and Minister Shipley had a clash of styles and priorities. Some blamed JB for the problem. Roderick Deane describes what happened:

“The National Government was elected in 1990 followed by what Ruth Richardson described as the ‘Mother of all Budgets’ in 1991. They pulled the plug on \$8m dollars that had been promised to IHC by the previous Labour Government and we were going to go down the gurgler. And I think that was the most stressful time for JB within the IHC. I was CEO of the Electricity Corporation at the time and I asked my Chairman whether I could take some time out for a day or two each week. I would go down to the IHC and really worked right alongside JB and we had to go through agony.

First, I had to confront some of the politicians particularly Jenny Shipley after we obtained legal advice from one of the country’s top lawyers who assured us that we had a legally binding contractual arrangement with the previous government on additional funding. He was fully confident this would be upheld by a court. “

They eventually came to a compromise whereby the Government lent the IHC \$10 million interest free for a period of 10 years.

Moreover, the IHC needed to continue its policy of purchasing a portfolio of houses suitable for accommodating intellectually disabled people who were moving out of the psychopaedic hospitals. IHC was a strong advocate for closing these institutions and providing instead normal living in normal houses in the regular community for intellectually disabled people. It was the right philosophy but implementation was demanding especially given the IHC’s constrained finances. As Roderick Deane outlined:

“One of the banks said we had to set up a company called IHC Mortgages which borrowed the funds and would have the security over the houses. The CEO of the bank said to me you have got to promise to be Chairman of the company until the loan is repaid. So he was really saying you are in terrible shape – not going down the gurgler, but I want your reputation on the line. “

It was a very painful time for IHC. JB had created a culture where working for the IHC often involved long hours without high wages, as the NGO sector had traditionally paid poorly. But staff were valued and given responsibility. But now there were numerous staff cuts and employment disputes. As Sir Roderick relates:

“We had to reduce staff. JB had never done that before, but sadly I had had the experience having done a big restructuring of the public service, so I guided him. He hated doing it and at times he was really depressed about it. Some people wanted to blame him for the terrible mess but I said no I will sit alongside him and I promise we will get it fixed. It was really a question of mentoring JB to help him learn about a different operating mode, one which he was not accustomed to.

All through that period JB was often really down to it and I kept having to prop him up and cheer him up. It was so unusual because he was always so full of life and good humour. I just thought, this wonderful man has made this fabulous contribution and he has got heaps more to offer.

JB remained the leader throughout. So in telling about the hard times I am not in any way belittling his role. He learnt what to do and he did it. He had guts and courage and we got it through it together and came out the other end and people said, thank goodness we did not ask him to go sideways. In paying off that \$10 million and managing the loans from the bank, restraint had to be exercised with great firmness as JB was always full of new ideas.”

The IHC paid off the \$10 million loan early due to a combination of approaches. The highly successful housing strategy for disabled people helped as did the fundraising and the door to door appeals:

“JB and I worked hand in glove through that process. He was a man of strong views and he did his own thing but he knew when the chips were down that he had to take notice of people like me and he knew that he had a political constituency out there that he had to keep happy. He responded to the hard times with great determination and resourcefulness and of course courage.”

There were also ongoing negative attitudes about disabled people which had been exacerbated by the closure of the institutions and the increasing visibility of disabled people in the community, which added to the problems in finding suitable houses. The National Government commissioned a review of IHC by former MP Venn Young, which reported in 1991 supporting the IHC’s philosophy of allowing all New Zealanders to be assisted to live ‘ordinary lives in ordinary communities’. There were other reviews of the IHC commissioned by the Government, none of which were really helpful and which Sir Roderick regarded as too often being too narrowly accounting oriented.

Roderick credits the united philosophy of the team at the top of the IHC for getting through these problems:

“Within the IHC, we were all committed to the policy of a free education in regular schools for all disabled children and to the philosophy of disabled people being able to live in normal houses in the regular community and to assist them get regular jobs. This approach entailed closing down the psychopaedic hospitals which was a demanding undertaking for the government and on us to provide enough houses and the support people needed. We were in many ways a bunch of evangelists –religious fanatics my wife Gillian used to say. Gillian would not allow me to talk about the IHC at dinner parties because if visitors expressed any prejudice against these ideas I would get uptight and give them a hard time. Through all of these changes the management and staff within the IHC were wonderful, strong advocates and real believers in what we were doing. JB created a great culture to underpin the changes.”

1993 reforms

In the early 1990s, Jenny Shipley, the Minister of Social Welfare, proposed a major restructuring of the disability support system. Responsibility for disability support would transition from Social Welfare into a revamped Ministry of Health of which she would be Minister. The process was called “A New Deal” and disabled people were generally against it, having been alarmed by the 1991 benefit and other cuts to disability support. In the process JB’s Disabled Persons Community Welfare Act was largely overturned and instead there would be a new Needs Assessment and Service Coordination system with narrow and strict eligibility requirements and ring fenced funding. ACC also became harder to access. It was a tough time for many in the disability sector.

Roderick Deane describes IHC’s opposition to the transfer from Social Welfare to Health:

“We were totally opposed to that. Intellectual handicap is not a health issue. Intellectual disability is just part of the diversity of our society. Disabled people get unwell just like the rest of us and some have greater vulnerability. We said disability is an income maintenance issue and should remain with Social Welfare. Money should follow the person.”

JB’s comment on the 1990s reforms of moving disability support from welfare to health was that it was a “bad idea, didn’t work”.

Roderick Deane summarised JB's contribution to IHC:

"JB was fabulous at advancing the cause for normality, for people with an intellectual handicap to have normal regular lives, for their talents to be utilised to the best possible extent, to enjoy the things the rest of us enjoy. And we did our best to do that across the workplace (that is the hardest), from psychopaedic hospitals into the houses, in the education system, into the sports arena to some extent, and he was the country's leader on all of this.

He had charisma, public speaking ability, persuasive powers, was a human dynamo, and people liked him. He was not always the best of managers because he would get impatient and go off and do it himself. He tried to do too many things himself and was not always best delegator, but we are all different. But when things were really bad and we almost went bankrupt, I knew this man just had to be helped to adjust to the new environment and then he would just motor along. And that is what happened. He learnt a bunch of new management skills. He was not perfect but none of us are. But he was larger than life and we were wonderful friends through thick and thin. Even though I was his boss a lot of the time and the shortage of money was hard, we remained unswervingly committed to the philosophy.

We had the great good fortune to have lots of good people around us and some wonderful managers and staff, to say nothing of some outstanding Branch Presidents who supported us at NZ Council level. JB was the leader on the philosophical changes. He was the leader of the change of culture although he was a control freak at times and would not let some things go and allow staff to do their own thing. But the staff embraced wholly the philosophy and were marvellous in ensuring that it was implemented. We joked at times about JB's unique ways of doing things but we all admired him and knew his leadership was critical to our success. JB was a great New Zealander."