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## EDITORIAL

### The Calisthenics of Democracy

I HAVE always had a strong interest in history, particularly economic history. It may have been something in the air where I was born, the city of Kirkcaldy in Scotland. It was there that Adam Smith – the begetter of modern economics – was born and wrote his great work *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Work and Wealth of Nations*. The same city is now represented in the British Parliament by the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, a very successful Chancellor of the Exchequer in the last decade.

We are here to celebrate thirty years of successful association to pursue a worthwhile project: to understand the forces that motivated those who built this community and, we hope, to contribute to its ongoing growth and prosperity.

History can be defined as a record of the activities of mankind in pursuit of their daily bread. Many of our studies have demonstrated this definition. History is also a study of the visible effects of invisible changes in human thought. That, too, is amply demonstrated by studies we have made and recorded in our Historical Journal.

To me, history is a record of change – ongoing, persistent and inevitable – and I say, 'Let us welcome it'.

Do you remember the coming of the Millennium ... all the fears that computers and machines would malfunction, and chaos would ensue? They were unfounded and we survived. Do you remember when Khrushchev at the United Nations said, 'Whether you like it or not, history is on our side: we will bury you'? We are still here, active and not interred. Do you remember when the faithful sang in all sincerity, 'Change and decay in all around I see'? Many are still singing it – vainly.

One purpose of our Historical Society is to foster such an understanding of historic development and change that we can say to ourselves and others: 'Don't panic!' Our studies have shown the inevitability of change, and that we can not only deal with it, but also co-opt it and make changes that contribute to our lives and our community. So much of what we do (either as individuals or as a community) is simply what we have learned from the past.

How does our Historical Society fit into that definition of community progress? My contention is that the history of the world and of nations began with small communities – whanau and iwi – and with their expansion. Al Gore in his recent book *The Assault on Reason*, says that we now have too much sitting and looking and not enough reading and discussion. The kind of study of social effects that we do in our Society he calls 'THE CALISTHENICS OF DEMOCRACY', and he thinks that the world is losing this exercise. Well – not here! At least in our Society we get some intellectual exercise, and learn from those who went before us how to handle change and growth.

We have regular meetings with guest speakers of knowledge whom we can question. We have annually produced our Historical Journal or a sponsored work like