



DOUGLAS HENRY PIKE

DOUGLAS HENRY PIKE (1908-74)

When Douglas Pike died in May 1974 the Academy lost a Foundation Fellow who had served it as Secretary and as Treasurer. Australia lost a scholar so fiercely devoted to a task of national significance that only the word 'vocation' can describe the way in which, for twelve years, he had gone about it.

He came late to academic life. Born in China of missionary parents, he arrived in Australia in 1924. When in 1948 he became a temporary lecturer in History at Adelaide there lay behind him an unusual but purposefully-directed career as student, bushworker, overseer of a cattle station, minister of religion. In 1962, now Professor of History in Tasmania, he accepted an invitation from the Australian National University to become the first General Editor of the projected *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Historians welcomed the appointment of a mature and gifted scholar whose *Paradise of Dissent* (1957), a study of the foundation and first generation of South Australia, had in style and method set an example for them all.

From the outset Douglas Pike quietly but remorselessly insisted on the highest standards for a project which he saw as a necessary aid to national self-understanding. In successive volumes he wrote generously about the work of his small staff and of the many contributors and helpers in Australia and elsewhere, but he said nothing about his own incessant work as reviser, corrector and, very often, re-writer. He could understand human errors and weaknesses, and with fatalistic resignation expected to find them in most manuscripts that came to him. Deliberate sin—scamped work or failure to fulfil obligations voluntarily undertaken—moved him to sardonic contempt.

As a hobby Douglas chose to build stone walls. He built them soundly and expertly so that they would stand for a hundred years, like the volumes of the *Dictionary* he edited.

J. A. La Nauze