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THE GROWTH OF AGRICULTURAL ADMINISTRATION,
1880-1900: THE DAIRY INDUSTRY AS A TEST CASE

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
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PREFACE

No historical writer is likely to deny that the growth of a relatively intensive administration was an integral part of the total Liberal achievement. Nevertheless, little enough research has been done on the nature of governmental growth in this period. Gibbons and Brooking have performed some of the spadework in this field and this thesis will attempt to slightly broaden and deepen the enquiry.¹

It is particularly in the explanation of Liberal administrative growth, comparable only with that experienced in the early years of the first Labour Government, that the hypothesis developed below will take a different course. Gibbons on the Labour Department, and Brooking on the Department of Agriculture, have emphasized the role of personalities, especially master bureaucrats, in their explanations of the massive quantitative and qualitative growth that the Liberal period of government (1891-1911) witnessed. The zealot Tregear, it would seem, successfully applied his peculiar bureaucratic ethic during those years of the 1890's when his idealism and effective control of the Labour Department existed in a relationship which enabled him to provide his conscious contribution to the "administrative revolution" then taking place. J.D. Ritchie, Brooking suggests, was only able to work his unobtrusive revolution once he was under the supervision of T.Y. Duncan and R. McNab, both decidedly weaker Ministers of Agriculture than Sir John McKenzie.

However, a close examination of the executive structure of the Department of Agriculture, especially as it concerned the dairy industry, has prompted the conclusion that "process" has been given insufficient consideration in favour of a single "personality".

1. See Gibbons, P.J. "'Turning Tramps into Taxpayers' - The Department of Labour and the Casual Labourer in the 1890's", unpublished M.A. thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North, 1970; and T.N.H. Brooking, "Sir John McKenzie and the Origins and Growth of the Department of Agriculture, 1891-1900", unpublished M.A. thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North, 1972.

The "unsung Tregear" whom Oliver "suspected was at work in the rural sector, masterminding the transition from permissive to coercive legislation, from local to central, from amateur to professional administration" certainly succeeded in this task;² but the credit for such a transformation must go not to one man, but a diverse body of administrative agents who constituted the field executive corps.

On examining dairy industry legislation as a test case from which to draw some tentative conclusions relating to the total growth of the Department,³ a logical process of expansion emerged. The initiative for such qualitative and quantitative change arises with the inspectorate charged with the direct supervision of the first Dairy Industry Act in 1892. Subsequent repeals and new enactments in 1894 and 1898 prove a nice correlation with the demands of expert departmental personnel, largely because their requests have the sanction of first hand local knowledge and a competent, scientific appreciation of the situation.

Beyond the realm of the dairying division expansion of departmental services in the fields of horticulture, viticulture, fibre production, stock supervision, veterinary medicine, entomology, chemistry and poultry science, appear to exhibit a similar pattern of growth.

The nature of executive initiative which follows the establishment of an effective field inspectorate would suggest that a similar process could well be significant in the development of the Health, Education and Labour Departments. However, as my research in these specific areas has been limited, such comments will remain speculative.

Although the bulk of my thesis is concerned with the years

2. Oliver, W.H., Towards a New History? (Hocken Lecture, 1969), Dunedin, 1970.

3. Unless otherwise stated the "Department" will refer to the Department of Agriculture.

1880-1900, a useful degree of perspective has been lent to the discussion by considerable initial research into the political career of T.Y. Duncan, and departmental trends while he was Minister of Agriculture, 1900-1906.

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The Annual Reports of the Department provided much of the substantive material for this thesis, while the Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, Parliamentary Debates and the New Zealand Statutes enabled a closer look at the legislative process. To complement the evidence of the inspectorate on field conditions and rural opinion, I spent some time perusing relevant issues of the Farmer and various newspapers. Secondary material in this particular area was scant, but Philpott's survey of the dairy industry offered a useful factual account of developments within the industry.⁴ I feel bound to acknowledge the work of Oliver MacDonagh, whose study of emigrant protection legislation in England provoked a closer investigation of the field executive corps.⁵ Although his controversial model of governmental growth was not appropriate for the situation with which I was dealing, it did afford some valuable insights.

The task of researching was alleviated by the cooperation of the staffs of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington; the General Assembly Library, Wellington; the Massey University Library, Palmerston North; National Archives, Wellington; and especially Miss Judith Hornabrook of the latter institution.

Descendants of T.Y. Duncan, Mr and Mrs T.D. Grant of Oamaru, showed a constant interest in my work, and like Mrs J. Ward of

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4. Philpott, H.G., A History of the New Zealand Dairy Industry, 1840-1935, Wellington, 1937.
 5. MacDonagh, O., A Pattern of Government Growth, 1800-1860: The Passenger Acts and their Enforcement, London, 1961.

Wellington, a relative of J.D. Ritchie, kindly loaned me relevant papers in their possession. The suggestions of fellow class-members and Tom Brooking are gratefully acknowledged, while credit for the typing of a draft and this final copy belongs to Mrs Maureen Macdonald. The preparation of this thesis was greatly assisted by the encouragement and time for discussion readily offered by my supervisor, Professor W.H. Oliver.

ABBREVIATIONS

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| AJHR | Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives |
| AR | Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture |
| <u>Farmer</u> | New Zealand Farmer and Bee and Poultry Journal |
| PD | New Zealand Parliamentary Debates |
| NZ Statutes | New Zealand Statutes |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY : THE DAIRY INDUSTRY, FIELD OFFICERS, AND THE FORMATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Under the direction of John McKenzie the Department of Agriculture emerged in 1892 as an amalgamation of the Stock Department and the Agricultural Branch of the Lands Department.¹ The former department contributed 77 officers and the latter five officers, to make a total of 82.² Appropriations for the first year amounted to £35,520.³ That the Department experienced massive subsequent growth is evidenced in the same statistics for 1908: some £159,817 was to be dispensed in the work of 419 officers.⁴

Essentially the Department was intended to provide information and direction to the agricultural interests of the colony and should be seen as having the responsibility of complementing Liberal land policy which was enabling men of small means but larger wills to get established on the land. The abysmal ignorance of basic agricultural practice had been vividly revealed across the 1880's, and there existed an obvious need for such technical instruction and organization which an effective department alone could provide. Apart from this specific purpose the establishment of the department had a more diffuse justification. Adept Liberal politicians, led by McKenzie in this particular field, had noted and were prepared to act upon a growing sectional consciousness among the rural sector. It would seem that their ability to exploit such feelings conditioned their initial and subsequent electoral appeal within this sectional group. The previous decade had provided the malcontents to whom

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1. Like Brooking, I have been unable to determine the precise date of the establishment of the Department of Agriculture in 1892.
 2. AJHR, 1892, B7, p.50.
 3. *ibid.*
 4. AJHR, 1908, B7, p.110.

Liberal policy would appeal: an electorally significant body of men who were anxious to become established farmers but were being constantly frustrated while pursuing their aspirations. The 1880's and early 1890's were gloomy years in New Zealand's economic development. The bright future promised by the advent of refrigeration in 1882 had been rendered illusory by near negligible immigration, reduced capital inflow, high land values and a drastically scaled down public works programme. Roads, in country districts especially, seemed to degenerate into an appalling state; in many cases they did, justifying feelings of rural deprivation. For the man attempting to eke out an existence from his recently procured rural property, depressed prices and distance from markets compounded with inadequately organised railway and shipping services to instil a general feeling of victimisation. Foreclosed mortgages added to rising unemployment figures. Pests such as rabbits, birds, insects and blights spared not the struggling farmer. Optimism was quickly snuffed out.

Individual introspection along such depressing lines promoted a sectional consciousness which found expression in the form of devil figures. The image of urban labour was aggravated by persistent striking and industrial unrest, particularly in 1890. The demands of the industrial sector were conceived as directly responsible for those rising consumer prices so punitive to agricultural interests. Editorially, the Farmer, a sectional monthly, condoned the formation of Farmers' Defence Associations to repel the unfair demands of Trade Unions.⁵ The large runholder represented a further devil figure in the eyes of bona fide settlers.

Faced with such overwhelming odds the farmers' belief in the value of practical experience seemed an inadequate prop, and the demand for the Government to provide assistance became stronger. In 1887 the Farmer exhorted farmers to combine and organise and reminded readers that "as a group the interests of agricultural

5. Farmer, September 1890, p.348.

settlers have never commanded that attention which they ought to have received".⁶ The Farmer's appeal was intended to favour bona fide small settlers and not the large land owner who was monopolising those resources which could provide an income for a host of eager settlers.

However the independent will had not entirely disappeared. A few enterprising farmers in the Taranaki district endeavoured to develop the dairy industry by effecting herd improvements and adopting the latest advances in dairy plant.⁷ But it must be emphasised that they composed a favoured and insubstantial minority.

All in all, the politique Liberals saw that the Department could offer assistance to struggling settlers while at the same time providing a focal point for rural identification with the new Government. McKenzie's rural sympathies assured agriculturists a sympathetic ear at the heart of Government, while his Department would ensure that judiciously conceived policy was put into practice.

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When reflecting on the origins of the Department of Agriculture, J.D. Ritchie, Secretary for Agriculture 1892-1909, recalled that with its establishment "a policy of instruction and encouragement of the agricultural resources and industries of the Dominion was initiated, first attention being devoted to the dairy industry".⁸ The promotion of dairying had earlier been recognized as a viable means of extricating New Zealand from the throes of colony wide depression. By the later years of the 1880's the economic prospects of wool, wheat and gold were on the wane. Dairy production emerged as the obvious staple to revitalise the flagging colonial economy. J. McKerrow, in a Lands Department report of 1886, warned of the

6. Farmer, September 1887, pp.209-10.

7. AJHR, 1887, H1, p.1.

8. AR, 1909, p.xxvi (underlining mine).

dull prospects of grain production and spoke of the improvement and extension of dairying as an "inexhaustible mine of wealth". On similar land the dairy farmers' gross receipts would amount to at least three times what they would be if the land was under sheep. Consequently, he decided, there devolved upon the Agricultural Branch a responsibility to assemble and disseminate useful knowledge to dairy producers and seek out new markets.⁹ This prerequisite to a flourishing dairy industry preoccupied those who participated in a Legislative Council discussion on dairy produce in November 1887. G.M. Waterhouse vehemently asserted that "if we can get hold of the United Kingdom market the dairy industry of the Colony will throw into the shade the sheep and pastoral interest and the mining industry of the colony".¹⁰ Such developments would revitalise the flagging economy and ensure a contented populace. Increased employment opportunities and the restoration or preservation of the closely knit family structure would also accrue from such a policy. The dairy industry offered both short term and long term prospects for attaining and perpetuating a favourable political reputation; and this is what the Liberals were about.

No great deal of perception was needed to realise that the most urgent problems facing the infant dairy industry were organizational and technical. For the individual farmer, especially when impoverished, these problems were insuperable. Their inability to help themselves created a predisposition to expect (and later accept) state assistance in their various enterprises. The governments of the 1880's, despite necessary parsimony, did see their way clear to stimulate dairy production.

The first evidence of the government's practical interest in the dairy industry was in the form of a bonus for the first 25 tons of butter or the first 50 tons of cheese produced in a

9. AJHR, 1886, C1, p.8.

10. PD, 1887, 58, p.365.

factory and capable of securing such prices in a foreign market as would show that the article was of fair quality.¹¹ This bonus was awarded to the Edendale dairy factory for its second season's cheese output in 1882-3.¹² A government supervision and advisory service was established in 1883 with the appointment of William Bowron from England as the first Government lecturer in dairying subjects.¹³ His career in this position was noted by his constant advocacy of the factory system of manufacture, rather than individual efforts, for the twin benefits of rational and uniform production. Geo. Bowron's¹⁴ report in 1884, Dairy Factories in New Zealand, revealed that the factories he had observed in operation were generally in a favourable condition, but he continued to present a more detailed argument for the need for absolute cleanliness in all stages of manufacture.¹⁵ The abysmal ignorance of those engaged in the industry, Bowron decided, would only be rectified by a system of government education of suppliers and managers.¹⁶ In the same report the manager of the Ashburton Factory inveighed against the suppliers of impure, adulterated or deteriorated milk, suggesting that such a client "not only commits an act of petty larceny, but injures his neighbours as well as the factory, and ultimately has returned upon his own head the reward of his misdeeds".¹⁷

The effect of such a report was hardly reassuring. The efficient probings of Bowron brought to the notice of the government

11. NZ Gazette, 1881, 18 May, p.640.

12. Philpott, H.G., A History of the New Zealand Dairy Industry 1840-1935. Wellington, 1937. p.34.

13. *ibid.*, p.49.

14. Although this report was signed by Geo. Bowron, Philpott suspects that it may be a misprint for William Bowron. See Philpott, p.52. This seems to be the only occasion on which the name Geo. Bowron appears in dairy industry records.

15. See AJHR, 1884, H9, pp.1-4.

16. *ibid.*

17. *ibid.*

and the public the actual state of the industry, thereby adding a further stimulus to government activity. The Agricultural Branch of the Lands Department soon felt some responsibility to act in this area, particularly in respect of the great want of uniformity in export produce. To this end, McKerrow suggested convening meetings of settlers in dairying districts, for the purpose of expert instruction in cheese and butter making, while at the same time conducting an investigation into new markets.¹⁸

Most observers agreed that the fundamental problem confronting dairy producers was their widespread disregard of the deleterious effects of their apparently innocuous practice. In 1887, W. de G. Reeves, officer in charge of the Agricultural Branch, noted the copious opportunities for milk to be contaminated by dust or odours while held at the farm. Obviously it was impossible to produce sound butter and cheese for discriminating foreign markets when milk was stored in dwelling-houses and workshops, and "among some of the poorer settlers milk pans have been known to be set under the beds". He saw little reason to believe that such carelessness would not accompany the whole process of butter making on the farm. He declared that a peripatetic model dairy, a competent expert and the payment for milk according to productive quality would bring about the much needed improvements in dairy production.¹⁹

However, for the bulk of producers in the factory or on the farm, the twin problems of insufficient scientific knowledge and disorganization proved endemic. If the Government could plead extenuating economic circumstances it could neither justify ignorance of such problems nor remain oblivious to its responsibilities in face of the barrage of official reports and the demands of newspapers. Reports from the London market, compiled by the Agent General, admonished New Zealand producers for lack of quality in their exports and emphasised that produce arriving out

18. AJHR, 1886, C1, p.8

19. AJHR, 1887, H1, pp.4-5.

of condition adversely affected prices and demand.²⁰ Such conclusions were reiterated and expanded throughout the colony, and gained prominence in the dairy section and the editorials of the Farmer. The damage done to the New Zealand economy by those various malpractices which produced a disparity in overall quality were baldly exposed. In October 1888 a Mr Meadows, with over thirty five years' experience at the London end of the provision trade, spoke of the limitless opportunities on the English market. But, he continued, "you have one grievous fault. Your butter is not uniform either in flavour, colour or package. Your makers have not arrived at the state of knowledge of the Home market to know the importance of thorough uniformity".²¹

Education in dairying matters, in the eyes of most commentators, seemed to be a panacea. There were soon charges that the government and Agricultural Department were overlooking practical instruction in details of dairy management. Such a state of affairs was barely mitigated by a letter to the Agent General in 1888, requesting him to select one dairy expert.²² Yet an editorial of the same issue of the Farmer suggested that this augured well for the future:

We welcome the step thus taken by the Government as a hopeful sign that at last our public men are beginning to realise the importance of affording some governmental encouragement to our pastoral and agricultural interests There has been wanting in our parliaments, no less than in our several ministries, that practical interest in the highest development of our agricultural resources which alone can lead to effective legislation to aid the successful progress of any national industry.²³

The editor opined that Denmark's outstanding success in dairying was

20. See AJHR, 1888, H33, p.5.

21. Farmer, October 1888, p.364.

22. Farmer, May 1888, p.151.

23. *ibid.*, p.165.

based on its efficient instructional service.²⁴

Such matters had not passed entirely unnoticed in Parliament. In 1882, W. Hutchison enquired as to what extent dairy inspection had been carried out according to the Public Health Act 1876 Amendment Act 1881. The Colonial Treasurer, T. Dick, could not provide a ready answer, as such action was within the province of local bodies who operated under their own regulations.²⁵ Extensive discussion arose in the Legislative Council on the topic of dairy produce. The absolute necessity for uniformity in quality and consistent quantities of goods for the London market was readily established. Waterhouse envisaged that the exploitation of available markets would dissipate the cloud of depression then shrouding the colony.²⁶ The question of new markets for a more expertly produced article was considered at some length. G. McLean was of the opinion that it was the Government's duty to assemble and disseminate relevant marketing information, and agreed that a Select Committee would be a useful measure toward this end.²⁷ The Australian market was considered unsuitable, not least because of its punitive tariffs. McLean aired his concern for the "injurious odours" arising from piggeries adjacent to dairies and in subsequent discussion J. Menzies advocated the investigation of foreign precedents and practices in the dairying field, and requested that all information compiled be distributed to those involved in the industry.²⁸

The appointment of R.M. MacCallum in 1888, to travel the colony and lecture on the establishment of dairy factories, was a governmental response to that situation made abundantly clear by

24. Farmer, May 1888, p.151.

25. PD, 1882, 82, p.253.

26. PD, 1887, 58, p.364.

27. *ibid.*, p.366.

28. PD, 1887, 59, pp.521-2.

official reports and newspapers. The Farmer accepted the appointment as a step in the right direction but considered it largely inadequate:

In all matters connected with the interests of agriculture the Government action in this colony has been only spasmodic. No doubt the absence of any sustained and systematic Government effort on behalf of this our most important field of industrial activity has been in great measure owing to the want of a properly organized Agricultural Department.²⁹

It had already been rumoured that G.F. Richardson, Minister of Lands, was about to organize an agricultural department, but one editor believed that "like Mr Nathaniel Winkle in Pickwick, the Government never appear to get any further in such matters than 'getting ready to begin'".³⁰ The editor continued to depict the vivid contrast between the dilatory efforts of the New Zealand government to encourage dairying, and those of New South Wales and Victoria.³¹ However the New Zealand Government was about to take a short but important step.

During the 1888 session Richardson assured the House that the Agent General had been requested to appoint a dairy expert for the purposes of colony wide instruction.³² By August 1889 he could inform the House that several applications for such a position had been received and were being considered by the Government. The first appointee as Dairy Instructor in 1889 was John Sawers. He had been in New Zealand for several years. After having managed several Scottish dairies he received a season's instruction from a Canadian expert and then ventured to New Zealand in 1885 to manage the Wairaka dairy factory near Oamaru.³³

29. Farmer, December 1889, p.489.

30. *ibid.*

31. *ibid.*, p.490.

32. PD, 1888, 60, p.143; PD, 1888, 61, p.199.

33. New Zealand Journal of Agriculture, November 1952, p.371.

Much of his time was spent in the South Island, his first report explained, where he had lectured to many receptive audiences on subjects concerning the dairy industry. When commenting on the factories he had visited he stressed the absolute need to eliminate such defects as poor siting, insufficient ventilation, inadequate drainage, and the too close proximity of piggeries. There was also a need in many cases for more practical internal construction. Like Bowron, Sawers remained an ardent proponent of the factory system to improve export produce. To combat the deleterious effect of inferior milk he advocated that managers should refuse to accept the impure article, thereby forcing the supplier to improve his working conditions.³⁴ Sawers remained aware of New Zealand's dependence on external markets for the sale of its dairy produce and constantly impressed this point upon those to whom he spoke. The overall impression he gained from his eight months as Dairy Instructor prior to this report was revealed in his concluding remarks:

I may say that the dairy industry is not on such a satisfactory basis as might be expected, resulting chiefly from the want of knowledge of many of those engaged in the manufacture and from the want of cooperation in the interest of the factory on the part of the settlers and milk suppliers.³⁵

Evidence given before the Flax and Other Industries Committee suggested that this want of practical and scientific knowledge would be alleviated by the appointment of at least two Danish dairy experts.³⁶ Sawers gave several pages of evidence and was explicit in asserting that the superiority of the Danish dairy industry - the paragon of dairying enterprise - was due to the supply company employing a qualified staff of inspectors and instructors to visit farms, examine cows and insist on scrupulous cleanliness of premises.³⁷ The Farmer

34. AJHR, 1890, H33, pp.2, 5.

35. *ibid.*, pp.6-7.

36. AJHR, 1890, I6a, p.3.

37. *ibid.*, p.59.

was also calling for more experts and it claimed that fewer than twenty five per cent of New Zealand farmers had ever heard of Sawers.³⁸ In a previous issue, W.S. Davidson, general manager of the Australia New Zealand Land Company which operated the Edendale factory, after closely investigating the Home market and foreign operations in dairying, revealed that "in most countries Government funds support schools or advisory experts We only need £1000 annually for dairy education in view to putting a good many thousand pounds, now lost every year, into the pockets of our farmers".³⁹

Such practical suggestions had the added sanction of Davidson's recognized authority and were about to gain ground. In 1891 the Liberals consolidated their position in the House and offered new hope to agricultural interests. The Liberal ministry, constantly seeking to remove those obstructions which tended to minimise opportunities, were prepared to discharge their duty of improving instructional services to the agricultural sector. Agricultural journals were optimistic; now the Government they had characterized as continually getting ready to begin had been removed from office. The Farmer trusted that there was some foundation in the rumour that the setting up of the Department of Agriculture was imminent:

There would be no formidable expenditure involved in such a department, an important function of which would be to gather and disseminate sound information on such subjects as the best modern systems of dairying, including packing for export and the facts to be known concerning foreign markets.⁴⁰

The Government already had some guarantee that their efforts would be appreciated. The attentive audiences to which Sawers had referred were substantial evidence of the desire of farmers to improve their means of production. A.J. MacGregor, M.H.R. for Akaroa informed a Committee deliberating on the dairy industry,

38. Farmer, October 1890, p.400.

39. Farmer, September 1890, p.337.

40. Farmer, March 1891, p.47.

that farmers of his district would readily act upon any suggestions. His comments would seem applicable to a wider sector than that for which he spoke. He interpreted local anxiety for further information as a realisation that "they are falling behind in the race, and simply as a matter of self preservation they find that they must do something. They look to expert information as being able to assist them".⁴¹ The frustration associated with scientific enquires before 1890 were outlined by William Pember Reeves:

As for scientific instruction, it used to be said in New Zealand that, prior to 1890, if anyone asked the Government for information on a matter calling for agricultural science, his enquiry was regularly sent forward to the colonial geologist. If the question had to do with insects the geologist took counsel of a certain telegraphic clerk. If the clerk was puzzled, the twain would seek advice of the New Zealand University.⁴²

Obviously there was a need for a coordinated central body to deal with agricultural matters.

The existence of foreign precedents was to provide an important impetus to the formation of a central agricultural department, and was to continue as a basis for much of the ensuing rural legislation. After all, in the revered Denmark,

until the State bestirred itself, the commercial value of butter was very low What the Government of Denmark did on the matter was simply to arrange for the systematic instruction of the people in practical and scientific knowledge concerning dairy work.⁴³

When discussing the report of the Livestock Committee in the House in September 1891, F. Lawry (Parnell) believed McKenzie's title of Minister of Agriculture to be anomalous if he was not in charge of a department providing essential services.⁴⁴ Captain

41. AJHR, 1890, I6a, p.26.

42. New Zealand Journal of Agriculture, op cit., p.371.

43. Farmer, October 1890, p.399.

44. PD, 1891, 74, pp.864-5.

Russell, the leader of the opposition, expressed ardent support for a scientifically based department of agriculture.⁴⁵ Sir John Hall protested that more must be done to help the dairy industry but McKenzie could at best promise that more dairy experts would be appointed as occasion arose. Further, "he did not think it was ever supposed by the House that a separate and expensive Agricultural Department was to be set up".⁴⁶ Yet this seemed the very mood of the House, or at least the opposition members who could oppose such a move, and it was already established that the expenditure involved would not be prohibitive. Valentine had concluded from his investigations that the South Australian Bureau of Agriculture, costing £600 per year, was a model worth emulating. Nevertheless the reluctant McKenzie saw no reason at this stage (22 September) to "rush matters". He was prepared to "let matters grow a little" and he assured the House that he would be assessing the responses of various agricultural and pastoral associations which had been consulted on this issue, during the recess.⁴⁷

On 4 September, R. Pharazyn had reminded the Legislative Council of a resolution passed in July 1891, by the Wellington Philosophical Society (an affiliate of the New Zealand Institute): "in the opinion of this Society, the establishment of a fully equipped expert Agricultural Department is urgently required in New Zealand".⁴⁸ Five days later the Council passed a resolution calling for the urgent establishment of an agricultural department which would inform and advise in all matters concerning the agricultural sector.

Perhaps the ultimate impetus to the formation of the Department in 1892 was the request of the Agricultural Conference which met in

45. PD, 1891, p.866.

46. *ibid.*, p.867.

47. *ibid.*, pp.867-8.

48. See PD, 1891, 74, p.232; and Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute, vol.xxiv, 1891, p.627.

May of that year in Christchurch. A Government grant of free rail passes to delegates denoted cooperation in such ventures and undoubtedly facilitated the representation of eighteen Agricultural and Pastoral Societies at the Conference. The proposition of an expertly equipped department gained extensive approval and several further resolutions dealt with more specific areas in which state activity would be desirable.⁴⁹

By the end of 1892, McKenzie, who had been Minister for Agriculture since 24 January 1891,⁵⁰ had taken charge of a duly constituted Department.⁵¹ It would be misleading to assert that the promotion of the dairy industry was the sole *raison d'être* of the Department. However, Ritchie's statement that prime attention would be devoted to dairying seems adequate when the socio-economic ramifications of such a concern are assessed. Nevertheless, orchardists, pastoralists and those engaged in more specialised pursuits such as viticulture, apiculture, flax and cereal production, all professed a well founded optimism once the department was established.

The dairy industry was that branch of agricultural pursuits which would benefit most from the application of science. The pathology of cattle and the biotechnology of cheese and butter-making required a corpus of specialists to deal with problems as they arose, and fulfil a general educational role. Because such men as were appointed were specialists their opinions were respected by Parliament and producers alike.

Marketing issues also provided that the dairy industry was a special case. Being almost entirely export dependent the development of this young industry of incalculable potential was

49. Farmer, July 1892, pp.276-7.

50. NZ Gazette, 1891, p.100.

51. See above, footnote 1.

predicated on producing articles which satisfied foreign demands. The great distances involved in transporting produce to the London market, and the still experimental state of cool storage made absolute care in uniform production and packaging imperative. The problems were clearly delineated and suggestions as to means of their solution were at hand.

The limited field executive corps, operating before the formal organization of the Department, had assembled a large body of objective evidence which was a primary influence on governmental measures in this area. Not only did their experience throughout the 1880's bear adequate testimony of field conditions and local opinion; it also provoked Members of the House, journalists, and agricultural bodies into pressuring government to remedy explicitly revealed problems. A centrally organized department with an expanding body of officers to alleviate problems as they arose, accelerated this total trend and can be traced in the specific area of dairy industry legislation.