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**“Man in his time plays many parts”:**

**Life stories of William Jordan**



**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Masters of Arts in History at Massey University**

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The title of this thesis is a phrase William Jordan used in a speech in the Raglan electorate in 1919. However, the quotation is originally from the play "As You Like it", by William Shakespeare. In Act II, Scene vii Jacques remarks "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; And one *man in his time plays many parts*".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D.C. Browning (ed.), *Everyman's Dictionary of Shakespeare Quotations*, London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1961, p. 105.

## Illustrations and Abbreviations

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#### Abbreviations used in text.

AJHR	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives.
DU:HO	Hocken Library, Dunedin.
NA	National Archives, Wellington.
WJC	Winnie Jordan Collection, Auckland.
WTU	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

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<sup>2</sup> J.T. Allen, *Parliamentary Portraits*, Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1936, unpaginated.

## Introduction

When the first Labour government was elected in 1935 William Jordan became both New Zealand's High Commissioner in London and New Zealand's representative at the League of Nations. Prior to his appointment Jordan had served nearly fourteen years as a Labour Member of Parliament.<sup>3</sup> I first became interested in Jordan while I was completing a research exercise on New Zealand's reactions to the Sino-Japanese war in 1937. Jordan featured prominently at the League of Nations when the New Zealand government's stand on international issues brought it into conflict with British policy. He stood out as a significant figure of this period due to his personality and strength of character. As New Zealand's representative, Jordan spoke powerfully on international morality. His forthright speeches showed his courage, often in the face of pressure from other nations. He delivered speeches that were blunt, simple and often in plain undiplomatic language. Bruce Bennett described his,

unpretentious, sincere, yet forceful speeches [which] brought him admiration at a forum noted for caution to the point of cowardice. His very simplicity, which some of his associates despised, was part of his magic.<sup>4</sup>

Jordan's character and personality seemed distinctive and denoted him as a compelling historical individual.

Notwithstanding his unique personality, Jordan was also a national figure in his time. When first appointed he was New Zealand's sole diplomatic representative. By the time of his retirement, after a record fifteen years as High Commissioner in London, he had been the country's best-known representative abroad. I was very intrigued to examine not only Jordan the man but to also explore a broader perspective and see how, as a distinct individual, he interacted within the social, cultural and historical contexts of his time.

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<sup>3</sup> Malcolm Templeton, 'Jordan, William Joseph 1879-1959'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 19 July 2002 URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Bennett, *New Zealand's Moral Foreign Policy 1935-1939: The Promotion of Collective Security Through the League of Nations*, Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1988, p. 14.

Malcolm Templeton, Jordan's biographer in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, indicated that Jordan was a prominent figure in his time, at home and aboard.<sup>5</sup> Although, he suggested that there was a wide gulf between the public perception of a national figure and his reputation among his subordinates and other public servants who had to deal with him. Templeton cited Major W.G. Stevens, Jordan's one-time deputy at New Zealand House, who described him as "the most unforgetting and unforgiving man he had ever known".<sup>6</sup> Other accounts also suggested Jordan was a complex individual, a man with a "many-sided personality".<sup>7</sup> Therefore, along with Jordan's distinct individuality, another enticing factor was to investigate both the perception and the reality of Jordan as a historical figure.

Although historians had outlined some aspects of Jordan's public life, his private life remained largely undocumented. What had been the formative influences which had shaped his personality? What beliefs or ideals guided him in his life's choices? The literature told us little about these issues. The initial title of this thesis was "'The most human of men"<sup>8</sup>: William Jordan, politician and diplomat'. I wanted to focus not only on diplomatic or political history but also on Jordan's humanity as early research suggested Jordan possessed distinctive human qualities. However, as the research progressed it became clear that Jordan's was a "many-sided personality" and this became a leading conceptual device.<sup>9</sup> The thesis was refocussed slightly to reflect this as Jordan himself said, quoting Shakespeare, "man in his time plays many parts".<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Templeton, 'Jordan'.

<sup>6</sup> Templeton, 'Jordan'. Major-General William George Stevens was Official Secretary, High Commissioners Office, London, 1946-53.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Carl Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', p. 164, Sir Alister Donald McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-463, WTU. Carl Berendsen was Head of the Prime Minister's Department 1932-43. Berendsen was New Zealand's High Commissioner to Australia 1943-44 and from 1944-48 he was ambassador to United States and United Nations. 'Reminiscences of an ambassador' is an unbound manuscript of twelve files MS-Papers-6759-453 to MS-Papers-6759-465. Each file is referenced individually in this thesis.

<sup>8</sup> The quote is from Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', MS-Papers-6759-463, p. 170.

<sup>9</sup> Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', MS-Papers-6759-463, p. 164.

<sup>10</sup> 'Address by William Jordan' at Ngaruawahia 4 November 1919, WJC. Jordan gave this address as the Labour candidate in the Raglan electorate. He remarked that when he first came to the district he would never have guessed that he would be asked to contest a Parliamentary election however he realised the truth of the saying "man in his time plays many parts".

Historian E.P. Thompson believed human experience in history should not be ignored. History is, in part, the product of humanity's own efforts. Historical knowledge could not be deduced from theory alone but was the product of concepts and evidence (historical theory and historical past). Therefore, there must be 'humanism' in history.<sup>11</sup> Concurring with Thompson, I searched for an approach to historical writing that would explore not only human qualities and life stories but would illuminate specific human experience within history. The genre of biography was appealing for, as Stephen Oates states, "biography humanises history".<sup>12</sup> Concurring, Frank Vandiver states "biography...can ... offer a glimpse of humanity in microcosm".<sup>13</sup> For Jordan, the biographical genre would illuminate not only his own humanity (or distinct human qualities) and many personalities but also place him in his social, cultural and historical context through which his own experience within history could be glimpsed.

The issue of subject choice has been the focus of debate among biographers. John Garraty, for example, discusses biographies which are written as a means of expressing the author's own personality.<sup>14</sup> This is not a new approach however, as Plutarch, sometimes described as the father of biography, also discusses this.<sup>15</sup> As one of the greatest contributors to the style and form of biographical writing, Plutarch wrote moralistic and anecdotal lives but also contributed an interesting dimension: a self-reflexive awareness of the role of the biographer. Plutarch stated that in writing a biography he discovered something about himself.

It was for the sake of others that I first commenced writing biographies: but I find myself proceeding and attaching myself to it for my own; the virtues of these great men service me as a sort of looking-glass, in which I may see how to adjust and adorn my own life.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Harvey J. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians: An Introductory Analysis*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984, p. 212.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Oates (ed.), *Biography as High Adventure: Life-Writers Speak on their Art*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986, p. xi.

<sup>13</sup> Vandiver cited in Oates, p. 64.

<sup>14</sup> John A. Garraty, *The Nature of Biography*, Oxford: Alden Press, 1958, Ch. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara W. Tuchman cited in Oates, p. 93 "...Plutarch, the father of biography, used it [biography] for moral example...".

<sup>16</sup> Plutarch cited in Ira Nadel, *Biography: Fiction, Fact & Form*, London: MacMillian Press, 1984, p. 21.

Freud restated Plutarch's idea when he suggested that writers often choose their subjects 'for personal reasons of their own emotional life'<sup>17</sup> and explained the psychology behind this. My interest in Jordan was indeed sparked by my own emotive feelings, initially manifest in Jordan's perceived strength of character. In addition, New Zealand's history has often been discussed with reference to an emerging national identity and independence. As a firm believer of New Zealand as an 'independent' nation, I was drawn to Jordan, who was described by Barry Gustafson as "often independent in outlook and action".<sup>18</sup> He seemed to epitomise the independent voice of New Zealanders, particularly as the proponent of New Zealand's independent foreign policy at the League of Nations.

Garraty also suggests that many biographies are the result of mutual interest whereby a historian who begins specialising in a particular field of history often ends up writing the biography of a central figure of that time. By the same token Garraty states,

intense historical study frequently results in the discovery of an obscure but significant individual, leading the scholar to bring the new figure before the eyes of the world through a biography.<sup>19</sup>

Garraty's quote encapsulates how the seed of this research was formed. My specific research into New Zealand's response to the Sino-Japanese war (of which Jordan was a part) did in fact reveal Jordan as a significant, yet largely overlooked figure.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, my choice of Jordan as a subject has been a combination of emotive reasons, which included admiration of his personal qualities and research which focussed on a particular area, revealing his neglected status.

As stated, there is no detailed analysis of Jordan, the man. While Jordan is noted in New Zealand's diplomatic history, his story beyond diplomacy remains largely

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<sup>17</sup> Freud cited in Nadel, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Barry Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave: A Biography of Michael Joseph Savage*, Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986, p. 285.

<sup>19</sup> Garraty, p. 136.

<sup>20</sup> Carina Hickey, ' "My old frying pan is not coming back to rip the guts out of any New Zealander": New Zealand responses to the Sino-Japanese war July 1937-March 1938', BA Hons. Research Essay, Massey University, 2002.

overlooked. Jordan's neglect was possibly due to the fact that his most high profile activity took place overseas, in London. This thesis takes up the challenge of redressing this gap in the literature of New Zealand's political history.

### Secondary Literature

When Jordan is recorded in the secondary literature it generally does not move beyond his role in international relations. A feature of the literature covering the period is analysis of New Zealand's emerging independent foreign policy and Jordan is documented within this, often as New Zealand's voice in the international arena. David McIntyre outlined New Zealand's preparations for war up to 1939 and described Jordan as making a considerable mark on the League of Nations with stirring words that were quite consistent with adherence to Labour's policy of collective security.<sup>21</sup> Malcolm McKinnon analysed New Zealand's independence and foreign policy, remarking that at the League Assembly, during discussions on the strengthening of the League's Covenant, Jordan raised one issue after another which Britain preferred to regard as closed.<sup>22</sup> F. P. Walters briefly characterises Jordan in his study of the League of Nations describing him as a man "who might have stepped straight from the ranks of Cromwell's New Model Army, [who] not infrequently embarrassed the Council by a tendency to quote the Bible and to pour ridicule on the best-accepted euphemisms of diplomacy".<sup>23</sup>

Another feature of the secondary literature is that it primarily focuses on the expanding diplomatic role of New Zealand's Department of External Affairs although it does also record glimpses of Jordan's personality. In Malcolm Templeton's *An Eye, An Ear And a Voice: 50 years in New Zealand's External Relations 1943-1993*, diplomat Frank Corner mentions Jordan as "deceptively affable to outsiders, aloof

<sup>21</sup> W. David McIntyre, *New Zealand Prepares For War*, Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1988, p. 164.

<sup>22</sup> Malcolm McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy: New Zealand in the World since 1935*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> F. P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, London: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 736.

somewhere viciously brooding on his grievances against Nash and Fraser".<sup>24</sup> In *Top Hats are not being Taken* Templeton outlines Jordan's role in diplomatic negotiations with the Russian Ambassador regarding the exchange of consular representatives between Wellington and Moscow.<sup>25</sup> In Ian McGibbon's two books of letters between New Zealand diplomats, *Undiplomatic Dialogue* and *Unofficial Channels*<sup>26</sup>, personal correspondence is exchanged between Wellington and the diplomatic network aboard, some of which highlights negative aspects of Jordan's character. McIntosh wrote in 1949, "Bill Jordan's growls and rumbles are too far off to be heard"<sup>27</sup> and Foss Shanahan remarked, "This Nash business with Jordan is like a cancer. He [Jordan] is becoming even worse".<sup>28</sup> This literature signalled that both Jordan's representation of himself, which was largely positive, and the perceived reality, which was sometimes critical, would indeed be a complex issue within the thesis.

Aside from his international role Jordan is occasionally noted on a national political level. He is mentioned in the biographies of several leading Labour politicians who were his contemporaries. In Barry Gustafson's *From the Cradle to the Grave*, he is described as Savage's close friend.<sup>29</sup> In Keith Sinclair's, *Walter Nash*, Jordan is characterised as someone Nash often had trouble with in London during the 1940's.<sup>30</sup> In P.J. O'Farrell's *Harry Holland*, some of Jordan's early Labour Party activity

<sup>24</sup> Malcolm Templeton, *An Eye, An Ear And a Voice: 50 Years in New Zealand's External Relations 1943-1993*, Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1993, p. 93.

<sup>25</sup> Malcolm Templeton, *Top Hats are not being Taken: A Short History of the New Zealand Legation in Moscow, 1944-1950*, Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs in conjunction with the Ministry of External Relations and Trade, 1989, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Ian C. McGibbon (ed.), *Undiplomatic Dialogue: Letters Between Carl Berendsen and Alister McIntosh 1943-52*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993 and Ian C. McGibbon (ed.), *Unofficial Channels: Letters Between Alister McIntosh and Foss Shanahan, George Laking and Frank Corner, 1946-1966*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1999.

<sup>27</sup> McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p. 69. Alister McIntosh was in the Prime Minister's Department from 1935-66 being permanent head from 1945-66. He was Secretary of External Affairs 1943-66.

<sup>28</sup> McGibbon, *Unofficial Channels*, p. 43. A wider perspective on New Zealand's diplomacy is featured in *New Directions in New Zealand Foreign Policy* edited by Hyam Gold and *New Zealand in World Affairs, Volume I* both of which briefly record facets of Jordan's involvement in New Zealand's diplomacy, the latter stating that New Zealand's official approach [through Jordan] was often in support of British foreign policy. W. David McIntyre, 'Labour Experience in Foreign Policy' in Hyam Gold (ed.), *New Directions in New Zealand Foreign Policy*, Auckland: Benton Ross Publishers, 1985. and W. David McIntyre, 'Peter Fraser's Commonwealth: New Zealand and the Origins of the New Commonwealth in the 1940's' in *New Zealand in World Affairs, Volume I*, Wellington: Price Milburn, 1977

<sup>29</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 285.

<sup>30</sup> Keith Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1976, p. 246.

reflected his independence, with O'Farrell noting that Jordan voted for a Bill in Parliament in 1923 which all other Labour MP's opposed.<sup>31</sup> The three separate biographies of Peter Fraser written by James Thorn, Margaret Clark, and Michael King and Michael Bassett all mention Jordan.<sup>32</sup> Bassett and King note Jordan's volatile behaviour, "Fraser even persisted with Jordan in London who was becoming a trial to the high commission staff and picked a fight with Nash every time he was there".<sup>33</sup> John A. Lee devotes a small section to Jordan in *Rhetoric at the Red Dawn*, which details some interesting political anecdotes including one of Jordan throwing some early Labour Party election literature in a ditch.<sup>34</sup> As generally biography effectively trains the spotlight on its subject, Jordan, perhaps not unexpectedly, receives no in-depth analysis in the biographies of his colleagues. Jordan is only really mentioned in passing.

Labour Party history occasionally mentions Jordan although he features as a figure of lesser significance than most of the Party's leaders. Barry Gustafson's *Labour's Path to Political Independence*<sup>35</sup> and Bruce Brown's *The Rise of New Zealand Labour*<sup>36</sup> provide a comprehensive analysis of the history of the Labour Party in New Zealand. Gustafson notes Jordan's religious affiliations in the chapter on religion and Labour.<sup>37</sup> Brown mentions Jordan briefly, four times in his entire book. One mention is at the League Assembly where he suggests Jordan faithfully and forthrightly advocated the views held by the leaders of his Party.<sup>38</sup> Although Jordan is included in these Labour Party histories, understandably the authors' aim was to provide a history of the Party itself and not an analysis of the individuals which made up the Party. Brown does, however, identify Holland, Savage, Fraser and Nash as standing out above the rest,

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<sup>31</sup> P.J. O'Farrell, *Harry Holland: Militant Socialist*, Canberra: Australian National University, 1964, p. 131.

<sup>32</sup> James Thorn, *Peter Fraser*, London: Odhams Press, 1952; Margaret Clark (ed.), *Peter Fraser: Master Politician*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1998; Michael Bassett and Michael King, *Tomorrow Comes The Song: A Life of Peter Fraser*, Auckland: Penguin, 2000.

<sup>33</sup> Bassett and King, p. 314.

<sup>34</sup> John A. Lee, *Rhetoric at the Red Dawn*, Auckland: Collins, 1965. Ch. 13.

<sup>35</sup> Barry Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence: The Origins and Establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party, 1900-1919*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1980.

<sup>36</sup> Bruce Brown, *The Rise of New Zealand Labour: A History of the New Zealand Labour Party from 1916 to 1940*, Wellington, Price Milburn, 1962.

<sup>37</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, Ch. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Brown, p. 183.

which, perhaps unintentionally, relegates Jordan to a secondary and therefore less analysed tier within the Party.<sup>39</sup> Analysis of this lesser tier is long overdue within Labour Party historiography.

New Zealand labour history has focused significant attention on militant trade union activity and industrial action. For example Erik Olssen examined the activity of the Red Feds and the Federation of Labour from 1908-1913.<sup>40</sup> Jordan, although a noteworthy Labour Party personality, was not from a trade union background and not involved in industrial militancy. Rather, he belonged to a somewhat less popularised area of Labour Party ideology which has loosely been defined as the ‘moderate’ faction. When discussing some neglected aspects of the labour movement’s ideology Jack Vowles suggested, “Until about 1913 most historians acknowledge that the labour movement was divided ideologically and structurally between so-called ‘militant’ and ‘moderate’ tendencies”.<sup>41</sup> He argues that different political and ideological contexts of Labour Party development have not been adequately appreciated by historians, which may account for some lack of early analysis of ‘moderates’ in the secondary sources.

### **Biographical Structure**

Historians have also experienced many practical problems, with regard to the biographical genre, some of which are outlined in secondary literature.<sup>42</sup> Hard decisions need to be made about reconstruction, selection of material, analysis of motive and cause, and the structure itself. How should a biography be structured?

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<sup>39</sup> Brown, p. 222.

<sup>40</sup> Erik Olssen, *The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1988. P.J. O’Farrell, *Harry Holland: Militant Socialist*. Bert Roth, *Trade Unions in New Zealand: Past and Present*, Wellington: Reed Education, 1973.

<sup>41</sup> Jack Vowles, ‘From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism: Some Neglected Aspects of the Ideology of the Labour Movement, 1914-1923’ in John E. Martin and Kerry Taylor (eds.) *Culture and the Labour Movement: Essays in New Zealand Labour History*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1991, p. 283. The militant/moderate term has been widely used amongst historians. See Brown, p. 8 and Gustafson, *Labour’s Path to Political Independence*, p. 24.

<sup>42</sup> See Ira Bruce Nadel, *Biography: Fiction, Fact and Form*, London: MacMillan Press, 1984 and Liz Stanley, *The Auto/biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/biography*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992.

According to strict chronology or by combining thematic and chronological approaches? Initially, a biography defined in a conventional way, as the presenting of a realistic life story shaped by chronology and the passing of time, appealed to me as an approach to Jordan's life. Liz Stanley, however, suggests that following the biographical subject in a linear and chronological way effectively trains a spotlight on them and them alone.<sup>43</sup> The effect is that everyone else this person knew is thereby made to have only a shadowy existence. There is some truth in this position. For example, in Bassett and King's biography of Peter Fraser, his colleagues are indeed sometimes obscure. Fraser himself is anything but obscure. The author suggests that he was "as much the Labour movements shepherd as its advocate; his capacity to control and manage the sometimes chaotic cross-currents within the wider Labour movement was unequalled".<sup>44</sup> With the spotlight on them the biographical subject can assume pre-eminence in some instances. The genre of biography can, therefore, distort the interpretation of the past privileging the role of the subject. For example, Barry Gustafson, in discussing the financial policy of the Labour Party states,

Savage, though not as critical as Holland, who believed Social Credit's solution 'would mean disastrous inflation' had serious reservations and joined Holland in stating publicly that the Labour Party 'does not accept the Douglas scheme'.<sup>45</sup>

Whereas Bassett and King argue,

As they searched to define policy in a way that would eventually inspire a generation of New Zealanders, Fraser and Holland had constantly to fight off snake-oil salesmen such as communists and social creditors.<sup>46</sup>

The subject's pre-eminence is indeed a multi-sided challenge in biography – one which is not easily resolved. Also, the role of the author can be as much a contributory factor in the subjects predominance as the genre itself. Another factor can be the subject who leaves behind evidence privileging the way he/she wants to be

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<sup>43</sup> Stanley, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> Bassett & King, p.126.

<sup>45</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 147.

<sup>46</sup> Bassett & King, p. 119.

remembered. This was indeed an issue with Jordan who left behind an evidence trail that was substantial and compelling.

The essence of biography is indeed to focus attention on the subject, however, I was mindful, when I commenced writing, not to bring Jordan forward into a position of undue prominence, which at the same time relegated all others around him into obscurity. Although I have chosen Jordan because he appeared a distinctive character, marked out by his individualism, the research is not driven by analysis which strives to impress upon the reader Jordan's greatness. However, the objective of not highlighting Jordan's prominence was easier to achieve than the inclusion of the supporting cast, for example, Jordan's family and colleagues. The genre, in my opinion, did in fact bring Jordan forward in the thesis at the expense of others around him. Another objective of this study was to set Jordan's views and opinions within the general social and political contexts of his time. Additionally, this proved difficult to achieve as the biographical structure, in which the dominant focus was on Jordan, often overrode my intentions. However, this research does aim to present Jordan in a more rounded way, pushing against the boundaries of the genre to include, where appropriate, his family, some of his contemporaries and some examination of the social and political context of the time, although the main focus remains on Jordan.<sup>47</sup>

In his discussion on how biographies are composed Bruce Nadel suggests the form or way biography is written is just as important as the content.<sup>48</sup> He suggests that in order to achieve 'completeness' biographers need to examine biography's narrative strategies to gain greater awareness of the complexity and richness of biographical form.<sup>49</sup> For example, Nadel suggests emphasis on causality rather than chronology, configuration instead of detail, and significance instead of information, as strategies that can articulate the inner life of the subject. However, human lives are never the same nor is the evidence they leave behind complete. There is merit in differing biographical strategies such as both causality and chronology with one sometimes

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<sup>47</sup> Susan Grogan, *Flora Tristan: Life Stories*, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 11.

<sup>48</sup> Nadel, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Nadel, p. 7.

having to substitute for the other due to a lack of evidence. Therefore, as each individual or biography is different and dependent on available evidence, biographical techniques should be selected for the subject and not be imposed with uniformity whereby the technique seems to override the biography itself. Susan Grogan has pointed out that “lives do not have the neat trajectory, the logic and wholeness, which the biographer generally aspires to achieve, but personalities, ‘selves’ are fragmented and shifting rather than unitary and coherent, defying any biographical aspiration to identify the real person”.<sup>50</sup> Grogan favours Liz Stanley’s suggestion that we look at lives ‘kaleidoscopically’ rather than microscopically.<sup>51</sup> In her study of Flora Tristan, Grogan highlighted a variety of ways in which her subject represented herself to the world by presenting her life as a series of themes. Initial research for this thesis suggested that there was debate about the nature of Jordan’s personality and that he assumed different personae in different situations. Therefore, exploring themes as a way of structuring Jordan’s life rather than the passage of time appeared an exciting way of studying his life.

The constraints of the Masters thesis itself also impacted on the approach. It appeared questionable as to whether the word limit would be able to accommodate a detailed chronological analysis of Jordan’s life. The thematic approach in which the most prominent patterns in Jordan’s life were examined could be accommodated within the boundaries of a thesis. Following Grogan’s lead, the narrative strategy in this biography is kaleidoscopic. It seeks to change the angles of vision on Jordan, to see new patterns in Jordan’s life as well as providing new ways of interpreting his life. The title of this thesis also echoes Grogan’s emphasis on multiple life stories. Although we may not be able to grasp the ‘real’ William Jordan we can glimpse an historical figure assuming a variety of guises, an image shifting as we change our perspective.

This thesis is therefore not organised in a chronological structure as may be expected of a biography but is centred on a series of themes which have appeared most

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<sup>50</sup> Grogan, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> Stanley, Ch. 6.

prominently and which reflect the patterns most prevalent in Jordan's life. Three prominent themes have been selected through a complex interaction between my role as author shaping and forming Jordan's life story and perceived 'real' patterns visible in the sources. These have formed the basis of Chapters two, three and four while Chapter one gives the reader a chronological overview of Jordan's life. Chapter two explores Jordan's enduring representations of himself as working class. Also examined in this chapter is the 'search for respect', a characteristic that is often linked with the working class and which, for Jordan, was seemingly reformed later in life into a desire for higher honours. This Chapter reflects some tension between Jordan's own representation and the 'reality' of the life. Chapter three considers Jordan in his best-known persona as an independent man, independence was represented both as a personal characteristic and a trait of his Party's political and diplomatic positions. However, amidst the dominant independent persona are notions of interdependence and dependence, the boundaries between them, at times, seemingly blurred. Jordan's religion was so all-pervasive that it informed all aspects of his life, consequently it is the theme of Chapter four. How religion engaged with his other life interests such as politics is the focus of this chapter and how echoes of religion manifest into other characteristics such as his humanitarianism. In this chapter Jordan's representation and the reality I have suggested are much more closely aligned than in the previous two chapters. These themes are not the only ones in Jordan's life but appear consistently during in his lifetime.

The use of themes has also been beneficial, as it has allowed some exploration of change and continuity over time. Rather than pursuing a simple chronology from birth to death this study is multi-chronological, tracing a series of life experiences, which overlap and interlock.<sup>52</sup> Each chapter presents Jordan from a different angle. In pursuing Jordan's life stories this study thus retraces the chronological ground several times, but each time with a different focus. Events and characters may feature briefly in one chapter only to be explored in detail in a later one, and the same event may be examined several times from different perspectives. The chapters provide a layered

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<sup>52</sup> Grogan, p. 12.

approach to his life, offering a multi-dimensional image of their subject.<sup>53</sup> The aim of this research is to uncover what Teresa Illes describes as “all sides of the subject”<sup>54</sup> or at least some of them and to emphasise the multiple dimensions of William Jordan’s story.

It must be noted, however, that the multi-dimensional images of Jordan’s life are limited to the evidence that survives which sometimes inhibits a complete chronological overview. The traces left of Jordan’s life are inevitably incomplete, fragments of a rich and complex life.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, within the chapters there are gaps, from a chronological viewpoint, as a result of no visible evidence or simply fluctuating human experience. Some of the evidence cannot be simply divided into neat categories. A danger of separating evidence into thematic strands is to isolate it from its original or surrounded context. It is apparent that some experiences could easily be placed in more than one chapter; therefore occasionally evidence itself is retraced and revisited to provide either insight or context, as is the chronological ground, although each time from a different perspective.

### Sources

Notwithstanding this, the project was largely based on a voluminous collection of primary source material which has been preserved and is in the possession of Mrs Winnie Jordan, the daughter-in-law of William Jordan, who lives in Auckland. The collection comprises a large number of photographs, including both private family photographs spanning Jordan’s entire life and numerous publicity photographs, which portray Jordan enacting his duties as High Commissioner overseas. The collection also contains several large scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings as well as magazine articles and numerous loose newspaper cuttings all of which are dated and referenced. The newspaper detail is extensive covering the entire span of his public life.

Complementing this is a considerable amount of private and public correspondence. In

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<sup>53</sup> Grogan, p. 12.

<sup>54</sup> The title of a book by Teresa Illes, *All Sides of the Story: Women and Biography*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1992.

<sup>55</sup> Grogan, p. 215.

addition there are a large quantity of speech notes also covering substantial periods of his public life. There are also a number of recordings from the Sound Archives, one an interview entitled 'Portrait from Life' in which Jordan reflects on his life, a valuable point of reference. Winnie Jordan gave me unlimited and unrestricted access to the collection and was very helpful and enthusiastic about the project.

In addition, Winnie Jordan also made available a bound, unpublished volume of Jordan's memoirs written in the 1950s. Also available was the original handwritten draft of the first twenty pages of the memoirs. The memoirs largely focus on the early part of Jordan's life, his boyhood in London, his arrival in New Zealand and his time as an MP, concluding at the outbreak of war in 1939. Jordan notes here that he received a request to write his life story although it is unclear who instigated this request. Correspondence did reveal, however, that in October 1953, Harraps, a London publishing firm, would give no firm commitment for the memoirs publication.<sup>56</sup> In July 1956 Jordan had also written to Odhams Press in London regarding the publishing of his life story, however they also would make no firm commitment to publish wanting, understandably, to read a manuscript.<sup>57</sup> Much of the information in the thesis outlining Jordan's childhood and early life has been gleaned from the memoirs.

Additionally, I interviewed Winnie Jordan who had particular recollections and insights regarding the family however, I was mindful that Mrs Jordan only knew William Jordan in the last few years of his life and any early memories had been relayed by her husband. They were in effect conveyed family stories rather than simple unmediated 'fact'. I also interviewed Dr. Gwen Douglas, Jordan's only living child, over the telephone in her home in London. She provided a great deal of personal information about Jordan and introduced another intimate perspective which was unobtainable elsewhere, although she herself admitted many of her recollections

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<sup>56</sup> Alan Mitchell to Jordan, 14 October 1953 "Harraps [are] not prepared to enter into a contract until they have seen manuscript", Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 1 Folder 3, Auckland University Library.

<sup>57</sup> Odhams Press Ltd (Book Department) to Jordan, 12 July 1956, WJC.

may be weighted in Jordan's favour due to her close family connection with him. I had conversations prior and subsequent to the interviews with both women which often clarified and added to the earlier information and have drawn on them where appropriate.

This project is also based on public archival material. At the Auckland University Library there is a selection of Jordan's papers ranging from ca 1920-1955. These were donated by his wife upon his death in 1959 and encompass material largely from the time of his second marriage in 1952 although there is some significant early material such as political scrapbooks. The Auckland University Library also holds the records of the Auckland Labour Representation Committee during some of Jordan's time as an MP. The Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington hold the papers of Sir Alister McIntosh, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, which focus on New Zealand's evolving diplomatic service of which Jordan was a part. McIntosh's voluminous correspondence with New Zealand's entire diplomatic staff provided insights into New Zealand's response to major international events, for example, the Paris Peace conference of 1946 which featured Jordan. The often-frank exchanges provided a candid perspective on Jordan in many instances. The McIntosh papers sketched Jordan's diplomatic career and supplemented the more personal record of Jordan's life found in Auckland.

Other material at the Alexander Turnbull Library included the papers of historian Bert Roth which provided biographical information on Labour Party identities including Jordan; the papers of Richard Mitchelson Campbell who served ten years in New Zealand House, London, during Jordan's tenure; the papers of Sidney George Holland, Prime Minister for the last two years of Jordan's tenure and the New Zealand National Party Papers whose file entitled 'High Commissioner' held newspaper clippings on Jordan. The papers of the Labour Party provided valuable information on Jordan's early Labour Party activity, which were also supplemented by the Labour Party Conference Reports during Jordan's time as an MP. The P.J. O'Farrell papers also provided material on early Labour activity, which included correspondence from Jordan and covered the activity of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

At the National Archives the Prime Minister's series held early correspondence from Jordan to Savage and then to Fraser. The External Affairs series also had correspondence from Jordan regarding issues at the League of Nations such as Italy's invasion of Abyssinia, civil war in Spain and Japanese aggression in China. The papers of Sir Walter Nash had correspondence with and concerning Jordan. Also invaluable at the National Archives were immigrant-shipping lists through which Jordan's arrival in New Zealand in 1904 could be verified. And the embarkation lists of troop ships allowed verification of Jordan's record of service, departure date and return to New Zealand during the first World War.

The National Archive in Auckland provided a copy of Jordan's last will and testament and the Personnel Archives of the New Zealand Defence Force provided Jordan's army service record. Sound Archives in Christchurch provided several radio broadcasts from Jordan and also an interview, which was recorded in the last few years of his life. The New Zealand Methodist Church Archive, also in Christchurch, provided some early material on Jordan's involvement with the Methodist Church in Wellington. The Hocken Library in Dunedin holds the papers of some prominent early Labour Party identities such as J.T. Paul, A.P. McCarthy and E.J. Howard in which there was some interesting correspondence from Jordan.

Although Winnie Jordan's collection contained a vast amount of newspapers cuttings, the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Auckland Star* supplemented these, on occasion, as Jordan was an Auckland MP they contained the most local reference to him. The *Dominion* and the *Evening Post* were also consulted and compared for reports of Jordan overseas. *The Maoriland Worker* and the *Standard*, which were official organs of the Labour Party were also used to assess Labour Party opinion. The *New Zealand Methodist Times* was used to cover Jordan's religious connections and *The Vanguard* used to provide insights into Jordan's Temperance activity. London and British newspapers and magazines such as the *Times*, *Daily Mirror*, and others too numerous

to recount individually, also provided clippings and articles on Jordan which are in Mrs Jordan's possession.

The primary sources are the crystals which have provided the images for the kaleidoscopic views of Jordan's life seen in Chapters two, three and four - The Working Class Man, The Independent Man and the Man of Religion. However, to aid the reader, a chronological outline of Jordan's life, Chapter one, precedes the thematic chapters.

## Chapter One

### **“The most human of men?”: Jordan – The Chronological Life.<sup>58</sup>**

There have been no previous extended biographies of William Jordan - this thesis is the first attempt to extensively document his story. However, the remnants left by a life are inevitably incomplete when compared to the labyrinth of the life itself.<sup>59</sup> It was indeed the complexity of Jordan’s life that instigated the thematic approach to this thesis whereby the multiple dimensions of William Jordan’s life could be more readily explored. However, we live our lives chronologically and as the actual sequence of past events in Jordan’s life may not be well known, before the reader delves into the multiplicity of Jordan’s story, dates and events in order of occurrence are presented as a chronological overview.

William Joseph Jordan was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, 1879, in Ramsgate, a seaport town on the Kentish coast of England.<sup>60</sup> His father, Captain William Jordan, born on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1851, was a fisherman who went to sea at the age of twelve. He received no formal education but learned to read and write while on the ocean.<sup>61</sup>



Figure 1: Captain William Jordan is pictured in 1922 aged seventy-one.

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<sup>58</sup> Berendsen, ‘Reminiscences of an ambassador’, MS-Papers-6759-463, p. 170.

<sup>59</sup> Grogan, p. 215.

<sup>60</sup> *The Times*, London, 9 April 1959.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

Jordan's paternal grandfather was a farm labourer at Northdown near Margate, who could not read or write. He worked six days a week, and when he was too old to work in the fields he was provided for by his employer in a retirement home.<sup>62</sup> Jordan's mother was Elizabeth Ann Catt, her family had lived in Kent for several generations, and were an established fishing family.



Figure 2: Jordan with his mother, aged eighty-four, in 1936.

Jordan's maternal grandfather, Captain Joseph Catt, owned fishing boats and pleasure yachts. Jordan said that his uncles and grandfather, as well as his father, were all fishermen who also doubled as lifeboat crew that went to ships in distress on the Godwin Sands.<sup>63</sup>

Jordan was the third child in a family of four, having two elder sisters and one younger. Gwen Douglas, Jordan's daughter does not recall the name of his eldest sister only knowing her as Auntie Tot.<sup>64</sup> The second sister's given name was Annie, although Jordan noted that the family called her Nancy.<sup>65</sup> The youngest sister was named Elizabeth, Gwen recalls her as Auntie Li.

<sup>62</sup> William Joseph Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs', unpaginated, dated 18 July 1954, WJC.

<sup>63</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>65</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

The coming of the steam trawler instigated a decline in the local fishing industry and as a consequence the family moved to London in the early 1880's, experiencing the urban poverty of the city. Jordan's father found it difficult to find regular employment and the family moved several times depending on their ability to pay the rent. They generally lived in the East End districts of Hoxton and St. Luke's. Jordan remarked, "sometimes the only water tap was in the washhouse in the back yard, all the water had to be carried upstairs and all the dirty water, ashes and other matter had to be carried down".<sup>66</sup> Having no oven Jordan recalled the main meal of the week being cooked in front of the fire, "the meat being suspended on a cord from the mantelpiece, one member of the family kept it turning and basting it from a basin below it, the potatoes boiled on the fire".<sup>67</sup> Places of his youth remained close to Jordan's heart throughout his life, "[After WWII] I was proud when the Borough Council invited me to declare open a large block of flats which was named 'Jordan House' ...they were in the Hoxton district of Shoreditch, near to where I lived when a boy".<sup>68</sup>



Figure 3: Jordan, the tenants, and the flats that bore his name.

<sup>66</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>67</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>68</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

The family attended St. Luke's Methodist Parish Church in Old Street, with Jordan receiving his only formal education at St. Luke's Parochial School (which was attached to the Church). Known in Jordan's time as St. Luke's Poor School it was also attended by his sister Nancy, "my sister and I were fortunate as children to be admitted to St. Luke's".<sup>69</sup> Clothing and boots were provided for a large number of children. Jordan recalled wearing an old fashioned blue uniform that included long trousers and a jacket with a button at the collar.<sup>70</sup>

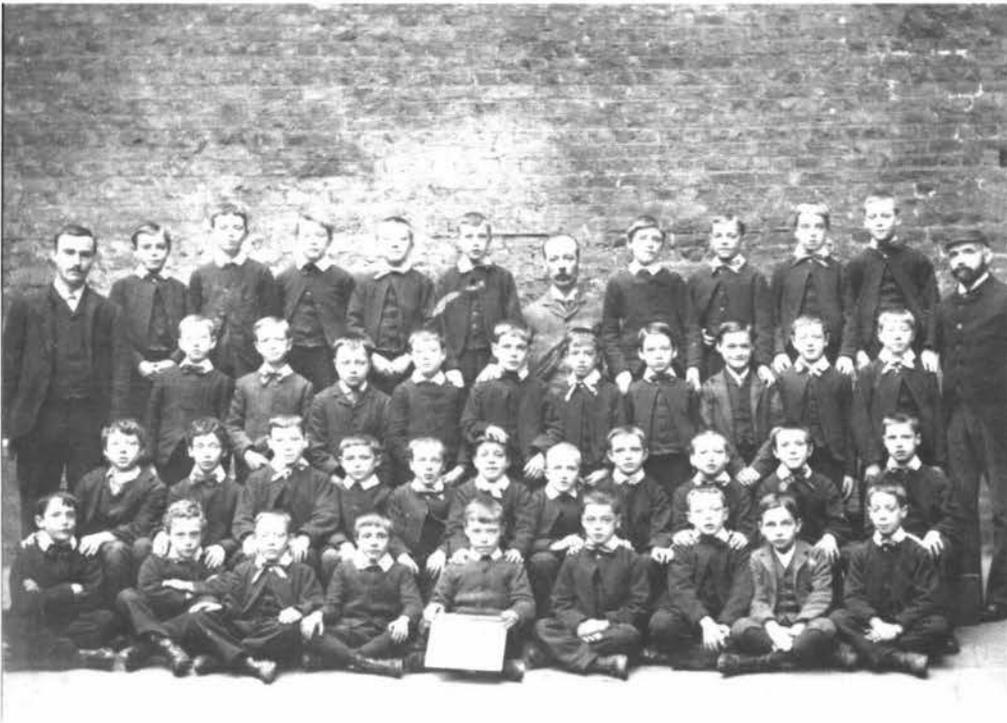


Figure 4: Jordan in uniform at St. Luke's school, he is in the middle of the third row with his hand on another boy's head.

There were jobs at the school for which some of the children were paid. Jordan worked as a fire boy, carrying the coals from the cellar to the various fireplaces, for which he received 6d a week, with a penny for firewood. Jordan passed through the classes into the seventh standard and left school at the age of twelve.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> 'Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan', Media No. 1013.1, Series No. TAL 939, Radio New Zealand Sound Archives, Christchurch.

<sup>70</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>71</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

On leaving school his first job was as an errand boy with a manufacturing jeweller in 1892. After less than a year he left to become an apprentice coach painter for Liversidge and Son who built wagons for Carter, Paterson and Company, a large London cartage firm.<sup>72</sup> The firm was next door to his school in Old Street. The job paid more, “6/- a week, an advance of 1/6 on the previous job...it was a highly skilled trade”.<sup>73</sup> Yet working conditions were poor. The coach painting was done in a closely shut workshop, which was badly lit and poorly ventilated. Many of the men suffered from white lead poisoning.<sup>74</sup> Jordan worked in Old Street for several years after which he himself developed white lead poisoning and was compelled to leave the trade after completing the apprenticeship.

Jordan joined the London postal service in 1897, initially as a labourer at the Post and Telegraph factory at Mount Pleasant, Clerkenwell.<sup>75</sup> After a few months he was appointed to the painting staff, painting telephone call cabinets, instrument panels and other Post Office gear. The conditions at the factory were much better than the coach factory, it was better ventilated, had set hours, a good rate of pay plus holidays. Within a few years, after several retirements and resignations, Jordan became the senior man in charge of the department.

Although initially safe and secure in civil service employment Jordan gradually developed a feeling he later described as “a wanderlust, a dissatisfaction or an ambition” which led him to make a further career move.<sup>76</sup> In 1903 he joined the London Metropolitan Police, thinking the job would be more interesting and active.<sup>77</sup> It was also out of the enclosed factories, he was dealing with the affairs of people and seeing them go their respective ways. He lived in a barracks at Kennington and received his training at Scotland Yard and Wellington Barracks. He was first posted to the Limehouse district and later to Forest Gate. Despite the attraction of the new job

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<sup>72</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 8 April 1938, WJC.

<sup>73</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>74</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’. Dry white lead was used in some of the paints and inhaled by the mixer.

<sup>75</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan’.

<sup>77</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

he recalled that the feeling of discontent persisted. He quickly found the beat monotonous. As a result he decided to emigrate to New Zealand.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 1904 Jordan sailed from Gravesend on board the *Corinthic*, a Shaw Savill and Albion ship.<sup>78</sup> The ship carried six hundred and twenty six passengers, five hundred and fifty-five of English descent, thirty-three Scots and thirty-eight Irishmen.<sup>79</sup> As an assisted immigrant Jordan travelled third class, he listed his occupation as painter. In London he was told that his trade would be desirable in his new country.<sup>80</sup> The ship's Inward Manifest records the arrival date in New Zealand as 12 November 1904.<sup>81</sup>

The advice about the utility of his trade was overstated; he was initially rejected for a painting job in Wellington.<sup>82</sup> As a consequence Jordan travelled to the Pohangina Valley in the Manawatu in pursuit of work. He worked in the Valley for nearly a year doing a variety of jobs, including clearing bush, initially weeding dog-tail grass that was sown in the ash after the forest area had been felled of trees, left to dry and then burnt. He milked cows, took part in a stumping contract, painted a farm house and outbuildings, planted pine trees, worked with a chaff cutter, picked up fleeces in a shearing shed, made fences, spread metal on the road, and any other available work.<sup>83</sup>

Jordan then moved to the Nelson district where he was offered six months painting work in the railway workshops. At the end of this time he was offered a more permanent job at the big railway works at Petone but states in his memoirs that he preferred to stay in Nelson, "it was pleasant living in Nelson, [I] was there when they celebrated the Centenary of the Battle of Trafalgar [21 October 1805]".<sup>84</sup> In Nelson he joined the Good Templars Lodge, a temperance movement, and was soon asked to

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<sup>78</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>79</sup> Passenger Lists October to December 1904, Micro – T5372, SS1/481-SS1/497, NA.

<sup>80</sup> 'Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan'.

<sup>81</sup> Although the ship's manifest records the arrival date as 12 November 1904, in his memoirs Jordan records the date as 9 November 1904.

<sup>82</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>83</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>84</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

speak to the members, perhaps the beginning of his public speaking career. Due to trade falling off in Nelson single men with no ties in the district were advised to leave to find work elsewhere. Jordan left Nelson for Wellington on the steamship *Penguin*.<sup>85</sup>

During 1906, Jordan, now resident in Wellington, joined the Primitive Methodist Church in Webb Street. He also became involved in politics, joining the Independent Political Labour League in 1907.<sup>86</sup> In 1908 Jordan first appears on the electoral roll for Wellington Central, his occupation listed as painter and his address at 21 Walter Street,<sup>87</sup> a boarding house where he lived for several years.<sup>88</sup> In 1910 Jordan joined the newly established Wellington City Men's Brotherhood, a subsidiary of the Wellington Methodist Central Mission, and on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1910 he was elected secretary of the Brotherhood.<sup>89</sup> The Brotherhood was a Sunday afternoon gathering for men whose objectives included assisting all movements for moral and social reform.

In September 1910 Jordan was a founding member of the Wellington Main Branch of the United Labour Party. He was appointed secretary/treasurer until the permanent officers were elected. In January 1911 he was elected to the Executive Committee.<sup>90</sup> Jordan's first foray into local politics was as a labour candidate in the Wellington City municipal elections in April 1911. He was among eight labour candidates however, only two were elected.<sup>91</sup> Jordan was unsuccessful, polling sixth out of the eight candidates, and twenty-third out of the thirty-six candidates.<sup>92</sup>

During his time in Wellington Jordan was elected to the Executive of the New Zealand Temperance Alliance<sup>93</sup> and in May 1911 went to Waihi as an unpaid Temperance organiser and speaker in Ohinemuri district. Jordan had agreed to go there for a three-

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<sup>85</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>86</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 285.

<sup>87</sup> Wellington Central Electoral Roll 1908, WTU.

<sup>88</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>89</sup> *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 13 August 1910. Photocopy supplied by The Methodist Church of New Zealand Archive, Christchurch.

<sup>90</sup> Minute Book of the United Labour Party (Wellington Main Branch), MSX-2792, WTU.

<sup>91</sup> *Evening Post*, 27 April 1911.

<sup>92</sup> *Evening Post*, 27 April 1911.

<sup>93</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

month period before the license poll took place. In the 1911 electoral roll he is registered in 'Ohinemuri', his occupation is recorded as painter and his address at Kenny-Street, Waihi.<sup>94</sup>

Due to a lack of employment in Waihi Jordan soon moved again, this time to Wanganui where he worked for a while as a painter and later started his own business with a partner, Charles Leigh.<sup>95</sup> Jordan was soon active as a Bible class leader at the Dublin Street Methodist Church in Wanganui.<sup>96</sup> During April 1912 he was Wanganui delegate to the Unity Conference in Wellington.<sup>97</sup> The *New Zealand Herald* noted, "Mr W.J. Jordan (Wanganui) commended the spirit which had dominated the deliberations of the conference. The prevailing note had been 'come let us reason together' and he believed that the same feeling would guide the future policy of the Labour Party".<sup>98</sup> In July 1912 he was a vice-president of the Wanganui Branch of the United Labour Party.<sup>99</sup>

In April 1913, Jordan was still based in Wanganui but working out of Ngaruawahia, painting, and living in a tent.<sup>100</sup> Despite intentions to the contrary he did not return to Wanganui, instead he returned to Waihi and established a painting business with Bert Waite.<sup>101</sup> Although he had a fair business in Waihi he moved to Ngaruawahia soon afterwards, "a friend built a house in Ngaruawahia and wishing to see yet another part of New Zealand I undertook to do the painting and paperhanging, and so went to that town".<sup>102</sup> In Ngaruawahia Jordan and a friend Albert Brewer set up a painting and paperhanging business, Jordan and Brewer.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Ohinemuri Electoral Roll 1911, WTU.

<sup>95</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 23 November 1945, WJC.

<sup>96</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 23 November 1945, WJC.

<sup>97</sup> United Labour Party-Research notes and records 1909-1913, Bert Roth Papers, 94-106-15/07, WTU.

<sup>98</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 13 April 1912.

<sup>99</sup> C. Leigh to A. P. McCarthy, 29 July 1912, A. P. McCarthy Papers MS-0963, Folder 4, DU:HO.

<sup>100</sup> Jordan to McCarthy, 3 April 1913, A.P. McCarthy Papers MS-0963, Folder 7, DU:HO.

<sup>101</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'. In the 1914 Ohinemuri electoral roll Bertram Waite is registered at Martha Street, Waihi, occupation painter and decorator.

<sup>102</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>103</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'. Jordan does not specify in his memoirs how he knew Albert Brewer. Brewer is on the Raglan electoral roll in 1919, his address Riverdale, Ngaruawahia, his occupation painter. Jordan's friendship with Brewer was long standing; when he died he left Brewer twenty pounds in his will.



Figure 5: Jordan outside his paintshop, he is on the right with his foot on the ladder.

By now he was a practising Methodist lay preacher, and among his hobbies was keeping hives of bees. He was an elected member of the Ngaruawahia Town Board.<sup>104</sup> He was a founding member of the Ngaruawahia Branch of the New Zealand Labour Party and became Branch President in December 1916.<sup>105</sup>

In October 1916 Jordan volunteered for war service, and although initially rejected by a local doctor who knew of his lead poisoning, a neighbouring doctor accepted him on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of February 1917.<sup>106</sup> He was thirty-seven years old, his height and weight recorded as five feet nine inches and 166 lbs respectively.<sup>107</sup> Jordan trained at Trentham joining the Canterbury Regiment and was promoted to Corporal on 5 May 1917 and then to Sergeant on 18 September 1917.

<sup>104</sup> *Maoriland Worker*, 23 June 1916.

<sup>105</sup> Biographical Summary of William Joseph Jordan in Biographical Notes, Bert Roth Papers, 94-106-65/04, WTU.

<sup>106</sup> 'Attestation For General Service', William Joseph Jordan No. 54524, Personnel Records (Archives), New Zealand Defence Force, Upper Hutt.

<sup>107</sup> 'Attestation For General Service'.

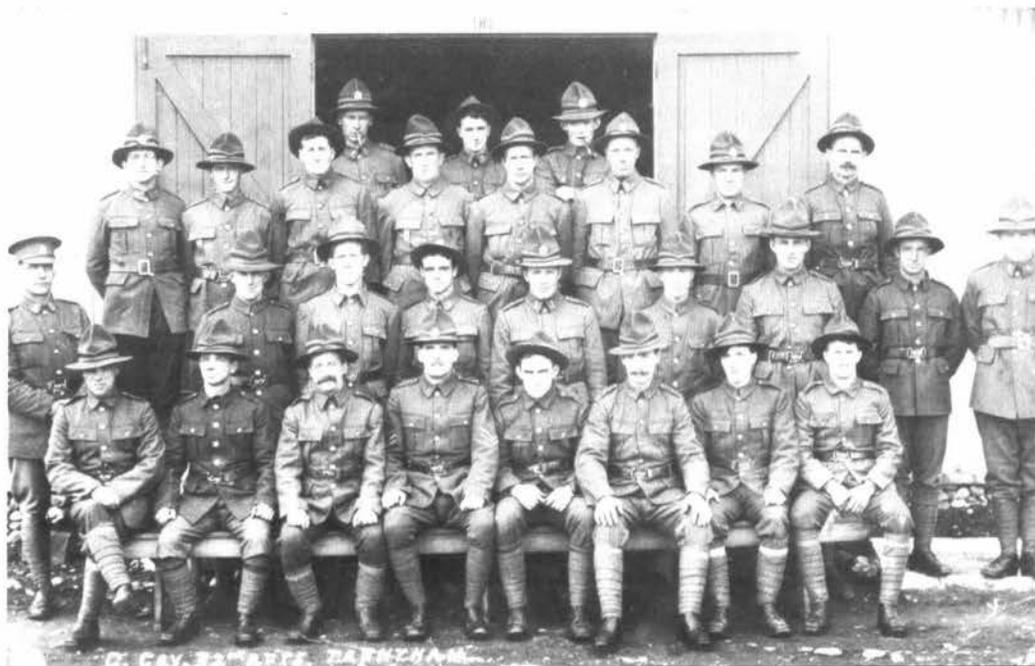


Figure 6: This photograph is dated 26th August 1917 and was taken at Trentham. Jordan is in the front row, fourth from left with his Corporal strips. He entitled the photo "a rough old lot".

He embarked from Wellington on the *Maunganui* on 21 November 1917, disembarking at Liverpool and arrived at Sling Camp in January 1918.<sup>108</sup> On the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1918 Jordan left for France and marched into camp at Etaples, joining the battle four days later. Jordan's war was short-lived as on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April he received a serious head wound at Ypres, which prevented his return to action.<sup>109</sup>

After Armistice, due to the shortage of shipping, it would be two years before all the troops were returned to New Zealand. To keep the men occupied an education wing was formed and Jordan joined as a bee-keeping instructor, rising to the rank of warrant officer second-class and third-class instructor.<sup>110</sup> He left London on 3 July 1919 on the troop ship *S. S. Mamari* and disembarked in Auckland on 20 August 1919.<sup>111</sup> He

<sup>108</sup> 'Statement of Service', William Joseph Jordan No. 54524, Personnel Records (Archives), New Zealand Defence Force, Upper Hutt.

<sup>109</sup> 'Statement of Service'.

<sup>110</sup> 'Statement of Service'.

<sup>111</sup> 'Statement of Service'.

received the customary decorations, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and was discharged from the army in October 1919.<sup>112</sup>

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1917, prior to his enlistment, Jordan was married at Ngaruawahia to Winifred Amy Bycroft, a draper's assistant.<sup>113</sup> Winifred was fifteen years his junior, her birthdate was the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1894.<sup>114</sup> She was born in Grafton, Auckland, educated in Ngaruawahia and was the eldest child of Mr and Mrs Louth Bycroft. She had three sisters and two brothers.<sup>115</sup> Her grandfather John Bycroft immigrated to New Zealand in the early 1840's, and established the first flourmill in Auckland.<sup>116</sup> Her father's occupation was also a flour miller. Her two brothers served in WWI, the youngest, Roy, was killed on Armistice Day. Winifred was a member of the Methodist Church in Ngaruawahia and a Sunday school teacher, the church was probably where she and Jordan met.

While on their honeymoon the Jordans stayed in Wanganui with friends, Fred and Sophia Clarke, originally from England.<sup>117</sup> After the marriage, while Jordan was in army training, Winifred lived in Wanganui with the Clarkes. A son, William Frederick, was born in Wanganui on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1917.<sup>118</sup> Sometime after the birth of her son Winifred moved back to her hometown. In 1919 she is recorded on the Raglan electoral roll as married and living in Ngaruawahia.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> 'Statement of Service'.

<sup>113</sup> Certified Copy of Marriage Certificate dated 12 July 1984 supplied by Winnie Jordan.

<sup>114</sup> Mrs Winifrid Amy Jordan's passport sighted by author, WJC.

<sup>115</sup> *Evening Post*, 10 October 1950, WJC.

<sup>116</sup> *Evening Post*, 10 October 1950, WJC.

<sup>117</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 9 October 1950, WJC.

<sup>118</sup> 'Attestation For General Service'.

<sup>119</sup> Raglan Electoral Roll 1919, WTU.



Figure 7: The family just before Jordan sailed for England. The photograph is a rather unconventional pose with an emphasis on Jordan's affection for his son. Jordan was obviously willing to be represented as a man who has a strong feeling for his family. Also prominent are Jordan's Sergeant strips on his right arm denoting pride in his army rank.

After the war, due to the effects of the head wound, Jordan did not return to his painting business at Ngaruawahia - instead the family moved to Auckland and settled at Papatoetoe. Jordan took a job as a honey blender for the New Zealand Honey Producers' Association.<sup>120</sup> He became an accomplished grader of honey and always remained a firm advocate of its nutritional value. Jordan's second child, Gweneth Jean Elizabeth Jordan, was born in Auckland on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1920.<sup>121</sup> In 1921, while still a honey blender, Jordan also began working as a storeman in Dalgety's wool store.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>122</sup> *Roskill and Onehunga News*, 2 April 1964, WJC.



Figure 8: The blending tank at the Honey depot in Stanley Street, Auckland ca 1920. Jordan is in the overalls. The photograph illustrates the pride he took in the particular blending system, which he designed himself.

At the 1919 general election Jordan contested the Raglan electorate. While he was a member of the Labour Party and had the backing of the local branch, he was not nationally endorsed and stood as an Independent Labour candidate. He was unsuccessful.<sup>123</sup> He stated in his memoirs his candidacy was encouraged by friends in Ngaruawahia and the miners in Huntly who were insistent that the seat be contested (Ngaruawahia and Huntly were both in the Raglan electorate).<sup>124</sup>

In 1922 Jordan contested the Manukau electorate as the official Labour representative and in an election sensation defeated the incumbent, Sir Frederick Lang, the Speaker of the House. After Jordan was elected to Parliament the family moved to Onehunga.

<sup>123</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>124</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

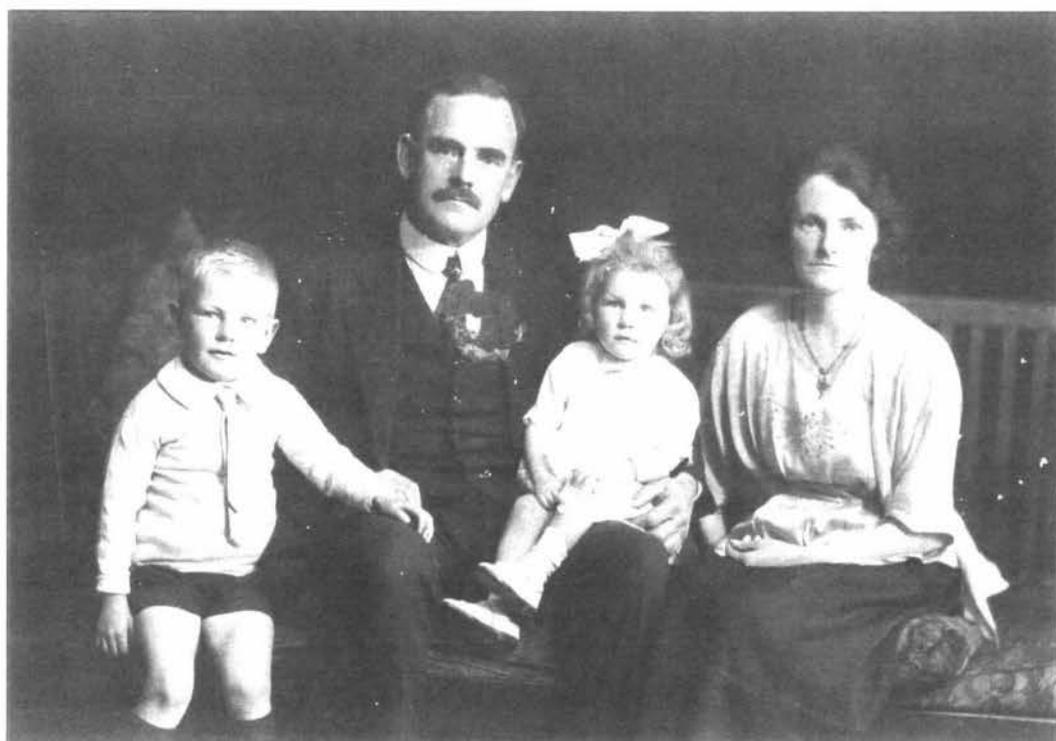


Figure 9: A family photograph taken ca 1922, possibly after Jordan was elected to Parliament. The image is a strong representation of family, primarily focussing on Jordan and the bond with his two children.

The Jordans were recorded on the Manukau electoral roll in 1925 and 1928 as resident in Grey Street East.<sup>125</sup> In 1928 they had a house built at 73 Quadrant Road, Onehunga, where they lived until 1936.<sup>126</sup> Jordan remained active during this time as a Methodist lay preacher and was a trustee of the church at Onehunga. While an MP Jordan was also a member of the Board of Governors of the Auckland Grammar School, the Auckland Transport Board and the One Tree Hill Domain Board.<sup>127</sup>

Jordan was a popular politician. In the five elections from 1922 to 1935 he increased his majority in all but one election, including the 1928 election when he was absent in Canada representing New Zealand at the Empire Parliamentary Conference.<sup>128</sup> His majorities and total votes polled were among the highest of the Labour politicians in

<sup>125</sup> Manukau General Electoral Rolls 1925 and 1928, WTU.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>127</sup> *Evening Post*, 9 April 1959.

<sup>128</sup> J.T. Paul, *Humanism In Politics*, Wellington: New Zealand Worker, 1946, Appendix F.

the country. He became known for his independent outlook.<sup>129</sup> Within the Party he was often perceived as a conservative resulting largely from his belief that strikes and militant unionism were never the answer to the workers' problems. Also his occasional vocal support for the Balance/Seddon Liberal administration sometimes caused friction with his Labour colleagues. However, this possibly contributed to Jordan's popularity amongst conservatives, which John A. Lee remarked was denied to other Labour MPs.<sup>130</sup> Jordan remained MP for Manukau from 1922 until 1936. During 1932-33 he was also national president of the New Zealand Labour Party.<sup>131</sup>

After the first Labour government was elected to power in 1935 Jordan was appointed High Commissioner in London and New Zealand's representative at the League of Nations, taking up his appointment on 1 September 1936. He represented New Zealand on the League's council from 1936 to 1939, and was President of the council in 1938 for the brief 102<sup>nd</sup> session.<sup>132</sup> The New Zealand government's independent stand on international issues such as the Spanish civil war brought it into conflict with British policy, and Jordan into corresponding public prominence.<sup>133</sup> He was known at the League for his blunt, down-to-earth manner.

During the Second World War Jordan became known for his assiduous concern for the welfare of New Zealand servicemen and women stationed in Britain.<sup>134</sup> On many occasions he lent small sums of money from his own pocket, which were almost invariably repaid. He drove hundreds of miles to see and talk with New Zealanders in ships, at shore establishments and on operational stations. When he visited New Zealand in 1945 he took with him an indexed collection of more than two thousand photographs and newspaper clippings, covering personnel in all the services.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> NZPD, 199 (1923), p. 222.

<sup>130</sup> Lee, *Rhetoric at the Red Dawn*, p. 83.

<sup>131</sup> Paul, Appendix G.

<sup>132</sup> Templeton, 'Jordan'.

<sup>133</sup> Templeton, 'Jordan'.

<sup>134</sup> Templeton, 'Jordan'.

<sup>135</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 9 October 1945, WJC.

As Jordan's tenure as High Commissioner stretched on he became known as the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps in London, being the senior in service of all overseas representatives of British Dominions and foreign countries. At the end of WWII he signed on behalf of New Zealand, peace treaties with Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia and Finland. He gained a reputation as an after-dinner speaker. Lee noted that, "He had a cockney's surface wit, no capacity for irony, but an ability instantly to note the incongruity that gives one the belly laugh".<sup>136</sup> When bombs fell near his Wimbledon home, Jordan went out to lend a hand. He was asked, "Warden?" and replied "No, Jordan. I have got a river named after me".<sup>137</sup>

In 1948 Jordan was reappointed for a further three years and when the National government was elected in 1949, contrary to all precedents with political appointments, he remained in his job for the full length of his term. In May 1950 Jordan visited New Zealand, he claimed to alert the government to staff pay anomalies but also to secure his pension when he retired.<sup>138</sup> When he did retire in August 1951 he had been High Commissioner for a record term of fifteen years. His first wife, Winifred, had suffered from rheumatic fever as a child and was not generally physically strong, her health deteriorating in later years.<sup>139</sup> She died in London in October 1950. They had been married thirty-three years.

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<sup>136</sup> Lee, *Rhetoric at the Red Dawn*, p. 84.

<sup>137</sup> *Evening Post*, 9 April 1959.

<sup>138</sup> *Dominion*, 27 May 1950, WJC.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.



Figure 10: Jordan with his son, William at the races ca 1948-1950. Jordan is wearing the round, dark rimmed glasses which became a trademark in later years.

Jordan received numerous honours during his lifetime. He was made a Freeman of Ramsgate and the City of London. He received honorary LL.Ds from St. Andrews and Cambridge Universities, and was also a Privy Councillor. In the Queen's Birthday Honours of 1952 he was made a Knight Commander of St. Michael and St. George (K.C.M.G.) for services to the Commonwealth.

Back in New Zealand, on 1 July 1952 Jordan married Elizabeth Ross Reid, a widow with no children, and moved into his wife's property at 26 Riddell Road, St. Heliers. His wife had been born in Scotland and had come to New Zealand as a child. They had met when she had been on a coach tour of England. 'Leith', as she was known, had brilliant blue eyes and was fun to be with.<sup>140</sup> Jordan returned to London several times during his retirement, both to see his daughter who became a psychiatrist and still lives in Britain, and to renew old acquaintances. He became a director of several boards and was a member of the Auckland Power Board from 1953 to December 1958. He died in Auckland on 8 April 1959.<sup>141</sup> The Sir William Jordan Recreation Centre stands in Onehunga today as a lasting testament to Jordan.

The chronological approach is one way of surveying Jordan's life. However, the image shifts as we change our perspective - with only a small movement, Jordan is revisioned, a different pattern appears, Jordan - The Working Class Man.

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<sup>140</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.

<sup>141</sup> *Evening Post*, 9 April 1959.

## Chapter Two

### “He walked with kings but kept the common touch”: The Working Class Man<sup>142</sup>

Historian Graeme Dunstall has argued that in estimating social status in an historical context, how a man sees himself – the self-conscious label – is our most important evidence.<sup>143</sup> William Jordan’s lifelong perception of himself was as a working class man. In his maiden speech to Parliament in 1923 he declared, “I am speaking for the ordinary workers”.<sup>144</sup> He was knighted in 1952 but even then maintained, “I am still the same man even though I am now a Sir”.<sup>145</sup> Erik Olssen suggests that social classes are defined by a wide variety of variables such as education, occupation and income.<sup>146</sup> Although Jordan constantly portrayed himself as working class, throughout his lifetime many variables, singularly and in combination, effectively complicated his position within the class itself. This chapter demonstrates a tension between Jordan’s own working class representation and my perspective of the reality which suggests that Jordan, later in his life, moved beyond a working class categorisation.

The concept of a working class in New Zealand has been much discussed, the notion has many vagaries. Melanie Nolan argues that the nationally homogeneous working class model is inadequate in New Zealand society between 1880 and 1920.<sup>147</sup> James Watson also rejects a monolithic working class, asserting that it was clear that there were big differences between the experiences and values of different groups amongst

<sup>142</sup> Sid Skinner, ‘He walked with kings but kept the common touch’ 1979 in William Joseph Jordan, *Biographical Notes*, Bert Roth Papers, 94-106-65/04, WTU.

<sup>143</sup> Commentary by G. Dunstall on Miles Fairburn, ‘Social Mobility and Opportunity in Nineteenth Century New Zealand’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1979, pp. 61-62.

<sup>144</sup> NZPD, 199 (1923), p. 225.

<sup>145</sup> Written information supplied by Mrs E. Moore, Mt. Roskill, Auckland.

<sup>146</sup> Erik Olssen, ‘The ‘Working Class’ in New Zealand’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1974, pp. 44-60. See also Erik Olssen, *Building The New World: Work, Politics and Society in Caversham 1880s-1920s*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995, Ch. 9.

<sup>147</sup> Melanie Nolan, ‘Family and Culture: Jack McCullough and the Christchurch Skilled Working Class, 1880’s – 1920’s’ in John E. Martin and Kerry Taylor (eds.), *Culture and the Labour Movement: Essays in New Zealand Labour History*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1991, p. 177.

those who considered themselves to be working class.<sup>148</sup> He put forward the concept of an independent working class in New Zealand, which included small farmers, self-employed tradesmen, small shopkeepers and skilled workers.<sup>149</sup> Watson claimed all these groups placed great emphasis on gaining the largest possible measure of economic independence, which often went hand-in-hand with a spirit of intellectual independence. Watson also defined the independent working class as having, typically, a comparatively low level of formal education, although individuals within the class would often read extensively and eclectically, and many would have strong views on just about everything.<sup>150</sup> Although, as Watson admits, it is difficult to draw lines around social classes, Jordan did possess many of the characteristics of this profile of an independent working class.<sup>151</sup> Arguably Jordan was upwardly mobile in New Zealand, raising his status from working class in London to the independent working class in New Zealand. This chapter examines Jordan's representations of his working class status, and features my suggested inclusion of Jordan into the independent working class category.

Although Jordan's working class persona is the dominant representation in this chapter, a linked characteristic, and one that is often closely associated with the working class, is 'the search for respect'. Stevan Eldred-Grigg, in his study of working people, discussed both respectable and the disreputable behaviour amongst the working class in New Zealand between 1890-1990.<sup>152</sup> In a recent interview Erik Olssen wryly noted the conflict over respectability when suggesting generational conflict in the 1970s between older Labour Party members in the Caversham branch, who strove for acceptance and respect only to see it vanquished by the behaviour of

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<sup>148</sup> James Watson, 'An Independent Working Class?' in John E. Martin and Kerry Taylor (eds.), *Culture And The Labour Movement: Essays in New Zealand Labour History*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1991, p. 184-196.

<sup>149</sup> Watson, 'An Independent Working Class?', p. 188.

<sup>150</sup> Watson, 'An Independent Working Class?', p. 188. Stuart Macintyre, in a British context, described working class autodidacts as those who "talked more, read more and possessed a much larger vocabulary than their neighbours in general" suggesting they were at the forefront of local life, hard working, respectable, and the natural leaders of opinion. Stuart Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science: Marxism In Britain, 1917-1933*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986, p. 38.

<sup>151</sup> Watson, 'An Independent Working Class?', p. 189.

<sup>152</sup> Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *New Zealand Working People 1890-1990*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1990, pp. 105-109.

student radicals.<sup>153</sup> The search for respect is distinct in Jordan's early New Zealand life, hence this notion is also investigated. Later in life earlier goals such as independence and respectability were reformulated, to some extent, into a desire for personal respect and recognition of his achievements. As Jordan does gain higher honours how they are reconciled with his own, and his Party's, egalitarian class ideals will also be examined.

### The Working Class Cockney

The founder of the Salvation Army in England, General William Booth described London's poor as the 'submerged tenth'.<sup>154</sup> He estimated that of the thirty-one million people living in Great Britain, three million could be classified as the poor, homeless, and starving.<sup>155</sup> In his memoirs Jordan used this phrase to categorise his London childhood, "We are now looking at the London of the submerged tenth where every opportunity was taken to earn a few shillings...my mother agreed to care for a little unwanted baby".<sup>156</sup> Although Jordan's family was itself below the poverty line and struggled to feed themselves, the child provided an extra income (Jordan's mother accepted payment for the child's care) so was accommodated.

Jordan said his family lived in a slum, a blind alley in which a dozen houses shared one water butt at the end of the alley. Whatever the family could do without was sold or pawned during his father's frequent periods of unemployment. There were no bathrooms, and clotheslines were in the rooms with the family eating and sleeping where wet washing was hanging for most of the week. During one winter he recalled living in a second storey room and using the flooring and doors from the vacant first floor for fuel. Rubbish collection was irregular, Jordan described the unpleasant conditions, "all rubbish was put into that [brick bin], fish heads, winkle shells, potato

<sup>153</sup> Kerry Taylor, 'Writing the Left into the Picture: An Interview with Erik Olssen' in Pat Moloney & Kerry Taylor (eds.), *On the Left: Essays on Socialism in New Zealand*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2002, pp. 179-197.

<sup>154</sup> William Booth, *In Darkest England and The Way Out*, London: McCorquodale & Co Ltd, 1890, Ch. 2 entitled 'The Submerged Tenth' Part One, pp. 17-23.

<sup>155</sup> Booth, p. 22.

<sup>156</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

peelings, ashes, everything – usually in the summer it was blown by flies and the stench can be imagined”.<sup>157</sup> His memoirs are a testament to the very powerful impression poverty had on him.

Jordan said he took with him to New Zealand memories of bitter poverty. Winnie Jordan remarked that early poverty, for Jordan, later evoked compassion and not bitterness. In her opinion, Jordan had not had the “love crushed out of him” and he did not carry a hurt within him, “Sir William never had his nose rubbed in the dirt”.<sup>158</sup> Although poverty was a formative experience in his life it was not dissimilar to many of his Labour Party colleagues whose early backgrounds also contained poverty and hardship. Gustafson described Michael Joseph Savage’s early rural Australian poverty as shaping his personality, compassion and later political attitudes.<sup>159</sup> Of Peter Fraser, Bassett and King wrote, “Like the inhabitants of most households in the village, the Fraser’s were poor...food was seldom plentiful...amongst Fraser’s earliest memories were hunger”<sup>160</sup> and James Watson described Dan Sullivan’s family as comparatively poor.<sup>161</sup> For Jordan, poverty was an experience which formulated, in part, humanitarian compassion – and which he had in common with many of his Labour Party contemporaries.

Jordan attended St. Luke’s Parochial School in London where he received his only formal education, his attendance denoting his social class as he said he was sent for the benefit of the free education provided.<sup>162</sup> Schooling was then compulsory in Britain, in 1880 the Compulsory Attendance Act was passed which made it obligatory for all children between 5 and 10 years to attend school fulltime<sup>163</sup> but parents “unless necessitous, had still to pay school pence”.<sup>164</sup> Jordan noted that when he attended the

<sup>157</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.

<sup>159</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 7.

<sup>160</sup> Bassett and King, p. 20.

<sup>161</sup> James Watson. ‘Sullivan, Daniel Giles 1882-1947’. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 4 April 2003 URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>

<sup>162</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>163</sup> Eric Midwinter, *Nineteenth Century Education*, London: Longman, 1970, p. 43.

<sup>164</sup> Gordon W. Roderick & Michael D. Stephens, *Education and Industry in the Nineteenth Century*, London: Longman, 1978, p. 18.

school it was known as St. Luke's Poor School, "Its now called St. Luke's Parochial School – I suppose it sounds better".<sup>165</sup> He was grateful for the opportunity it had given him,

I think of St. Luke's School as highly as any man can think of his Eton, Harrow, Winchester, Marlborough, Stowe or any other. The school attended by a lad or lass is largely determined by the financial position of the parents; it certainly was so in our case, although a man may justly be proud of attending one of the great public schools of Britain.<sup>166</sup>

Jordan's will is testament to the importance of St. Luke's in his life and his belief in the value of children's education. He bequeathed two hundred Bank of New Zealand shares to St. Luke's with Ellington Infant School in Ramsgate and the Ngaruawahia Primary School in New Zealand (Winifred Jordan's school) also receiving smaller bequests.<sup>167</sup>

In an apparent attempt to transcend class distinction he often asserted that educational attendance should not be the sole judge of a man's worth. In a speech to St. George's School in Ramsgate in 1944 Jordan spoke of not letting educational difference inhibit ambition,

We hear of great Schools, Eton, Harrow..., lads from there go forward confident that they have advantages. It is said that the battle of Waterloo won on playing fields on one of those schools. *You are as good as those lads if you think you are.* A man is not judged by the school he attended but a school, a town, a nation is judged by the men and women who came from it or who make it up.<sup>168</sup>

Reflected in the quote is a notion of individualism and his life was a quest to improve his own position in society. Jordan was acutely aware of the social class system in England, which encompassed educational institutions, however he refused to let this be an obstacle.

<sup>165</sup> 'Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan'.

<sup>166</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>167</sup> Will of William Joseph Jordan, BBAE 1570/p. 932/59, National Archives, Auckland.

<sup>168</sup> Speech Notes, St. George's School Ramsgate 23 November 1944, WJC. The authors own emphasis has been used to highlight individualism which demonstrates a link to another of Jordan's personae, The Independent Man.

From the outset Jordan's working life is a testimony to self-improvement. Jordan left his first job as a manufacturing jeweller's errand boy to become an apprentice coach painter in 1892, "After a while I was able to take a job which offered greater prospects".<sup>169</sup> The move signified early ambition although it is unclear whether this was a parental initiative or his own. In the new job he now experienced first hand the working conditions prevalent amidst much of the working class in London. He describes in his memoirs the closed workshop and the grinding of dry white lead into the paint which destroyed painters' gums causing their teeth to come out easily, gave them dropped wrist and colic. Men strived to do the work until they became too slow and were unable to do any other work; there was no compensation or redress for occupational hazards. The workshop itself was badly lit and not ventilated. Undercutting of wages was common whereby men who came to the workshop offering to work for less were employed at the expense of those who were paid higher. Jordan said that as a result of this practice men were working for four pence an hour which was less than they could possibly live on, there was no pay for bank holidays, no annual holiday or sick pay.<sup>170</sup> Jordan's identification with the needs and aspirations of the working class in the Labour movement in New Zealand evolved from his understanding and experience of these conditions.

After completing his apprenticeship Jordan was forced to leave the trade due to the onset of lead poisoning. He joined the London Postal service in 1897, where he experienced instances of workplace conservatism and resistance to change, which were also part of the British class system. One of his jobs was to count, one by one, magazines that were rolled up in a pile. He worked out a quicker way of doing it by counting the number at the base and how high they were piled, going to the senior man and saying that he thought it would be quicker for everybody if they did it that way. However, the senior man said that Jordan was not employed to work things out and told him to just count them one by one, the way he had been told to. Gwen Douglas recalled that her father told this story with some dissatisfaction, recalling the system

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<sup>169</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>170</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

was designed to keep the worker in his place and that too often the workers cooperated with this.<sup>171</sup>

Possibly reflecting his frustration at the inhibition of initiative resulting from a rigid bureaucracy, Jordan recalled that his first political interest was in the Postal Service when he joined the Fawcett Association,<sup>172</sup> a union of postal sorting clerks established in 1890.<sup>173</sup> Although Jordan did become a senior man in charge of a department in the Postal Service he cited job dissatisfaction and a feeling of restlessness as reasons for leaving.<sup>174</sup>

### **In Search Of Respect**

Possibly seeking self-improvement Jordan joined the Metropolitan Police Force in 1903. The occupation was portrayed in his memoirs largely in terms of the ‘respect’ associated with it. He was posted to the difficult Limehouse district but even there he suggested the people gave policemen respect. Jordan noted the career possibilities open to a London policeman, stating he was trained and encouraged to be of service to the public and said with very few exceptions the public reciprocated with a high regard for the ‘bobby’.<sup>175</sup> However, Sid Skinner who was chief clerk at New Zealand house during Jordan’s tenure as High Commissioner, later described several instances of Jordan’s time in the force which were not conducive to respect,

He was once almost throttled by a drunken youth with a grudge against the police. Again, during a penny ride in a horse-drawn omnibus and encountering another drunk who refused to pay or to leave the vehicle, Bill paid the fare, arrested the man at the end of the ride – and received a black eye for his trouble.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>172</sup> *Our Empire*, (magazine) Article entitled ‘New Zealand’s High Commissioner in London’, September 1936, WJC.

<sup>173</sup> <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/ead/148FA.htm>. In 1919 the Fawcett Association was one of the unions that amalgamated to form the Union of Post Office workers.

<sup>174</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>175</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>176</sup> Skinner, ‘He walked with kings but kept the common touch’.

Jordan obviously enjoyed telling stories about his experiences, Skinner would not know these details otherwise. His position of authority as a law enforcer would have given him a certain measure of respect from some members of the community, however, his emphasis on this reflects the high profile respect itself had in Jordan's mind as he constructed his life story. Although, as Stevan Eldred-Grigg remarks, respectability within the working class meant different things to different people, Jordan certainly placed emphasis on occupational respect.<sup>177</sup> Occupation was also used in an attempt for social parity: as High Commissioner, when other diplomats mentioned that they were University Blues at Cambridge or Oxford, he would proudly mention that he was a London Blue.<sup>178</sup>



Figure 11: Jordan as a London policeman, this representation reflecting his own self-respect.

<sup>177</sup> Eldred-Grigg, p. 108.

<sup>178</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

Jordan immigrated to New Zealand in 1904, his account of this featured class significantly in his memoirs. In discussing Walter Nash's emigration, Keith Sinclair argues, "It is very difficult to discover why immigrants decide to move. Often they don't themselves know very clearly which of the various circumstances most influenced them".<sup>179</sup> Sinclair suggests that in the case of migration from Great Britain to New Zealand people often moved when economic conditions were bad.<sup>180</sup> In Jordan's case, with a secure job in the police force and a good chance of promotion, his motive does not appear to be personally economic. Sid Skinner suggested that Jordan sailed for New Zealand after losing a girlfriend to a senior officer.<sup>181</sup> Winnie Jordan corroborated this story, having in her possession an early photograph of Jordan with an unnamed girlfriend. Therefore, a failed romantic relationship may have, in part, been a reason for leaving.

Jordan does not discuss this in his memoirs instead emphasising a 'wanderlust' or feeling of dissatisfaction that he felt in his previous jobs as his prime motive. Jordan's decision may have also included a desire for egalitarianism. Erik Olssen suggests many migrants wanted to leave the Old World social order behind. They did not want the deference of the British class system, only respect for themselves and what they had achieved.<sup>182</sup> This is consistent with Jordan's search for respect. In 1936 answering why he went to New Zealand he replied,

...with the urge to go somewhere came the urge to go as far as I could. And New Zealand was the furthest point in the British Empire. So I went there. I'd heard a lot of good things about the country, *a country with no snakes and no millionaires*.<sup>183</sup>

At that time, as a member of the Labour Party who represented the needs and aspirations of the working class, Jordan gave the class issue a degree of prominence in

<sup>179</sup> Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, p. 13.

<sup>180</sup> Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, p. 13-14.

<sup>181</sup> Skinner, 'He walked with kings but kept the common touch'.

<sup>182</sup> Olssen, *Building The New World*, p. 231.

<sup>183</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 3 September 1936, WJC. The authors own emphasis has been used to highlight the class aspect of this quote.

his reason for immigration. He also later reflected, "I went to New Zealand where owing perhaps to the fact that most people who migrated to the colonies did so to find, or establish better conditions, life was easier".<sup>184</sup> Immigration for Jordan was clearly a combination of several currents, as Sinclair stated, with Jordan himself probably not knowing exactly which circumstance most influenced him. However, as he reflected on his life in his memoirs, as a working class representative, he presented the class issue as one of some significance. This may have been an attempt to reassert his working class status, which was occasionally regarded with ambiguity in the press later in his life.

Olssen suggests that migrants' images and memories of Old World deference shaped what they wanted from the new.<sup>185</sup> However, Jordan's first New Zealand encounter may have dispelled any notion of an ideal society free from preconceived attitudes. Jordan had heard good things about New Zealand and recalled being told that, as a painter, he was just the man they wanted for immigration.<sup>186</sup> However, the morning after he arrived in Wellington he applied for a job as a painter. The employer asked where he had been working and when Jordan said he had just landed the man said, "You're from Britain, you're no good to me, while you're looking at a job we've finished it". Jordan replied "You don't want a man then". "Yes I do" the man said "but not you".<sup>187</sup>

Jordan only briefly touches on his thoughts regarding this incident recalling that he had wondered what he had struck and whether that was the general attitude towards new arrivals, although his later experience suggested that it was not. Jock Phillips, in his discussion of the New Zealand male culture, states that the underlying work culture in New Zealand was one of hard physical work with laziness being despised. The 'new chum' or new immigrant was often distinguished from an old chum and was gently mocked, becoming a figure to be pitied and scorned for his physical softness

<sup>184</sup> *News of the World* (magazine), 9 September 1951, WJC.

<sup>185</sup> Olssen, *Building The New World*, p. 230.

<sup>186</sup> 'Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan'.

<sup>187</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

and love of home comforts.<sup>188</sup> Similarly, Keith Sinclair suggests that in late nineteenth century in New Zealand the old settler or colonial regarded the ‘new chum’ with good-natured contempt.<sup>189</sup> Jordan’s first experience appears more extreme, he was labelled as idle simply by his nationality. Olssen argues that the Caversham community during this time did respect skill and independence, therefore Jordan could have expected a measure of respect for his trade. This was not, however, the case.<sup>190</sup> Sinclair also indicates that the new chum was criticised in the press for having too much ‘side’ which meant airs, arrogance and pretentiousness.<sup>191</sup> If Jordan had approached the prospective employer with any sense of presumption it was not surprising that he was rejected. Nevertheless, if Jordan had a distinctive expectation of immediate respect for his work ability or a preconceived image of New Zealand as an ideal society whose people were divest of prejudices, encompassing identity and class, he would have felt very let down. He remarked wryly, “...it wasn’t a very good welcome”.<sup>192</sup>

Phillips argues that the men who came to New Zealand were predominantly British and as largely manual workers (like Jordan), they probably brought a certain pride in their physical prowess which they hoped to re-establish here.<sup>193</sup> After the initial rejection it may have been a combination of economic necessity (having only three pounds to his name), and an attempt to recapture some pride in his working ability by showing he could ‘rough it’, that saw Jordan leave Wellington. By obtaining a colonial credential Jordan possibly believed this would give him a better chance of acceptance in his new society. He heard of a job nearly a hundred miles away in the rural back blocks, but doesn’t elaborate how. As a result he travelled to the Pohangina Valley in the Manawatu.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>188</sup> Jock Phillips, *A Man’s Country: The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History*, Auckland: Penguin, 1987, p. 16.

<sup>189</sup> Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand’s Search For National Identity*, Wellington: Allen and Unwin, 1986, p. 103.

<sup>190</sup> Olssen, *Building The New World*, p. 231.

<sup>191</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 November 1911 cited in Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*, p. 104.

<sup>192</sup> ‘Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan’.

<sup>193</sup> Phillips, p. 11.

<sup>194</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

Jordan immediately became acutely aware of his urban orientation, which was in stark contrast to the rural bushmen. He recalled that the men were amused by his appearance – he was well dressed, had a starched collar, dressy tie, creases in his trousers – “a proper city man”.<sup>195</sup> He was unprepared for the job, he had no swag, blankets, denim trousers, heavy boots or other equipment to work in the bush.<sup>196</sup> Jordan’s very first job was to weed dog tail grass, an arduous task made all the more difficult because he was unsuitably attired for the job which included climbing over charred tree trunks and slipping down on the ashes.<sup>197</sup>



Figure 12: Jordan had to adapt very quickly, certainly in terms of appearance. The photograph shows him preparing to cut down a tree wearing bowyangs, leather laces that were tied below the knee to keep trousers out of the mud which were commonly worn by the working class in New Zealand.

<sup>195</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>196</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>197</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

He recalled doing a variety of jobs in the bush, “a thousand jobs that we didn’t know had to be done, much less how to do them”.<sup>198</sup> Conspicuously aware of his distinct urban British derivation, and possibly the anomaly between urban and rural working class, Jordan remarked that he was unaware that so many different types of grasses existed, “a cockney’s idea of grass is its something that you had to keep off of!”<sup>199</sup>

However, it wasn’t only the nature of the work which illuminated Jordan’s urban orientation, but also the *way* work was conducted. Jordan said he was used to city methods of time keeping. For example, whistles blowing, doors closed on the tick of time, men shut out for an hour if they were not directly on time.<sup>200</sup> In the bush Jordan recalled the foreman carrying a watch and recording exactly the amount of time the men worked, the man being very particular, honest and reliable. Jordan asked what check their employer had on the time, which he recorded. The man replied “He has no check Bill, he wouldn’t know if we booked wrong time, who is he that we should rob him”.<sup>201</sup> Jordan emphasised this in his memoirs to illuminate the honesty of the working class and to project his own scrupulous honesty by showing an appreciation of this trait. Jordan appeared to conclude that although somewhat rougher in appearance than Londoners, the class of the men’s character was more impressive than those of whom he had left behind, “if this was the standard of many men in this new land, then I had something to learn and to live up to”.<sup>202</sup> Despite the bad start, Jordan rapidly developed a favourable impression of New Zealand.

Yet he still had to work to fit in easily. After only a short residency in New Zealand, Jordan made a concerted effort to remove the cockney accent in his speech, a recognisable class and nationality attribute which would have marked him out as an immigrant. Jordan was living in Nelson, around 1905/6, when he joined the Good Templars Lodge and was asked to address the members. He had not previously spoken

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<sup>198</sup> ‘Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan’.

<sup>199</sup> ‘Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan’.

<sup>200</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>201</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>202</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

to an audience.<sup>203</sup> During his speech Jordan remembered being continually interrupted by outbursts of laughter, the laughter directed not at what he was saying but at his cockney expression. Jordan commented that although other countries' dialects such as Scottish or American accents are acceptable, the London expression was referred to as 'cockney slang' and considered somewhat vulgar and in 'nice' company was frowned upon as showing bad, or neglected upbringing.<sup>204</sup> Jordan's reference to 'nice' company reflecting his desire for self-improvement and denotes his struggle for acceptance as a respectable, decent, upright member of the community. He resolved to speak whenever he could to improve his language,

Often I was awake at night worrying about it. If I am to live in New Zealand [and] desire to be a recognised citizen but I cannot mix with people and hope to receive a certain amount of respect if they laugh at my manner of speech, I must improve my language.<sup>205</sup>

Again Jordan's experience may have been extreme. Olssen argues that in Caversham, accent no longer functioned as an accurate guide to social position and standing. Migration had disrupted the inherited link between speech, status and class, with the local 'elite' speaking a gaggle of accents and dialects.<sup>206</sup> However, Olssen's 'elite' may not have included cockney accents. Regional variations and the clustering of immigrants, some in larger communities, may account for different attitudes towards accents – those such as Jordan's may have been more common in the highly populated areas but not so widely heard in less populated areas. Alternatively, Phillips suggests that many British immigrants were rural labourers from the south and west of England therefore Jordan's London voice may not have been common to those ears.<sup>207</sup> Perhaps Jordan was being overly sensitive, taking the laughter at his accent too seriously. However, the incident demonstrates his overwhelming desire for acceptance and respect in his new country. In old age Jordan would concede that his London accent was still recognisable but he endeavoured to speak the Queen's English so that at least it was not itself humorous. His manner of speech is one of the few instances where

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<sup>203</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>204</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>205</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>206</sup> Olssen, *Building The New World*, p. 232.

<sup>207</sup> Phillips, p. 11.

Jordan viewed his class background as being detrimental in his desire for respectability and upward class mobility.

In Wellington in 1906 Jordan joined the Primitive Methodist Church and became a lay preacher. This religious distinction may also have helped create a respectable self-image.<sup>208</sup> Eldred-Grigg argues that religion was part of respectability and that Methodism and its sister ‘nonconformist’ sects formed the true bastion of the respectable working class,

Methodists, Baptists and others who worshipped in ‘chapel’ were seldom rich, often fairly poor, but almost always respectable. Methodist congregations were full of active, saving workers who prayed hard, tried seriously to follow the commandments of their deity, and very much liked to sit on committees.<sup>209</sup>

This characterisation bears a striking similarity to Jordan. Eldred-Grigg also argues that such people “thought the true cure for social injustice was to stop disreputable people – whether workers or corrupt landowners – from drinking alcohol”, or making money from its sale.<sup>210</sup> Here Jordan, once again, comes within the parameters of Eldred-Griggs characterisation; he professed an interest in temperance work becoming a supporter and, during his time in Wellington, a member of the Executive of the New Zealand Temperance Alliance.<sup>211</sup> Jordan’s association with movements linked with moral and social reform were a manifestation of his quest for self-improvement.

Jordan lived in Wellington between 1906 and 1911, during this time he became increasingly politicised, joining the Political Labour League (PLL) in 1907.<sup>212</sup> The PLL branch in Wellington was strong, its driving forces were Alfred H. Hindmarsh, David McLaren and Michael J. Reardon.<sup>213</sup> Bruce Brown suggests the Wellington PLL branch was dominated by union leaders - Hindmarsh was a secretary of the

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<sup>208</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’. Jordan does not specify when exactly he became a lay preacher but does say it was during his time as a member of the Primitive Methodists which was between 1906-1910.

<sup>209</sup> Eldred-Grigg, p. 106.

<sup>210</sup> Eldred-Grigg, p. 107.

<sup>211</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>212</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 285.

<sup>213</sup> Gustafson, *Labour’s Path to Political Independence*, p. 18.

Wellington branch of the Seamen's Union, McLaren was full-time secretary of the Wellington Waterside Workers Union from 1899-1909 and M.J. Reardon was the secretary of the Wellington General Labourers Union 1906-1919.<sup>214</sup> Brown argues that the union leaders such as David McLaren, sought to gain better working conditions and higher wages for the worker through existing constitutional processes, achieving recognition of the dignity of labour and respectability of the worker in the process.<sup>215</sup>

Certainly the desire for recognition and respectability would have appealed to Jordan. In the 1911 Wellington municipal elections Jordan stood as part of the 'labour eight', which included McLaren, Hindmarsh and Reardon. Their platform included the municipalisation of public utilities, the establishment of public markets and hot water baths, the establishment of Municipal Labour Agency and they also stated their party was strongly against land speculation. McLaren and Hindmarsh were well known in Wellington. David McLaren had been first elected to the Council in 1901 and continuously re-elected on various tickets becoming Mayor in 1912.<sup>216</sup> A.H. Hindmarsh was first elected in 1905, remaining a councillor until 1915.<sup>217</sup> Only Hindmarsh and McLaren were successful for labour polling nearly twice the number of votes as each of the other six candidates, which included Jordan and three other first-time candidates. The press attributed the 1911 municipal result to the citizens not wanting labour to dominate 'corporation politics'.<sup>218</sup> Jordan's association with the PLL may have influenced and reflected his thinking that union militancy should not override constitutional processes in the quest for better conditions for the worker. In a letter to David McLaren in June 1911, for example, he questioned the decision of the Waihi Miners who voted to leave the arbitration system earlier that year to pursue direct negotiations for wage increases.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, pp. 153-169.

<sup>215</sup> Brown, p. 9.

<sup>216</sup> McLaren, David, Biographies of people prominent in the formation of the Labour Party 1900-1919, Bert Roth Papers, 94-106-16/08, WTU.

<sup>217</sup> Hindmarsh, A.H., Biographies of people prominent in the formation of the Labour Party 1900-1919, Bert Roth Papers, 94-106-16/08, WTU.

<sup>218</sup> *Evening Post*, 27 April 1911.

<sup>219</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 14 June 1911.

Jordan's political views were underpinned by a socialist political perspective which, like many of his peers in the PLL, had been largely influenced by the Fabians who sought to peacefully promote socialist ideas and establish a socialist state.<sup>220</sup>

Committed to gradual rather than revolutionary social reform to produce political and social change, Fabianism has been characterised by a commitment to social justice and a belief in the progressive improvement of society.<sup>221</sup> Gwen Douglas said her father was an avid reader and user of libraries, a characteristic of the working class autodidact.<sup>222</sup> Winnie Jordan still has a collection of Jordan's early socialist books including R.J. Campbell's *Christianity and the Social Order* published in 1907 and Philip Snowden's *The Living Wage* published in 1913. The books are well thumbed with personal indexes in the back, which included subjects such as cost of living, wealth and infant mortality. A Fabian socialist perspective provided the backdrop for Jordan's entry into the Labour Party of New Zealand. The Fabian's progressive reformism became indistinguishable from Jordan's own personal desire for social and self-improvement.

### **The Independent Small Business Capitalist**

In a context of unprecedented industrial upheaval a question to be pondered is why didn't Jordan embrace unionism more vigorously? There were many unionists in the PLL who favoured arbitration and shared similar thoughts on the unacceptability of strikes and militant industrial unionism. Between 1908-1913 the influence of syndicalism, which advocated working class liberation through industrial action, was on the rise in New Zealand. The main influence was the American Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) whose aim was for the workers to organise industrially into one big union and seize power by a general strike. The New Zealand Federation of Labour (Red Feds.) was strongly influenced by the syndicalism of the IWW. Gustafson suggests that moderate union leaders, such as David McLaren, were concerned at the

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<sup>220</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>221</sup> Patricia Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organise: 100 Years of Fabian Socialism*, London: Methuen, 1984, p. 14.

<sup>222</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

emergence of the Federation of Labour as a rival to the established Trade and Labour Councils. The moderates were concerned that “the militants’ intransigent stand would result in conflict, not only within New Zealand society generally but between the two union groupings in particular”.<sup>223</sup> Moderates, such as Jordan, were suspicious of industrial unionism, which preferred strike action to arbitration, and industrial to political activity, therefore, the prevailing political context could account for Jordan’s lack of a close association with the union movement at this time.

Beyond this, Jordan’s self-employment may have contributed to his relative lack of union activity. When he first arrived in Wellington he worked for wages but later started a business with another painter Harold Oakes, probably in 1910 as advertisements for ‘Jordan and Oakes’ appear in the *Weekly Herald* during that year.<sup>224</sup> His very first union involvement was in the Fawcett Association, a union of postal workers in Britain. He belonged to the Painters’ Union in Wellington, however, uncharacteristically does not appear to have held any positions of significance in the union.<sup>225</sup> He had no known union affiliation after his time in Wellington. Jordan may have felt that being self-employed disqualified him, union rules may have been an issue. In all the places he resided in after Wellington (Wanganui, Waihi and Ngaruawahia) he was self-employed, or as in Waihi, employing men.

While in Waihi Jordan wrote to A.P. McCarthy, ULP national secretary, discussing employment. He stated he was an employer of two men and although he had a fair business and was doing all right, he was tempted to throw it all up and get back to wages so as to have part of the fight.<sup>226</sup> Jordan appeared to exclude himself, in this instance, from the working class, possibly placing himself in a small business/capitalist category. Jordan’s employer status in Waihi may have been significant – he may have perceived the fight to improve conditions for the worker less acceptable as an employer.

<sup>223</sup> Gustafson, *Labour’s Path to Political Independence*, p. 33.

<sup>224</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 1909-1911.

<sup>225</sup> ‘Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan’.

<sup>226</sup> Jordan to McCarthy, 25 November 1913, A.P. McCarthy Papers MS-0963, Folder 9, DU:HO.

As a self-employed tradesman Jordan could now be perceived within the boundaries of Watson's independent working class category. Although it is not certain whether Jordan was driven principally by economic independence he made life choices which demonstrated a desire not to be reliant on the financial support of others. For example, when he landed in New Zealand he immediately returned the fifty pounds he had borrowed from an unnamed cousin, although this left him with less than three pounds in his pocket.<sup>227</sup> The frequency of his self-employment – his initial small business establishment in Wellington was followed by similar ventures in Waihi in 1911, Wanganui in 1912, and Ngaruwahia from 1913-1917, which indicates a preference for monetary self-support.

Another common feature of Watson's independent working class was that they possessed strong views on just about everything.<sup>228</sup> Jordan did, by 1911, possess a strong political perspective which, although less radical than others within the labour movement at this time, was a view that he would not deviate from during his lifetime. For Jordan, strikes and union militancy were never the answer to the workers' problems. When Jordan was in Waihi he commented on the decision by the Waihi Miners Union to leave the arbitration system.<sup>229</sup> Jordan wrote to David McLaren in a letter partially published in the *Weekly Herald* saying, "The mass of miners acquiesced but by no means agreed to the cancellation of the registration under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. Although it is alleged that a majority of the members favoured cancellation, yet I hear that there is a general doubt upon the statement".<sup>230</sup> Jordan's view was perceived to be a criticism of the Miners' Union officials which the *Maoriland Worker*, who supported militant unionism, took strong exception to. The newspaper called Jordan's insinuations cowardly and contemptible.<sup>231</sup> Jordan publicly apologised stating that his letter was in no way a slur on the integrity of the officials of

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<sup>227</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>228</sup> Watson, 'An Independent Working Class?', p. 188.

<sup>229</sup> Olssen, *The Red Feds*, p. 117.

<sup>230</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 14 June 1911.

<sup>231</sup> *Maoriland Worker*, 23 June 1911.

the Waihi Miners Union and declared that did not represent his true opinion of them.<sup>232</sup>

Again in 1913 Jordan's perceived conservatism brought him into conflict with those in favour of industrial unionism. The *Maoriland Worker* accused Jordan of supporting 'scabs' in Waihi. Although living in Wanganui, Jordan had revisited Waihi and in an interview gave his impressions of the mining town, which were published in the *Dominion*,

It is undoubtedly the case that those who now remain in the town consider the sending of police was justified. "Whatever may be the difference of opinion on this point" says Mr Jordan "there is no doubt whatever of the able way in which Commissioner Cullen handled the situation when he did go there"...The new union was going along well, and had now 600 members, and the new agreement between the men and the employees (which has been made into an award) is a splendid one. The effect of the strike (says Mr Jordan) has been to quite destroy the influence of the Federation of Labour as far as Waihi is concerned.<sup>233</sup>

Jordan's support for the police was seen as a criticism of the more radical industrial action wing of the labour movement. His support for the new union was underpinned by his pro-arbitration viewpoint. Jordan remarked to McCarthy that the *Maoriland Worker* waxed hot but without cause. He claimed the newspaper toned his comments to suit the policy of the paper and gave an impression very different to this statements and opinions.<sup>234</sup> The *Maoriland Worker* launched a stinging attack on Jordan with some serious charges,

Who is W.J. Jordan anyway?...Is he the same individual who has always displayed the most intense hatred of the Federation and tried to do it a gross injury by cruelly attacking its officers?...This illustrious leader of Labour visiting a scab town, interviewing scabs, obtaining the views of scabs and then putting that scabby knowledge against the word of honest men is revolting...<sup>235</sup>

<sup>232</sup> *Maoriland Worker*, 14 July 1911.

<sup>233</sup> *Dominion*, 6 February 1913.

<sup>234</sup> Jordan to McCarthy, 3 April 1913, A.P. McCarthy Papers MS-0963, Folder 7, DU:HO.

<sup>235</sup> *Maoriland Worker*, 14 February 1913.

The newspaper said that they believed Jordan's motivation came from his desire to see the influence of the Federation of Labour destroyed. The paper called for the Wanganui Branch of the United Labour Party, with which Jordan was affiliated, to seek an explanation from him.<sup>236</sup>

Jordan, however, received support from Walter Grey, a member of the Wanganui Labour Party who replied to the *Maoriland Worker*,

we are not taking orders from the *Maoriland Worker*, nor any of your staff or Party. We owe nothing to the Federation of Labour or the *Maoriland Worker*...and are not at all likely to ask Mr Jordan for an explanation at your request. For my own part, I would sooner be called a 'scab' etc than be a member of a party which, while it thinks New Zealand is worth governing, does not think it is worth defending.<sup>237</sup>

The conflicting views demonstrate that the issue of militant union action was a contentious issue within the labour movement - one which defied consensus. Grey was referring to the *Maoriland Worker's* strong opposition to compulsory military training and conscription. This view was held "not simply because it believed that a conscript army was a potential weapon of the capitalist class which could be used against the interests of the working class, but also because military training was a form of state oppression".<sup>238</sup> Grey, however, seems unaware that Jordan also opposed compulsory military training. In 1912 Jordan was a spokesman at a deputation to Mr. Myers (Minister of Defence) protesting against compulsory military training.<sup>239</sup> Jordan's views were consistent on this issue, as an MP in 1929 he moved a motion to repeal compulsory military training.<sup>240</sup>

Jordan's working class representation in 1913 encompassed small business capitalism, which is difficult to reconcile with his wider criticism of capitalism, and large

<sup>236</sup> *Maoriland Worker*, 14 February 1913.

<sup>237</sup> *Maoriland Worker*, 28 February 1913.

<sup>238</sup> R.L. Weitzel, 'Pacifists and Anti-militarists in New Zealand, 1909-1914', *New Zealand Journal of History* Vol. 7, No. 2 (1973), p. 131.

<sup>239</sup> *Maoriland Worker*, 19 April 1912.

<sup>240</sup> NZPD, 220-1 (1929), p. 782 ff.

monopolists expressed during the same year. However, this could be due, in part, to an independent working class ideal. Watson asserted that members of the independent working class did not generally aspire to become wealthy capitalists (capitalist in the sense of using money to make money). Rather, most of them felt eminently successful when they attained what they regarded as their independence.<sup>241</sup> Jordan did practice capitalist economics, defined as free enterprise, to achieve his independence and indeed survival. Jordan later recounted to John A. Lee how he starved the conservative painter and paperhanger out of Ngaruawahia in days when he was the village socialist. Skill was needed for a radical to survive in a small country town in the wake of the Waihi and general strike. Jordan had said he couldn't get a job so had to cut his prices, "Either I had to starve or starve the other painter and paperhanger out of town. I starved him out of town. Then I raised my prices and made the people who had tried to starve me pay for their jobs and a little for the jobs I had done too cheaply. Capitalistic economics" concluded Jordan.<sup>242</sup> Yet there is ambiguity and contradiction in his thinking. Writing from Ngaruawahia in November 1913 to the ULP national secretary he declared that the capitalist set had to be stopped from using the Church for "its miserable purpose".<sup>243</sup> Seemingly what Jordan objected to was large-scale wealth being used to monopolise or control. He later said in Parliament, "I cannot associate myself with those great monopolists, who are working for their own profit in this country".<sup>244</sup> In his eyes, his business practices per se did not seem to present a conflict in principles, he saw no incongruity in pursuing his own form of capitalism on a small scale, but monopoly capitalism was an evil which needed to be resisted.

### **The Working Class Politician**

Paul Baker suggests that in 1914 WWI brought different reactions within the ranks of labour with the moderate wing as a whole supporting the justness of the war and Britain's entry into it. This could explain Jordan's enlistment in 1916, even though he

<sup>241</sup> Watson, 'An Independent Working Class?', p. 189.

<sup>242</sup> Lee, *Rhetoric At The Red Dawn*, p. 84.

<sup>243</sup> Jordan to McCarthy, 25 November 1913, A.P. McCarthy Papers MS-0963, Folder 9, DU:HO.

<sup>244</sup> NZPD, 199 (1923), p. 222.

held anti-conscription views. Baker argues that several moderate leaders, including ULP President J.T. Paul joined patriotic organisations.<sup>245</sup> Some prominent moderates also enlisted such as E.J. Carey who stood as part of the labour eight in the 1911 Wellington municipal elections with Jordan.<sup>246</sup> However, the left wing militants viewed the war as a crisis in the capitalist system, a clash of imperialisms. As the war dragged on, wartime economics helped unify the two sides with both complaining about prices and profiteering – they also became united against conscription. Jordan and other labour leaders opposed the conscription of men for war service; many spoke out against the introduction of the Military Service Act. In June 1916 in Ngaruawahia Jordan chaired an anti-conscription meeting where labour party members Robert Semple and William Parry gave addresses – the meeting passed a resolution condemning the Conscription Bill.<sup>247</sup> Jordan's chairmanship of the meeting gave a clear indication of his own opposition. Baker suggests that many moderates wanted conscription of men accompanied by conscription of wealth, with some militants also accepting the moderate argument about conscription of wealth.<sup>248</sup> Although some moderates did advocate conscription, notably W. Veitch MP, seeing the democracy and equality of a system that would make men from all classes fight.<sup>249</sup>

Jordan volunteered for service in October 1916 and, after an initial rejection due to lead poisoning, volunteered again in February 1917 and was accepted.<sup>250</sup> A possible reason for Jordan volunteering in October 1916 was that conscription would become law in December. Baker suggests that many volunteers wanted to save themselves from the ignominy of conscription fearing that conscripts would be ill-regarded by society and ill-treated by the army.<sup>251</sup> Although Jordan had initially been exempted for health reasons his persistence does suggest alternative reasons. He may have seen his

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<sup>245</sup> Paul Baker, *King and Country Call: New Zealanders, Conscription and the Great War*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988, p. 65.

<sup>246</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p. 155. Elijah Jack Carey, an Executive member of the ULP and NZLP candidate for Wellington North in 1911, was killed on active service in 1916.

<sup>247</sup> *Maoriland Worker*, 28 June 1916.

<sup>248</sup> Baker, p. 69.

<sup>249</sup> Baker, p. 69.

<sup>250</sup> 'Attestation For General Service'.

<sup>251</sup> Baker, p. 103.

enlistment as his contribution to the 'war to end all wars'. Shortly after being wounded he wrote to his wife, "I hope that it [war] will result in a happier time for those who are to be men of the earth in the years to come for if he [his son] has to grow up to be a soldier, well, this is all time waste".<sup>252</sup> Another reason for volunteering may have been his family in England who he had not seen for nearly thirteen years (see photographs overpage). One labour figure who also volunteered was John A. Lee. Olssen said although Lee's reasons for volunteering are unclear he was probably intent on having fun with friends who enlisted at the same time and motivated, in part, by Imperial Jingoism.<sup>253</sup> Jordan's own views on the security of the Empire may have also played a part in his decision, (Jordan said in 1923, "I will still fight for the people of the Empire to which I am proud to belong").<sup>254</sup> For Jordan, being working class and holding pro-Empire views did not create an ideological conflict. Similarly, Baker argues that many in the working class may have also held pro-Empire views as they made up a substantial percentage of all recruits up to March 1917, with professionals and small business owners comprising a much smaller percentage.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> William Jordan to Winifred Jordan 25 April 1918, WJC.

<sup>253</sup> Erik Olssen, *John A. Lee*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1977, p. 12.

<sup>254</sup> NZPD, 199 (1923), p. 222.

<sup>255</sup> Baker, p. 242, Appendix Two. Baker gives percentage figures of all recruits to March 1917. The working class contributed a far greater percentage than professionals to the war effort. Semi or unskilled workers are 22.01%, farmers and farm employees 25.32%, whereas professional 0.95% and owner/manager large business 0.27%.



Figure 13: Jordan with his father in early 1918. Jordan was promoted to Sergeant for the voyage to England, but was confirmed in the rank of Corporal in February 1918. Therefore the photograph can be dated after his arrival in England but before the departure to France.



Figure 14: Jordan with his mother and three sisters ca 1919. He is wearing a 'Sam Brown' belt which denotes his status as a non-commissioned officer (warrant officer second-class and third class instructor) which he became in the Education Division after the war.

A head wound effectively ended Jordan's service on the front-line. Afterwards, the only health impairment his daughter recalled was occasionally, when walking in a street that had very tall buildings, Jordan felt they might fall in on him.<sup>256</sup>

Following his war service, Jordan, in the early stages of his political career, claimed a strong identification with the working class. As a candidate for the Raglan electorate in 1919, Jordan addressed a meeting of electors in the Ngaruawahia Town Hall. He was identified as the official Labour candidate by the president of the Raglan branch of the New Zealand Labour Party, Mr. J. Cumming, as his views co-incided with the policy of reform set out in the Labour Party's platform. Cumming proclaimed to the audience that it was "the *workers* votes...that they were after".<sup>257</sup> Jordan said the

<sup>256</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>257</sup> 'Address delivered to electors by W.J. Jordan' at Ngaruawahia Town Hall, 4 November 1919, WJC.

workers must be regarded more as partners, instead of 'hands' and must have the right of knowing not only what they get, but also what becomes of the surplus value of their labour.<sup>258</sup> The phrase, *surplus value of their labour* was a sign that Jordan was familiar with the writing of Karl Marx. Jordan also advocated the English Whitley Council method of settling industrial disputes. The Whitley Councils were joint councils of employers and workers who dealt with industrial relations issues in specific industries. The Whitley Council method was a feature of guild socialism, which sought to directly address the problem of balancing the employment of political and industrial weaponry, but it did so assuming those efforts would take place within existing constitutional and democratic processes.<sup>259</sup> There is continuity in Jordan's advocacy of non-revolutionary reform. Others in the Labour movement, such as Dan Sullivan who later became a prominent Labour member of Parliament, also professed an interest in the Whitley proposals. Jordan appeared to support workers' cooperatives rather than trade union based workers' control, which Sullivan also supported at this time.<sup>260</sup>

However, in his maiden speech to Parliament in 1923, as MP for Manukau, Jordan appealed to his fellow-members to study the welfare of the *people*, this wider representative theme was reiterated throughout his political career.<sup>261</sup> Although Jordan made his working class allegiance clear stating he had been clothed by charity in England and brought up at a poor school and,

...if ever the day came when he fought for the welfare of the great monopolists of this country, or if he ever became unmindful of the ordinary people and children, the God whom he served and who had raised him up would throw him back into the gutter...and I shall deserve it.<sup>262</sup>

During his speech he said his representation was both of the worker and the people. He had come to Parliament to support those things which were for the welfare of the

<sup>258</sup> 'Address delivered to electors by W.J. Jordan' at Ngaruawahia Town Hall, 4 November 1919, WJC.

<sup>259</sup> Vowles, 'From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism', p. 290-294.

<sup>260</sup> Vowles, 'From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism', p. 294.

<sup>261</sup> NZPD, 199 (1923), p. 223.

<sup>262</sup> 'Member for Manukau' Hansard's Report of First Speech in Parliament Reprinted from *Onehunga News* February 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, WJC.

people. He also declared, "I am speaking for the ordinary workers..."<sup>263</sup> Jordan projected a broad representation in Parliament, sometimes the people, sometimes the worker, possibly to appeal to a wider cross-section of voters within the political spectrum.

The trend of a broad identification with the general populace continued during Jordan's election campaigns for the Manukau electorate, "The member who represents all the people of Manukau all the time".<sup>264</sup> For Jordan, the workers were not strongly emphasised in his campaigns. A no party bias was largely emphasised in his 1928 election campaign rather than solidarity with the workers, with Jordan's personal record of services to the electors of Manukau, individually and collectively promoted.<sup>265</sup> However, he did champion the cause of the working class inside and outside his electorate on many occasions. In 1931, after meeting with unemployed single men in Onehunga, Jordan made an urgent request to the Unemployment Board for three hundred pounds to assist the unemployed in Onehunga and the neighbouring local district.<sup>266</sup> Although a Labour representative Jordan may have been careful to not closely align himself with only one sector of the community, the working class, electorally aware that other classes' votes were also needed to cement his own position as well as Labour's generally.

Up until 1935 Eldred-Grigg suggests that the language of class was evolving in New Zealand, "most widespread of all was the habit of talking about 'working people'".<sup>267</sup> Instead of the usual British way of talking about the working class, he suggests there emerged in New Zealand and Australia the phrase 'working people' as the world of work changed and some of the most basic ways of doing things altered. Possibly the phrase working people was a gentler way of describing the working class in New Zealand. Amongst questions posed by Eldred-Grigg was, "Were workers in New

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<sup>263</sup> NZPD, 199 (1923), p. 225.

<sup>264</sup> *The Watchman*, (magazine) 7 November 1928, WJC.

<sup>265</sup> *The Watchman*, (magazine) 7 November 1928, WJC.

<sup>266</sup> *Auckland Star*, 11 December 1931, WJC.

<sup>267</sup> Eldred-Grigg, p. 102.

Zealand ‘people’ rather than mere members of a class?”.<sup>268</sup> He also suggests that a further idea was that everybody was a worker and cites an unnamed Auckland merchant who said, “We are all fellow workers from the loftiest to the lowest”.<sup>269</sup>

Jordan also identified with the ‘people’ in his election campaigns. When questioned by a voter at a pre-election meeting in 1925 on his Labour Party affiliation Jordan said, “The party stands for better conditions for the people and so do I”.<sup>270</sup> Although in 1913 Jordan had condemned monopoly capitalism, in 1925 he tried to capture the free enterprise vote. In the campaign Jordan said that the Reform Party worked for the capitalist in this country, and other countries, while the Labour Party worked for all the people in this country, including the capitalist.<sup>271</sup> This reflects some change in Jordan’s actual views on capitalism and a desire to broaden his appeal base.

However, Jordan’s phraseology and apparent widening of his appeal could also be explained by a general trend in Labour Party politics during the 1920’s and 1930’s. The Party realised that to gain power they had to win votes, not only from the working class but a wider cross-section of the community, and adjusted their policies accordingly. They combined this in the 1930’s with a humanitarian approach to politics personified by Michael Joseph Savage. Gustafson argues that Savage refused to play on the politics of division and recrimination, “He sought to convince and to unite as many people as possible and take them beyond their diverse individual preoccupations to a common dream of a better society for all”.<sup>272</sup> In the dire economic conditions of the 1930’s Labour politicians talked in the language of ‘the people’. Jordan recalled on the night of the 1935 election victory Savage saying to him, “It looks as though we are the Government Bill, now we shall be able to do something for

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<sup>268</sup> Eldred-Grigg, p. 102.

<sup>269</sup> Cited in Eldred-Grigg, p. 102.

<sup>270</sup> Scrapbook 1925 election, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 1 Folder 3, Auckland University Library.

<sup>271</sup> Scrapbook 1925 election, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 1 Folder 3, Auckland University Library.

<sup>272</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 173.

the *people*".<sup>273</sup> Jordan's broadening of his appeal, a feature of his personal politics was also a trend within the Labour Party itself.

### Working Class Diplomat

When Jordan went to London as High Commissioner he was immediately reminded of the rigidities of the English class system. When he first arrived he wrote to Savage, "...there is certainly an official and a social plane in London which we do not have in New Zealand: there are forms to be observed which take time to understand".<sup>274</sup> When he met King George VI he wrote to Savage saying his Majesty was very easy to talk to and made him feel quite at ease although not so his entourage, "in fact his Majesty seems less formal than some of his officials".<sup>275</sup> Jordan often projected a straightforward approach, which downplayed class distinctions. The press remarked that Jordan was the most informal of all the higher officials of the Empire, "He has no 'side' (British slang for airs, arrogance and pretentiousness), and he prefers to view himself not as High Commissioner, but as a typical New Zealander".<sup>276</sup> This may have been the best way to combat the straightjacket of the British class system and his forthright representation endeared him to many during his time in London, "liked by all classes...our Bill is quite at ease with the Old School Tie civil servants in Whitehall, and they with him".<sup>277</sup> His working class background proved an asset,

...there is no fal-lal about his accent, which remains Old Street seasoned with robust, colloquial New Zealand idiom. In contrast with the other and more sophisticated Dominion High Commissioners – Canada's suave Massey, Australia's urbane Bruce, South Africa's soldiery Reitz – he is as rugged as an unpolished N.Z. nugget.<sup>278</sup>

Jordan undoubtedly realised his working class background could be detrimental within the hierarchical social class system in Britain. But at the same time by acknowledging

<sup>273</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>274</sup> Jordan to Savage, 6 October 1936, PM 16/1, NA.

<sup>275</sup> Jordan to Savage, 29 October 1936, PM 16/1, NA.

<sup>276</sup> 'Has No Side' (English newspaper) undated article about the time of Jordan's arrival in London 1936, WJC.

<sup>277</sup> *Illustrated*, (English magazine) 29 April 1944, WJC.

<sup>278</sup> *Illustrated*, (English magazine) 29 April 1944, WJC.

his own working class background, he could emphasise his achievement or rise in the world of which he was undoubtedly proud.

However, again there are complexities and contradictions. When personal distinction was involved Jordan did conform to diplomatic protocol. Winnie Jordan recalled that when Jordan got to London he had to adapt to diplomatic life, including finding himself invited to diplomatic parties and great functions. He dressed accordingly.<sup>279</sup> Jordan said it was the right thing to do saying, “When I was a house decorator I wore overalls. When I was in the army I wore a uniform. So I reckon that when I’m on duty anywhere I’ll wear the uniform suitable to the occasion”.<sup>280</sup> When he left for England at a farewell meeting of former constituents Jordan was asked “Will you wear a top hat and frock coat in your new job?” Gwen Douglas remembered her father’s reply: “I’d wear a bathing suit if it helped New Zealand”.<sup>281</sup>



Figure 15 and 16: The first photograph shows Jordan wearing an unnamed diplomatic uniform. The second photograph shows Jordan and Winifred, also in diplomatic uniform.

<sup>279</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.

<sup>280</sup> Skinner, ‘He walked with kings but kept the common touch’.

<sup>281</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

Berendsen referred to Jordan's attitude to dress when he accompanied Prime Minister Savage to the Coronation in 1937. He remarked that Jordan insisted that Savage wear the appropriate diplomatic uniform to the Coronation. The wearing of a uniform was something that Savage, a man of simple tastes, always loathed, "On the other hand Jordan, a former London policeman, loved this gaudy paraphernalia, and wore it with a simple pride – such is the difference in the nature of men".<sup>282</sup> Jordan, however, offered an explanation of his adherence to dress codes in terms of class, "A man can have a heart beneath a silk hat, and if I am invited to the Palace I hope I shall not be a snob as to refuse to dress like others".<sup>283</sup>

Although generally unperturbed by class distinctions Jordan did object, on one known occasion, when these impinged into his personal life. Winnie Jordan recalls that when Jordan took office in England his son no longer wanted to remain in the RAF to which he was bonded.<sup>284</sup> Jordan battled for his son's release claiming that he had been deceived because he had found out that the apprentices (William junior was an apprentice technician) would never get commissions – they would just be non-commissioned officers at best. The New Zealand Air Force stressed that for the training of service tradesmen of non-commissioned rank a very small chance of gaining a commission existed, approximately one per cent.<sup>285</sup> Winnie Jordan said that the man in charge in England told Jordan that his son would never get a commission because he was the wrong class. When Jordan retold the story some years later he still felt deeply hurt by that remark.<sup>286</sup> It appears that he used his office and influence to assist his son. For Jordan, the pursuit of individual goals occasionally overrode his broader ideologies and principles. Jordan did succeed on getting his son released from the RAF, on the strength of an arm injury William junior had received, coupled with

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<sup>282</sup> Sir Carl Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', p. 59, Sir Alister Donald McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-462, WTU.

<sup>283</sup> *Evening Standard*, (London) 9 July 1936, WJC.

<sup>284</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003. William junior had joined the RAF in England in 1932, aged fifteen.

<sup>285</sup> New Zealand Air Forces to W.J. Jordan MP 10 November 1932, WJC.

<sup>286</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.

Jordan's threat to go to the press exposing the 'class' remark.<sup>287</sup> The fact that all he had worked for plus all he had achieved in New Zealand could still be undermined in Britain by class distinction must have been a painful realisation.

At times it was apparent that you could take the man out of the working class but you couldn't take the working class out of the man. Although Jordan had relinquished his honey blending job to become an MP in 1922, on all subsequent electoral roles in New Zealand until 1935 he listed his occupation as 'honey blender', possibly still wanting to retain his working class connection. In 1944 several thousand itinerant bees swarmed above the Strand, on the roof of New Zealand House. The caretaker, who discovered them, quickly retreated. Jordan, however, walked up onto the roof and disdainingly proffered gloves and veil, climbed over several parapets, and stalked into the midst of the swarm. Carefully and expertly he selected the largest bee and put it into an adjacent apple box and into the box the bees followed their queen.<sup>288</sup>

At home, both in New Zealand and London, Jordan liked nothing better than to roll up his sleeves and dig his vegetable garden. In Onehunga he kept poultry, supplying the family with eggs, and also ducks. Gwen Douglas recalled her father delighting in lifting the foliage in the back garden so that the ducks could eat the snails hidden underneath.<sup>289</sup> The independent working class notion reverberated throughout Jordan's life. Watson suggests that those in this class considered it their task to provide food as well as money for their families by "maintaining a substantial vegetable garden and keeping a good number of chooks".<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.

<sup>288</sup> *Illustrated*, (English magazine) 29 April 1944, WJC.

<sup>289</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>290</sup> Watson, 'An Independent Working Class?', p. 188.



Figure 17: Jordan in his back yard in Wimbledon, a ‘digger’ literally and militarily.

### **Higher Honours**

Higher honours were later bestowed on Jordan but his working class background always remained close to his heart. The search for respectability, seen during Jordan’s early years in New Zealand, was later transformed into the desire for recognition of his life’s achievements, and honours were given in good measure. In 1937 Jordan was made a Freeman of his native town of Ramsgate, and also later a Freeman of the City of London. In 1946 he was made an honorary LL.D. by St. Andrews University, and a similar honour was conferred by Cambridge University in 1951. However, also important to him was respect and recognition from his own peers. For example, Jordan competed with his colleague Walter Nash in an effort to become a Privy Councillor before he did. Jordan undoubtedly realised that recognition in the form of higher honours would elevate his own personal status, however, his self-representation was

always of the working class and he never acknowledged any discrepancies with the egalitarian principles of the Labour Party (wherein the honours system a few select citizens are accorded special recognition and status in a society where all are professed equal). Jordan negotiated any variance between his own representation and the reality by redefining, sometimes unconsciously but often consciously, the conceptual boundaries to accommodate his own position.

Although the Labour Party's ideals encompassed democratic and egalitarian convictions the question of a title for Jordan was raised in the press even before he left for London. Prior to the election of the first Labour government the Speaker of the House and the High Commissioner had received knighthoods. Before the Labour Party took office in 1935 the Prime Minister elect, when questioned on the title issue, said he had no objection to tradition which still held its place in the hearts of many people, "Its importance could be over-emphasised, but personally he did not see anything wrong in the granting of honours which had been sanctioned by tradition".<sup>291</sup> The *Sporting Dramatic Review* (a New Zealand magazine) remarked that in the case of the High Commissioner it was a matter of expediency that that dignitary should have a title to his name.<sup>292</sup> The magazine said that Jordan had played a prominent part in the cause of the workers and his promotion was a worthy tribute to his long and faithful services to the Labour Party.<sup>293</sup> The title issue was again raised in 1937 when E.J. Howard, a government member, suggested a title for Jordan to raise his stature amongst dignitaries at official functions in London,

At present, when there are functions in London one hears the announcement of 'Sir Somebody', or 'Lord So-and-so', and then 'Bill Jordan'. This is not to the advantage of New Zealand and I certainly think that anyone holding the office of High Commissioner should be given some title.<sup>294</sup>

The *New Zealand Herald* cartoonist, Gordon Minhinnick, also commented on the

<sup>291</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 5 December 1935.

<sup>292</sup> *Sporting Dramatic Review (magazine)* 8 April 1936, WJC.

<sup>293</sup> *Sporting Dramatic Review*, 8 April 1936, WJC.

<sup>294</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 October 1937. E.J. Howard was secretary of the Christchurch PLL 1905-1908, national president of the Socialist Party in 1912, Labour MP Christchurch South 1919-39. Jordan does not appear specifically linked with Howard, possibly only as PLL members and early MPs, Howard was elected 1919, Jordan in 1922.

question of a title for Jordan.



Figure 18: The Minhinnick cartoon, 2 October 1937, which drew attention to Jordan's working class background. He was characterised flanked by working class men epitomised by their bowyangs, braces and rolled up sleeves. The cartoon's caption is a pun on the phrase 'Dignity of Labour'.

Minhinnick commented on both Jordan's status and rise in the world portraying him as self-important and slightly pompous - the working class Labour man in an official position amidst London High Society looking seemingly out of place. Jordan did not at this time appear to be openly boastful of his position; just genuinely proud of his achievements. The cartoon, therefore, is not a fair characterisation although it would presumably have amused Jordan who did have a good sense of humour. The problem for Jordan was, according to Minhinnick, he was in high society but not of it.

The question of higher honours for Jordan as well as his contemporary Walter Nash was again raised in 1946. Berendsen stated that Jordan was particularly keen to be

made a member of the Privy Council, “He took legitimate pride in his rise in the world and felt that public recognition would add lustre to his remarkable career”.<sup>295</sup>

Berendsen suggested this was fully recognised and appreciated in Wellington, however, Walter Nash also had claims to the same high honour.<sup>296</sup> He suggests a rivalry between the two men and Peter Fraser appeared reluctant to honour Nash without honouring Jordan as well with McIntosh remarking to Campbell, “the last time I mentioned it to the Prime Minister, he as usual harked back to Jordan and I reminded him that we could endeavour to buy him off with a Companion of Honour”.<sup>297</sup> Richard Campbell who knew both men suggests that from the earliest of times Jordan and Nash were incompatible, their antipathy possibly stemming from Jordan’s early independent Party outlook whereas Nash, as Labour Party secretary, was extremely loyal to the Party.<sup>298</sup> Berendsen also stated that to recommend the honour for one and not for the other would, in light of their, at times, volatile personal relationship, have led to a regrettable turbulence, “some of their colleagues in contemplating the possible consequences of such a step did not exclude the chances of bloodshed”.<sup>299</sup> Fraser was resourceful however, he arranged for them both to be made Privy Councillors at the same time in 1946. Jordan often remarked genially that the P.C. that had once been before his name was now after it.<sup>300</sup>

Jordan’s upholding of Labour Party socialist and egalitarian ideals were scrutinised in the press when in 1947 he bought a Rolls Royce for the High Commissioner’s office, at a cost to the government of two thousand and seventy five pounds.<sup>301</sup> Jordan responded to criticism in New Zealand justifying it on the grounds that the Rolls Royce was by far the most economical of vehicles. This does, however, suggest that Jordan was somewhat status obsessed. His justification, in part, was that he had

<sup>295</sup> Berendsen, ‘Reminiscences of an ambassador’, MS-Papers-6759-463, p. 186.

<sup>296</sup> Berendsen, ‘Reminiscences of an ambassador’, MS-Papers-6759-463, p. 186.

<sup>297</sup> McIntosh to Campbell, 22 November 1944, Sir Alister Donald McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-242, WTU.

<sup>298</sup> Richard Campbell was a diplomat and civil servant. He was Official Secretary, New Zealand High Commission, 1940-46. Previously he had been a government economic adviser.

<sup>299</sup> Berendsen, ‘Reminiscences of an ambassador’, MS-Papers-6759-463, p.186.

<sup>300</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>301</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 October 1947, WJC.

received a good price for the old one and had been able to exempt the purchase from the English sales tax.<sup>302</sup> The *Herald* commended Jordan on his business acumen but queried whether Jordan's sale was consistent with the pure doctrine of socialism (possibly meaning a fair distribution of wealth),

Mr Jordan appears to have broken all the rules. Has he not heard of the pegging of 1942 values under the Land Sales Act. He seems also to have been deaf to or unaware of the condemnations of the used-car market which so excite some of his colleagues in New Zealand. Perhaps this genial and ever-popular upholder of the ideals of Labour has fallen to the wiles of English Conservatism.<sup>303</sup>

It seemed, as the *Herald* suggested, that Jordan was participating in free enterprise, a mark of conservative politics. For Jordan, however, this was continuity rather than change as during his early days as a painter in New Zealand he practiced 'capitalist economics'. For the *Herald* at least, Jordan was a paradox, exhibiting a tension between his ideals and the culture that he may have acquired during his time in London. On several occasions during his life, Jordan's personal actions were difficult to reconcile with the ideals he represented as a member of the Labour Party. The tensions were seemingly not recognised or acknowledged by him. Jordan, in fact, created his own working class reality in which he himself determined the boundaries.

Labour's egalitarian class ideals, which Jordan represented, again appeared to be overridden by English protocol during the 1948 meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London. It was decided that the status of High Commissioners would be raised to equal that of foreign Ambassadors, entitling the appointee to be referred to as "His Excellency".<sup>304</sup> Now at all ceremonial occasions High Commissioners and Ambassadors would take precedence amongst themselves according to the date of their appointment.<sup>305</sup> In practice this meant the interspersing alternatively of High Commissioner and Ambassadors at occasions such as ANZAC day celebrations. In the

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<sup>302</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 October 1947, WJC.

<sup>303</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 October 1947, WJC.

<sup>304</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 October 1948, WJC.

<sup>305</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 October 1948, WJC.

example of ANZAC day wreath laying the longest serving official would present his wreath first. Previously Canada, as the oldest Dominion, had automatically had precedence in Britain.<sup>306</sup> However, it was concluded the seniority of appointment would determine that position. As the longest serving High Commissioner Jordan's status was significantly raised. Although Jordan's personal views are unrecorded the *Herald* noted Jordan's improved status, "The doyen of High Commissioners in London is Mr.W.J. Jordan (NZ) followed by those of Australia, Canada and South Africa", which again drew comment from Minhinnick.<sup>307</sup>



Figure 19: The Minhinnick cartoon, 29 October 1948, showing Peter Fraser, Prime Minister, querying Jordan's application and apparent acceptance of his 'excellency' status.

The cartoon distinguishes between the two men suggesting differences between them, Fraser reluctant to accept the title true to his Labour ideals, while Jordan appears to adjust his position. The cartoon suggests an observed tension between Labour's

<sup>306</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 October 1948, WJC.

<sup>307</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 October 1948, WJC.

democratic professions and a perceived willingness of some Party members, personified in this instance by Jordan, to compromise these ideals. The *Herald* in particular, periodically suggested a disparity between Jordan's own working class representation and the reality of his raised personal status.

Although Jordan had portrayed himself as a working class man all his life, in 1952 he accepted a knighthood. Possibly it reflected for him recognition of his achievements rather than an elevation of his own class standing, although he undoubtedly realised that a change in his status would accompany any acceptance. The knighthood was bestowed on him, not by his own Party, but by the then National Government led by Sidney Holland. John A. Lee said that the Labour Party, particularly the influential figures of Peter Fraser and Walter Nash, was against titles, "Walter at all conferences and caucus discussions of titles was completely opposed, until he wanted one for himself".<sup>308</sup> Margaret Thorn, Jim Thorn's wife, remarked,

I was very regretful that Bill Jordan accepted a knighthood. It is customary, but one can refuse. To me there is nothing more futile than to spend a whole lifetime battling for the underdog and end up a Knight of the Bath, Garter or a couple of Saints, and yourself a feudal survivor. It fills me with impatience for its childish vanity.<sup>309</sup>

The family's memory of Jordan's acceptance of the knighthood was that it was something he could offer the woman he wanted to marry in 1952. Jordan told his daughter that as an old man he didn't have much to offer Leith and if he had the title he could make her Lady Jordan.<sup>310</sup> However, Jordan's ego no doubt played a significant part in his decision. The quest for respectability and status was reinvigorated in Jordan's later life, they dominated his actions to the point where seemingly the views of his Labour Party colleagues no longer mattered. Yet if Jordan had been charged with abandoning his egalitarian ideals he would have defended that

<sup>308</sup> John A. Lee, *Political Notebooks*, Wellington: Alister Taylor Publishing Limited, 1973, p. 34.

<sup>309</sup> Elsie Locke & Jacque Matthews (eds.), *Stick Out, Keep Left: An Autobiography by Margaret Thorn*, Auckland: Auckland University Press & Bridget Williams Books, 1997, p. 115. Margaret Thorn was the wife of Jim Thorn who was a foundation member of the PLL. He was Labour MP for Thames 1935-46 and NZ High Commissioner to Canada 1947-50.

<sup>310</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

assertion aggressively. As had happened periodically throughout his lifetime, Jordan did not acknowledge or recognise (publicly anyway) that there appeared a contradiction of ideals. In this instance public recognition of his lifetime of service was a point of pride. Some within the Labour Party did not allow themselves such an elastic conception of belief, whereas there were others that did. In 1965, for example, Walter Nash also accepted a knighthood.

William Jordan's lifelong perception and self-representation was as a working class man and the newspaper obituaries after his death testify that this representation was successful, "Bill Jordan – man of the people" wrote the *Roskill & Onehunga News* and "'Bill' it was in spite of all the honours" said the *Herald* in 1964.<sup>311</sup> The recognition Jordan received did not appear to diminish the press's overall perception of him as working class. Winnie Jordan recalled that the working class themselves also still perceived him as one of their own. When his funeral cortege passed through the streets of Onehunga she recalls there were many workingmen standing on the footpath with their caps over their hearts which she described as an extremely moving sight.<sup>312</sup> His avidity for honours, as Berendsen called it, may have been simply to promote his standing in London society. Back in New Zealand though, this was not so necessary so his focus reverted to his empathy with the workingman.<sup>313</sup> In his retirement he claimed that the title had not changed his status. Mrs E. Moore, who was Matron of the Methodist Maori girls' Hostel where Jordan had once visited, said that when he visited old friends in Onehunga if he was invited into the sitting room for a cup of tea he would say, "If I can't have a cup of tea in your kitchen like I used to then I won't stay, I am still the same man even though I am now a Sir".<sup>314</sup> Although he had received many honours he was largely remembered as a champion of the working class and those factors that may be perceived to elevate him above that class, were overridden by his lifetime representation of the ordinary person. Overall, Jordan's

<sup>311</sup> 'Bill Jordan – Man of the People', *Roskill & Onehunga News* 2 April 1964, "'Bill' It Was In Spite Of All The Honours', *New Zealand Herald* 2 April 1964, in Biographical Notes William Joseph Jordan, Bert Roth Papers, 94-106-65/04, WTU.

<sup>312</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.

<sup>313</sup> Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', MS-Papers-6759-463, p. 185.

<sup>314</sup> Written information supplied by Mrs E. Moore, Mt. Roskill, Auckland.

successful representation of himself as working class merged with and dominated the alternative reality later suggested by the *Herald*.

Arguably Jordan had risen from working class to independent working class to a Knight of the Empire, however his own self-perception and successful self-representation was as a working class man. Although the working class persona has provided a structure through which to encounter Jordan, it was not the only guise by which Jordan identified himself. Other authors may select and have indeed constructed their own patterns from his life, authors such as Bennett classifying him by his independence.<sup>315</sup> The next chapter considers Jordan in his previously best-known persona as an Independent Man, which was arguably the most successful with his historical categorisation being dominated by this interpretation.

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<sup>315</sup> Bennett, p. 14.

### Chapter Three

#### **“I refuse to be bound to any man, in the Labour Party or out of it”: The Independent Man.<sup>316</sup>**

William Jordan’s name has been closely linked with independence in both secondary literature and primary sources. Although independence has already been discussed in relation to class, the concept overlaps into other facets of Jordan’s life. Independence appears as both a personal characteristic and a distinctive feature of his political and diplomatic career, whereby Jordan was the proponent of New Zealand’s independent foreign policy. In Barry Gustafson’s biography of Michael Joseph Savage, Jordan is categorised as thinking and acting independently.<sup>317</sup> Bruce Bennett, in discussing New Zealand’s foreign policy between 1935 and 39, said Jordan “liked to think of himself as an independent agent”.<sup>318</sup> Primary sources also revealed independence as one of Jordan’s constant and distinguishing traits. In his maiden speech to Parliament he announced, “I refuse to be bound to any man, in the Labour Party or out of it...mine is a vote that no man can rely upon”.<sup>319</sup> The prevalence of independence throughout Jordan’s lifetime warrants its inclusion as one of the themes in this study of his life.

Jordan’s own representation of his life in both his memoirs and the ‘Portrait from life’ interview (both in the 1950s) is largely independent and individualistic. For example, his portrayal of his candidacy for the Manukau electorate appears largely as the actions of an individual. There is no reference, in either account, to his workmates providing the deposit for his candidacy; rather his individual interpretations dominate the two versions. However, beneath the independent image lies a concurrent characteristic of interdependence – and also occasional dependence. Hence, this chapter also reflects some disparity between Jordan’s own representation and my reconstruction of events. Even for Jordan himself, in some contexts, there was no independent person. He considered that man was a social being and one could not consider a way of life for an individual apart from organised society, “The biblical

<sup>316</sup> NZPD, 199 (1923), p. 222.

<sup>317</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 285.

<sup>318</sup> Bennett, p. 14.

<sup>319</sup> NZPD, 199 (1923), p. 222.

adage, 'No man liveth to himself' is undoubtedly correct".<sup>320</sup> The apparent tension between these two concepts was not always recognised or acknowledged by Jordan. So, although the dominant representation of independence is the one that Jordan presented to the world it is juxtaposed with a notion of interdependence whereby he relied on the help and support of others around him. Periodically, another image appears - that of dependence. Although Jordan professed his independence from the Labour Party, in some instances it appears more rhetoric than reality. In 1935 his position as Labour's candidate for Manukau was tenuous, it was only the intervention of his Labour colleagues that secured this position. Hence, he depended on his colleagues for political survival. The boundaries between these concepts appear blurred therefore Jordan has some latitude which he could and in some instances did, substitute one concept with another. This chapter is divided into two parts, examining first the dominant independent representation and then the adjacent underlying notion of interdependence, which also features intermittent dependence.

The concept of independence in relation to Jordan will be explored in this chapter, from two perspectives. A conventional definition of independence is one free from control in action, judgment and capable of acting for oneself or on one's own.<sup>321</sup> However, it has been noted that in both secondary literature and primary sources, Jordan's independence has been portrayed in both a private context and a wider international one. This has warranted separate although concurrent explorations. Firstly, Jordan possessed his own personal autonomous attitude. How this manifested in his private life and impacted on his politics will be investigated. Secondly, Jordan's name is synonymous with New Zealand's independent foreign policy; he was, at times, the personification of the national position of independence. Therefore, from a broader perspective, Jordan as the government's proponent of the independent foreign policy will also be examined.

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<sup>320</sup> William Jordan, 'A Way of Life', Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 4 Folder 3, Auckland University Library.

<sup>321</sup> Patrick Hanks (ed.), *Collins Concise Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Collins, 1988, p. 573.

### He's His Own Man?

Jordan portrayed his decision to immigrate as largely one he made by himself saying in his memoirs that, "It was all a surprise to my friends and a shock to my parents and sisters, but they understood and wished me well".<sup>322</sup> Jordan's mother confirmed in 1935 that the family had not been involved in the decision, "at breakfast time he said he had thought things over carefully, and had made up his mind to go to New Zealand...In four days time he had gone".<sup>323</sup> The short time span between the announcement of Jordan's decision and his departure suggests a degree of impulse was involved and he says in his memoirs, "usually I decide in very little time, resolving that it is better to be in error than in continual doubt".<sup>324</sup>

When Jordan first landed in New Zealand he demonstrated a self-reliant attitude. He stated that when he arrived his capital was less than three pounds.<sup>325</sup> A condition of his assisted passage was that fifty pounds had to be deposited with the Agent-General in London to provide the new immigrant with some capital. Jordan had borrowed the fifty pounds from a cousin.<sup>326</sup> Although it could be argued that the loan represents a reliance on others, Jordan's choice to borrow the money can be seen as his own decision that was in pursuit of the broader immigration goal. He no doubt felt the loan was a means to achieve an end and would only be for a short time. It was. Shortly after his arrival he went to the Bank of New Zealand and requested the money be returned to an address in England, paying the requested fee of six shillings.<sup>327</sup> Believing in his ability to support himself Jordan was unwilling to be indebted to family members.

Arriving in New Zealand as a single twenty-five year old, Jordan adopted a lifestyle characterised by frequent periods of transience, which was not uncommon to new

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<sup>322</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>323</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 6 December 1935, WJC.

<sup>324</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>325</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>326</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>327</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

immigrants. Jordan was resident in the Pohangina Valley for approximately a year between 1904-1905, in Nelson between 1905-1906, Wellington from 1906 to May 1911, Waihi from mid to late 1911, Wanganui during 1912, returning briefly to Waihi again and then Ngaruawahia from 1913 until 1917.<sup>328</sup> Miles Fairburn, in discussing the foundations of modern New Zealand society, described the high rate of transience as a feature of colonial society.<sup>329</sup> Some of Fairburn's explanations of transience, such as regional employment fluctuations, apply to Jordan. He left Nelson because the painting trade was falling off and Waihi due to reduced employment after the Waihi Mining strike of 1912.<sup>330</sup> Fairburn also argues that the type of work done contributed to transience, which also applies to Jordan at least initially. In Pohangina he was involved in breaking in the land. This type of work was short lived due to the limited raw material. It meant that men had to move on, which Jordan did. However, Jordan also indicates that friendships were a reason for transience. He went to Nelson as his friend Percy, "was in some confusion" although he does not elaborate on what this was.<sup>331</sup> Jordan moved to Ngaruawahia because an unnamed friend was building a house and he undertook to do the painting and paperhanging.<sup>332</sup> Jordan was independent in his work habits, forming his own businesses in Wellington and all the places he was subsequently resident, the frequency of his self-employment indicating his desire to be his own employer rather than an employee of another man. Fairburn stated that transience was an individualistic and conservative method for self-improvement with transients seeking to improve their prospects by moving from place to place instead of staying in one place.<sup>333</sup> Jordan generally conforms to Fairburn's explanations of transience although an inherently itinerant job spectrum would be the exception for Jordan with painting not within the usual seasonal work classification.

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<sup>328</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>329</sup> Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989, p. 125. Jeanie Graham, writing on settler society in New Zealand, stated that settler mobility was a notable feature of the adjustment and establishment years, Jeanie Graham, 'Settler Society', in Geoffrey W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 113.

<sup>330</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>331</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>332</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>333</sup> Fairburn, p. 126.

Notions of independence would be part of his early political alignments. Within three years of arriving in New Zealand Jordan was part of a movement to assert a more forceful voice for labour in the political arena. During the Seddon administration the Trades Councils of New Zealand felt that the Liberal-Labour representation in Parliament did not adequately represent the needs of labour. Subsequently at the Annual Conference in 1904 the Trades Councils formed the Independent Political Labour League to assert labour's own political identity. The new party stressed its political independence from the Liberal government. Gustafson states that Jordan was a member of the Independent Political Labour League in Wellington during 1907.<sup>334</sup> The party later deleted the word Independent from its name. Personality clashes contributed to its fragmentation and the PLL had a brief history becoming virtually ineffectual after 1908.<sup>335</sup> Jordan was among those who believed that labour should have a distinct identity in the field of politics. The remnants of the PLL throughout New Zealand did not abandon the idea of an independent labour party although there were different opinions regarding means and policy (such as conflict between advocates of political and industrial action to achieve an objective) encompassed under the labour banner. Jordan favoured a political strategy rather than industrial militancy in these early years.<sup>336</sup>

Independence was a feature not only of Jordan's politics but also of his business, he was self-employed for much of the time between 1910-1917. After initially working for painter George Godber in Wellington he established a business with Godber's foreman, Harold Oakes.<sup>337</sup> 'Jordan and Oakes' advertised regularly in the Trades

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<sup>334</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p. 159. Despite extensive research this author has not been able to verify Gustafson's claim. Jordan was resident in Wellington from 1906-1911 however IPL records found in the papers of E.J. Howard MS-0980, in the Hocken Library in Dunedin were inconclusive regarding Jordan's membership. Bert Roth's notes on the PLL in the Alexander Turnbull Library were also inconclusive.

<sup>335</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p. 19.

<sup>336</sup> A letter to David McLaren in 1911 Jordan was perceived as conservative by not supporting the Waihi Miners Union withdrawing from the Arbitration system, *Weekly Herald*, 14 June 1911.

<sup>337</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

Council periodical, the *Weekly Herald*.<sup>338</sup> In Wanganui in 1912 he was first employed as a painter in a local firm, but then started his own business with a partner, Charles Leigh.<sup>339</sup> Here politics and economics merged, Leigh was also secretary of the United Labour Party in Wanganui. In Waihi Jordan established a business with Bert Waite.<sup>340</sup> Albert Brewer became Jordan's partner in the painting business, Jordan and Brewer,<sup>341</sup> in Ngaruawahia and they remained partners from 1913 until Jordan enlisted for WWI in February 1917.



Figure 20: Jordan is on the extreme right in this work site photograph. Apart from Jordan the only other man with painting overalls on is inside the house, seated on the window sill, possibly this is Albert Brewer. The other men are probably builders, their carpenters' aprons denoting their occupation, the man with the tie may be the owner of the property.

At this time, Jordan preferred to be his own employer rather than an employee – his self-reliant belief manifesting as independent occupational practice.

<sup>338</sup> During 1910 advertisements for 'Jordan and Oakes' appear weekly in the *Weekly Herald*. In September 1910 the partnership appears to have dissolved with only Harold Oakes' name appearing in the advertisement.

<sup>339</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 23 November 1945, WJC. In the 1914 Wanganui electoral roll Charles Leigh is registered at 3 Ingestre Street, occupation painter.

<sup>340</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'. In the 1914 Ohinemuri electoral roll Bertram Waite is registered at Martha Street, Waihi. His occupation is given as painter and decorator.

<sup>341</sup> Undated newspaper article from *Ngaruawahia Advocate*, WJC.

Politically, between 1907 and 1917 (WWI enlistment) Jordan remained active in Labour organisations. In April 1912 he was Wanganui's delegate at the Unity Conference in Wellington called by the Trades' and Labour Councils' Federation and the NZLP to bridge past discord and disharmony with the unions and other radical bodies.<sup>342</sup> The United Labour Party was formed to provide a basis for the future unification of both the political and industrial labour movements in New Zealand.<sup>343</sup> In July 1912 Jordan was Vice-President of the Wanganui ULP.<sup>344</sup> The ULP was first a reform, not a revolutionary party and its platform was progressive rather than radical, Jordan's membership of this Party, rather than the more militant Federation of Labour, is indicative of a more conservative attitude towards industrial militancy and political change.

Jordan always took opportunities to bring forward the Labour Party and his own representation into the public eye. By 1913 he was in Ngaruawahia, a town he described as socially and politically conservative. Jordan was among those who formed a branch of the Labour Party, which he said was the talk of the town, stating the local newspaper reported it fully and that the local policeman advised the residents not to worry as he would have most of the members 'in' before Christmas.<sup>345</sup> A vacancy occurred on the local town board, and Jordan was nominated and elected. In his memoirs Jordan implies he campaigned as a Labour man, however, he said his victory was a combination of both local advocacy and political affiliation,

...the baker Reg Sprague advocated my candidature as he delivered the bread and as he was a highly respected man, evidently many accepted his recommendation. That was my entry into public life and as it was the first time

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<sup>342</sup> Notes on Unity Conference 1912, United Labour Party-Research notes and records 1909-1913, Bert Roth Papers, 94-106-15/07, WTU.

<sup>343</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p. 49.

<sup>344</sup> Secretary Wanganui ULP to McCarthy, 29 July 1912, A.P. McCarthy Papers MS-0963, Folder 4, DU:HO.

<sup>345</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'. The local newspaper is the *Ngaruawahia Advocate*. While holding some later copies of the newspaper the Alexander Turnbull Library does not have copies for this time. Correspondence (a letter of reference for Jordan) dated February 1917 entitled 'To Whom it may Concern' is headed the Ngaruawahia Branch of the New Zealand Labour Party and identifies Jordan as its president, WJC.

that a Labour candidate had stood for any position in the district it was a hopeful sign.<sup>346</sup>

These remarks suggest an early ambition for both himself and the Party. As Jordan grew more politically confident, he would, at times, distance himself from his own Party affiliation.

In 1919, Jordan entered the political fray in earnest standing as an Independent Labour candidate for the Raglan seat in the general election. Returning from the war, Jordan said he was asked by the Huntly miners to stand for Raglan as Ngaruawahia, where he was living, and Huntly were both in the Raglan electorate.<sup>347</sup> Gustafson stated that although not nationally endorsed by the Labour Party, Jordan was a member of the Party and had the backing of his local branch.<sup>348</sup>

The Labour Party contested 46 endorsed seats in 1919, an electoral effort never before attempted by the movement and it was a heavy burden for a young Party.<sup>349</sup> Brown stated that the decision to fight so many seats overtaxed the Party. Jordan's decision to stand in an electorate previously uncontested by Labour and held by a Cabinet Minister ( Mr.R. Bolland) possibly inhibited national endorsement as the Party could see no hope of winning the seat and preferred to put thinly stretched resources into seats where candidates had a better chance of success. Also, Jordan had advocated his own candidacy, which was assisted by local support, he had not gone through a selection process with the National Executive of the Party. Jordan's representation of his candidacy, in his memoirs, highlight his own independent decision ahead of Party nomination processes and affiliation.

During the election campaign Labour was cast as disloyal (largely due to their anti-conscription perspective) and extreme by the daily press. On 4 December 1919 the *New Zealand Herald* covered the Prime Minister's addresses with sub-headlines

<sup>346</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>347</sup> 'Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan'.

<sup>348</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p. 140.

<sup>349</sup> Brown, p. 37.

entitled 'Extreme Labour Condemned' and 'Extreme Labour, No Help during the War'.<sup>350</sup> Jordan stated that it wasn't easy in 1919 to contest a seat for Labour. In many places he spoke he was the first Labour member to have been there, "the people were suspicious of our intentions, believing Labour men to be abusive, disloyal and irreligious, so suspicious that it was difficult to find accommodation".<sup>351</sup> Jimmy Cumming, President of the Raglan Branch of the Labour Party, accompanied him around the district. He spoke at Glen Murray where no accommodation could be found. After the meeting, however, several local residents offered them a bed, "they admitted that before we met they feared we would be uncouth in speech and appearance and unpleasant to be with".<sup>352</sup> Campaigning was demanding in other ways. Owing to a lack of transport they walked twenty-nine miles to a meeting at Pirongia where Jordan was due to speak.<sup>353</sup>

On the campaign he and Cumming carried with them numerous copies of the Labour Party's manifesto, headed "Socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange".<sup>354</sup> Jordan recalled it was difficult to convince farmers that they did not intend to socialise their lands and livestock, explaining that it was not the immediate policy and that it did not apply to them. He and Cumming decided that it was easier to say what they intended to do rather than what they didn't intend to do and so dumped the manifestos into a gully.<sup>355</sup> Although seemingly aligning himself with the Labour policy the independent Jordan was not afraid to make his own call regarding the centrality of official policy to his campaign.

When the first Labour MPs entered Parliament in 1919 J.T. Paul suggested that they often adopted an independent stance due to a lack of cohesion and unity of purpose among the small group,

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<sup>350</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 December 1919.

<sup>351</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>352</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>353</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>354</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>355</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

Labour members, lacking effective organisation or cohesion, naturally followed the policy and adopted the tactics which appeared to promise most advantage to the people whom they represented and to make their own calling and election more certain.<sup>356</sup>

Similarly, Gustafson recalled that while Michael Joseph Savage shared with all other Labour MPs strong views on Asian immigration into New Zealand in August 1920, “Savage took a position distinct from most other MPs, including his Labour colleagues”.<sup>357</sup> With the Labour Party still in its infancy and effective Party machinery and organisation still in relatively early stages of growth, Jordan adopted an independent tactic to gain election to Parliament. Standing as Independent Labour he could be his own leader presenting his own ideas and putting the interests of his constituents first while at the same time be aligned to the Labour Party. Yet nearly all of his platform directly mirrored Labour’s manifesto; a State Bank, opposition to compulsory military training, a State medical service and concern for overcrowding in schools.<sup>358</sup> One more unique feature of his platform was the promotion of the English Whitley Council Scheme for settling industrial disputes.<sup>359</sup> Although worker control of nationalised industry was for a long time a prominent feature of Labour Party policy the Whitley Council scheme was not promoted by the Party and the idea, which was overshadowed by the arbitration system, did not take root in New Zealand.<sup>360</sup> Under the Independent Labour umbrella Jordan was also able to disassociate himself from the tags of disloyalty and extremism being cast upon Labour, in fact he was introduced at pre-election meetings as a returned soldier.<sup>361</sup> He used his war service to advantage. When questioned about Paddy Webb, the Labour MP who was imprisoned for two years for refusing to accept conscription, Jordan replied, “Don’t judge me by my opinion of others, but by my actions. Webb went to goal; I went over the top in France”.<sup>362</sup> The press reported that he would not guarantee to follow the present

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<sup>356</sup> Paul, p. 69.

<sup>357</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 117.

<sup>358</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1919.

<sup>359</sup> ‘Address delivered by W.J. Jordan’ at Ngaruawahia 4 November 1919 to electors at Ngaruawahia Town Hall, WJC.

<sup>360</sup> Brown, p. 44.

<sup>361</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1919.

<sup>362</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1919.

leaders of the Labour Party except in matters contained in his platform, even though this was almost identical to the Party's.<sup>363</sup> Political independence, seemingly designed for electoral gain, was not successful for Jordan in 1919. He polled second in the three-man contest, 988 votes behind the winner.<sup>364</sup>

Jordan stood in the 1922 election for the Manukau electorate, this time, however as a nationally endorsed Labour candidate. This change may have been due to moves made in 1920 by the Labour Party to tighten the selection of the Party's Parliamentary candidates.<sup>365</sup> The 1920 Party Conference appointed a committee which made various recommendations, including the provision of standard nomination papers, and a pledge, which all approved candidates were required to sign. Brown stated,

The terms of the pledge bound the aspirant to support the objective and platform of the Party, to vote in Parliament, if elected, in accord with the majority decision of the Labour caucus, and not to retire from an election campaign without the consent of the Party.<sup>366</sup>

Jordan confirmed, in 1923, to the press that he had signed the pledge. Yet he still promoted his own independence in his maiden speech to Parliament in 1923, although this may have been more rhetorical than real.

Jordan's campaign for the Manukau electorate still had an element of independence. It was run with no financial assistance from the Labour Party. Because there was no candidate offering, Labour had initially decided not to contest the Manukau seat. Jordan later recalled ringing the secretary of the Labour Representation Committee controlling the Auckland metropolitan area stating that he would contest the seat if there were no objection. The secretary replied, "Well if you do you'll do it off your own bat. We can't give you any assistance as we've decided not to contest it".<sup>367</sup>

<sup>363</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1919.

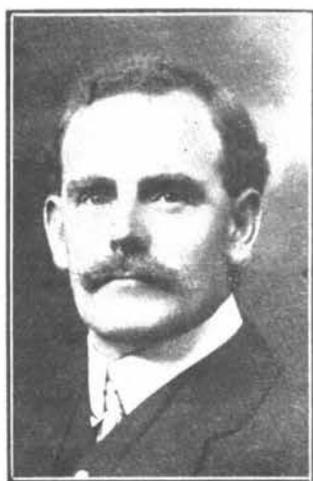
<sup>364</sup> Return showing the number of votes recorded for each candidate at the General Election 1919, AJHR, 1921-22 (V.III), H33 p. 2.

<sup>365</sup> Brown, p. 57.

<sup>366</sup> Brown, p. 57.

<sup>367</sup> 'Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan'.

Jordan decided to stand and did it the cheapest possible way, “largely on the street corner, there was very little advertising, we did not hire a committee room and did not have a paid organiser or secretary...a lot of us put forward a lot of energy but spent very little money as we did not expect to win”.<sup>368</sup> The sitting member for Manukau was Sir Frederick Lang (Reform), who had been a member of the House for twenty-eight years, its Speaker for nine and who was expected to retain his seat easily.<sup>369</sup> However, Jordan won the seat by a slim majority of 209 votes much to his own surprise, that of the Party and the country.<sup>370</sup>



STAR 43069

MANUKAU ELECTORATE

**W. J. JORDAN**

(LABOUR CANDIDATE)

STANDS FOR

IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES  
*(Elementary and Technical)*

WHITLEY COUNCIL SCHEME for PREVENTION  
OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES.

EXTENDED OLD AGE PENSIONS

INVALIDITY & UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCES

IMPROVED CONDITIONS FOR THE PEOPLE  
BY CONSTITUTIONAL METHODS

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**VOTE FOR JORDAN**

THE REASONABLE CANDIDATE

Figure 21: A 1922 printed election card, Jordan's self-representation as 'The Reasonable Candidate' emphasising his appeal as a moderate within the Labour Party.

The victory in Manukau was pivotal in Jordan's life, launching his parliamentary career. An evaluation of the win reveals several factors that contributed to his success. Peter Aimer analysed the voting patterns in the Auckland seats with regard to the Liberal vote in the 1919 and 1922 elections. In 1919 he revealed that Labour support in Auckland rose dramatically from 9.3% to 31.9% whereas the Liberal vote dropped

<sup>368</sup> 'Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan'.

<sup>369</sup> E.P. Aimer, 'The Politics of a City: A Study in the Auckland Urban Area, 1899-1935', MA thesis, University of NZ (Auckland), 1958, p. 158.

<sup>370</sup> Return of Polling Places in 1922 General Election, AJHR, 1923 (V.II), H33A p. 5.

from 48.4% to 24.8% with Reform remaining relatively static.<sup>371</sup> The 1922 election marked an even greater rise in the percentage of votes won by the Labour Party, “It rose from 9.3% of the City vote in 1914 to 31.9% in 1919 and to 43.2% in 1922”.<sup>372</sup> He argued that in the 1919 and 1922 elections, the bulk of the working class transferred their votes from Liberal to Labour. No Labour candidate stood in Manukau in 1914, the Labour percentage of the vote in the seat was 30% in 1919 and 49.5% in 1922 therefore there was a definite increase in the Labour vote within the electorate.<sup>373</sup> Jordan’s victory in 1922 was assisted by a steady increase in votes for Labour, which was part of a general trend in the Auckland area from 1914 to 1922.

Another key factor was the absence of a Liberal candidate in the Manukau electorate. Aimer suggests that, “It is almost certain that there would have been no such Labour majority had a Liberal candidate stood and exercised that Party’s remaining power to split the Labour vote”.<sup>374</sup> Jordan himself recognised this crucial factor stating that when the Liberal Party announced a candidate he called on Thomas Wilford, leader of the Party, asking that the Liberal candidate withdraw, “[I] explained that if the Liberal Party had a candidate neither he nor I would win”.<sup>375</sup> After securing a promise from Jordan that on a no-confidence vote between the Conservative and Liberal Parties, he would vote with the Liberal Party, Wilford agreed. Jordan noted, “That made all the difference, it was to be a straight out contest between Conservative and Labour”.<sup>376</sup>

It is unclear whether the Labour Party was aware of this agreement, Jordan said the Liberal Party was and pledged their political support. Aimer argues that the absence of a Liberal candidate in Manukau forced the voters who had remained faithful to Liberalism to make the only choice that was beginning to matter in the City, the

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<sup>371</sup> Aimer, p. 136.

<sup>372</sup> Aimer, p. 154.

<sup>373</sup> Percentage figures sourced from Votes Recorded for each candidate at each polling place, AJHR, 1921-22, (VIII), H33A pp. 1-29. Votes Recorded for each candidate at each polling place, AJHR, 1923, (VII), H33A pp. 1-29.

<sup>374</sup> Aimer, p. 158.

<sup>375</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>376</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

choice between Labour and Reform.<sup>377</sup> The majority choose the Labour Party with the press presenting a general economic interpretation of the overall results, “the voter, feeling the pinch of hard times, striking at the nearest possible target, either hesitated to go the whole length of voting Labour or [had] accepted the only alternative offered him”.<sup>378</sup>

A third factor was the redrawing of the boundaries of the Manukau electorate by 1922.<sup>379</sup> From 1919 to 1922 the electoral boundaries of the seat had been redrawn to exclude an area of high-polling conservatism in the southern rural fringe. Although the seat still remained a ‘town’ class seat it was now strongly suburban in character. The loss of a rural section of the seat, which had contained over 900 Reform supporters in 1919, combined with the radical influence of the urban growth between the Mt. Roskill and Ellerslie districts, were powerful and decisive political influences working in favour of the Labour Party.<sup>380</sup>

Jordan’s 1922 candidature in the Manukau electorate was indeed opportune. The three factors involved; the increased Labour vote, the absence of a Liberal candidate and the redrawing of the boundaries all combined at a moment in time to catapult Jordan to political prominence. How much the success can be attributed to Jordan personally is difficult to assess but it is clear from the results that Jordan did not squander his opportunity, working hard in the campaign to achieve success, which at any other time or place may not have eventuated.

### **The Independent MP**

As an MP Jordan asserted his Parliamentary liberty through which he placed the welfare of the people above Party politics. Prior to the election Jordan condemned the Party system when discussing Parliamentary methods. He pointed out that it was possible for a majority in the Cabinet to force legislation on Parliament, because what

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<sup>377</sup> Aimer, p. 159.

<sup>378</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 8 December 1922.

<sup>379</sup> Aimer, p. 159.

<sup>380</sup> Aimer, p. 159.

the Ministry decided upon, the Party had to vote for apart from individual opinions.<sup>381</sup> It was not a question of men thinking clearly and speaking freely upon questions affecting the people. In his maiden speech to Parliament Jordan declared,

I am charged with having stood as an Independent. That is so in a measure. The Labour Party has endorsed me. Nevertheless, I made it clear to my people, and I put it on record here, that I refuse to be bound to any man, in the Labour Party or out of it...mine is a vote no man can rely upon.<sup>382</sup>

Jordan said he would support even the Reform Party if the people benefited, “if the Reform Party...would introduce progressive legislation for the welfare of the people, I...would rapidly rush to their assistance”.<sup>383</sup> At an Onehunga meeting of electors, which was called to give constituents a short resume of the work put through in the Parliamentary session, Jordan replied to questions regarding his Labour Party affiliation. He said he was the official Labour representative, but there were things outside the policy, and he wanted to approach the people and as a democrat listen to the large voice of the electors of Manukau.<sup>384</sup> John A. Lee later recalled of Jordan, “He was a representative for Onehunga before he was a Labour man”.<sup>385</sup>

Jordan’s independence coupled with his democratic beliefs combined to circumvent, at times, his own Party lines. In July 1923, W. Hanan, Liberal MP for Invercargill, introduced the ‘Election of Ministers and Party Government Reform Bill’ into Parliament. He declared that over and over again members had to sink their honest opinions and real convictions for Party purposes.<sup>386</sup> Hanan proposed that Parliament would give instructions in matter of policy to its Executive, and be superior to the Executive, instead of subordinate to the Cabinet. He declared, “...there is no political freedom...the powers of individual members of the House are so limited under the present party system that they are almost entirely in the hands of the party boss”.<sup>387</sup>

<sup>381</sup> *Onehunga News*, 15 November 1922, WJC.

<sup>382</sup> NZPD, 199 (1923), p. 222.

<sup>383</sup> NZPD, 199 (1923), p. 223.

<sup>384</sup> *Onehunga News*, 7 March 1923, WJC.

<sup>385</sup> John A. Lee, ‘Bill Jordan kept his ear to the ground’, *Auckland Star* 27 February 1964, in Biographical Notes William Joseph Jordan, Bert Roth Papers, 94-106-65/04, WTU.

<sup>386</sup> NZPD, 200 (1923) p. 662.

<sup>387</sup> NZPD, 200 (1923) p. 666.

Political independence, free from pressure to serve Party purposes was what Jordan had advocated prior to his election. Harry Holland, spoke against the Bill saying that the Labour Party could not accept the proposals in the Bill as it proposed a coalition in perpetuity.<sup>388</sup> Jordan did not speak in the debate but when the Bill went to the vote he was the only Labour MP to vote for the Bill. All other Labour MPs voted against it. In the Parliamentary Labour Party Caucus the question of Jordan's action in supporting the Bill when all other members had voted against it was discussed. Jordan did not offer any explanation in caucus. Peter Fraser moved,

That whenever possible, the Party shall meet to discuss every Bill introduced, and when such a meeting is not possible, the voice of the members present in the House shall be taken, and the Chairman shall act in line with the decision of the majority. Every member of the Party shall abide by the decision of the majority so given.<sup>389</sup>

Jordan had exercised his opinion with his vote but pressure was brought to bear on him to comply with Party purposes.

Jordan's individualism may have been the source of ongoing friction with some of his Labour colleagues, especially Walter Nash. Richard Campbell, Jordan's onetime secretary at New Zealand house, said that the incompatibility between the two men, so evident in the 1940s, was old, deep and unrelenting, "Nash often got round to saying he and Jordan back to the earliest of times were incompatibles".<sup>390</sup> Campbell said that when Jordan won the Manukau seat in 1922 and replied to a pressman's query that his was a vote no man could rely on, Harry Holland was incensed, "Coinciding views on Jordan, and many items of greater importance, doubtless brought Nash and Holland closer together".<sup>391</sup> Jordan pursuing an independent agenda in contrast to the more collective viewpoints of Nash and Holland was clearly the source of some friction. Nash was Party Secretary from 1922-32. His organisational role may have included

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<sup>388</sup> NZPD, 200 (1923) p. 674.

<sup>389</sup> Caucus Minute Book 1920-1928, Labour Party Collection MS-Papers-0270-011, WTU.

<sup>390</sup> Campbell to Keith Sinclair, 1 July 1972, Richard Mitchelson Campbell Papers, MS-Papers-1900-16, WTU.

<sup>391</sup> Campbell to Keith Sinclair, 11 September 1970, Richard Mitchelson Campbell Papers, MS-Papers-1900-16, WTU.

comment on some of Jordan's statements which he construed as detrimental to building Party loyalty, although other Labour MPs also expressed individual opinions. In 1924 James McCombs disassociated himself from a cable of condolence to Russia on the death of Lenin, which had been sent by Secretary Nash, under instruction from the Executive. McCombs publicly voiced his disapproval and Nash, although furious with McCombs's attitude, was restrained in his rejoinder in the interests of Party harmony.<sup>392</sup> With the election of seventeen Labour MPs in 1922 problems of organisation and discipline arose within the ranks with not only Jordan providing difficulties for Party leadership. During the 1924 railwaymen's strike the four Christchurch members, without consulting Holland or Party Executive, attempted to negotiate directly with Prime Minister Massey on the strikers' behalf.<sup>393</sup> The press reported that, dissatisfied with Holland's leadership, they would probably stand as independents in the next election. The Christchurch members, James McCombs, Daniel Sullivan, Ted Howard and Tim Armstrong issued a denial,

There is a very wide range of opinion within the Party, but it would not be correct to say that there was serious conflict of ideas...The diversity of opinion and the diversity of personality only add strength and interest to the movement and at the same time ensure growth and development.<sup>394</sup>

P.J. O'Farrell suggested that Party leaders were anxious to avoid splits (with Holland inducing the members to stay) and were prepared to overlook almost any incident. Other regulatory action, besides the one involving Jordan, was also taken within the Parliamentary Labour Party. In Parliament, some members could not be found when divisions were called. It was decided that those wishing to leave Parliament Buildings during a sitting must obtain the permission of the chairman and both Whips.<sup>395</sup> Harry Holland's belief at this time was that "the tail must not wag the dog", the Labour Party could function healthfully only with teamwork based on majority decisions.<sup>396</sup> Jordan, as well as other Labour MP's, became subject to Party regulation and the 'bonds' of unity.

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<sup>392</sup> O'Farrell, p. 130. James McCombs was Lyttleton MP from 1913 until his death in 1933.

<sup>393</sup> O'Farrell, p. 131.

<sup>394</sup> *New Zealand Worker*, 21 May 1924 cited in O'Farrell, p. 131.

<sup>395</sup> O'Farrell, p. 131.

<sup>396</sup> O'Farrell, p. 132.

Although Jordan sometimes expressed his own opinions, which were not always aligned with his Party, he was a dedicated Parliamentarian. Individuality never overrode his love of politics or his desire to be ‘of service’.



Figure 22: This undated photograph shows Jordan asleep, on the right, in the Billiard room of Parliament House, Wellington, after an all-night sitting. Jordan identified, on the reverse of the photograph, the other two MPs as Alec Harris and Mr Dickson.

The 1925 election campaign revealed a tension between two perspectives of independence and loyalty. At a pre-election meeting in Manukau Jordan answered questions from electors with regard to his Labour affiliation. He stated that he had pledged himself to the Labour Party, to faithfully uphold and wholeheartedly work for its constituents, objectives, platform and decisions, and no other, and to vote and work for the selected candidates of the Party.<sup>397</sup> However, Jordan again reiterated that he would bind himself to no man. Asked if he would bind himself to Mr. Holland Jordan replied, “No, I will stand for his principles; but I am not going to truck along behind

<sup>397</sup> Scrapbook 1925 election, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 1 Folder 3, Auckland University Library.

Mr Holland and do what he bids. We will go along side by side if you wish".<sup>398</sup> Jordan effectively bound himself to the Party. His contrasting statements revealing an underlying leadership ambition, when asked during question time at a meeting at Kohimarama what leader would he follow Jordan replied, "The day will come, and before many years, when, if there is to be a leader, I will be that leader".<sup>399</sup> The pursuit of an individual agenda seemingly produced the contradictory perspectives although this also reflects the Labour Party's developing cohesion, demonstrated by the regulatory systems now in place for the Parliamentary Labour Party. Again a significant factor in 1925 was the absence of a Liberal opponent; it was a two-way contest with the Reform opponent, John Massey. Jordan's apparent contradictory statements not deter electors who returned him to Parliament with an increased majority of 784 votes.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Scrapbook 1925 election, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 1 Folder 3, Auckland University Library.

<sup>399</sup> Scrapbook 1925 election, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 1 Folder 3, Auckland University Library.

<sup>400</sup> Return of Polling Places in 1925 General Election, AJHR, 1926 (V.II), H33A p. 5.

# MANUKAU ELECTORATE

CANDIDATURE OF

# William J. Jordan

M.P.

LABOUR CANDIDATE



The Member  
with the courage  
to express his  
opinions!



The most  
approachable  
and willing  
Representative  
the district has  
ever seen!



NOTHING TOO SMALL TO ENGAGE HIS ATTENTION!

He will address the Electors at

**St. James' Hall, Mangere Bridge**

on SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10th, at 8 p.m.

**Mangere East Public Hall,**

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12th, at 8 p.m.

**Mangere Central Hall,**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14th, at 8 p.m.

RELIANCE PRINT

Figure 23: A 1925 election flyer which shows Jordan emphasising his independence and his representation

In the 1928 election Jordan increased his majority in Manukau although he was out of the country at the time. Jordan was selected as the Labour Party's representative at the Empire Parliamentary Conference in Canada. Tim Armstrong Labour member for Christchurch East was also nominated but withdrew when he knew Jordan wanted to carry on to England to see his aged mother. Before he left, Jordan held a series of meetings throughout his electorate requesting the sanction of electors to visit England after the Conference, which would mean his absence during the election. He received the people's mandate and it may have been the consultative process, which gave electors a feeling of participation in the decision, that was a factor in his majority. In his campaign from abroad Jordan emphasised his willingness to place his constituents first, "the welfare of the Electors of Manukau has always been W.J. Jordan's concern".<sup>401</sup> Believing he had done his best for his constituents he asked them to acknowledge this, "He has confidence in you, therefore show your confidence in him during his absence".<sup>402</sup> His constituents responded increasing his majority from 784 to 3,679 votes, Jordan's physical absence not proving to be a disadvantage.<sup>403</sup>

Jordan's majority in 1928 was the highest of the elected Labour candidates in Auckland. As in 1922, there were several factors which contributed to the victory. In 1928 Labour produced a much more comprehensive election platform, which included a revamped land policy. Subdivision, closer settlement, the prevention of aggregation, a State Bank and the extension of State Advances may have appealed to the largely suburban nature of Jordan's Manukau electorate. Several members on Jordan's campaign committee had been associated with him since 1922; Jordan's opponents, Mr. Bertram Bunn (Reform) and Mr. Walter Kells Mason (United) had not stood before in the electorate therefore his committee's organisational experience would have been advantageous.<sup>404</sup> Looking at voting patterns during the 1928 election Aimer argues that overall in the Auckland area Reform dropped from 48.7% to 22.6%,

<sup>401</sup> *The Watchman*, 7 November 1928, WJC.

<sup>402</sup> *The Watchman*, 7 November 1928, WJC.

<sup>403</sup> Return of Polling Places in 1928 General Election, AJHR, 1929 (V.III), H33A p. 13.

<sup>404</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'. For example, William Pickering, who became a lifelong friend of Jordan's was the secretary of the Onehunga branch of the Labour Party in 1922 and supported his candidacy at Dalgety's, was still involved in 1928, announcing the disbanding of Jordan's committees.

Liberal (United) gained, moving from 7.2% to 37.8% and Labour dropped from 44.1% to 39.3%.<sup>405</sup> However, the electoral boundaries were again redrawn in 1927 with a new Auckland Suburbs electorate created. Although the population of the Manukau electorate increased in size from 17,268 in 1922 to 19,394 in 1927, the seat, as in 1922, lost more of its rural and more conservative sections: the Mt Roskill Road District in the west and Kohimarama, St Heliers and parts of Tamaki to the north-east.<sup>406</sup> Therefore, although the area of the seat was actually reduced in size the urban population increased from 13,007 to 17,199 while the rural population decreased from 4,261 to 2,195.<sup>407</sup> Aimer suggests that urban expansion tended to favour Labour loyalties in this election as economic uncertainty and the resulting crucial questions of wage levels and working class prosperity, allied the political views and activity of the workers in the newly formed suburbs with the Labour Party.<sup>408</sup> Although among those seats with comparable boundaries in 1925 and 1928 the Labour vote declined. For example, the Labour vote in Grey Lynn dropped 7.2%; in Auckland Central, 5%; in Auckland West, 5.3%; and in Auckland East, 5.7%.<sup>409</sup> Jordan went against the Auckland trend and the graph below, Figure 24, illustrates Manukau as the only Auckland seat in which the Labour vote increased consistently over the three elections. External factors aside, Jordan's personal appeal whereby he promoted his independence ("The Member with the courage to express his opinions freely") and his representation of the broad political spectrum ("The Member who represents All the people of Manukau All the time"), which was also consistent with his 1925 portrayal, must now be considered a noteworthy factor in the results.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> Aimer, p. 195.

<sup>406</sup> Representation Commissions Report, AJHR, 1922 (V.II), H48, p. 16 Population of Electoral Districts rural and urban, Maps showing Electoral Districts boundaries after p. 26. And Representation Commissions Report, AJHR, 1927 (V.III), H45, p. 17 Population of Electoral Districts rural and urban, Maps showing boundaries after p. 28.

<sup>407</sup> Representation Commissions Report, AJHR, 1922 (V.II), H48, p. 16 Population of Electoral Districts rural and urban, Maps showing Electoral Districts boundaries after p. 26. And Representation Commissions Report, AJHR, 1927 (V.III), H45, p. 17 Population of Electoral Districts rural and urban, Maps showing boundaries after p. 28.

<sup>408</sup> Aimer, p. 196.

<sup>409</sup> Aimer, p. 199.

<sup>410</sup> 1928 Election flyer for William Joseph Jordan, WJC.

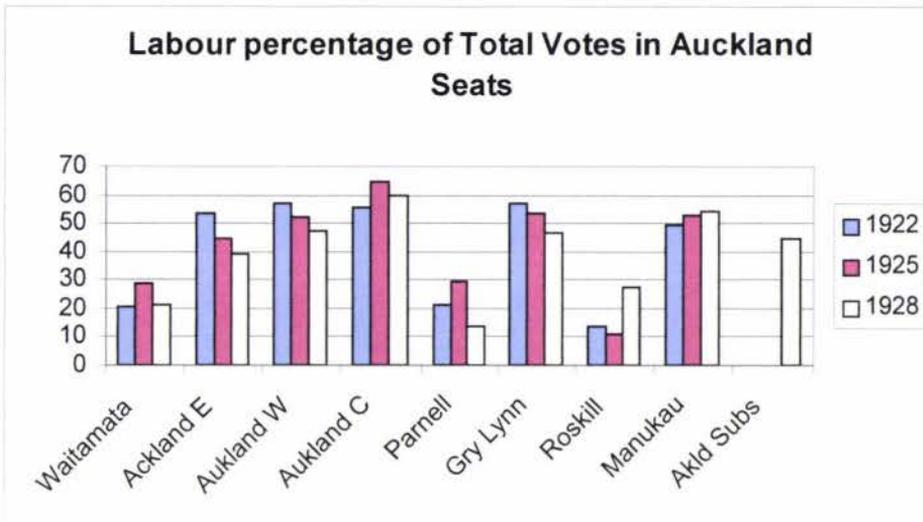


Figure 24: The graph shows Manukau as the only Auckland seat in which the Labour vote increased consistently over the 1922, 1925 and 1928 elections.<sup>411</sup>

Jordan periodically expressed sympathies with the early Liberal government of Balance and Seddon and during the 1931 election this was linked to his moderate political stance. Prior to the election, at the 1930 Annual Conference of the Labour Party, Jordan had received criticism (among others) from Arthur Cook, President of the Alliance of Labour, for comments reported in an Auckland paper. Jordan was reported to have said that if the old Liberal Party as led by Balance and Seddon was in power at that time he would have left the Labour Party and joined the Liberal Party.<sup>412</sup> Cook's argument was that the workers were subjected to poverty under that administration and directed a question to Holland asking him if he endorsed Jordan's statement. Holland replied that Jordan had made a correction to the report of his utterance.<sup>413</sup> Jordan's views on Liberalism may have also been a source of further

<sup>411</sup> Figures sourced from Votes Recorded for each candidate at each polling place, AJHR, 1923, (V.II), H33A pp. 1-29. Votes Recorded for each candidate at each polling place, AJHR, 1926, (V.II), H33A pp. 1-27. Votes Recorded for each candidate at each polling place, AJHR, 1929, (V.III), H33A pp. 1-31.

<sup>412</sup> 1930 Annual Conference Report of the New Zealand Labour Party, Papers of the New Zealand Labour Party MS-Papers-0270-352, WTU.

<sup>413</sup> 1930 Annual Conference Report of the New Zealand Labour Party, Papers of the New Zealand Labour Party, MS-Papers-0270-352, WTU. However, Jordan's correction did not appear specifically directed at his remarks regarding the Liberals. A day after the *Herald* had published Jordan's remarks he wrote a Letter to the Editor published on 5 April 1930, "...you reported me as having said "The Prime Minister is not so sick physically as many of his members are mentally" – My remark was that "The Prime Minister is not so sick

antagonism with Nash. Jordan privately acknowledged differences writing to Nash in 1930, "Your letter in hand with comment on the reference to the Liberal Party which I made at the meeting at Kohimarama. I am of the opinion that we shall disagree on that question as perhaps on many others".<sup>414</sup> In his first speech during the 1931 election campaign Jordan said,

If we had today a Liberal-Labour Party imbued with the spirit of the old party of the nineties, there would be no room in this country today for a Labour Party... What was wanted today was a government with the same courage and vision as the old Liberal Party leaders.<sup>415</sup>

Liberal sympathies may have been used by Jordan to claim conservative votes, the *Auckland Star* remarked, "... and there are many followers of the Coalition Parties for whom another victory for him [Jordan] would not be displeasing. Mr Jordan is of the moderate Labour type with which Liberalism used to work amicably and successfully, and he had been a useful member who has enjoyed the respect of all".<sup>416</sup> The conservative *Herald*, also characterised Jordan as 'moderate' although was not quite so complimentary saying that a vote for him or H.G.R. Mason, who it also classed as moderate, was a vote for the forces of socialism, which would drive the country headlong to bankruptcy.<sup>417</sup> For Jordan, Liberal sympathies represented both political independence and conservative vote catching. Jordan later recalled in his memoirs,

It is still thought by a large number that the Liberal Party should have had a better recognition of the thoughts of the people, and have been more radical in its policy, in which case many of those who played a big part in forming and supporting the Labour Party would have used their energies and influence in strengthening the Liberal Party.<sup>418</sup>

Thus, there is continuity in Jordan's expressions of affinity with the early Liberal Party.

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physically as many of his members are politically". Hence, Jordan's broad remarks about the Liberal Party were not retracted.

<sup>414</sup> Jordan to Nash, 9 April 1930, P.J. O'Farrell Papers, MS-Papers-1501-3, WTU.

<sup>415</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 November 1931, WJC.

<sup>416</sup> *Auckland Star*, 28 November 1931, WJC.

<sup>417</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 30 November 1931, WJC.

<sup>418</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

Political affiliation, which for Jordan manifests at times as independence, periodically appears as a contentious issue for him. Early in 1935 Jordan was involved in a dispute with the Auckland Labour Representation Committee when he decided to stand as an Independent in a by-election for the Auckland Power Board. This, as well as the dispute over the Labour candidate for the Auckland mayoralty only a month later, was a manifestation of what Sinclair describes as endless trouble in the branches at this time.<sup>419</sup> At a special meeting of the LRC on 21 January 1935 the committee resolved that it would take no part in the by-election, deciding against nominating an official Labour candidate.<sup>420</sup> Jordan, however, went ahead and nominated for the by-election, his motivation is unclear. The LRC met three days later to discuss Jordan's action requesting the National Executive investigate Jordan's defiance of the decision of the Auckland LRC. At a meeting on 4th February the LRC went further calling upon "the National Executive to withdraw Mr Jordan's name as a Labour candidate, and further call for nominations for the Manukau seat", on the grounds that he had refused to abide by the majority decision of the LRC.<sup>421</sup>

The LRC was dominated by Fred Young, the secretary of the Hotel Workers' Union, whose contempt for politicians also resulted in an attack on Labour's Parliamentary leaders at the 1935 Conference, stemming mainly from his belief that Labour had gone too far in moderating its policies, letting down the worker, "Young despised those he considered 'Bible-banging' wowsers, 'sanctimonious humbugs, reform cranks, and hesitant politicians'".<sup>422</sup> Young put forward the resolution to withdraw Jordan's name from the Manukau candidature. Gustafson states that at a special meeting of the LRC called to reopen nominations for Manukau "all the Auckland MPs...joined forces in the defence of Jordan".<sup>423</sup> Savage, who was a close friend of Jordan, attacked those in the LRC who had supported the resolution and wanted to bet five pounds that Jordan

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<sup>419</sup> Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, p. 109.

<sup>420</sup> Minute Book, Volume 1, Sept 1934-Jan 1936, Auckland Labour Representation Committee A-65, Auckland University Library.

<sup>421</sup> Minute Book, Volume 1, Sept 1934-Jan 1936, Auckland Labour Representation Committee A-65, Auckland University Library.

<sup>422</sup> Neill Atkinson. 'Young, Frederick George 1888-1962'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 31 July 2003 URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>

<sup>423</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 160.

had acted within the Constitution.<sup>424</sup> It is uncertain when the friendship between Savage and Jordan developed although Jordan recalled in a letter to Savage in 1936, “I know your thoughts...thinking of the many years that we worked together, of our many rides on the train, our walks home at night or to the House in the morning...”<sup>425</sup> On the 7th of February the LRC voted 29-11 to reopen nominations.<sup>426</sup> However, Savage was able to persuade the National Executive to overturn the LRC decision and endorse Jordan’s candidacy. Jordan was not successful in the Power Board election held on 4th February, although polling second out of seven candidates and only losing by thirty-five votes.<sup>427</sup> At a March meeting the LRC executive resolved, “That in the opinion of this executive it is inadvisable for Labour candidates to allow their names to be on any other ticket than that of the Labour Party”.<sup>428</sup>

Jordan’s independent action nearly cost him the parliamentary nomination, why he pursued the Power Board nomination is unclear. Local body candidacy was, however, not uncommon amongst Labour MPs. Robert Semple was a Labour representative on the Wellington City Council between 1925 and 1935.<sup>429</sup> In the May 1935 local body elections Dan Sullivan retained the Christchurch mayoralty, which he won in 1931, and Peter Fraser topped the Wellington council poll.<sup>430</sup> The prevalence of Labour in municipal politics can be seen as an attempt to influence national government, starting first from the grass roots civic government to instigate a flow on effect. Jordan may have felt confident enough to take on the LRC, as a test of political strength believing he was strong enough personally to override them. However, independence, at this time, needed the support and solidarity of his Labour colleagues to survive.

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<sup>424</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 161.

<sup>425</sup> Jordan to Savage, 10 November 1936 PM 16/1, NA.

<sup>426</sup> Minute Book, Volume 1, Sept 1934-Jan 1936, Auckland Labour Representation Committee A-65, Auckland University Library.

<sup>427</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 5 February 1935.

<sup>428</sup> Minute Book, Volume 1, Sept 1934-Jan 1936, Auckland Labour Representation Committee A-65, Auckland University Library.

<sup>429</sup> Len Richardson. ‘Semple, Robert 1873-1955’. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 4 April 2003 URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>

<sup>430</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 162.

Underpinning Jordan's political representation of himself was his self-perception of an individual who was capable of acting for oneself, confident in his own beliefs and abilities, and generally free from external control. This attitude was carried forward into his diplomatic career where it became married with New Zealand's independent foreign policy with Jordan becoming the personification of a national position.

### **The Independent Diplomat**

It may have been due, in part, to Jordan's independent outlook that Savage chose him for High Commissioner when the Labour Party became the government in 1935. Savage did regard independence as a valuable trait - regarding his own leadership qualities he wrote, "Lack of initiative and independence is the greatest curse in the world today. The person who has a normal brain, and the courage to do something, will generally get the necessary knowledge".<sup>431</sup> Jordan suggests that Savage offered him the post of Minister of Defence or the High Commissionership, stating that he preferred Jordan to go to London.<sup>432</sup> Gwen Douglas, Jordan's daughter recalled having a telephone conversation with Savage regarding her father's appointment with Savage remarking that it would be good if her father went to England because he could think independently.<sup>433</sup> Gwen suggested that due to the absence of swift telephone communications, Savage wanted Jordan in London as he was capable of making decisions without delay. In contrast, John A. Lee suggests that one of the reasons for Jordan's appointment was that Savage had marked him for export due to his earlier anti-radical flirtations.<sup>434</sup> Certainly in Savage's handwritten notes on the selection of cabinet Jordan's name does not appear amongst the first eight selected.<sup>435</sup> The Power Board debacle earlier in 1935 may not have enhanced Jordan's Ministerial chances. Sinclair also suggests that Jordan was an object of much suspicion in the Party because of his conservative views.<sup>436</sup> However, what value Savage placed on the High

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<sup>431</sup> Savage cited in Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 153.

<sup>432</sup> 'Portrait from Life - Sir William Jordan'.

<sup>433</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>434</sup> John A. Lee, 'Bill Jordan kept his ear to the ground', *Auckland Star* 27 February 1964, in Biographical Notes William Joseph Jordan, Bert Roth Papers, 94-106-65/04, WTU.

<sup>435</sup> Notes re selection 1935 cabinet, Nash Papers 2269, NA.

<sup>436</sup> Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, p. 246.

Commissionership is uncertain, although cabinet was selected first, and whether this was an ‘export’ move for Jordan or an acknowledgment of longevity and service, as even Lee said the post in London was a ‘plum job’, remains a matter of contention.<sup>437</sup>

Jordan arrived in Southampton on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1936. The photograph below and others similar to it was a much-publicised English representation of the new High Commissioner for New Zealand with members of his family.

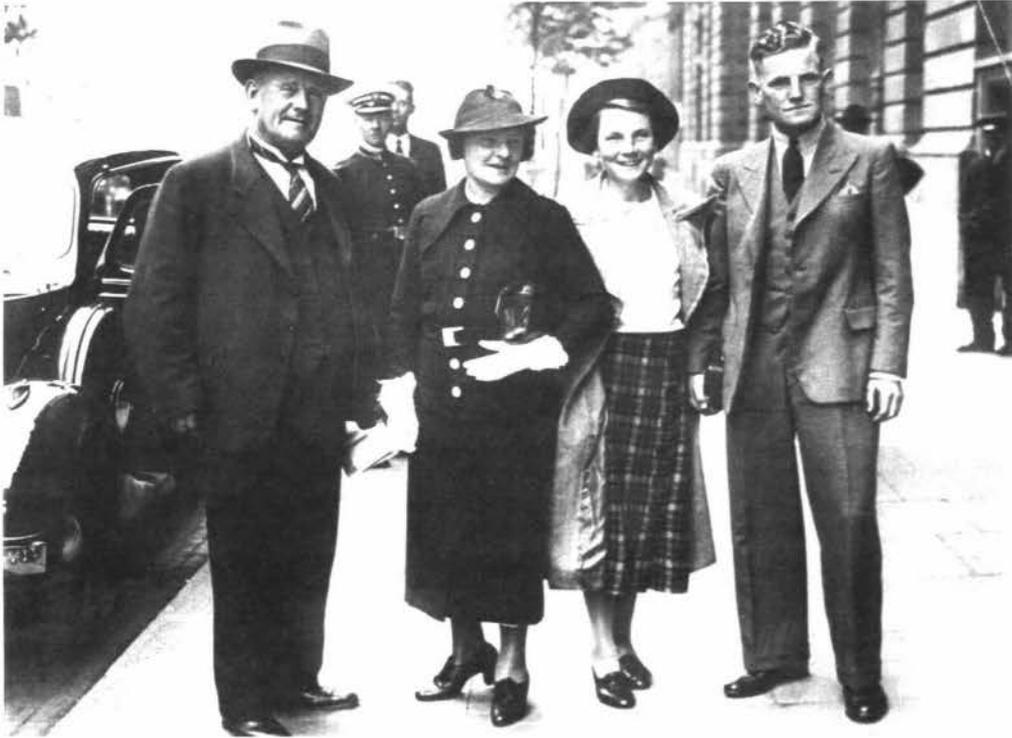


Figure 25: The family together in London. The group is happy and fairly relaxed showing Jordan smiling and pleased to be in London in his new role. This representation also emphasises Jordan as a family man of which he was obviously proud.

As High Commissioner in London Jordan was also New Zealand’s representative to the League of Nations in Geneva and as a diplomat Bennett suggested that he did, indeed, like to think of himself as an independent agent.<sup>438</sup> Berendsen who accompanied Jordan to Geneva as an advisor, recalled in Jordan’s character a

<sup>437</sup> Olssen, *John A. Lee*, p. 77.

<sup>438</sup> Bennett, p. 14.

marked disinclination to take instructions from his government, and to regard himself as in the fullest sense a plenipotentiary (diplomat invested with the full authority) upon whose judgment, and sole judgment, all his actions and statements were to be based.<sup>439</sup>

Berendsen recounted carrying with them, from Wellington, detailed instructions as to the opening speech to be made by Jordan at the League Assembly in 1936 (with Cabinet having specifically approved the actual text of much of the speech).<sup>440</sup> Berendsen claims, however, that when Jordan reached Geneva he rebelled from these instructions, of which he was fully aware long before he left Wellington.<sup>441</sup> He declined to take the Government's line, preferring a more moderate line described by Berendsen as "the 'soft-soap, soft-sawder' nonsense".<sup>442</sup> Berendsen argued with Jordan saying that he would have to inform the New Zealand government of such an unauthorised action. Jordan wanted to use his own discretion and say whatever he thought fit, arguing he would not be bothered with Wellington.<sup>443</sup> Berendsen persisted and Jordan was persuaded, agreeing to make a watered down version of the statement approved by his own government. When Berendsen returned to New Zealand he informed Savage personally of Jordan's behaviour, and did receive from Savage sympathy, encouragement and approval. There is however, no evidence of a rebuke to Jordan although contrastingly Berendsen recalled, "it was made clear to, and in the end accepted by, Jordan, that he was in fact the servant, and not the master, of the Government, the instrument of its policy and not its founder".<sup>444</sup> In a letter to Savage Jordan describes feeling his way, "We are now at Geneva, right amongst some of the foremost men of the world, and I am steadily feeling my way, taking care neither to step off with the wrong foot nor to fail to say what should be said at the proper time. Whenever in doubt I think hard and perhaps keep quiet".<sup>445</sup> Nevertheless, as a

<sup>439</sup> Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', MS-Papers-6759-462, p. 174.

<sup>440</sup> Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', MS-Papers-6759-462, p. 176.

<sup>441</sup> Bennett comments on Berendsen's claim that they carried with them written instructions, "I have not found any record of such written instructions in the National Archives". This author did not find anything resembling these either.

<sup>442</sup> Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', MS-Papers-6759-462, p. 176.

<sup>443</sup> Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', MS-Papers-6759-462, p. 176.

<sup>444</sup> Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', MS-Papers-6759-462, p. 178.

<sup>445</sup> Jordan to Savage, 6 October 1936, PM 16/1, NA.

diplomat Jordan did, at times, make his own calls although often qualifying them in his own mind, believing he knew what the government would want him to do.

New Zealand's relationship with the British government can be compared to Jordan's own relationship with his government: having an independent viewpoint but bound within a common allegiance. When the Labour government came to power in 1935 it pursued what has been described as an independent foreign policy.<sup>446</sup> Bennett describes this as a "pro-League, pro-collective security policy...seen by the government as not merely the best policy in practical terms, but also as the morally correct policy, in contrast to the Realpolitik of Britain and France, which seemed devoid of principle".<sup>447</sup> Three major security issues came before the League during Jordan's time as New Zealand's representative; Italy's invasion of Abyssinia, the Spanish Civil War and the Sino-Japanese war. New Zealand's views on these three issues differed from the British views. For example, the New Zealand government objected strongly to the Hoare-Laval Pact, a British-French plan to settle Italy's invasion by the ceding of a large portion of Abyssinia to Italy. Whereas British foreign policy included appeasement and non-intervention, the New Zealand government believed that the only way to stop aggression was strong collective security, immediate automatic sanctions amounting to a total boycott against the aggressor, backed up by the ultimate threat of force. For New Zealand, taking a stand would be dangerous but the easy alternative simply took the world further down the slippery slope to chaos and ultimately war. Despite holding these differing attitudes, New Zealand remained loyal to Britain and the exercise of the right to vigorous expression of judgement carried no challenge to the imperial link, "While expressing our views we have always abstained from voting against the British government".<sup>448</sup> Jordan's own relationship with his government can also be seen in this light. Although, at times, possessing an attitude to some League issues which differed from his government, such as the case of the *de jure* recognition of Italian sovereignty of

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<sup>446</sup> McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, p. 14.

<sup>447</sup> Bennett, p. 4.

<sup>448</sup> Berendsen cited in Bennett, p. 30.

Abyssinia, Jordan expressed his government's viewpoint.<sup>449</sup> Where he had been given discretionary powers, he expressed a view which he believed was in line with his government's policy. Therefore, while Jordan as well as the Labour government sometimes held and expressed independent viewpoints they both worked within a framework which had general overarching principles they would not breach.

Jordan's independence was, at times, less to the fore as he did ask for, receive and carry out instructions from his government. Nevertheless, Savage often gave Jordan discretionary powers although this may not have been public knowledge. Bennett stated that in the 1930s the public paid little attention to foreign affairs, and the general level of understanding was low.<sup>450</sup> However, the general public was, at this time, imbued with a strand of Imperial thought and was concerned when New Zealand was perceived to be out of step with British policy. The conservative press also reflected this concern and sometimes appeared to hold Jordan personally responsible. When Jordan recounted New Zealand's proposals for amendments to the League's Covenant, which differed from British proposals, the *Herald* commented,

Mr Jordan does not hesitate to embarrass the British Government and to fall out of line...and has chosen his own course in interpreting its [government memorandum sent to the league] general tone and tenor, to the weakening of British leadership and international amity.<sup>451</sup>

Jordan's insistence on full and immediate sanctions against aggressive countries provoked the New Zealand opposition to ask for an explanation of New Zealand's stand from the Prime Minister.<sup>452</sup> Savage replied that Jordan had the support of the government with regards to the memorandum submitted on League reform. In 1936, when the Credentials committee was deciding whether the Abyssinians should stay at

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<sup>449</sup> Jordan to Savage, 18 August 1937, PM 16/1, NA. Jordan had written to Savage suggesting that although distasteful, recognition might be the most prudent policy for peace. However, the government persisted in a strict line which Jordan felt was a mistake.

<sup>450</sup> Bennett, p. 95.

<sup>451</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 October 1936.

<sup>452</sup> H.S. Koplowitz-Kent, 'New Zealand and the League of Nations, 1919-1939', Dunedin University College, MA thesis, 1945, p. 78.

the assembly meeting, Jordan appeared disinclined to follow the British line. The press saw Jordan hindering Britain rather than helping.



Figure 26: A *Herald* cartoon, 2 October 1936, featuring Jordan in policeman's uniform purposely standing on the toes of the diplomats trying to uphold world diplomacy, reinforcing the view that Jordan was making the diplomats' task difficult.

Jordan had, however, been given discretionary powers, writing to Savage,

I am grateful that you allowed me to use my discretion in that matter as I feel I know your mind on most matters, and unless I am certain that my actions are in accord with your desires I shall communicate with you. I will run no risks of any misunderstanding, and I feel sure that you have sufficient confidence to leave matters to my discretion. If they involve a question of serious policy or expenditure I shall communicate with you.<sup>453</sup>

In December Jordan wrote to Savage advising that he was going to Geneva to a meeting called regarding the Spanish government alleging armed intervention by Italy

<sup>453</sup> Jordan to Savage, 6 October 1936, PM 16/1, NA.

and Germany and assumed he could use his own discretion as developments occurred.<sup>454</sup> Savage replied a day later giving Jordan virtually a free hand, “Government approve your attendance at League Council...use own discretion”.<sup>455</sup> It should be remembered, however, that this was within a broader context of a specific political ideology. For example, he would not have been free to support fascism, but Jordan always maintained he knew what the government’s mind was therefore, presumably knew what the boundaries were in practice.

Jordan also acted independently in his role as High Commissioner where his early role was, in part, trouble-shooter for the government. Jordan was assiduous in the protection of New Zealand’s standing in Britain which covered a vast field of influence. For example, Jordan took a particular interest in the complaints from British retailers regarding the quality and decomposition of New Zealand cheese. He made enquiries about different methods of packing and carriage and suggested a ‘Vac-Pac’ method to the Prime Minister, which he believed would reduce the complaints.<sup>456</sup> In 1938 Jordan was visited by a Director of the Stock Exchange who wanted to assure himself of the position in New Zealand with regards to the New Zealand stock he handled. It was rumoured at the time that political influence was being used to affect New Zealand stock in London. When he left, Jordan said the Director was perfectly satisfied that New Zealand stock was quite a good investment. Willing to put his money where his mouth was Jordan asked the Director to secure him some New Zealand stock and reported to Savage that the Director was most happy to do it and it was reassuring to see New Zealanders investing in their own stock.<sup>457</sup> In 1939 Jordan objected strongly to the BBC for a radio broadcast in which an economist, Professor N.F. Hall, attacked the measures recently taken by the New Zealand government. Jordan was given a chance to reply on air but refused, demanding an apology for inaccurate reports from the BBC. The Corporation was disinclined to move and Jordan threatened to expose them at Geneva by saying the BBC broadcast unreliable

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<sup>454</sup> Jordan to Savage, 2 December 1936, AAEG-950 87a (355/4/2 pt 1), Spanish Civil War 1936-39, NA.

<sup>455</sup> Savage to Jordan, 3 December 1936, AAEG-950 87a (355/4/2 pt 1), Spanish Civil War 1936-39, NA.

<sup>456</sup> Jordan to Savage, 14 January 1937, PM 16/1, NA.

<sup>457</sup> Jordan to Savage, 17 January 1938, PM 16/1, NA.

statements. An apology was duly made over the air with the press publishing a retraction. Jordan acted autonomously, although keeping Savage fully informed sending him a copy of the letter to the Director accepting the apology. Savage wrote to Jordan commending his action, "It is pleasing to know here the good work you are doing in keeping New Zealand's name high and in scotching the attempts regularly being made to discredit us".<sup>458</sup>

Notions of independence can also be seen in Jordan's dislike of taking instructions from Wellington, witnessed initially in his first League appearance in 1936, and as his career progressed into more vocal assertions of independence for his own office. Berendsen said Jordan's attitude was complicated by an unreasoning and even more unjustified suspicion of public officials although suggests this was not uncommon amongst members of the Labour government.<sup>459</sup> When Richard Campbell, the Official Secretary of the New Zealand High Commission, left London for another post Wellington suggested an appointee. Jordan, at first, agreed to the appointment of John Reid who had previously been in Washington but then rejected him in favour of his own appointment. McIntosh wrote to Berendsen, "Unfortunately he [Jordan] got the impression that we were trying to unload John Reid because he had been pushed out of Washington".<sup>460</sup> In writing to Reid, McIntosh said that Jordan's decision was not a personal one,

...he [Jordan] went out of his way to say that he was predisposed in your favour but he did object (a) to our arrogating to ourselves in Wellington the function of choosing and appointing his official secretary and (b) and this followed from (a) that as he was not acquainted with you personally he could not know whether or not you would suit until he had had experience of your work.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Savage to Jordan, 2 February 1939, PM 16/1, NA.

<sup>459</sup> Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', MS-Papers-6759-462, p. 79. Berendsen said a dislike of officials was a common trait amongst many in the Labour government, "...if there was one class of person more than another for whom the Labour government, indeed the whole Labour movement had a hatred and contempt, it was the official class...Fraser was one of the most contemptuous of the public official".

<sup>460</sup> McIntosh to Berendsen, 18 April 1946, Sir Alister Donald McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-231, WTU.

<sup>461</sup> McIntosh to Reid, 25 July 1946, Sir Alister Donald McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-332, WTU.

A frustrated McIntosh wrote to Campbell, "Mr Jordan has suggested that Sunley should carry on for the rest of his term, but the Prime Minister sent him a very terse comment on the nature of his proposal and refused point blank to agree. He also expressed disappointment that Mr Jordan had apparently gone back on the arrangement he made regarding John Reid".<sup>462</sup> McIntosh commented to Berendsen that Jordan did not actually object to Reid himself, "but he does object violently to our asserting the right in New Zealand to choose and appoint the Official Secretary, which he regards as a matter for himself".<sup>463</sup> Jordan's independence now mutated into an obstructive and unhelpful attitude. He also refused to put his activities into the High Commission's half-yearly report objecting to Wellington knowing, "what time he arrived in the office in the morning etc".<sup>464</sup> Jordan resented any interference from senior civil servants in Wellington, part of which can be attributed to an independent outlook and his dislike of officials, which as his term of office drew to a close built into what was described by Stevens, the Official Secretary after 1946, as "his dislike of Wellington and all its activities...[which] now transcends all reason and is fast becoming a monomania".<sup>465</sup>

Jordan retired as High Commissioner in August 1951 and returned to New Zealand, even near the end of his life he remained, as he had always been, a self-governing individual. Jordan's occasional propensity to stand as an Independent in local body elections without official Party support, first seen in 1935, manifest itself again late in his life. During his retirement he held a seat on the Auckland Power Board and five months before his death in April 1959 he stood as an Independent candidate for the Board. Due to a vacancy, Jordan had been offered a seat on the Board in December 1953 and had accepted. Prior to the 1958 election Jordan had been successful as a Labour candidate. In 1955 he was the only Labour representative to gain a seat on the Board out of ten Labour candidates with Citizen and Ratepayers' Association

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<sup>462</sup> McIntosh to Campbell, 16 July 1946, Sir Alister Donald McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-240, WTU.

<sup>463</sup> McIntosh to Berendsen, 18 April 1946, Sir Alister Donald McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-231, WTU.

<sup>464</sup> Stevens to McIntosh, 2 April 1950, Sir Alister Donald McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-352, WTU.

<sup>465</sup> Stevens to McIntosh, 27 September 1949, Sir Alister Donald McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-351, WTU.

candidates filling eleven of the twelve seats. Of the twelve successful candidates Jordan polled eleventh thus, Labour's success in the elections was minimal. Assessing low public confidence in the Labour Party at the time of the 1958 election he abandoned Party affiliation, and against the advice of his son, Jordan stood as an Independent believing his personal standing would pull him through.<sup>466</sup> The Labour Party had decided not to contest the elections and both he and Dr. Finlay, both known Labour men, stood as Independents. He was defeated in the election remarking, "...it is also an expression of the opinion of the people against the present government policy".<sup>467</sup> In a letter to Walter Nash, the Labour Prime Minister, he again blamed Labour policy for his defeat, "Dr Finlay was defeated for the Transport Board and I was defeated for the Power Board, other Labour candidates were likewise defeated, candidly there was no hope, many whom we met declared that they could not vote 'Labour' under present conditions".<sup>468</sup> Throughout his lifetime, assisted often by a strong self-belief, Jordan was never afraid to subjugate Party politics in favour of his own personal beliefs and objectives.

### **The Interdependent Man**

One of the strongest personae William Jordan presented to the world was one of an independent man. However, a notion of interdependence lies juxtaposed throughout his lifetime. Interdependence can be categorised as the support of friends and colleagues, which appears as an integral part of Jordan's political campaigns, and although Jordan does acknowledge this early in his career, it is downplayed and dominated by his own individualistic representation – later it is barely acknowledged. Additionally, there were times in his life when he was dependent on others, such as his Labour colleagues, for support. However, his own self-perception and the representation he wanted to project to the world relegated the less significant qualities (in his mind) to secondary positions in his life. Whereas, my perspective suggests that

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<sup>466</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.

<sup>467</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 November 1958, WJC.

<sup>468</sup> Jordan to Nash, 11 December 1958, WJC.

the concurrent notion of interdependence and occasionally even dependence are sometimes just as significant in Jordan's life as independence.

R T. Appleyard, in his study of assisted British immigrants to Australia, suggested that recommendations of friends or family who had previously emigrated played an important role in an immigrant's decision.<sup>469</sup> Megan Hutching concurred with Appleyard's viewpoint in her study of New Zealand's assisted immigrants.<sup>470</sup> Although Jordan appeared to act independently stating his decision to immigrate was an unexpected move for both friends and family, it seems that he went to New Zealand accompanied by his friend Percy Gorton.<sup>471</sup> Jordan had worked with Gorton in the Post Office at Mount Pleasant and it was Gorton who suggested the idea to Jordan and took the assisted passage particulars to him.<sup>472</sup> In the *Corinthic's* Inward Manifest Mr P. Gorton is listed as a passenger aged 21 with his occupation as carpenter.<sup>473</sup> When Jordan started work in Pohangina he stated his 'London friend' only lasted a day before leaving - this may have been Percy Gorton.<sup>474</sup> Jordan had no relatives in New Zealand and does not mention any influence of close friends who had already emigrated. However, Percy Gorton's influence appears significant.

During Jordan's early residency in New Zealand although his transience indicated an independent lifestyle, he was also a great joiner of organisations, which suggests Jordan was a people person who enjoyed the company of others and participation in a shared community. Wherever Jordan lived, after his initial time in the Pohangina Valley, he was active in several organisations. For example, in Wellington during 1910 he was a member of the Painters' Union.<sup>475</sup> He was secretary of the Men's Brotherhood in 1910, a subsidiary organisation of the Wellington Methodist Central

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<sup>469</sup> R.T. Appleyard cited in Megan Hutching, *Long Journey for Sevenpence*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1999, p. 75.

<sup>470</sup> Hutching, p. 75, "Oral history interviews and written questionnaires enabled me to ask a sample of immigrants who came to New Zealand what their reasons were, and their answers appear to support Appleyard's conclusions".

<sup>471</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>472</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>473</sup> Passenger Lists October to December 1904, Micro – T5372, SS1/481-SS1497, NA.

<sup>474</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>475</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 2 July 1910.

Mission.<sup>476</sup> He became provisional secretary of the Wellington Branch of the New Zealand Labour Party in September 1910, elected a few months later to the Executive.<sup>477</sup> Jordan also attended meetings of the Wellington Trades and Labour Council. During his time in Wellington he was on the Executive of the New Zealand Temperance Alliance.<sup>478</sup> Jordan obviously enjoyed the association with people and appeared keen to participate in organisational roles such as secretary. The purpose in joining organisations was, however, twofold as Jordan often used his participation in these groups to express his personal viewpoints. At a meeting of the Trades' Council the *Weekly Herald* reported that in new business and without notice Mr Jordan moved, "That the Council extend fraternal greetings to the No-License Convention sitting in Wellington, and further that Council approve the bare majority in the decision of local and Dominion option polls".<sup>479</sup> As well as providing social interaction these organisations gave Jordan a wider audience to express his individual opinions as well as possibly finding that his own opinions were shared by others.

Jordan also joined political organisations, and although his own political representation is characterised largely by independence, his initial foray into local politics was as part of the labour eight who contested the 1911 Wellington municipal elections. Jordan had a close association with some of the candidates including Hindmarsh, McLaren and Reardon through his PLL membership.<sup>480</sup> Another labour candidate was G.F. Reyling, secretary of the Wellington Painters' Union in 1909 who would have known Jordan through the Union.<sup>481</sup> The labour candidates asked the public to 'Vote the Whole Ticket' and presented themselves as a group rather than as

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<sup>476</sup> *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 13 August 1910. Photocopy supplied by The Methodist Church of New Zealand Archive, Christchurch

<sup>477</sup> Minute Book of the United Labour Party (Wellington Main Branch), MSX-2792, WTU.

<sup>478</sup> This author has tried to verify Jordan's membership of the Temperance Alliance Executive however records of the organisation held in the Alexander Turnbull Library are incomplete and do not cover the years 1908-1913. *The Vanguard*, newspaper of the Temperance Alliance, for those years was also inconclusive.

<sup>479</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 2 July 1910.

<sup>480</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p. 18.

<sup>481</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 10 July 1910.

separate individuals.<sup>482</sup> Although McLaren and Hindmarsh were elected, being well known in Wellington, Jordan and the other six candidates were unsuccessful. Certainly the better-known candidates did not improve the chances of the less experienced candidates, which Jordan may have been hoping for, and the United Labour campaign was unsuccessful for him.

Publicly, Jordan enjoyed the company of others; privately also he relied on the support of others, his interdependence is visually expressed by a montage of photographs on a wall of his residence prior to 1917.

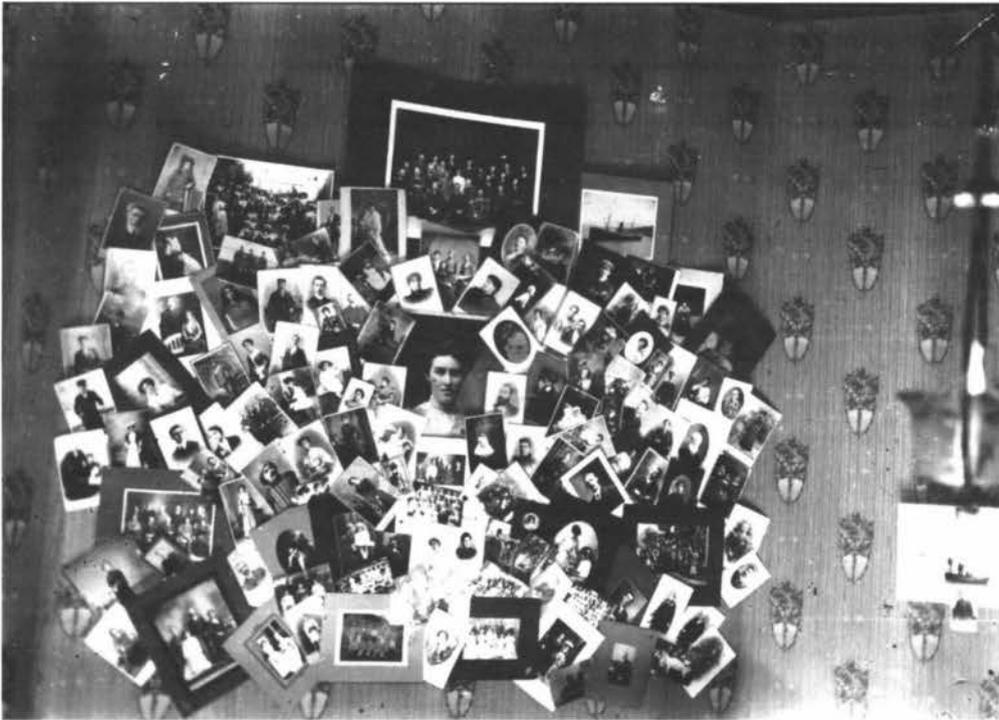


Figure 27: A photograph of images on Jordan's wall prior to 1917. It is post-1912 as the top centre photograph is of the NZLP conference in 1912. The woman in the centre of the photographs is Jordan's ex-girlfriend from London, suggesting this is before Jordan's marriage in 1917. Others recognisable in the photographs are his father and members of his London family. The photographs are a large collection, many of them he must have brought from London.

Jordan seemingly could not detach himself entirely from his earlier family, relationships and experiences, and drew strength from them. The photographs may have provided some comfort in times of loneliness. Although outwardly Jordan often

<sup>482</sup> 'Labour's Municipal Charter to the Public' Minute Book of the United Labour Party (Wellington Main Branch), MSX-2792, WTU.

appeared independent, obviously he relied significantly on personal and family relationships, both past and present, for support and encouragement.

Another classic network of support that Jordan belonged to at this time and which was continuous throughout his life was the Freemasons. The Freemasons was a widespread secret order, originally constituted in London, which declares itself to be based on brotherly love, faith, and charity.<sup>483</sup> Its ceremonies, which are allegorical and illustrated by symbols demand a vow of secrecy as well as a belief in God. Alan Bevins, in outlining the history of freemasonry in New Zealand, describes a 'lodge' or group of masons as a vehicle for, "members to meet and form friendships...being good members of the local community...developing personality and self-improvement".<sup>484</sup> Jordan's membership interlocks with his quest for self-improvement. His first known membership of the Freemasons in New Zealand is in 1913 when he was initiated into the Waihi Lodge.<sup>485</sup> His membership of the Freemasons was continuous in both New Zealand and England. Pledged to brotherliness and mutual aid, Jordan obviously enjoyed the close association that the Freemasons provided.

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<sup>483</sup> Alan B. Bevins, *A History of Freemasonry in North Island New Zealand*, Auckland: Coastal Promotional Print, 2001, p. 8.

<sup>484</sup> Bevins, p. 8-9.

<sup>485</sup> Waterloo Royal Arch Chapter dated 17<sup>th</sup> September 1917 (Masonic Lodge programme), which stated Jordan was initiated in 1913, WJC.



Figure 28 and 29: The two photographs show Jordan as a member of the Freemasons. In the first photo, taken in Onehunga, Jordan wears the apron of the Royal Arch Lodge. The second photo was taken in Wimbledon, London, and shows Jordan wearing the regalia of a past Grand Junior Warden.

Jordan's early political campaigns also featured support personnel. In his memoirs Jordan acknowledged local support in his election to the Ngaruawahia town council, in particular from a respected businessman who advocated his candidacy.<sup>486</sup> During his 1919 election campaign in the Raglan electorate Jordan recalled that Jimmy Cumming offered to accompany him through the district. Cumming, the President of the Raglan Labour Party, accompanied him the entire length of the campaign, sharing the hardships such as sleeping in a tent by the roadside on the way to an election meeting.<sup>487</sup> Jordan acknowledged the campaign was strenuous and Cumming's comradeship in a district Jordan described as suspicious of Labour representatives must have been a great support to him. This, however, is not emphasised in his memoirs. Also, Jordan said in 1922 he offered to contest the Manukau seat in the general election and recalled ringing up the President of the Auckland LRC who said he could go ahead but without any support from the Labour Party. However, in a later

<sup>486</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>487</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

reconstruction, the *Manukau Progress* recounted that Jordan's workmates at Dalgety's (where he was a storeman) first approached him to stand for the seat and donated the five pounds for his campaign deposit.<sup>488</sup> It is unclear who instigated the candidacy, both accounts could be correct with his workmates making the suggestion and then Jordan ringing the LRC. However, his workmates action is not mentioned in either Jordan's memoirs or the later 1950's interview. If the local account is correct Jordan was in an interdependent position which he later chooses not to acknowledge as significant.

Throughout his political career Jordan could never really be described as a Party man as he frequently made assertions seemingly independent of his Party. In his maiden speech to Parliament in 1923 he declared, "I do not want to shine as a Party man".<sup>489</sup> This was an image he portrayed with some continuity as the press recalled at a pre-election meeting in 1931, "He [Jordan] did not care which Party came out with a policy showing the necessary vision he would support it".<sup>490</sup> However, in practice, how free was Jordan to pursue his independence outside his own Party? The boundaries around Jordan's independence notion appear blurred; interdependence and, in fact, dependence could actually be substituted, at times, for independence. The 1935 Power Board election is an example of where Jordan was dependent on his Labour colleagues for political survival after the LRC had recommended to the National Executive to withdraw his name from the candidature of the Manukau seat after he had decided to nominate for the Power Board as an Independent. Jordan was only saved by the other Auckland MPs who joined forces in his defence and Michael Joseph Savage who persuaded the Executive to endorse his candidacy. Jordan outwardly professed his independence from the Labour Party, however he may, certainly in this example, have been more dependent than he would care to acknowledge. His own representation and the reality, in this instance, appear difficult to reconcile.

<sup>488</sup> *Manukau Progress*, (local district paper) 8 April 1964, WJC.

<sup>489</sup> NZPD, 199 (1923), p. 227.

<sup>490</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 November 1931, WJC.

Internationally, Jordan never perceived any specific distinction between England and New Zealand. For him, this belief manifested as interdependence between New Zealand and Britain and was widely professed: New Zealand was an extension of Britain and part of the greater Commonwealth, “We are so interlocked and so interdependent that we feel we are definitely one country”.<sup>491</sup> His views demonstrate continuity over time. When he first arrived in London in 1936 he commented on immigration and the Britishness of New Zealand, “When all our own people are employed we will have to look to the Old Country for labour. As it is we are 98% British”.<sup>492</sup> Jordan probably got this percentage figure from a book by a New Zealand politician. Sinclair said that in 1919 a cabinet minister, G.W. Russell published a book in which he asserted that the population of New Zealand was 98.12% British.<sup>493</sup> During a visit to New Zealand in 1945 Jordan said that the people of Great Britain and New Zealand were ‘one people’ with the only difference being that they were spread out amidst different lands rather than just being in one country. He remarked that “Pommies and New Zealanders were very much alike, the only difference was...that some were born out here to save the fare”.<sup>494</sup>

On an ideological level, the tension between Jordan’s own individualism and his views on interdependence can be seen in his hope for the future of the ‘human family’ which focussed on people caring for each other demonstrated in his comment, “our realisation that there cannot be happiness anywhere while there is misery somewhere”.<sup>495</sup> For Jordan, there was no independent person. He wrote that man was a social being and we could not consider a way of life for an individual apart from our organised society.<sup>496</sup> Jordan declared that we each have a part to play in providing for the welfare of others. Goods and services are exchanged between men, metaphorically we take in each others’ washing, and each is dependent upon the activities of others. “Even those who have monetary wealth have to pay for the services of others”, wrote

<sup>491</sup> *Isle of Chonet Gazette*, (English newspaper) 14 November 1936, WJC.

<sup>492</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 3 September 1936.

<sup>493</sup> Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*, p. 96. Sinclair cited G.W. Russell, *New Zealand Today*, Christchurch 1919, p. 115.

<sup>494</sup> *The Times*, Palmerston North, 4 December 1945, WJC.

<sup>495</sup> Unnamed speech notes ca 1950’s entitled ‘A friendly talk’, WJC.

<sup>496</sup> Jordan, ‘A Way of Life’.

Jordan, “are still dependent on those who produce the goods they buy and render the services they command”.<sup>497</sup> Jordan’s views on socialism underpinned this belief, he said in 1946, “Socialism means the welfare of the people”.<sup>498</sup> He declared that if each of us were concerned about the welfare of the other, then we would all be looked after, “We have to introduce the spirit of the word socialism”.<sup>499</sup> Also, “Socialism as I see it is a certain state of mind, a realisation of our interdependence and a determination to be of service to society”.<sup>500</sup> For Jordan, socialism was, in this instance, more spiritual than material. Echoes of Jordan’s political and religious beliefs can be seen in the notion of interdependence.

Interdependence amongst individuals, for Jordan, also applied to interdependence among nations in the international arena. He often declared a “oneness of peoples” when speaking about the relationship between New Zealand and Britain.<sup>501</sup> During the first months of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937 he held high hopes that America would overcome her normal isolationist opposition and take some positive action to deter Japanese aggression. Disappointed with America’s failure to take action Jordan claimed that undoubtedly the principles concerning individuals may be and should be applied to States.<sup>502</sup> He argued that the decisions of democratic states are the outcome of the opinions of individuals and also quoted the biblical adage, “No man liveth to himself”.<sup>503</sup> Jordan reiterated that since nations are collections of people it may truthfully be said “...individuals have responsibility for one another so it may be well said that our nations have a duty to care for one another”.<sup>504</sup>

In 1947 Jordan also linked the interdependence of nations with his unchanging views on union militancy and brought him, once again, into conflict with industrial labour in New Zealand. While launching a ship in England he commented on a watersiders’

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<sup>497</sup> Jordan, ‘A Way of Life’.

<sup>498</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 24 January 1946, WJC.

<sup>499</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 24 January 1946, WJC.

<sup>500</sup> Jordan, ‘A Way of Life’.

<sup>501</sup> *Evening Post*, 8 December 1936, WJC.

<sup>502</sup> *Standard*, 23 December 1937.

<sup>503</sup> *Standard*, 23 December 1937.

<sup>504</sup> *Standard*, 23 December 1937.

dispute in New Zealand stating that there was proper machinery for settling industrial troubles. Expressly referring to waterfront hold-ups and the delays in forwarding food supplies to Britain he stated, "Watersiders may have legitimate grievances and are entitled to try to settle their disputes. But to impose further suffering upon needy Britain is not the way to do it".<sup>505</sup> The Wellington branch of the Watersiders' Union objected to Jordan's comments and called for him and Bob Semple, who had attacked the secretary of the Australian Seaman's Union during the dispute, to be removed from office.



Figure 30: The *Evening Post* cartoon, 3 March 1947, which characterised the watersiders' attitude towards Jordan and Semple.

However Jordan, at this time, was not out of step with the views of the Labour leadership, Prime Minister Fraser said that any section of workers who tried to leap ahead - in wage increases or working conditions - would cause chaos in industry.<sup>506</sup> Angus McLagan, Minister of Labour, epitomised the Labour leadership's point of view when he said, "Strikes are entirely unnecessary today. There is no need for

<sup>505</sup> *Evening Post*, 3 June 1947, WJC.

<sup>506</sup> *Auckland Star*, 7 June 1947.

anybody to strike to get a fair deal or a fair settlement of a legitimate dispute - machinery has been provided".<sup>507</sup> Jordan's loyalty was generally to the Commonwealth as a whole. In 1940 he had remarked, "New Zealand is in the war, not to help the British Empire but as part of the British Empire which is threatened by Germany".<sup>508</sup> There is continuity in Jordan's views on Empire defence from WWI. This was a view not reciprocated by the waterside workers, and Jordan's assertions of Commonwealth interdependence is in apparent tension with his own individualism.

Over a lifetime of personal relationships, independence, interdependence and dependence are all conflated for Jordan. Personal independence and the solitude sometimes associated with single life was a feature of his early time in New Zealand. Contrastingly, he was also interdependent - always involved in various organisations and enjoyed being with people. Jordan's marriage in 1917 was a happy one with both partners apparently content with their roles. They were married for thirty-three years and when Winifred died in 1950 Jordan was terribly lonely.<sup>509</sup> His English family is only fleetingly acknowledged in his memoirs. His immediate family in New Zealand, including Winifred, is relegated to a supporting role at best. However, the depth of Winifred's contribution was glimpsed briefly when he returned home to New Zealand without her in 1951, "Coming home this way makes me feel like a captain who has lost his ship".<sup>510</sup> The extent of his dependence is made apparent. In his old age Jordan became dependent on his personal relationships as support. Miss Iggulden, Jordan's long time secretary at New Zealand House claimed in a letter to Alister McIntosh that when Mrs Jordan died, Jordan asked her to move in with him, "to keep the old fellow company".<sup>511</sup> Miss Iggulden took offence at what she regarded as an improper suggestion and refused point blank.<sup>512</sup> Gwen Douglas stated that Miss Iggulden was

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<sup>507</sup> NZPD, 277 (1947), p. 794. Also McLagan cited in R. McLennan, 'The Last Years of the First Labour Government, 1945-49', University of Auckland, MA thesis, 1963, p. 231.

<sup>508</sup> *The Methodist Recorder*, 5 December 1940, WJC.

<sup>509</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>510</sup> *Dominion*, 16 October 1951, WJC.

<sup>511</sup> Iggulden to McIntosh, 12 June 1958, Research Information supplied by *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.

<sup>512</sup> Iggulden to McIntosh, 12 June 1958, Research Information supplied by *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.

wonderful to her father and he, in turn, had a very high regard for her work. However, she queried Miss Iggulden's own feelings for her father suggesting that perhaps she imagined more into the situation than there really was.<sup>513</sup> Still seeking companionship Jordan married his second wife Leith in 1952, Winnie Jordan remarked that Leith took great care of him until his death in 1959.<sup>514</sup> As with many humans, Jordan's personal relationships were complex and changed over time as youth was replaced by old age.

In all the personae William Jordan presented to the world, the Independent Man is the one which has dominated the historical record. Underpinning Jordan's representation of himself was his own self-perception as an individual who was capable of acting for oneself, confident in his own beliefs and abilities, and generally free from external control. William Jordan believed he was, and projected himself as, an independent man, arguably this successful representation is the one by which he will be largely remembered even though the reality of his independence was, at times, questionable. However, another guise by which Jordan identified himself was both discrete and indiscrete. Although at times not openly visible, religion reverberated throughout Jordan's life in ever-increasing circles synonymous with a pebble dropped into still water. Hence, he defined himself as a Man of Religion, a self-image that was all-pervasive and informed all aspects of his life.

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<sup>513</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>514</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.

## Chapter Four

### “There’s a big hand in it all”: Man of Religion<sup>515</sup>

Another manner in which William Jordan presented himself to the world was as a Man of Religion. This religious representation features consistently in both the secondary literature and primary sources. Gustafson summarised Jordan as “a Methodist home missionary and very much a Christian socialist”.<sup>516</sup> F.P. Walters, in his history of the League of Nations, described Jordan as a man who “not infrequently embarrassed the Council by a tendency to quote the Bible...”.<sup>517</sup> John A. Lee said Jordan “had made speeches about The Master, clever but more suitable for the synod than Parliament”.<sup>518</sup> For Jordan, Christ held the answer to the needs of men, “I believe that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation...” he told the *National Review* in 1923.<sup>519</sup> Jordan emphasised a strong religious background in his memoirs and highlighted the importance of religion as he reflected on his life, “religion and politics were my chief interests”.<sup>520</sup> This third thematic chapter examines the religious dimension of William Jordan’s life and suggests that his representation and my perception of reality were closer in this part of his life than in other parts such as class or independence.

The Methodist religion permeated all aspects of Jordan’s life. It was prominently expressed in his role as a Methodist lay preacher. He became a lay preacher during his early years in Wellington and never relinquished the role. His early religious education will be examined and subsequently his lifelong commitment to Methodism. Religion was a distinguishing feature of both Jordan’s private and public life. Hence, his Methodist religion as a force in both contexts will be investigated as well as how his religion intertwined with his politics as he often presented his political views as being underpinned by religion. Also, echoes of religion can be seen amidst some of Jordan’s other characteristics, such as humanitarianism, as the Christian faith, for Jordan, was

<sup>515</sup> ‘Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan’.

<sup>516</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 285.

<sup>517</sup> Walters, p. 762.

<sup>518</sup> Lee cited in Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, p. 91.

<sup>519</sup> *New Zealand National Review*, 1 December 1923, WJC.

<sup>520</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

evidenced by love and concern for other people. Therefore, although not always expressly visible, religion underpinned and guided many of his thoughts and actions. How religion manifest during his political and diplomatic career as well as in his own personality will also be examined, including his broader Christian socialist beliefs.

From a very early age Jordan had a Methodist interpretation of religion and saw himself guided by the scriptures. Hence, he was less free to determine for himself where boundaries lay. As religion was *most* fundamental for Jordan, he was less inclined to deviate from its criterion. Consequently, the tension between his representation and the perceived reality, seen in previous chapters, was much less evident in this facet of his life.

### **The Wesley Pupil**

In his memoirs Jordan implies a family heritage distinctly associated with religion. When asked whether Jordan came from a family that held strong religious beliefs, his daughter Gwen Douglas, said that she didn't know although she confirmed Jordan did emphasise a religious tradition within the family.<sup>521</sup> Some of the few details that Jordan recalled in his memoirs about his two grandfathers were that they were religious men. His paternal grandfather went to Church regularly on Sundays and his maternal grandfather was distinguished by a portrait which still hung in the Sunday School of the Ramsgate Baptist Chapel.<sup>522</sup>

When the family moved to London, Jordan received his religious education from the Methodist Church. He recalled that while very young the family lived in Bunhill-row in the East Central district where they attended Wesley's Chapel and its Sunday school.<sup>523</sup> Moving to Bath Street Jordan attended the Radnor Street Methodist Sunday

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<sup>521</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>522</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'. At the time of writing his memoirs Jordan said his grandfather's portrait still hung in the Sunday School.

<sup>523</sup> *Methodist Times*, 28 October 1937, WJC.

School.<sup>524</sup> Jordan and his sister then attended St. Luke's Methodist School in Old Street, which was about a quarter of a mile away from St. Luke's Church which the family attended.<sup>525</sup> St. Luke's was a church school and he was taught parts of the catechisms and encouraged to prepare for Confirmation.<sup>526</sup> Jordan recalled, however, that they were sent to that school mainly for the benefit of free education suggesting that religion was not the primary reason for his attendance.<sup>527</sup> He recalls the presence of the Salvation Army and other churches that did what they could to help London's poor yet the Methodist religion was the one that dominated his childhood. His religious education remained close to his heart. In his will he bequeathed one hundred Bank of New Zealand shares to St. Luke's Church, the Radnor Street Methodist Sunday School also received a smaller bequest.<sup>528</sup>

Historian E. P. Thompson described Methodism in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century English history as a religion of the poor, and remaining as it had commenced, a religion *for* the poor.<sup>529</sup> Its founder, John Wesley, claimed that Methodism was, above all things, a 'religion of the heart' differing most evidently from the older Puritan sects with its enthusiasm and emotional transports which swept away all barriers of sectarian doctrines.<sup>530</sup> Thompson noted that Methodism gave to children and adults rudimentary education in its Sunday schools, and argued that there could be no doubt as to the deep-rooted allegiance of many working class communities to the Methodist Church.<sup>531</sup> Yet, Methodists represented a small percentage of the religious population in Great Britain, only 1.2% in 1901.<sup>532</sup> Historians, in analysing the distribution of Methodism suggest, "it is evident that Wesleyan success was much less marked in London than elsewhere".<sup>533</sup> Therefore,

<sup>524</sup> *Methodist Times*, 28 October 1937, WJC.

<sup>525</sup> *Standard*, 2 September 1937, WJC.

<sup>526</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>527</sup> *Standard*, 2 September 1937, WJC.

<sup>528</sup> Will of William Joseph Jordan, BBAE 1570/p. 932/59, National Archives Auckland.

<sup>529</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London: Gollancz, 1963, p.41 and p. 402.

<sup>530</sup> Thompson, p. 402.

<sup>531</sup> Thompson, p. 389.

<sup>532</sup> Rupert Davis, A. Raymond George, Gordon Rupp (eds.), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, Volume Three*, London: Epworth Press, 1983, p. 123.

<sup>533</sup> Davis, George and Rupp, p. 126.

although Methodism was generally regarded as a religion of the poor it appeared more prominent in working class areas outside London. Jordan's experience, therefore, was not typical. Nevertheless, the religion provided an early education for Jordan and, possibly a sense of encouragement and self-worth in a secure environment amidst others with similar economic circumstances. Also for Jordan it was an explicit link between the gospel, class and social activism. He claimed in his memoirs that trade unionism was born in Primitive Methodism.<sup>534</sup>

Jordan acknowledged the possibility of divine influence in his decision to immigrate suggesting, "there's a big hand in it all".<sup>535</sup> Jordan's strong religious faith featured during his early days in New Zealand with his residency in Pohangina testament to his first 'preaching'. He recalled attending his first New Zealand Methodist service in Pohangina,<sup>536</sup> which was conducted in a hall (instituted by the Broad Street Wesleyan Church in Palmerston North).<sup>537</sup> During Jordan's time in the Valley Ministers and lay preachers travelled from Palmerston North to Pohangina by horse and gig.<sup>538</sup> Jordan would later recall a man being killed in the Pohangina Valley where he first worked clearing land in 1905.<sup>539</sup> As there was nobody to take the burial service the men asked Jordan to say a few words of committal, after noticing that he always had his Bible on hand to read.<sup>540</sup> Although reluctant, as he wasn't an ordained preacher, Jordan did what they asked of him. His daughter said his feeling was that the men had done so much for him that it was the least he could do.

His religion provided an immediate link with the new communities in the various places he lived between 1904 and 1913, "In any place I happened to be I linked up with the Methodists".<sup>541</sup> Methodists were a more populous denomination in New

<sup>534</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>535</sup> 'Portrait from Life – Sir William Jordan'.

<sup>536</sup> Speech Notes, Methodist Local Preachers Mutual Aid Association Annual Meeting, London 15 April 1939, WJC.

<sup>537</sup> R.G. Passey, *A Brief History of Methodism in the Pohangina Valley 1893-1993*, Pohangina: Pohangina Methodist Church, 1993, p. 12.

<sup>538</sup> Passey, p. 12.

<sup>539</sup> Telephone conversation with Gwen Douglas, 3 April 2003.

<sup>540</sup> Telephone conversation with Gwen Douglas, 3 April 2003.

<sup>541</sup> *Methodist Times*, 28 October 1937, WJC.

Zealand than in England with 10.06% of the population in New Zealand in 1906. Jordan would have found affiliating with Methodists a somewhat easier task in New Zealand.<sup>542</sup> Clearly the connections made an impact. Later in life he could recount the names of Methodist Ministers he had met in both Nelson and Wellington during his early days in New Zealand.<sup>543</sup>

An established Methodist community provided an instant social network and as Jordan was very much a people person these would have been vital. Friends sometimes introduced him into the Church. For example, when Jordan arrived in Wellington from Nelson in 1906 he lived at 21 Walter Street in Wellington, next to a property named “Ramsgate House”.<sup>544</sup> The owners were previously from Ramsgate and had known his family years before, “We became close friends, I joined the Primitive Methodists Church, of which they were members”.<sup>545</sup> Although another of Jordan’s self-representations was as an independent man, in this instance, friends and networks appeared influential in assisting his integration in a new society.

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<sup>542</sup> *Census of New Zealand* 1906, Part II – Religions of the People p. 92-95. The *Census* records the distribution of Methodists in New Zealand: Auckland 15,720, Wellington 13,660, Nelson 3,037, Taranaki 4,529, Hawkes Bay 2,388, Canterbury 14,685 and Otago 8,022. These figures do not include figures for Primitive Methodists which would be additional.

<sup>543</sup> *Methodist Times*, 28 October 1937, WJC.

<sup>544</sup> Wellington Central Electoral Roll 1908, WTU. Jordan is registered at 21 Walter Street, Daisy Reed is registered at Ramsgate House, Walter Street.

<sup>545</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’. The first church that Jordan joined was the Webb Street Primitive Methodist Church.



Figure 31: A photograph of a picnic with the Webb Street Primitive Methodists in 1906. Jordan is in the back row on the extreme left.

The photograph shows the church congregation as reasonably young evidenced by the number of children and few elderly people. Jordan, twenty-seven in 1906, was mixing with other young men and women of his own age group through his Church membership. Worship combined with recreational activities outside the church giving Jordan an early sense of community.

### **The Prohibitionist**

Jordan had an interest in temperance work; he had previously joined the Good Templars in Nelson in 1905, which was a temperance movement.<sup>546</sup> Prohibition was also a particular focus of Primitive Methodism in Britain and in New Zealand. Hugh Bourne co-founder of Primitive Methodism in Britain “had stressed the importance of opposition to the drink evil”.<sup>547</sup> In New Zealand, historian Andrew Grigg argued that abstention from indulgence in alcohol was a tenet of membership of some

<sup>546</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>547</sup> Davis, George and Rupp, p. 176.

nonconformist Churches. In 1899 the Primitive Methodist Conference passed a resolution to the effect that total abstinence from all liquors be required as a condition of membership for all applicants for admission to the Church.<sup>548</sup> Therefore, to gain entry to the Primitive Methodists Jordan would have had to pledge abstinence. It is not recorded whether Jordan was an abstainer while still in Britain. Jordan's association with the Primitive Methodists was a link with prohibition activity in New Zealand; hence, his first political activity is more linked to religion than to a political ideology.

In 1910 Jordan joined the Wellington City Men's Brotherhood, which was part of the Wellington Central Mission. Of Methodist denomination, the Brotherhood had a Sunday afternoon men's meeting. The *Methodist Times* declared that "if any single Christian organisation in New Zealand is able to bring the light of Christian truth to bear promptly and powerfully upon the moral, social and political questions of the hour, (although these were not specified) that organisation should be the Wellington Central Mission and its Sunday afternoon gathering for men".<sup>549</sup> The Brotherhood's objectives were,

To foster the spirit of Christian brotherhood among the men of Wellington, to lead the strong to help the weak, to promote thrift, encourage pure literature, assist all movements for true social and moral reform, and in every way possible help in the making of a new Wellington.<sup>550</sup>

The Central Mission had itself only been established in 1909 and the formation of the Brotherhood and a Sunday School for infants followed a year later as subsidiaries of the Church. During the Brotherhood's inauguration an election of officers was held on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1910 and Jordan was elected secretary.<sup>551</sup> The Brotherhood denoted an interest in politics, "no city [has] such opportunities for watching the activities of

<sup>548</sup> A.R. Grigg, 'Prohibition, the Church and Labour. A Programme for Social Reform 1890-1914', *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.15, No.2, 1981, pp. 135-154.

<sup>549</sup> *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 4 June 1910. Photocopy supplied by The Methodist Church of New Zealand Archive, Christchurch.

<sup>550</sup> Central Mission Quarterly Minute Book 1909-1924 MSY-0488, Wesley Methodist Church (Taranaki St. Wellington) Papers MS-Group-0190, WTU.

<sup>551</sup> *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 13 August 1910. Photocopy supplied by The Methodist Church of New Zealand Archive, Christchurch. It is not clear how long Jordan held the position however he left Wellington for Waihi in May 1911.

political life”<sup>552</sup> and had contacts with some prominent politicians. The Hon. George Fowlds chaired the Brotherhood’s first meeting and during August, Messrs Francis Fisher and Robert Wright, both MPs, addressed the members.<sup>553</sup> In September 1910 the political speakers included MPs Henry Ell and David McLaren, with Jordan a founding member of the Wellington Branch of the Labour Party.<sup>554</sup> The Brotherhood’s speakers varied in their political allegiance, no particular support seemingly apparent.<sup>555</sup> However, a common denominator among the guests was their belief in prohibition. Fowlds was vice-president of the New Zealand Alliance in 1909, Ell was an ardent supporter of prohibition, as were Wright and McLaren.<sup>556</sup> Although they clearly shared ideas, amidst the principles of the organisation, was the seed of independence which featured prominently in Jordan’s later political life, “...every man is recognised as...a Christian brother, with the right to individuality of opinions and convictions...”.<sup>557</sup> The notion of the independent working class intertwines with Jordan’s religious beliefs.

Jordan was involved in the Temperance Movement at this time and by his own account was a member of the Executive of the New Zealand Temperance Alliance.<sup>558</sup> His involvement was indicative of the Brotherhood’s support of movements such as prohibition, which contributed to an individual’s moral reform. Grigg suggests that the prohibition movement became the most articulate expression of the nonconformist churches, as they attempted to influence the development of a young New Zealand.<sup>559</sup> Improvement could only come from individual moral regeneration, involving a

<sup>552</sup> *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 4 June 1910. Photocopy supplied by The Methodist Church of New Zealand Archive, Christchurch.

<sup>553</sup> George Fowlds was a Liberal MP and Minister of Education and Public Health 1906-1911. Francis Fisher was MP for Wellington Central and Robert Wright was MP for Wellington South.

<sup>554</sup> *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 24 September 1910. Photocopy supplied by The Methodist Church of New Zealand Archive, Christchurch. Harry Ell was Liberal MP for Christchurch South, 1905-19.

<sup>555</sup> In the 1908 General Election Francis Fisher was an Independent, David McLaren was Lib-Labour, Robert Wright stood as Opposition to the government, and Henry Ell was a government MP.

<sup>556</sup> Rev. J. Cocker and J. Malton Murray (eds.), *Temperance and Prohibition in New Zealand*, London: Epworth Press, 1930, pp. 205ff.

<sup>557</sup> Central Mission Quarterly Minute Book 1909-1924 MSY-0488, Wesley Methodist Church (Taranaki St. Wellington) Papers MS-Group-0190, WTU.

<sup>558</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’. As previously stated this author has tried to verify Jordan’s membership of the Temperance Alliance Executive but was unsuccessful.

<sup>559</sup> Grigg, p.135.

programme of social and economic reform, which concentrated on attacking gambling, prostitution and drink.<sup>560</sup> Interlocked with Jordan's religion is his desire for self-improvement as well as independence. Jordan actively contributed to the prohibition campaign going to Waihi in May 1911 as a temperance organiser and speaker in the Ohinemuri district, three months before the no-license poll in the area.<sup>561</sup>

In 1911 Jordan publicly advocated the inclusion of prohibition in labour's platform taking issue with those who were against its incorporation. In a letter to the *Weekly Herald*, W. Maddison stated that it would not benefit the labour party to be linked with prohibition, as the issue would distract those who may vote labour, "Wipe out the prohibition question from your politics. Let there be no cross issues at the hustings, no outside vote-splitting questions in your platform. Let neither the liquor nor the anti-liquor party make a cats-paw of you any longer".<sup>562</sup> Jordan replied saying that it was, in fact, the prohibitionists who had taken up the cause of labour. He gave as an example, David McLaren, who had emphasised the vital importance of the liquor question to the workers in 1908 and was selected and returned as labour's representative in Parliament.<sup>563</sup> Maddison and Jordan, headlined as two prominent unionists (although unionism for Jordan did not appear a distinguishable affiliation), debated the liquor question at the Wellington Trades Hall in January 1911 with the topic "That the inclusion of the liquor question in the labour party's platform operates against the welfare of the labour party".<sup>564</sup> Maddison advocated that if the workers allowed themselves to be led into the liquor controversy they could not expect solidarity in labour. Jordan ridiculed the idea of eliminating anything from the platform for the sake of expediency,

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<sup>560</sup> Grigg, p.135.

<sup>561</sup> Cocker and Murray, *Temperance and Prohibition in New Zealand*, p. 237, "[Jordan] rendered good service as organiser for the Ohinemuri No-Licence League in the 1911 campaign".

<sup>562</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 19 November 1910. It is not clear from the newspaper which union W. Maddison was involved in or the extent of his involvement in the labour movement. He does not feature in the minute book of the United Labour Party established in Wellington in September 1910.

<sup>563</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 26 November 1910.

<sup>564</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 21 January 1911.

The labour party stood for humanity, and as the liquor traffic stood for the downfall of mankind, morally, physically and mentally, it should die... In New South Wales the labour party went to the people with the anti-liquor issue in its platform and got into power. New Zealand's labour party last election had no anti-liquor plank and got but one man into Parliament.<sup>565</sup>

He declared,

I say that a trade so wealthy, so entrenched, so morally debased and tyrannical whose ware is declared not only unnecessary but harmful, whose makers are amongst the greatest of the worlds millionaires, should be fought by all who desire the advancement of the mass.<sup>566</sup>

Many members of the moderate United Labour Party, were associated with the prohibition movement. In fact they earned the nickname 'wowsers' who were fanatically puritanical tee-totallers. Fowlds and McLaren who had attended the Brotherhood meetings were, according to Gustafson, among the prohibition advocates in the ULP.<sup>567</sup> In 1912 other labour activists were complaining that the ULP was becoming too closely identified with the prohibition movement. Robert McCarthy of Alexandra wrote to A.P. McCarthy, national secretary of the ULP, in August 1912 suggesting that, "a good many who are inclined towards the party and who have not joined are of the opinion that there is too much 'wowsers' in the ranks. Two chaps working on my dredge told me that they would join at once except for the fact that the whole show was run by wowsers...".<sup>568</sup> The *Maoriland Worker* also said "the 'United Labour Party' appears to be attaching to itself all the wowsers' elements in the land. It may soon be known as the 'Wowsers Party'".<sup>569</sup> The prohibition issue was a constant source of disunity within the labour movement until a compromise was reached at the 1917 Conference whereupon the Party itself remained neutral on the issue, allowing its members an individual conscience vote on the liquor issue.<sup>570</sup> Jordan, as a

<sup>565</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 21 January 1911.

<sup>566</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 26 January 1911.

<sup>567</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p. 122. Gustafson lists ULP members who were wowsers; McCombs, a former prohibition organiser, Walker, Sullivan, Mack, Ayrton, Fowlds, Veitch, Rosser, Mrs Bessie Lee-Cowie, McLaren, McCullough, Paul, Robertson, Speirs, Richards, Hindmarsh, Mills, and the Rev. J.K. Archer.

<sup>568</sup> R. McCarthy to A.P. McCarthy, 12 August 1912, A.P. McCarthy Papers MS-0963, Folder 4, DU:HO.

<sup>569</sup> *Maoriland Worker*, 24 May 1912.

<sup>570</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p. 123.

prohibitionist in 1911 and a member of the ULP in 1912, was certainly not unique within the moderate wing of the Labour Party.

### **The Political Christian**

While in Wellington Jordan became a lay preacher in the Methodist Church. By 1913 he was resident in Ngaruawahia conducting, as he recalled, “ a score and more services each quarter in small preaching places a few miles from the township”.<sup>571</sup> For Jordan, politics and religion, at times, appeared indistinguishable. The link between them could, on occasion, be problematic. During 1913 he was asked to conduct a service on Sunday evening in the local church. One of the congregation, a sick woman, left the building and a friend followed her out; a little later they both returned. Jordan had said that the industrial strife that was being experienced was due to some extent to injustices of past ages, “In support of his view he quoted from Lord Shaftesbury’s allusions to the deplorable state of the mines at this time”.<sup>572</sup> The following day however, the local newspaper reported, “A number of the audience construed Mr. Jordan’s remarks into a sympathetic allusion to the strikers, and expressed their disapproval by promptly rising from their seats and leaving the building”.<sup>573</sup> After that Jordan said he was always careful to keep all reference to politics out of his sermons.<sup>574</sup> However, he did deal with social questions from a religious point of view.

An aim of the Christian socialists was the application of Christian principles to economic and social problems, likewise Jordan believed Christianity held the answer to the needs of men. However, it was not an uncritical view of religion. In 1913 he linked organised religion with capitalist activities, which was in line with some labour spokesmen’s criticism of the Church establishment. Writing to the ULP national secretary Jordan said,

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<sup>571</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

<sup>572</sup> *Ngaruawahia Advocate*, 11 November 1913, WJC.

<sup>573</sup> *Ngaruawahia Advocate*, 11 November 1913, WJC.

<sup>574</sup> Jordan, ‘Untitled Memoirs’.

the Church is great organisation but it has drifted away from its object, but as the reason for its existence is well printed it is necessary to challenge their actions at every point. There is...all that we need in Christianity as established by its founder, consequently I am taking as subjects 'Every Christian a Socialist' and 'Socialism: Practical Christianity' and men are coming along to hear the talk. I am satisfied that it is not all lost but very soon we could control the whole organisation with its influence and opportunities and so stop the capitalist set using it for its miserable purpose.<sup>575</sup>

Presumably Jordan was talking about the Church generically. Grigg argues that prior to 1914, business and professional people dominated most of the Churches and an antagonism existed between labour and the Churches over the method of reform for the working class.<sup>576</sup> Even though Churches were aware of poverty, unemployment and exploitation of the worker they did not see any need for an organised programme of social reform. Grigg does include Methodism in his characterisation citing the *New Zealand Methodist Times* in 1912 as arguing that matters such as the question of wages and hours of labour were not their concern.<sup>577</sup> Some in the labour movement (including Jordan) advocated the teachings of Christ as they concerned the social and economic welfare of the poor and needy, rather than the teaching of traditional Christianity wherein religion was in the exclusive domain of Churches and services every Sunday. Organised labour increasingly argued that Christ was a socialist (hence Jordan's two sermons) whereas the ministry, such as Catholic Archbishop Redwood of Wellington who produced an article attacking socialism, was accused of being against social reform and labour, and in favour of respectability and capitalism. The *New Zealand Worker* argued that Christ's teachings showed that he would have favoured socialism and opposed private capital and ownership.<sup>578</sup> Jordan's criticism of organised religion is indicative of parts of the labour movement at this time.

Winnie Jordan suggested that a bias against Catholics was evident in Jordan's later life, the seed for this may have become embedded prior to 1914. In 1911 Catholic

<sup>575</sup> Jordan to McCarthy, 25 November 1913, A.P. McCarthy Papers MS-0963, Folder 9, DU:HO.

<sup>576</sup> Grigg, p. 151.

<sup>577</sup> *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 9 March 1912, pp. 5-6 cited in Grigg, p. 152.

<sup>578</sup> *New Zealand Worker*, 31 October 1906 cited in Grigg, p. 151.

bishops had pronounced against prohibition. The clergy of the Catholic Church in New Zealand were of predominantly Irish and French backgrounds and the use of alcohol during their communion was an integral part of the service. Archbishop Redwood issued a circular letter to the Catholic clergy urging them to warn their parishioners against voting national prohibition in 1911.<sup>579</sup> This attitude, as well as the anti-Socialist message would not have endeared Jordan, as a prohibitionist and labour man in 1911, to Catholicism.

Jordan's religion, outwardly visible in his political viewpoints, was also a distinctive feature of his private life. Jordan was married in the Methodist Church in Ngaruawahia on 30 January 1917 to Winifred Amy Bycroft. The Bycrofts were a well-established Methodist family and Winifred was a staunch member of the Church and a Sunday school teacher.<sup>580</sup> It is likely Jordan met his future wife through the Church. After the war the family moved to Auckland where they belonged to the Onehunga Methodist Church and went, as part of the congregation, every Sunday.<sup>581</sup> Jordan occasionally preached and Gwen Douglas recalled her mother saying that if her father went on too long, to start fidgeting to attract his attention as they did not want to be too late or Sunday lunch would be spoilt.<sup>582</sup>

As an MP Jordan addressed audiences from both the pulpit and the platform. He still preached, not only at Onehunga but also in the surrounding districts. After the 1922 election the Labour Party held a meeting at the Strand Theatre where the newly elected MPs spoke to a crowded audience. In a headline 'A Sunday Night Departure' the *Auckland Star* said that although the audience expected a political speech Mr. Jordan dealt with the higher destiny of the human family.<sup>583</sup> It reported several biblical phrases used by Jordan and his extolling of the audience to practice "Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself". The newspaper noted Jordan's religious affiliation amidst the Labour Party, "The applause which followed the speakers remarks indicated that

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<sup>579</sup> Grigg, p. 146.

<sup>580</sup> *Methodist Times*, 28 October 1937, WJC.

<sup>581</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>582</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>583</sup> *Auckland Star*, 11 December 1922, WJC

the occasional anti-religious utterances of men associated with Labour were not endorsed by those attending the gathering last evening".<sup>584</sup>

Jordan's intermingling of religion and politics continued to be a facet of his public speaking. Ten years later John A. Lee recalled that he and Jordan were campaigning for Labour at the Motueka by-election in 1932.<sup>585</sup> Jordan, who knew the local parson, paid him a visit and as the parson was ill he was persuaded to take the Sunday service. Lee who was accompanied by a 'friendly' enemy, Bert Davy, of the United Party saw the Church notice. Lee said, "Look at that. There's electioneering for you, Bert. Beat that". Lee recalled Davy replying, "The bastard. He might at least have split the service fifty-fifty". Davy regarded Lee as the best canvasser from a platform but Jordan, he said, was the most dangerous private canvasser in New Zealand, presumably using the pulpit at times to gain converts.<sup>586</sup>

For Jordan, the task ahead was to recreate God's kingdom on earth, synonymous with the Christian socialist assertion that "the Kingdom of God had to be realised on Earth".<sup>587</sup> This included the need for Christian legislature, which Jordan advocated for all sectors of society. Peter Jones, who investigated the Christian socialist revival in England between 1877-1914, argues that generally, Christian socialists agreed that applied Christianity was a possibility.<sup>588</sup> Speaking in Parliament on the 'Religious Exercises in Schools Bill' in 1925 Jordan said, "Christianity is undoubtedly needed in our national life in all its branches".<sup>589</sup> When the same Bill was first introduced in 1924 Jordan voted against it calling it hypocrisy. He quoted the Holy Writ as saying that we should care for the blind, the sick, the afflicted, the hungry and he condemned the government for not allowing legislation which would give consideration to that, "the very thing that the Master himself ordered us to do". The government had previously rejected a Labour Party Bill for pensions for the Blind. Jordan now viewed

<sup>584</sup> *Auckland Star*, 11 December 1922, WJC.

<sup>585</sup> Lee, *Rhetoric At The Red Dawn*, p. 87.

<sup>586</sup> Lee, *Rhetoric At The Red Dawn*, p. 87.

<sup>587</sup> Peter d'A. Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, pp. 167ff., p. 214.

<sup>588</sup> Jones, Ch. 10.

<sup>589</sup> NZPD, 207 (1925), p. 554.

the government's introduction of the Religious Exercises Bill as insincere. Instead he called for religious instruction in Parliament and in business, "Christianity teaches love; our business methods teaches selfishness...we find in our country that the man who can force his fellows to the wall in business we call a successful man, because he had closed others down". Jordan stated he was not against teaching children Christianity, however, he opposed the Bill claiming that what was needed was also religious teaching not only in the schools, but applied with consistency throughout New Zealand society.<sup>590</sup> He did not just want Christianity on a Sunday but everyday of the week: not just Christianity in schools but incorporated into the everyday life of the nation. Continuing this theme in 1927, when opening a Methodist fair in Penrose, Jordan declared, "The great need of the day is the incorporation into our legislation of the spirit of Christianity".<sup>591</sup>

Many of Jordan's sermons to congregations in the Auckland area during the 1930's depression featured the encouraging theme of the progress of the human family, and offered Christianity as a solution to suffering. Jordan endeavored to provide spiritual solutions for earthly problems, endeavoring to translate heavenly things into the sphere of the earth. Speaking to an Onehunga congregation, acknowledging 'these days of strife and hardship', Jordan said God had always provided for man's needs and that these gifts were being developed and were improving all the time, "[man] can harness water, light and warm our homes and streets, drive our conveyances and in many ways ease efforts of people".<sup>592</sup> Jordan's belief in progress appears similar to the Fabians belief in the progressive improvement in society with the Christian dimension added in. In many of his speeches he quoted a variety of statistics to emphasise how, for example, world food production was increasing.<sup>593</sup> He said God had always provided for his creation, there was local shortage but provision exceeds all requirements, linking his Christianity with his socialism, suggesting that there should be a fairer distribution of wealth.

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<sup>590</sup> NZPD, 203 (1924), p. 612.

<sup>591</sup> *Auckland Star*, 21 November 1927, WJC.

<sup>592</sup> Speech Notes, Onehunga Congregation, 21 August 1932, WJC.

<sup>593</sup> Speech Notes, Royal Oak Baptists, January 1934, WJC.

While Jordan may have perceived the depression as a phase of man's development, man would pass through the years of conflict and development and then see the whole plan completed, a new heaven and earth, "It will come, as developed in industry, science, agriculture, medicine and so in Christian social organisation".<sup>594</sup> It was Christianity's mission to change human nature, said Jordan, to reconstruct society on the basis of Brotherhood, so that man could achieve complete development and transpose the Kingdom of God to Earth.<sup>595</sup> Jordan urged his congregations to, "Speak a shade more kindly, love a little more, pray a little more often than the year before, cling a little closer to the father's love, that life can liker grow to the life above".<sup>596</sup> Although offering spiritual solutions to parishioners he was also realistic when dealing with the suffering of the people saying in Parliament during the depression years, "Mr. Speaker, we are not dealing with cows and sheep; we are dealing with human beings! Human beings Mr. Speaker! Don't ever let us forget that".<sup>597</sup>

### **The Socialist Christian**

Peter Jones suggests that generally Christian socialists agreed that applied Christianity was a possibility and that the essential message of Christianity was the Brotherhood of Man.<sup>598</sup> Many Christian socialists believed that God himself guaranteed social progress through the application of basic Christian principles. And the fatherhood of God was the only sure and unequivocal foundation for egalitarianism. However, although all were agreed on the principle of the Christian brotherhood some did not agree as to the political or economic means of implementing that ideal in human society. Jordan tried very hard to live the reality of the Christian brotherhood.

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<sup>594</sup> Speech Notes, Royal Oak Baptists, January 1934, WJC.

<sup>595</sup> Speech Notes, Royal Oak Baptists, January 1934, WJC.

<sup>596</sup> Speech Notes, Penrose 6 May 1935, WJC.

<sup>597</sup> *Evening Post*, 9 April 1959.

<sup>598</sup> Jones, Ch. 10.

Socialism, for Jordan, appeared as the practical application of Christianity.<sup>599</sup> He believed that religion should encompass everything; politics, business, social life and recreation. Amongst his early socialist books was *Christianity and the Social Order* by R.J. Campbell published in 1907,<sup>600</sup> which was an attempt to show the correspondence between the principles of Christianity and those of modern socialism.<sup>601</sup> The book is well marked with Jordan's personal index in the back. In Jordan's socialism the emphasis was on religion as a means of transforming society rather than the establishment of an economic system of socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. His early socialism reflects a focus on changing human nature to benefit society, "The unfulfilled mission of Christianity is to establish society on the basis of Brotherhood... What is Christianity for but to change human nature".<sup>602</sup>

For Jordan, the interests of mankind as well as practical Christianity were promoted rather than rigid adherence to Church creed. He called for a living Christianity working in the lives of the human family.<sup>603</sup> This was coupled with a humanitarian message in 1926, as well as his aversion to what he saw as austere dogma in general Church teachings. Reflecting his early association with the Primitive Methodists, who professed a more liberal religious approach<sup>604</sup>, Jordan was averse to rigid teachings, "[there is a] need today for the Spirit of Christ, not catechism or dogma".<sup>605</sup> For Jordan, God was of the living, not of the dead. He believed in a living Christianity at work in the present, and humanely stressed that the torture of hell was in contrast with

<sup>599</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>600</sup> Collection of early books, several inscribed with Jordan's name in front cover, including many on socialism held by Winnie Jordan

<sup>601</sup> R.J. Campbell, *Christianity and the Social Order*, London, (Publisher unnamed), 1907, p.vii.

<sup>602</sup> Speech Notes, Royal Oak 1926, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 1 Folder 4, Auckland University Library.

<sup>603</sup> Speech Notes, Unnamed but dated 1926, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 1 Folder 4, Auckland University Library.

<sup>604</sup> *Fifty Years of Primitive Methodism in New Zealand: a series of historical and biographical sketches from the establishment of Primitive Methodism in this colony to its jubilee year, 1893-4*, Wellington: Primitive Methodist Book Deposit, 1893, p.26, "Primitive Methodism, originating in England in 1810, was the same in doctrine as Wesleyan Methodism, but more democratic in polity and generally more in touch with the liberal and aggressive spirit of the age".

<sup>605</sup> Speech Notes, Unnamed but dated 1926, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 1 Folder 4, Auckland University Library.

the pleading of Christ, "Come unto me and I will give you rest. Neither do I condemn Thee".<sup>606</sup> He spoke of peace in the world with international understanding and love, instead of greed, with everyone conscious of a living God in their midst. Jordan had taken his sermon from newspaper comments in which various Church leaders had softened their approach to the 'fear of hell'. Reverend Webster said that the Presbyterian Church did not lay stress upon the idea of a material hell. Reverend Hay, a Methodist Minister, said that the idea of a physical hell was a relic of barbarism; people were drawn to the church by love of God and not by fear of hell.<sup>607</sup> Jordan's interpretation of religion was a down-to-earth, realistic one.

Gustafson suggests also that to some within the Labour Party, socialism became a secular religion, "They took the Judaeo-Christian ethical tradition and demythologised it by removing the supernatural. Man, not God, became the center of their faith; a new society in the here and now, not pie in the sky...became their objective".<sup>608</sup> This was mainly among those in the Party who held orthodox religious beliefs. Jordan could be included in this category.

Bruce Brown suggests that socialism in general within the Labour Party was subject to a changing emphasis. He argues that from the Labour Party's 1916 formation until about 1925 the Party had retained a generally radical socialist platform. Its objective, 'the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange' was close to the hearts of many of its members, although this did not appeal to a majority of electors. But as the Party developed and as it became more preoccupied with immediate problems of the worsening economic scene in New Zealand due to the depression, Brown argues that the objective became increasingly remote from its policy.<sup>609</sup> During the 1920s and 1930s, the Party adjusted itself more closely to political realities in a concerted effort to appeal to a cross-section of voters.

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<sup>606</sup> Speech Notes, Unnamed but dated 1926, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 1 Folder 4, Auckland University Library.

<sup>607</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 7 October 1926.

<sup>608</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p. 120.

<sup>609</sup> Brown, p. 216.

By the 1940s and 50s socialism for Jordan and the Labour Party had a more secular and humanist emphasis. Jordan declared that socialism meant the welfare of the people wherein there was a willingness to cooperate and to share with one another, a common Labour Party characterisation at this time.<sup>610</sup> Demonstrating continuity, Jordan stressed that Christianity's purpose was to change human nature so that each of us would take in one another's washing – a duty to God and to our neighbour, the two purposes of Christianity and socialism almost indistinguishable. Jordan's socialism is similar to many other Labour Party members at this time. Walter Nash also defined his socialism in 1943 as largely humanist, "I am a socialist in the sense that I believe that a major responsibility of Government is to provide collectively for the economic welfare and security of the individual".<sup>611</sup> In Jordan's socialist state the emphasis was on a social spirit and activity rather than industry and resources under state control, "Socialism as I see it is not made up of a council or parliament owning and controlling the tools of trade and all the paraphernalia of the nation".<sup>612</sup> On a visit to New Zealand in 1950 Jordan declared, "Socialism was a spiritual movement which was motivated by people's high regard for one another and which envisaged a brotherhood wherein each worked unselfishly for the benefit of the majority".<sup>613</sup>

Jordan's memoirs hold scant reference to any early socialist viewpoint, the only later reference is downplayed, "The Labour Party was in power in New Zealand from 1935-49 and there was not much move made toward 'Socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange', the Bank of New Zealand was nationalised but little else".<sup>614</sup> This may be reflective of several issues - Jordan's own religious focus in transforming society as well as his growing conservatism. It may also reflect the attitude of the Labour Party itself as during the 1920s and 30s the Party had stemmed their radicalism in an effort to gain political power. The context of the memoirs may also be significant. They were written in the 1950s when both Jordan and Labour had moved further away from more explicitly socialist policies.

<sup>610</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 24 January 1946, WJC.

<sup>611</sup> Nash cited in Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, p.112.

<sup>612</sup> Jordan, 'A Way of Life'.

<sup>613</sup> *Standard*, 25 May 1950, WJC.

<sup>614</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

As socialism was revisioned within the Labour Party, influenced by variables such as political expediency and economics, Jordan was also revisioning himself. John A. Lee described Jordan as growing more radical in this time, “His radical invective grew with the fall in export prices...by 1935 no one could out-radical him”.<sup>615</sup> Lee may have been referring to the increasing popularity of monetary reform within the Labour Party, as a solution to New Zealand’s economic difficulties. In particular, to Labour’s idea of guaranteed prices for produce which would be higher than market prices. In 1930 Jordan wrote to Nash, the Party Secretary,

We need some definite statements, practical and simple in our policy on the big things which are engaging the minds of the people, statements which will be discussed in the homes of the people and which will be meet with the ‘That’s what we want’.<sup>616</sup>

Both Jordan and the Labour Party were responding to the national mood and the political environment in New Zealand, Jordan shuffling to the left and the Party also shifting its position, firstly to the right then, as Brown suggests, “the Party...by the 1933 conference...shuffled a few steps to the left again in a radical if not strictly socialist sense”.<sup>617</sup> However, both their singular and collective objectives were focused on the capture of the Treasury benches.

When the Labour Party did take office in 1935 it began to put into practice the humanitarian policies it had advocated before the election. Arguably the most notable of the new legislation was the Social Security Act of 1938 which consolidated and extended pension legislation from the time of Seddon’s original Old Age Pension Act.<sup>618</sup> Michael Joseph Savage described the Act as “applied Christianity”<sup>619</sup> also stating, “The government would play its part in assisting to establish the Kingdom of God upon earth, and he was doing his utmost to make it possible for the children to

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<sup>615</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 August 1979.

<sup>616</sup> Jordan to Nash, 24 January 1930, P.J. O’Farrell Papers MS-Papers-1501, WTU.

<sup>617</sup> Brown, p. 216.

<sup>618</sup> Brown, p. 184.

<sup>619</sup> Brown, p. 184.

live the lives they had been ordained to live”.<sup>620</sup> Therefore, the Christian scriptures, at times, provided a moral and humanitarian guide to Labour policy. Jordan’s personal beliefs mirrored those of his Party. As New Zealand’s High Commissioner and representative at the League of Nations he also drew on Christian principles which for him, now manifested as humanitarian policies in the international arena. Christian belief called for practice, something practical to show belief. In his private and public life, therefore, he strove to exemplify public friendliness, kindness, common sense and a lack of pretence.

### “Faith Without Works Is Dead”<sup>621</sup>

Jordan’s practical Christianity called for faith to be demonstrated by compassion for other people. Representation and reality are aligned when, as New Zealand’s delegate at the League of Nations, Jordan advocated humanitarianism which derived both from his own Christian morality and his government’s international policies. When the Spanish government appealed to the League for help against General Franco’s forces in the civil war Jordan pleaded their case, “Ethiopia, Spain and China have in turn appealed to the League to protect their peoples...the purpose of the Council...is to protect humanity and to oppose unwarranted attacks upon innocent people”.<sup>622</sup> Jordan acted as President of the Council in 1938 and his opening speech was largely directed against the “indiscriminate barbarity” of methods of modern warfare with a final plea that air-bombardment be outlawed as a crime against humanity.<sup>623</sup> Berendsen’s description characterises Jordan’s sympathy and compassion for humanity, “his well-known and quite genuine love for his fellow man”, visible at the League.<sup>624</sup>

Jordan’s actions at the League of Nations received approval from the Methodist Church both in Britain and New Zealand. A resolution expressing appreciation for his utterances at Geneva in support of peace was carried at the annual conference of the

<sup>620</sup> Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave*, p. 214.

<sup>621</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p. 121.

<sup>622</sup> *Evening Post*, 19 October 1937.

<sup>623</sup> Bennett, p. 70.

<sup>624</sup> Berendsen, ‘Reminiscences of an ambassador’, MS-Papers-6759-462, p. 180.

Methodist Church in England.<sup>625</sup> A question was raised whether the motion had a political flavour, but the mover said politics did not enter into the matter. As long as the conference considered the New Zealand representative to the League of Nations could speak in the name of Christ and humanity, they should pass the resolution and it was carried unanimously.<sup>626</sup> In New Zealand the Methodist Church Annual Conference of 1938 passed the following resolution,

Conference expresses its appreciation of the desire of Mr. W.J. Jordan, the N.Z. High Commissioner to bear witness to the nations through the medium of the Council of the League of Nations, for a greater respect for the observance of treaties and for the adjustment of disputes by arbitration instead of by force, and to convey such record with its greetings to Mr. Jordan.<sup>627</sup>

The Methodist Church had a history of sympathy towards the Labour Party, “The 1919 national conference of the Methodist Church...resolving...‘That this conference of the Methodist Church of New Zealand affirms its full sympathy with Labour in its efforts to secure its just, fair and equitable rights, including improved conditions, increased wages, and shorter hours, and pledges itself to assist Labour to that end’”.<sup>628</sup> The New Zealand Methodists later claimed Jordan as a “most worthy son of Methodism” therefore personal support may have played as much a part in their 1938 resolution as support for the government.<sup>629</sup>

Jordan’s Christianity was demonstrated by a love and concern for other people seen expressly in his personal humanitarianism in which he looked for the human side of people whoever they were. When he met King George VI in October 1936 he wrote to Savage, “his Majesty is intensely human, uses simple language and makes the visitor feel quite at ease”.<sup>630</sup> Jordan wrote expressing concern when hearing Savage was ill,

<sup>625</sup> *Evening Post*, 21 April 1938.

<sup>626</sup> *Evening Post*, 21 April 1938.

<sup>627</sup> Minutes of the Methodist Church Annual Conference 1938, p. 76. Photocopy supplied by The Methodist Church of New Zealand Archive, Christchurch.

<sup>628</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p. 125.

<sup>629</sup> *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 26 July 1952, WJC.

<sup>630</sup> Jordan to Savage, 29 October 1936, PM 16/1, NA.

“We have received the news of your entering hospital...and at this point the concern is not for the Prime Minister, but for the person, our personal friend, Joe Savage”.<sup>631</sup>

Jordan practiced his faith by showing both a personal and a general concern for the interests of mankind.

Another positive feature of Jordan's Christian humanism was his deep concern for the welfare of New Zealand's servicemen and women during WWII. He drove hundreds of miles to see and talk with New Zealanders in ships, at shore establishments and on operational stations.<sup>632</sup> He visited New Zealand troops in Egypt in 1940 before they advanced into Libya, “I wanted to go forward with them” he said, “and I went as far as they'd let me go with a bowler hat on”.<sup>633</sup> From Dover, in September 1942 he joined a New Zealand manned torpedo boat on trials in the English Channel, in sight of German guns. He visited a New Zealand military hospital in England writing to Peter Fraser,

I took advantage of opportunities to speak to groups of men in the grounds and asked them to tell me personally if they were being treated all right...I endeavour to keep in touch with the men in order that I may diplomatically attend to any complaints which are made.<sup>634</sup>

He liked to think of himself as the Father of the Forces in Britain. As president of the New Zealand War Services Association, which ran the New Zealand Forces Club in Charing Cross Road, he was a constant visitor to the premises.<sup>635</sup> When Jordan visited New Zealand in 1945, two grateful citizens, Mr and Mrs H. Butt, who pointed out that they had no personal or political association with Jordan, were praiseworthy of his concern for the welfare of their two sons during WWII,

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<sup>631</sup> Jordan to Savage, 2 August 1939, PM 16/1, NA.

<sup>632</sup> Skinner, ‘He walked with kings but kept the common touch’.

<sup>633</sup> *Illustrated*, (English magazine) 29 April 1944, WJC.

<sup>634</sup> Jordan to Fraser, 1 August 1940, PM 16/1, NA.

<sup>635</sup> *Illustrated* (English magazine) 29 April 1944, WJC. The phrase ‘Father of the Forces’ is used in the article, “He [Jordan] likes to feel he is the Father of the Forces here”.

He visited our eldest son at his air station and saw him leave one night as captain of a Wellington bomber on his way to Germany. Mr Jordan waited at the station until the early hours of the morning until the lad returned from the raid, sat with him at coffee, and shared his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday cake with him. Mr Jordan then wrote and told us all about the experience and the boy. When our son was later killed in action, no one could have been more kind and sympathetic.<sup>636</sup>

An ex-serviceman himself, Jordan felt he was aptly qualified to represent servicemen and their interests; he believed he knew their thoughts and could deal with some of their difficulties.<sup>637</sup> For Jordan, Christian faith was evidenced by a love and concern for other people, particularly those he could empathise with.

Yet once again the complexity of the man is manifest. In contrast to Jordan's outward professions of humanitarian concern, some of his staff and colleagues saw another side of him that was not so pleasant, or Christian. Berendsen recalled that although the journey to London with Jordan in 1936 had been harmonious he had later realised that "Jordan must not be crossed in any way or he became an enraged bull".<sup>638</sup> Once, suspecting Richard Campbell of disloyalty, Jordan told him, "One of us will have to go brother and it will not be me".<sup>639</sup> Bill Stevens wrote to McIntosh in 1947 "He is often not at all well, and has his bad days, and it has been on these occasions that trouble has knocked at the door".<sup>640</sup> Jordan suffered from a duodenal ulcer, his daughter saying that if he went too long without food he would get pain, possibly accounting for some of his outbursts.<sup>641</sup> Another factor in Jordan's behaviour may have been what Berendsen had previously described as his dislike of officials, a "profound suspicion of the Senior Civil Servant" which he suggested, as a public servant himself, was unjustified. According to Berendsen, this led Jordan into excesses

<sup>636</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 9 October 1945, WJC.

<sup>637</sup> Jordan, 'Untitled Memoirs'.

<sup>638</sup> Sir Carl Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', p.198, Sir Alister Donald McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-456, WTU.

<sup>639</sup> Jordan cited in Templeton, 'Jordan'.

<sup>640</sup> Stevens to McIntosh, 14 August 1947, Sir Alister McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-351, WTU.

<sup>641</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

in relation to his staff, which were in some instances “cruel and unfair”.<sup>642</sup> For Stevens, Jordan’s reputation was, at times, ironic,

The curse of it is that in the eyes of everyone in London life he is just Christmas...He is excellent in talking to people, and never tires of it, and that is all to the good. The reverse of the medal is never seen except by his long-suffering staff, and those few outsiders who have had really long and close association with him.<sup>643</sup>

Berendsen’s analogy as a man with a many-sided personality appears an apt description of Jordan as the best intentions and expressions of Christian concern for other people were occasionally circumvented, especially where his public servant staff was concerned.

### **The Individual Christian**

Periodically, the notion of independence interlocks with Jordan’s religious beliefs. After he became a Primitive Methodist lay preacher in Wellington he continued in this capacity throughout his lifetime. He retained the position after the Primitive Methodists joined the Union of Methodist Churches in 1912. Although autonomy from the Church is not recorded earlier Jordan certainly expresses this attitude in 1939. In a speech to the Methodist Local Preachers’ Mutual Aid Association Jordan stated it was a privilege to be a lay preacher as many who had gone before had helped to lay the foundation for the measure of freedom, religious and civil which we enjoy.<sup>644</sup> Jordan stated that as a Methodist lay preacher,

Following the method of our temporal founder we are not bound to any formula realising that every man must render an account of himself unto God, therefore exercising the right of private judgment and liberality of conscience in opposition to all human authority in matters of religion, recognising the supremacy of Christ as the only head of his Church and the sufficiency of the

<sup>642</sup> Berendsen, ‘Reminiscences of an ambassador’, MS-Papers-6759-463, p. 172.

<sup>643</sup> Stevens to McIntosh, 2 April 1950, Sir Alister McIntosh Papers, MS-Papers-6759-352, WTU.

<sup>644</sup> Speech Notes, Methodist Local Preachers Mutual Aid Association Meeting, London 15 April 1939, WJC.

scriptures as the rule of faith and practice.<sup>645</sup>

The quote does demonstrate continuity with Jordan's earlier criticism of organised religion. For Jordan, the only answerable authority was God himself and he therefore could adopt any method to bring about the spread of religion, not needing to stay within the close confines of Church control.

Jordan's religious individualism was also demonstrated on a personal level. While in London the Jordans belonged to the Methodist Church in Wimbledon, the London suburb where they lived.<sup>646</sup> Gwen remembered her father scribbling down notes in Church. Jordan himself recalled with irony that he was often inspired to write his after-dinner speeches in Church and his sermons at after-dinner speeches.<sup>647</sup> Jordan was almost eccentric in his habits. As her father grew older his daughter recalled going with him to Church with her mother's instructions to make sure he did not go to sleep, otherwise he would snore and disgrace them all.<sup>648</sup> However, it was not only in Church that Jordan slept. In the international arena where he was still a commanding presence in the 1940's, age also wearied him.

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<sup>645</sup> Speech Notes, Methodist Local Preachers Mutual Aid Association Meeting, London 15 April 1939, WJC.

<sup>646</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>647</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>648</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.



Figure 32: Jordan asleep at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946.

Gwen Douglas recalls her father's personal faith practices. She said Jordan read the Bible every night and read it through once a year, recalling that he always had a very deep faith, which he kept through all his doubts.<sup>649</sup> A personal recollection is her father's abhorrence of people's unkindness and lack of consideration towards others, which went against the Biblical adage, "Do unto others as you do unto yourself" - this despite his own behaviour towards his staff. She remembered her father being most upset with her brother who had played a prank on a woman friend who had come to the house. William junior had scared the woman and his father was angry and said that he [William junior] would not have liked that done to him.<sup>650</sup> Jordan presented Christian faith as consideration for other people – a quality which was not, in this instance, demonstrated by his own son and may have reflected badly on himself.

<sup>649</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>650</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

### The International Christian

While possessing personal religious viewpoints Jordan also expressed wider international perspectives. Although the overarching message of Christianity, for Jordan, was the Brotherhood of Man and the 'one' human family, international circumstances led to this concept being tested. In 1945 Jordan remarked on the courage of the British people during the air raids. Expressing an Anglophile bias, he said while the Spanish people had reacted with hysteria during the civil war bombings the British reacted coolly to the same experience, "That shows the difference between our race and the people of Spain".<sup>651</sup> Jordan's loyalty was always to the Commonwealth as a whole. In some respects Jordan's Commonwealth perspective is similar to New Zealand's Prime Minister Peter Fraser's at this time. McIntyre suggests that Fraser, although asserting New Zealand's aspirations toward independent nationhood, still hankered after Commonwealth defensive solidarity. However, WWII had forced New Zealand to turn realistically to the United States for security arrangements.<sup>652</sup> Fraser's and indeed Jordan's Commonwealth was to fade quickly away in the 1950s, within two decades the Asian, African and Caribbean republican members would be in a majority.<sup>653</sup> International circumstances quickly distanced a British Commonwealth as an outmoded option for New Zealand. Jordan expressions of Empire solidarity during the 1940s would soon become outdated, especially concerning New Zealand defense. However, at this time Jordan viewed the Commonwealth and its people as the paramount institution, he remarked in 1944, "the unity of our Empire is important and valuable. It is, of itself, already a League of Nations and the nucleus of a great world-peace governing power".<sup>654</sup>

Another feature of Jordan's belief in the Brotherhood of Man akin with the Christian socialists' Brotherhood, was his expression of interdenominational acceptance in

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<sup>651</sup> *Mataura Ensign* (Southland newspaper) 28 January 1946, WJC. The issue of Race is acknowledged by this author as one which could warrant further investigation, however, the length of the thesis prohibits this.

<sup>652</sup> McIntyre, 'Peter Fraser's Commonwealth': p. 59-60.

<sup>653</sup> McIntyre, 'Peter Fraser's Commonwealth', p. 40.

<sup>654</sup> Speech Dated February 1944, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 3 Folder 2, Auckland University Library.

religion. In 1944 Jordan drew on a speech by U.S. President Roosevelt, which stressed the four essential freedoms including “freedom of every person to worship God in his own way anywhere in the world”.<sup>655</sup> Also, it is Gwen Douglas’s recollection that her father was interested in other religions and was quite liberal, “he liked to think about things from lots of different angles and religion was no exception”.<sup>656</sup> However, this is in contrast with Winnie Jordan’s suggestion that Jordan had an anti-Catholic bias. Jordan did practice a form of liberalism, although he was a Methodist lay preacher while in London, he also served as a churchwarden of St. Lawrence Jewry (of Anglican denomination).<sup>657</sup> The *Times* of London reported that he saw no inconsistency in the two offices, and would remind anyone who raised the subject that Charles Wesley remained a member of the Church of England until his death.<sup>658</sup>

Yet close to home this openness could be questioned. Jordan’s interdenominational belief did not appear to extend to members of his family. Winnie Jordan recalls his extreme agitation, when his son announced their engagement that his intended bride, who was born in Argentina, was a Roman Catholic.<sup>659</sup> When her husband first took her to meet Jordan she said that it wasn’t long before he asked her her religion but appeared pacified when she said that she came from a family of freethinkers.<sup>660</sup> Winnie Jordan said that he was prejudiced against Catholics and did not want any grandchildren brought up as Catholics suggesting it was because Catholicism was so doctrinaire that he was against it. This attitude is in line with Jordan’s constant dislike of religious dogma. She did not know if he had always had the religious bias. Some of Jordan’s closest Labour Party colleagues were Catholic such as Dan Sullivan and Michael Savage who returned to the faith at the end of his life therefore the antagonism did not appear personal. However, this was not uncommon and was a cultural characteristic in English and New Zealand society as a whole. Eldred-Grigg suggests, “ ‘Irish versus the rest’ was how things often seemed to working class

<sup>655</sup> Speech Dated February 1944, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 3 Folder 2, Auckland University Library.

<sup>656</sup> Interview with Gwen Douglas, 3 June 2003.

<sup>657</sup> *London Times*, Obituary 9 April 1959.

<sup>658</sup> *London Times*, Obituary 9 April 1959.

<sup>659</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.

<sup>660</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.

Catholics".<sup>661</sup> Although the source of Jordan's antipathy is not known, a possible cause may be earlier Catholic support for the continuation of the liquor trade. Within Jordan's expounded ideology of the Christian Brotherhood of Man there were instances where it was overridden by his personal concerns.

### **Christianity In Retirement**

During his retirement back in New Zealand Jordan continued his interest and involvement in the Methodist Church. He attended Pitt Street Methodist Church with his second wife, Leith.<sup>662</sup> She was a strong Presbyterian and although she attended Methodist services with Jordan, he also attended Presbyterian services with her. The Methodist Church Archive recorded Jordan attending the Annual Meeting of the Auckland Men's Fellowship in 1951.<sup>663</sup> The Men's Fellowship was a religious group that met to enjoy a time of friendship, fellowship and encouragement with others, similar to the men's Brotherhood that Jordan was previously a member of, but without the political association. Throughout his life Jordan obviously enjoyed the brotherliness and religious companionships that such associations offered.

Jordan occasionally returned to the pulpit although his many public speaking appearances, as they had done in his early years, now became his main form of preaching. Winnie Jordan said he was in regular demand as a person of note, giving out prizes at schools, opening buildings and as guest speaker at associations such as Rotary Clubs. As in his early days he used Biblical adage to reinforce his message. When he opened the Waikato Winter Show in 1952 he stressed how important the farmers' produce was linking this to the interdependence of the Commonwealth, "Your surplus helps feed 50 million people...who are crying out 'Give us this day our daily bread'". He spoke of the world's population increasing and the responsibility

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<sup>661</sup> Eldred-Grigg, p. 86.

<sup>662</sup> Interview with Winnie Jordan, 19 March 2003.

<sup>663</sup> Information supplied by The Methodist Church of New Zealand, Archives, Christchurch.

that agricultural and pastoral people had to heed the command “give ye them to eat”.<sup>664</sup> A feature of Jordan’s retirement activity was his role as a preacher.

Themes from his early sermons and speeches were often reiterated during his retirement. Ever pragmatic, Jordan always believed in practicing Christianity here and now. To Onehunga Methodists in 1951, he advocated, as he had done throughout his lifetime, that God was ever present in human society. Akin to the concept that Christ was a God of the living, was Jordan’s belief that God was not in the far off heavens and did not need to be summoned by clerical men, but that God was near at hand, if only the human family would believe, “I am a God at hand saith the Lord, and not a God afar off”.<sup>665</sup> To his mind the miracles of everyday life such as the Red Cross societies, the food parcels to Britain, organisations such as the YMCA and the YWCA were testament to God’s work every day. Evidence such as the farmer toiling in the field, miller, baker, shepherd were all working to give us this day our daily bread. He saw people such as Sir Alex Fleming who invented penicillin to relieve suffering as evidence of a God at hand.<sup>666</sup> For Jordan, our duty was in the daily task and we had to do our work as part of the great plan, for God dwelt amongst mankind.

His Christian socialist belief that the Kingdom of God had to be realised on earth, and his early temperance views were also reiterated in his retirement. Jordan addressed the annual conference of the Church of England Men’s Society [CEMS] in 1957 urging them to be in the forefront of every endeavour that was being made to make the kingdoms of this world more like the kingdoms of our Lord.<sup>667</sup> He was always prepared to lend his voice in support of the Temperance movement as he had done before his time as an MP. Addressing the CEMS he cited the evils of drunkenness and prostitution in society’s midst and said the members had to be prepared to raise their

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<sup>664</sup> Speech Notes, ca 1954 New Plymouth A & P Show, WJC.

<sup>665</sup> Speech Notes, Onehunga Methodist 2 December 1951, WJC.

<sup>666</sup> Speech Notes, Onehunga Methodist 2 December 1951, WJC.

<sup>667</sup> *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1957, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 3 Folder 1, Auckland University Library.

voices against these.<sup>668</sup> To a Thames audience in 1957 he emphasised the evils of drinking habits and said that longer drinking hours would be disastrous, "There is no such thing as moderation".<sup>669</sup> To the CEMS he spoke plainly, as he had often done, saying that churches were the citadels of respectability and self-satisfaction, "Men and women have hats and coats on ready to go to heaven, when they ought to have their sleeves rolled up ready to tackle the evils that flourish in their midst".<sup>670</sup>

Jordan's funeral was held at the Pitt Street Methodist Church in Auckland. His close friend and confidant Reverend Averill Orr who had known him for many years gave the only eulogy. Winnie Jordan recalled that Jordan and Orr had previously talked deeply about faith and religion. Orr described Jordan as a real Christian, endeavouring to translate heavenly things into the sphere of the earth.<sup>671</sup> He said Jordan helped the poor weary pilgrim, assisted the widow and the orphan, and bound up the wounds of the afflicted.<sup>672</sup> Nothing made him swerve from his duty or betray his trust and in all his pursuits he kept eternity in view. Orr said Jordan had a Christian philosophy deep in his mind and a Christian spirit radiant in his life, which led him increasingly to realise that only the tangible things in life were of eternal value, and this enabled him to do what he thought he ought to do, and to stand what he had to endure right to the end.<sup>673</sup>

William Jordan believed that Christ held the answer to the needs of men. His underlying Christian philosophy pervaded all aspects of his life and his representation of it was generally in pursuit of what he believed Christ would advocate himself: an earthly interpretation of heaven. Although occasionally marred by personal concerns, Jordan's representation of his religion was indeed real. Echoes of both working class and independence reverberate in this persona, with all three lives interlocking in

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<sup>668</sup> *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1957, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 3 Folder 1, Auckland University Library.

<sup>669</sup> *Thames Star*, 8 October 1957, WJC.

<sup>670</sup> *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1957, Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 3 Folder 1, Auckland University Library.

<sup>671</sup> Funeral Eulogy by Averill Orr delivered in Pitt Street Methodist Church, April 1959, WJC.

<sup>672</sup> Eulogy, WJC.

<sup>673</sup> Eulogy, WJC.

several areas. William Jordan may have been happy to be categorised by any one of the three lives in this thesis, or even by one which still remains elusive.

**Conclusion: “The most human of men”<sup>674</sup>**

This research has been an emotional journey. I felt I have had an ongoing relationship with Jordan not dissimilar to a relationship with a living person. He has surprised and delighted me, then in contrast, disappointed and exasperated me. At times he has been so close as to almost reach out and touch, other times far away in the distant mists of time. Yet always he has been my constant companion at my shoulder and in my mind. The research became almost a consultative process whereby I began to ignore my own historical place and put myself in his place. To overcome this I found it essential not to ignore the time distance that separated Jordan and myself. As historian Linda Gordon argues there has got to be a tension between historical empathy and rootedness in one’s own present, a rigorous defence against presentism and against the illusion that the historian remains outside history.<sup>675</sup> This was achieved by not viewing the past as present, by placing Jordan in the past and not close beside me although this was a constant temptation. This proved essential in making the interpretation my own instead of Jordan’s.

As a biographer I found it difficult to capture the ‘essence’ of William Jordan. However, others such as cartoonists Gordon Minhinnick and John Thomas Allen did settle on an image of Jordan. Minhinnick often portrayed Jordan as the London policeman he once was, Allen emphasised his chin, see Fig. 33. They found it easy to capture his essence whereas it is not so easy for a biographer. Jordan left behind a myriad of photographs which although ensured his lifetime was documented in pictures made the issue of his identity a complex one. The same problem also surrounds the myriad of source material. To privilege any one photograph or image over the others would have given preference to a part of his life which I felt would be unwarranted – each one was a part of the greater whole, yet the whole remains elusive.

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<sup>674</sup> Berendsen, ‘Reminiscences of an ambassador’, MS-Papers-6759-463, p. 170.

<sup>675</sup> Interview with Linda Gordon, in *Visions of History: Interviews with E.P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm* [et al.], by MARHO, the Radical Historians’ Organisation, Henry Abelove, Betsy Blackmar, Peter Dimock & Jonathan Schneer (ed.), Manchester: Manchester Unity Press, 1983, p. 75.



MR W. J. JORDAN

Figure 33: A parliamentary portrait of Jordan by J.T. Allen in 1936.

William Jordan was a complicated man and this is born out in the research, he acknowledged this himself in 1919 citing Shakespeare, “man in his time plays many parts”.<sup>676</sup> His distinctive personality and strength of character manifest as a confident, unwavering self-belief which he outwardly presented to the world in various guises. From his assertions of political party independence in New Zealand to the world stage at the League of Nations where he pleaded for collective action against aggressive nations, William Jordan never lacked courage or strength of conviction. Throughout the research this trait remained prominent in the many facets of his life and confirmed him as a distinct and compelling individual in New Zealand’s history.

<sup>676</sup> ‘Address by William Jordan’ at Ngaruawahia 4 November 1919, WJC.

This research sought to reveal the more complex but more 'human' William Jordan. The thematic approach allowed the 'multiplicity of truths' to be partially explored and contributed to an unfolding process whereby some additional sides of William Jordan have been revealed. However, the thesis also confirmed that no amount of research could ever reveal exactly how William Jordan thought or felt at any given time. The 'real' William Jordan, or any other figure in history for that matter, can never be completely reconstructed. As much as the evidence allows, I have tried to reflect how Jordan, the man, responded to the world around him, recording his actions and some of his thoughts. The 'real' William Jordan will always remain something of an enigma.

When I started this research I did expect the themes to interlock and overlap although, I have been surprised by the extent, in Jordan's life, to which this took place. Even though Jordan presented a variety of different images to the world (as I now contend we all do) these were interlocked and interconnected so forcefully that it seemed questionable whether a single representation could stand alone. Over a lifetime these representations ebb and flow and vary in significance at any one time, yet each is often reflected and underpinned by the other. For example, Jordan's religion affected his political views of Christian socialism and his independence influenced his political attitude towards his Party. This research has revealed that although man in his time does play many parts, these are integral parts of a whole, as Susan Grogan said, small pieces of a larger puzzle.<sup>677</sup> Such was the case for Jordan with the three representations examined, the research revealing these were but small parts of a greater whole. Yet, as with the photographs, the whole remains elusive.

As a result of this research it became clear that the questions asked and the themes selected by another biographer in another era would be different from my own. Historian Michael King suggests that this reflects the changing interests and

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<sup>677</sup> Grogan, p. 217.

perceptions of successive generations of readers and researchers.<sup>678</sup> My approach to biography was metaphorically to hold a mirror to William Jordan's past life so that it could be reflected into the present – to bring images, both perceived and real, forward and then suggest character and motivation from them. Others may see things in the reflection which I did not. One of the most interesting aspects of this research is that I have continued to see new dimensions of William Jordan. A further thematic chapter could have focussed on Jordan's dual nationalism as a citizen of both New Zealand and Britain. Another theme could be Jordan as a 'Family' man, literally and figuratively. As New Zealand biographer Michael King stated, in this sense, subjects deserving of biography never die: they go on growing and changing with the interests and interpretations of consecutive generations of readers.<sup>679</sup> Possibly biographies of major figures need to be rewritten for each generation. Biography could then be a continuous process, for Jordan, with successive authors adding to the narrative and analytical spaces left by the last author.

Several key aspects; the biographical genre, Jordan himself, and my role as author have shaped this thesis. The biographical genre did, in my opinion, shape the interpretation of the past. As a result Jordan assumed more prominence in this research than others, such as his wife, who indeed, was almost confined to a shadowy existence. I was conscious of the spotlight being exclusively trained on the subject to the detriment of the supporting but by no means non-existent cast however the genre still often dictated the focus. However, in retrospect, the genre has fulfilled its purpose focusing singularly on Jordan's life. My own conceptions of what the genre should contain such as characters and context were fittingly subordinated to the main focus of the genre, Jordan himself. The relegation of others to subservience within the genre can be possibly viewed as a means to an end – necessary to focus solely on the individual's life.

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<sup>678</sup> Michael King, *Tread Softly For You Tread On My Life: New and Collected Writings*, Auckland: Cape Catley Ltd, 2001, p. 17.

<sup>679</sup> King, p. 17.

The way Jordan represented himself also had a significant effect on his primacy in the research. He constructed his story very individualistically. In his memoirs, for example, his family in Britain and then wife and children in New Zealand, although very important to him, are not given any degree of prominence in his story. The surviving sources are largely *his* collection and privilege the way he wished to be remembered. As this thesis is based largely on his collection, the way Jordan constructed and portrayed his story has also shaped the interpretation of the past.

The three lives of William Jordan presented in this thesis reflect the patterns which I have seen in his life. Therefore, my role as an author reflects my own interests, such as the concept of independence in New Zealand's history. Also, my own perceptions have contributed to the shaping of this thesis whereby I have presented, in some instances, an alternative picture of events than Jordan's own. Additionally, the objective of this research was to provide a 'compassionate truth', a truth that would not cause distress to living family members. At times it was hard to find a balance between writing the 'truth' and writing what I thought might distress Mrs Jordan or Dr. Douglas. This was especially difficult in the instance of conflicting evidence, whereby the family version of events and the version of Jordan's colleagues varied considerably such as the reason for Savage appointing Jordan as High Commissioner. I also noted that within the family there were different views, for example, on Jordan's relationship with Walter Nash. Also difficult to assess was the extent to which the family's objectivity (or lack of) influenced their evidence, and my relationship with them affected my own judgment as to how critically I assessed some evidence.

The interpretation and analysis of evidence was a key issue in this research. How much of William Jordan's "true thoughts" and "feelings" did he leave behind in the evidence, were they a complete set of his views or only those which he *chose* to leave behind? Although this thesis contributes to the gradual unravelling of Jordan's life our understanding is limited by the evidence that is left, there are only small pieces of a larger puzzle and in Jordan's case seem to have been largely selected by him such as in the examples of scrapbooks in Winnie Jordan's collection. The autobiographical

fragments were constructed late in life, not at the time of specific events therefore were subject to a life's reflection when made. Issues such as socialism appeared dominated by his later views, therefore I often had to carefully analyse the context in which Jordan had constructed his story. Jordan's own self-perception and the evidence trail he left to build his image was substantial and compelling. I had to frequently remind myself that Jordan's version of events was not the only one possible. There was also a paper trail of innumerable official evidence. These two sources provided tensions between sometimes differing perspectives, including my own, and it was often difficult not to be influenced by either side and maintain a level of objectivity as both asserted powerful voices. In addition, I had to work hard to bring in my own perspective and assert my own voice amongst the myriad of evidence from all sides.

What were William Jordan's self-representations expressing? The representations examined could be perceived as outward expressions or personifications he himself highly valued. Also his self-conscious adoption of the three prevalent personae in this thesis may have been the prominent ways he wanted to be remembered in the historical record. In this he was largely successful, as I indeed relied on his assemblage of evidence. Although accepting his storytelling of events I have also suggested some alternative versions. Jordan used all his experiences to construct his own paths through life, his various characterisations part of the process of his efforts to achieve this. Jordan was a man who you could never back into a corner – when faced with an ambiguity regarding his own image he often redefined the conceptual boundary, never conceding any disparity. In some respects the images are evidence of his many-sided personality that he adopted to cope with the trials and tribulations of life. William Jordan learned quickly what was successful for him, such as his independence persona, and used these consistently throughout his life. The self-representations were Jordan's curriculum vitae learnt from his own personal experiences; Jordan was after all a self-made man who drew on the things he knew best.

Jordan's working class self-image was enduring, throughout his life he believed he represented the needs and aspirations of the working class. However, it is my perception that arguably Jordan had been upwardly socially mobile during his life raising his personal status from working class to achieve a position in life whereby he later was offered and accepted a knighthood. Therefore, although he portrayed himself as working class, at the end of his life, I suggest he had risen upwards from that classification. Accompanying the rise in status came a disparity, perceived in the press and within the Labour Party itself, as the Party's ideals of egalitarianism seemingly clashed with Jordan's raised status. However, Jordan never acknowledged or recognised a tension existed. It is difficult to predict whether he did himself accept this or as he had done with other things such as class distinctions, merely minimised it. To accommodate his position Jordan revised the boundaries for the working class categorisation. Consequently, his overall representation as a working class man was successful, for all the honours he received he was still regarded as a champion of the working class.

Another prominent representation for Jordan was as an independent man. His accounts of himself portray a confident and assertive individual who acted largely free of any sort of internal or external control, be that privately in terms of his family or publicly with regard to the Labour Party he represented. However, this research revealed that although Jordan's own self-perception and representation of himself was as an independent man, beneath that dominant representation were conflicting notions of interdependence and dependence. Jordan's degree of interdependence and reliance on others was de-emphasised and not recognised by him as creating any sort of tension in his self-image. However, Jordan may not have realised himself his own interdependence or dependence, or wanted to accept it, and if he did this was certainly not the portrayal he wanted to present to the world.

The third self-representation of William Jordan was as a religious man. Religion pervaded all aspects of his life underpinning many of his life choices and he was guided throughout his life by his beliefs. His representation of religion generally

conformed to his Christian ideals and remained consistent although there were instances of 'un-Christian' attitudes and behaviour. In this part of his life Jordan's representation and my perception of reality were much closer together than in the other two personae of working-class and independence. This was largely due to religion providing the basic foundation for Jordan's life. For him, religion was fundamental and he was disinclined to revise and manoeuvre around its definitions.

William Jordan played many parts and generally played them well. Discovering the complexities of Jordan's life has been fascinating as he revealed something of himself to us. For me, he was indeed "the most human of men".<sup>680</sup> He not only exhibited innumerable human qualities but made me think self-reflexively about my own traits and characteristics and also about humanity as a shared characteristic – is William Jordan reflected in us all? As an author my feelings are expressed in the eloquent words of historian Michael King, "There is nothing as singular in all the world and as variable and as interesting as human behaviour".<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> Berendsen, 'Reminiscences of an ambassador', MS-Papers-6759-463, p. 170.

<sup>681</sup> King, p. 8.



Figure 34: Jordan waves goodbye on his last day of office as High Commissioner, 31st August 1951.

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