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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC SECONDARY EDUCATION
IN PALMERSTON NORTH

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fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
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ABBREVIATIONS

Used in this research exercise

AJHR	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives
MD	Manawatu Daily Times
MES	Manawatu Evening Standard

INTRODUCTION

The foundations of New Zealand secondary education lay in the aspirations of her well-to-do settlers. They had been educated in grammar and public schools in Great Britain,¹ and they believed a need existed for secondary schools in the new colony if their sons were to have at least the beginnings of a traditional grammar school education.²

The pioneer settlers wanted to establish secondary schools in New Zealand for a number of reasons. Firstly, knowledge of the classics was considered to be an essential part of the equipment of a gentleman, and the tradition had to be maintained. The second reason, and possibly the more important one, was that they were reluctant to sever their ties with the 'Old World.' It was to be expected that the early immigrants, mainly of British origin, would want to create an environment which was familiar to them, and reminiscent of the way life was at 'Home.' They were conscious of their isolation from Britain and aware of the disintegrating influences of pioneer life. These factors served to emphasize the importance of maintaining cultural continuity between New Zealand and the British Homeland through secondary education.

With the social and educational pattern of Victorian Britain firmly fixed in their minds, these settlers proceeded to establish endowed secondary schools. These schools derived their finance from endowments of land, and this was supplemented by the payment of school fees by parents. Secondary education was to be available within New Zealand only to a privileged group.

The curriculum of the early secondary schools demonstrated the extent to which they were consciously modelled on their British counterparts.

¹ A.E. Campbell, Education in New Zealand, Wellington, 1941, p.108.

² J.A. McLaren, 'Education and Politics: Background to the Secondary Schools Act 1903,' New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, vol.5, p.94.

The secondary schools which were established, tended to have a curriculum devoted entirely to academic studies. The subjects taught included Latin, French, history, English, geography, mathematics and science. Unfortunately, this curriculum bore no reference to the immediate needs of the newly settled colony. Basically, the secondary schools were to be the preparing ground for University, and the Matriculation Examination was the admitted goal.³

Prior to the abolition of the Provincial system in 1876, secondary education was under the auspices of Provincial Governments, a practical necessity in the early days of colonization because of the isolated nature of new settlements. The organization of secondary education was left to Provincial authorities who differed widely in their ideas, the extent of their resources and the value of their education endowments. The extent to which children shared the benefits of secondary education differed from place to place. Canterbury and Otago were well equipped with school buildings and teachers residences, whereas the Auckland College and Grammar School was the only secondary school available in the North Island. The provincial system was failing to satisfy the minimum educational needs of the colony.⁴ The establishment of a system of Central Government was seen as the first step toward improving the uneven distribution of secondary schools by co-ordinating the development of secondary education throughout New Zealand.

Many hoped further improvements would be implemented with the passing of an Education Act in 1877, which established a free, compulsory and secular education system. However, this was only for primary education, as it largely failed to make provision for secondary education. Only two provisions were made within the Act for secondary education; Education Boards were given authority to establish District High Schools, and the Boards were also given authority to spend certain sums for scholarships to enable children from poorer families to gain access to an endowed secondary school.

These provisions drew criticism. Sir George Grey considered the

³ Secondary Education in New Zealand,
UNESCO, Educational, p.4.

⁴ Compulsory Education in New Zealand, Studies in Compulsory Education,
UNESCO, p.20.

measure to be a monument to the folly and incompetence of those who devised its principles. He wanted to know what they proposed to do towards further improvements for secondary education within New Zealand.⁵ The reply to his question was provided by C. Bowen. He expressed the general intention of the Act as far as secondary education was concerned by stating that secondary education was to be taught upon payment of a sufficient fee. It was not intended to encourage children whose vocation was that of honest labour, to waste time in secondary school.⁶ Bowen believed that if a child did not have the intellectual ability to pass the Proficiency Examination at the end of standard six, it would be unable to cope with the academic curriculum of the secondary schools. He considered that these children would be better off learning a trade when they did not possess the special talent by which secondary education might be made immediately useful.

Perhaps Bowen's comments were correct, but they did not help the contemporary situation. He implied that secondary education should not be totally free as a right, but rather as a privilege to be gained by a child who achieved a good standard of education at primary school. It was considered by Bowen that the academic ability of the child should be the first priority in allowing entry to secondary school, regardless of the parents' financial status. The second priority was then to allow poorer families to have the same educational opportunities as the more affluent families of the colony. Although provision was made within the Education Act for scholarships as the means to make secondary education available to the poor of the colony, discrepancies still existed which were not amended; scholarships covered the cost of school fees but they did not cover additional costs such as books and uniforms which the less affluent parents may have found difficult to afford. Secondary education was now available on a selective principle; for those who were wealthy enough to afford the fees, or 'bright' enough to be admitted to an endowed secondary school on a scholarship.⁷

The number of children receiving secondary education was a minority

⁵ J. Mackey, The Making of a State Education System, London, 1967, p.185.

⁶ Campbell, p.46.

⁷ G.W. Parkyn, The Administration of Education in New Zealand, Wellington, 1954, p.46.

of the total population within the age-group eligible to attend secondary school. A great deal of criticism was levelled at the secondary schools' policy of selectively admitting particular sections of the community. To many in the working classes, the secondary schools had become symbolic of the privileges enjoyed by the affluent. Hostility towards secondary schools often found expression in the correspondence columns of newspapers. The Lyttelton Times frequently contained letters attacking the Canterbury College Board of Governors for allowing their secondary schools to be used as 'preparatory schools for the little children of the upper classes,' instead of using them for the 'legitimate purpose' of affording education beyond the primary school to those children who had the ability to benefit from it.⁸

Between the years 1870 to 1900, the growth of public interest in secondary education could be regarded as a measure of the speed at which an egalitarian society evolved in New Zealand.⁹ Changes in attitudes concerning secondary education as a right rather than a privilege, were brought about by changes in the contemporary social order, wrought by social and political developments. Factors which helped change the climate of public opinion toward secondary education were the economic recession of the 1880s, the Liberal Government's scheme of compulsory purchase of land for closer settlement, and the introduction of the free place system into primary schools initiated under the Education Act of 1877.

The economic recession during the 1880s provided the initial impetus for change. Paradoxically, the working-classes' interest in secondary schools, hitherto slight, increased as secondary schools' enrolments decreased and the economic situation deteriorated. J. Vogel's public works and immigration scheme had commenced in 1870. It inaugurated a period of development and prosperity for the whole country which continued down to 1879 when the boom ended. During the 'boom period' many of the working-class would have prospered to a certain extent because there was an abundance of employment both for adults and children. Through financial necessity, working-class parents believed that their children should be placed in employment, and the idea of attending secondary school was largely ignored. However, during the recession employment opportunities for the working-classes

⁸ McLaren, p.105.

⁹ McLaren, p.94.

declined. Parents became concerned that not only their livelihood was in jeopardy, but their children could not find employment. Working-class parents realized that if their children were going to obtain secure employment they would need to have suitable academic qualifications, but these could only be obtained at secondary school, a facility which they were financially prevented from attending. The parents felt that their children should be allowed the opportunity to partake of the benefits of secondary education alongside the wealthy-classes. It could possibly be one of the major reasons why public interest in secondary schools gained momentum during the recession of the 1880s.

The Liberal Government's scheme of compulsory purchase of land for closer settlement, was carried out in fulfilment of a promise made before their election to office in 1891. The Liberals had promised that the progress and welfare of all classes would receive unbiased careful consideration,¹⁰ because they believed that everyone should have equal opportunity to improve their position in society. One of the most important pieces of legislation enacted which developed from this belief was the compulsory purchase of land for closer settlement. The enactment of this legislation to allow easier acquisition of land at a competitive price, provided for those with some money, incentive and good work-ethic, the chance to acquire land. The Liberal Government had provided the lower-middle and working-classes with the opportunity for upward social mobility. For the adults within these classes the acquisition of land may have been enough, but for their children they wanted more. It was perhaps a natural extension of their newly found social status that they turned their attention towards education, particularly secondary education. Secondary education was seen as the means to provide their children with the possible openings into the middle-class by obtaining academic qualifications from a secondary school. The lower-middle and working-class parents called for reform because they wanted their children to have equal opportunity in obtaining secure, well-paid employment. They believed equal opportunity could be achieved by having free secular education from primary school through to University, compulsory education until their children were sixteen years of age, and for more junior scholarships to be made available.

¹⁰ K. Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, Harmondsworth, 1969, p.191.

Bowen's Education Act of 1877 introduced a free-place system into primary schools. Elementary education was made free for all children from five to fifteen years of age. The result of this legislation was an increase in the number of children attending primary school. The growth was partly attributed to the abolition of fees in primary schools, and as a consequence, children who had never before attended primary school could now attend, while other children transferred from private to public primary schools. A greater proportion of children were staying on at primary school until standard six. What was the destiny of these children after they had completed primary school if they had failed to qualify for a scholarship entitling them to attend secondary school? The only option open for many of them was to remain at primary school in a special class until they were able to secure employment, a situation which was not desirable, because it placed undue stress on both pupils and teachers within the primary schools. Parents and teachers were eager to see changes made to alleviate the problems associated with entry into secondary schools. One solution they could see as an important step in streamlining academic progress, was for the free-place system to be extended into secondary schools.

A beginning had been made by the 1890s toward the development of public secondary education in New Zealand. To appreciate the changes which effected these developments, a study of secondary education must be made on a local scale. In the following account I will discuss the establishment and development of public secondary education in Palmerston North.

The pioneer settlers of Palmerston North made provision for the primary education of their growing families at an early stage of the district's development. The first primary school was established in 1872.¹¹ However, tuition in secondary education was only available through private enterprise. The first of these secondary schools was provided by K. Wilson. In 1891 he opened a private secondary school for boys at 92 Rangitikei Street. The school had between forty to fifty pupils, including a dozen boarders.¹² The curriculum was devoted entirely to the study of academic subjects;

¹¹ J.A. Murray, PNHS Historical Survey 1902-1951, Palmerston North, 1952, p.2.

¹² The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand, Vol.6, p.115.

French, Latin, English, geography, history and mathematics. In 1892, Miss Fraser established the Craven School for Girls. This school was actually run by four Irish sisters who shared the responsibility of teaching and specializing in languages. Craven School for Girls provided for both day pupils and boarders who came from areas as far afield as Wellington, Dunedin and Auckland. The day pupils included members of families who had 'established' themselves in the Palmerston North area.¹³ The teachers aimed to give the girls a broad education, not to prepare them for a career because girls were not expected to be employed when they left school, but to be 'slightly social.'¹⁴

In analysing the development of secondary education up to the mid-1890s in Palmerston North, it is evident that the state of affairs concerning those eligible to attend secondary school was still based on a selective principle. Secondary education was only accessible to children whose parents could afford to pay for this privilege. In this respect, Palmerston North's development in secondary education was not too dissimilar from that of other parts of New Zealand. In addition, the people of Palmerston North, like others throughout New Zealand, achieved a position of relative prosperity through immigration, expansion of communications, trade and the development of the surrounding farmlands. However, to state that Palmerston North in the mid-1890s was typical of any town in New Zealand would not be correct, because each town had its own particular needs to consider in relation to its development.

It was perhaps the needs and aspirations of the local community in Palmerston North which necessitated changes to maintain a steady rate of development in secondary education. Public pressure for an improvement to the imbalance of the number of children attending, and not attending secondary school in Palmerston North, was illustrated by repeated requests to the Education Department, but these requests were, on various pretexts, always refused.¹⁵ The Department stated that the two private schools in Palmerston North were adequately serving the secondary educational needs of the area, but more importantly, the refusals were based on finance; the Education Department did not have the financial resources available to implement the

¹³ D. Joblin, Behold the Plains, Auckland, 1970, p.51.

¹⁴ MES, 10 June, 1970, p.12.

¹⁵ Palmerstonian, December 1907, Vol.I, No.1, p.2.

request.

The Wanganui Education Board was then approached for help. The Board joined with the local primary school committees to establish a District High School in Palmerston North, because they understood and appreciated the effort being made by the people of Palmerston North to establish public secondary education within their town. At their first meeting, held in 1898, the Wanganui Education Board put forward a proposal that if the people of Palmerston North could raise £200, the Board would subsidize that amount by £400, and Government would give £600, and thus a good building could be constructed for the purpose of secondary education. The residents of Palmerston North rallied to this proposal by subscribing the stated amount. Although the Government were unable to fulfil their part of the agreement and the money had to be invested until required, the local school committees and the Wanganui Education Board continued to work together towards establishing public secondary education in Palmerston North. In January 1901, at a monthly meeting of the Wanganui Education Board, it was decided that the three primary school committees in Palmerston North would be asked by the Board to meet and recommend which primary school could be established as a District High School.¹⁶ The primary school which the committees recommended to be raised in status, was the College Street primary school. Their decision was accepted by the Board, and it was to be effective as from 1 January, 1902.

It was the efforts of many interested parents, teachers, and politicians which contributed to the changes being made, and improvements being implemented in the secondary education system of Palmerston North. In particular, the development of public secondary education in Palmerston North had made a beginning. It appeared that secondary education in Palmerston North now had a destiny; onward and upward.

¹⁶ MDT, 23 January, 1901, p.3.

CHAPTER 1THE FIRST DECADE

The establishment of College Street School as a primary school in 1893 was necessitated by the growth of the borough between the railway and the river.¹ The removal of the old Central School from its site in Main Street to Campbell Street in 1890 was no doubt another factor which contributed to the building of a new primary school.²

By raising the status of the College Street primary school to a District High School in 1901, it was hoped that the pressure of numbers of children already attending primary school could be alleviated. A denial of educational opportunities was inevitable if no secondary education was available in Palmerston North for those children who were disadvantaged, financially or intellectually, from advancing further than standard six. The new District High School enabled some children who would otherwise have had a limited educational background, the chance to gain a little more knowledge, and higher academic qualifications so that they would be able to secure a better standard of employment.

The District High School at College Street School was to be a temporary measure. The Wanganui Education Board had decided to erect a new building for the District High School in Featherston Street on a site of nearly ten acres which had been given to the Board by the Palmerston North Borough Council in recognition of the educational needs of the town and country. With the decision by the Board not to build additional rooms at College Street School, temporary accommodation had to be found for the pupils until the opening of the new building. They succeeded in obtaining the use of St. Andrews Sunday School Hall in Church Street.

The arrangements for the District High School were explained to the

¹ Railway then situated in Main Street.

² College Street School, 1893-1943, Souvenir Booklet of Jubilee Celebrations, p.6.

public; school facilities, the proposed fees and curriculum, teachers available, and those who would be eligible to attend the new secondary school. The opening of the District High School in Palmerston North coincided with the passing of the 1902 Education Act, in which the free-place system that existed in primary schools was extended into secondary schools. This established the principle, that when a child passed the Proficiency Examination at the end of standard six, they were automatically eligible to attend a secondary school. However, in Palmerston North, as in other parts of the country, free-places were granted to pupils on the condition that they maintained a high level of attendance. In return, a Government capitation of £6 per pupil was granted to the District High School Board for those pupils with at least an eighty-percent attendance rate.³

Unfortunately, this Government assistance was not enough to cover the financial demands of secondary education, because in addition the Board charged fees of ten shillings per quarter for one subject, fifteen shillings for two, and twenty shillings for three. Secondary education at the new District High School was not going to be entirely free, but was it still going to be available only to a select group that had now extended to encompass the middle-class? Could we assume that the lower classes would remain in a position of being unable to take advantage of these changes because of the financial barrier? The middle-class had been the driving force in the establishment of the new District High School, so perhaps it was to be expected that they wanted to keep for themselves what they had created.

The official opening of the new District High School took place on 17 February 1902. A speaker at the ceremony, the Rev. C. Harper, emphasized the importance of the new school in relation to the educational needs of the community of Palmerston North by saying, that today was the real beginning of a period of great importance to the community, marking as it did the opening of a secondary school within the reach of everyone in the district.⁴

It had been ascertained that there would be a good roll of pupils. However, the actual number of enrolments were beyond expectation. Provision had been made for sixty pupils, but by the time the District High School opened the number of pupils anticipated to attend the school stood at

³ MDI, Jubilee Number, Fifty Years of Education, 1872-1922, p.10.

⁴ MES, 17 February, 1902, p.7.

eighty-four. It was a creditable beginning for public secondary education in Palmerston North despite the fact that these numbers would have represented just a small proportion of those children in the town who were within the age group eligible to attend secondary school.

The pupils attending the District High School were drawn from the three primary schools in Palmerston North; College Street, Terrace End and Campbell Street. A number of pupils who had formerly attended Wilson's private school for boys⁵ were also enrolled as pupils of the new school. The closure of Wilson's private school was inevitable. It could not maintain the same level of popularity which the District High School had gained, because the new school could offer a nearly identical curriculum together with appropriate examinations, for a considerably smaller sum of money. As a consequence, children would have the same opportunities to obtain the employment they required by matriculating at a public school as opposed to a private school. Therefore, the parents of boys who had attended the private school were not reluctant to send their children to a public secondary school.

Interestingly, the numbers attending the private school for girls were maintained at a relatively constant level for several years. Why then, did the number not decrease as it had done at the private school for boys? It appeared that the curriculum offered at the District High School aimed toward preparing the pupils for employment. This was in contrast to the girls school where the broad curriculum was based on the assumption that when a girl left school she was not expected to work, but to 'take her place in society,' until she married. Such a traditional belief was still fostered by many parents, even in Palmerston North. An important point has emerged insofar as one can see that the educational needs of the children in Palmerston North were partly a reflection of the aspirations of their parents.

The District High School Committee's aim was to give the pupils a good, sound, general and commercial education which would include a suitable course of manual or commercial instruction. Subjects of instruction included English, arithmetic and algebra, Latin, book-keeping, French, shorthand, elementary science, drawing, woodwork, typing and cookery.⁶ The subjects

⁵ G.C. Petersen, Palmerston North: A Centennial History, Wellington, 1973, p.228.

⁶ AJHR, 1902, E.12, p.5.

within the curriculum were identical to those taught in secondary schools throughout New Zealand, and considering the limitations of space, rooms and staff at the District High School, a very good bill of fare was offered.

Several pupils were prepared for external examinations. Pupils in the intermediate grades were entered in the Junior Civil Service Examination, and those in the upper grades were entered in the Matriculation and Teachers 'D' Examinations. The variety of examinations offered by the District High School allowed pupils to obtain suitable academic qualifications, and they attempted to cater for the needs, ability and interests of those attending school.

An important venture such as the introduction of public secondary education to Palmerston North, could not have been successful without the time and effort made by the staff of the District High School. Perhaps no one was more energetic in his approach than W. Gray, the School's headmaster, who was required to divide his time between supervising the primary division at College Street and the secondary department in St. Andrews Hall. One way by which this clash was partly alleviated, was to open College Street primary school at 9 a.m., and the District High School at 9.20 a.m. The teachers' perseverance in maintaining a good standard of education for national examinations was an undoubtedly important factor why the school gained immediate recognition as a suitable academic institution for Palmerston North.

When school resumed in 1903, the number of pupils who had enrolled at the District High School had swelled to one-hundred and forty. This necessitated the renting of the Alexander Hall to supplement the existing accommodation at St. Andrews Hall. This arrangement was inconvenient for both pupils and staff, but fortunately it had to be endured for only a short time, for on 22 April 1903, the new District High School building in Featherston Street was opened.

The new school comprised two science rooms, an art room, a woodwork room and a cooking room, as well as the ordinary classrooms. They all contained 'apparatus' for the teaching of the various subjects. In addition to secondary classes, this building provided accommodation for the Technical School classes in drawing and painting. Excluding furniture, the cost of the

building exceeded £2,500. Eight hundred pounds was contributed by the Government in fulfilment of its promised subsidy. A further £760 was additionally contributed by Government for the Technical School's furniture and fittings. The sum of £200 which had been raised by the residents of Palmerston North in 1898, and invested until required, was also forwarded toward the cost of the new building. The balance of the sum required to finance the school was provided by the Wanganui Education Board.⁷ Palmerston North was now in possession of a building well suited for a District High School. Those associated with secondary education felt that the high costs involved in providing this new building were justified, because it was necessary that they should provide the best education for the rising generation who would have to take their part at no distant date in the work of the Government.

In August 1903, the Member of Parliament for Palmerston North, W. Wood, introduced the Palmerston North High School Bill, into the House. The object of this Bill was to place the District High School under its own Board of Governors and to endow the School with an annual allowance. Wood succeeded in persuading Parliament to affirm the principle of this Bill. Concurrently, another Education Bill was being introduced into Parliament, the secondary Education Act of 1903. The importance of this proposed bill to Palmerston North was that it invested authority in Education Boards to establish High Schools. Wood withdrew his proposed bill in favour of the secondary Education Act, because he thought Palmerston North could gain more from the general bill than from his initial proposal. Under Wood's proposal the Palmerston North District High School would receive £650 per annum, but under the secondary Education Act, all secondary schools in New Zealand would stand to gain £1,250 per annum.⁸ It is possible that no secondary school in the country had started under more favourable conditions than Palmerston North's.

The Hon. R.J. Seddon, Premier of New Zealand, intimated in a speech, that as Minister of Education he would, under the secondary Education Act of 1903, disestablish the Palmerston North District High School and establish it as a High School proper. This led many to hope that when school resumed

⁷ MDT, Jubilee Number, Fifty years of Education 1872-1922, p.10.

⁸ J. Murray, PNHS, Historical Survey 1902-1951, New Zealand, 1952, p.16.

on 25 January 1904, it would then be as a gazetted High School, but unfortunately this was not realized. Certain formalities had still to be observed. One of these was the approval of the proposed scheme of control of the school. This was agreed to at a conference held with the Inspector General, G. Hogben, on 24 March 1904. This agreement marked a new beginning for Palmerston North's District High School. It was now 'officially' a High School, under the control of a Board of Governors based in Palmerston North. In assuming independent control of Palmerston North High School the Board became a body corporate invested with perpetual succession and a common seal. Additionally, the Board was given the prerogative to acquire and hold land⁹ for educational purposes.

The Board of Governors comprised nine members; three were appointed by His Excellency the Governor, three were appointed by the Wanganui Education Board, and three were elected by the parents of the pupils. A Board of Governors based in Palmerston North could realize more immediately the educational needs of the local population than if the controlling body of the secondary school had been based in Wanganui. Parents could also participate in the affairs of the school to a certain extent with their inclusion in the Board of Governors. Parental involvement in the running of the High School was significant, because they could now be an important influence in instigating changes in the education system, which previously went unnoticed by an out-of-town Board of control.

The Board of Governors could not claim complete autonomy for control of the High School, because there was yet another formality that had to be attended to. It was realized that because the land upon which the High School had been built was a gift to the Wanganui Education Board, the grounds and buildings therefore legally belonged to this Board. It was not until 1905, that a bill under the charge of Wood, the local Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Palmerston North High School Board, was passed by Parliament placing the buildings and grounds under the control of the Palmerston North High School Board.¹⁰

Palmerston North could now regard its secondary school as its own.

⁹ AJHR, 1904, E.12, p.33.

¹⁰ MDT, Jubilee Number, Fifty years of Education, 1872-1922, p.10.

At last true local interest in secondary education could be attained and become a living part of the education system. The Board of Governors in their role as 'body corporate,' represented the interests of the householders, being responsible for keeping the building in repair, for providing for the comforts of teacher and children, and for maintaining the efficiency of their school.

The Palmerston North High School completed its first day on 19 April 1904, with a roll of one-hundred and twenty pupils. These pupils were drawn from a wide area encompassing the rural outskirts of Palmerston North. Although the majority of pupils were classed as urban dwellers, there were a number of pupils who found it necessary to board in town during the school week. They required financial assistance to help meet the expenses additionally incurred through travel and accommodation. Where did this financial assistance come from? The Secondary Education Act of 1903 made it compulsory for secondary school Boards to accept Government free-place pupils, or otherwise provide scholarships of their own to the total value of one-fifth of their annual income from endowments.¹¹ As a consequence, the money which would otherwise provide academic scholarships was now used by the High School Board to increase the number of boarding scholarships, so that more children from country districts could have the advantage of secondary education.

The free-place system at the High School was extended in 1905 to include holders of Education Board, National or Queens Scholarships, and to pupils who had passed the Proficiency Examination and were under fourteen years of age on the thirty-first of December, preceding their date of admission. There was, of course, always the proviso that the privilege of a free-place would be withdrawn if the Board was satisfied that the attendance, conduct, diligence or progress of a pupil was unsatisfactory. Although secondary education in Palmerston North was not entirely free, considerable progress had been made toward lowering the costs involved in sending a child through school. Free-place schemes essentially tried to financially assist those children who came from working-class families, but no assistance was granted until the child had passed the Proficiency Examination. Such an examination was a qualifying test, not a competition test, so a standard had been set to which children could attain regardless

¹¹ A.G. Butchers, Education in New Zealand, Dunedin, 1930, p.125.

of their parents' social status within the population. It was an improvement on the situation which had previously existed where only the wealthy classes could enter secondary school. Palmerston North, like most other townships in New Zealand, was at last providing secondary education to those capable of passing examinations as opposed to those capable of paying for their education.

The curriculum of Palmerston North High School as set out by the Board of Governors, was framed so as to provide suitable secondary education for pupils intending to pursue professional, agricultural, commercial, technical and domestic occupations. The programme of each pupil was determined by the Headmaster after consultation with their parent or guardian. The curriculum was set out in the first printed prospectus in 1905, and listed the following subjects; English, history, geography, Latin, French, mathematics, chemistry, physics, agriculture, mechanics, book-keeping, shorthand, mensuration, drawing, woodwork, cookery and singing. Pupils were academically streamed into classes related to their course option. The higher classes were taught English, geography, elementary physiography, Latin, arithmetic, algebra, science, French, woodwork and cookery. The lower classes were taught English, geography, history, Latin, arithmetic, algebra, science (elementary botany and agriculture), French, book-keeping, drawing, woodwork and cookery.¹² The curriculum with only minor modifications on some occasions, continued the same for many years. During the first decade of public secondary education in Palmerston North, changes made in the curriculum at the High School included the following: in 1906, it was specified that all pupils had to take English, arithmetic and science (boys to take chemistry and the girls to take botany), together with certain options offered under the courses entitled professional, commercial, agricultural and general.¹³ In 1907, a course entitled Short General was introduced for pupils remaining at secondary school for no longer than two years. In 1908, the curriculum was expanded by the addition of a Domestic Course for girls. Subjects within this course included drawing, book-keeping, cooking, dressmaking and domestic science.

In analysing the subjects offered within the curriculum, two distinct

¹² AJHR, 1905, E.12, p.15.

¹³ Murray, p.89.

biases are evident. Firstly, the subjects available for female pupils emphasized their role as the future home-maker. Cooking, dressmaking and domestic science were not offered to male pupils, and even today, the same rule applies in many secondary schools, with the result that male and female roles within society are clearly defined. Secondly, although the High School offered a range of courses in an attempt to cater for the needs of the pupils, most stress was placed upon the academic stream within the school. In an increasingly urbanised and bureaucratic society the function of the secondary school was to act as a social filter, determining the composition of a new middle class, deciding who could or could not enter the white collar professional occupations. Parents recognized that these newly created occupations were sources of material security and social prestige. Their response was to enter their children in academic streams within secondary schools in the expectation that 'meal tickets' would be obtained by passing the appropriate examinations.¹⁴ The secondary schools, including Palmerston North High School, responded to the parents' demands by preparing pupils for the Junior and Senior Civil Service, Matriculation, Solicitors General Knowledge, Medical Preliminary, Education Board senior scholarships and Teachers Examinations.¹⁵ The number of pupils successful in passing these examinations was accepted by parents and public as being the criteria of the efficiency of the school.¹⁶

The 'Old Pupils' pages of the Palmerston North High School magazine, The Palmerstonian, gave testimony to the idea that secondary education was an entry ticket into the middle class. This refers in particular to boys, who entered into careers in the Civil Service, Teaching, University, farming and medical school. Destinations for these careers included Westport, Nelson, Shannon, and Wellington. At this stage of Palmerston North's development a limited number of professional positions were available. The town was not able to provide employment for every pupil leaving school, and consequently a number chose to find employment elsewhere.

For the girls, the choice of career which featured most prominently was teaching. Many, after completing their training returned to teach in

¹⁴ M. Fairburn, 'The Rural Myth and the New Urban Frontier,' New Zealand Journal of History, Vol.9, No.1, p.9.

¹⁵ Murray, p.89.

¹⁶ Butchers, p.212.

local primary schools. Others followed the pattern of the boys and settled in other communities. A small number of girls attended University, but they would have been very much in the minority considering the bias of the curriculum for girls. Girls who did not choose either of these options, presumably found work in Palmerston North until they 'filtered' out of the employment system to become housewives, thus fulfilling the role they were being trained for at secondary school.

An interesting aspect to consider is a comparison between the curriculum of those early days, and that offered for the year 1979. Has the stress that was placed upon academic success changed? I would proffer the suggestion that it has become a firmly entrenched tradition within this secondary school. Briefly, the courses offered today at Palmerston North Boys' High School¹⁷ are professional and provide boys with a sound preparation for School Certificate, University Entrance, Bursary and scholarship.¹⁸ The objectives of the curriculum between 1902-1911, were very similar to the aims of today's curriculum. Both curricula have strived to provide the pupils with an adequate level of secondary education and appropriate qualifications to meet the requirements for employment, both within Palmerston North and elsewhere.

Lessons, of course, came first, but all pupils were encouraged to take an interest in sport and recreation. The teachers at the High School made an effort to stimulate pupils' interest in extra-curricular activities of a sporting or cultural nature. It was hoped that the children would continue to pursue an interest in their chosen past-time after they had left school, for their future mental and physical well-being. The Board of Governors went to considerable expense to provide playing areas for summer and winter games in their efforts to approximate the games system to that of the greatest schools in England.¹⁹ The main objective of sporting activities was to enable the pupils to grow up strong in body, alert in mentality, liberal, and just in a code of honour learned on the games field.

Sports days were all important school and community events. They

17 Changed from a co-educational to a single sex school in 1920.

18 Palmerston North Boys' High School, Prospectus, 1979, p.8.

19 Murray, p.105.

included the annual athletic and swimming sports, and the school picnic to the foothills of Tiritea. For pupils with an interest in cultural activities, there was a well stocked library to cater for the tastes of avid readers. A Glee Club prospered for some years, giving pleasure to its choristers and enjoyment to audiences attending school functions. A Dialectic Society was formed by the girls. The first meeting took the form of a debate, 'Higher Education vs Home Life for Girls,'²⁰ an interesting topic considering their 'supposed' traditional role in society. In the sphere of outdoor games, hockey was for girls, what football was for boys. As with the girls hockey teams, both junior and senior boys football teams participated in local competition and inter-school matches. The summer sport which corresponded in importance to rugby, was cricket. The pattern of competition was similar to that of rugby and hockey, grade teams of the local association, club games of various grades and annual or occasional intra-school and inter-school games. Annual sports days and extra-curricular recreational activities were attempts to bring the school together on semi-formal occasions where pupils, parents and teachers could participate as one, and share one another's interests.

An activity available for the boys which appeared to have considerable following within the High School was cadets. The cadet corps movement maintained a high level of interest in secondary schools throughout New Zealand. Interest in military training in schools apparently first arose after the outbreak of the Boer War to which New Zealand sent ten contingents of volunteers. This forcibly directed public attention to New Zealand's vulnerability, isolation and need for adequate local defence. New Zealanders' belief that superiority and hardiness could be gained through military training was extended into schools where the Education Act of 1877 had neglected such training. In 1901, an amendment was made to the Defence Act, whereby full provision was made for the organization of cadet corps in public schools.²¹

The first cadet corp was established at Palmerston North High School in 1904. Its services were accepted by the Defence Department and teachers acted as the officers. The cadet corp introduced its recruits to formal

²⁰ Palmerstonian, June 1908, Vol.1, No.2, p.74.

²¹ Butchers, p.233.

discipline, drill, the development of physique, instruction in arms and the cultivation of camaraderie in camp and barracks.²² The cadets were encouraged by their instructors to strive for these goals, not only for their own sake, but for the honour of the school. The cadets participated in inter-school and district competitions for shooting organized by the Defence Department, in addition inter-school camps were held to provide the boys with an opportunity to practise mock wartime manoeuvres.

Through studying the cadet corp movement in secondary school one learns something of the values people wanted their children inculcated with, for children then, as now, went to school amidst certain social, civil and moral assumptions possessed by society at large, and more especially by their educators, the teachers, inspectors and administrators.²³ As a national movement for future citizens the cadets would be able to guide New Zealand's youth along the path to citizenship. This belief was upheld by society, and education was the means by which it was passed onto the children. The books children read, the activities they took part in became necessarily infused within the cadet system itself, for it was after all but a practical extension of classroom activity. To many New Zealanders, 'the good schoolboy,' 'the good cadet,' and 'the good future citizen' were identical.²⁴ The cadet corp within Palmerston North High School also reflected this trend with the level of interest and importance of this activity 'advancing by leaps and bounds' to achieve by 1907 the establishment of two companies.²⁵

The number of pupils at Palmerston North High School continued to increase from the original one hundred and twenty enrolled in 1903. Although there was a relatively high number of one hundred and fifty five in 1905,²⁶ the number of enrolments thereafter levelled out to one hundred and forty in

22 Murray, p.145.

23 R. Openshaw, 'The Patriot Band,' M.A. Thesis, Massey University, 1973, p.1.

24 Openshaw, p.1.

25 Palmerstonian, December 1907, Vol.1, No.1, p.17.

26 AJHR, 1905, E.1, p.xxvi.

1906,²⁷ and one hundred and thirty seven in 1908.²⁸ In 1908, boarding facilities were established at the High School. It came about through the actions of the Headmaster, J. Vernon, in endeavouring to meet a request from the parents of seven country pupils, to make available facilities to enable their sons to attend the High School. These parents wanted their children to 'embrace' the same opportunities as were at hand to their 'city cousins' to attend secondary school. The boys were not to be the first country pupils to attend the High School, because a total of twenty nine male pupils attended the school from the surrounding farming areas. Eighteen of these pupils travelled to and from school every day by train. They were issued free-tickets if they held free-places at the High School. However, for those who had not qualified for free-tickets, grants were available from the Education Department. As far back as 1895 the Education Department began the policy of making payments for the conveyance of pupils to schools by railway. In 1902, the sum of £1,860 was extended by the Education Department as grants to allow pupils to travel by train to attend public schools, primary and secondary. By 1908, this sum had increased to £11,248 and included conveyance to any type of school, private, secondary, technical as well as public elementary schools.²⁹ The parents from the surrounding rural areas, such as Longburn, who chose for their children to board in town during the week and journey home for the weekends, presumably had to incur the boarding expense alone, because a boarding allowance of 2s.6d. per week was only given when there was no method of conveyance available.

Normally, the Board of Governors would have assumed the responsibility for establishing boarding facilities at the High School as they had received sanction under the secondary Education Act of 1903 to license hostels or boarding houses for the accommodation of pupils who had to live away from home in order to attend a public secondary school, but they apparently had neither the funds nor endowment to do so. Although they were in sympathy with Vernon's proposal for establishing boarding facilities, the Board was unable to put into effect what the parents had advocated. Vernon, then undertook the responsibility himself to provide for what the parents from the rural areas had requested. In 1908 he admitted their sons into his own

27 AJHR, 1907, E.12, p.5.

28 AJHR, 1909, E.6, p.12.

29 Butchers, p.239.

residence. These boys formed the nucleus of what grew gradually into a full boarding department. This was brought about in part by Vernon's faith in the continued growth of the school, in addition to realizing that a boarding residence would draw to itself from the rural areas, boys who, in order to obtain a secondary education, must go where facilities for an education of that kind are provided. Vernon built a two-storey building adjacent to his residence to accommodate twenty boarders. This boarding residence, known as College House, was officially opened in 1909.³⁰ At that date the number of boarders was fifteen, increasing to twenty two by 1911. Fees paid by the parents for board, excluding the set amount of £10 for tuition were £40 per annum. The establishment of boarding facilities at the High School was an important step for secondary education in Palmerston North, because the secondary school could now offer its services beyond the scope of the immediate town.

On 5 April 1910, the Palmerston North High School was destroyed by fire. The loss of the High School occurred during what became known as the Pawelka fires.³¹ The school fire resulted in only one day's schooling being lost; the pupils were thereafter accommodated at the Technical School. Classes continued at these temporary premises until the opening of the new High School building on 16 February 1911. It was decided to construct a new building on the site of the former school. The Government came to the assistance of the Board of Governors by providing a grant to make up the difference not covered in the £4,100 from insurance. The Board put itself into debt by providing this new building. They believed that it was essential to keep secondary education in Palmerston North in line with other parts of the country. They wanted to provide a school which would continue to serve the educational needs of the local township and surrounding rural areas.

As the first decade of public secondary education in Palmerston North drew to a close, one could feel that these years had been ones of hope, expansion and disappointment, but it was evident that the demand for secondary education was proving to be a successful reality.

³⁰ B.R. Costly, A Sketch Book of Palmerston North Boys' High School, New Zealand, 1977, p.28.

³¹ A.G.S. Bradfield, Forgotten Days, Wellington, 1956, p.115.

CHAPTER 2AN ALTERNATIVE: TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Technical education in New Zealand provides a striking example of an indirect method in social progress.¹ Technical training was often discussed in educational circles from the 1870s onwards, but it was always overlooked in favour of academic education. During the 1880s attempts were made by Sir Robert Stout to assert the importance of this branch of education. He asked secondary schools and University Colleges to introduce into their curriculum classes in manual training and technical instruction. Only one or two 'workshops' and a few science laboratories in the secondary schools resulted from his efforts. These schools were unable to liberalize their curriculum when offered the alternative of a wider service to the community, because they were bound to the Matriculation and Entrance scholarship Examinations, the prescription for which did not include manual and technical subjects.

Attempts to change the academic bias of the secondary school curriculum were not successful until after the appointment of G. Hogben as Inspector General of Education in 1899. He formulated a scheme for the effective development of technical education in secondary schools. This scheme was outlined in the 1900 and 1902 Manual and Technical Instruction Acts. Under these Acts, local bodies and School Boards were given the prerogative to organize and conduct classes in manual and technical instruction. The classes which could be set up were the following; school classes, associated classes, and special classes. The former were to be held in regular school hours for secondary school pupils, whereas the latter two could be established jointly by a School Board, an Education Board, or a local body organization. These two classes were envisaged as the means to extend the opportunities for technical instruction beyond the secondary schools to the general public. By allowing the establishment of special and associated classes in technical instruction, Hogben was giving full scope to

¹ J. Nicol, Technical Schools in New Zealand, New Zealand, 1940, p.1.

local initiative and effort on the part of the general public or of any suitably constituted association or society.

The English model of education was again used as a base for education in New Zealand, because the ideas for these Acts were provided by A.D. Riley's report on workshops, art-rooms, cookery centres and scientific laboratories in British schools. Even the aspirations of the public in Palmerston North were for the development of ideas in technical education along British lines. However, the British model did not seem applicable to the New Zealand situation, particularly Palmerston North where the size of the industrial sector did not warrant being a British template. Hogben should have looked to his own environment in New Zealand and realized that the needs of the public would not match the British system of technical education where manual and technical instruction formed an integral part of the school course. The technical education which developed in New Zealand, while it was in part 'technical,' in the narrowest sense of the term was mainly concerned to give a general vocational training to boys and girls whose interests lay outside academic subjects. That is why technical classes established within secondary schools and special classes for apprentices and the general public provided only elementary instruction in the courses given. Geographical conditions and the absence of any concentration of industries in a single population prevented their development on other lines, because in no New Zealand town, including Palmerston North, did conditions approach those existing in English industrial centres of similar size.²

In Palmerston North, moves were made as early as 1899 to establish a technical school in the town. While speaking in the House of Representatives in August 1899, the Member for Palmerston North pointed out to the Premier, that by establishing a technical school in Palmerston North an end could be put to the existing system whereby a teacher travelled from the Wanganui Technical School to Palmerston North each week to conduct classes in freehand, geometry and drawing. These classes were held every Friday and Saturday mornings from 9 a.m.-12 noon. It is questionable whether these classes could be regarded as 'true' technical instruction, because their principal work was elementary freehand, model drawing, shading from a cast and painting.³

² Nicol, p.7.

³ AJHR, 1900, E.5, p.8.

It was to be expected that the request from the Member for Palmerston North would be turned down, because Palmerston North at this time only had private secondary schools catering for a select section of the population. The Government considered it would be more advantageous for Palmerston North to have a secondary school that could cater for a greater number of pupils than would be available to undertake technical education. This decision led to the establishment of a District High School in 1902.

The District High School was provided with the opportunity to take advantage of the facilities afforded by the 1900 and 1902 Manual and Technical Instruction Acts by establishing school classes in technical instruction. It did not appear to have done so judging by the comments of the chairman of the Wanganui Education Board in his annual report. He said that little had been done to take advantages offered under these Acts for establishing school classes. Some of the only classes held were in cookery.⁴ This may have been the result of more emphasis being put on the academic subjects in the curriculum, but in this case it appears that lack of space (housed in St. Andrews Hall), and proper apparatus were the reasons for the lack of technical education in the District High School. Enthusiasm within the District High School for developing technical education in Palmerston North was not lacking; the Headmaster, W. Gray, saw the necessity of extending the opportunities of technical education to young men and women who wished to better themselves in life, but it was not possible for them to do this through 'normal' secondary education. It may have been that these people who sought technical education as a means of upward social mobility were not able to afford the fees, or did not have the appropriate qualifications to attend the District High School.

Gray established a number of evening classes in conjunction with the District High School. Classes established included a literary class, book-keeping classes and a class for budding electricians.⁵ These classes comprised thirty six students, a number which indicates that there was a need for technical education outside the District High School. This small beginning was the Palmerston North technical school in embryo. Technical education was available only to a limited number of people in Palmerston North, therefore those who were associated with the evening classes could not hold

⁴ AJHR, 1903, E.1, p.69.

⁵ MES, 29 September 1909, p.5.

any hopes of extending their services until they were able to secure proper accommodation. Lessons taught in conjunction with the District High School had to be held in the temporarily rented St. Andrews Hall. This was not only unsatisfactory from a financial point of view, but the accommodation was quite unsuitable for the work that was required.

The possibility of having their own building received a setback when the District High School committee learned from the Under-Secretary of Education that the Department could not consider the construction of a building for a technical school until it was satisfied that the number of pupils was sufficient. The District High School committee decided to canvass the public of Palmerston North to find out how many pupils would attend. A public meeting was held in April 1902. There was a satisfactory attendance of people interested in technical education. There were present F. Pirani, Dr Smyth (Chief Inspector of the Wanganui Education Board), Gray, and several other gentlemen prominent in local education circles. Discussion centred around the special evening classes that had been established at the District High School. Pirani pointed out that if these classes were the success anticipated, the Government would be forced to provide a thoroughly equipped technical school in Palmerston North.⁶ Unfortunately, the committee's proposed scheme foundered because technical education in Palmerston North declined. The only series of classes that continued were held by L. Watkins in art work, building construction, engineering and drawing. The lack of support may have been caused through the loss of the strong leadership provided by Gray, who left Palmerston North in 1902 to take up a position as Chief Inspector of the Wanganui Education District, or it may have been due to the Government's decision not to build a separate technical school, but to continue having technical education as part of the curriculum of the College Street District High School. Furthermore, although classes in technical instruction were to be held at the District High School, technical education in Palmerston North was to remain under the auspices of the Wanganui Education Board.

As part of the Government's decision to have only school classes in technical instruction they provided a grant of £760 for furniture and fittings of the technical school which was to be accommodated within the new District

⁶ Palmerston North Technical School, 1906-1956, Jubilee Booklet, p.17.

High School building in Featherston Street. Was this grant to be taken as compensation for the decision not to construct a separate building for a technical school? The Government did not consider a real demand existed in Palmerston North for technical education; academic education was believed to be of greater importance because children with secondary education could eventually play a more influential role in society, and so it was their needs that must be catered for first.

In the years between 1903 and 1905, technical education was available in Palmerston North only within the High School. Pupils received instruction in painting, drawing, woodwork and cooking. It was inevitable therefore that certain sections of the public were missing out on technical education, particularly apprentices in employment. These apprentices could neither take time off work to attend classes during the day, nor possessed the entry qualifications (the Proficiency Examination), to take advantage of the technical education offered as part of the curriculum. The Wanganui Education Board was not prepared to establish special classes in technical instruction for people outside the High School. It is possible that the Board's apparent lack of foresight in the matter was an indirect result of being based in Wanganui, and so could not realize the immediate demand for technical instruction existed in Palmerston North. It was the working sector of Palmerston North, particularly employers, who recognized a need for technical instruction to be available to their employees - a need which the Board failed to apprehend. Employers involved in service industries which required apprentice labour undertook moves to train apprentices themselves without the help of technical education which could have been available under the Wanganui Education Board. For example, in 1905 when the town was growing so rapidly that the services of its only plumber, D. O'Reilly,⁷ were being overtaxed, local body employers made moves to train plumbers and to establish evening classes for them.

In 1905, further attempts to get evening classes established were made by the Palmerston North High School Board, particularly by the Headmaster, J.E. Vernon. The High School Board felt that by assuming complete control of technical education they could extend instruction given in evening classes. Why were they prepared to put in the effort when the Wanganui Education Board

⁷ The Dominion, Palmerston North Centennial Feature, 5 November 1970, p.50.

would not; because several members of the High School Board were residents of Palmerston North. They recognized the need for readily available technical education which would result from improvements they planned to implement. In May 1905, the High School Board informed the Wanganui Education Board that it intended to assume control of technical classes in Palmerston North at the end of that year. No objection was raised. With this complete severance from the Wanganui Education Board, technical education became the concern of the Palmerston North High School Board.⁸

In 1906, Vernon supported by the High School Board, established evening classes at the High School in freehand, drawing, modelling, experimental and natural science, woodcarving, plumbers and tinsmiths work, iron and brass moulding and commercial subjects.⁹ These classes were successful under the directorship of Vernon. Technical education in Palmerston North apparently needed a strong guiding force, previously found in Gray and which now flourished once again under the supervision of Vernon. During 1907, the number of classes increased to twenty nine with a total of two-hundred and forty one pupils.¹⁰ Unable to accommodate all the technical classes at the High School, some were transferred to Cuba Street where four small rooms were engaged in what was known then as Bert and Monrads Buildings. The plumbing classes were also transferred. They were taken in a small shop in Rangitikei Street, belonging to the Tiratu Sawmilling Coy.¹¹ The classes that remained at the High School were art and science. Because these technical classes were well supported and showed great promise of further expansion, Vernon decided to resign his honorary directorship in favour of appointing a permanent director. This decision was made because with the growth in the number of classes and some of them moving from the High School, Vernon could not devote as much time and effort to technical education as he would have liked. It was a bold step and received some criticism because it was thought that if left by itself the Technical School would decline as had occurred after the resignation of Gray in 1902. Nevertheless, the High School Board went ahead with its decision and appointed D. Opie as Director of the Technical School. His appointment was made on the condition that he should

⁸ Palmerston North Technical School, 1906-1956, Jubilee Booklet, p.13.

⁹ AJHR, 1907, E.5, p.26.

¹⁰ AJHR, 1908, E.5, p.4.

¹¹ MDI, Jubilee Number, Fifty years of Education 1872-1922, p.11.

occupy the position for a year, and if there were not sufficient pupils by that time the appointment was to be terminated. There was little possibility of this occurring, for when the Technical School commenced in 1908 under Opie's directorship there were thirty three classes with an average of twelve students in each class.

The growth in the number of technical school pupils demonstrated that there was a need for technical education in Palmerston North; an aspect which the Wanganui Education Board chose to neglect. The growth of technical education also brought to the fore the fact that a building was required in which the Technical School could make a worthy home.¹² Those associated with technical education had been denied this privilege once before, but the Government could not fail to recognize that the need existed for a separate school now. Perhaps they were successful this time because it was the High School Board on the motion of its chairman, W. Rutherford, who decided to raise funds to purchase a site for a Technical School. The High School Board invited local bodies to contribute sums of money to the funds of the Technical School. As a means of showing their support, and to prompt others, the Borough Council responded with a donation of £25. The people of Palmerston North, always ready to improve the education facilities within their town responded most liberally and a sufficient sum, subsidized by the Education Department, was raised to purchase a site on the corner of King and Duke Streets. The site was purchased for £1,400; a sum of £900 was raised as a building fund and the Government made a grant of £500.¹³ The amount of money involved in this venture illustrates that the people of Palmerston North and the Government realized that academic qualifications were not the only 'meal ticket' needed to get on in the world.

The new Technical School was opened on 29 September 1909, by the Hon. G. Fowlds, Minister of Education, in the presence of a large gathering of townspeople, students and others. The Minister in his speech expressed the hope that the school had before it many years of helpful work and that it would prosper and flourish as time went on.¹⁴ The Technical School comprised five classrooms, three art rooms, science room, cookery room, plumbing and

¹² MES, 29 September 1909, p.5.

¹³ Palmerston North Technical School, 1906-1956, Jubilee Booklet, p.13.

¹⁴ AJHR, 1908, E.5, p.44.

woodwork workshops,¹⁵ The aim of the curriculum offered was to provide courses suitable to the trade or profession that a boy or girl wished to enter for, for example; commercial, domestic, carpentry, mechanical, engineering, painting and decorating and plumbing. Although it was only seven years since a District High School had been established in Palmerston North, the people had realized the need to provide an alternative to secondary education. The fact that they had made the right decision in providing an alternative was seen in the continued growth of the number of pupils at the Technical School. By 1913, despite its comparatively late foundation the Palmerston North Technical School had become the largest of its kind in New Zealand, outside the four main centres. The number of individual students during the session that year was five-hundred and thirty five, and the class entries were seven-hundred and twenty.¹⁶

The Technical School in Palmerston North exemplified the development of technical education in a centre where there were already good facilities for the secondary education of girls and boys along orthodox lines. It was concerned with the part-time education of artisans, office workers and persons interested in art or domestic pursuits. It did not aspire to provide full-time post-primary education for pupils to whom the ordinary secondary schools made no appeal,¹⁷ and in this respect it reflected technical education throughout New Zealand.

15 MDI, Jubilee Number, Fifty years of Education 1872-1922, p.11.

16 Nicol, p.109.

17 Nicol, p.109.

CHAPTER 3

EXPANSION AND DIVISION

A feature of the first decade of state secondary education in Palmerston North between 1901 and 1911, was its success in becoming established within such a short time. Palmerstonians had succeeded in stimulating the development of a Technical School in addition to a High School, and this served as a basis for the expansion and division of existing facilities.

The needs and aspirations of the local population had been adequately catered for up to this time, but the rapid progress of the town and the large numbers availing themselves of secondary education determined that the development of further educational facilities was essential.

The expansion and division of secondary education in Palmerston North began with the establishment of a separate High School for girls. Palmerston North High School had been originally designed to cater for two-hundred and fifty five pupils, but by 1912 accommodation was being sought for three-hundred and fifty pupils. The problem of accommodation at the High School could not be solved totally by extending the existing facilities. The High School Board's solution to alleviate the problem was seen in the construction of a separate building for a Girls' High School. The Board believed that it would be advantageous to have a school which catered solely for girls. A more suitable curriculum could be offered, because the teachers could devote more attention to courses orientated toward the girls' future employment than if the girls had attended a co-educational school. A co-educational school did not recognize the full potential of the female pupils, because they tended to place more emphasis on the future role of the male as breadwinner, rather than on a female becoming capable of financially supporting herself after she had left secondary school.

The Palmerston North High School Board made an application to the Education Department for permission to initiate the establishment of a

separate building for a Girls' High School. Their application was declined for two reasons. Firstly, the Department did not consider the problem of overcrowding at Palmerston North High School to be serious. It was thought that other means of accommodating the increasing number of pupils should be considered before taking the bold step of attempting to set up a whole new school after the town had already benefitted by the existence of two secondary education institutions. The second reason for the decline of an application for a new school was related to New Zealand's role within the Empire. By the time this application was made, World War One had commenced. The New Zealand Government had to channel money into the Defence Department as part of its duty in assisting the 'Mother Country' to fight the Great War. As a result, other government departments, including Education, lost valuable financial resources. Hopes for development in education by Palmerston North, or any other town or city within New Zealand were temporarily set back because of the Government's allegiance to Britain.

By 1918, Palmerston North High School was sustaining a roll of over three-hundred pupils. The Board considered that this number was too large if pupils were to receive the full benefit of the teachers' time. The situation prompted the chairman of the High School Board to renew his plea to the Minister of Education for consent to establish a separate Girls' High School. In his statement to the Minister, Hodder outlined the problem which the High School was faced with. The gymnasium had been absorbed as a classroom to cater for the demand created by the extra pupils. Also in that year, several pupils had been refused entry to College House. Pupils would have to be refused entry to the school if things continued on the present par. To a town like Palmerston North that prided itself upon extending the opportunities of secondary education to as many eligible candidates as possible, the existing situation required immediate action. In addition, the High School Board felt that they were letting the people down, particularly those in remote country areas by restricting entry to College House, the boarding residence of the High School.

The Minister of Education's reply to the chairman's request acknowledged that a need probably did exist in the town for a separate Girls' High School, but their case was not singular. The Board had to realise that increasing numbers of pupils attending secondary school was a trend developing throughout New Zealand. The Board should not therefore

expect any preferential treatment in obtaining their request. The only way educational needs within New Zealand were going to be adequately met was by the Government increasing the vote for education, and the Minister did not envisage them doing this in the foreseeable future.

It was evident that if Palmerstonians were prepared to continue pursuing their request, they must be prepared to share the financial burden of that request. The people of Palmerston North did wish to continue to support the need for an additional secondary school, their interest and concern being expressed at a public meeting.

This meeting was held on 4 November 1918, in the Opera House.¹ It was attended by members of the High School Board, school committees of the town's primary schools, as well as interested parents and public. The public's presence at this meeting expressed the feeling that the time had arrived when action should be taken.

Hodder, chairman of the High School Board, spoke at the meeting. He said that the public's needs and aspirations were to the fore where education was concerned. However, needs and aspirations were not the only prerequisites for the development of education in Palmerston North. Without the interest and concern of parents, the Board would not be able to achieve their planned development of Palmerston North's established educational facilities. Apathy and indifference had no place in the development of secondary education in this town, because these negative attitudes would only hinder moves to establish a separate Girls' High School.

With the parents' moral support, the High School Board succeeded in obtaining affirmation from the Minister of Education that a separate secondary school for girls would be established in Palmerston North. The site chosen for the new school was in Fitzherbert Street.

The date set down for the girls' departure from their present school was February 1920. The girls awaited the transition with feelings mingled with joy and regret. They appreciated the effort shown by those people associated with the establishment of the new Girls' High School in Palmerston North. They realized the importance of this development and they promised

¹ MDI, 5 November 1918, p.7.

themselves that they would earnestly endeavour to make their new school intellectually, morally and physically, one of the leading schools in New Zealand. The year 1920 arrived, but because of the disruption to the economy wrought by World War One, the construction of the new school was not completed; the lack of building materials had unfortunately delayed the work far beyond the contract time. The situation, however, was not as bad as anticipated. The pupils and staff of the new Palmerston North Girls' High School were offered the use of the Technical School building in Duke Street. Amicable arrangements were made so that all pupils would not be too inconvenienced. Room was made available for the girls' classes to be held in the downstairs area of the building, so that technical classes could continue undisturbed upstairs. No objections were raised over this temporary measure, because the parents realized that some arrangement had to be found so that their children's education would not be disrupted, and this was the best that could be done under the circumstances. The Technical School building continued to be used by the girls until the official opening of their new school on 13 September 1920. Even at this stage not all was complete; carpenters and plumbers were still at work, and the grounds were still in the transition stage between rough paddock and lawn. Despite these initial discomforts, everyone felt that the new school was worth all the effort that had been put into its foundation.

The new Girls' High School comprised eight classrooms, a laboratory and cookery room. Outside, physical education was provided for in extensive playing fields which, when completed, would encompass three hockey grounds, two tennis lawns and a tennis court.

There were three courses of instruction offered within the curriculum; professional, commercial and general. The following subjects; English, arithmetic, mathematics, history, geography and French were compulsory to each course. The alternatives were science, Latin, book-keeping, shorthand and drawing. They were available as options within the courses. The course a girl entered for depended upon what career she was hoping to pursue. Once this was decided, they worked toward the final examination. Pupils from the Girls' High School were entered for Junior and Senior National scholarships, Matriculation, Teachers 'C' Certificates or Public Service Examinations. These examinations were applicable to an appropriate course taken by the pupils.

The academic side of the curriculum was important, but at Palmerston North Girls' High School the undisputed aim was to train the healthy homemaker and mother of the future.² The girls were required to take hygiene, domestic science, cooking, dressmaking, first-aid and ambulance in addition to their academic subjects. There was no 'escaping' from the woman's traditional role within society; no matter what career a girl may have pursued when she left school, it was believed that she would inevitably become a housewife and mother. Therefore, the girls were expected to have some knowledge and practical experience of a woman's duties when they assumed their traditional role in marriage.

The pupils who attended Palmerston North Girls' High School came not only from the town, but from outlying rural areas. Those girls who did not live in town travelled to school by train or rode on their horses.³ This school was continuing the belief now instilled in all of Palmerston North's secondary schools, of extending the opportunity for secondary education to as many eligible pupils as possible.

For those who had questioned the need for a separate Girls' High School, their opposition proved unfounded. This was judged by the number of pupils at enrolment. The Girls' High School was fulfilling a need, because the number of pupils exceeded expectation. During the first three years, enrolment numbers increased from one-hundred and thirty three (1920), to one-hundred and fifty eight (1921), and one-hundred and eighty one (1922), a significant increase for a town of Palmerston North's size.

The year 1920 marked not only the end of an era for the existing High School, but also a new beginning for secondary education in Palmerston North. The need for additional secondary school facilities was finally realized, culminating in the establishment of the Girls' High School. All three secondary schools in Palmerston North (the Boys' High School; the Technical School; and the Girls' High School), represented the effort made by Palmerstonians to cater for the educational needs of their children.

The children who were sent to school could now take advantage of the opportunities given to them by their parents, and the community as a whole

² MDI, Jubilee Number, Fifty years of Education 1872-1922, p.11.

³ Palmerston North Girls' High School 1902-1962, Jubilee Booklet, p.12.

would prosper as a result, Prosperity exists where opportunities are provided and used to the fullest. In Palmerston North's case, 'social prosperity was an inevitable result of its residents' endeavours to advance the interests and knowledge of their young people.⁴

⁴ MES, 14 September 1920, p.4.

CONCLUSION

The establishment of public secondary education in Palmerston North was quite remarkable; within the space of eighteen years from 1902 to 1920, two secondary schools and a technical school had been established. Such an achievement was possibly unparalleled in any other town of comparable size within New Zealand. It would have been impossible for Palmerston North to have accomplished so much in so short a time without the existence of intense local interest in the need for higher education as part of the development of the town. It could be said that 'education reflects the values and aspirations of society,'¹ and in Palmerston North's case it was no exception. The people of Palmerston North strived for better opportunities for their future generations by creating an education system within the town which made secondary education a very real possibility for everyone, where once it was a dream except for a wealthy minority. The changes effected ensured that the development of education would prosper for many years to come.

Today, Palmerston North is one of New Zealand's foremost educational centres, possessing a University, a Technical Institute and a Teachers' College, in addition to five public secondary schools and twenty three public primary schools. The fact that education has become synonymous with the city of Palmerston North gives testimony to the importance of the basic foundations for higher education which were laid down between 1902 and 1920.

¹ R. Openshaw, 'The Patriot Band,' M.A. Thesis, Massey University, 1973, p.63.

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