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# **‘For Light and Liberty’**

## **The Origins and Early Development of the Reform Party, 1887-1915**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
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## *Abstract*

The Reform Party was one of the main political parties in New Zealand prior to the Second World War. Despite this, very little research has been conducted into its origins and growth as a party. This thesis examines that period of the Reform Party's development, beginning in the late 1880s and ending with the formation of the National Government in 1915.

It argues that a 'reform' identity began to emerge at the 1887 election and that in the 1890s the Opposition to the Liberals continued to refine 'reform' ideals. Furthermore, the establishment of the National Association in 1891 provided the Opposition with an extra-parliamentary organisation. This meant that it was better organised than the Liberals, and not the disunited group that some have previously characterised it as. Although the Opposition had relatively good political organisation, it was unable to win an election during the 1890s because its political message did not resonate with the electorate.

In the first decade of the twentieth century the Opposition transformed itself into the Reform Party, beginning with the formation of the Political Reform League in 1905, and then taking the name Reform Party in 1909. During this period Reform displayed a profound understanding of the changes occurring in New Zealand society and shaped its rhetoric to appeal to voters. This thesis proposes that Reform's rise was due to their superior organisation and political messaging; and challenges the idea that the electoral swing to Reform was the sole result of Liberal decline and societal changes.

Furthermore, it contends that by 1915 Reform tended to operate like a mass party. It built a nation-wide branch structure, with separate sections for women and Māori. From 1912 to 1914 Reform held annual conferences which were attended by delegates from throughout New Zealand and enabled the general membership to propose policy ideas. The party itself had an executive committee which oversaw its functions and this committee consisted of nine men and two women elected by the delegates at the annual conferences. Reform also employed a general secretary who oversaw the day to day running of the party. This is contrary to previous descriptions of Reform, which portray it as a party which was controlled by the leader of the Parliamentary Party, William Massey. By 1915 Reform was the most organised and extensive political party in New Zealand.



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# List of Abbreviations

- AJHR** *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives.*
- MHR** *Member of the House of Representatives.*
- MLC** *Member of the Legislative Council.*
- MP** *Member of Parliament.*



# Introduction

*'A new era is dawning, new times are coming,  
and new men will soon be found in this House'*<sup>1</sup>

– Sir George Grey

On 10 July 1884, a public meeting of electors was held at the Star Hotel in the north Taranaki town of Urenui to discuss the 'present political crisis'. The attendees voted to form a Political Reform Association because it was 'the opinion of this meeting [that] members do not represent their constituents, but only their own views.'<sup>2</sup> They formulated eleven points, which were to be sent to the various candidates for parliamentary seats in the Taranaki District to ascertain where they stood in relation to the Association's platform. Members of the Urenui Political Reform Association were concerned with government spending. They believed the current system of free education was extravagant, that civil servants should not have pensions, and that the number of Members of the House of Representatives (MHRs) should be reduced. They thought land and property taxes discouraged growth and should be abolished. Land should be freehold, perpetual leasing was irresponsible, and the Government should obtain more native land and sell it at cost, to encourage immigrants with limited capital onto the land. Lastly, they wanted voters to have more say in government, particularly through an elected Legislative Council. What eventually happened to the Urenui Political Reform Association is unknown, but some of their solutions to the problems New Zealand faced during the 1880s became part of Reform Party policy in the early twentieth century. This illustrates that those who held the political ideas that became associated with Reform were developing organisations to promote them well before the Liberals began their long stretch in government.

This thesis examines the development and early history of the Reform Party as an organisation. It covers the period from the late 1880s, when political parties first began to emerge in New Zealand, until 1915, when the war led to a Reform-Liberal coalition Government, called the National Government, and party organising was suspended. It investigates three key areas. First, it will consider the origins of Reform, focusing on when a 'reform' identity emerged to oppose the 'liberals' and the attempts of those who held that identity to form organisations. Second, Reform's early development will be explored,

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<sup>1</sup> Sir George Grey, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1877, vol:26, pp.489.

<sup>2</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 11 July 1884, p.2.

focusing on organisation and campaigning. Finally, the initial organisation of Reform will be analysed to assess whether it can be described as New Zealand's first mass party.

## The contribution to scholarship

The Reform Party was one of the main political parties in pre-Second World War New Zealand. The opposition to the Liberals began to organise from 1891, continued with Political Reform Leagues from 1905 and then consolidated into the Reform Party from 1909. Furthermore, Reform governed, either by itself or in coalition,<sup>3</sup> for nearly sixteen years between 1912 and 1928, and was a major contributor to the National Party, New Zealand's most electorally successful political party. However, there has been very little research on the party itself. Only one article has been written specifically on Reform, and it was published over half a century ago.<sup>4</sup> Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett did lead a project on New Zealand working class conservatism, which examined the basis for electoral domination of right-wing parties in New Zealand from 1911.<sup>5</sup> Although one of the purposes of that undertaking was to investigate who voted for Reform, it did not examine the party organisation.<sup>6</sup>

This thesis rectifies this gap in our knowledge about the development and organisation of what was once one of New Zealand's major political parties. Although very little has been written specifically about the Opposition to the Liberals in the 1890s or Reform there are some key beliefs about these groups which persist. The characterisation of the 1890s Opposition as disorganised, the role that Massey played in the development of Reform, and the place of Farmers' Union, and rural communities, in the rise of Reform will be examined.

There has been scant research into Reform's organisation at a local level, so very little is known about how it operated as a political party. This thesis will explore the extent, reach and coverage of the Reform Party branches, showing that it had a remarkably wide and robust branch network, including separate branches for women and Māori. This thesis is primarily focused upon the organisation of the Reform Party, but it also engages with an underlying question of whether the rise of Reform is primarily attributed to the decline of the Liberals, or, whether it might more credibly be attributed to Reform's improving organisation and sharper political messaging.

<sup>3</sup> Between 1915 and 1919 New Zealand was governed by a National Government which was a coalition between Reform and the Liberals.

<sup>4</sup> W.J. Gardner, 'The Reform Party' in *Ends and Means in New Zealand Politics*, (ed) Robert Chapman, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1961, pp.25-33.

<sup>5</sup> Miles Fairburn and Erik Olssen, 'Introduction' in *Class, Gender and the Vote: Historical Perspectives from New Zealand*, (eds) Miles Fairburn and Erik Olssen, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2005, p.11.

<sup>6</sup> Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey 1908-1914?' in *A Great New Zealand Prime Minister? Reappraising William Ferguson Massey*, (eds) James Watson and Lachy Paterson, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2011, p.65 stated that it is possible that Reform's success in increasing its vote before the First World War may have been due to better organisation by the party, but more research is needed on this aspect.

Another theme that emerges is the development of an 'anti-socialist' political grouping in the New Zealand context. Attention has been given to the origins and development of both socialism and political labour in New Zealand.<sup>7</sup> Yet little scrutiny has been given to what political groups were instigated to oppose socialist and labour political organisations. Reform and its predecessors consistently placed themselves in opposition to much that might be considered socialist. By examining the origins and development of Reform this thesis will also explore the establishment of an 'anti-socialist' political grouping in New Zealand.

As this thesis deals with a political party, it will also consider some key ideas about the development of political parties and the formation of the New Zealand party system. A party system describes the interaction between political parties competing to be the Government. Therefore, studying a party leads to consideration of its place within that system.<sup>8</sup> Giovanni Sartori asserted that the development of party organisation and changes in party systems are closely linked.<sup>9</sup> He proposed that the development of mass parties and strong party systems happened together, the party system becoming structured in response to the rise of one or two mass parties.<sup>10</sup> A mass party is widely recognised as being one in which a party organisation undertakes three main functions: developing and expanding membership, developing policy for the parliamentary wing and preparing for election campaigns.<sup>11</sup>

Sartori also linked the formation of mass parties to the introduction of universal franchise, arguing that parties of 'the masses' are a response to the widening of the franchise.<sup>12</sup> In New Zealand mass suffrage was achieved relatively early by international standards,<sup>13</sup> with all people aged twenty-one and over being able to vote from the 1893 election.<sup>14</sup> Yet our current understanding of the way mass parties and party systems

<sup>7</sup> For example: Bruce Brown, *The Rise of New Zealand Labour: A History of the New Zealand Labour Party from 1916 to 1940*, Wellington: Price Milburn, 1962; Mark E. Dunick, 'Making Rebels : The New Zealand Socialist Party, 1901-1913', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2016; Peter Franks and Jim McAloon, *Labour: The New Zealand Labour Party 1916-2016*, Victoria University Press, 2016; Barry Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence: The Origins and Establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party, 1900-19*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1980; P.J. O'Farrell, 'The Formation of the New Zealand Labour Party', *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 10, no. 38, 1962, pp.190-202; Erik Olssen, 'The Origins of the Labour Party: A Reconsideration', *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 21, no. 1, 1987,

<sup>8</sup> Daniele Caramani, 'Party Systems' in *Comparative Politics*, 3rd edition, (ed) Daniele Caramani, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p.217.

<sup>9</sup> Sartori is considered one of the leading theorists on the development of parties and party systems. For a summary of his contributions see Peter Mair, 'Introduction to Sartori's 1967 Manuscript on "Party Types, Organisation and Functions"', *West European Politics*, 28, no. 1, 2005, pp.1-5.

<sup>10</sup> Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, vol. 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp.21-22; Giovanni Sartori, 'The Influence of Electoral Systems: Faulty Laws or Faulty Methods' in *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*, (eds) Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart, New York: Agathon Press, 1986, p.56.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p.111.

<sup>12</sup> Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, vol. 1, p.21.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Mair, 'Democracies' in *Comparative Politics*, 3rd edition, (ed) Daniele Caramani, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p.86.

<sup>14</sup> Neill Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy: A History of the Vote in New Zealand*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2003, p.84.

developed identifies Labour as the first mass party, developing as such in the 1920s<sup>15</sup> with a structured party system developing after 1935.<sup>16</sup> Using this time frame, mass parties began developing around thirty years after universal suffrage and a structured party system over forty years after the arrival of the masses at the ballot box.

Other comparable democracies developed mass parties and structured party systems either before, or around the same time, as major franchise extensions.<sup>17</sup> In New Zealand little attention has been paid as to why current explanations place the development of mass political parties and the party system so much later than the final franchise extension. It appears that the received view is based more on Maurice Duverger's classic theories of party development than on detailed research. Duverger was one of the first to describe the development and organisation of political parties in modern states.<sup>18</sup> Building on observations made by Moisey Ostrogorski<sup>19</sup> and Max Weber,<sup>20</sup> he isolated two types of parties, distinguishing them by their structure. He called the earliest parties to develop 'cadre parties', which had a top-down structure and developed inside parliament. They were characterised by groupings of prominent politicians who selected candidates based on the quality of the person, not the support of a body of party members.<sup>21</sup> Cadre parties did not have membership enrolment, instead relying on loose groups, which Duverger, drawing from Weber,<sup>22</sup> called caucuses, which became active around elections.<sup>23</sup> The second type of party Duverger identified was the 'mass party', which developed outside of parliament.<sup>24</sup> This party arose with the introduction of universal suffrage, and the first mass parties had of necessity to be socialistic, because they were of the masses, who were the workers.<sup>25</sup> Duverger believed that cadre parties, which arose from inside parliament, could not transition to mass parties, arguing that mass parties must form outside parliament.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Raymond Miller, *Party Politics in New Zealand*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.73.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Church, 'Electoral Systems, Party Systems, and Stability in New Zealand', PhD Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1998, p.466.

<sup>17</sup> For example: John F. Bibby and Louis Sandy Maisel, *Two Parties--or More?: The American Party System*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998, pp.21-28; Louis Sandy Maisel and Mark D. Brewer, *Parties and Elections in America: The Electoral Process*, 6th edition, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012, pp.33-35; Paul Strangio and Nick Dyrenfurth, 'Introduction' in *Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System*, (eds) Paul Strangio and Nick Dyrenfurth, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009, pp.2-4; Robert C. Self, *The Evolution of the British Party System: 1885-1940*, Harlow: Longman, 2000, pp.21-26.

<sup>18</sup> Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, 3rd edition, London: Methuen, 1964.

<sup>19</sup> Moisey Ostrogorski, translated by Frederick Clarke, *Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties*, 2 vols., vol. 1, London: Macmillan and Co, 1902. Ostrogorski studied English political parties and described their organisation, proposing the idea that they were based on caucuses.

<sup>20</sup> Max Weber, translated by Hans Heinrich Gerth, C. Wright Mills and Bryan S. Turner, 'Politics as a Vocation' in *From Max Weber Essays in Sociology*, Routledge, 2009, pp.77-128. 'Politics as a Vocation', was originally published in 1919 and further developed Ostrogorski ideas and proposed that some parties were no longer caucus based.

<sup>21</sup> Duverger, pp.63-64.

<sup>22</sup> Weber, p.106.

<sup>23</sup> Duverger, pp.17-18, p.67 and p.71.

<sup>24</sup> Duverger, p.66 and pp.24-25.

<sup>25</sup> Duverger, pp.63-65.

<sup>26</sup> Duverger, pp.xxxiv-xxxvii.

Although Duverger is not mentioned, his influence is clearly seen in the way the historical development of New Zealand parties is explained.<sup>27</sup> It seems that the classification of Labour as the first mass party<sup>28</sup> is influenced by the idea that it was the first real 'socialist' party.<sup>29</sup> Those parties which came before Labour, Reform and Liberal, are usually described as cadre parties.<sup>30</sup> However, the classification of Reform as a cadre party seems to be based on Duverger's theoretical framework, rather than on historical analysis.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Duverger's claim that mass parties must develop on the left,<sup>32</sup> outside of parliament, has attracted criticism. Both Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner<sup>33</sup> and Sartori<sup>34</sup> pointed out that parties which began as intra-parliamentary parties had gone on to develop many characteristics of a mass party, for example the Conservative Party and Liberal Party in Britain and the Republican Party and Democratic Party in the United States.<sup>35</sup> This thesis challenges the idea that Reform was a cadre

<sup>27</sup> For a classic explanation of the development of New Zealand political parties and party systems see: Miller, pp.27-32.

<sup>28</sup> Brown, *The Rise of New Zealand Labour*, covered the development of the organisation of the Labour Party from 1916 to 1919, pp.32-37, but with no discussion of what the style of organising showed; Church, pp.194-195, said Labour was the first mass party based on use of branches and trade union affiliations. However, he provided no examination of other, contemporary parties; Franks and McAloon, pp.81-86 gave details of Labour's attempts to organising during the 1920s and early 1930s and assumed that Labour was a mass party from the beginning; Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, pp.146-152 noted that Labour support for the 1919 election had marked regional differences, suggesting organisational issues; Jim McAloon, 'A Political Struggle: Christchurch Labour Politics 1905-1913', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 28, no. 1, 1994, p.36 described the Christchurch Social Democratic Party as a mass party; Miller, p.73, described Labour's organisation as a departure from the dominant cadre party model; Libby Plumridge, 'The Necessary but Not Sufficient Condition: Christchurch Labour and Working-Class Culture', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 19, no. 2, 1985, pp.130-150, described the Christchurch Labour Party Organisation as 'mass' by 1915.

<sup>29</sup> R.M. Chapman, *The Political Scene, 1919-1931*, Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969, p.40; Duverger, p.15, singles out New Zealand as an example of a country where a real 'Labour' mass party (Labour) existed alongside a cadre 'Socialist' party (Liberals); Len Richardson, 'Parties and Political Change' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, (ed) Geoffrey W. Rice, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.202.

<sup>30</sup> Miller, p.27 and p.69; R.S. Milne, *Political Parties in New Zealand*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1966, p.165; Barry Gustafson, *The First 50 Years: A History of the New Zealand National Party*, Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986, p.4.

<sup>31</sup> There has been a reasonable amount of attention given to the Liberal Party and its organisation for example: Christopher Campbell, 'The "Working Class" and the Liberal Party in 1890', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 9, no. 1, 1975, pp.41-51; John Clavey Clarke, 'The New Zealand Liberal Party and Government, 1895-1906', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1962; R.M. Chapman, 'The Decline of the Liberals' in *Ends and Means in New Zealand Politics*, (ed) Robert Chapman, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1961 pp.18-24; Bernard J. Foster, 'Development of Unity and Organisation in the New Zealand Political Parties of the Liberal Era', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1956; D.A. Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988; R.K. Newman, 'Liberal Policy and the Left Wing, 1908-1911: A Study of Middle-Class Radicalism in New Zealand', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1965; Richard Shannon, 'The Decline and Fall of the Liberal Government: A Study in an Aspect of New Zealand Political Development, 1908-1914', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1953.

These provided evidence for the classification of the Liberals as a cadre party.

<sup>32</sup> Duverger, p.67.

<sup>33</sup> J. LaPalombara and M. Weiner, 'Origin and Development of Political Parties' in *Political Parties and Political Development*, (eds) Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966, pp.9-10.

<sup>34</sup> Giovanni Sartori, 'Party Types, Organisation and Functions', *West European Politics*, 28, no. 1, 2005, pp.13-14.

<sup>35</sup> LaPalombara and Weiner, p.10; Sartori, 'Party Types, Organisation and Functions', p.14.

party and reconsiders the place of Reform within the current narrative of party and party system development in New Zealand.

The place of Reform within the development of New Zealand political parties will be assessed by examination of its organisation.<sup>36</sup> This will be done by focusing on both the growth and progress of the organisational aspects of Reform and its predecessors. Furthermore the effectiveness of Reform's organisation has been assessed by analysing their political campaigns. The coverage of elections has been undertaken with a broad view, and it aims to ascertain patterns in Reform support and how organisation influenced this support.

## Historiography

Current understandings of the development of party politics in New Zealand during the nineteenth century owe much to William Pember Reeves. He described the pre-1890 parliaments as being dominated by a group of wealthy land owners, which he called a political oligarchy,<sup>37</sup> suggesting that they were a ruling conservative elite bound by their class and business interests, not by party ideology. He thought that the ministries they formed were made up of similar combinations of people, hence he used the term 'continuous ministry' to describe those governments which held office between 1869 and January 1891.<sup>38</sup> Reeves portrayed the Ballance Government that took office in January 1891 as a fully formed radical 'political party'<sup>39</sup> whose opponents were a disorganised conservative group with no new ideas.<sup>40</sup> This viewpoint, of one fully formed cadre party and another disorganised opposition, persisted for a long time.<sup>41</sup> For example, Keith Sinclair in the first edition of his *History of New Zealand*, published in 1959, described the politics of the 1870 to 1890 period using a classic Reevesian narrative; that of a continuous ruling oligarchy overthrown by the democratic will of the people in 1890.<sup>42</sup>

However, Sinclair revised this understanding in light of scholarship emerging in the

<sup>36</sup> This is based on Sartori's assertion that changes in party organisation and party system development are closely linked. See: Sartori *Parties and Party Systems*, p.56.

<sup>37</sup> William Pember Reeves, *The Long White Cloud, Ao Tea Roa*, 3rd edition, London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1924, p.270.

<sup>38</sup> Reeves, p.245.

<sup>39</sup> Although Reeves used the term 'political party' to describe the Liberals, he was using it to show that the Liberals were a united body in the House, rather than a mass party.

<sup>40</sup> Reeves, pp.270-282.

<sup>41</sup> For example: W.T.G Airey, 'New Zealand in Evolution 1800 to the Present' in *New Zealand*, (ed) Horace Belshaw, Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press, 1947, pp.90-92; Leslie Lipson, *The Politics of Equality: New Zealand's Adventures in Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948, p.197.

<sup>42</sup> Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, 1st edition, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959 pp.160-162.

early 1960s<sup>43</sup> and began to see the period between 1887 and 1890 as important.<sup>44</sup> He identified this as the point where a cleavage began between radicals and conservatives, which provided the impetus for the Liberals' victory in 1890. In particular he saw the development of extra parliamentary groups, like the Political and Financial Reform Association and the Canterbury Electors' Association, as a sign that parties were developing.<sup>45</sup> Sinclair hinted that the 'conservative' Government may have also been moving toward party organisation,<sup>46</sup> but stopped short of questioning Reeves' characterisation of the pre-1890s parliaments as being ruled by an oligarchy.<sup>47</sup>

Despite Sinclair pointing out more organisation in what became the opposition after 1890, Reeves' portrayal of this group as disorganised has persisted.<sup>48</sup> This disorganisation, or lack of party discipline, is one of the classic explanations for why the Liberals remained in power for so long.<sup>49</sup> In his description of Massey's early career, W.J. Gardner described the opposition during the 1890s as decaying and unable to adapt to the new political realities of the Seddonian era.<sup>50</sup> Sinclair saw them as worn down by successive election losses, and thought that there was more effective opposition from within the Liberal Party than from the official opposition.<sup>51</sup> David Hamer went as far as to say the opposition 'often saw themselves as offering not an alternative party but an alternative to party'.<sup>52</sup>

The idea that the opposition was disorganised has been challenged in two theses.

<sup>43</sup> Keith Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry", 1887-1891', in *Studies of a Small Democracy*, (eds) Robert Chapman and Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Paul's Book Arcade, 1963. Footnote four lists some of those which influenced him as being: W.R. Armstrong, 'The Politics of Development: A Study of the Structure of Politics from 1870 to 1890', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1960; Edmund Bohan, 'The General Election of 1879 in Canterbury', M.A.(Hons) Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1958; A.M. Evans, 'A Study of Canterbury Politics in the Early 1880s, with Special Reference to the General Election of 1881', M.A. Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1959; D.A. Hamer, 'The Law and the Prophet: A Political Biography of Sir Robert Stout, 1844-1930', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1960.

<sup>44</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"'; Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, p.9. He stated that he substantially revised the chapter on the continuous ministry in line with advances in scholarship.

<sup>45</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', pp.110-111.

<sup>46</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.102.

<sup>47</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.105.

<sup>48</sup> James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland: Penguin Press, 2001, p.41; Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2003, p.278. Are examples of two recent general histories which called the opposition to the Liberals disorganised before Massey's appointment as leader; Barry Gustafson, 'Massey, William Ferguson', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m39/massey-william-ferguson>, accessed 13 June 2016, described the Opposition as a 'dispirited, loosely organised collection' when Massey arrived in parliament in 1894

<sup>49</sup> For examples of this see: Belich, pp.41-43; John E. Martin, *The House: New Zealand's House of Representatives 1854-2004*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2004, p.144; D.A. Hamer, 'Centralization and Nationalism 1891-1912' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, (ed) Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990 p.13; Richardson, p.208.

<sup>50</sup> W.J. Gardner, 'The Rise of W.F. Massey, 1891-1912', *Political Science*, 13, no. 1, 1961, pp.13-14.

<sup>51</sup> Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, p.190.

<sup>52</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.11.

Margaret Brand<sup>53</sup> conducted an analysis of conservatism between 1890 and 1911. She found that, at a parliamentary level, the opposition was disorganised between 1891 and 1903,<sup>54</sup> but that outside parliament the National Association, a conservative pressure group, was attempting to organise those who opposed the Liberals into some kind of nationwide party. In particular, she thought that the National Association was the foundation for the Political Reform League, and then the Reform Party itself.<sup>55</sup> Brian Phipps<sup>56</sup> went further than Brand and described those in opposition between 1890 and 1903 as a 'party'. He based this argument on the way they carried out principled opposition to the Liberals' legislation.<sup>57</sup> He argued that the opposition organisation was actually ahead of the Liberals, with its extra-parliamentary body, the National Association, being developed before the Liberals had an extra-parliamentary body.<sup>58</sup>

The election of Massey as leader of the opposition in 1903 is often seen as the point when a more coherent opposition party emerged.<sup>59</sup> Massey is usually portrayed as one of the leading figures in the improved organisation of the opposition, and is sometimes described as a conservative version of Seddon, managing the party from within parliament, dominating its organisation and selection process.<sup>60</sup> More recently, Tom Brooking described Massey as having built the Reform Party from the grass roots.<sup>61</sup> However, the limited research carried out on the origins of the Reform Party suggests that there was a considerable amount of extra-parliamentary work in the early years of Massey's leadership and that Reform organisation was not entirely dominated by Massey.<sup>62</sup> This is also shown in a number of theses that examine the political trends in various North Island electorates at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>63</sup> These show that the growth of Reform as a party was driven by local organisation rather than intervention from within parliament.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately there are no similar studies of the South Island during the

<sup>53</sup> Margaret Brand, 'A Study of Conservatism 1890-1911', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1950,

<sup>54</sup> Brand, pp.10-49, had details of the opposition organisation in parliament.

<sup>55</sup> Brand, p.51.

<sup>56</sup> Brian Hawthorne Phipps, 'The New Zealand Conservative Party 1891-1903', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1990,.

<sup>57</sup> Phipps, p.2.

<sup>58</sup> Phipps, p.9.

<sup>59</sup> Brand, p.74; B.H. Farland, *Farmer Bill: William Ferguson Massey and the Reform Party*, Wellington: B. Farland, 2008, pp.60-61; Foster, pp.191-192; Lipson, p.216; Martin, p.134.

<sup>60</sup> Foster, pp.200-201; Milne, pp.168-169; W.H. Oliver, *The Story of New Zealand*, London: Faber, 1960, p.162; Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, p.208.

<sup>61</sup> Tom Brooking, *The History of New Zealand*, Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 2004, p.92.

<sup>62</sup> D.R. Hill, 'Organization of the Reform Party in New Zealand', M.A. Thesis, Kansas State University, 1956, pp.16-18.

<sup>63</sup> E.P. Aimer, 'The Politics of a City: A Study in the Auckland Urban Area 1899-1935', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1958; Brian S. E. Bellringer, 'Conservatism and the Farmers: A Study in the Political Development of Taranaki-Wanganui between 1899 and 1925', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1958; M.D.N. Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics: 1890-1914', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1967; Steven Cegledy, 'The Pattern of Wellington Politics 1908-1919', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1963; B.D. Graham, 'Waikato Politics: A Study in the Relationship of Local and National Politics in the Early Twentieth Century', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1954; J.D. Prince, 'Northland Politics 1899-1929', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1966.

<sup>64</sup> For example: Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics', pp.197-200; Graham, pp.76-77, pp.188-191, pp.203-204; Prince, pp.184-185, pp.194-195.

early twentieth century, though it is generally considered that Reform was much stronger in the North Island than the South.<sup>65</sup>

Between 1908 and 1914 there was an increase in electoral support for Reform and this period is often cited as when the 'rise of Reform' occurred. In the 1908 election it won twenty-eight percent of the vote, obtaining thirty-five percent in 1911, and forty-seven percent in 1914.<sup>66</sup> New Zealand experienced considerable social change from the beginning of the twentieth century until the First World War, and this is often cited as the explanation for the rise in Reform's support.<sup>67</sup> It is argued that the changing economy had benefited small farmers, through the rising prices for primary produce. These farmers had voted Liberal in the past because they had benefited from Liberal land policy. However, as farmers became more prosperous they became more conservative. Furthermore, they also became more organised, through the Farmers' Union, and therefore more politically vocal.<sup>68</sup> This narrative describes Reform as the political party that benefited from these changes and suggests it came to be the party that represented farmers. Massey himself was a farmer - his nickname was 'Farmer Bill'<sup>69</sup> - as were most of his caucus and cabinet. This is presented as evidence that Reform was a farmers' party.<sup>70</sup> The predominance of the idea that farmers were a major political power is also shown in the way chapters or sections in general histories are named. Sinclair called his chapter on the period 'Cow Cockies and Red Feds';<sup>71</sup> Michael King, 'Farmers in Charge';<sup>72</sup> James Belich, 'The Rise of the Farmer Backbone';<sup>73</sup> and Fairburn 'The Farmers Take Over'.<sup>74</sup>

Hamer proposed a variation on the idea that it was a swing among farmers that led to Reform's success.<sup>75</sup> He thought that it was not farmers who switched allegiances but country towns. He argued that farmers had always voted for the opposition. However, as towns became more settled, and sometimes ceased to grow, they began to realise that

<sup>65</sup> Aimer, p.44 pointed out the Opposition and Reform candidates often accused the Liberals of favouring the South Island over the North; Lipson, p.215; Gardner, 'The Reform Party', p.28.

<sup>66</sup> Fairburn and Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey 1908-1914?', p.61.

<sup>67</sup> Jim McAloon, 'The Making of the New Zealand Ruling Class' in *Revolution*, (ed) Melanie Nolan, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005 p.218 gave a good summary of the internal migration, urbanisation and immigration in the years 1890-1910.

<sup>68</sup> For examples of this see: Tom Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise: A Comparative Study of the Origins and Early Phases of Development of the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales and the New Zealand Farmers' Union, Ca 1880-1929', PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1977; W.J. Gardner, *The Farmer Politician in New Zealand History*, Palmerston North: Massey University, 1970; B.D. Graham, 'The Country Party Idea in New Zealand Politics, 1901-1935' in *Studies of a Small Democracy*, (eds) Robert Chapman and Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Paul's Book Arcade, 1963 pp.177-178; Lipson, pp.215-217; McAloon, 'The Making of the NZ Ruling Class,' pp.221-222; Milne, pp.34-36; Oliver, p.151 and p.160; W. B. Sutch, *Poverty and Progress in New Zealand: A Reassessment*, 2nd edition, Wellington: Reed, 1969 p.158.

<sup>69</sup> King, p.307; Farland, *Farmer Bill: William Ferguson Massey and the Reform Party*, the only book length biography of Massey used this nickname in the title.

<sup>70</sup> Belich, p.150; Fairburn and Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey 1908-1914?', p.62.

<sup>71</sup> Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, pp.189-212.

<sup>72</sup> King, pp.305-324.

<sup>73</sup> Belich, pp.146-156.

<sup>74</sup> Miles Fairburn, 'The Farmers Take Over' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, (ed) Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990 pp.185-210.

<sup>75</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.150-194; Also used by Richardson, p.214.

their interests lay more with the farming hinterland than the city. It was the farmer that the towns depended on, not industry within the town. The voters of these towns then began to switch to Reform because it appeared to identify with rural issues, while the Liberals seemed to be increasingly urban-focused.<sup>76</sup> Hamer gives an in-depth analysis of towns that switched from a Liberal member to a Reform member at either the 1908 or 1911 election, many of them remaining Reform until 1935.<sup>77</sup>

Fairburn and Haslett proposed a third reason for the growing electoral success of Reform. They argued that a swing among farmers and small towns was not enough to account for the growth in the Reform vote. Categorising electorates as farmer, rural, special country, provincial towns, suburban and city, they found that most of the swing toward Reform after 1908 occurred in city and special country seats.<sup>78</sup> A swing toward Reform among those living in cities had been observed before and was explained by the urban elite voting for Reform.<sup>79</sup> However, Fairburn and Haslett pointed out that urban elites were not a big enough percentage of the population to account for the size of the swing and presumably some of these people would have voted for Massey before 1908.<sup>80</sup> Instead, they argued the move toward Reform occurred across all occupational groups. They showed this by correlating household occupations against the Reform vote in ten provincial towns. Using voting booths and occupations from street directories, they estimated the occupational percentages against the voting percentages at each booth.<sup>81</sup> Fairburn and Haslett's main conclusion was that while the swing toward Reform was more marked among the urban middle class, a substantial minority of workers also voted for Reform.<sup>82</sup>

This thesis also investigates two further areas which have hitherto received little attention, namely the relationship between women and the Reform Party and Māori and the Reform Party. Linda Moore also attempted to ascertain the voting patterns of men and women between 1893, when women first obtained the vote, and 1919.<sup>83</sup> By using various statistical methods she found that it was possible that women were slightly more likely to vote for the Opposition, and then Reform, during the period researched. However, she did not provide an explanation as to why women slightly favoured those candidates who were in Opposition to the Liberals. Moore noted that there had been little attention given to women's involvement in the two main pre-First World War political parties and suggested that research on this could help to explain her findings.<sup>84</sup> There has been very

<sup>76</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.160.

<sup>77</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.150-163.

<sup>78</sup> Fairburn and Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey 1908-1914?', pp. 64-65. Special country seats were those which contained a mix of farming and industries usually associated with more radical workers, like mining, forestry and flax workers.

<sup>79</sup> For example: Gardner, 'The Reform Party', pp.29-30; King, p. 280; Lipson, p.221.

<sup>80</sup> Fairburn and Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey 1908-1914?', p.66.

<sup>81</sup> Fairburn and Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey 1908-1914?', pp.67-70.

<sup>82</sup> Fairburn and Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey 1908-1914?', p.74.

<sup>83</sup> Linda Moore, 'Gender Counts: Men, Women and Electoral Politics 1893-1919', M.A. Thesis, University of Canterbury, 2004,

<sup>84</sup> Moore, p.199.

little research conducted on Māori and Reform, with most historians focusing on Māori relationships with the Crown.<sup>85</sup> A notable exception to this is a thesis by Shelia McClean, which addressed elections in the Māori seat between 1905 and 1948.<sup>86</sup>

There are several works which cover the actual development of Reform as a party. The rise of Reform was the subject of a thesis by Leicester Webb in 1928.<sup>87</sup> Webb was writing while Reform was still in power and his work focused on explaining why and how Reform had become the predominate political party. He did not examine the formation of the party organisation or assess whether this had any bearing on their ability to dominate New Zealand inter-war politics. D.R. Hill wrote a thesis on the early organisation of Reform, covering the period 1912-1914.<sup>88</sup> Hill found that Reform planned for an extensive organisation, but was unable to assess whether this was ever implemented. Bernard Foster also covered the early development and organisation of Reform in his thesis on unity and organisation of New Zealand political parties in the Liberal era.<sup>89</sup> He noted that there was increased unity among those on the opposition side of the House once Massey became leader and this helped them to depose the Liberals. Gardner wrote two articles on Massey, one on his rise to power,<sup>90</sup> and the other on his time in office.<sup>91</sup> Both of these covered aspects of Reform organisation, particularly in relation to Massey's control and interaction with the party. However, there has not been any primary-based research on the extent and reach of the pre-First World War Reform Party.

## Sources

The principal sources for this thesis were contemporary newspapers. The ability to word-search on Papers Past meant that the development and growth of branches of the Political Reform League, and its predecessors, could be traced using newspaper reports of meetings. A wide range of newspapers were used, from the main-centre daily newspapers, to once-a-week rural publications. In all seventy-six newspapers were used,<sup>92</sup> and without the ability to word-search Papers Past it would not have been possible to

<sup>85</sup> For example: Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney, and Aroha Harris, *Tangata Whenua*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2014, pp.318-349; Richard Hill, *State Authority, Indigenous Autonomy*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004, pp.31-127; Michael King, 'Between Two Worlds' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, (ed) Geoffrey W. Rice, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp.293-296; Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle without End*, 2nd edition, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2004, pp.165-181; John A. Williams, *Politics of the New Zealand Maori: Protest and Cooperation 1891-1909*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

<sup>86</sup> Shelia McClean, 'Maori Representation 1905-1948', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1950.

<sup>87</sup> Leicester Chisholm Webb, 'The Rise of the Reform Party', M.A. Thesis, Canterbury College, 1928.

<sup>88</sup> Hill, 'Organization of the Reform Party in New Zealand'.

<sup>89</sup> Foster, 'Development of Unity and Organisation in the New Zealand Political Parties of the Liberal Era'.

<sup>90</sup> Gardner, 'The Rise of W.F. Massey'.

<sup>91</sup> W.J. Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power, 1912-1925', *Political Science*, 13, no. 2, 1961.

<sup>92</sup> Each newspaper has been referenced with the name under which it is listed on Papers Past, even though this may not have been the name of the newspaper at the time the article referenced was written. The decision to use the Papers Past name was chosen to make the finding of references easy for the reader.

achieve a nationwide perspective. The scope of newspapers also provided contemporary opinions and discussions about the political issues of the period, including both pro and anti-Reform commentary.<sup>93</sup> The most pro-Reform newspapers included; *New Zealand Herald*; *Dominion*; *Press*; *Manawatu Standard*; *Wanganui Chronicle*; *Wairarapa Daily Times* and *Timaru Herald*. Those which promoted the Liberals included: *New Zealand Times*; *Lyttelton Times*; *Auckland Star*, *Evening Star*; *Manawatu Daily Times*; *Wanganui Herald*; *Colonist* and *Oxford Observer*. Some newspapers changed allegiance over time. For example, the *Otago Daily Times* was anti-Seddon during the 1890s, but also anti-party. However, during the first years of the 1900s it became pro-Opposition and then pro-Reform. Both the *Temuka Leader* and *Northern Advocate* became pro-Reform after being purchased by Reform supporters. The use of Papers Past as the main primary source was not without issue.<sup>94</sup> Careful thought was given to the choice of search terms so as to capture as much useful information as possible. It was not feasible to find every relevant entry due to mistakes in the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology and being restricted to those newspapers which have been digitised.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, newspapers themselves needed to be used with caution and consideration given to authorship, accuracy and why certain events were reported. It was also impossible to know what was not reported, and this meant that what was covered needed to be viewed in a critical light. Another issue, particularly as telegraph technology improved in the 1890s, was that there were often multiple reports of the same incident. When this occurred, an effort was made to find the newspaper from which the report originated. When this was not possible, the main centre daily newspapers were favoured as they were usually the papers where duplicate reports appeared soon after the original article. This is probably because the size of the papers allowed more news to be printed, and the daily nature of the publications meant they were more up-to-date. The ability to track meetings through newspapers enabled an in-depth examination of the origins, development and expansion of Reform. Additionally, it permitted evaluation of the successes and struggles the party encountered.

To provide balance to the Papers Past material, archival sources have been accessed where possible. Unfortunately, none of the Reform Party's records have survived. However, a complete set of the Reform Party's second newspaper, *Light and Liberty*, has been deposited in the National Library. This ran from May 1913 until December 1914 and provided considerable insight into the Party policy, propaganda and organisation during this period. The Political Reform League also published three editions of a newspaper in 1905. Called *The Reformer*, a complete set is in the Bagnall collection of the Massey

<sup>93</sup> Tom Brooking, *Richard Seddon: King of God's Own*, Auckland: Penguin, 2014, pp.535-537, had more on the affiliation of some of the newspapers used in this thesis, although he only considered the affiliations up to 1906.

<sup>94</sup> Caroline Daley, 'Papers from the Past, and Problems from the Present', *Turnbull Library Record*, 2011, pp.65-72.

<sup>95</sup> For example, during the writing of this thesis the *Lyttelton Times* was digitised. The *Lyttelton Times* was an important pro-Liberal newspaper which provide useful anti-Reform material.

University Library. There is also some political ephemera relating to Reform in the Alexander Turnbull Library.<sup>96</sup> This includes election propoganda, leaflets for candidates and the rules and constitution of the Political Reform League.

There is only a limited amount of archival material relating to William Massey, Reform's longest-serving leader. However, there is some material in the Alexander Turnbull Library,<sup>97</sup> of which the most useful was a set of scrapbooks containing annotated news clippings from the 1911 election.<sup>98</sup> The Massey University Archive also had some material relating to Massey, including a biography by his grand-daughter, Christine Massey.<sup>99</sup> Gordon Coates, the second leader of Reform, also has papers in the Alexander Turnbull Library.<sup>100</sup> Although Coates was leader from 1925 until 1936, which is outside of the scope of this study, his papers were consulted to gain insight into the organisation of the Reform Party. Jim Gardner and Bill Sutch conducted research on Reform and they both have material relating to this in the Alexander Turnbull Library. Like Coates's papers, the Gardner<sup>101</sup> and Sutch<sup>102</sup> papers mostly fall outside of the time frame of this thesis. However, both provided useful background on the organisation of the Reform Party.

There is also informative material in the papers of men who were associated with the opposition to the Liberals in the 1890s. Both William Rolleston<sup>103</sup> and Sir William Russell<sup>104</sup> were leaders of the Opposition in the 1890s and have extensive archival deposits in the Alexander Turnbull Library. Both men were involved in the National Association, a forerunner to the Reform Party, and their papers contain correspondence about the Association. Furthermore, these papers provided insight into how the Parliamentary Opposition interacted with the National Association. Other leading members of the 1890s Opposition whose papers in the Alexander Turnbull Library were useful are Sir Francis Bell,<sup>105</sup> Sir John Hall,<sup>106</sup> and R.R.D McLean.<sup>107</sup>

There are archival deposits relating directly to the National Association and Political Reform League. E.E. Vaile was an Auckland land agent who had extensive involvement in the Association. His papers are deposited in the Sir George Grey Special Collection held in the Auckland Public Library.<sup>108</sup> Vaile was also involved in the early stages of the

<sup>96</sup> Eph-B-POLITICS-1890s, Eph-A-POLITICS-1912-01, Eph-A-POLITICS-1914, Eph-B-POLITICS-1911/1919, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>97</sup> William Ferguson Massey Papers: MS-1398, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>98</sup> Election speeches of Mr Massey, 1911: Pq920 MAS 1911, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>99</sup> D. Christine Massey, *The Life of Rt. Hon. W.F. Massey P.C., L.L.D., Prime Minister of New Zealand, 1912-1925*, Auckland: D.C. Massey, 1996.

<sup>100</sup> J.G. Coates Papers, MS-Group-30, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>101</sup> W.J. Gardner - Script from interview notes with A.E. Davy: MS-Papers-6542.

<sup>102</sup> W.B. Sutch - Research notes on Joseph Gordon Coates: MS-Group-1018. Thank you to Helen Sutch, who gave me permission to view her father's papers.

<sup>103</sup> Rolleston Papers, 77-248, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>104</sup> Russell Papers, MS-Papers-1711, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>105</sup> Bell Family Papers, MS-Papers-5210, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>106</sup> Hall Papers, MS-Papers-1784, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>107</sup> McLean Family Papers, MS-Papers-0032, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>108</sup> National Association of New Zealand Auckland Branch, NZMS 1375, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

Auckland Political Reform League and there is material in his papers relating to this. R. Clinton Hughes was a New Plymouth lawyer who led the Taranaki National Association. There is a considerable amount of information about that organisation in his papers which are held in Puke Ariki, New Plymouth. This repository also holds the papers of E.H. Hemingway, a long-time friend and supporter of Massey.<sup>109</sup> Hemingway was involved in the Political Reform League in both Stratford and Patea, as well as being part of the League's National Executive. His papers contain letters from Massey addressing issues of organisation and political campaigning.<sup>110</sup>

Two Reform MPs,<sup>111</sup> Francis Fisher,<sup>112</sup> and William Field,<sup>113</sup> also have papers deposited in the Alexander Turnbull Library. Both men began their parliamentary careers as Liberal MPs. The Field papers contain little about the Reform Party, as those which deal with his career as an MP focus on local and constituency issues. The Fisher papers have some material about Fisher's political career, particularly his campaign for the 1914 election and some reminiscences. Fisher also recorded a series of talks for the New Zealand Broadcasting Service in the late 1950s.<sup>114</sup> These cover his parliamentary life and his memories of the House before the First World War and were made available by Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision archives. These archives also contain two recordings made by William Downie Stewart, in which he reminisces about Massey and William Herries.<sup>115</sup>

Various government publications have also been used. The *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates* provided important information for understanding the formation of parties and identification with parties within parliament. The *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives (AJHR)*, provided useful information about election results, including data about voter numbers. Year books were accessed for statistical information around demographics and economic changes over the period covered.

Another useful tool was a CD-ROM compilation of five electoral rolls, published by

<sup>109</sup> Hemingway Papers, ARC 2006-189, Puke Ariki, New Plymouth.

<sup>110</sup> Gardner used the Hemingway papers for his 1961 article on Massey in power. In that article he noted that Hemingway's papers contain the minutes from the first Political Reform League Dominion-wide conference held in 1912. These are not within the papers held in Puke Ariki. Those in Puke Ariki were donated by Hemingway's granddaughter in 2006. It is probable that Gardner viewed the Hemingway material while it was in the possession of Hemingway's family and it appears that all that Gardner viewed has not survived.

<sup>111</sup> William Downie Stewart's papers were also considered. He has extensive deposits in Hocken Collections of Otago University Library and a smaller collection in the Macmillian Brown Library of Canterbury University. The papers in the Macmillian Brown Library were viewed, but they mostly pertained to political events after 1915. As Stewart began his association with Reform sometime in 1914, it was decided that his papers fell outside of the scope of this study.

<sup>112</sup> Fisher Family: Parliamentary Papers, 86-129, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>113</sup> William Field Papers, 73-128, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>114</sup> F.M.B Fisher on Wellington and Politics, 35747; Personalities in Parliament 1854-1900, 148530; F.M.B Fisher remembers William Pember Reeves, Massey and outbreak of World War One, 159107, Ngā Tonga Sound and Vision.

<sup>115</sup> William Downie Stewart on Prime Minister William Massey, 33109; William Downie Stewart on William Herries, 33110, Ngā Tonga Sound and Vision.

the New Zealand Society of Genealogists.<sup>116</sup> This enabled the rolls to be searched alphabetically, rather than by electorate. Being able to find someone by surname meant that members of the National Association and Reform could be traced, even if they had moved electorates. Furthermore, it made it easier to trace women members. Women are often hard to find on electoral rolls, as it was the practice to publish married women's names with their husband's initials, so it was very rare to know a woman's first name. Being able to search based on surname meant that husband and wife could be connected quickly, and this made the task of researching married women considerably easier.

## Thesis outline

This thesis begins by tracing the origins of the term 'political reform' and its association with policy platforms that were eventually part of Reform Party policy. Chapter one covers the campaign for the 1887 election, during which a nationwide 'political reform' movement emerged. It also examines how the 1887 election contributed to the development of political parties, and as such foreshadowed the 1890 election. Chapter two considers those who opposed the Liberals during the 1890s, with a particular focus on the National Association and its relationship to the Parliamentary Opposition. It investigates the claims that the opposition to the Liberals was disorganised and that the National Association was the forerunner of the Reform Party.

The middle section covers the emergence and development of the Reform Party. Chapter three explores the period between 1900 and 1905, looking specifically at the Opposition's reaction to the 1899 election and Massey's rise to leader. It also reviews the very early stages of the Political Reform League in the context of the 1905 election. Chapter four covers the growth of the Political Reform League and the gains the Opposition made in the 1908 election. This chapter also examines the transformation of the Opposition into the Reform Party and scrutinizes the idea that Reform was a passive benefactor of Liberal decline. Chapter five offers an in-depth analysis of the 1911 election, focusing on the Reform Party organisation. There is further exploration of the strategic approach of the party, and how it courted political labour as part of its efforts to win the election. It also covers how the uncertain result effected Reform, and the action undertaken by the party to try and depose the Liberals between February 1912 and when they took office in July 1912.

The last two chapters look at the party structure of Reform. Chapter six investigates how the party operated, starting with the first Dominion-wide conference in 1912 and ending with the cessation of party organising in 1915. There is an emphasis on evaluating the party's operations to ascertain whether it had attributes of a mass party. The 1914 election is also examined, and explanations for Reform's large share of the vote

<sup>116</sup> Diane Wilson, *New Zealand Elections: Five Significant Rolls, 1881, 1893, 1896, 1911, 1925*, Auckland: New Zealand Society of Genealogists, 2013. (1 DVD-ROM)

sought. Lastly, Reform's efforts to reach women and Māori are explored, beginning with the National Associations reaction to female enfranchisement in 1893. The assessment covers both the efforts of Reform to reach women and Māori and why women and Māori were interested in Reform. It also places Reform's attempts within the narrative of party development and analyses whether Reform's desire to be a broad party adds weight to the argument that it had attributes of a mass party.

## Chapter 1

# A 'Reform' Identity Emerges: 1887-1891

*'Their business would be the sinking of individual ambitions  
for the good of the party'.<sup>1</sup>*  
– John Ballance

While the election of 1890 is widely considered to be the point at which party politics began, there is evidence that the development of the coherent political groupings which emerged at 1890 began earlier. Keith Sinclair noted that during the 1887 election in Christchurch there appeared to be two opposing extra-parliamentary groups, which were roughly analogous to the Liberal Party and the Opposition of the 1890s.<sup>2</sup> In his study of the 1887 election in Canterbury, C. Whitehead observed that there seemed to be a greater divide between what he called 'left and right', caused by the deepening economic depression.<sup>3</sup> Raewyn Dalziel also found that parliament itself was becoming more stable in the 1880s with factions beginning to disappear and 'party' lines becoming more defined.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, governments themselves were becoming more stable. The Stout-Vogel Government had a precarious beginning, being replaced by a government led by Harry Atkinson for a short period in 1884. Yet once returned to office, the Stout-Vogel Government remained unchallenged until June 1887. The Atkinson-led Government, formed during October 1887, was the first in the country's history to last a whole term. This suggests that there was a fundamental shift occurring in the New Zealand political system. David Hamer noted that the 1887 election had strong elements of 'Government versus Opposition'. The identification of those who had been part of the Stout-Vogel

<sup>1</sup> Ballance, speaking to the first Liberal caucus after the 1890 election, as reported in the *New Zealand Times*, 23 January 1891, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Keith Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry", 1887-1891' in *Studies of a Small Democracy*, (eds) Robert Chapman and Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Paul's Book Arcade, 1963, p.112.

<sup>3</sup> C. Whitehead, 'The 1887 General Election in Canterbury', M.A. Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1961, p.vii.

<sup>4</sup> Raewyn Dalziel, 'The "Continuous Ministry" Revisited', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 21, no. 2, 1987, p.52.

Government was so well formed that they almost all went into Opposition,<sup>5</sup> suggesting that loyalty to the group was overriding personal ambition. Hamer regarded this as the beginning of what would become the Liberal Party after 1890.

However, very little attention has been paid to whether a stronger 'party' identification was forming opposite this emerging liberal identity. One of the difficulties in discerning whether there was a growing coherence among 'anti-liberal' politicians and supporters is that they did not use a consistent term to describe themselves. In fact, Hamer noted that it was common for all candidates to call themselves 'liberal', partly because the term 'conservative' held so many negative overtones.<sup>6</sup> Despite this, during the period 1884 to 1890 some of the ideas and policies eventually associated with the Reform Party began to be articulated by political groups. These included lower taxes, tax reform, a more fiscally responsible government and reform of the Legislative Council: New Zealand's upper house to which members were appointed by the current government. Sometimes the term conservative was used to describe these groups, but it was often a form of abuse rather than a useful description of political belief.<sup>7</sup> It is probable that the use of the term conservative was borrowed from the familiar context of British politics, in that these were the groups which opposed the 'liberals'.<sup>8</sup> When used in this chapter, the term conservative denotes those who campaigned against the Stout-Vogel Government, and then were in disagreement with the John Ballance-led Opposition.

Despite the lack of an official term to describe those who broadly aligned themselves against the grouping that Hamer observed, there was a growing association of the term 'reform' with their political ideologies. This is the name they chose for the 1887 election, and as such will be used in this chapter to describe them, their platform and ideals. This connection seems to have begun in 1867 when Financial Reform Associations were set up in three centres. The campaigning for the 1881 and 1884 elections also saw several short-lived associations which used reform in their name. At this stage a group calling for political reform could be offering either 'liberal' or 'conservative' solutions to the problems before the electors, and this reflected the ferment of political ideas which existed in the 1880s. This was partly driven by the economic depression which New Zealand experienced for much of the decade, and which deepened from 1886. The 'long depression' also motivated a nationwide political reform movement which developed before the 1887 election. Some of the solutions offered by these groups foreshadowed Reform Party policy and the term 'reform' was increasingly associated with those on the 'anti-liberal' side

<sup>5</sup> D. A. Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988, p.23.

<sup>6</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.33.

<sup>7</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.33; Brian Hawthorne Phipps, 'The New Zealand Conservative Party 1891-1903', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1990, p.7.

<sup>8</sup> Phipps, p.8, argued that using the term 'conservative' to describe those who opposed the Liberals was appropriate considering their position in New Zealand politics; Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.111, argued that the 1887 Reform Associations were conservative in the sense that they wished to conserve the social status quo.

of politics. The intensity of interest in the 1887 election was reflected not only in the emergence of very active 'reform' extra-parliamentary groups, but also in the unprecedented turnout of electors. The Reform Associations formed in 1887 petered out within eighteen months of the election, and were not visibly present in the 1890 election campaign. The 'reform' movement seemed to have lost momentum and became fractured over the issue of land tax. However, even though this split weakened the movement it later provided one of the strongest unifying policies of the National Association, an anti-Liberal movement formed in 1891. Individuals in the community who promoted 'reform' ideas were organising throughout the country to return MHRs who supported those views from as early as the 1887 election. Although they may not have been as organised in 1890, this election provided further clarification of the base ideals which would define the Reform Party.

## The development of the term 'political reform'

Before 1887 several groups used the name Political Reform Association or Financial Reform Association. The first recorded mention of a New Zealand Financial Reform Association was in 1867 when a group of Nelson electors met and passed five resolutions. They wanted lower taxes, an end to borrowing, and cuts in government spending. There was particular concern at the amount central government was spending on the wars in the North Island.<sup>9</sup> Christchurch also formed a Financial Reform Association, which held its first public meeting on 13 November 1867.<sup>10</sup> The focus in Christchurch was similar to that in Nelson with the addition of a desire for a reduction in the spending of the Provincial Government.<sup>11</sup> The movement then spread north. On 30 January 1868 a public meeting was held in Auckland to form a Financial Reform Association to hold central government to account over taxes and spending, and to co-operate with the Christchurch and Nelson Associations to affect change.<sup>12</sup> There were calls to start Financial Reform Associations in other centres, but it appears that these were not acted upon.<sup>13</sup> The three Associations were active during 1868 but do not appear in newspaper reports after July 1869.<sup>14</sup> It is probable that the forming of the Financial Reform Associations was related to the financial difficulties which beset the government in 1867. The Colonial Treasurer, William Fitzherbert, had put together a debt consolidation plan in August 1867 which was designed to amalgamate provincial and government debts. This caused some resentment in the south, as the northern provinces had higher debt, and the consolidation plan meant the South Island was subsidising the North,<sup>15</sup> which probably explains the strength of the

<sup>9</sup> *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 7 September 1867, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 14 November 1867, p.2; *Press*, 14 November 1867, p.2.

<sup>11</sup> *Press*, 21 November 1867, p.2.

<sup>12</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 February 1868, p.4.

<sup>13</sup> For example: *Wellington Independent*, 6 February 1868, p.9; *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 24 March 1868, p.2.

<sup>14</sup> The last mention of Financial Reform Associations that began in 1867-8 was in the *Press*, 19 July 1869, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> Andre Brett, *Acknowledge No Frontier: The Creation and Demise of New Zealand's Provinces, 1853-76*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2016, pp.184-186.

Associations in the south. However, the formation of a Financial Reform Association in Auckland suggests that the concern over the colony's finances and proposals for a more conservative fiscal approach were more widespread.

Although the original Financial Reform Associations seemed to have faded by 1870, what they and the term stood for did not. The idea that a group calling for financial reform was associated with retrenchment in government spending and lower taxes seems to have been well understood. Between 1870 and 1887 no Financial Reform Associations appear to have been active, but this did not prevent people calling for them to be formed. At a meeting in Auckland in 1872 about the control of public works, there was an appeal to revive the Financial Reform Association to keep a check on provincial government spending.<sup>16</sup> An editorial in the *Wairarapa Daily Times* in 1879 likened the spending of the New Zealand Government to that of the prodigal son, and called for Financial Reform Associations to be set up across the country to bring the colony back to its bearings.<sup>17</sup> In 1884 the *Southland Times* editor thought that there was 'never in the history of the world' more need for Financial Reform Associations than at the present time, because government spending was out of control.<sup>18</sup> The understanding of what the term Financial Reform Association stood for was probably assisted by the existence of a British equivalent, which was well known in New Zealand.<sup>19</sup> Begun in Liverpool in 1848, its platform was general retrenchment in government expenditure, removal of tariffs and a greater emphasis on direct taxation.<sup>20</sup> In Britain the removal of tariffs was more closely associated with working men's organisations,<sup>21</sup> but in New Zealand it tended to be an issue which resonated with businessmen and farmers.<sup>22</sup> This may explain why in Britain financial reform was aligned to Liberal and trade union politics, but in New Zealand it was identified more with those who opposed the Liberals.<sup>23</sup>

The term Political Reform Association was not as clearly defined as Financial Reform Association. It was more likely to refer to reforming the current political situation, which meant it could be applied across the political spectrum, depending on who was in power. Like the Financial Reform Associations, Political Reform Associations began forming in

<sup>16</sup> *Daily Southern Cross*, 14 August 1872, p.3.

<sup>17</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 29 October 1879, p.2.

<sup>18</sup> *Southland Times*, 15 September 1884, p.2.

<sup>19</sup> For example: *Star*, 16 June 1885, p.2, an editorial on tax in the quotes from the Liverpool Financial Reform Association yearly handbook, *Otago Daily Times*, 27 April 1887, p.3, a letter to the editor called for a Financial Reform Association to be started along the lines of the British Association; *New Zealand Herald* 8 June 1887, p.6, a letter to the editor called on the Auckland Political and Financial Reform Association to adopt the same three simple platforms.

<sup>20</sup> W.N. Calkins, 'A Victorian Free Trade Lobby', *The Economic History Review*, 13, no. 1, 1960, p.95.

<sup>21</sup> Eugenio F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone 1860-1880*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp.101-102.

<sup>22</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.119; *Star*, 30 June 1887, p.3, an article entitled 'The political situation from a working man's point of view' stated workers had nothing to fear from tariffs as they targeted goods that they did not buy and protected their jobs.

<sup>23</sup> This is also noticeable in New South Wales where 'reform' also became associated with political groups which were more 'anti-labour' and unions. See: P. Loveday, A.W. Martin, and Patrick Weller, 'New South Wales' in *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, (eds) P. Loveday, A.W. Martin, and R.S. Parker, Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1977, p.226.

the late 1860s.<sup>24</sup> In the Auckland district toward the end of 1869 two Political Reform Associations were formed, one at Papakura<sup>25</sup> and the other at Mahurangi.<sup>26</sup> Both focused on local issues and in particular wanted to change or abolish the Auckland Provincial Government. A Political Reform Association was formed in Wanganui in 1871 which was decidedly liberal in nature,<sup>27</sup> and also had the objective of abolishing the provincial governments.<sup>28</sup> A New Zealand Political Reform Association formed in Christchurch in 1878 was aligned to Working Men's Associations.<sup>29</sup> The affiliation of the term Political Reform with working men's issues was also illustrated by a report in 1884, which stated that the Christchurch Working Men's Political Association would like to see a national body for Working Men's Associations, to be called the National Political Reform Association.<sup>30</sup>

However, it appears that during the 1880s the term 'political reform' was becoming more associated with ideas similar to those espoused by the Financial Reform Associations. In 1881 there was a meeting to establish a Political Reform Association in Wakefield, in the Nelson province. Initially, it was stated that the Association would be for the organisation of the 'industrial classes', but the actual issues discussed had much in common with those emphasised by the Financial Reform Associations. The main speaker argued that the toil of the worker was being rewarded with high taxation caused by too much government spending and borrowing.<sup>31</sup> It has already been noted that a group with very similar ideals as the earlier Financial Reform Associations formed in Urenui in 1884, but called itself the Urenui Political Reform Association.<sup>32</sup> That same year Political Reform Associations were formed in the South Canterbury and North Otago areas. The Association formed in Timaru described itself as a working man's organisation, liberal in constitution and economic in government.<sup>33</sup> The Oamaru Association initially seemed to be solely focused on comprehensive reforms of taxation and government administration.<sup>34</sup> However it gradually became more interested in discussing single tax and land nationalisation.<sup>35</sup> An occupational analysis of the committee members of the Timaru and Oamaru Political Reform Associations shows that the Timaru committee consisted entirely of men whose occupations would have led them to identify with working men. The Oamaru Association had a much more mixed membership, with fifty-eight percent of them professional or business owners and the remaining forty-two percent working

<sup>24</sup> Brett, p.194, noted that debt crisis of 1867 sparked a political crisis, which could explain the rise in extra-parliamentary groups at this time.

<sup>25</sup> *Daily Southern Cross*, 14 August 1869, p.5.

<sup>26</sup> *Daily Southern Cross*, 9 October 1869, p.4.

<sup>27</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 5 May 1871, p.2.

<sup>28</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 25 May 1871, p.2.

<sup>29</sup> *Press*, 12 June 1878, p.2.

<sup>30</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 2 September 1884, p.2.

<sup>31</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 20 September 1881, p.4.

<sup>32</sup> See Introduction, p.1

<sup>33</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 21 June 1884, p.3.

<sup>34</sup> *Oamaru Mail*, 25 June 1884, p.2.

<sup>35</sup> *Oamaru Mail*, 29 July 1884, p.2; *Oamaru Mail*, 19 August 1884, p.3.

men.<sup>36</sup> These differences could account for the disparate focus of each association and also illustrates that the term 'political reform' was still ambiguous.

The paradoxical use of the term 'reform' reflected the ferment of political ideas within New Zealand during the 1880s. A signal of this was Sir George Grey's attempts to organise a Liberal Party ahead of the 1879 election. Between July and September 1879 there was a flourishing of Liberal Associations designed to promote the election of 'liberal' candidates.<sup>37</sup> In addition, it appears that Grey himself tried to further the idea of there being two distinct groupings in parliament, his group, which was 'liberal', and the opposition, which was 'conservative'.<sup>38</sup> However, the idea that Grey was the leader of a nation-wide party has been rebutted. Several theses examining elections from 1879 to 1884<sup>39</sup> have argued that at this stage New Zealand politics was fluid and bound largely by local loyalties.<sup>40</sup>

Robert Stout had been part of Grey's ministry and while out of parliament between 1879 and 1884, he attempted to encourage the idea of a Liberal Party. In 1880, shortly after Grey's defeat, Stout published an article in the *Melbourne Review* entitled 'Political Parties in New Zealand'.<sup>41</sup> He asserted that the election of 1879 had been between 'liberals' and 'conservatives' and that the 'liberals' were reviving.<sup>42</sup> Between 1880 and 1882 Stout continued to encourage the idea of a Liberal Party and political parties in New Zealand through his newspaper *Echo*.<sup>43</sup> However, a meeting with Sir Julius Vogel in late 1882 led Stout to moderate his call for distinct parties. He began to talk about a replacement for the Hall-Whitaker Ministry rather than a specifically 'liberal' alternative. This appears to be because Stout and Vogel had decided to work together to gain office,<sup>44</sup> which they did after the 1884 election.

Whereas in 1884 the term 'political reform' could still be used by either side of the political divide, by 1887 it had generally come to be identified with those who wished to

<sup>36</sup> Sources: *Timaru Herald*, 7 June 1884, p.2; *Oamaru Mail*, 25 June 1884, p.2; Diane Wilson, *New Zealand Elections: Five Significant Rolls, 1881, 1893, 1896, 1911, 1925*, Auckland: New Zealand Society of Genealogists, 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Christopher Campbell, 'Parties and Special Interests in New Zealand 1890-1893', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1978, p.3; For example: *Evening Post*, 25 July 1879, p.2.

<sup>38</sup> Edmund Bohan, *To Be a Hero: Sir George Grey 1812-1898*, Auckland: Harper Collins, 1998, p.280.

<sup>39</sup> W.R. Armstrong, 'The Politics of Development: A Study of the Structure of Politics from 1870 to 1890', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1960; Edmund Bohan, 'The General Election of 1879 in Canterbury', M.A.(Hons) Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1958; A.M. Evans, 'A Study of Canterbury Politics in the Early 1880s, with Special Reference to the General Election of 1881', M.A. Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1959; David P. Millar, 'The General Election of 1884 in Canterbury', M.A. Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1960.

<sup>40</sup> Edmund Bohan, 'The 1879 General Election in Canterbury', *Political Science*, 12, no. 1, 1960, pp.45-61; Tom Brooking, *Richard Seddon: King of God's Own*, Auckland: Penguin, 2014, p.54; Raewyn Dalziel, 'The Politics of Settlement' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, (ed) Geoffrey W. Rice, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992 pp.106-107; Armstrong, pp.180-181.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Stout, 'Political Parties in New Zealand', *Melbourne Review*, 17, 1880.

<sup>42</sup> Stout, p.78.

<sup>43</sup> D. A. Hamer, 'The Law and the Prophet: A Political Biography of Sir Robert Stout, 1844-1930', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1960, pp.73-82.

<sup>44</sup> Hamer, 'The Law and the Prophet', p.83.

remove the Stout-Vogel Government. Furthermore, it became interchangeable with the term Financial Reform. This is best illustrated by the name of the group which opposed the Stout-Vogel Government in Auckland. Called the Auckland Financial and Political Reform Association, it was formed in June 1887 and was the first of a nationwide movement of similar associations. Some of the objectives that each association embraced became the core policies of the opposition to the Liberals in the 1890s and subsequently the platform of the Reform Party. However, there were still some incongruous elements in the Financial and Political Reform Associations, and this reflected the ferment of political ideas that circulated in New Zealand during the 1880s. In particular, the Association's call for tax reform included a wide variety of beliefs, from free-traders to single taxers, and the cry of government retrenchment was common across many candidates.<sup>45</sup> Yet, the Associations also represent a further attempt to refine what 'reform' stood for in the New Zealand context.

The associations which arose in 1887 differed from the earlier groups in that they tried to influence the outcome of the election in an organised way. Although previous associations had formed, they had been focused on concerns within the local area and they had not sought wider publicity or actively canvassed for members.<sup>46</sup> In 1887 Associations published appeals for members, advertised the platform in newspapers, and the Associations in the main centres actively sought to spread their ideas by setting up suburban and country branches. The Auckland Association printed a thousand copies of their platform for publicity purposes.<sup>47</sup> This active promotion of the ideas of Financial and Political Reform Associations appears to be a marked departure from the way previous political groups had approached elections.

## The 1887 election

On 31 May 1887 the Stout-Vogel Government lost a vote of no confidence and Stout was granted a dissolution,<sup>48</sup> signalling that an election was imminent. A few days later, on 2 June, a public meeting was held in Auckland. Those who attended had received a circular letter and it seems they were chosen because it was likely that they would oppose the Stout-Vogel Government and would support government retrenchment and tax reform.<sup>49</sup> There was a general feeling from the meeting that the policies of the government were not alleviating the depression and that new solutions had to be tried. After much discussion about the state of the government's finances, it was decided to form a committee to draw

<sup>45</sup> Keith Sinclair, *William Pember Reeves; New Zealand Fabian*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965, p.63, Reeves wrote in 1887 that it was not that he disagreed with the need for retrenchment, but it was what to retrench which was disputed.

<sup>46</sup> There was no evidence of any of the pre-1887 organisations actively seeking to publicise platforms, nor did any of them try to spread by sponsoring or encouraging associations outside of the one they set up. The only advertising they seem to have engaged in was to announcing meetings.

<sup>47</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 9 August 1887, p.4.

<sup>48</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.57, 1887, p.540.

<sup>49</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 3 June 1887, p.6.

up a platform for the Association to campaign on. The name which was chosen was the Financial and Political Reform Association. Some people at the meeting were concerned that the word 'political' implied party spirit, but it was retained to emphasize that the Association wanted a reformation of the finances of the government.

The formation of the Auckland Financial and Political Reform Association received wide newspaper coverage.<sup>50</sup> On 11 June, the *Nelson Evening Mail* reported a move in the Waimea district to form a 'New Zealand Political Reform League' which proposed reforms of a radical and sweeping nature,<sup>51</sup> including removing the upper house and reducing the members of the lower house by more than half. The report did not reference the Auckland Financial and Political Reform Association, but stated that those promoting the idea intended to get in touch with Radical Reform Leagues<sup>52</sup> in Auckland and Christchurch to form a nationwide movement. This suggests that the movement in Nelson was not as politically conservative as that in Auckland.<sup>53</sup> In Christchurch, an advertisement appeared on 18 June stating that the offices of the Canterbury Political Reform Association had opened in the Grain Agency Building and would 'enrol electors desirous of joining'.<sup>54</sup> On 23 June an editorial in the *Waikato Times* praised the Auckland Financial and Political Reform Association and called for one to be set up in the Waikato to ensure the election of members who would cut government expenditure.<sup>55</sup> The Waikato County Council took the lead, passing a resolution on 24 June to hold a public meeting to discuss the financial situation of the colony and to form a Political Reform Association.<sup>56</sup> A public meeting was held on 7 July and attended by about thirty men, a committee was elected and it was decided to attempt to open branches in other local centres.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, the Canterbury Political Reform Association had made an impression in the country areas surrounding Christchurch. Branches formed in Sefton,<sup>58</sup> Kaiapoi,<sup>59</sup>

<sup>50</sup> For example: *Nelson Evening Mail*, 4 June 1887, p.2; *Oamaru Mail*, 6 June 1887, p.3; *Otago Daily Times*, 6 June 1887, p.2; *Wanganui Herald*, 9 June 1887, p.2

<sup>51</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 11 June 1887, p.2.

<sup>52</sup> There is no record in the press of a Christchurch Radical Reform League. The Auckland Radical Reform League was very active and seemed broadly liberal in nature, as they co-operated with the Trades and Labour Council. However, they also espoused retrenchment. They seemed to include men who promoted single land tax and who were in favour of proportional representation. There was an overlap in membership between the Auckland Radical Reform League and the Auckland Financial and Political Reform Associations. See: *Auckland Star*, 7 June 1887, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 November 1887, p.6; *Auckland Star* 10 January 1888, p.2.

The Auckland Radical Reform League eventually became closely aligned with the Anti-Poverty Society, which was an organisation for promoting single tax and land nationalisation. See: *Auckland Star*, 2 July 1889, p.2; Frank Rogers, 'The Influence of Political Theories in the Liberal Period 1890-1912: Henry George and John Stuart Mill' in *Studies of a Small Democracy*, (eds) Robert Chapman and Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Paul's Book Arcade, 1963, p.157.

<sup>53</sup> A subsequent meeting showed that the Nelson Association was for Stout, see: *Nelson Evening Mail*, 30 June 1887, p.2.

<sup>54</sup> *Press*, 18 June 1887, p.1.

<sup>55</sup> *Waikato Times*, 23 June 1887, p.2.

<sup>56</sup> *Waikato Times*, 25 June 1887, p.6.

<sup>57</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 8 July 1887, p.5.

<sup>58</sup> *Star*, 29 June 1887, p.3.

<sup>59</sup> *Press*, 1 July 1887, p.2.

Loburn,<sup>60</sup> Courtenay,<sup>61</sup> Waiiau and Oxford.<sup>62</sup> There was also an attempt to form one in Cust, but this failed owing to the suspicion surrounding members of the Political Reform Association who were known free-traders and believed to be supporters of Atkinson.<sup>63</sup> The Political Reform Association was particularly strong in South Canterbury, with branches in Timaru,<sup>64</sup> Geraldine,<sup>65</sup> Hinton,<sup>66</sup> and Winchester.<sup>67</sup> There was a public meeting in Ashburton to form an Association,<sup>68</sup> but it appears this was unsuccessful.<sup>69</sup>

In Dunedin, a Financial Reform Association was formed in late June. As with the Auckland Association, the first meeting was a general discussion of the need for retrenchment. Seven platform points were proposed and a committee was elected.<sup>70</sup> The official name was the Dunedin and Suburban Financial Reform Association and it formed two suburban branches, one in the North East Valley<sup>71</sup> and one at Green Island.<sup>72</sup> The Invercargill Reform Association first met on 1 July, and although they did not use the words political or financial, their objectives showed that they were aligned with the other associations forming throughout the country.<sup>73</sup> There were several other Financial Reform Associations in the Otago-Southland region. The Tuapeka area of Central Otago was particularly active with branches forming at Lawrence, Waitahuna and Waitahuna Gully.<sup>74</sup> There were also associations at Wyndham,<sup>75</sup> and Fortrose,<sup>76</sup> on the Southland Coast.

To some degree, the Financial and Political Reform Associations were local movements against the Stout-Vogel Government and driven by the worsening depression. However, there is evidence that the various Associations were in contact,<sup>77</sup> and the Auckland and Christchurch Associations' platforms were published widely in newspapers.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, all the Associations which published platforms made similar proposals. This

<sup>60</sup> *Press*, 2 July 1887, p.2.

<sup>61</sup> *Star*, 6 July 1887, p.3.

<sup>62</sup> *Press*, 13 July 1887, p.1.

<sup>63</sup> *Star*, 14 July 1887, p.3. There was also an unsuccessful attempt by the Canterbury Electors' Association to form a branch at Cust, *Star*, 30 July 1887, p.2.

<sup>64</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 11 July 1887, p.3.

<sup>65</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 19 July 1887, p.3.

<sup>66</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 25 July 1887, p.3.

<sup>67</sup> *Timaru Herald* 21 July 1887, p.1.

<sup>68</sup> *Press*, 19 July 1887, p.2.

<sup>69</sup> *Ashburton Guardian*, 17 September 1887, p.2.

<sup>70</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 29 June 1887, p.3.

<sup>71</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 5 August 1887, p.1.

<sup>72</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 4 August 1887, p.5.

<sup>73</sup> *Southland Times*, 4 July 1887, p.2.

<sup>74</sup> *Tuapeka Times*, 16 July 1887, p.3.

<sup>75</sup> *Mataura Ensign*, 9 August 1887, p.9.

<sup>76</sup> *Mataura Ensign*, 13 September 1887, p.4.

<sup>77</sup> For example: *Nelson Evening Mail*, 30 June 1887, p.2; *Poverty Bay Herald*, 5 July 1887, p.2; *Tuapeka Times*, 23 July 1887, p.2; *Otago Daily Times*, 8 October 1887, p.3.

<sup>78</sup> *Temuka Leader*, 21 June 1887, p.2; *Waikato Times*, 23 June 1887, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 7 July 1887 p.4; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 9 July 1887, p.2; *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 9 July 1887, p.2.

suggests that there was some understanding about what platform a Financial or Political Reform Association should hold to. Although some went into considerably more detail than others, they all called for reductions in government spending through smaller salaries for MHRs, reduction in their numbers, and removal of their special allowances. The Legislative Council was also criticised, with suggested reforms including a freeze on the number of Councillors, a reduction in their allowances, and the move to an elected, rather than appointed, chamber. They also wanted government departments to reduce spending and, more specifically, for the education budget to be cut, with free education only for primary schooling to the fifth standard and the school starting age raised to seven. Other common planks were a halt to government borrowing and reform of railway and government administration. In general, all Associations were for lower taxes and some reform of the system, but this was often expressed in a vague manner. For example, Auckland,<sup>79</sup> Christchurch<sup>80</sup> and Dunedin<sup>81</sup> all mentioned that no form of tax should be increased but did not specify a preference for any particular form of tax. In 1887 at least, Financial and Political Reform Associations did not want to identify themselves as being for or against tariffs. In Auckland and Dunedin both free traders and protectionists were welcome to join.<sup>82</sup> The Canterbury Associations were identified with free trade,<sup>83</sup> a point strongly made by the Electors' Association, a group formed to support pro-government candidates in Canterbury.<sup>84</sup> However, this link seems to have been formed by looking at the people that were involved<sup>85</sup> rather than the actual platform of the Association, which mentioned nothing about free trade.<sup>86</sup> The differences over taxes shows that in 1887 there was still some disunity among those who supported what became the platform of those who opposed the Liberals. However, the consistency between Associations suggests the emergence of a nationwide identity. Some of the issues that the Associations campaigned for - economy in government, reform of government administration and Legislative Council reform, were issues that the opponents of the Liberals campaigned on during the 1890s and were to become part of Reform Party policy.<sup>87</sup>

Apart from the Auckland provincial area, there was relatively little activity in the North Island. However, the Gisborne Working Men's Political Association voted to change its name to the Gisborne Political Reform Association in early July. They knew about the Auckland Financial and Political Reform Association and decided to use the platform prepared by that body.<sup>88</sup> There was also a Political Reform Association formed in Waipawa, apparently to ensure the election of an opposition candidate.<sup>89</sup> The current member,

<sup>79</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 July 1887, p.5.

<sup>80</sup> *Press*, 23 June 1887, p.1.

<sup>81</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 29 June 1887, p.3.

<sup>82</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 3 June 1887, p.6; *Otago Daily Times*, 8 August 1887, p.2; *Auckland Star*, 12 November 1887, p.4, had a list of protectionist members of the Auckland Association.

<sup>83</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.111.

<sup>84</sup> For example: *Star*, 30 June 1887, p.3.

<sup>85</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 20 June 1887, p.4; *Star*, 20 July 1887, p.20.

<sup>86</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.111.

<sup>87</sup> *The Reformer*, Issue 1, September 1905, pp.1-2.

<sup>88</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 5 July 1887, p.2.

<sup>89</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 28 July 1887, p.2.

W.C. Smith, was a strong supporter of Stout and Vogel.<sup>90</sup> There is no record of the Waipawa Political Reform Association having any objectives beyond the election of their preferred candidate, Thomas Tanner. However, the fact that they chose Tanner, a well-known Hawke's Bay runholder whose business associates included pro-Atkinson members of the House,<sup>91</sup> suggests that they had similar political ideals to the other Financial and Political Reform Associations.

There is no record of Reform Associations being formed in the Taranaki or Wellington areas. It is possible that because the acknowledged leader of the opposition, Harry Atkinson, came from Taranaki there was little need for an organisation which would support the election of opposition candidates. Sinclair, in noting that Financial and Political Reform Associations were not set up in Wellington, suggested that Wellington was not feeling the effects of the depression in 1887, so a group that was offering solutions to the country's financial difficulties would have lacked support.<sup>92</sup> Another possibility is that with Wellington being the seat of government the call for retrenchment in the number of civil servants, and cuts to their salaries, was unlikely to attract much support.

Most of the Financial and Political Reform Associations were formed within six weeks of the announcement of the election. This would seem to indicate that the main purpose of the Associations was election campaigning. During the 1880s it had become more common for groups that desired political change to endorse candidates whom they thought would support their aims once in parliament.<sup>93</sup> The most common way of doing this was for a questionnaire to be sent to the candidates to ascertain where they stood on the Associations' proposals.<sup>94</sup> This was done in Auckland,<sup>95</sup> Dunedin,<sup>96</sup> Lawrence,<sup>97</sup> Invercargill<sup>98</sup> and Fortrose.<sup>99</sup> From the replies, the Associations decided which candidates they would recommend electors choose. The Invercargill Association received two replies from a possible five candidates and were disappointed by the lack of attention given to their platform.<sup>100</sup> In Lawrence<sup>101</sup> and Fortrose<sup>102</sup> the selection of one candidate over another led to dissension in the Associations. In Auckland twenty-two candidates were endorsed for electorates from Rodney in the north to Waikato in the south.<sup>103</sup> Of

<sup>90</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.366.

<sup>91</sup> Kay Mooney, 'Tanner, Thomas', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1t10/tanner-thomas>, accessed 14 February 2017

<sup>92</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.110.

<sup>93</sup> For example: *Evening Post*, 19 July 1884, p.1 (supplement), had the Trade and Labour Council endorsed candidates; *Otago Daily Times*, 10 July 1884 p.3, had the Trade and Labour Council endorsed candidates.

<sup>94</sup> None of the surveys were published, only the replies from the candidates.

<sup>95</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1887, p.5.

<sup>96</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 20 July 1887, p.2.

<sup>97</sup> *Tuapeka Times*, 6 August 1887, p.2.

<sup>98</sup> *Southland Times*, 16 September 1887, p.2.

<sup>99</sup> *Mataura Ensign*, 13 September 1887, p.4.

<sup>100</sup> *Southland Times*, 16 September 1887, p.2.

<sup>101</sup> *Tuapeka Times*, 21 September 1887, p.3.

<sup>102</sup> *Mataura Ensign*, 13 September 1887, p.4.

<sup>103</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 September 1887, p.5; General Election, 1887, *AJHR*, 1887 (S.2), H.13, p.1.

these, six were elected to parliament.<sup>104</sup> In Dunedin, the Association decided that all the candidates in local electorates supported its proposals. This drew some criticism, with one member wondering why the Association continued to exist if it was not prepared to choose the best man for parliamentary honours.<sup>105</sup>

The Canterbury Political Reform Association faced a slightly different political climate to its counterparts. A rival political group, the Canterbury Electors' Association, was set up in Christchurch at about the same time.<sup>106</sup> It was formed by William Pember Reeves and was pro-government.<sup>107</sup> Because the Political Reform Association declared themselves for a change of government, it was easy for the Electors' Association to attack them by associating them with Atkinson, who was extremely unpopular in Christchurch. This was because he had raised the grain duty during his previous term in government, which had a particularly damaging impact in Canterbury as it was New Zealand's principal grain-producing region. His government had also halted construction of the railway line between Christchurch and the West Coast.<sup>108</sup> The Electors' Association argued that there were two sides in parliament, the government led by Stout and Vogel and the opposition, led by Atkinson. Therefore those against the government were for Atkinson.<sup>109</sup> The common way the Political Reform Association rebutted this assertion was to say that they were calling for new men in parliament and did not support one side or the other, instead they wanted men who supported the Association's platform.<sup>110</sup> Unfortunately for the Political Reform Association, the Electors' Association was very effective at communicating its arguments and for a candidate to be identified with the Reform Association became regarded as political suicide.<sup>111</sup> Opposition candidates in Canterbury distanced themselves from both the Political Reform Association and Atkinson, and the Association did not publicly back any candidate.<sup>112</sup> It seems that this also had an effect in Nelson, where the only reported public meeting expressed concern over how the Christchurch Association's list of members contained several known Atkinson supporters.<sup>113</sup> Sinclair also noted that one distinctive feature of the 1887 campaign was the attempts to induce the Opposition to remove Atkinson as its official leader.<sup>114</sup> However, this only seemed to

<sup>104</sup> General Election, 1887, *AJHR*, 1887 (S.2), H.13, p.1.

<sup>105</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 22 September 1887, p.3.

<sup>106</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.111.

<sup>107</sup> Sinclair, *William Pember Reeves*, p.65.

<sup>108</sup> Judith Bassett, *Sir Harry Atkinson, 1831-1892*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1975, p.123.

<sup>109</sup> A good example of this argument is in an editorial: *Star*, 13 July 1887, p.2.

<sup>110</sup> Some good examples for this are: *Press*, 5 July 1887, p.3; *Press*, 11 July 1887, p.3.

<sup>111</sup> A good example is Charles Purnell, a candidate for Ashburton, who tried to set up a Political Reform Association in July and by September was denying an involvement with them, see: *Press*, 19 July 1887, p.2; *Ashburton Guardian*, 20 July 1887, p.2; *Ashburton Guardian*, 16 September 1887, p.2; *Ashburton Guardian*, 17 September 1887, p.2.

<sup>112</sup> For examples of candidates in Canterbury electorates distancing themselves from the Political Reform League and Atkinson: *Press*, 29 July 1887, p.3; *Press*, 16 August 1887, p.2; *Press*, 7 September 1887, pp.5-6; *Press*, 10 September 1887, p.5.

<sup>113</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 30 June 1887, p.2.

<sup>114</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.112.

be an issue in the Canterbury and Nelson areas, where Atkinson was still very unpopular.<sup>115</sup>

One aspect that the Dunedin and Auckland associations had in common was that they endorsed more than one candidate for many electorates. However, there were some recorded cases of Associations trying to ensure that there was only one anti-government candidate so as to prevent vote-splitting. As already noted, this seemed to be the sole reason for setting up the Waipawa Political Reform Association. It was not successful, with another opposition candidate, Frederick Sutton, entering the race. There appeared to be a concerted effort to get voters to choose Tanner and not be tempted by Sutton.<sup>116</sup> In South Canterbury there were reports of the Political Reform Association asking prospective candidates for the Gladstone electorate to withdraw in favour of A.E.G. Rhodes,<sup>117</sup> whom they believed was the candidate best representing their platform. This tactic appeared to be successful. Rhodes won the election, with almost all the votes being cast for either Rhodes or his main opponent, Jeremiah Twomey,<sup>118</sup> a well-known local liberal and eventual Liberal appointee to the Legislative Council.<sup>119</sup> Although most Reform Associations were still endorsing more than one candidate per electorate, these examples show that some Associations were not just endorsing pro-Atkinson candidates but also trying to influence candidate selection.

Financial and Political Reform Associations across the country thus presented roughly the same political platform and many tried to organise the return of opposition candidates. Although the Trades and Labour Councils and Working Men's Associations had organised for working men's candidates and other political issues related to workers, they were not exclusively a group for the promotion and election of candidates of a certain political persuasion.<sup>120</sup> The organisation of the Financial and Political Reform Associations marked a new kind of group within New Zealand politics, one which was called into existence to fight an election campaign. Before the 1887 election there were local groups which might support one candidate or a particular point of view or philosophy, and some of the early Political Reform Associations fall into this category. What was different about the 1887 Associations was that they were part of a nationwide movement with a platform and the specific aim to change the government and return one which supported the Association's policies. The emergence of a nationwide organisation with the sole purpose of fighting an election campaign suggests the structure of New Zealand politics was changing.

<sup>115</sup> The reference Sinclair gave was to an editorial in the *Evening Post*, 30 September 1887, p.2. However, in its context this seems to be a hearsay report. The same editorial noted that Atkinson was unpopular in Canterbury, the West Coast and Nelson.

<sup>116</sup> See: *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 21 September 1887, p.3; *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 23 September 1887, p.3; *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 24 September 1887, p.2.

<sup>117</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 6 August 1887, p.2; *Timaru Herald*, 20 August 1887, p.2.

<sup>118</sup> General Election, 1887, *AJHR*, 1887 (S.2), H.13, p.3.

<sup>119</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record*, Wellington: Government Printer, 1950, p.87.

<sup>120</sup> Peter Franks and Jim McAloon, *Labour: The New Zealand Labour Party 1916-2016*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2016, pp.36-39.

There are several reasons why the Associations emerged in 1887. Tony Ballantyne observed that the 1887 election was the first to see truly national issues emerge.<sup>121</sup> It was New Zealand's fourth election since the abolition of the provinces, and the shift to one set of nationwide elections had aided the growth of national issues. Sinclair also noted that the 1880s seemed to mark the beginning of greater polarisation in New Zealand politics into radical and conservative. He argued that the drying up of public works had led to the removal of the previous basis for electing members: who could get the most roads and bridges.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, he proposed that by 1887 the effect of the depression on the population had led the propertied class to join together in order to defend their interests against a rising tide of radicalism.<sup>123</sup> Hamer pointed out that the 1887 election seemed to be the first where it was the voter who decided the result of the election, rather than the previous pattern of a rearrangement of provincial blocks once parliament met. Another indication that politics was changing was that the Atkinson Government was the first to remain in office for the entirety of the parliamentary term. Previously, the government benches had changed hands during three-year terms when votes of confidence were lost.<sup>124</sup> When combined with the Financial and Political Reform Associations, these factors indicate a reshaping in the structure of New Zealand political system and suggest that the 1887 was an election which was quite different from its forerunners.

There is another indication that the 1887 election marked a new era in New Zealand politics. Ballantyne noted that in Otago and Southland the turnout at elections was growing during the 1880s, and saw this as a sign of increased political engagement.<sup>125</sup> F.H. Barker, Political Reform Association member and organiser for A.E.G. Rhodes' campaign in Geraldine, wrote to William Rolleston about the 1887 election, stating that he was amazed at how many men had turned out to vote.<sup>126</sup> When examining the turnouts for general elections the usual measure is official turnout (OT). However, the formula used for OT is flawed in that it uses the actual number of votes cast divided by the number of voters registered. This assumes that the electoral rolls were an accurate reflection of those eligible to vote.<sup>127</sup> Nagel argued that using the number of registered voters as the denominator can be misleading due to inaccuracies with the roll.<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, by

<sup>121</sup> Tony Ballantyne, 'The State, Politics and Power, 1769-1893' in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, (ed) Giselle Byrnes, South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press, 2009, p.120.

<sup>122</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.106.

<sup>123</sup> Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.109.

<sup>124</sup> John E. Martin, *The House: New Zealand's House of Representatives 1854-2004*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2004, pp.96-97. The beginning of the Stout-Vogel Government was unstable. The ministry took office, was replaced by Atkinson after a no-confidence vote and then replaced him after another.

<sup>125</sup> Ballantyne, p.119.

<sup>126</sup> F.H. Barker to Rolleston, n.d 1887, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence 1887, 77-248-07/04, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>127</sup> The use of the number on the roll for 1887 and 1890 elections is particularly problematic, see appendix one, p.275.

<sup>128</sup> Jack H. Nagel, 'Voter Turnout in New Zealand General Elections, 1928-1988', *Political Science*, 40, no. 2, 1988, p.18.

using registered voters, it is possible to miss pointers that much of the eligible population as a whole is disengaged from the political process and choosing not to register.<sup>129</sup> Nagel contended that using the age-eligible population, derived from the census, as the denominator gives a more accurate idea of election turnout. Appendix one shows estimated population-based turnouts (PBT) for the elections from 1881 to 1914. The PBT calculation shows that the turnout in 1884 was an estimated fifty-four percent and the turnout in 1887, seventy-five percent. This is a significant increase in the proportion of the eligible population voting and the figure of around seventy-five percent has more in common with elections in the 1890s than those in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>130</sup> It is difficult to know whether the turnout was stimulated by the campaigning of the Financial and Political Reform Associations or that the Associations themselves were a symptom of greater political engagement. However, the 1887 election could be described as New Zealand's first mass election, with nationwide campaigning and high turnout.

## From 1887 to 1890

Even though the Financial and Political Reform Associations had been extremely active in the lead up to the September 1887 election, the momentum proved hard to maintain. At an October meeting of the Dunedin Association there was discussion about whether it should continue meeting now that the election had happened and, after some debate, it was decided to let the executive make the decision.<sup>131</sup> As this was the last meeting reported in the newspapers, it is highly probable that the decision was to cease meeting. It appears that most other Associations followed this example. There is no record of meetings for the Christchurch Association after the election, or any other in the Canterbury area.

There are reports of three Associations continuing activity after the election. The Tuapeka<sup>132</sup> and Fortrose<sup>133</sup> Associations were in electorates which had not returned the candidate supported by the respective Associations. It appears that the desire to continue the campaign against the sitting member fuelled these Associations.<sup>134</sup> The Auckland Association also remained very active, as it continued the campaign to reduce government spending. It held regular meetings during the first half of 1888 and employed several tactics to influence the House. One was to let all MHRs know its opinions by sending them questionnaires and publications. For example, in October 1887 a meeting

<sup>129</sup> Nagel, p.19.

<sup>130</sup> See appendix one p.275 for calculations up to 1914.

<sup>131</sup> *Evening Star*, 17 October 1887, p.1.

<sup>132</sup> The last reported meeting was *Tuapeka Times*, 31 August 1888, p.2. There is a letter to the editor of the *Otago Daily Times* in 1905 which referenced the Tuapeka Financial Reform Association and contained the platform of the Association see; *Otago Daily Times*, 28 November 1905, p.8.

<sup>133</sup> The last reported meeting was *Otago Daily Times*, 11 July 1888, p.2.

<sup>134</sup> *Evening Star*, 2 June 1888, p.3, stated Tuapeka Associations opinion of their local MHR, James Brown; *Otago Daily Times*, 11 July 1888, p.2 for Fortrose disapproval of local MHR, George Richardson's, actions.

of the Association decided to send questions to all members about the new government appointments in the Customs Department. In June 1888 a report on retrenchment, produced by Richard Duncan,<sup>135</sup> was sent to all MHRs before the budget debates.<sup>136</sup> The Association also continued to organise large public meetings in Auckland. They held one in November 1887, to discuss the first financial statement,<sup>137</sup> another in June 1888 to show support of further retrenchment in the government estimates,<sup>138</sup> and one in July, which focused more specifically on retrenchment in education, but did cover other areas.<sup>139</sup> Delegates from the Association also visited government members who came to Auckland. The secretary of the Association, John McLachlan, met with Atkinson and Edwin Mitchelson, Minister for Public Works and MHR for Eden,<sup>140</sup> when Atkinson visited Auckland in January 1888. The meeting was reported as being cordial and Atkinson approved of the Association's platform.<sup>141</sup> George Fisher, Minister of Education,<sup>142</sup> visited in April 1888 and received a large deputation from the Association, which asked him to consider removing property tax.<sup>143</sup> Tax was also the reason a delegation met with Atkinson during his Auckland visit in February of 1889, the *Auckland Star* reporting that property tax was discussed at considerable length.<sup>144</sup> However, since Auckland was some distance from parliament, the Association's most common lobbying method was to send telegrams to members. Usually they sent them to specific members praising them for making points in House debates, or to suggest lines of debate. They tended to be sent to Auckland members, the most popular being David Goldie, MHR for Auckland City West,<sup>145</sup> who was a member of the Association. In November 1887, a telegram was sent to Goldie asking him to direct members' attention to an article in the *New Zealand Herald* on Vogel's spending.<sup>146</sup> In June 1888 the Association telegraphed Goldie ahead of the final budget debate, giving him voting recommendations and asking him to communicate these to the other Auckland MHRs.<sup>147</sup> Other Auckland members the Association communicated with included Edmund Withy,<sup>148</sup> Robert Thompson,<sup>149</sup> Richard Monk,<sup>150</sup> and Sir George Grey.<sup>151</sup> There are no newspaper reports of the activities of the Auckland Financial and Political Reform Association after February 1889.<sup>152</sup> There is some suggestion that the group may have kept going, as it is mentioned at a meeting to form

<sup>135</sup> *Auckland Star* 13 June 1888, p.8, for more about Duncan.

<sup>136</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 13 June 1888, p.4.

<sup>137</sup> *Auckland Star*, 10 November 1887, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 12 November 1887, p.3.

<sup>138</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 26 June 1888, p.5.

<sup>139</sup> *Auckland Star*, 3 July 1888, p.2.

<sup>140</sup> Scholefield, p.40 and p.127.

<sup>141</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 26 January 1888, p.5.

<sup>142</sup> Scholefield, p.39.

<sup>143</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 April 1888, p.6.

<sup>144</sup> *Auckland Star*, 6 February 1889, p.8.

<sup>145</sup> Scholefield, p.109.

<sup>146</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 23 November 1887, p.6.

<sup>147</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 16 June 1888, p.8.

<sup>148</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 8 June 1888, p.4.

<sup>149</sup> *Auckland Star*, 18 November 1887, p.4.

<sup>150</sup> *Press*, 2 July 1888, p.5.

<sup>151</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 23 June 1888, p.3.

<sup>152</sup> Last mention is *New Zealand Herald*, 6 February 1889, p.8.

an anti-property tax league in January 1890,<sup>153</sup> but if it did its meetings were not being reported in the newspapers.

Despite only lasting around eighteen months, it is significant that it was the Auckland Financial and Political Reform Association which continued with such energy after the 1887 election. This strength of support in Auckland for the platform advocated by the Association foreshadows the groups which would replace the Financial and Political Reform Associations. Both the National Association and Political Reform Leagues began in Auckland and the Auckland Province was the part of New Zealand from which they drew the most support. This indicates that not only were the platforms which were eventually identified with Reform being developed in the late 1880s, but also the area of the country in which these ideas would find the most resonance.

## The 1890 election

The campaign for the 1887 election had seen both nationwide action by those who held ideals which would become associated with Reform, and the issues which defined a 'reform' identity became clearer. However, this did not seem to progress during the campaign for the 1890 election. When compared with 1887 the 'reform' voice was less united and struggled to find a strong platform with public appeal. What had bound the Associations together was the desire to change the government, which they hoped would lead to taxation reform and retrenchment. However, it appears that by 1890 the issue of taxation reform divided rather than united those who had been strong supporters of the Associations. Within the Associations there had been a variety of opinions about tax, some being free traders, some protectionists and some single taxers. It seems that no matter what tax members had favoured in 1887 they had all been prepared to join behind the platform of tax reform as they all wanted changes to the tax system. This desire was somewhat driven by the deepening depression and the state of the government's finances. The Financial and Political Reform Association was broad enough that it could contain those who desired change.

Yet, once they had a change of government, the question of alterations to the tax system became contentious as a gulf opened between those who wanted a land tax and those who favoured a property tax. There was a strong belief within New Zealand that too much land was owned by too few, and that placing people on the land was the way out of the depression, and accompanying industrial unrest, which had beset the country during 1890.<sup>154</sup> The idea that more land for settlement was needed was also driven by the

<sup>153</sup> *Auckland Star*, 17 January 1890, p.4.

<sup>154</sup> Len Richardson, 'Parties and Political Change' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, (ed) Geoffrey W. Rice, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.204; Timothy McIvor, *The Rainmaker: A Biography of John Ballance, Journalist and Politician, 1839-1893*, Auckland: Heinemann Reed, 1989, p.187.

'exodus' of the 1880s, as more people left New Zealand than arrived.<sup>155</sup> The need to free up 'land for settlers' was agreed by all sides of the political debate;<sup>156</sup> the divide occurred around how to make more land available. During the 1880s the philosophies of Henry George had become popular in New Zealand.<sup>157</sup> George taught that land was a natural resource, and no one should profit from owning it.<sup>158</sup> He believed that land ownership led to the economic inequalities seen in society, and that poverty could be eliminated if all land was owned by the government and leased to individuals. As an initial step, George proposed that Crown Land should become leasehold and that Crown Land sales to individuals should cease to prevent any further freeholding. Eventually he envisioned that land tax would force all private owners to sell to the government, making all land leasehold. The widespread dissemination of Georgist ideas led to a tacit understanding that support for land tax was also taken to mean support for leasehold, and the eventual nationalisation of all land.<sup>159</sup>

In Auckland, the Financial and Political Reform Association had contained some men who followed the ideas of Henry George, including one of Auckland's best-known proponents, Edward Wither.<sup>160</sup> At the beginning of 1890 some of those who had been part of the Association began an effort to form a 'party' which was based on Georgist principles. Initially, there was an attempt to form an anti-property tax league in January 1890,<sup>161</sup> which failed as there was disagreement over whether there should be low tax or land tax.<sup>162</sup> This became clearer in July when a meeting was called to form a new national party.<sup>163</sup> It was sponsored by the Anti-Poverty Society and the Knights of Labour, both leading Georgist groups.<sup>164</sup> The main platforms of the proposed party were to scrap the property tax and impose a land tax on the unimproved value. Land speculation was called the root of all evil and several of the speakers called for land nationalisation. The meeting ended with the resolution to form a political 'party' called the 'Jubilee Land Reform Party'.<sup>165</sup> However, it seems that this was the only meeting held as there are no further newspaper

The Common figure quoted in the election campaign was that 250 men owned seven or seven-and-half million acres. See: *Southland Times*, 20 November 1890, p.2; *North Otago Times*, 29 November 1890, p.3; *Press*, 28 November 1890, p.6; *New Zealand Times*, 1 November 1890, p.6.

<sup>155</sup> Raewyn Dalziel, 'Railways and Relief Centres' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, (ed) Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990, p.111.

<sup>156</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 November 1890, p.4. Atkinson referred to the necessity of freeing up land and the measures his government would put in place; *New Zealand Herald*, 24 September 1890, p.5. Ballance thought there should be a vigorous policy of land settlement and outlined how he would free up land.

<sup>157</sup> Rogers, p.156.

<sup>158</sup> Jacob Oser, *Henry George*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974, pp.46-47. The popularity of Georgist ideas appears to have peaked between the mid-1880s to 1890s, possibly fuelled by Henry George's short visit to Auckland in 1890. See: Rogers, p.157.

<sup>159</sup> Rogers, p.156.

<sup>160</sup> Rogers, p.166, also see: Edward Wither, *Property, Moral and Immoral* Auckland: Auckland Anti-Poverty Society, 1892; Edward Wither, *The Social Outlook : The Single-Tax Remedy* Auckland: Ground Rent Revenue League, 1894.

<sup>161</sup> *Auckland Star*, 17 January 1890, p.4.

<sup>162</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 5 February 1890, p.8.

<sup>163</sup> *Auckland Star*, 23 July 1890, p.2.

<sup>164</sup> Rogers, p.157.

<sup>165</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 23 July 1890, p.3.

reports of this group.

Those promoting the Georgist cause seem to have decided that using the name liberal would be more useful. This was probably because both Ballance and Sir George Grey, men firmly associated with the term liberal,<sup>166</sup> were known supporters of George's philosophies.<sup>167</sup> This would have been further encouraged by the emergence of Ballance as Leader of the Opposition in 1889.<sup>168</sup> Those in Auckland who held Georgist sympathies began to coalesce around the figure of Sir George Grey and the idea of a liberal election committee. In October 1890 a delegation waited on Grey to ask him to stand for the Auckland City seat. All but one of the men were known ex-members of the Political and Financial Reform Association, and all were Georgist, apart from Ernest Burton, who later withdrew.<sup>169</sup> Grey was unable to stand because of ill health,<sup>170</sup> but the idea that the Georgists should work to get 'liberal' Auckland candidates elected persisted. In early November, a meeting was held to form a committee to ensure the election of 'men who were firm on the great Liberal platform – the land tax.'<sup>171</sup> This committee had several men who had been very active members of the Political and Financial Reform Association, including the ex-secretary and president of the Association. It is probable that this split in the ex-members of the Auckland Association weakened the organising capabilities of those who were not Georgists as many of the most active ex-members were now campaigning for the 'liberal' cause.

This split in Auckland between those who had been members of the Financial and Political Reform Association strengthened the identity of what the term 'reform' meant. In 1887, it was clear that those who took the name 'reform' wanted changes to the system of taxation. Yet the taxation aims of the Association were vague enough that it could attract those who had competing views on what that change should be. After 1887 those who wanted the only tax to be that based on land were drawn to the Ballance-led Opposition, and subsequently the term 'liberal'. This left those who opposed land tax and favoured changes to property tax with the term 'reform'. This is illustrated by an attempt on the part of those who opposed land tax, but wanted property tax reform, to organise a Political Reform Association.<sup>172</sup> They held a public meeting at the end of September 1890,<sup>173</sup> but nothing more seems to have eventuated. There was also another group calling itself the New Zealand Political and Financial Reform Association which produced pamphlets about retrenchment and lower property taxes.<sup>174</sup> These groups did not have the same organisation and impact as the 1887 Association, but they retained the name 'reform'.

<sup>166</sup> Grey is very commonly called the father of New Zealand Liberalism; See: Bohan, *To Be a Hero*, pp.322-323.

<sup>167</sup> Rogers, pp.156-157.

<sup>168</sup> McIvor, p.158.

<sup>169</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 23 October 1890, p.5.

<sup>170</sup> Bohan, *To Be a Hero*, p.315.

<sup>171</sup> *Auckland Star*, 4 November 1890, p.5.

<sup>172</sup> *Auckland Star*, 17 July 1890, p.8; *Auckland Star*, 24 July 1890, p.2; *Auckland Star*, 28 July 1890, p.4.

<sup>173</sup> *Auckland Star*, 30 September 1890, p.2.

<sup>174</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 July 1890, p.6; The New Zealand Political and Financial Reform Association, *The New Zealand Taxpayers' Shorter Catechism*, Auckland: Wilson and Horton, 1890.

As Auckland became the centre of the opposition to the Liberals in the 1890s, and then Reform at the beginning of the twentieth century, this further clarification over what kind of tax was associated with the term 'reform' was an important step.

In the other centres which had Political and Financial Reform Associations there does not seem to have been the same public divide over tax. However, there were some indications that Georgists had been present in other Associations. In Canterbury two ex-Political Reform Association members either supported or stood as land tax-leasehold candidates, E.G. Kerr, a candidate for Timaru,<sup>175</sup> and George Laurensen, who supported J. Joyce, the liberal candidate for Akaroa.<sup>176</sup> In Dunedin a group called the Electors' League was formed. It had a small overlap with the Financial Reform Association<sup>177</sup> and was branded as conservative by its opponents.<sup>178</sup> An examination of its eight platform points show two that were similar to the Financial Reform Association, economical administration of government and an elected upper house, and some that were liberal, including support for the eight-hour day and 'liberal' land administration.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore the two candidates it endorsed for Dunedin City, R. Leary and A. Lee Smith, both supported the eventual nationalisation of land.<sup>180</sup> Unfortunately not enough is known about the views of the other members of the Electors' League to ascertain whether this group was a Georgist-based split.

The issue of which tax to support also impacted the national unity of those with ideals espoused by the Financial and Political Reform Associations. In Auckland, there was a very strong call to remove the property tax, but not to necessarily replace it with land tax. However, in the other centres where Financial or Political Reform Associations had been active in 1887, those candidates who had identified with the Associations wanted to keep the property tax. In Christchurch, G.G. Stead, a member of the Political Reform Association committee,<sup>181</sup> stood as a candidate for the Avon electorate. He was strongly for retaining the property tax as he thought that land tax would weigh heavily on farmers and not produce enough revenue.<sup>182</sup> This preference for the property tax was marked in rural areas. For example in rural South Canterbury, where an active Political Reform Association had been based, both candidates were in favour of a property tax,<sup>183</sup> despite one being labelled 'liberal'.<sup>184</sup> In Tuapeka, which had also had an active Association,

<sup>175</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 11 July 1887 p.3; *Timaru Herald*, 9 August 1890, p.3.

<sup>176</sup> *Press*, 28 July 1887, p.3; *Press* 2 October 1890, p.3.

<sup>177</sup> There were three men who were members of both. These were Alexander Bartleman, Keith Ramsey and Henry Shacklock; *Otago Daily Times*, 8 November 1890, p.4.

<sup>178</sup> Both Henry Fish and Stout called them conservative. See: *Otago Daily Times*, 8 November 1890, p.4; *Otago Daily Times*, 28 November 1890, p.3; John Angus, 'City and Country, Change and Continuity Politics in Otago 1877-1893', PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1976, p.641, called it the successor to the Financial Reform Association.

<sup>179</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 1 November 1890, p.2.

<sup>180</sup> *Evening Star*, 21 November 1890, p.2; *Otago Daily Times*, 4 December 1890, p.2.

<sup>181</sup> *Star*, 4 July 1887, p.2.

<sup>182</sup> *Press*, 18 November 1890, p.5.

<sup>183</sup> *Temuka Leader*, 4 December 1890, p.3; *Timaru Herald*, 1 November 1890, p.4.

<sup>184</sup> *Star*, 2 December 1890, p.3.

the long-sitting MHR, in favour of land tax,<sup>185</sup> lost to a candidate who was in favour of property tax.<sup>186</sup> There had been an Association in Waikato in 1887, but there was no contest in the electorate in 1890 with John Bryce being elected unopposed. However, Bryce was well known to favour a property tax.<sup>187</sup> Although there was still little support for property tax in Auckland, the beginning of property tax as an alternative to land tax was emerging.

There were other issues which impacted on the ability of those with 'reform' ideals to mount a united campaign. In 1887 Vogel was the ideal enemy of those seeking to change the government. He had a reputation for free-spending policies and Atkinson had been accusing Vogel and, by association, Stout, of promising money by magic, rather than sound finance, since 1884.<sup>188</sup> With the government books in a dire state by 1887, the call for retrenchment, by removal of the government, resonated nationwide and gave the Financial and Political Reform Associations platform a focus.<sup>189</sup> In 1890 it proved almost impossible to create the same momentum. Ballance was the leader of the opposition and he had been vocal in his support for radical land proposals.<sup>190</sup> However, he was also strongly associated in the mind of the public with village settlements,<sup>191</sup> which were proposed by both sides of the political spectrum as a way of getting more settlers on to the land. Furthermore, Ballance appeared to be a reluctant leader<sup>192</sup> and Stout, although out of parliament, gave the impression that he might resume the leadership of the Opposition at any time.<sup>193</sup> This confusion meant that those wanting to ensure the election of members who might oppose some of the more liberal proposals of Opposition MHRs had no clear leader to target.

Not only was there a lack of clear opposition, it was also unclear whether Atkinson would be able to lead the next government. He had been ill for much of 1890 and unable to attend the last session of parliament before the election.<sup>194</sup> This had led to questions about whether he would be physically capable of leading another ministry.<sup>195</sup> Furthermore, Atkinson was not seen by 'anti-liberals' as a true 'conservative' leader. His reputation for 'fads', and in his attitude toward tax, had alienated some of those who had

<sup>185</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 November 1890, p.1 (supplement).

<sup>186</sup> *Tuapeka Times*, 29 November 1890, p.3.

<sup>187</sup> Moyra Cooke, 'John Bryce, 1834-1913: The White Charger', M.A. Thesis, Massey University, 2015, pp.115-116.

<sup>188</sup> Raewyn Dalziel, *Julius Vogel: Business Politician*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986, p.264.

<sup>189</sup> Dalziel, *Julius Vogel*, p.296.

<sup>190</sup> Mclvor, pp.109-112, p.161.

<sup>191</sup> Mclvor, pp.130-132

<sup>192</sup> Hamer, 'The Law and the Prophet', pp.345-346; Mclvor, p.169.

<sup>193</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 29 October 1890, p.4, reported that the opposition wanted to replace Ballance due his advanced views on land; *Evening Star*, 25 November 1890, p.2, reported a candidate declaring themselves for Ballance or whoever led the opposition; Hamer, 'The Law and the Prophet', pp.348-353.

<sup>194</sup> Bassett, *Sir Harry Atkinson*, pp.156-157.

<sup>195</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 November 1890, p.5. In a speech at Hamilton, Bryce referred to Atkinson's illness and his inability to lead the house in the last session.

supported him in 1887.<sup>196</sup> Already unpopular in Canterbury and other parts of the South Island, his defence of the property tax meant he became unpopular in Auckland.<sup>197</sup> This left those who desired an 'anti-liberal' government unable to provide a clear indication of what that ministry might look like. This is illustrated by candidates who considered themselves to be against Ballance not declaring themselves for Atkinson. Heaton Rhodes, future Reform cabinet minister, when asked at a public campaign meeting whom he would support, replied that 'a reconstruction of the ministry was considered inevitable and he could not pledge himself to blindly support one man.'<sup>198</sup> Adam Porter, a candidate for Auckland City, declared that Ballance was not acceptable to him, and Atkinson was not acceptable to the electors, so his leader would be Bryce.<sup>199</sup> This ambiguity on both sides of the political spectrum was another reason that those who were more 'anti-liberal' found it difficult to organise a coherent, nationwide campaign.

## Conclusion

On the surface, the 1890 election was a setback for the political organisation of those who held to the ideals espoused by Financial and Political Reform Associations. The 1887 election had seen the nationwide emergence of groups which held to similar platforms and were united in the aim of removing the Stout-Vogel Government and replacing it with a ministry pledged to retrenchment, tax reform and reduction. Furthermore, the groups had used a similar name, either Financial or Political Reform Associations, which developed a sense of identity. The voting public understood that those candidates endorsed by the Associations stood for a certain set of policies. In the political arena, the use of the terms political or financial reform was not new, but by 1887 it had increasingly come to be recognised as belonging to those who wished to reduce government spending and reform taxes. The 1887 election itself was different from previous elections. Not only did the first groups organised solely for the purpose of an election campaign emerge, but also there was a significant increase in the numbers of men turning out to vote. All the 1887 Associations had dissolved by 1890, the longest one, in Auckland, lasted about eighteen months. It seems that those who had driven the Associations in 1887 were unable to agree on one of the crucial issues of the 1890 election: whether the tax system should be based on land or property tax. This issue was particularly damaging in Auckland as a core of the Association's committee were followers of Henry George and therefore wanted land tax. These men split off and joined the 'liberal' cause. Tax also separated Auckland from the rest of the country as the property tax was very unpopular in Auckland, but was supported by 'anti-liberal' candidates in the rest of the country.

<sup>196</sup> Judith Bassett, 'Sir Harry Atkinson and the Conservative Faction in New Zealand Politics 1879-1890', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 2, no. 2, 1968, p.140; Sinclair, 'The Significance of "the Scarecrow Ministry"', p.120.

<sup>197</sup> *Auckland Star*, 7 February 1889, p.2. Atkinson spoke at a public meeting where he defended the property tax and was poorly received.

<sup>198</sup> *Star*, 25 November 1890, p.4.

<sup>199</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 29 November 1890, p.5.

Another issue that those on the 'anti-liberal' side of politics faced was the lack of clear leadership from both the Opposition and within the government. Ballance was a reluctant Leader of the Opposition and rumours circulated that he would be replaced by Stout. On the other hand, Ballance was associated with village settlements, which were seen as positive in the 1890 political climate, so it was much more difficult to portray him as an enemy of sensible government. Additionally, it was not at all obvious who would lead the government if it was returned, and this weakened them further.

Although it appeared that the 1890 election damaged the growing sense of 'reform' identity, it provided one of the core issues through which they would distinguish themselves. As 1891 progressed, it seemed that the Ballance Government would try to enact legislation to bring in a land tax. This was interpreted as the first step towards nationalisation of land and the end of freehold in New Zealand.<sup>200</sup> The right to freehold land became one of the main platforms of the National Association, the organisation which followed on from the Financial and Political Reform Associations, and eventually one of the Reform Party's core policies.

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<sup>200</sup> Rogers, p.156, argued that in New Zealand land-tax was associated with land nationalisation. Ballance's belief in land nationalisation probably encouraged the idea that the government planned to remove freehold. See: Mclvor, pp.110-111.



## Chapter 2

# The National Association 1891-1899

*'Verily the understanding of electors is difficult.'*<sup>1</sup>

– William Russell

After gaining office in 1891, the Liberal Party remained in power for twenty-one years, still the longest period that any political party in New Zealand has held the ministry benches. One of the classic explanations for this long reign has been the alleged poor organisation of the Opposition.<sup>2</sup> However, during the 1890s there was a group which consistently opposed the Liberals – the National Association. The Association has been considered a small group, primarily based in Auckland,<sup>3</sup> yet an extensive search using Papers Past, along with consulting recent archival deposits,<sup>4</sup> has shown that it was much more nationally organised than previously realised. This chapter examines the Association and argues that its activities helped to ensure that the Opposition was often better electorally organised than the Liberals. It was not lack of organisation which hampered the Opposition and led to the election of a comparatively small number of MHRs, but their inability to capture the political mood of the 1890s.

The National Association was founded in Auckland sometime in August 1891,<sup>5</sup> and by

<sup>1</sup> Russell to Duthie, 7 December 1899, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie, MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>2</sup> James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland: Penguin Press, 2001, p.41; Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2003, p.278. These are examples of two recent general histories which called the opposition to the Liberals disorganised before Massey's appointment as leader; Barry Gustafson, 'Massey, William Ferguson', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m39/massey-william-ferguson>, accessed 13 June 2016, described the Opposition as a 'dispirited, loosely organised collection' when Massey arrived in parliament in 1894.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Brand, 'A Study of Conservatism 1890-1911', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1950, pp.50-72; Brian Hawthorne Phipps, 'The New Zealand Conservative Party 1891-1903', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1990, gave some space to the National Association see pp. 59-62; B.D. Graham, 'Waikato Politics: A Study in the Relationship of Local and National Politics in the Early Twentieth Century', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1954, p.56.

<sup>4</sup> National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki; Liberty: The Journal of the National Association of New Zealand, JQ5892 LIB, Auckland War Memorial Museum.

<sup>5</sup> *Auckland Star*, 8 September 1891, p.5, had the first reported meeting, but the detail in this report suggests that the Association had been formed sometime previously.

the beginning of 1893 had branches throughout the North Island. It was much slower to take hold in the South Island, with only one branch established before the 1893 election. Thereafter the Association continued to grow, reaching its maximum influence in 1896. An examination of the Association's objectives and personnel also reveals many common threads with the Reform Associations of 1887. This suggests that it was effectively a continuation of those groups. It differed from them, however, in that it endured much longer and possessed many more attributes associated with a political party. After the 1896 election the National Association began to decline, and it appears that the loss of the 1899 election caused it to disband. However, it was instrumental in further cementing an 'anti-liberal' identity within New Zealand, and its political objectives continued into the twentieth century, becoming in large part the foundation of the Political Reform League.

### **The early development of the National Association 1891-1893**

As with many social and political developments in New Zealand history, the formation of the National Association had roots in the wider 'Tasman World'.<sup>6</sup> In July 1891 news reached New Zealand that a new political group had been formed in Victoria. Called the National Association, it was a response to the establishment of a Labor Party in Victoria and the entry of a Labor Party into the New South Wales Parliament.<sup>7</sup> The idea of a movement ranged against political labour resonated locally and almost immediately there were calls for a National Association to be established in New Zealand.<sup>8</sup> There had been several recent developments to concern those who saw the rise of political labour as a potential problem. Unionism had grown in the late 1880s and it has been estimated that by 1890 twenty-seven percent of wage and salary earners belonged to a union.<sup>9</sup> Another indication that organised labour was becoming more powerful was the 1890 maritime strike, New Zealand's first experience of widespread union-organised strike action.<sup>10</sup> Although the strike was easily broken, as at a time of high unemployment the employers had no trouble finding strike breakers,<sup>11</sup> its effect was to politically activate

<sup>6</sup> Philippa Mein Smith, 'The Tasman World' in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, (ed.) Giselle Byrnes, Victoria: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp.298-299, defines the 'Tasman world' as both Australia and New Zealand and the traffic between them.

<sup>7</sup> D.W. Rawson, 'Victoria' in *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, (eds) P. Loveday, A.W. Martin, and R.S. Parker, Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1977, p.57.

<sup>8</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 11 July 1891, p.1 (supplement); *Press*, 16 July 1891, p.3; Rolleston Papers, Correspondence May-August 1891, 77-248-08/3, and Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library, show the amount of interest in the National Association.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Franks and Jim McAloon, *Labour: The New Zealand Labour Party 1916-2016*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2016, pp.39-42.

<sup>10</sup> Len Richardson, 'Parties and Political Change' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, (ed) Geoffrey W. Rice, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.201.

<sup>11</sup> Judith Bassett, *Sir Harry Atkinson, 1831-1892*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1975, p.159.

workers and employers alike.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, at the 1890 election five candidates identifying themselves with 'labour' won seats,<sup>13</sup> and became part of the Liberal Government. By mid-1891 that government's legislative programme had seemed to confirm the fears of those who opposed it. Ballance's first financial statement, delivered on 16 June, announced the government's intention to abolish the property tax and replace it with a land and income tax.<sup>14</sup> These proposals were placed before the House in August.<sup>15</sup> Other bills introduced during the 1891 sessions included the Land Bill, which the Opposition regarded as the thin edge of the land nationalisation wedge,<sup>16</sup> and the Shop Hours Bill, which was seen as a major interference in the freedom of employers.<sup>17</sup> When combined with events in Australia, particularly the 1891 New South Wales election, in which Labor won twenty-five seats and held the balance of power,<sup>18</sup> some in New Zealand felt they had much to be concerned about. Hence, the idea of an organisation which could counter the perceived dangers of labour found support.

Another development that concerned those who opposed the Liberals was the attempt to form a nationwide Liberal Association. Grey had founded Liberal Associations in conjunction with his 1879 election campaign,<sup>19</sup> and they had since begun independently at various times and locations throughout New Zealand.<sup>20</sup> However, in 1891 Ballance proposed a national 'Liberal Federation', based on the National Liberal Federation in the United Kingdom. He envisioned that it would provide grass-roots support for the parliamentary Liberals and encompass trade unions and other organisations interested in promoting Liberalism.<sup>21</sup> Ballance's main concern seemed to be providing support and finance for the next election,<sup>22</sup> but he also wanted some of the elements associated with political parties. These included candidate selection by local Liberal Committees to prevent vote splitting and every Liberal candidate adhering to a nationwide platform, which

<sup>12</sup> Franks and McAloon, pp.43-44. The first Employers' Associations were formed as a result of the maritime strike, see: *New Zealand Herald*, 29 August 1890, p.6; *Evening Post*, 29 August 1890, p.2; *Press*, 4 September 1890, p.6; *Press*, 6 September 1890, p.4.

<sup>13</sup> Tony Ballantyne, 'The State, Politics and Power, 1769-1893' in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, (ed) Giselle Byrnes, South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press, 2009, p.121; Franks and McAloon, p.45 said the count was disputed, but there was no doubt that 'Labour' electoral strength was considerable, particularly in Dunedin and Christchurch.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy McIvor, *The Rainmaker: A Biography of John Ballance, Journalist and Politician, 1839-1893*, Auckland: Heinemann Reed, 1989, pp.185-186.

<sup>15</sup> McIvor, p.188.

<sup>16</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.72, 8 July -30 July 1891, pp.499-558, showed that the main Opposition objection to the bill was that it would led to land nationalisation.

<sup>17</sup> This was often mentioned at early National Association meetings, for example: *Taranaki Herald*, 23 November 1891, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 23 December 1891, p.6.

<sup>18</sup> P. Loveday, A.W. Martin, and Patrick Weller, 'New South Wales' in *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, (eds) P. Loveday, A.W. Martin, and R.S. Parker, Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1977, p.188.

<sup>19</sup> Edmund Bohan, *To Be a Hero: Sir George Grey 1812-1898*, Auckland: Harper Collins, 1998, pp.274-275.

<sup>20</sup> D. A. Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988, pp.32-33, detailed some earlier Liberal Associations, although the relationship of these Associations to the Liberals of the 1890s was muddled by the tendency of a great variety of candidates to claim the title 'liberal'.

<sup>21</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.83.

<sup>22</sup> This was also a concern of the Opposition: see A.K. Newman to Rolleston, 8 April 1892, Rolleston Papers, 77-245-09/2, March-June 1892, Alexander Turnbull Library.

was to be decided on at a national conference.<sup>23</sup> The National Liberal Association was launched in Dunedin in May 1891 at a meeting attended by several Liberal MHRs and a platform was released.<sup>24</sup> By November Ballance had appointed a national council and an organising secretary, Thomas Buick, the MHR for Wairau. During the parliamentary recess in the summer of 1891-92, Buick undertook a nationwide tour to organise local Liberal Associations.<sup>25</sup> The knowledge that the Liberals appeared to be organising vigorously probably encouraged those opposed to them to develop their own structures.

Almost as soon as news of the Victorian National Association arrived, rumours began circulating that a National Association would be formed in New Zealand.<sup>26</sup> In July 1891, Sir John Hall wrote to William Rolleston, mentioning that he had a letter from Oliver Samuel, ex-MHR for New Plymouth, saying a local movement was starting a National Association.<sup>27</sup> Rolleston became Leader of the Opposition in August 1891 and his correspondence from August to October 1891 shows a keen awareness among Opposition supporters of the need to start some form of political association.<sup>28</sup> The first reported meeting of a National Association in New Zealand was in Auckland on 7 September. However, the detail in the report - that eighty members were present, that the roll of membership was now 300, and that the platform had been printed - suggests that the National Association had been formed some time before September.<sup>29</sup> This meeting was reported in newspapers throughout New Zealand, between 9 and 10 September, and the platform published in six other newspapers, including in at least one daily from the other main centres.<sup>30</sup> Initially, the reaction to the formation of the National Association was muted. There was a letter to the editor in the *New Zealand Herald* on 10 September,<sup>31</sup> and an editorial supporting the Association. However, they were dissatisfied with the platform, calling it vague.<sup>32</sup> Outside of Auckland City, the *Taranaki Herald*,<sup>33</sup> *Press*,<sup>34</sup> and *Waikato Times*<sup>35</sup> all ran favourable editorials, although the *Press* also complained that the platform was vague. Another indication that the National Association may have been formed earlier is that on 28 September an advertisement appeared in the *New*

<sup>23</sup> Mclvor, pp.197-198.

<sup>24</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 28 May 1891, p.3.

<sup>25</sup> Mclvor, p.198, he also recorded that Buick was offered a salary of £250.

<sup>26</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 7 August 1891, p.4.

<sup>27</sup> Sir John Hall to Rolleston, 18 July 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence May-August 1891, 77-248-08/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>28</sup> For example: H.A. Stratford to Rolleston, (n.d.) Rolleston Papers, Correspondence May-August 1891, 77-248-08/3, Alexander Turnbull Library; Pressy E. Granger to Rolleston, 9 September 1891, Charles Lewis to Rolleston, 9 September 1891, Bryce to Rolleston 13 October 1891, Jackson Palmer to Rolleston, 23 October 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>29</sup> *Auckland Star*, 8 September 1891, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 9 September 1891, p.4.

<sup>30</sup> *Evening Post*, 10 September 1891, p.3; *Press*, 10 September 1891, p.5; *Otago Daily Times*, 10 September 1891, p.2.

<sup>31</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 10 September 1891, p.3.

<sup>32</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 14 September 1891, p.4.

<sup>33</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 17 September 1891, p.2

<sup>34</sup> *Press*, 19 September 1891, p.4.

<sup>35</sup> *Waikato Times*, 19 September 1891, p.2.

*Zealand Herald* for an organising secretary. A salary of £250 was offered and the applicant was expected to devote the whole of his time to the position.<sup>36</sup> This advertisement appeared in newspapers throughout New Zealand,<sup>37</sup> and the appointment of John Hastie was announced in late November. Hastie was living in Invercargill, but was described as a recent immigrant from Scotland with considerable experience in political matters.<sup>38</sup> The fact that the Association had the funds and the work for a fulltime secretary suggests that by the beginning of October 1891 it was already well organised.

The platform of the Auckland National Association was widely publicised during September 1891. It had five points with the last two, promoting reforms in economic, legislative and constitutional issues and advancing sound political economy, being a continuation of the Financial and Political Reform Associations.<sup>39</sup> However, the first three had a slightly different tone, encapsulated in the first point - to promote national sentiments as opposed to sectional and class interests. Point two was the removal of any impediments to commercial, mining and manufacturing enterprises and the third to ensure the registration of all electors. The National Association was very much concerned with what they described as 'class legislation', those laws which they thought favoured one class over the welfare of the whole nation.

Some commonalities in platform were not the only links to the Financial and Political Reform Associations. As far as can be ascertained, sixteen members of the Auckland Financial and Political Reform Association went on to join the National Association. Furthermore, eight of those had been committee members of the Financial and Political Reform Association, suggesting that they were dedicated to the 'anti-liberal' cause. As the National Association spread, this pattern was also observed in areas which had active 1887 Associations. For example, in Christchurch there were four members of the Canterbury Political Reform Association who joined the National Association, and in Dunedin there were six members in common between the two groups.

The National Association was very quickly recognised as an anti-labour body. The Trade and Labour Council denounced it as a 'fresh and ingenious attempt to deprive labour of fair representation in Parliament'.<sup>40</sup> Although this opinion of the National Association was somewhat extreme, it was generally accepted that it was against the current Liberal Government and therefore of a more conservative nature.<sup>41</sup> This impression was reinforced by the first major piece of political lobbying the Association undertook: to organise a petition in an attempt to prevent Ballance from altering the balance of power in

<sup>36</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 28 September 1891, p.1

<sup>37</sup> *Evening Post*, 30 September 1891, p.3; *Press*, 2 October 1891, p.1; *Otago Daily Times*, 2 October 1891, p.3.

<sup>38</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 21 November 1891, p.4; *Southland Times*, 24 November 1891, p.2.

<sup>39</sup> See chapter one, p.25, for a discussion on the platforms of the Financial and Political Reform Associations.

<sup>40</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 September 1891, p.4.

<sup>41</sup> For example: *Auckland Star*, 17 October 1891, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 28 October 1891, p.3; *Star*, 23 November 1891, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 30 November 1891, p.4.

the Legislative Council. In early 1891, Atkinson had appointed seven new members to the Legislative Council as insurance against the possibility of a radical Liberal Government.<sup>42</sup> This meant that Ballance found his most significant bills rejected by the upper house, and it was difficult for the Liberals to govern.<sup>43</sup> He therefore proposed his own appointments to weight the Council in favour of the Liberals. By 2 October the National Association had organised a petition against the new appointments because it would remove the majority enjoyed by Opposition supporters in the Council.<sup>44</sup> This action placed it firmly against the Ballance Government and gained it further publicity.

The importance of this stand over the changes to the Legislative Council is illustrated by the spread of the National Association. The first area outside of Auckland Province to start a branch was New Plymouth. The *Taranaki Herald* had been a supporter of the Association from the beginning.<sup>45</sup> On 2 October they published a short article saying they would like to receive copies of the National Association's Legislative Council petition.<sup>46</sup> On 22 October an editorial again praised the National Association and signalled that a branch was about to be set up in New Plymouth.<sup>47</sup> The first meeting was held on 9 November, led by R. Clinton Hughes, who had stood for New Plymouth at the 1890 election.<sup>48</sup> The main concern expressed at the meeting was that the government's measures brought before the House in the last session would 'materially check the progress which the colony had been making'. After some discussion about whether there was a need for an Association in New Plymouth, the motion was carried to hold another meeting a week later at which a branch of the National Association would be formed.<sup>49</sup> This meeting, held on 22 November, elected a committee, but there was some debate about the advisability of joining with the Auckland National Association. However, it was pointed out that an Association formed in Taranaki without affiliation to the Auckland branch would have little influence, and so the majority voted to join.<sup>50</sup> This was a substantial step for those who supported the Opposition, signalling a realisation that colony-wide organisation was necessary to further their views.

Another area in which the Legislative Council petition raised awareness of the National Association was the Waikato. The petition was presented and signed by numerous members at the October meeting of the Waikato Farmers' Club. At the same meeting, there was an effort to get the Farmers' Club to endorse the Association's Platform, which appears to have been sent with the petition. There was some fierce opposition to the National Association being discussed at the Club, as it was thought that this would signal

<sup>42</sup> Bassett, *Sir Harry Atkinson*, pp.164-165.

<sup>43</sup> Mclvor, p.195.

<sup>44</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 2 October 1891, p.4.

<sup>45</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 17 September 1891, p.2.

<sup>46</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 2 October 1891, p.2.

<sup>47</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 22 October 1891, p.2.

<sup>48</sup> General Election, 1890, *AJHR*, 1891 (S.1), H.2, p.1.

<sup>49</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 10 November 1891, p.2.

<sup>50</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 23 November 1891, p.2.

an identification with partisan politics. The counter-argument was that in the current political climate farmers should work together to prevent anti-farming legislation. The matter was resolved by the reading of the National Association's five objectives, with most at the meeting agreeing with them, and it was suggested that all members of the Club should send their names and membership fee to Auckland.<sup>51</sup> Although it seems there were people within the Farmers' Clubs in the Waikato who wished them to remain politically neutral, it was through these Clubs that the National Association opened branches in the region. In early December, arrangements were made for a delegation of the Auckland National Association to visit the Waikato with the purpose of opening branches.<sup>52</sup> The four-member party spoke at the Cambridge Farmers' Club meeting on 14 December, Ohaupo and Te Awamutu on 15 December, and Hamilton on 16 December. A theme expressed at all these meetings was the importance of groups who were against the present government uniting and organising to bring out every voter.<sup>53</sup> Edward Lake, the MHR for Waikato, wanted to know if the Association would support candidates, and was assured that they would select and support candidates within the Auckland Province, and further afield if possible.<sup>54</sup> The ideals of the National Association must have resonated among the largely rural communities they visited as branches were formed everywhere they spoke.<sup>55</sup>

The Auckland National Association was very active in spreading its message, sending delegations throughout the Auckland Province to form and support branches. In October 1891, a meeting was held in Warkworth to discuss forming a local National Association. The main concern of those at the meeting was the possibility of land nationalisation. There was some disagreement about whether the National Association was an appropriate organisation to further these views, as some present believed that the Association had 'a party behind it, which was undesirable'.<sup>56</sup> Those in favour of aligning with the National Association asked for the Auckland Section to send some speakers, which they did, with three members travelling to Warkworth on 9 November. The Association's emphasis on the freehold and the dangers of the 'socialistic legislation' of the Liberal Government convinced those present to form a branch.<sup>57</sup>

During 1892 and early 1893 the Auckland National Association concentrated on opening branches in areas surrounding the city. This was mostly undertaken by Hastie in his position as paid secretary, but he was often assisted by other prominent members of the Association, in particular Edmund Bell.<sup>58</sup> Initially, they focused on places south of

<sup>51</sup> *Waikato Times*, 15 October 1891, p.2.

<sup>52</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 December 1891, p.6.

<sup>53</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 December 1891, pp.5-6.

<sup>54</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 December 1891, p.6.

<sup>55</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 December 1891, p.4.

<sup>56</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 28 October 1891, p.3.

<sup>57</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 November 1891, p.6.

<sup>58</sup> Bell was an Auckland architect, who also took part in public debates against single-taxers, see: *Auckland Star*, 21 October 1891, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 11 November 1891, p.6.

Auckland City, with branches formed at Onehunga<sup>59</sup> and Mount Roskill<sup>60</sup> in May 1892, Otahuhu in June,<sup>61</sup> Mangere in August,<sup>62</sup> and Papatoitō<sup>63</sup> (sic), Papakura and Wairoa<sup>64</sup> in October. At the same time, branches were formed west and north of the City, one at Birkenhead in September<sup>65</sup> and Avondale in October.<sup>66</sup> There were also reports of support in the Dargaville area.<sup>67</sup> In March 1893 a delegation from the Auckland Association visited Kaipara, and branches were formed at Port Albert, Maungaturoto, Matakōhe, and Paparoa.<sup>68</sup> During March and April, Francis Mander, from the Albertland Branch, was active in spreading the National Association message, speaking at meetings in Hateo North, Wayby<sup>69</sup> and Tauhoa,<sup>70</sup> all of which formed branches. There were also branches opened at North Albertland and Te Ari.<sup>71</sup> It seems that the ideals of the National Association had particular appeal in the areas north of Auckland City. A report of a meeting of the Albertland branch, in Port Albert, indicates that the Liberal Government's emphasis on taxing the unimproved value of the land was felt to be unfair, as many properties had modest improvements and there was a lack of infrastructure, so settlers did not gain property value from public works.<sup>72</sup>

Branches also opened without direct assistance from Auckland. Besides New Plymouth, they were also founded in Wellington and the Hawke's Bay. A meeting was held in Wellington in February to start an organisation to oppose the Liberal Government, but was not certain about using the name National Association.<sup>73</sup> Alfred Newman, writing to Rolleston in the same month, mentioned that a meeting to organise Opposition supporters was planned for February.<sup>74</sup> In April the *Evening Post* stated that steps were being taken to form a National Association in Wellington and it listed the proposed platform points.<sup>75</sup> This was confirmed by Newman, who wrote to Rolleston about the Association in April 1892.<sup>76</sup> However, the lack of published reports of meetings makes it difficult to know how active this branch was. At the first annual meeting of the National Association, in September 1892, it was mentioned that Wellington was slow in getting started, but it

<sup>59</sup> *Auckland Star*, 5 May 1892, p.5.

<sup>60</sup> *Auckland Star*, 31 May 1892, p.2.

<sup>61</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 3 June 1892, p.4.

<sup>62</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 12 August 1892, p.6.

<sup>63</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 5 October 1892, p.4.

<sup>64</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 29 October 1892, p.4, Wairoa is now known as Clevedon.

<sup>65</sup> *Auckland Star*, 12 September 1892, p.2.

<sup>66</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 29 October 1892, p.4.

<sup>67</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1892, p.2.

<sup>68</sup> *Auckland Star*, 6 March 1893, p.2.

<sup>69</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 April 1893, p.5.

<sup>70</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 28 March 1893, p.6.

<sup>71</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 April 1893, p.6.

<sup>72</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 August 1893, p.3.

<sup>73</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 9 February 1892, p.3.

<sup>74</sup> Newman to Rolleston, 19 February 1892, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-February 1892, 77-248-09/1, Alexander Turnbull Library. Newman was also in favour of using the name Nationalist Liberal, see: Newman to Rolleston, (n.d but probably December 1891), Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>75</sup> *Evening Post*, 30 April 1892, p.2.

<sup>76</sup> Newman to Rolleston, 8 April 1892, Correspondence March-June 1892, 77-248-09/2, Alexander Turnbull Library.

was hoped that it would keep developing,<sup>77</sup> When the Marlborough branch formed in late 1892, it also mentioned the existence of a Wellington section.<sup>78</sup>

In the Hawke's Bay area, there seemed to be an eagerness to start a movement supporting the Opposition. Gilbert Carson informed Rolleston in November 1891 that he had visited the area and met with Patrick McLean and Nathaniel Kettle, who were both interested in starting such an organisation.<sup>79</sup> However, the first report of the Hawke's Bay branch appeared on 20 July 1892.<sup>80</sup> It is difficult to account for this delay, but Carson also told Rolleston that he had advised Patrick McLean and Kettle to wait until the Christchurch Opposition supporters had met, which was expected to happen in late November 1891.<sup>81</sup> The first meeting of the Hawke's Bay National Association was held on 25 July 1892 and was by invitation only. A summary of this meeting supplied to the *Hawke's Bay Herald* stated that ninety-eight people had attended, a six-point platform had been agreed upon, a committee had been elected and R.D.D. McLean had been appointed president.<sup>82</sup> The newly formed Association then organised a public meeting, which was held on 27 August at Napier. The theme of the two speakers, Patrick McLean and George Hunter, was that the National Association was a truly national organisation which would place the needs of the country before any other interests.<sup>83</sup> Much was made of the name 'National' and strong emphasis was laid on the need for those who shared the views of the Association to work together for the good of the country.

With the development of a Hawke's Bay branch, Hastie claimed that the National Association had 'circled' the North Island.<sup>84</sup> However, they did not make any progress in the South Island until late 1892,<sup>85</sup> when a branch began in Marlborough. Initially, it was proposed to call the group the Marlborough Association of Settlers and Working Men. The main concern of those who attended seemed to be to promote friendly relations between farmers and workers, but it was also stated that Buick, the local MHR, was not the farmers' ally due to his views on the single tax and land nationalisation.<sup>86</sup> However, the *Marlborough Express* reported later in October that, due to a request from Auckland, the name of the new group would be the National Association Marlborough Section.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>77</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1892, p.3

<sup>78</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 10 October 1892, p.3.

<sup>79</sup> Gilbert Carson to Rolleston, 11 November 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library; *Auckland Star*, 8 September 1891, p.5.

<sup>80</sup> *Woodville Examiner*, 20 July 1892, p.2.

<sup>81</sup> Carson to Rolleston, 11 November 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>82</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 26 July 1892, p.3; Hastie wrote to McLean in May 1892 to ask him to support a National Association in Napier. See: Hastie to R.D.D. McLean, 4 May 1892, McLean Family Papers, Personal, financial, official and other miscellaneous papers, MS-papers-0032-1029, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>83</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 29 August 1892, p.3.

<sup>84</sup> *Auckland Star*, 30 August 1892, p.4.

<sup>85</sup> John Angus, 'City and Country, Change and Continuity Politics in Otago 1877-1893', PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1976, p. 568, notes that there were attempts to start a National Association in Southland and Otago, but they were unsuccessful.

<sup>86</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 10 October 1892, p.3.

<sup>87</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 17 October 1892, p.2.

Again, the importance of national unity was emphasised in the decision to use the title.

One important aspect of all the branches of the National Association that developed between 1891 and 1893 was that they were truly extra-parliamentary organisations. They were all apparently begun and driven by citizens rather than by Members of Parliament. Some National Associations may have had members who were MHRs or who had political ambitions, but the organisation of, and speaking at, meetings was largely carried out by men from outside parliament. This was in direct contrast to the Liberal Association, which was almost entirely promoted by MHRs. In this regard, the National Association was continuing the organisational model used by the Political and Financial Associations that had arisen in 1887, that of grassroots support for a 'party' in parliament. This distinction is important because the presence of extra-parliamentary groups is recognised by political scientists as one of the indications that mass political parties are developing.<sup>88</sup>

However, in 1891 the Opposition MHRs recognised that they too needed to be more organised and drew up plans to initiate political associations. A resolution passed in caucus in September 1891 shows the plans the Opposition MHRs had and that they understood they needed to be more active, particularly in the larger population centres.<sup>89</sup> It also seems that in 1891 sitting Opposition members had no intention of partnering with the National Association. The resolution contains no mention of the Association or the people involved with it. Furthermore, at the first annual meeting of the National Association in September 1892, it was stated those groups which were begun by MHRs were not part of the National Association, but were welcome to join.<sup>90</sup> It is unclear as to why Opposition members did not co-operate with the National Association, but there does seem to have been some uncertainty around whether it was politically advantageous to be identified with it. When the National Association asked Rolleston to speak in Auckland in early 1893, he said he would only do so if it was not under the auspices of the Association. This was based on advice from Edwin Mitchelson, the Opposition MHR for Eden, who told him that the Association was perceived by the public as being very conservative and that it would not be to Rolleston's advantage to be connected to it.<sup>91</sup> The Association's tactic of running 'stump'<sup>92</sup> meetings was also viewed with distaste, with some MHRs believing it was unnecessarily combative.<sup>93</sup> For whatever reason, it appears that between 1891 and 1893 the Opposition MHRs decided that the best political organisations were those driven by themselves.

<sup>88</sup> Raymond Miller, *Party Politics in New Zealand*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp.68-69.

<sup>89</sup> Hall Papers, Correspondence September-October 1891, MS-Papers-1784-180, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>90</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 1892, p.3.

<sup>91</sup> Edwin Mitchelson to Rolleston, 11 December 1892, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence October-December 1892, 77-248-09/5, Alexander Turnbull Library; Mitchelson to Rolleston, 8 February 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-April 1893, 77-248-10/1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>92</sup> This term is usually used to refer to a series of public meetings held for purposes of rallying local voters.

<sup>93</sup> For example: Scobie Mackenzie to Rolleston, 29 January 1892, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-February 1892, 77-248-09/1, Alexander Turnbull Library; Mitchelson to Rolleston, 25 January 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-April 1893, 77-248-10/1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

The first attempt to form Associations driven by MHRs was in the Manawatu-Rangitikei area. John Bryce had indicated to Rolleston as early as October 1891 that he wanted to start an organisation like the National Association on the West Coast of the North Island.<sup>94</sup> Within Rolleston's papers is a draft of a planned circular letter written by Bryce for the purpose of gaining support for an Association.<sup>95</sup> These plans seemed to have come to fruition on 23 December 1891, when a large public meeting was held in Marton with the purpose of discussing country districts uniting against the policies of the current government, which were detrimental towards landowners and towns. The main speaker was the local MHR, Douglas Macarthur. Bryce also spoke and James Wilson, MHR for Palmerston, was reported as the organiser.<sup>96</sup> The main objectives of the group were similar to the National Association, but it differed in that they wished to see a return to the dual vote.<sup>97</sup> This had been in operation for elections from 1881 to 1887 and had given men the right to vote once in each electorate they owned property, additional to the one vote that every man had. Therefore, those who owned property potentially had more influence at elections. Furthermore, they chose the name Rangitikei Political Association, suggesting that they wanted to separate themselves from the National Association. The movement spread to Feilding in January,<sup>98</sup> and Foxton in March.<sup>99</sup> The format of these meetings was very similar to that at Marton, with Macarthur and Bryce as speakers; in Foxton, Wilson also spoke. The Feilding group decided on the name Colonist Political Association,<sup>100</sup> and at Foxton they chose Manawatu National Political Association.<sup>101</sup> A branch was also formed in Campbelltown.<sup>102</sup> There were reports of a group forming in Palmerston North,<sup>103</sup> but no copies of either the *Manawatu Daily Times* or *Manawatu Evening Standard* from the period have survived, making it difficult to ascertain the size and strength of any such group.

All the Manawatu-Rangitikei Associations were active during 1892. The death of the sitting MHR, Macarthur, in May 1892, triggered a by-election in Rangitikei, and this may have given them momentum. Both the Colonist<sup>104</sup> and Rangitikei Associations<sup>105</sup> played a role in selecting Robert Bruce as the 'conservative' candidate. Bruce, an ex-MHR, won the seat with a small majority.<sup>106</sup> There was some suggestion that the government was

<sup>94</sup> John Bryce to Rolleston, 13 October 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>95</sup> Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>96</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 12 January 1892, p.2; Bryce to Rolleston, 25 December 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>97</sup> *Manawatu Herald*, 29 December 1891, p.2.

<sup>98</sup> *Feilding Star*, 28 January 1892, p.2.

<sup>99</sup> *Manawatu Herald*, 15 March 1892, p.2.

<sup>100</sup> *Feilding Star*, 28 January 1892, p.2.

<sup>101</sup> *Manawatu Herald*, 15 March 1892, p.2.

<sup>102</sup> *Manawatu Herald*, 10 May 1892, p.3, Campbelltown is now called Rongotea.

<sup>103</sup> *Feilding Star*, 21 July 1893, p.2.

<sup>104</sup> *Feilding Star*, 2 June 1892, p.2.

<sup>105</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 4 June 1892, p.2.

<sup>106</sup> *Evening Post*, 9 July 1892, p.2, recorded the majority as 61.

surprised by Bruce's victory, having considered the seat to be safe.<sup>107</sup> However, since it had been held by an Opposition MHR, Bruce's victory may have been expected, but it was narrow and it is possible that the presence of the Political Associations in the electorate helped to secure the win. After the by-election in July, there are no further reports of the Rangitikei Political Association, suggesting it may have dissolved, but the Colonist Political Association was meeting as late as October 1892.<sup>108</sup> Although the *Wanganui Chronicle* thought that the Manawatu-Rangitikei Political Associations were collaborating with the Auckland, New Plymouth and Napier National Associations,<sup>109</sup> there is no evidence that the National Association considered the Manawatu-Rangitikei groups to be part of the movement.

The other Opposition group driven by MHRs was in the Canterbury area and Sir John Hall seems to have been its protagonist. He began planning in September 1891,<sup>110</sup> and wrote to Rolleston in October 1891 about the need to start a local political organisation, suggesting a meeting to coincide with the Canterbury A and P show.<sup>111</sup> The meeting proved disappointing with only five men attending.<sup>112</sup> Despite this, Hall pressed on with trying to start an association and at a meeting held in mid-January a name was chosen, the Canterbury Political Association, and a secretary appointed.<sup>113</sup> Sometime during January a platform was decided upon and circulars organised.<sup>114</sup> However, by April Hall was concerned about the progress of the Association,<sup>115</sup> and it seems to have been wound up some time in May, partly because it could not cover expenses. Edward Wright, the MHR for Ashburton, thought it would be replaced with another association which would try and link town and country.<sup>116</sup> Wright may have been referring to the New Zealand Farmers' and Country Settlers' League, which held its first meeting in July 1892.<sup>117</sup> Although this organisation had some similar objectives to the National Association,<sup>118</sup> it

<sup>107</sup> *Oamaru Mail*, 8 July 1892, p.3.

<sup>108</sup> *Feilding Star*, 20 September 1892, p.2, had an advert for October meeting.

<sup>109</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 31 December 1891, p.2.

<sup>110</sup> Hall Papers, Correspondence September-October 1891, MS-Papers-1784-180, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>111</sup> Hall to Rolleston, 22 October 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library. A and P show is an abbreviation for Agricultural and Pastoral Show

<sup>112</sup> Edward Wright to Rolleston, 1 December 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>113</sup> Hall to Rolleston, 11 January 1892, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-February 1892, 77-248-09/1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>114</sup> Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-February 1892, 77-248-09/1, Alexander Turnbull Library, has a copy of this, outlining the four objectives of the Association.

<sup>115</sup> Hall to Rolleston, 9 April 1892, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence March-June 1892, 77-248-09/2, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>116</sup> Wright to Rolleston, 21 May 1892, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence March-June 1892, 77-248-09/2, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>117</sup> *Press*, 6 July 1892, p.1; *Star*, 14 July 1892, p.3.

<sup>118</sup> Rolleston Papers, Correspondence October-December 1892, 77-248-09/5, Alexander Turnbull Library, has a copy of the programme of the New Zealand Farmers' and Country Settlers' League.

does not seem to have had the goal of influencing elections.<sup>119</sup> The failure of Hall's efforts to promote the formation of a political association seems to suggest that there was no desire among Opposition supporters to join a group that was being organised by a sitting MHR. It is possible that groups sponsored by MHRs were viewed with suspicion, because they could be construed as being for the electoral benefit of the sponsoring member.<sup>120</sup> Certainly those associations organised by MHRs were much less successful than the National Association, which was organised by men outside parliament.

## The National Association and the 1893 election

From the beginning of 1893, the Auckland National Association signalled that it intended to play an active role in that year's election. The *Auckland Star* reported on 6 January that the Association was taking steps to select candidates for the Auckland seats, and speculated about who they would choose. It also noted that the Liberal Association had not yet acted.<sup>121</sup> Despite indications of an early start, it was not until November that the National Association officially announced that it would support two candidates for the Auckland City seat, W. Crowther and C.E. Button. Furthermore, it also lent support to W.S. Allen in Parnell, Edwin Mitchelson in Eden, Richard Monk in Waitemata, J. Trounson in Bay of Islands, W.F. Buckland in Manukau, William Massey in Franklin, Frederick Lang in Waipa, Isaac Coates in Waikato and Colonel Burton in Bay of Plenty.<sup>122</sup> All of these men, apart from Trounson, were either members of or closely linked to the National Association. It is difficult to establish how much influence the Auckland National Association had over the candidacy of the men they chose to support, but it does seem that they were behind the effort to get a candidate who supported the Opposition in every electorate in the Auckland Province.<sup>123</sup> W.S. Allen lived in Piako,<sup>124</sup> but was discussed as a possible National Association candidate for Parnell in July 1893, when he came to Auckland and held a political meeting under the auspices of the Association.<sup>125</sup> The fact that Allen was a candidate in an electorate where he did not reside suggests that the Association had asked him to

<sup>119</sup> It appears that the New Zealand Farmers' and Country Settlers' League was a South Island only organisation, which focused on farmers. See: *Press*, 27 July 1892, p.6; *Oamaru Mail*, 29 August 1892, p.4; *Mataura Ensign*, 30 August 1893, p.5.

It was still active as late as 1896, although it did not invite newspapers to, or provide information about, its meetings to the press see: *Star*, 13 December 1893, p.3; *Press*, 10 August 1896, p.4.

<sup>120</sup> *Manawatu Herald*, 12 March 1892, p.2, at the meeting to start the Manawatu Political Association, the local MHR, Wilson was accused of starting the Association for his own selfish reasons. Russell was reluctant to become involved in the Hawke's Bay National Association for this reason see: Russell to Thomas Gale, 25 November 1895, Russell Papers, letter book 24 October 1889-30 December 1895, MS-Papers-1711-04, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>121</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 January 1893, p.4.

<sup>122</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 November 1893, p.5.

<sup>123</sup> The only electorate in the Auckland Province for which the National Association did not recommend a candidate was Thames.

<sup>124</sup> Diane Wilson, *New Zealand Elections: Five Significant Rolls, 1881, 1893, 1896, 1911, 1925*, Auckland: New Zealand Society of Genealogists, 2013.

<sup>125</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 July 1893, p.4.

stand, rather than being chosen because he was a popular local figure.<sup>126</sup> There is even more evidence that Colonel Burton was chosen by the National Association to stand in Bay of Plenty. Burton, who resided in Auckland,<sup>127</sup> declared his intention to stand for Bay of Plenty in early November 1893, and promptly began travelling throughout the electorate,<sup>128</sup> where it was said ninety-nine percent of electors did not know who he was.<sup>129</sup> It was reported that Burton was standing with the backing of the Association,<sup>130</sup> and he communicated his progress to Hastie, the Association's secretary.<sup>131</sup> The idea that one of the National Association's roles would be to organise candidates to oppose the government had been expressed in public meetings,<sup>132</sup> and it appears that they did this for the 1893 election.

Outside of the Auckland Province the National Association seems to have had very little influence over candidate selection. In the areas where Association branches had been established - Poverty Bay, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki and Blenheim – the only evidence of local Association activity was the selection of George Hunter, one of the initiators of the Hawke's Bay National Association, as the candidate for Waipawa.<sup>133</sup> It was reported that Robert Trimble had been chosen by the Association to stand in New Plymouth.<sup>134</sup> However, the Taranaki National Association appears not to have held meetings between January 1893 and March 1896.<sup>135</sup> Trimble wrote to Rolleston about his decision to stand and did not mention the National Association,<sup>136</sup> so it seems unlikely that the Association was behind his candidacy. In Poverty Bay, the local National Association branch decided not to choose a candidate as they were only formed in August 1893 and felt there was not enough time to do so before the election.<sup>137</sup> In July 1893 it was reported that the 'Conservative Political Association' in Palmerston North was selecting a candidate for the Palmerston electorate.<sup>138</sup> However, John Duthie, an MHR for Wellington, had written to Rolleston earlier in the year, indicating that G.M. Snelson, the eventual Opposition candidate, was confirmed for the seat.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>126</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 9 November 1893, p.5.

<sup>127</sup> Wilson, *New Zealand Elections: Five Significant Rolls*.

<sup>128</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 16 November 1893, p.5.

<sup>129</sup> *Bay of Plenty Times*, 29 November 1893, p.2.

<sup>130</sup> *Star*, 7 November 1893, p.3; *Bay of Plenty Times*, 20 November 1893, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 25 November 1893, p.4.

<sup>131</sup> *Auckland Star*, 21 November 1893, p.4.

<sup>132</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 December 1891, p.6.

<sup>133</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 8 November 1893, p.2. Hunter was one of the main speakers at the Hawke's Bay National Association's first public meeting, see: *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 29 August 1892, p.3; M.D.N. Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics: 1890-1914', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1967, p.92; Russell to P.S. McLean, 3 November 1893, Russell Papers, letter book 24 October 1889-30 December 1895, MS-Papers-1711-04, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>134</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 16 October 1893, p.2.

<sup>135</sup> National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, Minute Book 1891-1897, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki.

<sup>136</sup> Robert Trimble to Rolleston, 22 October 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1893, 77-248-10/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>137</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 24 November 1893, p.4.

<sup>138</sup> *Feilding Star*, 21 July 1893, p.2.

<sup>139</sup> John Duthie to Rolleston, 29 March 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-April 1893, 77-248-10/1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

William Rolleston's correspondence also seems to point towards the National Association's influence over candidate selection in Auckland. During the second half of 1892 Hastie wrote to Rolleston several times to encourage him to join with the Auckland Association to make a nationwide movement. Hastie argued strongly that the Opposition would not make any progress against the Liberals unless they were united and shared funds and resources.<sup>140</sup> However, Rolleston chose not to make use of the National Association and instead seemed to rely on what he called 'our friends' to keep him informed of political developments in other centres. Duthie was Rolleston's main informant in the lower North Island<sup>141</sup> and Richard Oliver, MLC, was his contact in Dunedin.<sup>142</sup> For the rest of the country Rolleston seemed to rely on Opposition supporters contacting him for advice.<sup>143</sup> In the case of Auckland, Rolleston had very little correspondence with anyone. In late 1892, when Walter Buchanan, MHR for Wairarapa, visited Auckland, he reported what he had heard of the political situation while playing billiards at the Auckland Club.<sup>144</sup> In April 1893 Wilson, MHR for Palmerston, visited Auckland and wrote that he perceived the mood was in the Opposition's favour.<sup>145</sup> After April, there is no evidence that Rolleston had contact with anyone in Auckland, suggesting that the selection and organisation of candidates in the Auckland Province was under the control of the National Association and Rolleston was not consulted.

The result of the 1893 election was profoundly discouraging for the Opposition.<sup>146</sup> Several prominent members lost their seats, including Rolleston, Scobie Mackenzie and

<sup>140</sup> Hastie to Rolleston, 12 July 1892, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence July 1892, 77-248-09/3, Alexander Turnbull Library; Hastie to Rolleston, 22 August 1892, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence August-September 1892, 77-248-09/4, Alexander Turnbull Library; Hastie to Rolleston, 5 September 1892, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September 1892, 77-248-09/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>141</sup> For example: Duthie to Rolleston 29 March 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-April 1893, 77-248-10/1, Alexander Turnbull Library; Duthie to Rolleston 12 May, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence May- August 1893, 77-248-10/2, Alexander Turnbull Library; Duthie to Rolleston 21 October, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1893, 77-248-10/3, Alexander Turnbull Library; Duthie to Rolleston 1 November, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1893, 77-248-10/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>142</sup> For example: Richard Oliver to Rolleston, 28 May 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence May-August 1893, 77-248-10/2, Alexander Turnbull Library; Oliver to Rolleston, 29 October 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1893, 77-248-10/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>143</sup> For example: A.G. Fell to Rolleston, October 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1893, 77-248-10/3, Alexander Turnbull Library, wrote about Marlborough; A.T. Maginnity to Rolleston, 17 February 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-April 1893, 77-248-10/1, Alexander Turnbull Library wrote about Nelson; J.D. Lance to Rolleston, 24 April 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence May-August 1893, 77-248-10/2, Alexander Turnbull Library, wrote about North Canterbury.

<sup>144</sup> Walter Buchanan to Rolleston, 9 December 1892, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence October-December 1892, 77-248-09/5, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>145</sup> J.G. Wilson to Rolleston, 9 April 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-April 1893, 77-248-10/1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>146</sup> Brand, pp.27-28, thought the reduction from twenty-five to seventeen seats showed the collapse of the 'old conservative guard'; Phipps, pp.45-46, thinks that the Opposition emerged a more efficient and realistic group; Rolleston correspondence shows mostly pessimism: Duthie to Rolleston, 2 December 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1893, 77-248-10/3, Alexander Turnbull Library; Wright to Rolleston, 2 December 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1893, 77-248-10/3, Alexander Turnbull Library; Russell to Rolleston, 2 December 1893, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1893, 77-248-10/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

G.F Richardson.<sup>147</sup> However, a closer examination of where the seats were lost shows that in the Auckland area the Opposition actually gained three members. Waitemata was won by Richard Monk,<sup>148</sup> and two of the three Auckland City MHRs were National Association candidates. Previously these seats had been held by supporters of the government. The only other electorate where an Opposition candidate won against a sitting government supporter was Wellington City.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, two candidates supported by the National Association came close to winning, with Coates losing in Waikato by just 75 votes, and Massey losing in Franklin by 89.<sup>150</sup> In the Bay of Plenty seat, the Association candidate, Colonel Burton, had entered the race at a late stage, and was largely unknown in the electorate. However, he came a very credible second, losing to the Liberal candidate by 209 votes.<sup>151</sup> In the analysis of the Auckland election, the newspapers maintained that the superior organisation of the National Association played a large role in the success of the Opposition candidates.<sup>152</sup> The defeated government candidate for Waipa, G. Peacocke, complained that his defeat was due to the influence of the National Association,<sup>153</sup> and the *Observer* thought that excellent organisation undertaken by the Association could be fatal to the Liberal cause in Auckland.<sup>154</sup> Ballance's idea of a National Liberal Association had not succeeded and the Auckland Liberals had suffered a split. Some newspapers cited the lack of Liberal unity as another factor in the Opposition win.<sup>155</sup> At its post-election meeting the National Association felt it would be possible to attain greater success in the next election.<sup>156</sup>

The Opposition and their supporters had been aware from 1891 that they needed to change the way they organised for elections if they were going to regain the government benches. In the period between 1891 and the 1893 election they operated two different models of political organisation - the extra-parliamentary model, typified by the National Association, and the intra-parliamentary model, followed by the various political associations. The 1893 result showed that the National Association model of an organisation built by local voters supporting and fundraising for candidates was far more successful than the intra-parliamentary model which relied on the MHRs driving the formation of associations. Furthermore, the Auckland National Association had shown that being better organised than the Liberals could lead to electoral success.

<sup>147</sup> *Auckland Star*, 29 November 1893, p.4, noted that the government had been particularly successful in the rural South Island.

<sup>148</sup> Monk's election was subsequently declared void. However, the by-election was won by William Massey, the National Association vice-president and Opposition supporter, showing that the election of Monk was a swing against the government.

<sup>149</sup> General Election, 1893, *AJHR*, 1894, H.19, pp.1-4. The results in Wellington City were very similar to Auckland City with older, prominent politicians, Grey in Auckland, Stout in Wellington, topping the poll and Opposition supporters taking the two remaining places.

<sup>150</sup> General Election, 1893, *AJHR*, 1894, H.19, pp.1-4.

<sup>151</sup> General Election, 1893, *AJHR*, 1894, H.19, pp.1-4.

<sup>152</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 29 November 1893, p.4; *Press*, 30 November 1893, p.6; *Otago Daily Times*, 9 December 1893, p.4.

<sup>153</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 December 1893, p.4.

<sup>154</sup> *Observer*, 9 December 1893, p.3.

<sup>155</sup> *Auckland Star*, 29 November 1893, p.4; *Otago Daily Times*, 9 December 1893, p.4.

<sup>156</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1893, p.4.

## The growth of the National Association 1894-1895

With Rolleston out of parliament, William Russell was elected leader of the Opposition in 1894.<sup>157</sup> He was a reluctant leader but seemed to be more favourable to the idea of a nationwide Opposition electoral organisation and was more open to working with the National Association. However, many branches of the National Association suffered the fate that seemed to befall many political organisations during the 1890s; without an election to stimulate activity they became dormant.<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, the Auckland National Association remained strong and active. The Waitemata by-election, held in early April 1894, may have helped to continue the Association's momentum. It campaigned for the Opposition candidate, Massey,<sup>159</sup> so much that the government candidate, Jackson Palmer, took out an advert attacking the Association.<sup>160</sup> Massey's win doubtless continued to boost the confidence of the Auckland National Association.<sup>161</sup> During 1894 it met regularly and attacked Ward's budget and the return to overseas borrowing.<sup>162</sup>

It also criticised an article in the *Journal of the Department of Labour*, which apparently advocated socialism and 'free love'. The alleged scandalous nature of the article received wide publicity,<sup>163</sup> and led to a lengthy debate in the House about the appropriateness of a government funded journal publishing such distinctly objectionable articles.<sup>164</sup> These attacks led to the National Association gaining more publicity and the newspapers that supported the government increased their criticism of the Association.<sup>165</sup> The Association also continued opening branches,<sup>166</sup> but its activities were confined to the Auckland Province. The Auckland correspondent for the *Otago Daily Times* reported in October 1894 that the National Association was very well organised and was gaining ground in country areas.<sup>167</sup> Even though the Association was not yet organised nationally, its liveliness during 1894 suggested that it remained committed to politically agitating

<sup>157</sup> S.W. Grant, 'Russell, William Russell', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2r34/russell-william-russell>, accessed 19 May 2017.

<sup>158</sup> For example: National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, Minute Book 1891-1897, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki, show the Taranaki Branch held no meetings in 1894 or 1895; McLean Family Papers, Personal, financial, official and other miscellaneous papers, MS-papers-0032-1029, MS-papers-0032-1032, MS-papers-0032-1033, contain notices for Hawke's Bay National Association meetings in March and April 1894, but it is not known if this section continued meeting after April 1894; *New Zealand Herald*, 28 September 1894, p.4, report of the 1894 Annual General Meeting stated that the provincial branches were largely inactive.

<sup>159</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 10 February 1894, p.5; *Auckland Star*, 13 February 1894, p.4.

<sup>160</sup> *Auckland Star*, 29 March 1894, p.8.

<sup>161</sup> *Observer*, 14 April 1894, p.6.

<sup>162</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 5 June 1894, p.6; *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 7 June 1894, p.2; *Oamaru Mail*, 16 June 1894, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 6 July 1894, p.4.

<sup>163</sup> Reports about the article appeared in twelve newspapers between 14 July and 17 July 1894.

<sup>164</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.83, 21 June – 20 July 1894, p.469.

<sup>165</sup> For example: *Star*, 8 June 1894, p.2; *Evening Post*, 17 July 1894, p.5; *Oamaru Mail*, 29 August 1894, p.2.

<sup>166</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 11 August 1894, p.3; *New Zealand Herald*, 20 September 1894, p.6; *New Zealand Herald*, 28 September 1894, p.3.

<sup>167</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 6 October 1894, p.3.

for the Opposition.<sup>168</sup>

During 1895, the National Association was able to establish itself more firmly outside the Auckland Province, and made substantial gains in the South Island. In April 1895 Russell visited Christchurch and urged Opposition supporters in the city to be more organised, emphasising the need to work with other groups, like the National Association.<sup>169</sup> A meeting to form a Canterbury Branch of the National Association was held a few weeks later. There was a small attendance of around fourteen and Charles Lewis was elected chairman.<sup>170</sup> Lewis had been the chair of Rolleston's 1890 election committee,<sup>171</sup> and of the short-lived Canterbury Political Association.<sup>172</sup> Several other men who had been part of the Canterbury Political Association were also present, suggesting that those driving the Canterbury National Association had some experience in organising for the Opposition. It is also notable that there were no current or ex-MHRs present and nor did any become involved in the organisation as it grew. Despite its small beginnings, the Canterbury National Association gained strength throughout 1895. In July, the *Press* reported that membership was growing rapidly, illustrated by the admittance of forty new members at the last council meeting.<sup>173</sup> They had enough confidence in September to open a meeting room for members.<sup>174</sup> In October branches were formed in Ashburton<sup>175</sup> and Oxford.<sup>176</sup> A report to the December meeting of the Auckland Council stated that the Canterbury National Association had 350 members, and was planning more local branches.<sup>177</sup> In Otago there were reports as early as September that a local National Association might be formed,<sup>178</sup> but it took until December to organise a meeting. The Otago National Association was formed on 23 December and a committee of forty was appointed, suggesting that there was dedicated support in Dunedin.<sup>179</sup> The growth of the National Association in the South Island led the *Grey River Argus* to speculate that a branch might even be formed on the West Coast.<sup>180</sup>

In comparison, the North Island, the National Association's traditional stronghold, was relatively quiet. However, in early December an enthusiastic meeting was held at which the Association was finally able to establish a branch in Wellington, with a committee

<sup>168</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 28 October 1894, p.3 report of the Annual General Meeting said that the Auckland branch alone had over 1 000 members, this did not count the various branches.

<sup>169</sup> *Press*, 16 April 1895, p.4.

<sup>170</sup> *Star*, 4 May 1895, p.4.

<sup>171</sup> Charles Lewis to Rolleston, 10 September 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>172</sup> Rolleston Papers, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-February 1892, 77-248-09/1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>173</sup> *Press*, 27 July 1895, p.7.

<sup>174</sup> *Press*, 14 September 1895, p.7.

<sup>175</sup> *Ashburton Guardian*, 21 October 1895, p.2.

<sup>176</sup> *Press*, 21 October 1895, p.4.

<sup>177</sup> *Press*, 7 December 1895, p.8.

<sup>178</sup> *Evening Star*, 6 September 1895, p.3.

<sup>179</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 24 December 1895, p.2.

<sup>180</sup> *Grey River Argus*, 20 December 1895, p.2.

being appointed to arrange further meetings.<sup>181</sup> There were also two reports of a branch forming in Wanganui,<sup>182</sup> but no newspaper reports of a branch meeting. The *Wairarapa Daily Times* ran an advert for the National Association for almost all of 1895, containing the objectives of the Association and a membership form. The previously active branches of Poverty Bay and New Plymouth still seemed to be dormant.<sup>183</sup> However, the Hawke's Bay section was revived sometime in 1895 with the council of the Hawke's Bay National Association meeting from July.<sup>184</sup>

Another sign that the National Association was growing in confidence was its publication of a newspaper. Called *Liberty*, it was published monthly and first appeared in March 1895.<sup>185</sup> Two thousand copies were printed, and they sold out within two days.<sup>186</sup> Unfortunately it seems that only one copy of *Liberty* has survived, the second edition, published in April 1895.<sup>187</sup> This had eight pages, and showed that at this early stage the paper was very much focused on the Auckland National Association. It contained reports of the Auckland March meeting, and a re-print of a paper given by W.S. Allen at that meeting on the subject of taxation. There was also the first in a three-part series on proportional representation by Dr Joseph Giles, the Auckland Resident Magistrate.<sup>188</sup> There were two articles, one aimed at 'working-men' and another criticising the government's co-operative working scheme. The editorial attacked the government's borrowing schemes and predicted a sharp rise in land-tax to pay for the interest on the loans that Ward had brokered. The Liberal press was dismissive of the paper's content. The *New Zealand Times* called it the 'braying of the national ass'<sup>189</sup> and the *Oamaru Mail* said it preached 'the kind of liberty that kept children in coal mines'.<sup>190</sup> However, the perceived importance of *Liberty* in spreading the National Association's message is suggested by a cartoon which appeared in the *Observer* showing Hastie shooting Richard Seddon, with a gun labelled 'Liberty'.<sup>191</sup> At the 1895 Annual General Meeting, *Liberty* was described as the mouth-piece of the Association, enabling it to counter the misrepresentations in certain sections of the daily press. The report also mentioned that it was the Association's goal to have a daily paper, but that this was at present beyond its means.<sup>192</sup> However, the publication of a monthly journal suggests that Association was feeling positive about

<sup>181</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 7 December 1895, p.2.

<sup>182</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 11 October 1895, p.2; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 18 November 1895, p.2.

<sup>183</sup> National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, Minute Book 1891-1897, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki, record no meetings in 1894 or 1895.

<sup>184</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 29 January 1896, p.2; Russell to Hastie, 15 June 1895, Russell Papers, letter book 24 October 1889-30 December 1895, MS-Papers-1711-04, Alexander Turnbull Library, suggest the revival of Hawke's Bay Branch was beginning in June 1895.

<sup>185</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 2 March 1895, p.4.

<sup>186</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 9 March 1895, p.5.

<sup>187</sup> *Liberty: The Journal of the National Association of New Zealand*, JQ5892 LIB, Auckland War Memorial Museum.

<sup>188</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. I, A-L, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, p.293.

<sup>189</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 6 April 1895, p.1 (supplement).

<sup>190</sup> *Oamaru Mail*, 8 August 1895, p.2.

<sup>191</sup> *Observer*, 16 March 1895, p.1.

<sup>192</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 September 1895, p.3.

its future.

There were two by-elections in 1895 and early 1896 in which the National Association was involved. The first, in Auckland City during July 1895, was caused by Sir George Grey's resignation. At first the National Association had trouble finding a candidate.<sup>193</sup> However, Richard Monk agreed to stand just before the nomination day, after being promised that all his expenses would be paid.<sup>194</sup> Monk was not a strong candidate, having lost his seat after being convicted of corrupt election practices during his campaign for the 1893 election.<sup>195</sup> Seddon's nominee was T. Thompson, and it was thought that Monk's chances were improved by the candidacy of J.M. Shera, who had been a Liberal MHR between 1890 and 1893,<sup>196</sup> and J. Fawcus, who was the nominee of the Trades and Labour Council,<sup>197</sup> as this meant that three candidates were contesting the Liberal vote. In the week before the election both Shera and Fawcus withdrew,<sup>198</sup> even though it was alleged that the National Association had offered to pay Fawcus's election expenses if he maintained his candidacy.<sup>199</sup> Monk was soundly beaten by Thompson, although after the election the Association claimed they never expected to win.<sup>200</sup>

The second by-election, in Christchurch City, was caused by the appointment of Reeves to the post of Agent-General in London. Rumours began circulating in late 1895 that Reeves would be resigning,<sup>201</sup> but Seddon wished to secure a suitable candidate before he called the by-election. However, this gave the Canterbury National Association time to organise. In November 1895, the Canterbury Association asked Rolleston to stand in the event of a by-election, but he declined.<sup>202</sup> Seddon's own need to find a candidate then gave the Association time to regroup and choose another candidate. In early 1896 Reeves had not yet resigned, but the Association made the announcement that its chairman, Charles Lewis, would stand.<sup>203</sup> Lewis had not stood for parliament before and was considered inexperienced, but Seddon's problems worked in Lewis' favour as two candidates stood as Liberals, Richard Taylor as the official Liberal candidate and Tommy Taylor as an independent Liberal.<sup>204</sup> The vote splitting helped Lewis, who won by 412 votes. Tommy Taylor, whose dislike of Seddon was well-known, came second and the government-endorsed Richard Taylor came last.<sup>205</sup> This was seen by the National

<sup>193</sup> *Auckland Star*, 3 July 1895, p.4

<sup>194</sup> *Auckland Star*, 11 July 1895, p.9

<sup>195</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 10 February 1894, p.5.

<sup>196</sup> J.O. Wilson, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record 1840-1984*, Wellington: Government Printing Office, 1985, p.258.

<sup>197</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 11 July 1895, p.5.

<sup>198</sup> *Auckland Star*, 15 July 1895, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 July 1895, p.5.

<sup>199</sup> *Observer*, 20 July 1895, p.2.

<sup>200</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 September 1895, p.3.

<sup>201</sup> *Press*, 12 November 1895, p.6.

<sup>202</sup> Canterbury National Association to Rolleston, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence 1895, 77-248-10/5, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>203</sup> *Press*, 6 January 1896, p.5.

<sup>204</sup> *Press* 29 January 1896, p.5.

<sup>205</sup> *Press*, 14 February 1896, p.5.

Association as a sign that the popularity of Seddon, and the Liberals, was waning.<sup>206</sup>

## The National Association and the 1896 election

As the country entered the election year of 1896 the National Association had placed itself in a strong position and Lewis' win added considerable momentum.<sup>207</sup> Christchurch City had consistently returned 'Liberal' members since 1887, and the unexpected success silenced those within the Opposition who had been suspicious of the Association.<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, there is evidence that Russell was co-operating with the National Association. He wrote to Hastie in November 1894 about the Hawke's Bay Branch, saying he was very favourable to the idea,<sup>209</sup> and in another letter to Hastie in early 1895 indicated that he wanted to support the National Association.<sup>210</sup> Russell also believed that national unity and active organisation were important for the Opposition,<sup>211</sup> and he was prepared to use the organising ability of the National Association to achieve this. This was a marked contrast to 1893, when the Opposition had treated the Association with caution.

Another indication that the National Association had achieved a strong position was the public attacks made by both the Government MHRs and the pro-government newspapers. These first appeared in early March 1896, and all contained similar accusations. An editorial in the *Wanganui Herald* said the National Association was a 'misleading and grandiloquent title for the Conservative Party' and they wished to show their readers how the Association was trying to 'poison the minds of the country against the Liberals who have done so much for the country during the last five years'.<sup>212</sup> Seddon toured Nelson and the West Coast during March and April and criticised the National Association in every public speech he gave. His first public meeting in Nelson set the tone for his reproofs, when he repeated the accusation that the Association was the 'Tories' in disguise and that 'private money was being used to influence electors and a section of the press being purchased to plead the cause of land sharks'.<sup>213</sup> The government's line of attack seemed

<sup>206</sup> *Press*, 14 February 1896, p.2.

<sup>207</sup> Minutes of the proceedings of the delegates to the conference of the sections of the National Association of New Zealand, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki, record that a resolution was passed to thank the Christchurch Section for the inspiration their victory had given the Association.

<sup>208</sup> Hall to Rolleston, 19 November 1895, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence 1895, 77-248-10/5, Alexander Turnbull Library, although written before the by-election Hall admitted that he had been impressed with National Association and thought they could win.

<sup>209</sup> Russell to Hastie, 7 November 1894, Russell Papers, letter book 24 October 1889-30 December 1895, MS-Papers-1711-04, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>210</sup> Russell to Hastie, 12 January 1895, Russell Papers, letter book 24 October 1889-30 December 1895, MS-Papers-1711-04, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>211</sup> Russell to Gale, 25 November 1895, Russell Papers, letter book 24 October 1889-30 December 1895, MS-Papers-1711-04, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>212</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 3 March 1896, p.2.

<sup>213</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 17 March 1896, p.2.

to centre on calling the Opposition and Association 'Conservatives' or 'Tories' and insinuating that the Association was run by a few rich men who were trying to influence public opinion.<sup>214</sup> Another tactic was to call the Association the 'National Ass' and describe it as being like Balaam's Donkey, which spoke with the voice of God. The 'National Ass', it was argued, spoke with the voice of the Opposition.<sup>215</sup> The attacks made the Association appear as if it were a front for something more sinister. This contrasts with 1893, when the government had given very little attention to the National Association, suggesting there was some truth in Russell's allegation that Seddon's attacks showed he was now afraid of it.<sup>216</sup>

The Association's ability to present strong opposition to the government was enhanced by the fact that planning for a nationwide strategy had begun much earlier than 1896. Buchanan approached Hall in early 1894 about the possibility of him contributing funds to a central organisation.<sup>217</sup> Hastie had stated publicly that he believed a central council based in Wellington would improve the Association's ability to organise nationally,<sup>218</sup> and he visited Wellington in late 1894.<sup>219</sup> Although there is no direct evidence to suggest that the purpose of Hastie's 1894 visit was to further national organisation, he did meet with senior Opposition members.<sup>220</sup> In early 1895 Russell and Duthie began to ask for funds so that the Opposition could set up a 'central committee' to organise vigorously,<sup>221</sup> and Thomas Gale was appointed by the National Association to organise for them in Wellington.<sup>222</sup> Gale already had connections to the Opposition, having worked on F.H.D. Bell's unsuccessful by-election campaign in 1892.<sup>223</sup> This suggests that the National Association and the Opposition were working together as the election approached. The relationship between the National Association and the Opposition was never put on a formal footing, but by 1896 the Association appears to have operated as the extra-parliamentary body of the Opposition. It was the main source of funding for the 1896 election, and selected and supported Opposition candidates.

The plan to form a 'central committee' came to fruition in March 1896 when the National Association held a national conference in Wellington. This was very much like a modern party conference with delegates from each active section. Most delegates were

<sup>214</sup> For example: John McKenzie at Gisborne, *Poverty Bay Herald*, 19 March 1896, p.2; Seddon at Hokitika, *West Coast Times*, 21 March 1896, p.2; Fredrick Flatman at Temuka, *Timaru Herald*, 11 April 1896, p.2; William Hall-Jones at Oamaru, *Oamaru Mail*, 25 April 1896, p.4; Seddon at Napier, *Hastings Standard*, 27 May 1896, p.3; Major Benjamin Harris at Pukekohe, *New Zealand Herald*, 5 June 1896, p.5.

<sup>215</sup> *Observer*, 25 April 1896, p.2; *Star*, 27 May 1896, p.1; *Hasting Standard*, 18 November 1896, p.2.

<sup>216</sup> *Evening Post*, 27 March 1896, p.4.

<sup>217</sup> Hall to Rolleston, 22 March 1894, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence 1894, 77-248-10/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>218</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 9 May 1894, p.3.

<sup>219</sup> *Auckland Star*, 19 September 1894, p.2.

<sup>220</sup> *Observer*, 6 October 1894, p.13.

<sup>221</sup> Russell to Duthie, 1 January 1895, Russell Papers, letter book, 24 October 1889- 30 December 1895, MS-Papers-1711-04, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>222</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 18 March 1895, p.2.

<sup>223</sup> Newman to Rolleston, 29 December 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

National Association members, not parliamentarians.<sup>224</sup> On the surface, the purpose of this conference was to consolidate the sections of the National Association and produce a common platform and constitution.<sup>225</sup> The common platform was longer than the original one drawn up by the Auckland branch in 1891, but it contained analogous sentiments. The first point remained to foster national sentiment, but the second was new: to protest any alteration to the land laws which would destroy freehold. The third was to show the fallacy of the idea that labour and capital were antagonistic, while the fourth was similar to the initial Auckland platform in that the Association was to oppose any experimental legislation which would be to the detriment of employee and employer. Numbers five to eight were mostly drawn straight from the first Auckland platform - with the promotion of various industries, sound political economy and registration of electors. However, it also contained a new point, to show the unfairness of laws framed so the industrious and thrifty were hampered. Lastly, platform nine was 'to return to parliament capable and honourable men . . . whose aim will not be individual gain but the welfare of the whole colony'.<sup>226</sup>

Furthermore, the conference drew up a national structure. The country was divided into sections based on a provincial area or a divisional district, as decided by a central council. This council was to be formed by two delegates from each section. The central council was also to mediate on disputes within sections and to control the money donated for use in national campaigns. Three men were appointed to a provisional central council, Gale from Wellington, F.R. Jackson from Wanganui and Patrick McLean from Napier.<sup>227</sup> Other important organisational matters were also discussed, like candidate selection and finances, and according to the minutes 'all the electorates were dealt with.'<sup>228</sup> This conference ensured that all the National Association centres had an agreed platform, while having a central committee meant funds could be distributed nationwide. This provided a vehicle for the Opposition to fund candidates in seats where their support base was weak.

The selection of candidates was a critical area in which the National Association and the Opposition worked together. Candidates were discussed at the March conference and, although what was decided was not recorded, it seems that there was a co-ordinated effort to find one candidate for each seat; the 1896 election was the first in New Zealand

<sup>224</sup> Minutes of the proceedings of the delegates to the conference of the sections of the National Association of New Zealand, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki, lists twenty men as present, four of whom were MHRs.

<sup>225</sup> Minutes of the proceedings of the delegates to the conference of the sections of the National Association of New Zealand, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki.

<sup>226</sup> Minutes of the proceedings of the delegates to the conference of the sections of the National Association of New Zealand, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki.

<sup>227</sup> Minutes of the proceedings of the delegates to the conference of the sections of the National Association of New Zealand, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki, the fund would consist of £10 from each section and all voluntarily donations.

<sup>228</sup> Minutes of the proceedings of the delegates to the conference of the sections of the National Association of New Zealand, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki, the minutes say a discussion took place, but the details are not recorded.

history where every seat was contested. By using Russell's and Rolleston's correspondence, in conjunction with newspaper reports, it was possible to gain some insight into how the National Association and Opposition collaborated. In electorates where there were National Association branches, the selection of an Opposition candidate was left to each branch. Once the branch had decided on a candidate, the rest of the members were bound to that decision and should campaign for the chosen candidate. By mid-1896 there were sections in all four main centres, which covered the provincial areas of Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago. There were also sections in Poverty Bay,<sup>229</sup> New Plymouth,<sup>230</sup> Wanganui, Hawke's Bay and Maitua District.<sup>231</sup> It is difficult to know how much choice the various branches really had in who would be the Opposition candidates - some branches were more involved than others. In the Hawke's Bay a meeting was held in April to choose a candidate for Napier. R.D.D. McLean was successful, but it is unclear if any other candidates were put forward.<sup>232</sup> Furthermore, McLean had been active in National Association circles since the early 1890s and was the first president of the Hawke's Bay Association.<sup>233</sup> In Canterbury, conferences were held in each electorate, but again there were no surprises in the selections. The Kaiapoi electorate branches met in Rangiora and chose Richard Moore, who had lost the seat in 1893.<sup>234</sup> For the Ashley seat, a conference was held in Amberley in late July,<sup>235</sup> and Henry Reece was chosen. He had been talked about as a possible candidate since March, and was an active National Association member.<sup>236</sup> In New Plymouth there was no record of a selection meeting, but the Opposition candidate, Henry Brown was an active Association member.<sup>237</sup> The process did not always work. In Masterton the Association asked William Beetham, the brother of Masterton ex-MHR George Beetham, to stand, but he declined.<sup>238</sup> It was then reported that the branch had disbanded because they could not agree on a candidate.<sup>239</sup> In Pahiatua they seemed unable to agree and the chair of the organising committee wrote to Russell, who advised having a meeting and ensuring that each candidate would abide

<sup>229</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 24 February 1896, p.1, this was a reopening as it seems that the main organisers were the same as 1893.

<sup>230</sup> National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, Minute Book 1891-1897, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki, shows the Association began meeting again in late March when Hastie visited them on his way back to Auckland after the Conference. Like Poverty Bay it was a reopening of a previously dormant section.

<sup>231</sup> *Maitua Ensign*, 14 March 1896, p.2.

<sup>232</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 10 April 1896, p.2.

<sup>233</sup> McLean was corresponding with Hastie as early as May 1892 see: Hastie to McLean, 4 May 1892, McLean Family Papers, Personal, financial, official and other miscellaneous papers, MS-papers-0032-1029, Alexander Turnbull Library; Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics', p.110.

<sup>234</sup> *Press*, 30 September 1896, p.6.

<sup>235</sup> *Press*, 22 July 1896, p.5.

<sup>236</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 6 March 1896, p.2.

<sup>237</sup> National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, Minute Book 1891-1897, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki.

<sup>238</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 4 September 1896, p.2.

<sup>239</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 10 September 1896, p.2.

by the decision before the vote.<sup>240</sup> This appears to have been unsuccessful as two Opposition candidates stood for the seat.<sup>241</sup> From Buchanan's correspondence to Rolleston it seems that Buchanan had been actively trying to secure candidates in early 1896.<sup>242</sup> Therefore, the 'selection' by many Association branches was more likely to have been a confirmation process than an actual contest.

The Opposition and the National Association went to some lengths to make it seem as if candidates were being selected by locals. This could have been to contrast with Seddon's practice of choosing a candidate for government endorsement.<sup>243</sup> In many electorates, the chosen candidate was also a member of the National Association, which added the feel of local control. Of the sixty-seven 'official' Opposition candidates, thirty-six had known National Association affiliations. Another reason for local selection could have been to prevent vote splitting. Both the government and the Opposition understood that they had a better chance of winning if they had one candidate per seat. It seems that the Opposition's tactic of using local National Association branches was an effort to prevent multiple candidates, by using the Association members to vote on their preferred candidate and asking all other candidates to abide by the decision. This also shielded the Opposition from accusations of trying to control local contests and the endorsement of the local National Association seemed to ensure a candidate had a ready election committee and access to the national fund.<sup>244</sup> This method was relatively successful in preventing more than one Opposition candidate standing. Of the fifty-eight single member seats, fifteen had more than two candidates. Thirteen of those had more than one 'Liberal' candidate, but only five had more than one Opposition candidate.<sup>245</sup> Furthermore, in all the multi-member city seats, apart from Wellington City,<sup>246</sup> each National Association endorsed just three candidates,<sup>247</sup> which prevented vote splitting. There is evidence to suggest that the lack of multiple candidates was because the Opposition was having difficulty finding men to stand in some areas.<sup>248</sup> However, the use of National Association committees does appear to have aided the Opposition by ensuring that few

<sup>240</sup> Russell to D Prebble, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>241</sup> *Evening Post*, 2 December 1896, p.2.

<sup>242</sup> Buchanan to Rolleston, 20 February 1896, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence 1896, 77-248-11/1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>243</sup> Bernard J. Foster, 'Development of Unity and Organisation in the New Zealand Political Parties of the Liberal Era', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1956, pp.83-87.

<sup>244</sup> For examples of candidates given money see: *Poverty Bay Herald*, 7 December 1896, p.3; *Woodville Examiner*, 5 February 1897, p.4; For an example of the National Association running a campaign see: *Ashburton Guardian*, 15 October 1896, p.2.

<sup>245</sup> The two where there were multiple Opposition candidates and one Liberal were Avon and Hawera, the remaining three with multiple Opposition and Liberal candidates were Pahiatua, Waitaki and Wallace.

<sup>246</sup> Wellington remained a difficult area for the National Association. The two Opposition Candidates were A.A.S. Menteath and A.R. Atkinson, but there did not appear to be an endorsement and Menteath denied being a nominee of the Association see: *Evening Post*, 20 November 1896, p.2.

<sup>247</sup> See: *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1896, p.6; *Evening Star*, 11 November 1896, p.2; *Press*, 25 October 1896, p.5.

<sup>248</sup> Duthie to Rolleston, 5 July 1896, 20 February 1896, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence 1896, 77-248-11/1, Alexander Turnbull Library; Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics', pp.111-112 suggested that this was also a problem for the government in areas where the Opposition was strong.

seats had more than one Opposition candidate.

In the parts of New Zealand where there were no active National Association sections, Russell and Duthie worked together to find candidates.<sup>249</sup> Traditionally the Opposition was weak in the Upper South Island and West Coast. There were attempts to start a National Association in Nelson,<sup>250</sup> while the Waimea Farmers' Political League adopted the National Association's platform, but did not wish to affiliate due to a concern that the Association was too close to the Opposition.<sup>251</sup> It seems that none of these efforts resulted in an actual section of the Association being active in the area, but there were Opposition candidates for Nelson and Motueka.<sup>252</sup> Although all three West Coast candidates called themselves independents,<sup>253</sup> there is evidence that they were asked to stand,<sup>254</sup> and at least one had his election expenses paid.<sup>255</sup> However, there were three seats where none of the candidates stood as Opposition supporters: Wairau, in the Upper South Island, and Thames and Ohinemuri, both in the Coromandel area.<sup>256</sup> The weakness in Thames had also shown in 1893 when it was the only electorate in the Auckland province for which the National Association did not provide a candidate endorsement.

The attention paid to organisation was also seen in the National Association's election campaign. In general, the newspapers thought that the National Association, and by connection the Opposition, were better organised and prepared than the government. The *Star*, a pro-government newspaper, warned that the National Association was ensuring that the Opposition was ready and united, whereas the Liberals were in danger because they were too divided.<sup>257</sup> The *Otago Daily Times* thought that National Association was better organised and more disciplined than the Liberal Association,<sup>258</sup> and a letter to the *Hastings Standard* suggested that the National Association had an advantage over the Liberals as they were working for one objective.<sup>259</sup> It also seems that many local National Association branches were meeting regularly to organise for the local Opposition candidate. The principal areas of activity were the Matura electorate, Dunedin, Canterbury,

<sup>249</sup> Russell to Gale, 3 January 1896, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library; Duthie to Rolleston, 5 July 1896, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence 1896, 77-248-11/1, Alexander Turnbull Library; Russell to Rolleston 13 August 1896, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence 1896, 77-248-11/1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>250</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 15 May 1896, p.2; *Nelson Evening Mail*, 24 August 1896, p.2.

<sup>251</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 17 April 1896, p.2; *Nelson Evening Mail*, 30 April 1896, p.2.

<sup>252</sup> Richmond Hursthouse, the candidate for Motueka was an ex-MHR see: Scholefield, vol. I, A-L, pp.422-423.

<sup>253</sup> *Evening Post*, 2 December 1896, p.2, Joseph Grimmond was listed as Opposition, but he denied this, see: *West Coast Times*, 28 November 1896, p.2.

<sup>254</sup> *Observer*, 30 May 1896, p.4.

<sup>255</sup> Russell to Joseph Grimmond, 27 October 1896, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

This letter promised National Association funds to Grimmond, but he denied that he was paid by them see: *West Coast Times*, 4 December 1896, p.2.

<sup>256</sup> *Thames Star*, 1 December 1896, p.3 said that this was noted in *Liberty*.

<sup>257</sup> *Star*, 6 March 1896, p.4.

<sup>258</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 25 April 1896, p.4.

<sup>259</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 19 September 1896, p.2.

Hawke's Bay, Poverty Bay, New Plymouth, and Auckland City. Apart from New Plymouth, where the branch minutes book has survived,<sup>260</sup> and Auckland, where some branch details are in the E.E. Vaile papers,<sup>261</sup> the activity was measured by newspaper reports.<sup>262</sup> This assumes that newspapers were reporting on local branches,<sup>263</sup> and so is not an infallible measure, but it is indicative of where the most engaged sections existed.

One area on which the Association concentrated during the campaign was distribution of literature. The Auckland branch had previously focused on this, sending its circulars throughout the country.<sup>264</sup> For some reason *Liberty* was not distributed nationally,<sup>265</sup> and it appears that in 1896 the most widely distributed National Association material was written by Wellington journalist James Wilkie and published in the *Press* on Saturdays.<sup>266</sup> It was noted at the 1896 Auckland Annual Meeting that the Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin sections had an arrangement with the *Press*.<sup>267</sup> These Saturday editions were widely distributed in the lower North Island, with reports of them being given away on trains between the Wairarapa and Wellington,<sup>268</sup> and being supplied to wharf labourers in Wellington<sup>269</sup> and Napier.<sup>270</sup> The New Plymouth National Association had copies delivered for the membership to read,<sup>271</sup> and the articles also began appearing daily in the *Otago Daily Times* in the week before the election.<sup>272</sup> Wilkie was personally attacked by Seddon,<sup>273</sup> which suggests his articles were seen as a threat. Another indication that the government thought that the Association's literature was potentially damaging to them

<sup>260</sup> National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, Minute Book 1891-1897, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki.

<sup>261</sup> National Association of New Zealand Auckland Branch, Items 26-54, NZMS 1375, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>262</sup> Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics', p.112-115, detailed the Hawke's Bay campaign, and called the Opposition 'vigorous'.

<sup>263</sup> An example of this was Auckland, where the Vaile papers show that the Association's council was meeting fortnightly in the months leading up to the election, these meetings were not recorded in the newspaper. See: National Association of New Zealand Auckland Branch, NZMS 1375, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>264</sup> For example, the 1893 AGM recorded that they distributed 10 000 leaflets that year. See: *New Zealand Herald*, 29 September 1893, p.6.

<sup>265</sup> This claim comes from the annual report of the Auckland Branch, *New Zealand Herald*, 25 September 1896, p.6. However, the Taranaki Section placed an order for 75 copies sometime in August 1896 see: Hastie to G.W. Brown 20 August 1896, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki.

<sup>266</sup> See: *Press*, 29 February 1896, p.7; *Press*, 21 March 1896, p.9; *Press*, 4 April 1896, p.9; *Press*, 11 April 1896, p.9; *Press*, 6 June 1896, p.9; *Press*, 13 June 1896, p.8; *Press*, 20 June 1896, p.9; *Press*, 18 July 1896, p.5; *Press*, 1 August 1896, p.9; *Press*, 15 August 1896, p.9; *Press*, 29 August 1896, p.8; *Press*, 5 September 1896, p.8; *Press*, 12 September 1896, p.8; *Press*, 19 September 1896, p.9; *Press*, 26 September 1896, p.9; *Press*, 10 October 1896, p.4; *Press*, 7 November 1896, p.9; *Press*, 14 November 1896, p.8; *Press*, 21 November 1896, p.8.

<sup>267</sup> *Auckland Star*, 25 September 1896, p.3.

<sup>268</sup> *Observer*, 4 April 1896, p.3.

<sup>269</sup> *Auckland Star*, 4 March 1896, p.4.

<sup>270</sup> Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics', p.117.

<sup>271</sup> Minutes of meeting, 28 April 1896, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, Minute Book 1891-1897, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki; C.D. Morpeth to R.C. Hughes, 25 July 1896, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki.

<sup>272</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 28 November, p.2, 30 November, p.4, 1 December, p.4, 2 December, p.4, 3 December, p.8, 4 December, p.4, all 1896.

<sup>273</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 17 March 1896, p.2.

was that the *Star* began publishing a pro-government supplement, called 'In the Cause of the People', which appeared on Friday evenings.<sup>274</sup>

The result of the 1896 election justified the effort the National Association had dedicated to organising for the Opposition. Its overall share of the vote increased from twenty-four percent to thirty-seven percent and, more importantly, the number of its seats increased from thirteen to twenty-five.<sup>275</sup> The gains were particularly noticeable in Otago-Southland, where G.F. Richardson won Matura and two out of the three Dunedin City seats were won by Opposition supporters. The Dunedin City seat had been consistently 'Liberal' since its formation in 1890.<sup>276</sup> The Opposition was most successful in Canterbury, gaining four seats, and Lewis topped the poll in Christchurch City. In Hawke's Bay, the Opposition won Napier and Waipawa, and on the opposite coast they won Taranaki, Wanganui and Rangitikei. In the Auckland provincial area, they gained Bay of Plenty, and Massey won Franklin from its Liberal incumbent. He had previously been the MHR for Waitemata, which was retained by Monk. In his study of the 1896 election in Hawke's Bay, Campbell noted a swing toward the Opposition in rural areas, partly due to a feeling that the Government was not moving fast enough on land settlement,<sup>277</sup> and because the 1896 boundary changes had favoured the Opposition. However, in Napier, the Hawke's Bay's most urbanised centre, he found that the Opposition candidate, R.D.D. McLean, had won a majority in all but one booth. He attributed this to the National Association's focus on canvassing in the port and other working-class areas.<sup>278</sup> This suggests that the organisation undertaken by National Association mobilised voters for the Opposition and had a direct effect on the result of the election. The Association certainly believed this. At the post-election meeting of the Canterbury Section, the president stated, 'for it is worthy of more than a passing notice that in those electorates where branches of the NA were well organised there our candidates were returned, whilst, on the other hand, in electorates where the Association was weak or did not exist, there the Opposition was defeated.'<sup>279</sup>

There were two parts of the country in which the Opposition performed poorly compared with 1893. Since 1887 those with conservative political views had been unable to organise any long-term movements in the Wellington area. Despite this, the Opposition candidates had been reasonably successful in 1893, but this was reversed in 1896. The Opposition lost not only its two Wellington City seats, but also Wellington Suburbs<sup>280</sup> and

<sup>274</sup> *Star*, these ran on Fridays between the 7 August and 6 November 1896.

<sup>275</sup> Leslie Lipson, *The Politics of Equality: New Zealand's Adventures in Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948, p.187.

<sup>276</sup> Henry Fish stood, and won as a 'liberal' in 1890, but soon fell out with the government and ran, and won, as an Opposition supporter in 1896. See: F.R.J Sinclair, 'Fish, Henry Smith', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2f8/fish-henry-smith>, accessed 24 June 2017.

<sup>277</sup> Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics', p.109.

<sup>278</sup> Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics', p.117.

<sup>279</sup> *Press*, 19 December 1896, p.8.

<sup>280</sup> This result was subject to an electoral petition which saw the election of the successful candidate, Thomas Wilford, invalidated. However, the subsequent by-election was won by the government.

Otaki. In Auckland City, the Opposition also lost one of its sitting members, C.E. Button, and one of its other candidates, Edwin Mitchelson, who had won Eden in 1893 but switched to stand for the city seat in 1896. The National Association had not been well organised in the Wellington area, but Auckland was its birthplace. However, by 1896 the Auckland Association was short of money and this may have impacted on their ability to campaign strongly.<sup>281</sup>

## The demise of the National Association 1897-1899

At the beginning of 1897 the National Association had reason to feel confident. Political organisations usually went into suspension after elections, yet the Auckland National Association had already shown the value of continuous action, and in 1897 was entering its sixth year. The Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin sections all remained active during 1897 and Russell seems to have recognised the importance of building on the organisation created in 1896.<sup>282</sup> However, the ability to sustain a nationwide political organisation was tested. Under the constitution agreed to in 1896 the central council, made up of two members from each section, was to meet annually. Yet, the council was never elected, nor did it meet. Furthermore, two members of the provisional central council, Patrick McLean and Gale, had a disagreement in November 1896.<sup>283</sup> Russell tried to mediate between them, but the result was Gale's resignation from the National Association in June 1897. Gale was upset not only by his disagreement with McLean, but also complained that there was a lack of energy within the Association for running election campaigns.<sup>284</sup> It is probable that Russell convinced Gale to return as the Wellington-based organiser because he corresponded with Gale about arrangements for the 1899 election. Yet the failure to maintain the nationwide connections with the National Association meant that the organisation established in 1896 fell into disuse.

Another issue faced by the National Association after 1896 was a decline in the Auckland Branch. The report of the Auckland 1896 Annual Meeting, held in September, showed that the section was having difficulties. They had begun the year with a small debt, which they had been unable to clear. Another sign that the Association's finances were strained was the inability to employ Hastie as a fulltime organising secretary, his position being reduced to part-time. Furthermore, John Batger, who had been president

<sup>281</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 September 1896, p.6.

<sup>282</sup> Russell to R.P. Greville, 17 December 1896, letter book 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library; Russell to Gale, 19 December 1896, letter book 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library; Russell to Gale, 7 March 1897, letter book 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>283</sup> Russell to P.S. McLean, 10 November 1896, letter book 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>284</sup> Russell to Buchanan, 10 June 1897, letter book 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

of the Association since it began in 1891, resigned.<sup>285</sup> He was replaced by Massey, who was elected president at a council meeting in early October.<sup>286</sup> It is doubtful that Massey would have been able to devote much time and attention to the Association, because as an MHR he had the competing demands of the House and his electorate, which was south of Auckland. Furthermore, at the annual meeting it was reported that the amount of time required to prepare for the monthly publication of *Liberty* was demanding.<sup>287</sup> By April 1897, the publication of *Liberty* had been suspended and its future was being discussed.<sup>288</sup> It is probable that having only a part-time secretary meant the demands of running the Association and the newspaper were too much for the Auckland Section and after two years of publication *Liberty* was closed.

Although the Auckland section continued to meet during 1897 and held a winter lecture series,<sup>289</sup> there were signs that it was struggling. The council meeting in May failed to obtain a quorum<sup>290</sup> and the Annual Meeting, which had been held regularly in September, was postponed until late October. The Annual Report stated that 'the attendance of members at meetings had not been so full and satisfactory' but that other sections of the Association had been able to continue the fight against the government.<sup>291</sup> At the meeting Hastie tendered his resignation, probably for financial reasons,<sup>292</sup> and Massey also resigned as president.<sup>293</sup> Edmund Bell was elected president in November 1897,<sup>294</sup> but it seems that there was some furore as Bell attempted to resign in March 1898, and called a meeting to discuss the future of the Association.<sup>295</sup> This internal dissent was noticed by the newspapers,<sup>296</sup> but long-time National Association supporter, F.W. Ewington, acted as a peacemaker and kept the Association together.<sup>297</sup> Massey seems to have abandoned the Association by June 1898. He sent a circular letter to those interested in organising for the Opposition, asking them to attend a meeting. This was to be held in the National Association rooms, but he was very clear that any group that formed

<sup>285</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 September 1896, p.6.

<sup>286</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 7 October 1896, p.5.

<sup>287</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 September 1896, p.6.

<sup>288</sup> *Auckland Star*, 7 April 1897, p.4.

<sup>289</sup> *Auckland Star*, 7 April 1897, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 9 July 1897, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 21 July 1897, p.5; *Auckland Star*, 6 August 1897, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 3 September 1897, p.5; *Auckland Star*, 17 September 1897, p.4.

<sup>290</sup> National Association of New Zealand Auckland Branch, Items 26-54, NZMS 1375, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>291</sup> *Auckland Star*, 22 October 1897, p.2.

<sup>292</sup> Hastie left New Zealand for Britain in early 1898 to search for investors for a mining project. It was suggested in the newspapers that he would not be able to afford to return to New Zealand if this venture failed. See: *New Zealand Herald*, 21 February 1898, p.3; *New Zealand Herald*, 22 December 1898, p.6.

<sup>293</sup> *Auckland Star*, 22 October 1897, p.2.

<sup>294</sup> *Auckland Star*, 17 November 1897, p.4

<sup>295</sup> National Association of New Zealand Auckland Branch, Items 26-54, NZMS 1375, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>296</sup> *Auckland Star*, 11 April 1898, p.4.

<sup>297</sup> *Auckland Star*, 14 April 1898, p.2.

would not be connected to the Association.<sup>298</sup> In August an Auckland Provincial Electors' League was formed. It was suggested at the first meeting that it was an attempt to reform the National Association under a different name. This was denied, but the three main promoters of this league had all held important positions within the Association and were quite possibly those who broke away in March,<sup>299</sup> suggesting that the split was permanent.

There were further signs of decline in September when the Annual Meeting had to be adjourned because not enough members attended.<sup>300</sup> There were no subsequent newspaper reports of the Auckland National Association, and the Vaile papers provide the only insight into its last year of its existence. Sometime in early 1899 Francis Mander took over the secretary position and then became president in April. The last piece of correspondence was from Mander in October 1899.<sup>301</sup> There is no record of the Association playing any role in the 1899 election. After eight years of campaigning against the government, it had quietly faded.

Of the other North Island National Associations, Hawke's Bay and Poverty Bay were active during 1897. Hawke's Bay had one meeting in April at which Seddon's trip to Britain was discussed,<sup>302</sup> and an Annual Meeting was held in August.<sup>303</sup> Poverty Bay had one meeting in April.<sup>304</sup> There are no newspaper reports of any other North Island Associations holding meetings, but the New Plymouth section minutes show that it met in February and held an Annual Meeting in April. New Plymouth had no more meetings until April 1898, when it held another Annual Meeting. The last minutes are undated, but they indicate that sometime after the April 1898 meeting the New Plymouth section decided to close and recommended that the members join the Constitutional Union.<sup>305</sup> Both Poverty Bay and Hawke's Bay met periodically in 1898, with the Poverty Bay section stepping up activity towards the end of 1898. In 1896, the Waiapu Opposition candidate, Cecil FitzRoy, had lost by 370 votes.<sup>306</sup> This result was thought to be very good as FitzRoy was not a local<sup>307</sup> and had entered the race late. The Poverty Bay National Association therefore hoped that by choosing a candidate early they could capitalise on the progress made in 1896.<sup>308</sup> After a series of meetings FitzRoy was confirmed in early 1899.<sup>309</sup>

<sup>298</sup> National Association of New Zealand Auckland Branch, Items 56-63, NZMS 1375, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>299</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1898, p.3. The three men were; Graves Aicken, Joseph Blades and Reed Bloomfield.

<sup>300</sup> *Auckland Star*, 9 September 1898, p.3.

<sup>301</sup> National Association of New Zealand Auckland Branch, Items 26-54, NZMS 1375, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>302</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 3 April 1897, p.3.

<sup>303</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 21 August 1897, p.2.

<sup>304</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 2 April 1897, p.3.

<sup>305</sup> National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, Minute Book 1891-1897, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki. Attempts to trace the Constitutional Union proved fruitless.

<sup>306</sup> *New Zealand Official Year Book 1897*, pp.360-363.

<sup>307</sup> He was mayor of Hastings, see: Scholefield, vol. I, A-L, p.261.

<sup>308</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 31 October 1898, p.2; *Poverty Bay Herald*, 5 December 1898, p.2.

<sup>309</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 10 April 1899, p.2

Hawke's Bay had no need to think about candidates, the Opposition having won the section's three seats in 1896, and they met once in June 1898.<sup>310</sup>

The National Association was much more active in the South Island during 1897 and 1898. The Canterbury Section continued to be the most vigorous, holding regular meetings throughout 1897 and 1898. In 1897, educative papers were read on topics such as socialism,<sup>311</sup> the village settlement at Riccarton<sup>312</sup> and the abolition of party government.<sup>313</sup> In 1898, the Association organised for Scobie McKenzie, an MHR for Dunedin City, to speak. McKenzie was considered an excellent platform speaker and his meeting attracted one of the largest crowds ever seen in Christchurch at that time.<sup>314</sup> However, at the Annual Meeting in July the president announced that the Association had decided to dispense with the paid secretary position, indicating that it had financial difficulties.<sup>315</sup>

The Dunedin and Maitaia National Associations maintained momentum due to by-elections in their electorates. In 1897, Henry Fish, a Dunedin City Opposition MHR, died, which triggered a by-election.<sup>316</sup> The National Association chose Alexander Sligo, an ex-president of the Association, as the Opposition candidate.<sup>317</sup> Sligo won, the Liberal vote having been split between the official candidate and an independent.<sup>318</sup> After the election the Association seemed to cease meeting, but they did hold an Annual meeting in May 1898, at which pleasure was expressed at Sligo's success.<sup>319</sup> In Maitaia, the sitting Opposition MHR, G.F. Richardson, was declared bankrupt, which meant he had to resign from the House.<sup>320</sup> The local National Association followed the pattern set in 1896, and called a conference of all the branches and chose a candidate, W.F. Ward, with the other contender, I.W. Raymond, agreeing to the decision.<sup>321</sup> Ward lost to Robert McNab, who had been the local member between 1893 and 1896.<sup>322</sup> However, the loss did not dent the activity of the Association. Later that year they chose Raymond as the candidate for the 1899 election,<sup>323</sup> but there were no further newspaper reports of the Maitaia National Association so it is difficult to ascertain whether it continued to operate.

One important way the National Association had assisted the Opposition in 1896 was by having a central 'fighting fund'. This fund, which had been administered by Gale from Wellington, enabled the Opposition to fund candidates in parts of the country where they

<sup>310</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 11 June 1898, p.3.

<sup>311</sup> *Press*, 24 April 1897, p.6.

<sup>312</sup> *Press*, 24 May 1897, p.6.

<sup>313</sup> *Press*, 21 August 1897, p.8.

<sup>314</sup> *Star*, 28 June 1898, p.4.

<sup>315</sup> *Press*, 28 July 1898, p.6.

<sup>316</sup> F.R.J. Sinclair, 'Fish, Henry Smith'.

<sup>317</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 27 September 1897, p.3.

<sup>318</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 14 October 1897, p.2.

<sup>319</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 1 June 1898, p.3.

<sup>320</sup> *Maitaia Ensign*, 21 April 1898, p.2.

<sup>321</sup> *Maitaia Ensign*, 28 April 1898, p.2.

<sup>322</sup> *Maitaia Ensign*, 28 May 1898, p.3.

<sup>323</sup> *Maitaia Ensign*, 11 August 1898, p.3.

were weaker. Russell was eager to keep the fund growing, partly to continue funding Wilkie to write articles, but also in the anticipation of the 1899 election.<sup>324</sup> However, contributions to this fund and the Opposition's financial position became a source of tension in 1897, which continued into 1898. In June 1897 Russell had to arrange for donations to keep Wilkie employed,<sup>325</sup> and in July sent £150 to Gale from himself and Buchanan, and mentioned that he had been unsuccessful in his attempts to get money from other MHRs.<sup>326</sup> The Awarua by-election in mid-1897 revealed that Russell thought the task of funding the Opposition was not being evenly shared. When Gale asked for money to help the Opposition candidate, Russell said the money should come from Otago and thought that 'if the largest province in New Zealand does not pay its way then why should the rest of New Zealand'.<sup>327</sup> By 1898 Massey was organising fund raising and this also caused tensions between the North and South Island MHRs. He wrote to Rolleston in January 1898 to remind him that Canterbury was expected to raise £400 before the next election.<sup>328</sup> Lewis resented the large sum demanded by Wellington. He informed Rolleston that he saw little chance of raising even £200 and even if he could, 'local claims would be satisfied first'.<sup>329</sup> This may have been aggravated by Massey expecting to raise only about £100 or £200 in Auckland, as it was a 'poor place at the moment'.<sup>330</sup> When the National Association network had been in place each section had been expected to pay into the central fund and this seemed to have taken some of the tensions out of fundraising. Without the Association the ability of the Opposition to fund a national campaign was compromised.

## The National Association and the 1899 election

By the beginning of 1899 the National Association had lost much of its organisational strength. As Leader of the Opposition, Russell understood he needed to begin organising for the election due late that year, but unlike in 1896 he could not take advantage of the networks built by the National Association. This was illustrated by the way candidates were chosen: in 1896 the Opposition had used the National Association, but in

<sup>324</sup> Russell to Gale, 7 March 1897, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>325</sup> Russell to Gale, 10 June 1897, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>326</sup> Russell to Gale, 24 July 1897, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>327</sup> Russell to Gale, 11 August 1897, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>328</sup> William Massey to Rolleston, 19 January 1898, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-March 1898, 77-248-11/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>329</sup> Lewis to Rolleston, (n.d. but probably January 1898), Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-March 1898, 77-248-11/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>330</sup> Massey to Rolleston, 19 January 1898, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-March 1898, 77-248-11/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

1899 Russell relied on MHRs.<sup>331</sup> In early 1899 Russell convened a meeting in Wellington to coincide with the racing conference.<sup>332</sup> The attendees were all from the lower North Island and, apart from Gale, were MHRs or previous Opposition candidates. It was decided that Duthie would oversee the campaign with help from Massey in Auckland, Lewis in Christchurch and James Allen in Otago.<sup>333</sup> There was no mention of the National Association and the only link to any of the Associations was Lewis who was still involved in Christchurch.<sup>334</sup>

Despite the demise of some National Associations, the Canterbury section remained active during the 1899 campaign. It continued to hold regular meetings and chose three candidates for the Christchurch City seat: Charles Lewis, James Grieg, a master builder, and R.A. Green, a bacon curer.<sup>335</sup> However, the selection of Grieg and Green may have been unpopular, with a letter to the *Press* suggesting it showed that the Opposition did not have many quality candidates to pick from.<sup>336</sup> Green withdrew his candidacy a few weeks later,<sup>337</sup> and the third candidate became National Association stalwart, Michael Donnelly.<sup>338</sup> Other Associations which had a presence in the 1899 campaign were Dunedin and those on the East Coast of the North Island. There is no record of the Dunedin branch meeting during 1899, but they endorsed sitting MHRs Scobie McKenzie and Alexander Sligo for the Dunedin City seat, with Charles Haynes as the third candidate.<sup>339</sup> Although the Hawke's Bay branch had met sporadically between 1896 and 1899, it decided to temporarily dissolve in late 1899 as it was concerned that any money raised to fund a candidate might breach the Corrupt Practices Act.<sup>340</sup> In Poverty Bay the Association continued to campaign vigorously for their candidate, FitzRoy, in the hope that he would be able to overturn his narrow 1896 loss.

During the 1899 campaign several newspapers complained about Opposition disorganisation and attributed this to the National Association's absence. In April, the *Wairarapa Daily Times* asked what the Opposition was doing to organise and wondered what had happened to the National Association, as the paper thought it was time for a local branch

<sup>331</sup> Buchanan to Rolleston, 10 March 1898, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-March 1898, 77-248-11/3, Alexander Turnbull Library; Buchanan to Rolleston, 5 February 1899, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-August 1899, 77-248-11/5, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>332</sup> Russell to Duthie, 28 December 1898, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library; Russell to Buchanan, 4 January 1899, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>333</sup> Buchanan to Rolleston, 28 January 1899, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-August 1899, 77-248-11/5, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>334</sup> Lewis to Rolleston, (n.d. but probably 1898), Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-March 1898, 77-248-11/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>335</sup> *Star*, 27 October 1899, p.1.

<sup>336</sup> *Press*, 1 November 1899, p.2; *Press*, 4 November 1899, p.5

<sup>337</sup> *Star*, 14 November 1899, p.2.

<sup>338</sup> Donnelly had been the secretary of the Canterbury Political Association and the first secretary of the Canterbury National Association. He also stood for the Opposition in 1896.

<sup>339</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 26 October 1899, p.5.

<sup>340</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 11 November 1899, p.3. This reasoning seems dubious as there is evidence that Poverty Bay paid FitzRoy's election expenses in 1899, see: General Election 1899: Return show expense of Members and Candidates, *AJHR*, 1901, H.41, pp.2-5.

to become active.<sup>341</sup> The *Otago Daily Times* asked where the branches of the Association were, and argued for their return after the useful work they had carried out in 1896.<sup>342</sup> The *North Otago Times* ran an editorial entitled 'Disorganisation' which said there was no evidence of the Opposition having any organisation and that many government candidates in the South Island faced weak, or even no, candidates. The paper thought this was due to National Association becoming moribund.<sup>343</sup> Another sign that the Opposition's organisation was weaker than in 1896 was that they failed to find candidates for two seats, Westland and Waihemo.<sup>344</sup> There were also twenty seats which had two or more candidates, and in five of these there was more than one Opposition candidate.<sup>345</sup> The effect of the breakdown of the Auckland National Association was particularly noticeable, as there were two Opposition candidates for the seats of Parnell and Manukau.<sup>346</sup>

After the 1899 election the Opposition was reduced to nineteen seats. There was shock among those who had been involved in the campaign, particularly as the Opposition had been expecting to increase its seats.<sup>347</sup> Wanganui, Taranaki, Waipawa, Kaiapoi, Ashburton and Riccarton were all won by the government candidate who lost in 1896, and some of the margins were very small. Rolleston lost Riccarton by one vote<sup>348</sup> and R.D.D. McLean lost in Napier by thirty-eight votes. Buchanan lost in Wairarapa, a seat he had held since 1881,<sup>349</sup> and the two Opposition MHRs for Dunedin City came fourth and fifth. In the different political climate of 1899, FitzRoy was unable to unseat the current MP in Waiapu, James Carroll, and lost by over 1 300 votes.<sup>350</sup>

Shortly after the 1899 election the remaining active sections of the National Association dispersed. At the beginning of 1900 the Canterbury National Association voted to dissolve itself, although it is unclear why. With only a few sections participating in the 1899 election campaign, it is probable that the Canterbury section realised that there

<sup>341</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 21 April 1899, p.2.

<sup>342</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 30 September 1899, p.4.

<sup>343</sup> *North Otago Times*, 16 November 1899, p.2.

<sup>344</sup> General Election, 1899, *AJHR* 1900, H.26, pp.1-4, the government candidates for these seats were Seddon and John McKenzie.

<sup>345</sup> General Election, 1899, *AJHR* 1900, H.26, pp.1-4. One of these was Palmerston where Fredrick Pirani, an ex-government supporter stood as an 'Opposition' candidate, but this was a controversial move within the Opposition. Buick, the other 'Opposition' candidate, had stood in 1896 and come close to beating Pirani who was then the government candidate. See: Russell to Massey, 18 December 1898, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>346</sup> Buchanan to Rolleston, 13 January 1899, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-August 1899, 77-248-11/5, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>347</sup> Russell to Richardson Bros, 21 December 1899, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>348</sup> Rolleston to Duthie, 17 December 1899, Correspondence September-December 1899, 77-248-11/6, Alexander Turnbull Library, Rolleston said that he would not challenge the result despite its close nature as it would be seen as 'men of wealth using their power to crush illiterate shearers &c. &c.' Rolleston also told Duthie he did not have the money for the court challenge and doubted that the Opposition could fund him either.

<sup>349</sup> David Hamer, 'Buchanan, Walter Clarke', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2b46/buchanan-walter-clarke>, accessed 3 July 2017.

<sup>350</sup> General Election, 1899, *AJHR* 1900, H.26, pp.1-4.

was no value in being part of the National Association. There was also a lingering tension between those in Canterbury and the Opposition over the issue of funds, with the Canterbury Association donating the balance of accounts to the patriotic fund.<sup>351</sup> Despite the fact their candidate lost the election, the Poverty Bay Association continued to meet into 1900, with the last recorded activity in July.<sup>352</sup> It seems that this was the last section of the National Association to close, almost exactly nine years after its formation was first discussed.

The Opposition losses in the 1899 election can partly be attributed to the political climate in 1899. Since 1896 economic conditions had improved; unemployment, an election issue in 1896, was barely noticeable in 1899. The Boer War allowed Seddon to play to his strengths as a populist politician.<sup>353</sup> Furthermore Seddon had learnt from the National Association and attempted to organise a national Liberal and Labour Federation.<sup>354</sup> However, the Opposition received thirty-six percent of the overall vote,<sup>355</sup> only slightly less than 1896. The maintenance of the overall share of the vote suggests that the Opposition had not lost support since 1896. What they had failed to do was to organise well in local electorates and turn the support into votes for a candidate. It seems likely that the fact that the Opposition had the support of a well-organised National Association contributed to its success in terms of winning seats in 1896. Conversely, the absence of such co-ordinated backing appears to have been a significant factor in its big loss of seats in 1899.

## The connection between the National Association and the Opposition

The National Association often went out of its way to deny that it was connected to the Opposition.<sup>356</sup> Yet, as we have seen, the two groups worked closely together and often shared membership. Even though the Association said that its main purpose was to bring unity and purity to politics and to the support the election of the best men, it never once endorsed a candidate that supported the government. Furthermore, as Brand points out,<sup>357</sup> the National Association and the Opposition became largely perceived as synonymous.<sup>358</sup> In 1949 Brand interviewed E.E. Vaile, a leading member of

<sup>351</sup> *Star*, 5 January 1900, p.3.

<sup>352</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 30 June 1899, p.3.

<sup>353</sup> Tom Brooking, *Richard Seddon: King of God's Own*, Auckland: Penguin, 2014, p.188.

<sup>354</sup> Foster, pp.126-134, detailed this organisation.

<sup>355</sup> Lipson, p.187.

<sup>356</sup> National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, Minute Book 1891-1897, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki; *New Zealand Herald*, 9 May 1894, p.3; *Otago Daily Times*, 10 October 1894, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 5 July 1895, p.6; *Otago Daily Times*, 4 March 1896, p.3; *Otago Daily Times*, 21 March 1896, p.3; *Mataura Ensign*, 24 March 1896, p.2; *Lake Country Press*, 26 March 1896, p.2; *New Zealand Times*, 18 January 1897, p.2; *Daily Telegraph*, 21 August 1897, p.2; *Poverty Bay Herald*, 23 April 1896, p.3.

<sup>357</sup> Brand, p.61.

<sup>358</sup> For some evidence of this see: *Mount Ida Chronicle*, 20 March 1896, p.2

the Auckland National Association, who affirmed that in Auckland at least the Association was the organisation for the Opposition.<sup>359</sup> As we have seen, in New Plymouth, Napier, Christchurch, Dunedin and the Matura electorate, the Association worked very closely with, often selected the candidates of, and campaigned strongly for, the Opposition, which suggests that it was closely tied to it.

Therefore, the Association must have had a purpose in trying to obscure its relationship with the Opposition. The National Association wanted to appear as a group which encompassed all sections in society, to be identified as being for all New Zealanders. This was in line with the political mood of the 1890s, and is reflected in the choice of name and its platform. However, there was a section of the public and the Association that perceived this goal as being at odds with being part of a political party. For these people parties were associated with sectionalism and being a political party meant placing the interests of the party above the country.<sup>360</sup> Yet the Liberals never denied being a party and were quick to accuse the National Association and the Opposition of being another party,<sup>361</sup> therefore being a party in itself was not necessarily damaging. When examining anti-party movements in Britain, Searle contends that a party may be perceived by much of the public as representing the whole nation.<sup>362</sup> Hamer noted a similar aura around the Liberals. Seddon illustrated this when he said Liberal legislation 'has been upon broad general lines, applicable to all and beneficial to all and that consequently it is only reasonable to expect that all sections of the community- all with the exception of a selfish few- would support the government in the forward progressive policy'.<sup>363</sup> Therefore, even though the Liberals were perceived as a party and owned the label of party they were not identified with sectionalism. What the National Association struggled with was that they did not want to be identified with the selfish few who opposed the government, yet they were opposed to the government. This led them to distance themselves from the Opposition and the notion of party, in an effort to appear as an organisation for all sections of the community.

Furthermore, the relationship between the Opposition and Association was obscured

<sup>359</sup> Brand, p.72.

Some places where Opposition and National Association were used interchangeably: *Auckland Star*, 19 November 1892, p.10; *Observer*, 20 May 1893, p.2; *Otago Daily Times*, 9 December 1893, p.4; *Press*, 14 April 1896, p.4; *Star*, 18 May 1896, p.4; *Press*, 26 November 1896, p.2.

<sup>360</sup> This was seen from the beginning of the National Association and a common objection raised was that it was 'sectional'. For examples see: *Waikato Times*, 15 October 1891, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 28 October 1891, p.3; *Taranaki Herald*, 7 April 1892, p.2; *Evening Star*, 10 March 1896, p.2; *Press*, 5 September 1896, p.7.

For National Association members' declarations of being non-party see: *New Zealand Herald*, 31 March 1892, p.6; *Taranaki Herald*, 7 April 1892, p.2; *Auckland Star*, 6 March 1893, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 5 July 1895, p.6; *New Zealand Herald*, 12 December 1895, p.4; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 31 March 1896, p.2; *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 10 April 1896, p.2; *Otago Daily Times*, 7 August 1896, p.3; *Daily Telegraph*, 21 August 1897, p.2; *Otago Daily Times*, 29 March 1897, p.2.

<sup>361</sup> *Woodville Examiner*, 6 March 1896, p.4; *Star*, 6 March 1896, p.4; *Poverty Bay Herald*, 19 March 1896, p.2.

<sup>362</sup> G.R. Searle, *Country before Party: Coalition and the Idea of "National Government" in Modern Britain, 1885-1987*, London: Longman, 1995, p.11.

<sup>363</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.116, 1 July-26 July 1901, p.355.

by the struggles of those within the Opposition to accept the new political landscape. The 1890s were very much a transitional phase in the formation of political parties in New Zealand. Foster argued that between 1890 and 1912 New Zealand went from being a country in which elections were fought on a local basis to one where there were two nationally organised political parties and the nucleus of a third.<sup>364</sup> This change was partly driven by the arrival of the universal franchise, which is well recognised by political scientists as a factor that encourages greater 'party' organisation.<sup>365</sup> Sartori argues that the universal franchise was necessary to force the formation of mass parties because, with the increase in the number of people voting, those who wished to be elected needed to find ways of mobilizing the expanded electorate. It was no longer enough to rely on personal appeal.<sup>366</sup> It is reasonable to expect that the two franchise changes, one-man-one-vote in 1890 and female franchise in 1893,<sup>367</sup> would force an adjustment in the way parties were formed and how elections were run. Foster thought that those on the 'conservative' side of politics struggled with this more than the Liberals. He argued that men like Rolleston and Russell, who had been raised in an environment where the ability to govern was a product of social position and training, could not adapt themselves to a world where someone like Seddon could become Premier.<sup>368</sup>

This struggle can be seen in the reversal of the Opposition's organisational methods between 1896 and 1899. In 1896, it appeared that the Opposition had come to terms with mass franchise. The National Association, as the Opposition's organising body, used some methods which are attributed to a mass party.<sup>369</sup> For example, it was mainly organised by men outside of parliament. It formed a connected nationwide body of Associations, which allowed New Zealanders to be paid members at a local level and to send delegates to a national council.<sup>370</sup> The development of a centrally administered fund, some of which came from membership fees, and the running of a newspaper for over two years were also moves in the direction of a mass political organisation. However, in 1899 the Opposition reverted to its previous ways of organising, using local MHRs to fundraise and find local candidates. This suggests that the leadership of the Opposition had not yet come to terms with the need to form a modern, nationwide organisation to reach voters. Some leading Opposition members were still not sure they needed to be

<sup>364</sup> Foster, p.viii.

<sup>365</sup> Richard S. Katz, 'Political Parties' in *Comparative Politics*, 3rd edition, (ed) Daniele Caramani, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p.202; Susan E. Scarrow, 'The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Modern Political Parties: The Unwanted Emergence of Party-Based Politics' in *Handbook of Party Politics*, (eds) Richard S. Katz and William Crotty, London: Sage, 2006, pp.16-17.

<sup>366</sup> Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, vol. 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp.21-22.

<sup>367</sup> Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, p.77 and p.84. Technically New Zealand's first election under universal male franchise was 1881 when the property ownership qualification was removed. However, the retention of the right to vote in whichever electorate the voter held property meant that those with wealth still had a greater say in elections until this was abolished before the 1890 election.

<sup>368</sup> Foster, p.154.

<sup>369</sup> This is using the criteria in Katz, 'Political Parties', p.204.

<sup>370</sup> As far as is possible to ascertain the National Association was the first political organisation of this kind in New Zealand. Previously this has been attributed to the Liberal and Labour Federation set up in 1899 see: Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, p.103.

organised, or even make public appeals for support. Russell wrote at the beginning of 1899 that he 'wasn't sure about beginning to organise now, I would rather wait a bit'.<sup>371</sup> Scobie Mackenzie complained that stumping was a mistake because 'it alerts the government to our tactics, none of our people are good at it and it brings the opposition down to Seddon's gutter politics. A few good speeches here and there are much better'.<sup>372</sup>

On the other hand, there were those within the Opposition ranks who saw that the change in franchise required a change of tactics. As early as 1891 Newman wrote that, 'if we are to beat the ministry next time we shall do it only by careful planning. We shall also have to organise and gather money for our candidates'.<sup>373</sup> In the summer recess of 1897-1898 Massey attempted to organise Opposition speakers everywhere a minister had spoken,<sup>374</sup> and George Hutchison, MHR for Patea, offered to follow Seddon around to reply to his speeches.<sup>375</sup> However, these offers were not taken up and it seems that the older Opposition MHRs still hoped to be elected because of their status as community leaders, rather than by direct appeals to the voting public. This idea was expressed by Buchanan when he told Rolleston that, 'my own belief is that if we can only get the right candidates we could sweep the field at the next election'.<sup>376</sup> This vacillation over the changing political climate meant the Opposition had an ambiguous relationship with the National Association

## Why were the Opposition electorally unsuccessful in the 1890s?

In a first-past-the-post electoral system, success at elections is measured by the number of individual electorates a party wins. In this regard, the Opposition was largely unsuccessful for the entirety of the 1890s. The most seats they held was twenty-five, still eleven short of a majority. This failure to even come close to the Treasury benches is usually explained by the disorganisation of the Opposition. As shown, the reversals suffered in 1899 were indeed partly due to lack of organisation, meaning that the Opposition could not turn votes into seats. However, as the activity of the National Association illustrates, they were not as disorganised as has been previously suggested. Furthermore, they were, particularly in 1896, much more organised than the government, which struggled to create a cohesive Liberal Party.<sup>377</sup> If electoral failure was a product of disorganisation, then the

<sup>371</sup> Russell to Buchanan, 4 January 1899, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>372</sup> Scobie Mackenzie to Rolleston, 16 February 1899, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-August 1899, 77-248-11/5, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>373</sup> Newman to Rolleston, 22 January 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-April 1891, 77-248-08/2, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>374</sup> Massey to Rolleston, 19 January 1898, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-March 1898, 77-248-11/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>375</sup> George Hutchinson to Buchanan, 5 February 1898, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-March 1898, 77-248-11/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>376</sup> Buchanan to Rolleston, 27 February 1898, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-March 1898, 77-248-11/3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>377</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.233-237; Brooking, *Richard Seddon*, pp.227-282.

Liberal Government should have suffered even greater losses. Consequently, another explanation for the Opposition's inability to perform better should be sought.<sup>378</sup>

In his analysis of the 1899 loss, Duthie highlighted four points that he thought had contributed: lack of policy, lack of public addresses, lack of organisation and Russell's leadership.<sup>379</sup> It is reasonable to say that the National Association had provided three of these in 1896. The Association's national conference held in March 1896 had produced a nine-point manifesto, to which all branches had agreed. It had organised stumping tours, particularly in the first half of 1896 when the House had been in recess. For example, Russell had spoken in Auckland,<sup>380</sup> Gisborne,<sup>381</sup> Nelson,<sup>382</sup> and Christchurch.<sup>383</sup> In 1896 the National Association had also provided the connections within electorates which enabled organisation at that level.

Duthie was right to point out that these factors were lacking in 1899. However, in some National Association sections there was a feeling that because these strategies had not worked in 1896, other methods needed to be tried. This was more evident in Auckland, where the National Association had actively organised for two elections yet had seen only seen a modest improvement in the overall position of the Opposition. The idea that electoral fortunes could be reversed if the public were 'better educated' had been present since the Association began, but after 1896 it seemed to become more important. The last large-scale event undertaken by the Auckland section was to organise a series of educational lectures in 1897.<sup>384</sup> This was also seen in other branches. After the 1896 election, some in the Canterbury section thought there was a need to educate rather than organise.<sup>385</sup> Another idea was that a focus on voter registration and ensuring the roll was accurate would yield results. This is demonstrated by a letter which appeared in the *Poverty Bay Herald* criticising the Association for spending too much time electioneering when 'In older countries it is a recognised axiom that the fight is won, not at the polls, but in the registration'.<sup>386</sup> In Otago the fear was expressed that the rolls were not kept properly because the registrar was a paid government official.<sup>387</sup> It seems that when electoral organisation appeared to fail, the National Association did look for other explanations.

That organisation alone was not enough was vaguely understood by those who campaigned for the Opposition. After the 1899 election there was some discussion among

<sup>378</sup> Phipps, pp.156-7, argued that the explanation for the Opposition's poor poll results lay in changes in the electorate.

<sup>379</sup> Memoranda on Election of 1899 of 6<sup>th</sup> December 1899, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie, MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>380</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 10 April 1896, p.5.

<sup>381</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 23 April 1896, p.3.

<sup>382</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 9 May 1896, p.2.

<sup>383</sup> *Press*, 5 June 1896, p.5.

<sup>384</sup> *Auckland Star*, 7 April 1897, p.4.

<sup>385</sup> *Press*, 19 December 1896, p.5

<sup>386</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 30 May 1899, p.3.

<sup>387</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 30 September 1899, p.4.

leading Opposition supporters as to what had caused the reversal. Seddon's ability to offer public works and other 'bribes' was perceived as a problem, with Scobie McKenzie writing, 'for the first time in the history of politics... real solid gifts, money, were to be expected from the one, while the other, not without reason, became identified with opposition to it'.<sup>388</sup> Duthie agreed that 'Seddon's strength is mainly in political bribery' and that 'Old Age Pensions... proved to be Seddon's master stroke.'<sup>389</sup> The advantage that the government had in campaigning had been a complaint of the National Association during the 1896 election.<sup>390</sup> The ability of Seddon and a government MHR to promise public money in the form of 'roads and bridges' or government appointments did disadvantage the Opposition, particularly in areas which were underdeveloped, or relied on government departments for employment.<sup>391</sup> However, some of the bush areas in the North Island returned Opposition candidates during the 1890s,<sup>392</sup> and conversely some of the more settled areas of the South Island returned Liberal members.<sup>393</sup> Therefore, the promise of local public works and jobs does not entirely explain why the Opposition was unable to make electoral progress.

In general, the tone of letters sent between leading Opposition supporters about the 1899 loss was one of puzzlement. Russell told Duthie the result was 'a devil of an upset' and he could not understand why it had happened as 'everybody agreed that whether or not we beat Seddon, that we were likely to improve our position'.<sup>394</sup> Duthie told Rolleston that 'I have been far astray of public opinion' and went on to give some reasons why a win might have been expected. These included his 1898 by-election result, that Seddon's candidates seemed to be unpopular at public meetings, that Seddon himself excited no enthusiasm, and the positive reports Duthie had received from electorates.<sup>395</sup> There was a feeling that the Opposition had tried different methods to engage the voter and yet they had failed for a third time. Russell summed up the general mood among Opposition supporters, saying, 'the universal collapse proves some strong undercurrent which we were not yet aware of'.

The undercurrent of which the Opposition was unaware was that the political mood of the 1890s was against them. Hamer proposed that the essential aim of New Zealand Liberals was to eradicate 'class politics'. He pointed out that this did not necessarily

<sup>388</sup> Scobie McKenzie to Russell, 20 December 1899, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie-MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>389</sup> Memoranda on General Election of 6<sup>th</sup> December 1899, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie-MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>390</sup> For examples of this see: *New Zealand Herald*, 5 July 1895, p.6; *North Otago Times*, 18 March 1896 p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 March 1896, p.4; *Southland Times*, 1 April 1896, p.2

<sup>391</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.223-224.

<sup>392</sup> Some examples of North Island 'bush' electorates that were consistently Opposition during the 1890s are Patea and Hawera.

<sup>393</sup> Some examples of South Island electorates that were consistently government during the 1890s are Timaru and Oamaru.

<sup>394</sup> Russell to Duthie, Bell Family Papers, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie, MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>395</sup> Memoranda on Election of 1899 of 6<sup>th</sup> December 1899, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie, MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library.

mean the removal or denial of class, but that they wanted to end what they saw as the promotion of the interest of one class, or section of society, over another.<sup>396</sup> Those who were thought to be pursuing their own 'class' interests were often described as the 'enemies of the people'. Hamer believed that the Liberals saw themselves engaged in a moral battle against those who wished to turn New Zealand into a society with class divisions similar to Britain.<sup>397</sup>

However, these ideas were not unique to those Liberals who supported Seddon and the government.<sup>398</sup> Similar philosophies were very prevalent in the National Association. From its inception the Association declared that its first purpose was 'to promote national interests and oppose class and sectional interests' and its fifth platform point was 'to promote sound economy and oppose class legislation'.<sup>399</sup> Even the choice of name was meant to imply that the Association was formed in the interest of the whole country.<sup>400</sup> It never wavered from the idea that the main purpose of the National Association was to prevent 'class politics'. At the 1893 Auckland Association Annual General Meeting, Bagger declared 'we strive for general good, without distinction of class or sex; and are in fact opposed to class legislation and class privileges of any kind'.<sup>401</sup> In 1896 the *Wanganui Chronicle* said of the Association 'It is not class organisation, but embraces all men, without distinction, who love their country, and wish to see it making substantial progress'.<sup>402</sup> Patrick McLean, speaking at the Napier 1899 Annual General Meeting, said 'The word "national" chosen as the name of the association expressed the very spirit, which gave rise to the association'.<sup>403</sup> Like the Liberals, the National Association believed that 'class politics' were injurious to New Zealand.

The difference between the two sides was in what they believed caused class divisions. The Liberals had come to power in 1890 arguing that large, wealthy landowners were the cause of the depression and therefore the 'enemies of the people'. As William Earnshaw, a Liberal MHR for Dunedin City explained, the Liberals' opponents wanted 'to try and grasp the whole of the lands, to try and get the whole of the monetary power into their possession, and also the whole of the manufacturing interest, so as to keep the working-classes in the bondage of slavery'.<sup>404</sup> These ideas were firmly fixed in the consciousness of most voters during the 1890s, and the 'enemies of the people' remained those who owned large amounts of land. Hamer showed the consistency of these views. In 1893 Richard Taylor accused owners of large estates of wanting to establish 'a titled aristocracy in the country' and in 1904 George Laurenson said the Opposition wanted to

<sup>396</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.40-41.

<sup>397</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.42.

<sup>398</sup> Jim McAloon, 'The Making of the New Zealand Ruling Class' in *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand*, (ed) Melanie Nolan, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005, pp.222-223, noted similar rhetoric from Opposition MHRs.

<sup>399</sup> *Evening Post*, 10 September 1891, p.3.

<sup>400</sup> The Opposition tended to use the term 'national', the Liberals tended to use the term 'people'.

<sup>401</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 29 September 1893, p.6.

<sup>402</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 31 March 1896, p.2.

<sup>403</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 12 August 1899, p.3.

<sup>404</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.71, 11 June-7 July 1891, p.451.

'have country families and class distinctions'.<sup>405</sup> Free Lancing's writing in the *Observer* summed up how the Liberals saw the problem, 'the only class legislation from which we are really suffering is that imposed upon us by the moneyed class in the earlier days when laws were placed on the statute books simply for the benefit of the money bags who framed them and loans were squandered for the improvement of their town properties.'<sup>406</sup>

The problem that the Opposition faced in the 1890s was they found it very difficult to convince enough of the voting public that they were not aligned with 'enemies of the people'. Russell, as a large runholder, was an easy target for government accusations that he represented the 'selfish class' and was part of the section of society which was perceived to have caused the economic problems of the late 1880s. He was described as 'a large land owner of Hawke's Bay . . . his antecedents and all his interests identify him with the party of privilege and monopoly'.<sup>407</sup> He was not the only large-landowning Opposition member or supporter. For example, Buchanan owned a large southern Wairarapa station,<sup>408</sup> R.D.D McLean was one of the largest land owners in the Hawke's Bay<sup>409</sup> and Scobie Mackenzie owned a large Otago run.<sup>410</sup> Newman noted after the 1890 election that F.H.D Bell's connections to the Cheviot estate may have been the cause of his loss and noted that 'we must have smaller men. The public are also greatly set against servants of big companies.'<sup>411</sup> This relationship with large, wealthy landowners was also an easy point of attack for those opposed to the National Association. Right from its beginnings it was accused of being 'composed of Globo wire pullers'<sup>412</sup> and 'of land-owners and capitalists and few others who can lay claim to neither title but who stupidly consider that their interests are identical'.<sup>413</sup> During the 1896 campaign the Samuel Carnell, Liberal MHR for Napier, said 'the National Ass. [was] started by the champion sweaters of Auckland who made women and girls work 16 hours a day'<sup>414</sup> and the national platform was described as 'in reality a challenge by the capitalistic society to the industrious classes.'<sup>415</sup> In 1897 an editorial in the *Colonist* accused the National Association of being 'well to do squatters who, having a hold of the country would withhold from others the advantages which enabled them to secure broad acres'.<sup>416</sup> As these charges were very

<sup>405</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.43.

<sup>406</sup> *Observer*, 23 April 1892, p.4.

<sup>407</sup> *Oxford Observer*, 16 May 1896, p.3.

<sup>408</sup> Hamer, 'Buchanan, Walter Clarke'

<sup>409</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. II, M-Addenda, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, p.36.

<sup>410</sup> Tom Brooking, 'Mackenzie, Mackay John Scobie', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m18/mackenzie-mackay-john-scobie> accessed 3 July 2017.

<sup>411</sup> Newman to Rolleston, 22 January 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence January-April 1891, 77-248-08/2, Alexander Turnbull Library. Bell's wife was the daughter of William Robinson, the owner of Cheviot.

<sup>412</sup> *Observer*, 19 December 1891, p.4, Globo was a company which owned substantial amounts of land in the Auckland province. It was often used as a representation of the worst kinds of land sharks.

<sup>413</sup> *Bay of Plenty Times*, 11 April 1892, p.2.

<sup>414</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 17 March 1896, p.3.

<sup>415</sup> *Star*, 16 October 1896, p.5.

<sup>416</sup> *Colonist*, 5 August 1897, p.2.

difficult for the Association to rebut, the Association and the Opposition continued to be identified by many voters with those who had caused the perceived class divisions of the past.

This negative image was reinforced by some of the National Association's platforms. One of the first campaigns the National Association ran in 1891 was to oppose Ballance's appointment of extra Legislative Councillors. Hamer pointed out that the Legislative Council was obstructive to Liberal Government in its early years and this gave government supporters an enemy to focus on.<sup>417</sup> The Council became identified with the 'class enemies' the Liberals were fighting against and the Association's campaign to prevent more Liberal Councillors being appointed placed it alongside the 'enemies of the people'. This was expressed by the *Auckland Star* when it said the Association's efforts were directly aimed at Ballance, who wished 'to introduce some leaven in that decidedly unwholesome chamber. . . [and] have the effect of counteracting the pig-headed opposition of the chamber'.<sup>418</sup>

The National Association and Opposition also struggled with the loss of the plural vote.<sup>419</sup> Throughout the 1890s, members of both organisations promoted the idea that ratepayers should have an extra vote in general elections. This hindered their efforts, as dual voting was considered by many to be 'class legislation'. The promotion of dual voting was first seen in 1891-92 when the political associations set up on the west coast of the North Island had the dual vote as their fifth platform. This was thought necessary to prevent 'a man who has no stake in the country from wielding too much political power'.<sup>420</sup> Bryce thought that 'appealing to rate-payers would give us a large number of votes'<sup>421</sup> and G.F. Richardson thought that the slogan 'one-man-one-vote, one-ratepayer-one-vote would be very well received'.<sup>422</sup> There were Opposition members who recognised the danger of returning to any form of plural voting. Scobie Mackenzie told Rolleston he 'knocked the idea out of him [Richardson] in five minutes flat with a few good points', one of which was that it had no chance of success.<sup>423</sup> Newman thought that the ratepayer vote would earn them the title of 'the stupid party'.<sup>424</sup> However, the damage was done and the idea was picked upon by Thomas Buick who was toured the North Island speaking on behalf of Ballance's Liberal Association in 1892. He maintained that

<sup>417</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.82.

<sup>418</sup> *Auckland Star*, 5 December 1891, p.2 (supplement).

<sup>419</sup> Neill Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, p.77 detailed the end of plural voting, but he noted that although it was illegal to vote more than once you could be registered in any electorate where you owned land. This was abolished in 1893 see: Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, p.94.

<sup>420</sup> *Manawatu Herald*, 29 December 1891, p.2.

<sup>421</sup> Bryce to Rolleston, 25 December 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>422</sup> G.F. Richardson to Rolleston, 1 December 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>423</sup> Scobie Mackenzie to Rolleston, 25 December 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>424</sup> Newman to Rolleston, 29 December 1891, Rolleston Papers, Correspondence September-December 1891, 77-248-08/4, Alexander Turnbull Library.

the National Association's chief aim was a return to plural voting in order to favour the wealthy over the mass of 'the people'.<sup>425</sup>

Nevertheless, it appears that the Association was not prepared to surrender the idea of ratepayer votes. The National Association's proposals for an elected Legislative Council, which they issued in January of 1893, had a franchise based on taxpayers or ratepayers.<sup>426</sup> The unpopularity of the idea led the Liberal *New Zealand Times* to hope that the policy would be adopted by all Opposition candidates 'as it would ensure a great liberal victory'.<sup>427</sup> This remained a point on which the Association was attacked, especially after women were granted the vote. As was pointed out at a March 1894 meeting in Auckland, most women were not ratepayers or tax payers and would therefore be excluded from voting.<sup>428</sup> A letter to the *Otago Daily Times* in 1896 accused the Association of being against one-man-one-vote so as to 'block the working class voter'.<sup>429</sup> Furthermore, one of the topics for the 1897 winter lecture series organised by the Auckland National Association was an attack on universal suffrage. E.E. Vaile, the speaker, said that universal suffrage placed too much power in the hands of one class and valued quantity over quality, and so he proposed 'one extra vote for education, one extra to householders and one extra to landowners'.<sup>430</sup> In 1899 Russell wrote that 'I have never been afraid to say that in my opinion, intelligence and property ought to have some mitigation in our franchise'.<sup>431</sup> During the 1899 campaign the Liberal candidate for Rangitikei reminded voters that a political association aligned with the Opposition had, about six years before, proposed the dual vote, which 'meant the disfranchisement of working men and women'.<sup>432</sup> The fact that the Association and the Opposition continued to pursue these ideas shows that they were not in touch with popular political mood of the 1890s and helps to explain why they struggled to gain votes at elections,<sup>433</sup> even when they were better organised than the government.

## Conclusion

The National Association was founded in 1891 to oppose the Ballance Government and acted over its life as the Opposition's organising body. During its nine-year existence, it

<sup>425</sup> For example: *New Zealand Herald*, 24 April 1892, p.3; *Thames Advertiser*, 3 May 1892, p.3; *Poverty Bay Herald*, 7 May 1892, p.3; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 19 May 1892, p.2.

<sup>426</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 26 January 1893, p.4.

<sup>427</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 28 February 1893, p.2.

<sup>428</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 23 March 1894, p.6.

<sup>429</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 9 January 1896, p.4.

<sup>430</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 3 September 1897, p.5.

<sup>431</sup> Russell to John Parsons, 21 April 1899, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>432</sup> *Feilding Star*, 20 November 1899, p.2.

<sup>433</sup> The idea that the Opposition and the National Association did not understand the public mood occasionally appeared in newspaper articles. See: *New Zealand Times*, 3 March 1896, p.2; *Thames Star*, 3 June 1895, p.2.

spread from Auckland throughout the North Island and by 1896 had sections which covered most of the country. Although its national nature faded after 1896, active sections continued up until July 1900. Most branches were organised at a grass-roots level by voters and had very little input from sitting MHRs, so it was primarily an extra-parliamentary organisation. These two factors made the National Association stand out from other political organisations at the time. Ballance had tried to organise a National Liberal Association in 1891, but it had largely failed to gain traction, and Seddon organised the Liberal and Labour Federation in 1899. However, both these groups were organised by those already in parliament. Furthermore, in 1896 the National Association used membership fees to contribute to a national fund and held a national conference. These attributes demonstrate that support for the Opposition was far more organised than has been previously assumed.

Rather than electoral disorganisation, it was the voters' perception of class favouritism that impaired the Opposition. The Liberals' explanation for the depression of the 1880s focused on the 'locking up' of land, with run-holders labelled as the 'enemies of the people'. The Opposition was widely seen as aligned with these 'enemies', partly because some Opposition MHRs were run-holders and partly because of the attitudes both the Opposition and National Association displayed toward various liberal measures, particularly one-man-one-vote. During the 1890s the Opposition and National Association were unable to convince enough of the voting public that they placed the welfare of 'the people' above their own 'class' interests.

The defeat of the Opposition at the 1899 election led to the final disbanding of the National Association. However, that organisation left several important legacies in the development of a 'reform' identity. The various platforms of the National Associations formed the basis of some of the important policies pursued by the Political Reform League in the early twentieth century. The National Association also gave those in the Opposition experience in political organisation. The success in 1896, and the subsequent decline, taught key people, like Massey, that extra-parliamentary organisation was a necessity in the age of universal franchise. The National Association was a major step in the formation of a coherent, 'anti-liberal' political party.

## Chapter 3

# Towards the Political Reform League 1900-1905

*'Some day, [sic] no doubt, men will arise who will  
beat Seddon with his own weapons'.<sup>1</sup>*

– John Duthie

At the end of 1899 the Opposition was in disarray. Between 1900 and 1905 it rebuilt, formed a new extra-parliamentary organisation, the Political Reform League, and began to capture some of the political debate. The gap between the end of the National Association and the formation of the Political Reform League is not well researched.<sup>2</sup> However, it was during this period that the Opposition came to terms with the need for party organisation and began to practise methods of electioneering that were better suited to the age of mass franchise. Some of this change can be attributed to the election of new Opposition MHRs, who were perceived to be men of more modest means, rather than part of the inter-connected colonial elite.<sup>3</sup> The Opposition was also aided by the changing tone of the political debate. By the beginning of the twentieth century the drive to settle

<sup>1</sup> Duthie to Rolleston, 12 December 1899, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie, MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Brand, 'A Study of Conservatism 1890-1911', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1950, pp.73-80 do cover this period, but largely focused on Massey; B. H. Farland, *Farmer Bill: William Ferguson Massey and the Reform Party*, Wellington: B. Farland, 2008, pp. 61-64 briefly cover Massey's election to the leadership and the 1905 campaign; Michael Bassett, *New Zealand Prime Ministers: From Dick Seddon to John Key*, Mangawhai: David Ling Publishing Limited, 2017, pp. 81-83, cover this period of Massey's life, but did not provide detail about how he rose to leadership or his relationship with the Political Reform League; W.J. Gardner, 'The Rise of W.F. Massey, 1891-1912', *Political Science*, 13, no. 1, 1961, pp.16-21, covered the period, but mainly from the perspective of Massey's career as Leader of the Opposition; D.A. Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988, pp.239-270 covered this period from the perspective of the Liberals; Tom Brooking, *Richard Seddon: King of God's Own*, Auckland: Penguin, 2014, pp.349-399, covered the period from Seddon's perspective.

<sup>3</sup> Jim McAloon, 'The Making of the New Zealand Ruling Class' in *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand*, (ed) Melanie Nolan, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005, p.218, noted the declining participation of wealthy men in politics.

workers on farms was fading.<sup>4</sup> Urbanisation had increased,<sup>5</sup> the economy was buoyant,<sup>6</sup> and there was a growing realisation that many workers did not want to be farmers.<sup>7</sup> The political focus shifted from moving people out of towns to maintaining the economic prosperity of towns. Ironically, this coincided with the New Zealand economy's growing reliance on the export of farm produce,<sup>8</sup> which reinforced the idea that towns were reliant on farmers for their existence, the so-called 'farmer backbone'.<sup>9</sup> Between 1900 and 1905 the Opposition began to be identified as the party which supported the rural economy, and this enabled it to begin building a strong electoral base.

Between 1900 and 1903 the Opposition was leaderless in the House and had no discernible extra-parliamentary organisation. However, the 1902 election was strongly influenced by the Farmers' Union, which some Opposition MHRs may have considered could become their new organising vehicle. The Farmers' Union declared itself to be 'anti-party', but supported at least six of the new Opposition MHRs elected in 1902. During the 1903 parliamentary session, the Opposition elected Massey as leader and within a year there were reports of an extra-parliamentary organisation forming to support the Opposition. This organisation, called the Political Reform League, became more active from mid-1905 as the next election approached. Although the Political Reform League appeared to be a new organisation, its roots lay very much in the National Association. In the 1905 election the Opposition lost seats but increased its share of the vote. The decrease in seats did not discourage Massey and the Opposition, and they continued to organise through the vehicle of the Political Reform League.

## The aftermath of the 1899 election

The Opposition was severely weakened after the 1899 election. Not only did some prominent members lose their seats,<sup>10</sup> but it also suffered from poor morale. In the days before parliament met in June 1900, there was speculation about what the Opposition would do. It was described as having been 'utterly wrecked at the polls',<sup>11</sup> and 'practically wiped out

<sup>4</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.172-173.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Schrader, *The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities 1840-1920*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016, pp.392-393.

<sup>6</sup> G.R. Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp.98-99.

<sup>7</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.177.

<sup>8</sup> Tom Brooking, 'Economic Transformation' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, (ed) Geoffrey W. Rice, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.232; Jim McAloon, 'The New Zealand Economy, 1792-1914' in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (ed) Giselle Byrnes, Victoria: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp.214-215.

<sup>9</sup> B.D. Graham, 'The Country Party Idea in New Zealand Politics, 1901-1935' in *Studies of a Small Democracy*, (eds) Robert Chapman and Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Paul's Book Arcade, 1963, p.175; Miles Fairburn, 'The Farmers Take Over' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, (ed) Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990, p.185.

<sup>10</sup> William Rolleston and Walter Buchanan, both senior Opposition members lost their seats. See: Russell to Richardson Bros, 21 December 1899, Russell Papers, letter book, 3 January 1896-14 September 1900, MS-Papers-1711-05, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>11</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 19 June 1900, p.2.

of existence'.<sup>12</sup> Some newspapers thought that it needed to regroup and develop something new. The editor of the *Press* wrote, 'The old Opposition as a party is dead and the sooner that fact is recognised the better. It was practically wiped out at the last election, and when we start again it ought to be on fresh lines.'<sup>13</sup> There was debate about what the 'fresh lines' should be. The *Press* thought that the Opposition should not elect a leader or appoint a whip,<sup>14</sup> and the Wellington correspondent for the *Hawke's Bay Herald* simply said the Opposition felt 'bound to "hold the fort" till they are relieved, in a similar manner to that in which relief came to the gallant little force at Mafeking'.<sup>15</sup>

When the Opposition caucus met on 22 June 1900, nineteen MHRs attended and Massey was in the chair. Four options were placed before the members: re-elect William Russell as leader, elect James Allen as leader, appoint a committee to organise the Opposition or have no organisation at all. Apparently, no decision was made at this meeting, but the general opinion seemed to be for no organisation.<sup>16</sup> There were no further reports of caucus meetings, but from the Opposition's conduct in the House it appears they indeed chose the option of having no organisation.<sup>17</sup> As the *Press* noted, this was not without risk. There was a possibility that the left of the Liberal Party might split off and form a stronger opposition group. If this happened, those in the Opposition might be forced to align with Seddon to prevent a more radical party from winning an election.<sup>18</sup> Generally, when the newspapers reviewed the 1900 session, they gave muted approval for the way the Opposition proceeded. There was a sentiment that the Opposition had little option but to 'act as a kind of independent guerrilla',<sup>19</sup> and that it was not 'sufficiently numerous and powerful to justify any present organisation'.<sup>20</sup>

There are several possibilities as to why the Opposition did not choose a leader. There was some belief that the lack of Opposition might cause the Liberals to fracture. The *Nelson Evening Mail* hoped that without an organised Opposition, 'a new party of independence will spring forth in due time'.<sup>21</sup> The *Evening Post* went as far as to speculate on what this new party might look like. They thought that it would be called the 'New Liberal Party', be led by James Allen and would include some of the 'independent' Liberals.<sup>22</sup> The *Hawke's Bay Herald* thought the Opposition could be a group 'with whom members who generally supported the government could join in opposing measures to which they objected without any severing of party ties'.<sup>23</sup> Some Liberals also believed that having

<sup>12</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 June 1900, p.5.

<sup>13</sup> *Press*, 19 June 1900, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> *Press*, 19 June 1900, p.4.

<sup>15</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 21 June 1900, p.2.

<sup>16</sup> *Press*, 23 June 1900, p.9.

<sup>17</sup> *Press*, 16 October 1900, p.4, reviewed the 1900 session and noted that the Opposition had no organisation.

<sup>18</sup> *Press*, 23 June 1900, p.9.

<sup>19</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 12 March 1901, p.2.

<sup>20</sup> *Press*, 8 March 1901, p.4.

<sup>21</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 21 June 1900, p.2.

<sup>22</sup> *Evening Post*, 19 June 1900, p.4.

<sup>23</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 12 March 1901, p.2.

no organisation was an attempt on the Opposition's part to cause the Liberals to split. William Napier, an Auckland City Liberal MHR, thought that a lack of Opposition would lead those within the government to feel they could criticise it more freely and shatter the unity of the party.<sup>24</sup> Hamer certainly notes that Seddon was dealing with more internal discord from 1900.<sup>25</sup> However, the Opposition's tactic did not result in any government MHRs joining its ranks.

Gardner proposed another possible reason why the Opposition did not elect a leader in 1900. He argued that the Opposition was split over whether to choose Allen or Russell, so they postponed the issue indefinitely.<sup>26</sup> Russell had made it clear that he was not interested in the leadership.<sup>27</sup> Allen had filled the place of deputy and was therefore seen as the natural choice.<sup>28</sup> However, some considered him not the right person to make the changes that the Opposition needed. Allen was a large landowner who also held considerable mining interests,<sup>29</sup> and so could be identified with the wealthy elite. Allen's son believed that this was the main reason he was not chosen.<sup>30</sup> Allen also had a somewhat 'part-time' attitude to politics, more typical of a colonial member than the leader of a mass party.<sup>31</sup> He may also have lacked the personality needed to lead a group of disheartened men.<sup>32</sup> The editor of the *Temuka Leader* said of Allen, 'he lacks that which draws men'.<sup>33</sup> There were also hints of disunity in the newspapers,<sup>34</sup> and the inability to reach a decision over the best leader for the situation was also suggested by Russell in his 1900 address-in-reply speech. He ended it by saying he 'thought it maybe some short time yet before the collective wisdom of the Opposition finds voice',<sup>35</sup> which suggests trouble with agreeing on the way forward. Although not the official Leader of Opposition, Russell continued to fill the role until the 1901 session when he indicated that he was no longer willing even to do this.<sup>36</sup> More generally, it would seem that much of the disorganisation of the parliamentary Opposition was driven by the inability of the members to agree on how to respond to the changed political environment.

The Opposition was dealt further blows between 1900 and 1902 when they lost two long-serving MHRs through resignation. George Hutchison resigned from his Patea seat

<sup>24</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 116, 1 July-26 July 1901, p.57.

<sup>25</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.216-226.

<sup>26</sup> Gardner, 'The Rise of W.F. Massey', p.16.

<sup>27</sup> Brian Hawthorne Phipps, 'The New Zealand Conservative Party 1891-1903', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1990, p.101.

<sup>28</sup> Gardner, 'The Rise of W.F. Massey', p.17.

<sup>29</sup> Ian McGibbon, 'Allen, James', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3a12/allen-james>, accessed 15 August 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Brand, p.77.

<sup>31</sup> Raewyn Dalziel, 'The "Continuous Ministry" Revisited', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 21, no. 2, 1987, p.60.

<sup>32</sup> Gardner, 'The Rise of W.F. Massey', pp.17-18.

<sup>33</sup> *Temuka Leader*, 12 March 1901, p.2.

<sup>34</sup> *Evening Post*, 19 June 1900, p.4; *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 21 June 1900, p.2.

<sup>35</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 111, 21 June – 19 July, 1900, p.39.

<sup>36</sup> Phipps, pp.105-106.

in 1900 to go to South Africa as a military legal advisor.<sup>37</sup> At his farewell function, Hutchison said he would not be leaving if 'he was not convinced that, for a time at least, the fortunes of the Opposition were not likely to be in the ascendant'.<sup>38</sup> The subsequent by-election was won by Fredrick Haselden, the Opposition candidate. That election was invalidated but the second election was won again by Haselden.<sup>39</sup> In 1901 Charles Lewis, an MHR for Christchurch City, also resigned, citing a lack of support for Opposition members. Because their number was so small, he felt that he had 'practically no associates or supporters'.<sup>40</sup> The by-election for his seat was held in July 1901 and there was no Opposition candidate. The winner, George Smith, had been a member for Christchurch City between 1893 and 1899, but had come only fifth at the 1899 election.<sup>41</sup> Smith described himself as an Independent Liberal, and Hamer names him as one of the 'Liberal' members who did not give regular support to the government.<sup>42</sup> However, he was not a reliable Opposition supporter either, so it was reduced to eighteen.

During 1899, A.G.C. Glass, a Northland farmer, had begun to organise a nationwide Farmers' Union.<sup>43</sup> This development was driven by the growing concern among farmers that the urban workers' unions had too much influence on the government.<sup>44</sup> The Union declared itself to be politically neutral, expressed in its motto, 'Principles not Party'.<sup>45</sup> However, it could not avoid politics if it wished to advocate for farmers. Glass admitted this when he said 'to be useful the Union must be political, as they would have to deal with political questions affecting their interests'.<sup>46</sup> In July 1902, it held its first colonial conference and the issue of participation in the election was discussed. After much debate, it declared 'that the Union should not as a union take part in the election except that every member of it should see that the candidate he supports subscribed to the platform of the Union'.<sup>47</sup> The platform had been drawn up at the conference and the executive arranged for each branch to receive questionnaires, which could be used to determine candidates' views. It was thought that this would maintain the Union's cohesiveness. During the debate concern was expressed that a partisan stand could lead to splits with branches, so it was important that the Union-endorsed candidate was chosen on whether they agreed

<sup>37</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. I, A-L, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, p.423.

<sup>38</sup> *Evening Post*, 2 August 1900, p.6.

<sup>39</sup> J.O. Wilson, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record 1840-1984*, Wellington: Government Printing Office, 1985, p.203.

<sup>40</sup> *Press*, 17 June 1901, p.3.

<sup>41</sup> General Election, 1899, *AJHR* 1900, H.26, p.2.

<sup>42</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.361.

<sup>43</sup> *Auckland Star*, 21 November 1899, p.3 contained a speech given by Glass to the Auckland Farmers' Agricultural Association Conference in which he detailed the progress of the Union and the Conference members' vote to support the Union. They joined in March 1900 see: *New Zealand Herald*, 3 March 1900, p.3

<sup>44</sup> Tom Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise: A Comparative Study of the Origins and Early Phases of Development of the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales and the New Zealand Farmers' Union, 1880-1929', PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1977, p.88; *New Zealand Herald*, 7 September 1901, p.5 (supplement) for a contemporary expression of this.

<sup>45</sup> Tom Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise', p.339.

<sup>46</sup> *Press*, 2 September 1901, p.3.

<sup>47</sup> *Press*, 8 July 1902, p.6.

with the platform, not on the party they belonged to.<sup>48</sup>

The National Association had been widely considered as the organising body for the Opposition and it seems many Liberals saw the Farmers' Union as its replacement. This accusation first appeared in April 1901, when the editor of the *Taranaki Daily Times* declared that the Union's programme 'has a flavour which smacks very strongly of the defunct "National Association"'.<sup>49</sup> This was repeated by Liberal MHRs,<sup>50</sup> and Seddon described the Union as 'the National Association, phoenix-like, rising from the ashes caused by the last election'.<sup>51</sup> George Laurenson, MHR for Lyttelton, gave a series of speeches in which he highlighted the resemblance between the Farmers' Union and the Association.<sup>52</sup> In a letter to the *Otago Daily Times*, he said his purpose was to 'take the horse-cloth off the Farmers' Union, and show underneath the "National Ass." in all his hideousness'.<sup>53</sup> The idea that the union was the National Association in disguise was strongly repudiated by Union members,<sup>54</sup> and Opposition MHRs.<sup>55</sup> However, it was used in the 1902 election campaign,<sup>56</sup> and was still being reported and denied in 1906.<sup>57</sup>

There were certainly elements of continuity between the Farmers' Union and the National Association. The first connection was their common membership. In the House, John O'Meara, MHR for Pahiatua, accused Richard Monk, MHR for Waitemata, and Massey of being the Union's instigators.<sup>58</sup> Both Monk and Massey had been members of the National Association and were now members of the Farmers' Union.<sup>59</sup> Outside of the House there were other overlaps. The most obvious example was Matthew Kirkbride, the president of the Auckland Union and the first colonial president,<sup>60</sup> who had been an active member of the Auckland National Association, organising meetings for them.<sup>61</sup> Other examples of ex-National Association members who had prominent roles in regional Farmers' Unions included Henry Okey, the first president of the Taranaki Farmers' Union;<sup>62</sup> Charles Lewis, who became involved with the Templeton branch;<sup>63</sup> Henry

<sup>48</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 7 July 1902, p.2.

<sup>49</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 27 April 1901, p.2. Also see: *North Otago Times*, 30 October 1901, p.3.

<sup>50</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.116, 1 July-26 July 1901, p.78; *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.116, 1 July-26 July 1901, p.123; *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.116, 1 July-26 July 1901, p.321.

<sup>51</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.116, 1 July-26 July 1901, p.356; *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.116, 1 July-26 July 1901, p.352.

<sup>52</sup> *Star*, 4 December 1901, p.3; *Press*, 24 December 1901, p.9.

<sup>53</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 15 May 1901, p.5.

<sup>54</sup> *Manawatu Times*, 6 July 1901, p.2; *Press*, 2 September 1901, p.3; *Star*, 4 November 1901, p.4; *Northern Advocate*, 1 September 1902, p.2.

<sup>55</sup> *Evening Post*, 8 July 1901, p.6; *Evening Post*, 12 July 1901, p.5; *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.116, 1 July-26 July 1901, p.376.

<sup>56</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 21 October 1902, p.2; *Evening Post*, 4 November 1902, p.7.

<sup>57</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 29 December 1906, p.1; *Observer*, 29 December 1906, p.18.

<sup>58</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.116, 1 July-26 July 1901, p.122.

<sup>59</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.116, 1 July-26 July 1901, p.376.

<sup>60</sup> *Evening Post*, 3 July 1902, p.5.

<sup>61</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 10 September 1892, p.4.

<sup>62</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 29 April 1901, p.2.

<sup>63</sup> *Press*, 30 August 1901, p.5.

Reece, who was on the committee of the Rangiora branch;<sup>64</sup> Thomas MacGibbon, chairman of the Maitua branch;<sup>65</sup> and Donald Reid jnr., treasurer of the Milton branch.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, some Opposition MHRs paid assiduous attention to the Farmers' Union. In July 1901, the North Island Farmers' Union held a conference in Palmerston North. When Liberal MHRs had met to discuss whether they should attend, there was a heated discussion because many perceived the Union as being against the government, while others dissented, saying that they planned to go.<sup>67</sup> However, out of the thirteen MHRs who did attend, five were government members, and two, William Field and John Stevens, represented local electorates. In contrast, the eight Opposition MHRs came from throughout the country,<sup>68</sup> and comprised a considerable portion of the depleted Opposition caucus. Furthermore, in November 1901 Auckland Opposition MHRs had played a role in the amalgamation of the Auckland Agricultural Association with the Farmers' Union, with Massey speaking in favour of the move.<sup>69</sup> With the collapse of the National Association and the lack of Opposition organisation, it is likely that some Opposition MHRs saw the Union as the basis for a new party.

The actual stance of the Farmers' Union towards the Opposition during the 1902 election remains murky. Despite the Union's claim that it would support any candidate who supported its platform, there were suggestions that the Union could not support a candidate who also supported the government. When the Feilding branch discussed which candidate to endorse, the opinion of the members was 'that it would be very difficult for any candidate not to vote against the government and at the same time support the Farmers' Union platform'.<sup>70</sup> Frederick Lang, the Opposition MHR for Waikato, said in a campaign speech that 'It is impossible for a man to support the platform of the Farmers' Union and remain in the ranks of government followers'.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, in their local studies of the 1902 election, both Prince<sup>72</sup> and Bellringer<sup>73</sup> found that the Union only supported Opposition candidates. Bellringer cited the Union's endorsement in Rangitikei electorate as evidence that the Union favoured the Opposition. There were two candidates who were prominent Farmers' Union members, W.J. Birch and R.H. Hornblow, but the Union chose to endorse Birch, the Opposition candidate, over Hornblow, a Liberal.<sup>74</sup> This was not the case in all areas. Campbell saw little evidence of the Farmers' Union in Hawke's Bay,<sup>75</sup> and Graham thought that the Union in the Auckland Province did not

<sup>64</sup> *Press*, 2 October 1901, p.2.

<sup>65</sup> *Maitua Ensign*, 24 August 1901, p.2.

<sup>66</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 26 August 1901, p.2

<sup>67</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 July 1901, p.5.

<sup>68</sup> *Manawatu Times*, 29 July 1901, p.4.

<sup>69</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 3 March 1900, p.3

<sup>70</sup> *Feilding Star*, 1 November 1902, p.2.

<sup>71</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 24 November 1902, p.2.

<sup>72</sup> J.D. Prince, 'Northland Politics 1899-1929', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1966, p.56.

<sup>73</sup> Brian S. E. Bellringer, 'Conservatism and the Farmers: A Study in the Political Development of Taranaki-Wanganui between 1899 and 1925', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1958, p.48.

<sup>74</sup> Bellringer, p.99.

<sup>75</sup> M.D.N. Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics: 1890-1914', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1967, p.131.

take the Opposition seriously,<sup>76</sup> although this seems unlikely as the Union-endorsed Opposition candidates had significant success. In the Waikato electorate both candidates pledged to support the Farmers' Union platform,<sup>77</sup> but the Opposition candidate, Frederick Lang, won. However, there were instances of Liberal candidates either pledging to support the Union platform, or gaining the official endorsement of the local Union.<sup>78</sup> It seems that at this stage Union support for the Opposition only occurred in some areas of the country.

## The 1902 election

Despite the hopes that some Opposition members may have had of the Farmers' Union, the Opposition's organisation for the 1902 election was poor.<sup>79</sup> There were twenty-one seats without an Opposition candidate,<sup>80</sup> and their percentage of the overall vote dropped to twenty-one. They won twenty-two electorates,<sup>81</sup> but the number of seats in the House had increased from seventy to seventy-six,<sup>82</sup> so the Opposition proportion was almost identical to that in the previous parliament.<sup>83</sup> A closer examination of where the Opposition was successful shows that the Farmers' Union probably did have some influence. In the northern North Island, where the Union had begun, three seats were won by Union-endorsed Opposition candidates: Francis Mander in Marsden,<sup>84</sup> A.E. Harding in Kaipara<sup>85</sup> and Matthew Kirkbride in Manukau.<sup>86</sup> The victories of Mander and Kirkbride were particularly notable as they deposed long-sitting Liberals.<sup>87</sup> In the Manawatu seat, another strong Farmers' Union area,<sup>88</sup> Job Vile, the local Union candidate,<sup>89</sup> beat

<sup>76</sup> B.D. Graham, 'Waikato Politics: A Study in the Relationship of Local and National Politics in the Early Twentieth Century', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1954, p.81.

<sup>77</sup> Graham, 'Waikato Politics', p.56.

<sup>78</sup> George Witty, a government supporter, won based on the support of the Farmers' Union see: *Evening Star*, 27 November 1902, p.1; Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics', p.131, noted that the Liberal Candidate for Waipawa, Charles Hall, had Farmers' Union support; Bellringer, p.50, Major the Liberal candidate for Hawera supported the Farmers' Union platform.

<sup>79</sup> This was noted by newspapers leading up to the election, see: *Cromwell Argus*, 22 July 1902, p.5; *Press*, 12 September 1902, p.5; *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 7 October 1902, p.2; *Auckland Star*, 25 November 1902, p.2.

<sup>80</sup> Calculated using party affiliations from *Evening Post*, 26 November 1902, p.5. This election was notable for the prohibitionist F.W. Isitt standing in eight seats to force a contest so as to insure the electorate had a local option vote.

<sup>81</sup> Leslie Lipson, *The Politics of Equality: New Zealand's Adventures in Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948, p.187.

<sup>82</sup> Alan McRobie, *New Zealand Electoral Atlas*, Wellington: Government Printing Office, 1989, p.67.

<sup>83</sup> This is based on eighteen seats in a parliament of seventy, which is twenty-six percent, and twenty-two seats in a parliament of seventy-six, which is twenty-eight percent.

<sup>84</sup> *Observer*, 22 November 1902, p.5.

<sup>85</sup> *Evening Post*, 20 November 1902, p.6.

<sup>86</sup> *Observer*, 22 November 1902, p.3.

<sup>87</sup> Mander beat Robert Thompson who had been in the House for fifteen years and Kirkbride beat Sir Maurice O'Rourke who had been in the House a total of thirty-eight years; *Evening Post*, 13 November 1902, p.5, thought that neither Mander or Kirkbride could win.

<sup>88</sup> The Dominion president, James Wilson, lived in Manawatu electorate, and the first Farmers' Union conference had been held in Palmerston North.

<sup>89</sup> *Manawatu Times*, 11 November 1902, p.3.

John Stevens, the Liberal whip. In the South Island, the Union had success in Otago with Alexander Herdman winning Mount Ida,<sup>90</sup> and Donald Reid jnr. winning Taieri.<sup>91</sup>

In general, the Opposition-supporting newspapers thought that the 1902 election result was positive. Both the *Evening Post* and *Otago Daily Times* thought the Opposition had come out more strongly and should be pleased with the result.<sup>92</sup> The *New Zealand Herald* argued that seats obtained by the Opposition and independent candidates in the North Island had sent a message to Seddon that he was neglecting the North in favour of the South and that being an 'official' candidate in the North Island would become an impediment if this did not change.<sup>93</sup> Some newspapers noted that the new Opposition members were a different type of representative.<sup>94</sup> Vile,<sup>95</sup> Mander,<sup>96</sup> Kirkbride<sup>97</sup> and Harding<sup>98</sup> had all been small farmers; they were self-made and could not be considered part of an educated elite. Harding and Mander had been born in New Zealand and Vile and Kirkbride had arrived as teenagers. Herdman<sup>99</sup> and Donald Reid jnr.<sup>100</sup> were small-town lawyers, but they both had Farmers' Union endorsement. They were also born in New Zealand and had gained their law degrees from Otago University. In contrast, many of the Opposition of the late nineteenth century had been large landowners, educated in Britain and part of the interconnected colonial elite.

## Massey's rise to Leader of the Opposition

When the new Opposition caucus met in early July 1903, the leadership question remained unresolved. The *Auckland Star* reported that Charles Lewis<sup>101</sup> had been appointed whip and the caucus had adjourned without electing a leader. However, its reporter thought that either Massey or Allen would be chosen.<sup>102</sup> Russell had previously ruled out returning to the leadership role.<sup>103</sup> The *New Zealand Herald* went one step further with a headline proclaiming 'The Opposition Party Leadership Question, Probable

<sup>90</sup> Herdman was not a member of the Farmers' Union but he was endorsed by them and his opponent was very against the Union see: *Otago Witness*, 12 November 1902, p.20; *Mount Ida Chronicle*, 21 November 1902, p.3.

<sup>91</sup> *Evening Star*, 14 October 1902, p.2

<sup>92</sup> *Evening Post*, 26 November 1902, p.4; *Otago Daily Times*, 27 November 1902, p.4.

<sup>93</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 November 1902, p.4.

<sup>94</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 26 November 1902, p.4; *Auckland Star*, 26 November 1902, p.4; *Evening Post*, 26 November 1902, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 26 November 1902, p.4; *Evening Post*, 20 June 1903, p.4.

<sup>95</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. II, M-Addenda, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, pp.418-419.

<sup>96</sup> Prince, p.71.

<sup>97</sup> Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. I, A-L, pp.470-471.

<sup>98</sup> Prince, pp.64-65.

<sup>99</sup> Susan Butterworth, 'Herdman, Alexander Lawrence', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3h18/herdman-alexander-lawrence>, accessed 18 August 2017.

<sup>100</sup> Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. II, M-Addenda, p.89

<sup>101</sup> Lewis had been returned to parliament as the member for a new seat, Courtenay.

<sup>102</sup> *Auckland Star*, 2 July 1903, p.2.

<sup>103</sup> Phipps, pp.101-102.

Appointment of Mr Massey'.<sup>104</sup> On the same day the *Press* ran an editorial suggesting that the Opposition would remain leaderless, a policy they approved because 'it is a new parliament and politics just now are in a very fluid condition'.<sup>105</sup> Despite the July predictions of a new Opposition leader, and rumours circulating in August that Massey would be appointed at any moment,<sup>106</sup> it was not until September that he was finally elected. According to newspaper reports, he was proposed by Russell and seconded by Allen and the vote was unanimous.<sup>107</sup> It seems likely that in the period between July and September informal soundings had led to the conclusion that Massey had the numbers and this was accepted by Allen.

Several factors may have led to the decision to elect an official leader after three years without. Some newspapers had suggested that a more organised Opposition would have made bigger inroads into Seddon's majority. The editor of the *New Zealand Herald* wrote 'there can be very little question that if during the last session the Opposition had been organised, and if they had met the electorate with a well-defined platform, they would have secured more seats . . . a great opportunity has been lost'.<sup>108</sup> The *Press* thought that the Opposition's advance was remarkable, but that more organisation was needed if the gains were to be built upon.<sup>109</sup> The result of the election may well have given the Opposition members new hope. The influence of the Farmers' Union and the Liberals' issues with vote splitting<sup>110</sup> had prevented the Opposition from suffering further major reversals and given them new members and renewed energy for organising. This led to them seeking a man who reflected the new voter base and had experience in political organisation.

The substantial proportion of new members may also have changed the balance within the caucus, making it easier for Massey to gain the numbers. Three of the new members were from Auckland Province, and another from the Manawatu, which boosted the number of North Island members. Furthermore, Kirkbride and Mander had both been heavily involved in the Auckland National Association and had worked with Massey for some years. The new member for Taiari, Donald Reid, had also been involved in the Otago branch. In addition, the new members mostly represented rural seats, there were thirteen rural members of the Opposition caucus in 1899 but nineteen in 1902. This increase in northern and rural representation would have benefited Massey, who was identified as a small North Island farmer.<sup>111</sup> The popularity of Massey in the North had

<sup>104</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 3 July 1903, p.5.

<sup>105</sup> *Press*, 3 July 1903, p.4.

<sup>106</sup> Rumours were also printed in mid-August, see: *Press*, 14 August 1903, p.5; *Feilding Star*, 14 August 1903, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 August 1903, p.5.

<sup>107</sup> *Star*, 10 September 1903, p.3.

<sup>108</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 26 November 1902, p.4.

<sup>109</sup> *Press*, 26 November 1902, p.6.

<sup>110</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.236-237; *Auckland Star*, 26 November 1902, p.4; *Star*, 27 November 1902, p.2.

<sup>111</sup> Gardner, 'The Rise of W.F. Massey', p.26.

been reflected in the *New Zealand Herald*,<sup>112</sup> the editor describing him as 'a farmer, the leading political representative of that great class which is the backbone of the colony, and without whom our towns would perish and our prosperity vanish away'.<sup>113</sup> The 1902 election was thus the pivotal point for the Opposition. Success in the rural seats had shown that they had a dynamic new base and their understanding of this was confirmed when they chose Massey as leader.

Further evidence that the 1902 election had given new energy to the Opposition was demonstrated by Massey using the parliamentary recess of 1904 to travel to Otago and Southland. He left in early April and stopped at Christchurch, but despite requests, did not hold any public meetings.<sup>114</sup> He held no public meetings in Dunedin either, but went further south to speak at Lawrence, Milton, Invercargill, Gore and Balclutha.<sup>115</sup> On his way back to Wellington he also delivered speeches at Temuka<sup>116</sup> and Kaiapoi.<sup>117</sup> In general he was well received and spoke to large audiences.<sup>118</sup> Some of this response may have been due to the novelty of hosting the Leader of the Opposition, as it was the first time an Opposition leader had held a public meeting in Gore<sup>119</sup> or Balclutha.<sup>120</sup> However, he also received requests to speak in Naseby and Wyndham,<sup>121</sup> suggesting there was genuine interest in hearing what Massey had to say. In his addresses Massey focused on criticising the government and explaining the Opposition's position on the leasehold-freehold debate.<sup>122</sup> In Lawrence he described the Opposition as the true liberals,<sup>123</sup> and at Balclutha declared that the Opposition was not a 'country party', as it had several strong city members and believed that 'the interests of town and county were identical. If there was depression in the country, trade in the towns must suffer'.<sup>124</sup> Massey was interviewed by the *Evening Post* when he returned to the North Island in mid-May. He believed the tour was a remarkable success and had boosted support for the Opposition, the reporter describing him as being 'in an optimistic frame of mind- a very unusual condition for a leader of the Opposition'.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>112</sup> The *New Zealand Herald* was the first to report that Massey was in the leadership race, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 July 1903, p.5. They continued to promote the idea, *New Zealand Herald*, 8 July 1903, p.1 (supplement); *New Zealand Herald*, 31 July 1903, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 August 1903, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 7 September 1903, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 10 September 1903, p.4.

<sup>113</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 11 September 1903, p.4.

<sup>114</sup> *Evening Star*, 13 April 1904, p.6.

<sup>115</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 18 April 1904, p.1.

<sup>116</sup> *North Otago Daily Times*, 4 May 1904, p.2.

<sup>117</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 3 May 1904, p.5.

<sup>118</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 April 1904, p.5; *Otago Daily Times*, 20 April 1904, p.5; *Southland Times*, 23 April 1904, p.2; *Mataura Ensign*, 28 April 1904, p.3; *Clutha Leader*, 29 April 1904, p.6; *North Otago Daily Times*, 4 May 1904, p.2; *Otago Daily Times*, 3 May 1904, p.5.

Although most only say large, at Balclutha, 500-600 were reported, 800 at Temuka and 300 at Kaiapoi.

<sup>119</sup> *Mataura Ensign*, 16 April 1904, p.2.

<sup>120</sup> *Clutha Leader*, 29 April 1904, p.6.

<sup>121</sup> *Otago Witness*, 27 April 1904, p.4.

<sup>122</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 April 1904, p.5; *Southland Times*, 23 April 1904, p.3; *Mataura Ensign*, 28 April 1904, p.3; *Clutha Leader*, 29 April 1904, p.6.

<sup>123</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 April 1904, p.5.

<sup>124</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 28 April 1904, p.10.

<sup>125</sup> *Evening Post*, 11 May 1904, p.4.

Massey thus demonstrated a different approach. That he went to the South Island at all showed an awareness of the need to make himself known to the voters. The *Southland Times* commented that the substantial number of men who met Massey when he arrived at the train station were eager to meet him, 'as he came as a stranger'.<sup>126</sup> He also demonstrated an understanding that his Auckland origins could be a disadvantage in the South and that a personal visit was a way to overcome this. He used his North Island rural credentials to empathise with the Catlins farmers in an impromptu speech he gave on a visit to Owaka, saying he understood that 'the crying needs of the country were good roads and railways'.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, he chose to visit rural centres rather than speaking in the two cities. Despite staying in both Christchurch and Dunedin he did not hold public meetings in either place. This suggests that he was aware that the Opposition success in 1902 was due to the rural vote.

Another indication that the Opposition were more positive were rumours that they were forming an organising body. In a pre-session speech given in June 1904, an Opposition member for Wellington City, John Duthie, said that in the coming session the Opposition would band together under the title 'Reform League' because 'their duty was to reform all the abuses'.<sup>128</sup> This was the first public association of the word 'reform' with the Massey-led Opposition, and foreshadowed the Political Reform League. It is difficult to know when the first Leagues were formed. In the first edition of *Light and Liberty*, the journal of the Reform Party, its origins were traced back to 1904, when, at a dinner held for Massey, he extolled the virtues of extra-parliamentary organisation. The men at this dinner then formed the first Political Reform League for the purposes of supporting the Opposition.<sup>129</sup> It seems unlikely that the League would have formed in such a spontaneous way, but sometime in early 1904 a group did form a committee to begin organising for the Opposition. The first annual report of the Auckland Political Reform League, produced in July 1905, stated that it began on 15 April 1904 when thirty people meet at the Chamber of Commerce rooms.<sup>130</sup> In April 1905, Seddon gave a speech at Mangatainoka in which he encouraged Liberals to organise for the coming election because the Opposition was already preparing and they had a committee in Auckland led by John Upton.<sup>131</sup> However, there are no newspaper reports of an Auckland Political Reform League

<sup>126</sup> *Southland Times*, 22 April 1904, p.2.

<sup>127</sup> *Clutha Leader*, 22 April 1904, p.6.

<sup>128</sup> *Evening Post*, 8 June 1904, p.2.

<sup>129</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 May 1913, p.23. It also stated that the group was originally called the Auckland Electoral League and changed its name to Political Reform League four years later. There was an Auckland Provincial Electoral League active in the 1899 election which had some ex-National Association and future Political Reform League members, see: *New Zealand Herald*, 30 November 1899, p.6. No record could be found of it between 1900 and the beginning of the Auckland Political Reform League in 1905; D.R. Hill, 'Organization of the Reform Party in New Zealand', M.A. Thesis, Kansas State University, 1956, p.9; Bernard J. Foster, 'Development of Unity and Organisation in the New Zealand Political Parties of the Liberal Era', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1956, p.259.

<sup>130</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 July 1905, p.7.

<sup>131</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 22 April 1905, p.9. John Upton had been Mayor of Auckland, and involved in the Financial and Political Reform Association and the National Association, see: Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. II, M-Addenda, p.413.

meeting until June 1905,<sup>132</sup> later than the Canterbury League, which formed in May.<sup>133</sup> Leicester Webb gave a slightly different view stating that those who had been part of the National Association in Auckland re-formed in 1905 to support Massey.<sup>134</sup> It is possible that the term Political Reform League was first used in Christchurch<sup>135</sup> and later adopted by Auckland. However, it is clear that the Opposition began to form an organising body in Auckland during 1904.<sup>136</sup>

As in 1904, Massey used the 1905 summer parliamentary recess to 'stump' the country. He began in Taranaki in February, speaking to large crowd in Stratford. He emphasised the Opposition's support for freehold, challenging Seddon to 'speak on the land question, which previously he had always scrupulously avoided'.<sup>137</sup> In March he travelled north of Auckland, speaking at Warkworth,<sup>138</sup> Mangawhai, Waipu,<sup>139</sup> Kawakawa, Whangarei,<sup>140</sup> Ohaeawai,<sup>141</sup> Dargaville and Aratapu.<sup>142</sup> Seddon had toured the area earlier in the month,<sup>143</sup> so Massey used his speeches to rebut him, claiming that 'Mr Seddon himself was not a true Liberal',<sup>144</sup> and 'the Opposition were the true Liberals'.<sup>145</sup> The land question was also an important part of Massey's addresses. At Kawakawa he claimed that the Opposition defence of freehold meant they were followers of Sir George Grey as 'that statesman had distinctly favoured the freehold to the settlers'.<sup>146</sup> On his return to Auckland, Massey addressed an extremely large public meeting, the *Auckland Star* estimated that there were over three thousand present, and many more in the street who could not get into the hall. Massey's speech was similar to those he gave in Northland, emphasising his liberal credentials and expounding on the Opposition's freehold policy. He also added that his tour of the North had convinced him that it was neglected and 'it wanted more attention from those in charge of affairs'.<sup>147</sup>

In April he travelled south, visiting Gore, Clinton, Balclutha,<sup>148</sup> Queenstown,<sup>149</sup> and

<sup>132</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 3 June 1905, p.4.

<sup>133</sup> *Press*, 6 May 1905, p.9, had the first report of a Canterbury Political Reform League.

<sup>134</sup> Leicester Chisholm Webb, 'The Rise of the Reform Party', M.A. Thesis, Canterbury College, 1928, p.21.

<sup>135</sup> Fisher family: Parliamentary papers, F M B Fisher – miscellaneous papers, 86-129-01, Alexander Turnbull Library, has parts of a memoir written by Francis Fisher claiming to have been responsible for the name 'Reform', based on a letter he wrote to his father in 1904. Fisher was living in Christchurch at the time, but as the son of a well known Liberal MHR it seems unlikely he would have associated with those who supported the Opposition. However, it does suggest that the idea that a new 'Reform' party might be formed was current in Christchurch in 1904.

<sup>136</sup> Brand, p.79, thought that Webb's account was incorrect and that 1904 was the most likely date.

<sup>137</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 11 February 1905, p.2.

<sup>138</sup> *Auckland Star*, 21 March 1905, p.2.

<sup>139</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 23 March 1905, p.5.

<sup>140</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 March 1905, p.6.

<sup>141</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 March 1905, p.6.

<sup>142</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 28 March 1905, p.5.

<sup>143</sup> *Auckland Star*, 10 March 1905, p.4.

<sup>144</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 March 1905, p.6.

<sup>145</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 March 1905, p.6.

<sup>146</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 March 1905, p.6.

<sup>147</sup> *Auckland Star*, 30 March 1905, p.5.

<sup>148</sup> *Otago Witness*, 12 April 1905, p.54.

<sup>149</sup> *Lake Wakatipu Mail*, 14 April 1905, p.4.

Dunedin where he gave speeches at both Mosgiel<sup>150</sup> and Dunedin.<sup>151</sup> He then spoke at Alexandra<sup>152</sup> and Naseby<sup>153</sup> and travelled to Christchurch, visiting Cheviot,<sup>154</sup> Malvern,<sup>155</sup> and Akaroa.<sup>156</sup> His last speaking engagement was in Christchurch where he held a meeting on 2 May which filled the Theatre Royal and left many standing.<sup>157</sup> The speeches in the South Island had a different emphasis from those he gave in the North. The freehold was mentioned in Alexandra and Christchurch, but not Dunedin or Naseby. However, in every speech Massey discussed the distribution of public works funds, calling for a Public Works Committee which he claimed would increase transparency in the allocation of money for 'roads and bridges'. One constant theme was the Opposition's liberal qualifications. In Naseby, he said of the Opposition 'that its members were Liberals in the best sense of the word – genuine Liberals',<sup>158</sup> and in Christchurch, 'there were as good Liberals and Democrats on the Opposition benches as there were on the benches behind the Government'.<sup>159</sup>

Back in the North Island, Massey spoke at Pahiatua,<sup>160</sup> Wellington,<sup>161</sup> Masterton,<sup>162</sup> and Stratford again.<sup>163</sup> Neither the Wellington or Pahiatua speeches were reprinted in the newspapers, but it was reported that Massey was well received in Pahiatua.<sup>164</sup> In Masterton he began by telling the audience that 'he would endeavour to show them that they (the Opposition) were Liberals in the truest sense of the word'.<sup>165</sup> He then moved on to speak about land, and explained the Opposition's policy at length. In Stratford, he began once again with the land question, and it was reported that his reception was far stronger, and the meeting larger, than when he spoke in February.<sup>166</sup> He returned to Auckland in mid-May and gave an interview to the *New Zealand Herald*, which portrayed his tour as a success and Massey himself as optimistic. The article stated, 'the meetings were well attended, and very enthusiastic and he had received an excellent reception at every centre visited by him.'<sup>167</sup>

The way Massey's tour was conducted suggests that he understood the value of 'stumping' the country, both to raise his profile and gain votes for the Opposition. It seems that one of his purposes was to present the Opposition as a 'liberal' group as this was

<sup>150</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 18 April 1905, p.2.

<sup>151</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 April 1905, p.2.

<sup>152</sup> *Dunstan Times*, 24 April 1905, p.4.

<sup>153</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 22 April 1905, p.7.

<sup>154</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 5 May 1905, p.5.

<sup>155</sup> *Press*, 28 April 1905, p.5.

<sup>156</sup> *Akaroa Mail and Banks Peninsula Advertiser*, 28 April 1905, p.2.

<sup>157</sup> *Star*, 3 May 1905, p.1.

<sup>158</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 22 April 1905, p.7.

<sup>159</sup> *Press*, 3 May 1905, p.7.

<sup>160</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 6 May 1905, p.7.

<sup>161</sup> *Evening Post*, 10 May 1905, p.4.

<sup>162</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 11 May 1905, p.4.

<sup>163</sup> *Press*, 17 May 1905, p.8.

<sup>164</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 6 May 1905, p.6.

<sup>165</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 11 May 1905, pp.5-6.

<sup>166</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 16 May 1905, p.2.

<sup>167</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 May 1905, p.5.

a consistent theme. Furthermore, he displayed an understanding of which issues would resonate with the different audiences he spoke to. In the North Island, he spent most of time attacking the government on land issues and explaining the Opposition's freehold policy. In Auckland, he emphasised the long-held grievance that the north was neglected. In the South Island, he spent more time discussing public works grants and other financial issues. Land tenure was a prominent issue in the North Island where bush sections required a large amount of physical labour to clear them. These 'bush' farmers wanted to be able to buy leases at the price the land was worth when they first settled on it, so they could benefit from the increased value of the land, which was a result of their physical labour. In the South this was a smaller problem, as much of the land required less work to make it suitable for stock, but it seems that development of infrastructure was still an issue. For example, the progress on the Catlins and Central Otago railways was a concern in Otago<sup>168</sup>, which might explain why Massey talked so much about public works spending in his Dunedin speech.

## The formation of the Political Reform League

Although one purpose of Massey's tour was election campaigning, he travelled more and spoke less than he had in 1904. This was because he had another purpose, which was to organise for the election. For example, while in Otago Massey spoke in public four times, but visited eight different centres. It is reasonable to assume that he visited places like Gore, Balclutha and Queenstown not to campaign publicly but to ensure that local organisation was in place before the election. This is best illustrated by where the Political Reform Leagues began to develop. Three days after Massey left Christchurch a meeting was held to form the Canterbury Political Reform League. The report in the *Press* suggested that this was a direct result of Massey's visit, stating, 'Mr Massey's visit to Christchurch has already resulted in a renewal of political activity on the part of his supporters.'<sup>169</sup> The next League formed was in Wellington, while Massey was there in May, and he was the main speaker at the meeting.<sup>170</sup> In mid-May there were newspaper reports of Political Reform Leagues in Auckland<sup>171</sup> and Whangarei,<sup>172</sup> and in June a League was formed in Dunedin<sup>173</sup> and Lawrence, after a visit from James Allen.<sup>174</sup> Dunedin League members travelled to Balclutha and started a League there in July,<sup>175</sup> and a League was formed in Masterton during the same month.<sup>176</sup> Apart from Lawrence, every place a Political Reform League was organised had been visited by Massey as part

<sup>168</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 22 May 1905, p.6.

<sup>169</sup> *Press*, 6 May 1905, p.9.

<sup>170</sup> *Evening Post*, 10 May 1905, p.4.

<sup>171</sup> *Auckland Star*, 13 May 1905, p.4.

<sup>172</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 16 May 1905, p.5.

<sup>173</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 21 June 1905, p.2.

<sup>174</sup> *Tuapeka Times*, 28 June 1905, p.2.

<sup>175</sup> *Clutha Leader*, 25 July 1905, p.3.

<sup>176</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 13 July 1905, p.4.

of his tour. This suggests that the visit of Massey had energised the political organisation of the area, and perhaps laid the foundation for the development of the League.

Considerable evidence supports the idea that the Political Reform League was a renewal of the National Association.<sup>177</sup> Most obvious is a continuation in the people involved. Massey had been a staunch member of the Auckland National Association, as were the Political Reform League's Auckland vice-presidents, Reed Bloomfield and Graves Aickin. In Wellington, Alfred Brandon had been a member of both groups, and the Dunedin League had four ex-National Association members. E.E. Vaile, an Auckland-based member of both groups saw the membership of the League and the Association as being almost identical, all that had changed was the name. He explained, 'The National Association became generally known as the "National Ass" so it was decided to change the name to the Political Reform League.'<sup>178</sup> This gave the impression that in Auckland at least, many of the National Association members became involved in the Political Reform Association. Comparisons of known members in other centres also shows a continuity of membership between the two groups.<sup>179</sup>

Another similarity was the policies each group advocated. The National Association had a nationwide platform at the 1896 election which called for laws that preserved freehold tenure, introduced 'sound political economy', and replaced 'experimental legislation' with 'sound government'.<sup>180</sup> The Political Reform League's platform for the 1905 election had some related policies.<sup>181</sup> Most obvious was the call for reform of the land laws to allow state tenants to freehold their titles.<sup>182</sup> Other continuities were the desire to reform 'the deceptive method of presenting public accounts',<sup>183</sup> which the League believed was masking government overspending, and to promote laws which were consistent with 'justice and liberty'.<sup>184</sup> The Political Reform League was more detailed in its platform, also focusing on Public Service appointments, reform of the Legislative Council and reform of the system by which public works money was allocated. However, the general ideological drive of the two groups was the same; a belief that the Seddon Government was spending too much money and interfering too much in the 'liberty' of New Zealanders.

The connection between the National Association and the Political Reform League was also noted by some newspapers. The *Lyttelton Times* said the League was 'probably the old National Association posing in another elaborate disguise. The men and platform are practically the same'.<sup>185</sup> The *New Zealand Times* thought there was nothing

<sup>177</sup> Brand, p.51.

<sup>178</sup> Brand, p.80.

<sup>179</sup> See appendix two for a list of members of both groups

<sup>180</sup> Minutes of the proceedings of the National Association of New Zealand, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki.

<sup>181</sup> *The Reformer*, Number Two, October 1905, pp.1-2.

<sup>182</sup> *The Reformer*, Number One, September 1905, p.2.

<sup>183</sup> *The Reformer*, Number One, September 1905, pp.3-6; *The Reformer*, Number Two, October 1905, pp.13-14.

<sup>184</sup> *The Reformer*, Number Two, October 1905, p.39.

<sup>185</sup> Reported in *Evening Star*, 21 June 1905, p.5 and *Observer*, 8 July 1905, p.3.

new in the programme of the Political Reform League and 'it seems to be a resurrection of the old National Association.'<sup>186</sup> As pro-Liberal newspapers, it is not surprising that these publications would attack the League. There was another occurrence in a report of the Auckland Trades and Labour Council Annual General Meeting, at which it was said that the League was a 'supporter of the conservative party which is trying to bluff the people by dropping the name "National Ass." and assuming the misleading title of the Political Reform League'.<sup>187</sup> However, the links between the National Association and the Political Reform League were not as widely drawn as they had been between the National Association and the Farmers' Union.<sup>188</sup> Yet the League had a much greater claim to be a continuation of the Association. This difference could reflect the passage of time. It was now almost ten years since the National Association had peaked, and about six since it disappeared, so it had probably faded from the public consciousness. However, the fact that the connection was made suggests that calling an organisation a reincarnation of the National Association still had some meaning.

It is difficult to determine precisely why the name Political Reform League was chosen for the organising body of the Opposition. However, as with the National Association, there was a precedent in Australia. In the 1904 New South Wales election the Liberal Party's organising body had been called 'The Reform and Liberal League'.<sup>189</sup> In New Zealand it seems that the term was first used in Christchurch, but it is not known whether this name originated among Canterbury supporters, or had been decided on at an earlier date. Because the Auckland Opposition organisation had probably been working since April 1904, it seems unlikely that the name Political Reform League originated in Auckland, as they adopted it after Christchurch. It was first used in the South Island, so it seems likely that the idea was conceived on Massey's 1905 tour and that the choice of name was designed to give the impression of something new and progressive. This fits with the rhetoric of Massey's speeches of 1904 and 1905, which emphasised that the Opposition was 'liberal'. This claim to be the 'true liberals' became a common theme in Opposition speeches from 1905 onwards as they attempted to distance themselves from the conservative label. They wanted to convince voters that it was the Opposition, not the government, which would carry on liberal principles. In Masterton, Massey described the Opposition as 'a strong reform party with progressive ideals'.<sup>190</sup> This message was repeated throughout the election campaign. In an interview, Dean Bamford, Opposition candidate for Auckland East said, 'The Opposition of 1905 is not the old Conservative

<sup>186</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 1 July 1905, p.16.

<sup>187</sup> *Auckland Star*, 22 June 1905, p.3.

<sup>188</sup> At the time it was formed there were more connections drawn between the Farmers' Union and the National Association. Although attempts to connect the Political Reform League and the National Association were not as common, reporting of the connection between those two groups persisted considerably longer. See chapter six, p.187.

<sup>189</sup> P. Loveday, A.W. Martin, and Patrick Weller, 'New South Wales' in *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, (eds) P. Loveday, A.W. Martin, and R.S. Parker, Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1977, p.226. At this time the NSW Liberal Party had similar policies to the Political Reform League, rather than the New Zealand Liberal Party.

<sup>190</sup> *Press*, 12 May 1905, p.5.

party in disguise . . . the party which Mr Massey leads is a Reform party. There is nothing Conservative about it'.<sup>191</sup> William Polson, the chairman of the Canterbury Political Reform League told a meeting of over two thousand that the League 'was a Young People's Party. It had no connection with any former party, it had no axe to grind . . . This party supported Mr Massey as a Liberal with a progressive policy'.<sup>192</sup> The Opposition's Matura candidate described himself as 'representing the party of protest and progress'.<sup>193</sup> This rhetoric suggests that there was a desire on the part of the Opposition to portray themselves as being the party of change, and the decision to emphasise their liberal credentials and use the word reform as part of the name of its organising body reflects this.

One difference between the National Association and the Political Reform League was the relationship with the Opposition. The National Association had publicly distanced itself from the Opposition, despite acting as their de facto organising body. In contrast, the Political Reform League was identified with the Opposition from the beginning.<sup>194</sup> The first League, in Christchurch, unashamedly called themselves Opposition supporters<sup>195</sup> and the group formed to organise for the Opposition in Auckland adopted the name Political Reform League.<sup>196</sup> Opposition candidates also associated themselves with it. L.J. Bagnall, the Opposition candidate for Auckland City said at a campaign meeting that the Opposition was a new Reform Party,<sup>197</sup> and John Studholme, the Opposition candidate for Ashburton was described as 'one of W.F. Massey's Reform Party'.<sup>198</sup> This connection was also made in newspapers, with the *Press* running an article about the Canterbury Political Reform League in which the local secretary said that 'the League cannot therefore support the present government, because it realises that it is corrupt'.<sup>199</sup> The *Evening Post* equated the Reform League with the Opposition, asserting that the poor turn out at a League meeting showed that the Opposition was not popular in Wellington.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, Massey linked himself to the Political Reform League; he was the president of both the Auckland<sup>201</sup> and Christchurch Leagues,<sup>202</sup> and used the term 'reform' when referring to his policies.<sup>203</sup> This open admission of the relationship between the parliamentary Opposition and the Political Reform League also shows that the Opposition, under Massey's leadership, had come to understand that it needed to use political organisation if it wanted to challenge Seddon.

Another way that the Opposition and the Political Reform League were connected

<sup>191</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 31 August 1905, p.2.

<sup>192</sup> *Star*, 10 October 1905, p.1.

<sup>193</sup> *Matura Ensign*, 5 December 1905, p.2.

<sup>194</sup> See chapter two, p.76.

<sup>195</sup> *Press*, 6 May 1905, p.9.

<sup>196</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 July 1905, p.7.

<sup>197</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 7 October 1905, p.6.

<sup>198</sup> *Clutha Leader*, 13 October 1905, p.1.

<sup>199</sup> *Press*, 14 September 1905, p.5.

<sup>200</sup> *Evening Post*, 12 September 1905, p.4.

<sup>201</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 July 1905, p.7.

<sup>202</sup> *Press*, 10 October 1905, p.8.

<sup>203</sup> *Press*, 1 November 1905, p.5; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 4 December 1905, p.4.

was through the Political Reform League's newspaper, *The Reformer*. Begun in September 1905, and based in Christchurch, *The Reformer* published three editions in the lead up to the 1905 election. It was published under the auspices of the Political Reform League yet was used to promote Opposition policy. Each edition led with the Opposition's platform and mirrored many of the issues that had been mentioned in Massey's speech. For example, in all three editions there was an article about the land issue<sup>204</sup> and the state of the country's finances.<sup>205</sup> It also covered how the Opposition planned to reform public works<sup>206</sup> and the public service.<sup>207</sup> Additionally, it published excerpts from Hansard showing how Opposition members had opposed the government.<sup>208</sup> Another link between the Opposition and *The Reformer* was that the distribution was initially undertaken by Massey's private secretary R.W. Hill,<sup>209</sup> which suggests Massey had a close connection with the paper.

## 1905 Election

Massey had publicly stated that he wanted an Opposition candidate in every electorate for the 1905 election.<sup>210</sup> Although the Opposition fielded more candidates than in 1902 there were still areas where they did not contest a seat. In the upper North Island, where the Opposition was stronger, all seats had an Opposition candidate. There were no Opposition candidates in Napier or Hutt and those endorsed in Masterton, Wellington Central, Otaki and Newton were 'independents'.<sup>211</sup> In the traditionally weak area of Nelson and the West Coast, the Opposition stood no candidates, and in Buller and Westland there was only a poll because a prohibition candidate stood to force the local option. The other South Island area where the Opposition struggled to find candidates was Canterbury. They had no one standing in Hurunui, Christchurch North or East and in Avon the Opposition-endorsed candidate ran as an independent.<sup>212</sup> This is somewhat surprising as the first Political Reform League had begun in Christchurch and it was where *The Reformer* was based. However, Christchurch was a strong-hold of left-wing Liberalism and unionism, and some of the most radical MHRs represented Christchurch electorates.<sup>213</sup>

<sup>204</sup> *The Reformer*, Number One, September 1905, pp.25-28; *The Reformer*, Number Two, October 1905, pp.7-12; *The Reformer*, Number Three, November 1905, p.40.

<sup>205</sup> *The Reformer*, Number One, September 1905, pp.5-6; *The Reformer*, Number Two, October 1905, pp.13-14, pp.21-22; *The Reformer*, Number Three, November 1905, p.9, pp.20-23.

<sup>206</sup> *The Reformer*, Number One, September 1905, p.19; *The Reformer*, Number Two, October 1905, pp.16-17; *The Reformer*, Number Three, November 1905, pp.33-34.

<sup>207</sup> *The Reformer*, Number Two, October 1905, pp.31-32; *The Reformer*, Number Three, November 1905, pp.11-12.

<sup>208</sup> *The Reformer*, Number One, September 1905, pp.9-10; *The Reformer*, Number Two, October 1905, pp.34-35.

<sup>209</sup> *Press*, 5 May 1905, p.3; *The Reformer*, Number One, September 1905, p.1.

<sup>210</sup> *Grey River Argus*, 4 May 1905, p.6; *Press*, 10 May 1905, p.6.

<sup>211</sup> *Evening Post*, 27 November 1905, p.4.

<sup>212</sup> Using the party affiliations from *Evening Post*, 7 December 1905, pp.5-6, and a list of Opposition candidates in *The Reformer*, Number Three, November 1905, pp.5-6.

<sup>213</sup> Jim McAloon, 'A Political Struggle: Christchurch Labour Politics 1905-1913', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 28, no. 1, 1994, pp.22-23.

Lastly, Sir Joseph Ward's dominance in Awarua led to his only opposition being a prohibition candidate.<sup>214</sup> It appears that the Opposition was still having trouble organising candidates in the some of the areas in which the National Association had been weak. This suggests the Opposition may have been using contacts from the National Association to organise for the 1905 election.

Another factor which suggests that the Opposition had not entirely left its past associations behind was the reluctance of some candidates to call themselves 'Opposition'. This was most noticeable in the Southern half of the North Island and in Christchurch. In the Masterton electorate, the candidate who stood against the long serving MHR, Alexander Hogg, was James Cooper. Cooper had stood against Hogg in 1902 as an Oppositionist. In 1905 Cooper initially declared himself as an Opposition candidate, but in September distanced himself from the Opposition and became an 'independent liberal'. This is despite having the endorsement of the Masterton Political Reform League,<sup>215</sup> and stating publicly that he was opposed to the government and would support Massey if elected.<sup>216</sup> In Newtown, Thomas Hislop also stood as an independent, even though he had a long association with the Opposition,<sup>217</sup> and in Otaki, Byron Brown also called himself an independent, but was in opposition to the government and had many of the same policies as the Political Reform League.<sup>218</sup> In Avon, John Brunt called himself an 'independent liberal',<sup>219</sup> but was endorsed by the Political Reform League.<sup>220</sup> However, his use of the term 'liberal' was considered by some to be an effort to fool voters. A letter to the editor of the *Star* said, 'while he has the audacity to pose as an "Independent Liberal" we know he is a Conservative at heart, and is being run by the Political Reform League',<sup>221</sup> and another, 'he must underrate the intelligence of the electors if he thinks they cannot see in him all that stands for Conservatism.'<sup>222</sup> As we have seen, Massey and other Opposition candidates emphasised their 'liberal' connections while campaigning. It is possible that those who called themselves independent, while also being endorsed by the Political Reform League, thought that being associated with the Opposition would tarnish their political reputation. This suggests that not all the electors saw the Opposition as a new, progressive group.

Despite the new energy and political organisation, the Opposition was soundly beaten in the 1905 election. It lost seven seats, going from twenty-two to fifteen. The size of the loss was unexpected,<sup>223</sup> as in general, it had been thought that the Opposition might not

<sup>214</sup> *Southland Times*, 17 November 1905, p.2.

<sup>215</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 12 October 1905, p.4.

<sup>216</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 28 September 1905, p.5.

<sup>217</sup> Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. I, A-L, pp.392-393.

<sup>218</sup> *Evening Post*, 5 December 1905, p.2; *Evening Post*, 18 November 1908, pp.2-3, Brown stood as an official Opposition candidate in 1908.

<sup>219</sup> *Press*, 1 November 1905, p.6.

<sup>220</sup> *The Reformer*, Number Three, November 1905, pp.5-6.

<sup>221</sup> *Star*, 4 November 1905, p.4.

<sup>222</sup> *Star*, 2 December 1905, p.4.

<sup>223</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 7 December 1905, p.2; *Timaru Herald*, 7 December 1905, p.4; *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 7 December 1905, p.4; *Auckland Star*, 7 December 1905, p.2; *Otago Daily Times*, 7 December

beat Seddon but it would at least increase its number of seats.<sup>224</sup> On the eve of the election Massey had thought 'there was no doubt whatever that the Opposition would gain considerable ground'.<sup>225</sup> After the election the pro-Liberal *New Zealand Times* expressed relief at the result, claiming that 'in our own most optimistic mood we did not anticipate that the election would leave Mr Seddon with more than a working majority of a dozen or so'.<sup>226</sup> The Opposition lost several long serving MHRs; John Duthie in Wellington, Walter Buchanan in Wairarapa,<sup>227</sup> Russell in Hawke's Bay and Lang in Waikato, and three who had been elected in 1902 - Harding in Kaipara, Vile in Manawatu,<sup>228</sup> and Herdman in Mount Ida. The *Auckland Star* described the defeat of Russell, Duthie and Buchanan as a rejection of 'the old-fashioned Conservatism which these gentleman have so long represented in our Parliament'.<sup>229</sup> Despite the loss of seats, the Opposition increased its share of the vote from twenty-one to thirty percent.<sup>230</sup> This was partly because they stood more candidates in 1905 than 1902, but it is also a reflection of the closeness of some contests. For example, Harding lost by nine, Lang lost by eighty-two, and in Kaiapoi the Opposition candidate lost by fifty-four.<sup>231</sup> The election had also left the Opposition with only one city seat, that of Wellington East, further reducing it to a rural base. Furthermore, where it retained seats was reflective of where the Opposition's core support was. It was strong in the Auckland Province - where it won six seats - almost half its total and in rural Otago where it won four. It also won three seats in rural Canterbury. These areas also corresponded to places Massey visited earlier in 1905,<sup>232</sup> suggesting that they had better organisational structures than other areas.

In a post-election interview Massey gave several reasons why he thought the Opposition had been defeated. His first was the 'voucher incident',<sup>233</sup> which he believed had invoked sympathy for Seddon. The 'voucher incident' arose when Francis Fisher accused Seddon's son of having received unauthorized payments.<sup>234</sup> Fisher's desire was to taint Seddon with charges of corruption, but this backfired when the subsequent enquiry cleared Seddon of any wrongdoing.<sup>235</sup> The 'voucher incident' was also named as a factor by some newspapers. The *Southland Times* thought that it was unfairly associated

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1905, p.4; *Evening Star*, 7 December 1905, p.4; *Evening Post*, 8 December 1905, p.5; *Cromwell Argus*, 11 December 1905, p.4.

<sup>224</sup> *Star*, 4 December 1905, p.2; *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 4 November 1905, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1905, p.4; *Otago Daily Times*, 5 December 1905, p.6; *Evening Star*, 5 December 1905, p.4; *New Zealand Times*, 6 December 1905, p.4.

<sup>225</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1905, p.7.

<sup>226</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 7 December 1905, p.4.

<sup>227</sup> Buchanan had lost his seat in 1899 but won it back in 1902. In 1905 he was defeated by J.T. Marryat Hornsby, who had also defeated him in 1899

<sup>228</sup> Vile died on election day see: *New Zealand Herald*, 7 December 1905, p.6.

<sup>229</sup> *Auckland Star*, 7 December 1905, p.4.

<sup>230</sup> Lipson, p.187.

<sup>231</sup> General Election, 1905, *AJHR* 1906 (S.1), H.25, pp.1-4.

<sup>232</sup> Farland, *Farmer Bill*, p.63.

<sup>233</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.246-247.

<sup>234</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 8 December 1905, p.6.

<sup>235</sup> Brooking, *Richard Seddon*, p.394.

with the Opposition and 'has to some extent prejudiced the county',<sup>236</sup> and the *Marlborough Express* believed 'that the voucher allegations did assist Mr Seddon'.<sup>237</sup> William Hall-Jones, a government cabinet minister, also believed that the 'voucher incident' had increased public sympathy for Seddon.<sup>238</sup> Vaile, a long-time supporter of the National Association, now involved in the Auckland Political Reform League, wrote a letter to Massey in early 1906 outlining what he thought were the factors behind the Opposition's defeat. He also named the voucher incident, believing it 'contributed more than any other single cause to the return of the government to power'.<sup>239</sup> The public feeling invoked by the attack on Seddon certainly could have played a role in increasing support for the government, but cannot entirely explain his expanded majority.

Massey identified another problem as being the ability of the government to use public works as a bribe. This had also been cited as a factor in the Opposition's losses of 1899,<sup>240</sup> and Vaile also named this as a reason for the 1905 defeat.<sup>241</sup> It is probable that the public believed having a government MHR did increase the likelihood of a constituency getting public works. Graham argued that this was the main reason that Waikato voters turned to the Liberals in first part of the twentieth century.<sup>242</sup> Bellringer thought that the desire for 'roads and bridges' also played a role in the voting patterns of farmers in the underdeveloped areas of Taranaki, particularly in the Egmont and Patea electorates in 1905.<sup>243</sup> Yet the north of the North Island was also considered to be underdeveloped. The Opposition lost Kaipara in 1905 and in his local study of the election Prince thought this was more to do with competing local interests than the desire for infrastructural development.<sup>244</sup> The idea that Seddon's consistent victories were partly due to his ability to promise public works had long been a complaint of the Opposition, and it seems that it played a small role in their 1905 defeat. However, the persistence of the Opposition success in the north of the North Island, which was considered to be in need of public works money, shows that the voters did not always base their choice on who could provide the most 'roads and bridges'.

Another aspect named by Massey was vote splitting. This was a new problem for the Opposition, as there had been some difficulty in finding candidates in previous elections. In Parnell, the Opposition had an official candidate, Murdoch McLean, but another candidate, John Shera, also claimed the Opposition title. This led the Auckland Political

<sup>236</sup> *Southland Times*, 7 December 1905, p.2.

<sup>237</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 8 December 1905, p.2.

<sup>238</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 12 December 1905, p.7.

<sup>239</sup> E.E. Vaile to William Massey, 14 January 1906, Letters and other material relating to the New Zealand Political Reform League 1905-1908, NZMS 75, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>240</sup> Memoranda on Election of 1899 of 6<sup>th</sup> December 1899, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie, MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>241</sup> Vaile to Massey, 14 January 1906, Letters and other material relating to the New Zealand Political Reform League 1905-1908, NZMS 75, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>242</sup> Graham, 'Waikato Politics', pp.60-61.

<sup>243</sup> Bellringer, p.122.

<sup>244</sup> Prince, p.94.

Reform League to take out an advertisement in the *New Zealand Herald* backing McLean and informing the voting public that it had a letter from Massey confirming McLean as the official Opposition candidate.<sup>245</sup> However, Shera received 232 votes and McLean lost by 132,<sup>246</sup> suggesting that without the vote splitting McLean could have won. The situation was similar in Hawera, Patea and Wanganui. The Hawera contest was particularly bitter, with one of the Opposition candidates, B.C. Robbins, accusing the other, Felix McGuire, of offering him money to withdraw.<sup>247</sup> The Liberal candidate, Charles Major, was the main benefactor of the acrimonious relationship between McGuire and Robbins; he won, but the combined vote of the two Opposition candidates was more than Major's.<sup>248</sup> In Patea the Liberal candidate also won on a minority.<sup>249</sup> The third candidate called himself an independent, but he was against the government<sup>250</sup> so most likely took votes from the official Opposition candidate.<sup>251</sup> In Wanganui the combined of votes of the two Opposition candidates was fewer than the winning candidate. However, there had also been some dissatisfaction there as Massey endorsed William Bassett over an ex-Opposition MHR, Fredrick Haselden.<sup>252</sup> In the South Island, the Lyttelton electorate had four candidates, two of whom were Oppositionists, but they came third and fourth. Waitaki had five candidates, two of whom identified as Opposition, but these men also came near the bottom of the poll at places three and five. The surfeit of candidates was a hindrance in some electorates and vote splitting could have resulted in the Opposition losing at least three seats.

The Liberal and Labour Federation organiser, W.J. Culver, replied to Massey in a speech at the Auckland branch in February 1906. He thought that vote splitting had not affected the Opposition at all and that it was the accusations of corruption which had 'disgusted the people'. Culver also thought that the Opposition had been well organised and ultimately the defeat was due to it being unable to command the confidence of the people and that 'it would have been more dignified of the Opposition if it had accepted that reason'.<sup>253</sup> However, the Opposition's increase in the total percentage of votes suggests that it did command the confidence of about a third of voters. Considering that the Opposition's share of the total vote was thirty percent but their seats were twenty-one percent, it would seem that one factor was the inability of the Opposition to turn votes into seats. The standing of multiple Opposition candidates in some electorates would have increased the Opposition percentage without winning the seat. It also shows poor organisation, particularly as, in the case of Wanganui and Parnell, Massey seemed unable to

<sup>245</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 5 December 1905, p.10.

<sup>246</sup> General Election, 1905, *AJHR* 1906 (S.1), H.25, p.1.

<sup>247</sup> Bellringer, pp.112-113.

<sup>248</sup> General Election, 1905, *AJHR* 1906 (S.1), H.25, p.1. Major received 2206, McGuire and Robbins combined, 2779.

<sup>249</sup> General Election, 1905, *AJHR* 1906 (S.1), H.25, p.1. Symes, the Liberal candidate received 2552, Hine and Wake combined, 2901.

<sup>250</sup> *Patea Mail*, 25 October 1905, p.2; *Patea Mail*, 3 November 1905, p.3.

<sup>251</sup> *Patea Mail*, 23 April 1906, p.3, published a letter from Massey that stated he believed the presence of the third candidate was the main cause of the Opposition loss.

<sup>252</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 1 December 1905, p.7; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 5 December 1905, p.4.

<sup>253</sup> *Auckland Star*, 22 February 1905, p.3.

use a very public endorsement of one candidate to force the retirement of the other. In his letter to Massey, Vaile also identified poor organisation as a major reason for the loss of seats. He thought that if the Opposition had better organised local committees, which had canvassed their electorates, and helped voters to turn out, then the result might have been better.<sup>254</sup> The multiple candidates, and the disparity between the number of seats and the number of votes suggests that Vaile was correct in identifying that one of the main reasons for the Opposition's defeat was poor local organisation.

Although the Opposition had received a severe setback, Massey was not demoralised by his apparent failure and, unlike in 1899, seemed determined to continue building a party organisation. The *Lyttelton Times* had advised him to renounce his leadership and make way for the formation of an Opposition party of progressive liberals.<sup>255</sup> However, Massey was defiant saying at the end of his interview with the *New Zealand Herald*, 'as far as I am personally concerned, I may say that while I feel disappointed at what has taken place, I do not intend to allow it to affect me'.<sup>256</sup> This resolve to continue along the course he had set was demonstrated in early 1906 when, at a garden party held in his honour, he declared 'they (the Opposition) had been licked and defeated, but they were not going to take it lying down. He was going to take it standing up, as a man ought to take it.'<sup>257</sup> This attitude was very different to that displayed by Russell after his 'shock' defeat in 1899. This signals that Massey believed that he could reverse the fortunes of the Opposition by continuing to use mass political organisation.

## Conclusion

Between the 1899 loss and the 1905 loss the Opposition had undergone some fundamental changes. The result of the 1899 election led the Opposition to abandon any form of organisation, and it remained leaderless between 1900 and 1903. However, the 1902 election showed that the Opposition had a new, dynamic, base of rural voters who were becoming more organised and politicised, partly through the formation of the Farmers' Union.<sup>258</sup> The 1902 election also signalled a renewal of Opposition MHRs with six new members elected, all of whom were self-made men, and different from those interconnected colonial elites that had made up the Opposition in the past. In 1903 the Opposition elected William Massey as leader. It was probably the new members who tipped the balance in favour of Massey and this allowed him to gather a majority in caucus. Massey demonstrated the new energy of the Opposition by going on 'stump' tours in the first half of 1904 and 1905, visiting the South Island, and concentrating on rural areas. The change in the Opposition was signalled in another way, by the development

<sup>254</sup> Vaile to Massey, 14 January 1906, Letters and other material relating to the New Zealand Political Reform League 1905-1908, NZMS 75, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>255</sup> *Auckland Star*, 16 December 1905, p.9.

<sup>256</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 8 December 1905, p.6.

<sup>257</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 19 February 1906, p.2.

<sup>258</sup> Graham, 'Waikato Politics', p.204.

of an extra-parliamentary organisation to support it. Originating in Auckland sometime in 1904, by the 1905 election it had the name Political Reform League and there were branches in the four main centres, Whangarei, Masterton and Balclutha. Although the Political Reform League was promoted as a new group it had strong links to the National Association and was, in some ways, a continuation of it. Despite the vigorous nature of Massey's leadership, the result of the 1905 election was a severe defeat for the Opposition. Although 1905 was a setback, Massey's resolve to continue with the Political Reform League showed that he understood that he had a solid foundation upon which to build. It would be rural voters and organisation by the League which would begin the reversal of fortunes for Massey and his party.

When reflecting on the 1899 election Duthie had hoped that one day someone in the Opposition would be able to 'beat Seddon with his own weapons'.<sup>259</sup> Once elected to the leadership of the Opposition, Massey had shown he was prepared to use some of Seddon's 'weapons', something that the Opposition members of the 1890s had been reluctant to do.<sup>260</sup> However, Massey was never able to prove that using methods of political campaigning which attempted to reach the mass electorate were the way for the Opposition to finally overthrow Seddon. On the morning of 11 June 1906, the news reached New Zealand that Richard Seddon had died while traveling home from Australia.<sup>261</sup> Having 'died in the harness',<sup>262</sup> Seddon remained undefeated. Joseph Ward, who had been groomed by Seddon as his successor, was confirmed as the new Prime Minister, and leader of the Liberal Party.<sup>263</sup> The death of Seddon left a political vacuum, and the prospect of facing Ward rather than Seddon at the next election was undoubtedly less daunting for Massey and his party, and probably encouraged them to continue growing their organisation.

<sup>259</sup> John Duthie to William Rolleston, 12 December 1899, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie, MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>260</sup> William Russell to Duthie, 7 December 1899, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie, MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library; Scobie McKenzie to Russell, 20 December 1899, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie- MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library; Memoranda on General Election of 6<sup>th</sup> December 1899, Bell Family Papers, Correspondence with John Duthie- MS-Papers-5210-041, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>261</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 12 June 1906, p.5.

<sup>262</sup> *Auckland Star*, 12 June 1906, p.3.

<sup>263</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.254.



## Chapter 4

# Political Reform League to Reform Party 1906-1910

*'I made up my mind that it was my duty to re-establish the party and I have been working to that end during the last three years'.<sup>1</sup>*

– William Massey

When writing of Massey's ascent to the leadership of the Opposition, W.J. Gardner suggested that probably only a few people believed in 1903 that Massey would ever be Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup> However, from fifteen members in 1905, the Opposition gained nine members in 1908 and a further eleven in 1911, making them the biggest party in the House after the election. A common explanation for the electoral swing towards Reform is the decline of the Liberals. This can be observed from 1908,<sup>3</sup> and is often attributed to changes in society and within the Liberal Party. However, this characterises Reform as the passive beneficiaries of the slow disintegration of the Liberals. Instead, this chapter will argue that Reform was actively working to secure votes through well-planned political campaigning. Indeed, the rhetoric deployed by Reform shows that they understood the social change, and resulting conflicts, which began emerging in New Zealand in the early years of the twentieth century and used them in their appeals to voters.

The most enduring explanation for Liberal decay was first put forward by Leicester

<sup>1</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 December 1908, p.8. Massey speaking at a meeting to honour the newly elected Reform MP for Waitemata, Ewen Alison.

<sup>2</sup> W.J. Gardner, 'The Rise of W.F. Massey, 1891-1912', *Political Science*, 13, no. 1, 1961, pp.20-21.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Bassett, *Three Party Politics in New Zealand, 1911-1931*, Auckland: Historical Publications, 1982, p.3; Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett, 'Voter Behaviour and the Decline of the Liberals in Britain and New Zealand 1911-29: Some Comparisons', *Social History*, 30, no. 2, May, 2005, p.198; Barry Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence: The Origins and Establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party, 1900-19*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1980, p.45.

Webb,<sup>4</sup> and then expanded upon by Leslie Lipson,<sup>5</sup> Gardner,<sup>6</sup> Robert Chapman<sup>7</sup> and Len Richardson.<sup>8</sup> They argued that the Liberals weakening was caused by the gradual loss of rural and country town seats, which occurred as growing prosperity in these electorates led their populations to become more conservative. Furthermore, there had been moves to form an Independent Labour Party in 1904, but the economic downturn gave political labour more traction as prices rose faster than wages.<sup>9</sup> Some unions became discontented with the Arbitration Court and in 1907 there were twelve strikes.<sup>10</sup> As the result of a strike at the Blackball mine in 1908, the New Zealand Federation of Labour was formed as a break-away from the arbitration system.<sup>11</sup> In both the 1908 and 1911 elections the labour-aligned vote increased, and it is argued that this was largely at the expense of the Liberal Party.<sup>12</sup> The farmers began to vote for Reform, and the workers for labour parties, which eroded the Liberal voter base.<sup>13</sup> It has also been argued that the population shift to the North Island favoured Reform as the Liberals were a predominately South Island party.<sup>14</sup>

However, David Hamer proposed an alternative explanation for the rise of Reform. He argued that farmers had always voted for the opposition to the Liberals and that Reform's vote grew because of the changing economic make up of towns and suburban areas. During the Liberal era it became apparent that many small and medium sized towns had reached their maximum urban growth. As this occurred these towns became more reliant on the surrounding farms for their existence and so began to see their interests as identical to farmers.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, despite the rhetoric that New Zealand was a rural country dependant on the 'farmer backbone', the urban population continued to grow faster than the rural. Between the 1901 and 1906 censuses the growth in the urban population was almost twice that of the rural,<sup>16</sup> and by 1911 the urban population was

<sup>4</sup> Leicester Chisholm Webb, 'The Rise of the Reform Party', M.A. Thesis, Canterbury College, 1928, p.26.

<sup>5</sup> Leslie Lipson, *The Politics of Equality: New Zealand's Adventures in Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948, p.215.

<sup>6</sup> Gardner, 'The Rise of W.F. Massey', pp.21-23.

<sup>7</sup> R.M. Chapman, 'The Decline of the Liberals' in *Ends and Means in New Zealand Politics*, (ed) Robert Chapman, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1961, pp.20-21.

<sup>8</sup> Len Richardson, 'Parties and Political Change' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, (ed) Geoffrey W. Rice, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.214.

<sup>9</sup> Miles Fairburn, 'The Farmers Take Over' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, (ed) Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990, p.187.

<sup>10</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p.29.

<sup>11</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, pp.30-34, has more detail on the formation of the Federation of Labour.

<sup>12</sup> D.A. Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988, p.185.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Shannon, 'The Decline and Fall of the Liberal Government: A Study in an Aspect of New Zealand Political Development, 1908-1914', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1953, pp. 250-252; Chapman, 'The Decline of the Liberals' p.22; B.D. Graham, 'The Country Party Idea in New Zealand Politics, 1901-1935' in *Studies of a Small Democracy*, (eds) Robert Chapman and Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Paul's Book Arcade, 1963, pp.177-178; R.M. Burdon, *The New Dominion; a Social and Political History of New Zealand, 1918-39*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1965, pp.1-4.

<sup>14</sup> Shannon, p.132; Lipson, p.216.

<sup>15</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.158-163.

<sup>16</sup> Ben Schrader, *The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities 1840-1920*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016, p.395.

equal to that of rural areas.<sup>17</sup> Hamer thought that the Liberals were weak in the new suburban areas, particularly those which combined middle-class residential areas with small farm holdings, often on the edges of main centres.<sup>18</sup>

Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett have convincingly argued that neither the traditional view nor Hamer's analysis encapsulated sufficient votes to explain the size of the swing towards Reform.<sup>19</sup> They established that the shift which brought Reform to power was remarkably broad-spectrum, with Reform gaining votes from all occupational sectors.<sup>20</sup> This swing across all sectors of society can be explained by Reform's vigorous pursuit of voters. Reform appeared to be aware of the changing political environment and diligently used this to their advantage. With this proactive approach it was able to transform itself into a broad-based party.

Between 1906 and 1908 the Opposition continued to focus on building strength as a party organisation. In contrast, it appears that Ward did not see value in the Liberal and Labour Federation developed by Seddon,<sup>21</sup> and instead of using that organisation, he decided to change New Zealand's electoral system to use the Second Ballot.<sup>22</sup> This is a form of proportional representation where, if no one candidate receives a majority on the first ballot, then a second ballot is held between the top two polling candidates. The Liberals hoped that the first ballot would act in place of party candidate selection by eliminating the weaker Liberal candidates, allowing the strongest Liberal candidate to compete in the second round.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, the Opposition pursued an active programme of political organisation through the Political Reform Leagues and endeavoured to ensure one Reform or anti-government candidate stood in each electorate. However, as the Opposition learnt in the 1890s, good political organisation was not enough to win an election, they also needed a message that resonated with voters. Land tenure became an important political issue as the Liberals were increasingly split by the debate over whether leased Crown land should be offered for freehold. The Opposition was in a strong position to capitalise on disagreements within the Liberal Party. They had been presenting themselves as pro-freehold since 1891,<sup>24</sup> and the Political Reform League portrayed itself as the defender of freehold, making it an attractive political alternative to the Liberals.

<sup>17</sup> Schrader, p.396.

<sup>18</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.185.

<sup>19</sup> Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey 1908-1914?' in *A Great New Zealand Prime Minister? Reappraising William Ferguson Massey*, (eds) James Watson and Lachy Paterson, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2011, p.63.

<sup>20</sup> Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett, 'The Rise of the Left and Working Class Voting Behaviour in New Zealand: New Methods', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 35, no. 4, 2005, p.547; Fairburn and Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey?', p.74.

<sup>21</sup> D.A. Hamer, 'The Second Ballot: A New Zealand Electoral Experiment', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 21, no. 1, 1987, p.103.

<sup>22</sup> Tom Brooking, *Richard Seddon: King of God's Own*, Auckland: Penguin, 2014, pp.279-280, points out that the introduction of a second ballot as a solution to vote splitting had been discussed by Liberals since about 1900. Ward had introduced a Second Ballot Bill in 1902, which had failed to gain support.

<sup>23</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.309-310.

<sup>24</sup> See chapter two p.47, for discussion of this in the 1890s.

The growth of militant socialism in the first decade of the twentieth century provided another area which Political Reform League could exploit. The Opposition was quick to identify themselves as anti-socialist, and as industrial unrest grew from 1907, they were able to use this in campaigning. They extended their voter base from the core rural areas by appealing to urban fears of socialism, attempting to equate the Liberals with socialists. Reform differentiating itself as anti-socialist aided their efforts to solidify the party identity. The combination of Liberal factionalism and superior political tactics led to the Opposition making a large encroachment into the Liberals' majority at the 1908 election. In 1909 the fictional line between the Opposition and the Political Reform Leagues was dissolved, when the Opposition became the Reform Party. Although it took some time for the name Reform to be widely adopted, it signalled that the Opposition now saw itself as a serious contender to replace the government.

## The growth of the Political Reform League and the 'land question'

Reflecting on the period between the 1905 and 1908 elections, Massey said 'After the disastrous defeat of the Opposition Party at the polls in 1905 I made up my mind that it was my duty to re-establish the party and I have been working to that end during the last three years'.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the best indication that the Opposition was determined to pursue party organisation was the appointment of a fulltime organiser in 1906, the first since Hastie had been reduced to part-time in 1896.<sup>26</sup> It was announced in May 1906, at a Political Reform League meeting in Pukekohe, that Richard Martin, a local league member, had been appointed to the position.<sup>27</sup> Martin was closely associated with Massey. He had been his campaign organiser in 1905,<sup>28</sup> and managed the Helvetia Ostrich Farm, in which Massey held shares, and which was the venue for the Political Reform League's summer garden parties.<sup>29</sup> Before this appointment, Political Reform Leagues had been inaugurated by an Opposition MHR,<sup>30</sup> or on local initiative.<sup>31</sup> However, the reliance on MHRs meant that organisation could only be undertaken when the House was not meeting, and placed an extra burden on them. Martin took up his new role at the end of June 1906, and his first task was visiting the far north.<sup>32</sup> He then spent

<sup>25</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 December 1908, p.8.

<sup>26</sup> See chapter two p.69, for more detail.

<sup>27</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 May 1906, p.6.

<sup>28</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 2 November 1906, p.8.

<sup>29</sup> Lisa J. Truttman, 'Ostriches and Politics: The Helvetia Ostrich Farm at Pukekohe', <https://timespanner.blogspot.co.nz/2012/02/ostriches-and-politics-helvetia-ostrich.html>, accessed 18 October 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Some 1906 examples are, Pukekohe, Hunua, Onewhero and Onehunga. See: *Waikato Argus*, 5 April 1906, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 16 April 1906, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 May 1906, p.6; *New Zealand Herald*, 20 July 1906, p.3.

<sup>31</sup> Examples of this occurred in Otago and Katikati. See: *Clutha Leader*, 7 July 1905, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 2 May 1906, p.4.

<sup>32</sup> *Auckland Star*, 27 June 1906, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 13 July 1906, p.3.

September and October traveling around the Taranaki Province organising Leagues.<sup>33</sup> It is unclear where Martin was based during 1906 and 1907. There were reports of a Political Reform League organiser, called 'R.R. Hall', based in Wellington.<sup>34</sup> As Massey's Wellington-based private secretary was called R.W. Hill, it is difficult to know if these two men had been confused. However, it does seem most likely at this stage that Martin was based in Wellington.

From the outset Martin worked to form a strong party structure. His work in the Taranaki district is a good example of how the Political Reform League built sound local organisation in electorates. In September 1906 he visited New Plymouth, held a meeting of Opposition supporters, and formed a League in the town.<sup>35</sup> He then travelled to Stratford, and formed a League there.<sup>36</sup> In early 1907 he was back in Taranaki forming branches in Patea<sup>37</sup> and Eltham.<sup>38</sup> He spent at least one month in the South Taranaki area and his organising activities were noted by the local Farmers' Union.<sup>39</sup> A document in the Vaile papers lays out suggestions on how to organise Leagues and Martin followed this pattern. Initially he called a meeting of all supporters in the area, with Vaile suggesting polling places as the ideal base. At this meeting a committee was elected, and a League formed. That committee then elected delegates to be part of a central committee for each electorate.<sup>40</sup> In March 1907, Martin began working in the Waikato, following the same pattern,<sup>41</sup> before moving on to South Wairarapa in April 1908,<sup>42</sup> forming Leagues in Carterton,<sup>43</sup> Greytown,<sup>44</sup> Featherston,<sup>45</sup> and Martinborough.<sup>46</sup> The fact that Vaile had laid out ideas for how to organise the Political Reform League and that Martin appears to have followed these where possible suggests that the League and the Opposition had a strategy for forming a party organisation.

The strength that came from having a political organiser became apparent not long after Martin's appointment. In November 1906 Matthew Kirkbride, Opposition MHR for

<sup>33</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 18 September 1906, p.5; *Taranaki Daily News*, 29 September 1906, p.2; *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 4 October 1906, p.7; *Taranaki Herald*, 30 October 1906, p.7.

<sup>34</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 10 September 1906, p.3; *Evening Post*, 10 September 1906, p.6; *Timaru Herald*, 11 September 1906, p.5.

<sup>35</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 14 September 1906, p.2.

<sup>36</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 29 September 1906, p.2.

<sup>37</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 20 February 1907, p.2.

<sup>38</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 27 February 1907, p.2

<sup>39</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 15 September 1907, p.5.

<sup>40</sup> Letters and other material relating to the New Zealand Political Reform League 1905-1908, NZMS 75, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>41</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 13 March 1907, p.2; B.D. Graham, 'Waikato Politics: A Study in the Relationship of Local and National Politics in the Early Twentieth Century', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1954, p.189.

<sup>42</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 27 March 1908, p.4.

<sup>43</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 2 April 1908, p.4.

<sup>44</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 4 April 1908, p.4.

<sup>45</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 7 April 1908, p.4.

<sup>46</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 7 April 1908, p.5.

Manukau, died, causing a by-election.<sup>47</sup> Although Manukau was considered a safe Opposition seat, Martin managed the candidate selection, ensuring that all the electorate's Political Reform Leagues agreed over who would stand. Frederick Lang, ex-MHR for Waikato, was chosen by a meeting of League delegates.<sup>48</sup> Lang won the election, and, even though a victory would have been expected, this provided a boost to the Opposition and encouraged the work of the League.<sup>49</sup> At a meeting in Pukekohe celebrating Lang's win, Martin said that organisation had been key and 'with such organisation as that in every electorate, next election would see Mr Massey returned with a party constituting a majority'.<sup>50</sup>

Martin's importance was further demonstrated in 1907. In April of that year, the Liberal MHR for Taranaki, Edward Smith, died.<sup>51</sup> Taranaki had been held only once by the Opposition since 1890. Henry Brown won in 1896, and in 1905 the Opposition candidate, Henry Okey, had come within 236 votes of Smith.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, Martin had already organised Political Reform Leagues in Taranaki during 1906, and land tenure was a particularly contentious issue in Taranaki where freehold was strongly defended. Okey was chosen by the Taranaki Political Reform League to be their candidate,<sup>53</sup> with Martin and Massey arriving to support him at the beginning of May,<sup>54</sup> giving a series of speeches.<sup>55</sup> Martin spoke for Okey and the Opposition during the campaign, mostly in smaller centres,<sup>56</sup> meaning that the Opposition could hold more meetings. On the eve of the election, Massey spoke at Okey's last meeting.<sup>57</sup> The result was an Opposition win by 364 votes.<sup>58</sup> The *Otago Daily Times* cautioned against reading too much into a by-election result, but felt that the size of the majority showed it was a good victory for the Opposition and praised the work of Martin and the Political Reform Leagues.<sup>59</sup> In contrast, pro-Liberal newspapers blamed the loss of the seat on vote splitting, as there had been one official and one independent Liberal candidate in the contest.<sup>60</sup> The fact that there were two Liberal candidates suggests that the government's organisation was not strong and it is probable that the attention given to the Taranaki district by Martin helped the Opposition to victory.

<sup>47</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. I, A-L, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, pp.470-471.

<sup>48</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 8 November 1906, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 14 November 1906, p.8.

<sup>49</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 December 1906, p.6; *Press*, 3 August 1907, p.10.

<sup>50</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 December 1906, p.6.

<sup>51</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. II, M-Addenda, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, pp.309-310.

<sup>52</sup> General Election, 1905, *AJHR*, 1906 (S.1), H.25a, pp.1-5.

<sup>53</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 24 April 1907, p.7.

<sup>54</sup> *Opunake Times*, 3 May 1907, p.2.

<sup>55</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 30 April 1907, p.3; *Taranaki Herald*, 1 May 1907, p.7; *Taranaki Herald*, 2 May 1907, p.2; *Taranaki Herald*, 3 May 1907, p.2; *Taranaki Herald*, 4 May 1907, p.7.

<sup>56</sup> For example, Martin spoke in Mangorei, Warea and Rahunu. See: *Opunake Times*, 3 May 1907, p.2; *Taranaki Herald*, 4 May 1907, p.2; *Taranaki Herald*, 6 May 1907, p.2.

<sup>57</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 14 May 1907, p.3.

<sup>58</sup> *Auckland Star*, 15 May 1907, p.5.

<sup>59</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 15 May 1907, p.5.

<sup>60</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 15 May 1907, p.6; *Taranaki Daily News*, 15 May 1907, p.2.

There was another factor at play in the Taranaki by-election, the debate over land tenure. This had been an issue for the Liberal Party in 1905, but Seddon had deflected it by appointing a Land Commission.<sup>61</sup> The Commission's findings had not resolved the debate, and land tenure was an ongoing source of tension within the Liberals when Ward took office in 1906. On the surface the issue was how to manage the land which the government had purchased under its Lands for Settlement scheme. Obtained with the purpose of breaking up large landholdings, this land was leased to farmers for 999 years, called lease-in-perpetuity. There was no right for the leasees to freehold, partly because it was argued that the government had bought the land from private owners. On-selling it to the leaseholder could result in land aggregation, which was the very thing the Lands for Settlement Act was trying to prevent.<sup>62</sup> A group within the Liberal Party saw retention of the leasehold as a philosophical principle. They believed that leasehold was the way to secure the 'unearned increment', the rise in land value that comes from development of infrastructure. This was perceived as different from the rise in value which happened through an individual's work, as the 'unearned increment' often accrued due to government-funded projects like drainage and roads. Those who favoured leasehold held that it would return the 'unearned increment' to the government for the benefit of all society. Although lease-in-perpetuity prevented the leaseholder from profiting from rising land values, it also meant that the state could not collect the profit because there was no provision to raise rents. This led to neither side in the debate being satisfied, and the leasehold faction within the Liberals became increasingly vocal in their demands for rent rises and shorter leases.<sup>63</sup>

Very soon after assuming the Prime Ministership, Ward announced that he would solve the 'land issue'.<sup>64</sup> He appointed a new land minister, Robert McNab, who then introduced a Bill in 1906. However, the terms of the Bill appeared to be an attack on freehold. It removed the right of any Crown tenant to purchase freehold and replaced lease-in-perpetuity with sixty-six year leases which did not have a right of renewal, once the lease expired the land was transferred by ballot.<sup>65</sup> The Farmers' Union began a vigorous campaign against the Bill, believing that it would erode the right of farmers to own their land and to gain the profit that came from improving it.<sup>66</sup> The Union's agitation led the Liberal members from country seats to protest and some threatened to vote against the Bill, because they feared the electoral implications of being associated with leasehold views.<sup>67</sup> Ward decided to delay the second reading and during the 1906-1907 parliamentary recess McNab undertook a tour of the North Island to try and promote the Bill.<sup>68</sup> Due

<sup>61</sup> Brooking, *Richard Seddon*, pp.373-376.

<sup>62</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.289.

<sup>63</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.285-287.

<sup>64</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.290.

<sup>65</sup> Shannon, p.43.

<sup>66</sup> Tom Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise: A Comparative Study of the Origins and Early Phases of Development of the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales and the New Zealand Farmers' Union, 1880-1929', PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1977, pp.336-337.

<sup>67</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.291-292.

<sup>68</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.292-293.

to the strength of public feeling, and growing dissention within the Liberal caucus, the Bill was changed before it was re-introduced to the House in 1907. It now allowed for leased crown land to be purchased by the lessee. This was considered a triumph for those who supported freehold and the Opposition claimed that it was their pressure on the government that had led to the change.<sup>69</sup> McNab in particular became associated with the Bill and was seen to have led an attack on the rights of farmers, which further alienated rural voters from the Liberals.

Much of the debate within the Liberal Party and in the House during the passage of the 1906 and 1907 Bills was centred on how long future leases should be, and whether tenants should be allowed to buy the freehold.<sup>70</sup> In the end the 1907 Land Act was a further compromise, with leaseholders given the right to freehold and the length of all new Crown leases set at thirty-three years.<sup>71</sup> However, as Gary Hawke points out, the heat in the debate seems out of proportion to the number of those affected. Crown leasehold farmers were a small percentage, as most farmers held their land freehold.<sup>72</sup> As an example of how little desire there was for leaseholders to buy the freehold to their farms, by 1935 less than one third of lease-in-perpetuity holders had taken up freehold.<sup>73</sup> This suggests that there was another dimension to the debate. The leasehold-freehold debate was not just about the right of those who held leasehold to eventually freehold their land. It was also about the fears of those who held freehold that their land would be acquired by the government and that land would be nationalised. They thought that if the leasehold faction within the Liberal Party gained a majority, then every farmer would lose their right to freehold. They drew on the experiences of the 1890s when the government bought large estates which had been freehold and were now, under government ownership, leasehold. Farmers feared that if this trend continued, all of New Zealand would be owned by the government and leased to the population.<sup>74</sup>

The fear of losing freehold was not new, as it had been part of the impetus behind the formation of the National Association.<sup>75</sup> However, by the beginning of the twentieth century there was a different dimension which gave the issue new life. In 1904 the annual Trade and Labour Council conference had established the Political Labour League. One of the policies of the League was the nationalisation of land.<sup>76</sup> Although the Political Labour League stood nine candidates in the 1905 election, they were not seen as

<sup>69</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 6 July 1907, p.2; *Evening Post*, 5 July 1907, p.2; Shannon, p.44, pointed out that the government had a large majority so could have past the legislation if it desired. He thought the failure of the first Bill was a product of the Liberals' own disunity rather than Union or Opposition campaigning.

<sup>70</sup> Shannon, pp.43-50.

<sup>71</sup> Michael Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward: A Political Biography*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993 pp.157-158.

<sup>72</sup> G.R. Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p.93.

<sup>73</sup> Brad Patterson, "'Every Man His Own Landlord': Mr Massey and the Fight for Freehold, 1894-1912" in *A Great New Zealand Prime Minister? Reappraising William Fergusson Massey*, (eds) James Watson and Lachy Paterson, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2011, p.59.

<sup>74</sup> Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise', p.335.

<sup>75</sup> See chapter two p.43.

<sup>76</sup> Peter Franks and Jim McAloon, *Labour: The New Zealand Labour Party 1916-2016*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2016, pp.51-53.

a serious threat and they themselves thought that the contest was a 'forlorn hope'.<sup>77</sup> Yet, between 1905 and 1908 the political labour movement became more militant, with a series of strikes and the formation of a Socialist Party, which also had a policy of land nationalisation.<sup>78</sup> With the introduction of the Second Ballot in 1908, the possibility of a labour or Socialist candidate winning a seat became more likely. Voters who may have been concerned that a vote for a labour party could split the Liberal and labour vote, thereby allowing an Opposition candidate to win, could now vote for a labour party knowing that, if necessary, they could vote Liberal in the second round. This encouraged more candidates from the various labour parties.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, the Australian Labor Party became part of the government after the 1904 Federal elections,<sup>80</sup> giving hope to the political labour movement in New Zealand. The Opposition quickly began to link leasehold Liberals to the labour and socialist land nationalisation policies. They argued that the Liberal Party was being influenced by socialism and that the maintenance and extension of leasehold was a step towards land nationalisation. So, whereas the second ballot had been introduced by the Liberals to prevent Opposition candidates from winning seats due to Liberal-Labour vote splitting, the Opposition actually used the increase of labour-aligned candidates against the Liberals, by tying them to labour's radical land policies.

The deliberate strategy to connect the Liberal Party with socialism shows that the Opposition understood this was an area where they could gain political ground. In the Taranaki by-election campaign Massey and Okey called a vote for the Opposition a vote for freehold,<sup>81</sup> and Massey connected leasehold with socialism in a speech given at Hawera.<sup>82</sup> Massey also gave a speech at Cheviot in early May in which he described the Land Bill as 'a backward step-in the direction of Socialism and the single tax'.<sup>83</sup> By June 1907, Martin was also linking the 1907 Bill to socialism quoting Ramsey McDonald,<sup>84</sup> who had purportedly said, 'to carry on a progressive system, freehold would have to be knocked on the head'.<sup>85</sup> This theme of the Land Bill being a Trojan Horse for socialism was also used in Massey's speech at the 1908 garden party. He said the last 'two years had seen demands put forward by people who believed in the socialistic theory that the country should be run on socialistic lines, land should be nationalised, that all industry should be nationalised and that people should be divided into two classes ... He (Mr Massey) was not in the habit of speaking soft platitudes or of endeavouring to arouse needless alarm and he would not speak as he did if he did not think the danger was

<sup>77</sup> Franks and McAloon, p.53.

<sup>78</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, pp.25-27.

<sup>79</sup> Franks and McAloon, p.55.

<sup>80</sup> P. Loveday, 'The Federal Parties' in *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, (eds) P. Loveday, A.W. Martin, and R.S. Parker, Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1977, pp.407-409.

<sup>81</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 14 May 1907, p.3.

<sup>82</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 4 May 1907, p.5.

<sup>83</sup> *Press*, 9 May 1907, p.8.

<sup>84</sup> David Marquand, *Ramsey Macdonald*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1977, p.100, MacDonald was the leader of the British Labour Party and visited New Zealand in 1906.

<sup>85</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 17 June 1907, p.1.

very real'.<sup>86</sup> This deliberate coupling of the Liberals with the emerging political labour movement shows that the Opposition understood where the Liberals were vulnerable, and that they took an active part in exploiting those weaknesses.

Another tactic the Opposition used was to accuse socialists, and by extension the Liberals, of favouring one class over another. The idea New Zealand should be a society where the government treated all sectors of society equally had been one of the essential aims of 1890s liberalism.<sup>87</sup> By accusing the Liberals of being selfishly concerned with 'one class', the Opposition was attempting to position itself as the true defender of that aim, and therefore more 'liberal' than the Liberals. At the end of 1907 Massey was characterising the Opposition as 'liberals' and the Liberals as 'socialists'. In a speech given at Pukekohe he said 'let not anyone imagine that the last has been heard of the land question. It will come up again at the next election when the socialists will be asking for more'.<sup>88</sup> He went on to assert that the next election would be a contest between 'straight-out liberals, or straight-out socialists, or opportunists who would pander to the socialists in the way experienced during the last few sessions'.<sup>89</sup> William Herries said in a speech in Hamilton 'there must be no class distinction if the moderate section of the people, which after all formed the great bulk of the community, was to be properly represented'.<sup>90</sup> The editor of the *Waikato Argus* thought the problem with the current government was that it had 'promoted the interests of the working classes as represented by the town populations, but it has only partly succeeded in gaining this end, for the reason that in promoting the interests of the one class, those of others have been overlooked'.<sup>91</sup> The promotion of 'class interest' had been one of the 'evils' levelled at the Opposition members in the 1890s. The National Association had been adamant that its desire was 'to promote national interests and oppose class and sectional interests',<sup>92</sup> but had been unable to convince enough of the voting public that they really were against 'class interests'. It appears that under Massey's leadership the Opposition began to use the Liberal Party's association with socialism to accuse the Liberals of promoting 'class interest' and claim for itself the role of the protector of New Zealand's equal society.

During 1907 Martin continued to travel, building the Political Reform League. He was in Northland<sup>93</sup> and South Taranaki in February,<sup>94</sup> Rangitikei in March,<sup>95</sup> and Waikato in April.<sup>96</sup> He went back to Taranaki in early May to assist Okey with the by-election,<sup>97</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 February 1908, p.6.

<sup>87</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.40-43.

<sup>88</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 December 1907, p.8.

<sup>89</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 December 1907, p.8.

<sup>90</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 14 March 1907, p.6.

<sup>91</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 27 March 1907, p.2.

<sup>92</sup> *Evening Post*, 10 September 1891, p.3.

<sup>93</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 February 1907, p.6.

<sup>94</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 20 February 1907, p.2; *Taranaki Daily News*, 27 February 1907, p.2.

<sup>95</sup> *Rangitikei Advocate*, 18 March 1907, p.2.

<sup>96</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 3 April 1907, p.2.

<sup>97</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 4 May 1907, p.2.

but was back in the Waikato for the second half of that month,<sup>98</sup> suggesting that the by-election had interrupted his organising work in that district. In June he went to Gisborne,<sup>99</sup> and Wairarapa in July.<sup>100</sup> At the end of July he made his first trip to the South Island as the Political Reform League organiser, visiting Temuka,<sup>101</sup> Dunedin,<sup>102</sup> South and Central Otago,<sup>103</sup> and then Gore, Maitua and Wyndham.<sup>104</sup> By the middle of October he was back in the North Island, travelling through the Hawke's Bay,<sup>105</sup> Manawatu,<sup>106</sup> Northern Wairarapa,<sup>107</sup> and in early December he went to Nelson.<sup>108</sup> In every place, except Nelson, he formed at least one branch of the Political Reform League, his stated aim being to have a League in every electorate before the next election.<sup>109</sup> In Nelson, the Opposition had a long history of not being able to arrange any organisation, or find a candidate, and it seems that Martin was still unable to break into this area. The parts of the country Martin did not visit are also illustrative. He did not go to the Thames-Coromandel district, another area traditionally hostile to the Opposition, nor the West Coast of the South Island or Christchurch. The West Coast, like Nelson, had been an area where the Opposition had struggled since the 1890s, but they had been somewhat successful in Christchurch.<sup>110</sup> In 1905, one of the first Political Reform Leagues had been formed there. However, the chairman, William Polson, had left Christchurch in 1906,<sup>111</sup> and there seems to have been no one who was prepared to continue the League.

One of the themes of Martin's South Island speeches was that the organisation of the Farmers' Union had not been enough to prevent the Land Bill.<sup>112</sup> The Union had not been very politically active in the 1905 election, but the land issue seems to have reawakened it.<sup>113</sup> During 1907 prominent Union members toured the country speaking against the Land Bill.<sup>114</sup> The president of the Auckland Provincial Farmers' Union,

<sup>98</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 May 1907, p.6.

<sup>99</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 5 June 1907, p.3.

<sup>100</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 15 July 1907, p.4.

<sup>101</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 29 July 1907, p.5.

<sup>102</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 19 August 1907, p.2.

<sup>103</sup> *Bruce Herald*, 29 August 1907, p.5; *Lake Wakatipu Mail*, 17 September 1907, p.5; *Maitua Ensign*, 18 September 1907, p.2.

<sup>104</sup> *Maitua Ensign*, 27 September 1907, p.2.

<sup>105</sup> *Dominion*, 17 October 1907, p.2.

<sup>106</sup> *Manawatu Times*, 4 November 1907, p.5.

<sup>107</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 7 December 1907, p.5.

<sup>108</sup> *Colonist*, 10 December 1907, p.6.

<sup>109</sup> *Temuka Leader*, 3 August 1907, p.2.

<sup>110</sup> There had been a strong National Association in Christchurch, see chapter two p.61.

<sup>111</sup> Robert James Bremer, 'Polson, William John', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4p15/polson-william-john>, accessed 6 July 2016.

<sup>112</sup> *Temuka Leader*, 3 August 1907, p.2; *Bruce Herald*, 29 August 1907, p.5; *Lake Wakatipu Mail*, 17 September 1907, p.5. Although both the Opposition and the Farmers' Union had campaigned against the Bill, it is difficult to ascertain how much the Union relied on the Opposition to exert pressure in parliament, particularly on the freehold country Liberal members. It is more likely that it was the work of the two groups together which brought enough pressure to change the Bill.

<sup>113</sup> Les Cleveland, 'An Early New Zealand Farmers' Pressure Group', *Political Science*, 18, no. 2, 1966, p.64, noted that Wilson seemed to believe that the Union had an influence on the 1908 election, suggesting that they were becoming more politically active.

<sup>114</sup> Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise', pp.336-337.

Leonard Philipps,<sup>115</sup> travelled around the province in March and April. Interviewed at the end of his trip he noted 'the expressions by the farmers were unanimous in opposition to the government's Land Bill'.<sup>116</sup> In Canterbury the anti-Land Bill crusade was undertaken by David Jones,<sup>117</sup> president of the North Canterbury Union,<sup>118</sup> with assistance from James Cooper, who farmed in the Wairarapa and was the vice-president of the Wellington Union.<sup>119</sup> James Boddie, a farmer from Eltham and ex-president of the Taranaki Union,<sup>120</sup> spoke against the Bill in Otago.<sup>121</sup> At the Auckland Provincial Conference in May three remits were put forward concerning political action. The first called for the Union to take a more active role in politics, the second for the Union to form its own party, and the third asked for the Provincial Unions' support to bring a remit at the National Conference revoking the rule which barred discussion of a political nature at meetings. After considerable debate, it was decided to approve the second and third motions.<sup>122</sup> This had a sequel at the National Farmers' Union conference in July when a remit was put up by the Auckland Provincial delegate, Allen Bell, that the Farmers' Union adopt a more united political attitude. Bell argued that this was necessary because the Opposition, not the Union, had stopped the Land Bill.<sup>123</sup> Although there were several delegates who supported the remit it failed to pass.<sup>124</sup>

Many of the men who spoke in favour of more political participation by the Union were also involved with the Opposition and the Political Reform League.<sup>125</sup> Bell was the Opposition candidate for Waikato in 1908,<sup>126</sup> and the seconder of his motion, Lissant Clayton, had been the Opposition candidate for Waiapu in 1905<sup>127</sup> and Poverty Bay in 1908.<sup>128</sup> Some Farmers' Union members who campaigned against the Land Bill also stood for the Opposition. Cooper had been the Opposition candidate in Masterton in

<sup>115</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 May 1907, p.7.

<sup>116</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 April 1907, p.6.

<sup>117</sup> Jones had a long association with farmers' political groups and then Reform. See chapter five, p.159, chapter six, p.190.

<sup>118</sup> *Press*, 21 February 1907, p.8; *Press*, 13 May 1907, p.5; *Star*, 30 May 1907, p.3; Jim McAloon, *No Idle Rich: The Wealthy in Canterbury and Otago 1840-1914*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2002, p.116.

<sup>119</sup> *Press*, 21 March 1907, p.5; *Press*, 28 May 1907, p.8.

<sup>120</sup> *Oamaru Mail*, 20 March 1907, p.4.

<sup>121</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 9 March 1907, p.9.

<sup>122</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 May 1907, p.6.

<sup>123</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 6 July 1907, p.2.

<sup>124</sup> *Evening Post*, 5 July 1907, p.2.

<sup>125</sup> Graham, 'Waikato Politics', pp.76-80, said that the League and the Farmers' Union in Waikato seemed to be separate and the Union had no influence over political thought. However, it seems that the connections were strong.

<sup>126</sup> General Election, 1908, *AJHR*, 1909, (S.2), H.30a, pp.1-8.

<sup>127</sup> General Election, 1905, *AJHR*, 1906 (S.1), H.25a, pp.1-5.

<sup>128</sup> General Election, 1908, *AJHR*, 1909 (S.2), H.30a, pp.1-8.

1902 and 1905, and Pahiatua in 1908.<sup>129</sup> In 1908 David Jones was an Opposition candidate in Ashburton,<sup>130</sup> Phillips won the Waitemata seat for the Opposition in 1908,<sup>131</sup> and Boddie was asked to stand for Taumaranui in 1911.<sup>132</sup> Brooking also noted that land tenure issues brought the Opposition and the Union closer, making the political neutrality of the Union more and more nonsensical.<sup>133</sup> It is possible that greater political action by the Union concerned the Opposition because it could lead to a separate 'country party', hence the emphasis on the Union alone not being enough to prevent the original Land Bill. Graham found that the impetus for a country party during this period was strongest in the Auckland Province and named Phillips as one of the promoters.<sup>134</sup> However, Graham concedes that Massey's leadership appealed strongly to farmers, so there was little desire for their own political party.<sup>135</sup>

## The 1908 election

Going into the election year of 1908 the Opposition was in a very different situation from 1905. They had built a network of branches, which was strongest in the North Island, and they had identified several issues on which they could campaign - anti-socialism and land tenure being dominant. Martin was interviewed twice at the end of 1907, when he stated that there were now fifty Political Reform League Branches,<sup>136</sup> and that he was positive the election would result in a swing towards Massey.<sup>137</sup> From Martin's activity in 1908 it would seem that the Opposition had a plan to target certain electorates. From late January Martin was based in Palmerston North,<sup>138</sup> which was ideal for reaching the electorates south of Lake Taupo, as it was the junction between the North Island main trunk line and the lines which went west to Taranaki and east to Hawke's Bay. Martin visited Waikato in mid-February,<sup>139</sup> and at the end of the month and into March he was in Northland.<sup>140</sup> Apart from one visit to the South Island to support the Opposition candidate in the Tuapeka by-election in May,<sup>141</sup> and two short trips - one in August<sup>142</sup> and another

<sup>129</sup> General Election, 1902, *AJHR*, 1903, H26, pp.1-6; General Election, 1905, *AJHR*, 1906 (S.1), H.25a, pp.1-5; General Election, 1908, *AJHR*, 1909 (S.2), H.30a, pp.1-8.

He was asked to contest Pahiatua again in 1911 but declined the nomination see: *Wairarapa Age*, 17 May 1911, p.5.

<sup>130</sup> General Election, 1908, *AJHR*, 1909 (S.2), H.30a, pp.1-8.

<sup>131</sup> J.O. Wilson, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record 1840-1984*, Wellington: Government Printing Office, 1985, p.226.

<sup>132</sup> *King Country Chronicle*, 20 August 1910 p.2, Boddie moved to the King Country around 1908, see: *King Country Chronicle*, 7 May 1910, p.5.

<sup>133</sup> Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise', p.338.

<sup>134</sup> Graham, 'The Country Party Idea', pp.176-177.

<sup>135</sup> Graham, 'The Country Party Idea', p.178.

<sup>136</sup> *Manawatu Times*, 4 November 1907, p.5.

<sup>137</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 22 November 1907, p.5.

<sup>138</sup> *Evening Post*, 28 January 1908, p.7.

<sup>139</sup> *Dominion*, 24 February 1908, p.8.

<sup>140</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 9 March 1908, p.6.

<sup>141</sup> *Temuka Leader*, 16 May 1908 p.3.

<sup>142</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 3 August 1908, p.5; *Manawatu Standard*, 8 August 1908, p.5.

in September,<sup>143</sup> he spent most of 1908 in the lower North Island. Massey also travelled in early 1908, visiting the South Island in April.<sup>144</sup> He only met with supporters<sup>145</sup> and made no speeches, causing the editor of the *Temuka Leader* to accuse the Opposition of conducting the visit in an underhand way.<sup>146</sup> Massey also gave a speech in Gisborne in early May.<sup>147</sup> However, the main focus of Opposition political activity in 1908 was the lower North Island suggesting that they strategically targeted this as an area where they could make gains.

Another constituency that the Opposition seemed to be targeting was workers. In his assessment of the 1905 election, Vaile had told Massey he thought that the Opposition had spent too much time in rural areas and not enough in cities.<sup>148</sup> In 1908 this did not change, the Political Reform League was still weak in cities, but they worked to form Leagues in smaller centres. Hamilton,<sup>149</sup> Palmerston North,<sup>150</sup> New Plymouth,<sup>151</sup> and Hastings<sup>152</sup> all had Leagues by 1908, as did many smaller towns, like Feilding,<sup>153</sup> Carterton,<sup>154</sup> Patea,<sup>155</sup> Hawera<sup>156</sup> and Pahiatua.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore the style of League meetings began changing. From 1907 it became far more common for meetings to have social gatherings attached,<sup>158</sup> or for the local League to hold 'socials'.<sup>159</sup> This led to accusations from pro-Liberal newspapers that the League was copying the British Conservative Party's Primrose League and that the 'working man is to be seduced by courteous invitations to social gatherings, dances, garden parties, afternoons, quadrille assemblies and so on.'<sup>160</sup> Whether this change in tactics was purposeful so as to encourage workers to join the League is unknown, but there was also a change in the language of some Opposition speeches. In the Taranaki by-election, both Massey<sup>161</sup> and Okey<sup>162</sup> attempted to extend the land tenure issue to workers dwellings, saying that workers should be allowed to borrow cheap government money to buy their own sections, and suggesting that the

<sup>143</sup> *Colonist*, 28 September 1908, p.2.

<sup>144</sup> *Evening Post*, 25 April 1908, p.6.

<sup>145</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 25 April 1908, p.9; *Timaru Herald*, 25 April 1908, p.2.

<sup>146</sup> *Temuka Leader*, 28 April 1908, p.2.

<sup>147</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 6 May 1908, p.2.

<sup>148</sup> Letters and other material relating to the New Zealand Political Reform League 1905-1908, NZMS 75, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>149</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 13 March 1907, p.2.

<sup>150</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 13 November 1907, p.2.

<sup>151</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 14 September 1906, p.2.

<sup>152</sup> *Dominion*, 17 October 1907, p.2.

<sup>153</sup> *Feilding Star*, 23 June 1908, p.2.

<sup>154</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 2 April 1908, p.4.

<sup>155</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 20 February 1907, p.2.

<sup>156</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 15 February 1907, p.5.

<sup>157</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 7 December 1907, p.5.

<sup>158</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 December 1906, p.6; *Waikato Times*, 23 April 1907, p.2; *New Zealand Herald*, 26 June 1907, p.8; *Taranaki Herald*, 17 September 1907, p.3.

<sup>159</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 August 1906, p.6; *New Zealand Herald*, 10 August 1906, p.7; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 February 1908, p.3.

<sup>160</sup> *Observer*, 23 March 1907, p.4. The connections between the Primrose League and the Political Reform League are discussed further in chapter six p.189.

<sup>161</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 23 April 1907, p.2.

<sup>162</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 7 May 1907, p.3.

Liberals would not allow this as it would be a concession to freehold title. In the 1908 campaign this rhetoric was increased. In a speech at Te Kuiti, Massey claimed the Opposition was not hostile to workers but anxious for the welfare of all people,<sup>163</sup> and in Palmerston North he said that the way to raise workers' wages was to generate good will between employers and employees.<sup>164</sup> George Sheat, the Opposition candidate for Riccarton, claimed the Opposition would conserve the rights of the workers without endangering the rights of the employers<sup>165</sup> and Alexander Herdman assured his audience in Wellington that the Opposition wanted justice for workers and justice for all classes.<sup>166</sup> The attention given to workers suggests Massey and others had taken Vaile's advice and were trying to solicit their votes. It also demonstrates that the Opposition was actively trying to seek a new voter base.

In the 1905 election the Opposition had suffered somewhat from vote splitting. The attention paid to candidate selection for the 1908 election suggests that this was an area where they were determined to improve. Allen Bell was the first known candidate selected, being chosen to stand for Waikato in mid-1907.<sup>167</sup> Although Bell had been mentioned as a possible candidate in April 1907, it was reported that he declined to take the nomination, as he wanted the League to decide.<sup>168</sup> In September a meeting of Political Reform League delegates from throughout the Waikato electorate met in Hamilton, and chose Bell. They then set up an election committee in which each branch was represented.<sup>169</sup> Southern Taranaki had been an area where having multiple candidates had cost the Opposition in 1905. In early 1908 Martin organised a conference for the Patea electorate, which met in Hawera.<sup>170</sup> They had three candidates to choose from, but their first choice, J. Driver, withdrew,<sup>171</sup> and another meeting was held at which one of the original candidates, George Pearce, was selected as the replacement.<sup>172</sup> In Egmont, Martin tried to ensure the selection of one candidate, holding a conference at which Bradshaw Dive was chosen. However, Charles Wilkinson, who had indicated he wanted to stand in the interests of the Opposition, would not submit his name to the selection conference, and proceeded to stand as an independent opposition candidate.<sup>173</sup> In Oroua, the long-standing Opposition MP was retiring at the election, and two potential candidates came forward. In a piece of incredible organisation the local Political Reform League sent out ballot papers to each elector asking them to choose which candidate they would prefer.<sup>174</sup> About one thousand voted and the result was a victory for David Guthrie, with the other

<sup>163</sup> *Feilding Star*, 25 June 1908, p.3.

<sup>164</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 22 September 1908, p.3.

<sup>165</sup> *Press*, 21 October 1908, p.7.

<sup>166</sup> *Evening Post*, 30 October 1908, p.3.

<sup>167</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 13 September 1907, p.2.

<sup>168</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 12 April 1907, p.2.

<sup>169</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 13 September 1907, p.2.

<sup>170</sup> *Patea Mail*, 18 April 1908, p.2.

<sup>171</sup> *Patea Mail*, 29 July 1908, p.2.

<sup>172</sup> *Patea Mail*, 5 August 1908, p.3.

<sup>173</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 22 September 1908, p.5.

<sup>174</sup> *Feilding Star*, 2 July 1908, p.2.

candidate, Arnold Atkinson, pledging to work to elect him.<sup>175</sup> Conferences of delegates also met to select Opposition candidates in Palmerston,<sup>176</sup> Pahiatua,<sup>177</sup> Gisborne,<sup>178</sup> and Kaipara.<sup>179</sup> The attention given to preventing multiple Opposition candidates turned out to be unnecessary as the Second Ballot Act was passed in October 1908, meaning that the first ballot could eliminate any extra Opposition candidates and consolidate the vote in the second ballot.<sup>180</sup> However, the experience of choosing a single Opposition candidate in each electorate led to the Political Reform League developing robust procedures and it set the expectation that the Reform Party would choose one candidate to stand in each electorate.

The Opposition was unable to meet its goal of having a candidate for every electorate. It is difficult to compare electorates between 1905 and 1908, due to major boundary changes in the 1908 reallocation.<sup>181</sup> Yet there were some patterns which persisted from 1905. The Opposition continued to be underrepresented in city seats, with no candidates for Chalmers, Dunedin Central, Dunedin South, Christchurch North, Christchurch East or Avon. In the North Island cities, the Opposition stood no candidate in Auckland East, Auckland Central and Wellington Central.<sup>182</sup> One noticeable pattern is a lack of Opposition candidates in seats based in the centres of cities, which tended to be the most highly urbanised.<sup>183</sup> Furthermore, Napier, Nelson, Buller and Grey again had no candidate and neither did Invercargill or Awarua.<sup>184</sup> Apart from Nelson, these were also areas not visited by Martin, suggesting that local Opposition organisation was poor. However, for the first time since 1896 the Opposition had a candidate in Westland, Henry Michel.<sup>185</sup> Both the *Press*<sup>186</sup> and the *Southland Times* complained about a lack of Opposition organisation in their provinces, the *Southland Times* saying that a candidate who had combined support from Massey and the Farmers' Union would have received a lot of votes and that the Opposition organiser had missed an opportunity.<sup>187</sup> As in 1905, there were also some candidates who stood as Independents but were against the government. This occurred

<sup>175</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 17 July 1908, p.4.

<sup>176</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 11 August 1908, p.6, this was the electorate containing Palmerston North and some of its rural surrounds.

<sup>177</sup> *Bush Advocate*, 13 May 1908, p.5.

<sup>178</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 26 September 1908, p.4.

<sup>179</sup> *Auckland Star*, 18 May 1908, p.4.

<sup>180</sup> Neill Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy: A History of the Vote in New Zealand*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2003, p.117.

<sup>181</sup> Alan McRobie, *New Zealand Electoral Atlas*, Wellington: Government Printing Office, 1989, p.71.

<sup>182</sup> *Evening Post*, 18 November 1908, pp.2-3. However, the winning candidate for Wellington Central, Francis Fisher, joined the Reform Party caucus when parliament met in 1909, so it is possible that Reform had an understanding with him and did not actively seek a candidate for his seat.

<sup>183</sup> There was no Christchurch Central seat, Avon and Christchurch East covered the more densely populated urban areas, see: McRobie, p.72.

<sup>184</sup> *Evening Post*, 18 November 1908, pp.2-3.

<sup>185</sup> *Evening Post*, 19 November 1908, p.2; Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. II, M-Addenda, pp.82-83.

Michel stood four times for parliament, and in the early elections often denied being an Oppositionist or Reformer, but he stood as the Reform candidate in the 1913 Grey by-election and was appointed to the Legislative Council by Massey in 1918.

<sup>186</sup> *Press*, 14 October 1908, p.8.

<sup>187</sup> *Southland Times*, 4 November 1908, p.4.

in Thames,<sup>188</sup> Rangitikei,<sup>189</sup> Masterton,<sup>190</sup> Hutt,<sup>191</sup> and Wairau.<sup>192</sup> As explained above the Opposition, through the Political Reform League, focused on standing only one candidate in each electorate. There is evidence that men prepared to come out as straight Oppositionists stood down in both Rangitikei<sup>193</sup> and Hutt,<sup>194</sup> to allow the Independent candidate to stand unopposed. This suggests that the Opposition and the Political Reform League thought that these men would vote with the Opposition on a no-confidence vote. This desire of some candidates to continue to be independent, despite appearing to support the Opposition platform, could indicate that there were still some who were wary of the 'party' label. However, the use of the 'independent' label occurred more frequently in areas where the Opposition was traditionally weak, this suggests that in some areas of New Zealand candidates were still reluctant to associate themselves with the Opposition.

One notable aspect of the speeches given by Opposition candidates in the 1908 campaign is that they had some uniform themes. We have already seen that there was an effort to appeal to workers, but candidates also campaigned on the idea that a vote for them was a vote for a strong opposition. Edward Newman, the Opposition candidate for Manawatu,<sup>195</sup> Henry Okey, Opposition MP for Taranaki;<sup>196</sup> Robert Williams,<sup>197</sup> candidate for Wellington Suburbs; and Robert Wright, candidate for Wellington South,<sup>198</sup> all said this in campaign speeches. In Christchurch, Charles Boxshall, the candidate for Christchurch South, 'made stirring appeals to the electors to vote to strengthen the Opposition'<sup>199</sup> and Jessie Rhodes, campaigning for her husband Heaton,<sup>200</sup> thought that a vote for the Opposition would result in better legislation as the parties would be more equal.<sup>201</sup> The wide variety and distance between these candidates suggests that this was a message that they were told to emphasise. This illustrates that the Opposition, through the League, was trying to present a uniform message throughout the whole country. This stance did attract some derision from Liberal candidates. Albert Jull, a Liberal candidate for Hawke's Bay, said what was needed was not a strong Opposition, but that the Opposition should join the Liberals.<sup>202</sup> Bellringer, Okey's Liberal opponent in Taranaki, said that 'Mr Okey's statements were absurd. If he was returned he was pledged to the Opposition

<sup>188</sup> Although Thomas Deeble did not declare himself entirely against the government in 1908, he stood as a Reform candidate in the 1909 Thames by-election, which occurred less than three months after the General Election see: *Thames Star*, 5 November 1908, p.2; *Thames Star*, 19 January 1909, p.2.

<sup>189</sup> *Press*, 9 September 1909, p.7.

<sup>190</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 3 September 1908, p.5.

<sup>191</sup> *Evening Post*, 14 November 1908, p.9.

<sup>192</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 23 October 1908, p.2.

<sup>193</sup> *Press*, 9 September 1909, p.7.

<sup>194</sup> *Evening Post*, 27 October 1908, p.7.

<sup>195</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 29 October 1908, p.5; *Feilding Star*, 11 November 1908, p.3.

<sup>196</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 3 November 1908, p.7; *Taranaki Herald*, 13 November 1908, p.7.

<sup>197</sup> Gábor Tóth, 'Robert Bradford Williams: The African-American Mayor of the Wellington Borough of Onslow', Wellington City Libraries, <https://www.wcl.govt.nz/heritage/robertbradfordwilliams.html>, accessed 10 October 2018.

<sup>198</sup> *Dominion*, 30 October 1908, p.9; *Evening Post*, 13 November 1908, p.3.

<sup>199</sup> *Press*, 17 November 1908, p.2.

<sup>200</sup> Geoffrey Rice, *Heaton Rhodes of Otahuna*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2001, p.146.

<sup>201</sup> *Akaroa Mail and Banks Peninsula Advertiser*, 17 November 1908, p.2.

<sup>202</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 13 November 1908, p.5.

and must therefore do his best to turn the Government out'.<sup>203</sup> However, the homogeneity of the message suggests that the Opposition had a long-term strategy. It is difficult to believe that they did not want to win the election, but with sixteen members<sup>204</sup> they were a considerable distance from the forty-one needed to hold a majority. It appears that they thought a realistic goal would be to increase the number of seats they held.

The first Ballot for the 1908 election was held on 17 November and the second on 24 November in all electorates apart from Bay of Plenty, which was held on 1 December.<sup>205</sup> In the first ballot fifty-three seats were decided. Of these the Opposition won sixteen, four of them gained from Liberals,<sup>206</sup> the most notable being the unseating of McNab, the Minister of Lands.<sup>207</sup> In general, the result was considered good news for the Opposition.<sup>208</sup> The *Feilding Star* said that 'Mr Massey has every reason to be in high feather, no prospect has been so bright for a leader of the opposition during the past seventeen years'.<sup>209</sup> There was still the prospect of an increased number of seats in the second ballot. One of the complaints about the second ballot was it could potentially be an expensive exercise. Ward had answered these criticisms by saying he thought that maybe half a dozen seats would need a second ballot. He grossly underestimated, with twenty-three seats going to a second ballot in 1908.<sup>210</sup> The Liberals had introduced the Second Ballot to overcome their problems with vote splitting, but the Opposition, despite efforts to prevent multiple candidates, also had the same issue. In both the Ashburton and Egmont electorates there had been two strong Opposition candidates and they came second and third in the first ballot. The provision of the second ballot meant that the Opposition was able to consolidate its vote behind one candidate and win both seats.<sup>211</sup> The Opposition also gained Wellington South, Tuapeka and Dunedin North, which they had lost in the first ballot. However, it was defeated in Wellington East, Geraldine and Hawke's Bay, which had been first ballot wins. The win in Tuapeka appeared surprising as a by-election had been held there in June 1908 in which the Opposition candidate, Robert Scott, had come third,<sup>212</sup> but boundary changes and the second ballot allowed him to win the seat six months later.<sup>213</sup>

After the last second ballot on 1 December the Opposition had twenty-five seats, its best result since 1896. Yet the Opposition's share of the vote actually decreased slightly,

<sup>203</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 14 November 1908, p.7.

<sup>204</sup> Although they had won fifteen seats in 1905, the win in the Taranaki by-election of 1907 had increased the Opposition numbers to sixteen.

<sup>205</sup> Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, p.244.

<sup>206</sup> This included the new seat of Stratford, where a sitting Liberal, Walter Symes, lost.

<sup>207</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 November 1908, p.5.

<sup>208</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 18 November 1908, p.4; *Manawatu Standard*, 18 November 1908, p.5; *Otago Daily Times*, 18 November 1908, p.6; *Evening Post*, 19 November 1908, p.6.

<sup>209</sup> *Feilding Star*, 19 November 1908, p.2.

<sup>210</sup> Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy*, p.117.

<sup>211</sup> Both defeated candidates publicly endorsed their winning Opposition opponent, see: *Opunake Times*, 20 November 1908, p.2; *Ashburton Guardian*, 19 November 1908, p.3.

<sup>212</sup> *Mount Ida Chronicle*, 13 November 1908, p.3; *Mount Ida Chronicle*, 27 November 1908, p.3; *Mount Ida Chronicle*, 4 December 1908, p.1.

<sup>213</sup> *Evening Post*, 18 November 1908, pp.2-3.

from thirty to twenty-seven percent. The increase in seats, despite the lower overall vote, illustrates the importance of organisation. Most of the gains were in the lower North Island, where the Opposition had focused their attention. After the 1905 election the Opposition held two seats below Lake Taupo,<sup>214</sup> after 1908 this had increased to ten. The other North Island area that Martin had focused on was the Waikato electorate. Here, the Opposition lost by over four hundred votes, but the alteration of the boundaries to include Huntly, and the growing influence of Hamilton as a Liberal base, probably helped Henry Greenslade to retain his seat.<sup>215</sup> In the South Island, the Opposition made gains again in Otago-Southland, winning Tuapeka, Mataura, and Dunedin North by six votes.<sup>216</sup> The surprise win was Wairau, in the Upper South Island, an area where the Opposition were traditionally weak. John Duncan, the winning candidate, stood as an independent in 1908,<sup>217</sup> having previously stood as an Oppositionist in 1902 and 1905.<sup>218</sup> The *Marlborough Express* thought his victory was a combination of him becoming an independent and having a large personal following.<sup>219</sup> However, Reform remained weak in the four main centres. In Christchurch all the city seats were won by either Liberal supporters or Independents, while in Dunedin the Opposition won one out of five city seats.<sup>220</sup> They also won two out of six city seats in Wellington and one out of six in Auckland. Overall the results reiterated the power of organisation and the effectiveness of the Opposition's message. It was these lessons that Massey and the Political Reform League took from the election.

## The Opposition becomes the Reform Party

It is very probable that the result of the 1908 election meant that Massey and his party now felt that the treasury benches were within their grasp. Perhaps the biggest signal that they were aiming to be the government at the next election was the decision to give a party name to the Opposition. This was probably based on the premise that they could not go into government being called 'Opposition'.<sup>221</sup> Massey made the announcement in Palmerston North at a function organised to celebrate the success of the local Opposition candidate, David Buick. After praising the people of Palmerston North for choosing Buick and reminding those present of the government's short-comings, he said 'The party at

<sup>214</sup> These were Oroua and Wellington East. This had increased to three when the Opposition won the Taranaki by-election in 1907.

<sup>215</sup> Graham, 'Waikato Politics', p.186.

<sup>216</sup> General Election, 1908, *AJHR*, 1909 (S.2), H.30a, p.8. In 1905 the Donald Reid had held Taieri for the Opposition. He retired before the 1908 election and Thomas Mackenzie, who had previously been an Opposition supporter stood and won. After the election he announced that he would support the government, see: Tom Brooking, 'Mackenzie, Thomas', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3m18/mackenzie-thomas-noble>, accessed 13 November 2017.

<sup>217</sup> *Evening Post*, 18 November 1908, pp.2-3.

<sup>218</sup> *Evening Post*, 26 November 1902, p.5; *Evening Post*, 7 December 1905, p.6.

<sup>219</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 18 November 1908, p.4.

<sup>220</sup> *Evening Post*, 18 November 1908, pp.2-3.

<sup>221</sup> W.J. Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power, 1912-1925', *Political Science*, 13, no. 2, 1961, p.4.

present in Opposition was a reform party, and in future it would be known as the Reform Party'.<sup>222</sup> This was widely reported on both news services, with the Press Association reports saying that 'The party now in Opposition is the Reform Party. That is the name by which it will be known in the future'.<sup>223</sup> The pro-Opposition papers greeted the change as a positive sign. The *Dominion* thought there would be no doubt as to which party wanted reform of politics,<sup>224</sup> and the *Manawatu Standard* said the name signified what the party stood for.<sup>225</sup> However, many newspapers were sceptical,<sup>226</sup> the *Evening Post* thought the name would not stick as it could not imagine that Massey had reforms to bring to the country.<sup>227</sup> The *Evening Star* wrote of the name change 'This little trick has a piquant humour of its own, but it is rather too transparent to be effective . . . Conservatives they are likely to remain until the end of the chapter',<sup>228</sup> and the *Poverty Bay Herald* reported that the *Lyttelton Times* editor had said 'the Conservative Party may call itself the Reform Party, it will still smell fishy.'<sup>229</sup>

Another accusation was that the Reform Party was a revival of the National Association. This had been raised when Political Reform Leagues began forming in 1905,<sup>230</sup> and again the pro-Liberal newspapers began to allude to connections between the Association and the Reform Party. Not long after Massey's announcement, a cartoon appeared in the *Observer* which showed Massey redressing the National Ass as the Reform Party.<sup>231</sup> Later in 1909 a letter to the editor of the *New Zealand Times* warned of the dangers of Massey and his party, saying that 'this so-called "reform" party was known for some years as the National Association of New Zealand'.<sup>232</sup> In 1910 the *Evening Star* published a piece originally from the *Lyttelton Times*, which suggested that the conservatives in New Zealand wished to disguise themselves with names. First came the National Association, now it was the Reform Party, and it would probably change to something else the following year.<sup>233</sup> These allusions to the Reform Party being another name for the National Association increased in 1911, and were a feature in some Liberal candidates' campaign speeches.<sup>234</sup> The allegation that Reform was the National Association with another name was not unfounded, as the two groups had members in common.<sup>235</sup> It is difficult to know what effect drawing a connection between the National Association and

<sup>222</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 12 February 1909, p.6.

<sup>223</sup> For examples see: *Auckland Star*, 12 February 1909, p.4; *Bay of Plenty Times*, 12 February 1909, p.3; *Hastings Standard*, 12 February 1909, p.5; *Star*, 12 February 1909, p.3; *Grey River Argus*, 13 February 1909, p.3; *Timaru Herald*, 13 February 1909, p.4.

<sup>224</sup> *Dominion*, 13 February 1909, p.2.

<sup>225</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 20 February 1909, p.4.

<sup>226</sup> Other examples: *Oamaru Mail*, 13 February 1909, p.2; *Marlborough Express*, 15 February 1909, p.2; *Alexander Herald and Central Otago Gazette*, 17 February 1909, p.4.

<sup>227</sup> *Evening Post*, 12 February 1909, p.6.

<sup>228</sup> *Evening Star*, 12 February 1909, p.4

<sup>229</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 20 February 1909, p.4.

<sup>230</sup> See chapter three p.102 for more discussion on this.

<sup>231</sup> *Observer*, 27 February 1909, p.13.

<sup>232</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 4 September 1909, p.7.

<sup>233</sup> *Evening Star*, 31 March 1910, p.1.

<sup>234</sup> For example, see: *Patea Mail*, 29 September 1911, p.3; *Timaru Herald*, 1 November 1911, p.5.

<sup>235</sup> See appendix two p.279.

Reform had on the voting public. It was now fifteen years since the National Association had reached its peak and thirteen since it folded. Yet, some on the Liberal side thought that the accusation of being part of the National Association was still damaging.

Massey's announcement that the Opposition would now be known as the Reform Party appears to have been no more than a cosmetic change. There seems to have been no formal structures put in place that constituted the organisation.<sup>236</sup> This led to some confusion about the role of the Political Reform Leagues and the Reform Party. Political Reform Leagues had been in existence since 1905 and, through Martin's work, had by 1909 grown to a North Island-wide network, with some South Island branches. Those local branches continued to call themselves Political Reform Leagues, but the newspapers often equated the party and the Leagues as one. It is unclear why this practice of separate names continued, as the Leagues had never distanced themselves from the Opposition and the names Political Reform League and Reform Party appeared to be interchangeable for local organisations. However, there was some effort by the wider party organisation that developed after 1912 to keep the Leagues and the party slightly separate. For example, the newspaper *Light and Liberty*, was described as 'being issued in the interests of the Reform League (men's and women's)',<sup>237</sup> yet was published for the promotion of the Reform Party's policies and achievements. This distinction between the Leagues being the local organisation and party being the League plus the parliamentary members was often blurred, particularly in newspaper reports.

There are several possible reasons why the Opposition abandoned its traditional stance and became a party in 1909. The first, which has already been discussed, was the need for a name other than Opposition. The political climate had changed considerably since 1890 and, in reality, the two sides of the House were reasonably fixed. The word 'opposition' no longer described a loose band of MPs united by their opposition to those in government. Instead they were a group of members united by common philosophies and it was becoming rarer for MPs to cross the floor.<sup>238</sup> Another factor that may have encouraged the formal naming of a 'party' was the apparent success of the 'party-style' organisation undertaken before the 1908 election. Yet, as we saw with the National Association, the 1896 election success was not enough to convince the majority of the Opposition that new ways of campaigning were necessary. However, by 1909 those who were most uncertain about the value of 'party' organisation were no longer part of the Opposition. Sir William Russell had lost his seat in 1905,<sup>239</sup> and failed to regain it in

<sup>236</sup> This was done in 1912, and is discussed in chapter six p.186.

<sup>237</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 May 1913, p.1.

<sup>238</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.10, noted that Massey's 1912-1914 Government did not lose a single division, which was not achieved by Seddon or Ward, suggesting that Reform was very united.

<sup>239</sup> General Election, 1905, *AJHR*, 1906 (S.1), H.25a, pp.1-5.

1908,<sup>240</sup> Scobie Mackenzie,<sup>241</sup> William Rolleston,<sup>242</sup> and Sir John Hall<sup>243</sup> had all died. The Opposition was now dominated by those who had been pro-party style organisation in the 1890s, men like Massey, Alfred Newman<sup>244</sup> and George Hutchison,<sup>245</sup> or those who were new to the parliamentary party, for example Herdman, Francis Mander<sup>246</sup> and Henry Okey.<sup>247</sup> Another factor that appeared to prevent acknowledgement of party alignment in the 1890s was the idea that forming a 'party' would lead to the favouring of one section of society. Yet, this does not seem to have been considered an issue by either the Political Reform Leagues or the Parliamentary Opposition. This possibly reflects an acceptance by the Opposition that some form of organisation was needed with the changed political environment brought about by universal franchise – organisation was more important than lofty ideals about national good. It could also indicate that the Liberals had lost the aura of 'non-party' that Hamer noted surrounded them in the 1890s.<sup>248</sup> This meant that being a party had become less about sectionalism and there was wider acceptance that New Zealand would have two, or three, political parties.

In newspapers the replacement of 'Opposition Party' with 'Reform Party' seems to have been a gradual process. The pro-Reform newspapers used Reform Party from February 1909, for example a February editorial in the *Waikato Argus*<sup>249</sup> described Massey as the leader of the Reform Party, rather than the Opposition.<sup>250</sup> From February 1909 the *Dominion* also began referring to Massey as 'leader of the Reform Party' and Martin as 'Reform Party Organiser',<sup>251</sup> as did the *New Zealand Herald*,<sup>252</sup> and the *Manawatu Standard*.<sup>253</sup> Other newspapers continued to use the term 'Opposition Party' or used the term "Reform Party" with double speech marks to signify that they were

<sup>240</sup> General Election, 1908, *AJHR*, 1909 (S.2), H.30a, p.8.

<sup>241</sup> Tom Brooking, 'Mackenzie, Mackay John Scobie', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m18/mackenzie-mackay-john-scobie> accessed 3 July 2017.

<sup>242</sup> W.J. Gardner, 'Rolleston, William', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1r17/rolleston-william>, accessed 15 May 2017.

<sup>243</sup> W.J. Gardner, 'Hall, John', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1h5/hall-john>, accessed 17 January 2018.

<sup>244</sup> Despite being out of parliament, Alfred Newman remained active. Both he, and his wife were part of the Wellington Political Reform League. See: *Evening Post*, 24 September 1909, p.9. and *Dominion*, 4 February 1910, p.3.

<sup>245</sup> Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 1, A-L, p.423. Hutchison had resigned his seat in 1901 to go to South Africa, but returned to New Zealand in 1906, and stood as an Opposition candidate for Wanganui in 1908 and 1911.

<sup>246</sup> Mander had been involved with Auckland National Association from 1891 to 1899.

<sup>247</sup> Okey was involved in the New Plymouth National Association.

<sup>248</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.41-42.

<sup>249</sup> The *Waikato Argus* was owned by George Edgecumbe, an active member of the Hamilton Political Reform League, see: <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/waikato-argus>, accessed 16 January 2018; *Waikato Argus*, 13 September 1907, p.2.

In general, the search of newspapers tended to indicate that the name 'Reform Party' was more commonly used in North Island newspapers with direct connection to the Party.

<sup>250</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 23 February 1909, p.2.

<sup>251</sup> *Dominion*, 15 February 1909, p.3.

<sup>252</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 May 1909, p.6.

<sup>253</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 21 May 1909, p.5.

using it in a pejorative way.<sup>254</sup> The pro-Liberal *New Zealand Times* only used the term 'Reform Party' to describe the Opposition when it was reporting verbatim speech,<sup>255</sup> and the *Evening Star* described Martin as 'organiser for the (Conservative) Reform Party'.<sup>256</sup> The reluctance of the pro-Liberal newspapers to use the term 'Reform Party' probably reflects the contested nature of the title. The name 'Reform' fitted the image that the Opposition were trying to present to the public and reflected the rhetoric that Massey and others within the Opposition had been espousing since the Political Reform League had been formed. They wanted to be perceived as a new party<sup>257</sup> and as a 'liberal' party.<sup>258</sup> The term 'Reform' was an attempt to project the image of a party of change and transformation. However, this was strongly resisted by the Liberal Party and those newspapers which supported it, as they believed that the party of progress was the Liberal Party. As the country moved closer to the 1911 election this debate became a major campaign issue.

## Reform Party consolidation 1909-1910

Despite 1909 being a year after an election, Martin continued to travel around New Zealand organising Political Reform Leagues. In March it was announced that Martin was moving from Palmerston North to Wellington,<sup>259</sup> and he visited Central Otago.<sup>260</sup> He also spent time in Auckland,<sup>261</sup> Taranaki,<sup>262</sup> and Rangitikei during the by-election.<sup>263</sup> The most notable advance for the League in 1909 was the reactivation of a Political Reform League in Wellington. The first notice of a League meeting appeared in June,<sup>264</sup> but it seems this was mostly driven by a strong Women's League<sup>265</sup> as the report of its first meeting was published a week later.<sup>266</sup> By mid-July the Women's League had obtained rooms and the secretary was available daily to enrol new members.<sup>267</sup> The

<sup>254</sup> For example: *Evening Star*, 15 March 1909, p.1; *Evening Post*, 6 March 1909, p.4; *New Zealand Times*, 4 September 1909, p.7; *Wanganui Herald*, 10 September 1909, p.4.

<sup>255</sup> For example: *New Zealand Times*, 17 June 1909, p.7; *New Zealand Times*, 24 August 1909, p.8; *New Zealand Times*, 29 April 1909, p.7.

The most notable avoidance of the use of the term 'Reform Party' was in an editorial about the Rangitikei by-election, see: *New Zealand Times*, 17 September 1909, p.4.

<sup>256</sup> *Evening Star*, 20 May 1909, p.4.

<sup>257</sup> *Evening Post*, 18 September 1909, p.2; *Southland Times*, 22 July 1911, p.5; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 6 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>258</sup> There were many examples of Reform Party candidates and supporters calling the party the 'true liberals' for example: *Patea Mail*, 18 June 1909, p.2; *Press*, 17 November 1909, p.4; *Dominion*, 4 April 1910, p.4; *Otago Daily Times*, 29 April 1910, p.6; *North Otago Times*, 16 November 1910, p.4.

<sup>259</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 2 March 1909, p.5.

<sup>260</sup> *Alexander Herald and Central Otago Gazette*, 17 March 1909, p.4; *Dunstan Times*, 22 March 1909, p.4; *Alexander Herald and Central Otago Gazette*, 24 March 1909, p.5.

<sup>261</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 29 April 1909, p.6; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 May 1909, p.6.

<sup>262</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 17 July 1909, p.5; *Taranaki Herald*, 4 December 1909, p.1.

<sup>263</sup> *Dominion*, 11 September 1909, p.7.

<sup>264</sup> *Evening Post*, 17 June 1909, p.6.

<sup>265</sup> Women's Leagues became a feature of the Reform Party and are discussed in more detail in chapter seven.

<sup>266</sup> *Dominion*, 23 June 1909, p.3.

<sup>267</sup> *Evening Post*, 16 July 1909, p.8.

Women's League also organised the first Political Reform League social at the end of July. Designed as a launch for the League in Wellington, it was a dance interspersed with speeches from Massey, Herdman, Martin and Francis Fisher, the MP for Wellington Central and new member of the Reform Party caucus.<sup>268</sup> Although there are reports of both the men's and women's branches of the Wellington Political Reform League holding meetings, the women's branch appears to have been more active.<sup>269</sup> The main organisers of the Women's League were Octavia Newman,<sup>270</sup> the wife of Alfred Newman,<sup>271</sup> Florence Martin,<sup>272</sup> the wife of Martin, and Alice Schoch, who had been previously active in the Liberal Party's Women's League.<sup>273</sup> The Opposition had struggled to maintain a long-term organisation in Wellington and this was reflected in the difficulty they had winning urban seats. The *Evening Post* thought the formation of a League in Wellington 'showed a decided advance on anything previously achieved by the party. The formation of a Political Reform League shows that the Opposition is not going to make do with an organisation formed on the eve of the polls.'<sup>274</sup> The strength and activity of both the men's and women's Wellington Political Reform Leagues was a signal that the Reform Party was beginning to target urban areas.

In August 1909 Reform had its first test since the general election, when the death of Arthur Remington, MP for Rangitikei, triggered a by-election.<sup>275</sup> Initially there were three 'liberal' candidates, one of whom was endorsed by the government, two Reform and one Independent in the race.<sup>276</sup> The presence of two Reform candidates was despite efforts by the party to ensure that a selection process was followed.<sup>277</sup> In an editorial, the *Wanganui Chronicle* weighed up the merits of the two Reform candidates. The first, George Hutchison, was thought to have a strong case as Rangitikei contained a large part of

<sup>268</sup> *Evening Post*, 30 July 1909, p.3.

<sup>269</sup> For women's meetings see: *Dominion*, 30 June 1909, p.3; *Evening Post*, 16 July 1909, p.8; *Evening Post*, 6 August 1909, p.6; *Evening Post*, 13 August 1909, p.6; *Dominion*, 20 August 1909, p.3; *Dominion*, 27 August 1909, p.4; *Evening Post*, 4 September 1909, p.7; *Dominion*, 17 September 1909, p.3; *Evening Post*, 24 September 1909, p.9; *Evening Post*, 1 October 1909, p.9; *Evening Post*, 20 October 1909, p.9; *Evening Post*, 5 November 1909, p.9; *New Zealand Times*, 26 November 1909, p.2; *New Zealand Times*, 3 December 1909, p.2; *Evening Post*, 10 December 1909, p.9.

For men's meetings see: *Dominion*, 8 July 1909, p.7; *Evening Post*, 4 August 1909, p.8; *New Zealand Times*, 12 November 1909, p.2; *New Zealand Times*, 26 November 1909, p.2.

There were considerably more women's meetings reported. However, the reports of women's meetings appeared on the women's page and the more frequent reporting could be a product of the practice of reporting the social gatherings of women.

<sup>270</sup> *Evening Post*, 24 September 1909, p.9.

<sup>271</sup> John Stenhouse, 'Newman, Alfred Kingcome', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3n4/newman-alfred-kingcome>, accessed 13 December 2017.

<sup>272</sup> *Evening Post*, 4 September 1909, p.7; *Evening Post*, 1 October 1909, p.9.

<sup>273</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 30 July 1909, p.7; Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 'A.R. Schoch', Women's Suffrage Petition Biographies, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/suffragist/r-schoch>, updated 14-Sep-2017, retrieved 12 December 2017.

<sup>274</sup> *Evening Post*, 29 June 1909, p.6.

<sup>275</sup> Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. II, M-Addenda, p.222.

<sup>276</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27 August 1909, p.5.

<sup>277</sup> *Evening Post*, 24 August 1909, p.7.

his old Patea electorate,<sup>278</sup> and he was a strong opponent of the government who could add much to the Reform Party in the House. Hutchinson's rival, Frank Hockly, claimed the candidature on the basis that he had stood aside in 1908 to prevent vote splitting, and was refusing to do so again. Hockly was also a resident of Rangitikei, farming at Hunterville.<sup>279</sup> The conclusion of the *Chronicle* editor was that the second ballot meant that both candidates could stand, as it was likely that the Liberal vote would be more split as they had three candidates.<sup>280</sup>

However, this was not a risk that the Reform Party was prepared to take, possibly because they were hoping for an outright majority on the first ballot.<sup>281</sup> In early September a meeting of local Reform Party members was held in Hunterville, after which Hutchison announced that he was withdrawing. He had travelled through the electorate to canvas voter opinion and had found that voters thought having two Reform candidates would be detrimental to the party, so he had decided to quit the race.<sup>282</sup> The by-election attracted considerable national interest as it was seen as a test of the government's support.<sup>283</sup> The *Wanganui Chronicle* wrote 'Rangitikei has proved itself a Government stronghold, and its capture by the candidate of the Reform Party, should it eventuate, would prove the most convincing proof that could be adduced of the waning mana of the Ministry'.<sup>284</sup> In a campaign speech John Millar, a cabinet minister, said 'If Mr Hockly is returned, the Reform Party will say it is the turn of the tide. The moral effect is going to have a great effect on the Liberal Party throughout New Zealand'.<sup>285</sup> Hockly topped the first ballot but was unable to win an outright majority.<sup>286</sup> As a sign of how seriously Reform was campaigning Massey was present in Hunterville for the results,<sup>287</sup> and remained in the area until the second ballot was held a week later. He mostly spoke in the rural parts of the electorate,<sup>288</sup> for example, Manganoho, Ohingaiti,<sup>289</sup> Utiku<sup>290</sup>, Taihape, and Mangaweka.<sup>291</sup> He was well received, with the meeting at Utiku described as 'the largest and most representative ever held in the district'.<sup>292</sup> When he gave his speech in Taihape the hall was packed and at the end men lined up by the stage to shake Massey's hand. A report of the meeting commented that Massey 'had good reason to be proud of the

<sup>278</sup> McRobie, pp.49-62 for the changes to the Waitotara/Patea electorate while Hutchinson was the MHR between 1887 and 1901.

<sup>279</sup> Hockly eventual became a Reform MP for Rotorua in 1919, holding the seat until 1928. See: Wilson, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record*, p.205.

<sup>280</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 24 August 1909, p.4.

<sup>281</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 14 September 1909, p.6, contained an interview with Martin in which he hinted at this.

<sup>282</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 10 September 1909, p.6.

<sup>283</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September 1909, p.8; *Dominion*, 1 January 1910, p.7.

<sup>284</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 15 September 1909, p.4.

<sup>285</sup> *Evening Post*, 21 September 1909, p.3.

<sup>286</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 17 September 1909, p.5.

<sup>287</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 17 September 1909, p.5.

<sup>288</sup> McRobie, p.70, in 1909 the Rangitikei electorate contained part of Wanganui East.

<sup>289</sup> *Dominion*, 22 September 1909, p.8.

<sup>290</sup> *Dominion*, 20 September 1909, p.4.

<sup>291</sup> *Dominion*, 22 September 1909, p.8.

<sup>292</sup> *Dominion*, 21 September 1909, p.6.

reception which had been accorded to himself'.<sup>293</sup>

Despite the strong campaign Hockly lost the second ballot, but in an interview Massey said that 'we are not discouraged by the result' and he felt that 'the tide is running in our favour'.<sup>294</sup> The pro-Liberal newspapers thought the loss was a setback for the 'self-styled Reform Party'.<sup>295</sup> Yet the pro-Reform papers saw several positives. The *Dominion* thought that the closeness of the contest<sup>296</sup> showed that Reform was making very good progress in its campaign.<sup>297</sup> The *Manawatu Standard* pointed out that an important effect of the campaign was that the Reform Party had been strengthened throughout the electorate.<sup>298</sup> Another effect was that the use of the name Reform to describe the Opposition Party became more common in the newspapers.<sup>299</sup> Although some still used it with double speech marks,<sup>300</sup> or prefaced it with 'so-called',<sup>301</sup> its consistent use in speeches and reporting from the Rangitikei by-election helped to cement the name change.

Repeating the schedule he had followed between 1904 and 1908, Massey visited the South Island during the 1910 summer parliamentary recess. He left Wellington in April,<sup>302</sup> travelled down the East Coast, again visiting Southern and Central Otago and finishing in Christchurch. Like his 1908 trip he made no speeches but met with personal friends and supporters.<sup>303</sup> From Christchurch, Massey, accompanied by Martin, proceeded to the West Coast in what was described by the *Greymouth Evening Star* as the first ever visit of a Leader of the Opposition to the Coast.<sup>304</sup> He held a public meeting in Hokitika,<sup>305</sup> and socials in Hokitika<sup>306</sup> and Greymouth.<sup>307</sup> He also visited several mines,<sup>308</sup> and the harbour works at Greymouth.<sup>309</sup> In general his visit was well received, drawing what was described as 'a very large audience'<sup>310</sup> in Hokitika and although he gave a speech which was critical of the government, the audience was polite and attentive.<sup>311</sup> Massey's warm reception was not necessarily a sign that the Liberal hold on the West

<sup>293</sup> *Dominion*, 22 September 1909, p.8.

<sup>294</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 24 September 1909, p.8.

<sup>295</sup> *Star*, 25 September 1909, p.5.

<sup>296</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 24 September 1909, p.5, had the second ballot result, which showed a majority of 399 for Smith the winning candidate, with one small return outstanding.

<sup>297</sup> *Dominion*, 24 September 1909, p.9.

<sup>298</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 25 September 1909, p.5.

<sup>299</sup> For example: *Matarua Ensign*, 4 October 1909, p.3; *Clutha Leader*, 5 October 1909, p.3; *Woodville Examiner*, 18 October 1909, p.2; *Greymouth Evening Star*, 25 October 1909, p.2; *Evening Star*, 13 November 1909, p.2, this was an early example of a pro-Liberal newspaper using 'Reform Leader' to describe Massey without any pejorative comment.

<sup>300</sup> *Evening Star*, 20 October 1909, p.4; *Oamaru Mail*, 25 October 1909, p.3.

<sup>301</sup> *Star*, 21 October 1909, p.3; *Marlborough Express*, 30 December 1909, p.4.

<sup>302</sup> *Evening Post*, 12 April 1910, p.7.

<sup>303</sup> *Press*, 23 April 1910, p.4.

<sup>304</sup> *Greymouth Evening Star*, 27 April 1910, p.1.

<sup>305</sup> *Grey River Argus*, 29 April 1910, p.6.

<sup>306</sup> *West Coast Times*, 2 May 1910, p.4.

<sup>307</sup> *Greymouth Evening Star*, 2 May 1910, p.1.

<sup>308</sup> *West Coast Times*, 2 May 1910, p.4.

<sup>309</sup> *Greymouth Star*, 30 April 1910, p.3.

<sup>310</sup> *West Coast Times*, 29 April 1910, p.2.

<sup>311</sup> *West Coast Times*, 29 April 1910, p.2.

Coast was weakening. An editorial in the *Greymouth Evening Star* argued that the purpose of Massey's visit was to 'fish' for a Reform candidate for the next election. The *Star* also asserted that the electors would not 'be hoodwinked by the political fudge which Mr Massey preached'.<sup>312</sup> However, the *Dominion* asserted that Massey's visit was a sign that the Reform organisation was gaining strength as they were attempting to organise in Liberal strongholds.<sup>313</sup> In June, James Allen also visited Hokitika, holding another well attended public meeting.<sup>314</sup> While the electors of the West Coast may not have been fully converted to Reform, that the party was able to organise two public meetings in a traditionally hostile area was an important signal of strength.

Martin had accompanied Massey on the South Island tour and he continued his active national organisation during 1910. In late January and early February he visited the Wairarapa<sup>315</sup> and Hawke's Bay,<sup>316</sup> and in March, Northern Wairoa,<sup>317</sup> returning to Wellington via Gisborne<sup>318</sup> and Napier.<sup>319</sup> While Massey was in Otago, Martin stayed in Canterbury. It was reported that he was in Timaru,<sup>320</sup> but the announcement on 26 April that a Political Reform League had been formed in Christchurch<sup>321</sup> suggests that Martin had been active in that city as well. There was little newspaper coverage of the first meeting to revive the Christchurch League, but it seems that sixty members were enrolled.<sup>322</sup> In May, Martin visited Taihape,<sup>323</sup> and stayed in Auckland during the Auckland East by-election.<sup>324</sup> In August he was in the Waikato, visiting Hamilton<sup>325</sup> and Te Kuiti,<sup>326</sup> before moving south to Hunterville<sup>327</sup> and Palmerston North.<sup>328</sup> From late September Martin was back in Auckland,<sup>329</sup> he visited Northern Wairoa again,<sup>330</sup> returning to Wellington in mid-October.<sup>331</sup> His last trip of the year was to Nelson where he held a meeting in Richmond,<sup>332</sup> although the *Nelson Evening Mail* thought the main purpose of his visit was to find a Reform candidate for the Nelson electorate.<sup>333</sup> 1910 was Martin's fourth year as organiser for the Political Reform Leagues and the Reform Party, yet he seems to have tirelessly maintained a high level of involvement in national organisation of the party.

<sup>312</sup> *Greymouth Evening Star*, 30 April 1910, p.2

<sup>313</sup> *Dominion*, 2 May 1910, p.6.

<sup>314</sup> *West Coast Times*, 11 June 1910, p.3.

<sup>315</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 28 January 1910, p.4.

<sup>316</sup> *Dominion*, 7 February 1910, p.4.

<sup>317</sup> *Dominion*, 10 March 1910, p.6.

<sup>318</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 5 April 1910, p.4

<sup>319</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 11 April 1910, p.8.

<sup>320</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 22 April 1910, p.4.

<sup>321</sup> *Press*, 26 April 1910, p.6.

<sup>322</sup> *Ashburton Guardian*, 26 April 1910, p.6; *Press*, 26 April 1910, p.6.

<sup>323</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 6 May 1910, p.5.

<sup>324</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 18 May 1910, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 16 June 1910, p.6.

<sup>325</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 August 1910, p.8.

<sup>326</sup> *King Country Chronicle*, 20 August 1910, p.2.

<sup>327</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 22 August 1910, p.8.

<sup>328</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 24 August 1910, p.5.

<sup>329</sup> *Auckland Star*, 28 September 1910, p.6.

<sup>330</sup> *Auckland Star*, 7 October 1910, p.3.

<sup>331</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 14 October 1910, p.6.

<sup>332</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 9 December 1910, p.6.

<sup>333</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 9 December 1910, p.4.

As well as Martin's activities there were sporadic reports of active Political Reform Leagues. Once again, the Wellington Women's Political Reform League held regular meetings,<sup>334</sup> but there were also reports of meetings from Hastings,<sup>335</sup> Taumarunui,<sup>336</sup> Ohaupo,<sup>337</sup> south of Hamilton, Pukekohe,<sup>338</sup> Hunterville,<sup>339</sup> and Palmerston North.<sup>340</sup> Apart from the Wellington Women's League, all the reported meetings were in North Island rural areas, or towns which were rural service points. It is not possible to know if these were all the active branches of the Political Reform Leagues, but the fact that the meetings were reported in these particular areas says something about the strength of Reform: that its core base remained in the rural North Island. It also shows that the Political Reform League was persisting between elections. Although there had been examples in the past of National Association branches continuing between elections, by 1910 some Political Reform Leagues had been meeting continuously for five years. Furthermore, they had been actively involved in two election cycles and were still vigorous as they neared a third.

An indication of how much work the Reform Party needed to do in urban areas was highlighted by the Auckland East by-election. The sitting MP, Frederick Baume, died in May 1910<sup>341</sup> and reports began to appear of a possible Reform candidate soon after. The first name mentioned was Christopher Parr, a well-known city councillor who had stood for Reform in the Auckland West seat in 1905.<sup>342</sup> Parr declined,<sup>343</sup> but the *Dominion* was convinced that Reform was 'seemingly overburdened with candidates'.<sup>344</sup> Two selection meetings were held,<sup>345</sup> but it was announced on 25 May that Reform would not stand an official candidate. The reason given was that Arthur Myers, an ex-mayor of Auckland and Baume's cousin,<sup>346</sup> had put his name forward as a candidate and, after an extensive interview, Martin was convinced that Myers would be entirely independent and

<sup>334</sup> *Dominion*, 4 February 1910, p.3; *Dominion*, 18 February 1910, p.3; *New Zealand Times*, 4 March 1910, p.7; *Evening Post*, 11 March 1910, p.9; *Evening Post*, 8 April 1910, p.9; *Evening Post*, 6 May 1910, p.9; *Evening Post*, 21 May 1910, p.7; *Evening Post*, 27 May 1910, p.9; *Evening Post*, 8 July 1910, p.9; *Dominion*, 2 September 1910, p.9; *Dominion*, 5 December 1910, p.11.

<sup>335</sup> *Dominion*, 7 February 1910, p.4.

<sup>336</sup> *Dominion*, 7 May 1910, p.7.

<sup>337</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 28 May 1910, p.3.

<sup>338</sup> *Auckland Star*, 2 July 1910, p.9.

<sup>339</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 16 July 1910, p.7.

<sup>340</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 30 August 1910, p.1.

<sup>341</sup> Frank Rodgers, 'Baume, Frederick Ehrenfried', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2b11/baume-frederick-ehrenfried>, accessed 10 January 2018.

<sup>342</sup> Graham W.A. Bush, 'Parr, Christopher James', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3p10/parr-christopher-james>, accessed 10 January 2018.

<sup>343</sup> *Auckland Star*, 18 May 1910, p.6.

<sup>344</sup> *Dominion*, 18 May 1910, p.4.

<sup>345</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 21 May 1910, p.6; *New Zealand Herald*, 24 May 1910, p.6.

<sup>346</sup> R.C.J Stone, 'Myers, Arthur Mielziner', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3m66/myers-arthur-mielziner>, accessed 16 January 2018.

would not attend the government caucus. So, if Myers won, it would be a loss for the Liberal Government.<sup>347</sup> This stance was immediately ridiculed by the *Auckland Star* which thought that Myers was a Liberal and pointed out that he said he would vote with the government as long as they followed 'liberal principles'.<sup>348</sup> It also led to accusations that Reform chose to support Myers because they could not find a candidate.<sup>349</sup> The Reform Party's stance was similar to that of the 1908 election where they did not stand candidates against Independents who the party thought would vote against the government. However, in this instance it is likely that there was some truth in the claim that Reform was having difficulty finding a candidate. Five days after endorsing Myers, Reform withdrew its support, citing an unsatisfactory speech, and it was reported that they were asking Rev. Joseph Clark to stand.<sup>350</sup> On nomination day Reginald Hill, Massey's ex-private secretary,<sup>351</sup> came forward as an independent supporter of the Reform Party.<sup>352</sup> Why Hill was not an official candidate is unclear, he used the Reform Party planks in his advertising and called himself a 'Reform Candidate'.<sup>353</sup> It is possible that Hill came forward too late to be placed before the official selection committee. At the Auckland regional conference, held after the by-election, the delegates expressed regret at the inability of the party to find a 'straight-out Opposition candidate for Auckland East' early in the contest,<sup>354</sup> suggesting that the problem was Hill's late nomination. From what occurred it appears that Reform did have issues finding a candidate to stand. Myers was a strong candidate and it is probable that this may have deterred some possible Reform choices, but the difficulty in securing a candidate hints that Reform was still struggling with organisation in urban seats.

Although the Liberal Party won the Auckland East by-election there were signs that its power was waning. When parliament assembled in July 1910, Massey took advantage of the Address-in-Reply to call for a want-of confidence vote on the land issue, moving that the House divide over whether Crown lessees should have the right to purchase their leased land.<sup>355</sup> Hamer believed that Massey was setting a snare to trap the Liberal freeholders into a no-win situation.<sup>356</sup> There were eleven freeholders on the government side. If they voted with the government they could be accused of placing party principles before their own convictions. If they voted with Massey, they would embarrass the government and ran the very small risk of Massey winning the no-confidence vote. When the division was taken five government members crossed the floor,<sup>357</sup> all of whom were members for a country seat. The *Press* noted that the vote was won by ten, and although

<sup>347</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 May 1910, p.6 and p.8.

<sup>348</sup> *Auckland Star*, 25 May 1910, p.4.

<sup>349</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 27 May 1910, p.4.

<sup>350</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 31 May 1910, p.4.

<sup>351</sup> *Dominion*, 10 June 1910, p.6.

<sup>352</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 9 June 1910, p.6.

<sup>353</sup> For example, *New Zealand Herald*, 10 June 1910, p.10; *New Zealand Herald*, 15 June 1910, p.12.

<sup>354</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 11 June 1910, p.8.

<sup>355</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 150, 26 July- 24 August 1910, p.8.

<sup>356</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.301.

<sup>357</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 150, 26 July- 24 August 1910, p.93. They were Dillon, Field, Jennings, Ross and J. C. Thomson.

this was a large margin the *Press* also reported it as the smallest victory in the last fifteen years.<sup>358</sup> Furthermore, those members who said they supported freehold but voted with the government became the target of a campaign by the Farmers' Union, which wanted to hold the MPs accountable for voting against the freehold motion.<sup>359</sup> Hamer thought that the party character of the vote led the Union to abandon all pretence of political neutrality and declare support for the Reform Party. William Field, the Liberal MP for Otaki, voted with Massey, but he believed the Union began targeting all government MPs, not just those who had voted against Massey's motion.<sup>360</sup> Although Ward was able to hold his government together, the split over the land issue was still troubling the Liberals.

## Conclusion

Between 1906 and 1910 Reform had transformed from a party with fifteen parliamentary members to be a strong challenger for the government benches. The rise of Reform during this period has often been attributed to the decline of the Liberals and the political effects of social and economic changes. In the first decade of the twentieth century New Zealand became more urban, the economy began slowing from around 1908, and the Liberals were increasingly divided over land tenure. However, Reform were more than passive benefactors of the altering political and social climate, the party was active, vigorously organising and campaigning. The Opposition was well situated to take advantage of the split in the Liberals over land. It had supported freehold since 1891 and had aggressively portrayed itself as the defender of the right to freehold title. The Liberals confusing stance over 'the land question' aided Reform as it was able to use this to cement its identity as the 'freehold party' in the minds of voters.

Furthermore, the Opposition did not let the poor result of the 1905 election discourage them. Instead they began to establish a strong network of political organisation, using the Political Reform League as their basis. The League appointed a full time organiser in 1906 and the benefits of this were seen in the gaining of nine seats in the 1908 election. In 1909 the Opposition took the name Reform Party, signalling that they had overcome their traditional antipathy to 'party' and were seriously contending to be the government. By the end of 1910 there were Political Reform Leagues throughout the North Island, one in Christchurch, and several in Otago-Southland. In October 1910 their organiser, Martin, predicted that the 1911 election would be 'the biggest political battle ever fought in New Zealand', and that 'the strength of the Opposition party was increasing'.<sup>361</sup> Reform had worked hard to get to a position where they could challenge for the government benches and the 1911 election proved to be a test of its organisation.

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<sup>358</sup> *Press*, 29 July 1910, p.6.

<sup>359</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 18 August 1910, p.2.

<sup>360</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.301.

<sup>361</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 7 October 1910, p.2.

## Chapter 5

# The 1911 election and its aftermath

*'When we commenced this campaign I determined, if it were possible, to put up the biggest fight this country had ever seen'.<sup>1</sup>*

– William Massey

The 1911 election marked the end of Liberal political domination, as the party never again formed a majority government. After the second ballot Reform had the most seats and once the first Reform Government was formed in July 1912, the party held the treasury benches until 1928. The campaign for the 1911 election showed a Reform Party which was very active and tactical in its efforts to win. Reform understood the social and economic changes that New Zealand was undergoing and presented a message that addressed those changes. It also sought to exacerbate and exploit the Liberals' internal issues. During the campaign Reform appeared vigorous and its meetings attracted extremely large crowds. From the selection of candidates in 1910 to a highly organised national stump tour in early 1911, Reform entered the election well prepared. The party had a strategy for seats it thought it could win as well as a good understanding of how to use the second ballot to its advantage, particularly by exploiting political labour's disillusionment with the Liberals.

Between 1909 and 1911 Reform toned down its attacks on socialism and began to court political labour in the belief that the common desire to remove the Liberal Government might lead to a minority Reform administration with labour support.<sup>2</sup> As a result of Reform's softening towards political labour, a group called the Farmers' Political Protection Federation was formed in 1910. The Federation was anti-socialist, and it disseminated this rhetoric without compromising Reform's new position.

Another feature of the 1911 election was that the results in the Māori seats were profoundly important. After that ballot, Massey held the most seats, but he was not able

<sup>1</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 December 1911, p.7. Massey speaking to a crowd gathered in Queen Street, Auckland, to hear the results of the second ballot.

<sup>2</sup> R. S. Milne, *Political Parties in New Zealand*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1966, p.33; Barry Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence: The Origins and Establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party, 1900-19*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1980, pp.42-44.

to secure a majority when the House met in February 1912. However, the new Prime Minister, Thomas Mackenzie, was unable to hold his fractured alliance together and on 6 July 1912, Massey won a vote of no-confidence and Reform became the government.<sup>3</sup>

## Preparation for the 1911 election

Reform's strategy in the selection of candidates demonstrates the measured way in which it approached the 1911 election. The first reported selection meeting was held for the Hawke's Bay electorate in February 1910. There were three possible candidates and it was decided to choose one by taking a general ballot covering all centres in the electorate.<sup>4</sup> In August, candidate selection meetings were held in Masterton for that seat,<sup>5</sup> and in Te Kuiti, for the Taumarunui seat.<sup>6</sup> A candidate for Taumarunui was selected at the first meeting<sup>7</sup> and it was announced in November 1910 that George Sykes had been chosen as the candidate for Masterton.<sup>8</sup> It was not unheard of for men to declare their candidature some time out from the election, but these were usually individuals declaring their intention to stand without any input from a party. The selections by the local Reform Party branches were different, requiring a group of people to come together and consider who might be the candidate, and vote if there was more than one applicant. This suggests that branches had good organisation in place long before the official campaign began. It also shows that the Reform Party began preparing for the 1911 campaign at least two years in advance. This readiness contrasted with the 1899 election in which the Opposition had been in a similar position in the House, holding twenty-five seats.<sup>9</sup> Yet, even at the beginning of 1899 leading figures within the Opposition had been reluctant to begin organising.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, men who declared early sometimes dropped out as the election got closer, but the candidates selected for Hawke's Bay and Masterton<sup>11</sup> in 1910 went on to contest the election. This suggests that the selection process was robust and that the candidates were resolute in their intention to represent Reform.

In March 1911 Ward left New Zealand for the coronation of George V in London. He was expected to be overseas for about six months and, despite some electioneering before he left,<sup>12</sup> his absence allowed Reform to seize the initiative. A week after Ward's

<sup>3</sup> D.A. Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988, p.353.

<sup>4</sup> *Dominion*, 7 February 1910, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 25 August 1910, p.4.

<sup>6</sup> *King Country Chronicle*, 20 August 1910, p.2.

<sup>7</sup> *King Country Chronicle*, 20 August 1910, p.2.

<sup>8</sup> *Woodville Examiner*, 16 November 1910, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> Leslie Lipson, *The Politics of Equality: New Zealand's Adventures in Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948, p.187.

<sup>10</sup> See chapter two p.78 for further discussion.

<sup>11</sup> Masterton electorate eventually had two 'Reform' candidates. The problems that Reform had in Masterton will be discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward: A Political Biography*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993, p.190.

departure, the Auckland Political Reform League announced arrangements for an extensive speaking tour of the South Island. Massey had already visited the far north in late January and early February,<sup>13</sup> and was in the northern Waikato with Lang in mid-March.<sup>14</sup> Massey arrived in Christchurch in late March and proceeded north, speaking in Kaiapoi, Hawarden, Amberley, and Rangiora. He then spoke in Waiau and travelled to Kaikoura, a particularly difficult journey, where he held another public meeting.<sup>15</sup> From Kaikoura he proceeded to Blenheim and then to Nelson, holding a public meeting at the Theatre Royal. In Nelson the attendance was large, with one paper saying 'the commodious building was packed to the doors'.<sup>16</sup> From Nelson, Massey travelled to Dunedin by ship and then inland to Central Otago, giving speeches in Roxburgh and Alexandra, accompanied by the local Reform MP, Robert Scott.<sup>17</sup> By mid-April he was back in Dunedin, where he gave a speech at an 'almost packed' Garrison Hall.<sup>18</sup> On his return to Auckland Massey stopped at Palmerston North where he gave an interview. Asked about the prospects for the Reform Party at the coming election, he replied 'that he had met with splendid receptions wherever he had spoken and there was an undoubted feeling throughout that the country was ripe for a change of government'.<sup>19</sup> While Massey had become a regular visitor to the South Island by 1911, this time he went beyond 'meetings with friends and supporters' to hold several public gatherings. For example, during his 1910 tour he visited Southern and Central Otago, Christchurch, Hokitika and Greymouth, but he only spoke publicly in Hokitika.<sup>20</sup> This change to holding more public meetings was probably in response to the upcoming election, as Massey was now campaigning. It also suggests that the work he had done during previous visits had led to a network of Reform supporters who were able to take care of the local arrangements needed for public meetings. From when he became Leader of the Opposition, Massey had been aware that he needed to promote Reform in the South Island.<sup>21</sup> The continued building of contacts by himself and Martin shows that Reform understood the obstacles it faced in the South and illustrates Reform's long-term strategising.

Reform had not finished its campaigning in the South Island. In May Herries began his tour. He started in the Nelson area, speaking at Wakefield<sup>22</sup> and Murchison, where both meetings were well attended. Herries then travelled to the West Coast, but did not hold public meetings in either Greymouth or Westport, on the grounds that they were

<sup>13</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 January 1911, p.7; *New Zealand Herald*, 31 January 1911, p.6.

<sup>14</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 11 March 1911, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> *Press*, 23 March 1911, p.7.

<sup>16</sup> *Colonist*, 4 April 1911, p.2.

<sup>17</sup> *Press*, 10 April 1911, p.7.

<sup>18</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 13 April 1911, p.4.

<sup>19</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 18 April 1911, p.4.

<sup>20</sup> *Press*, 23 April 1910, p.4; *Greymouth Evening Star*, 2 May 1910, p.1; *West Coast Times*, 29 April 1910, p.2.

<sup>21</sup> See chapter three p.97, one of his first tours as Opposition leader was in the South Island.

<sup>22</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 5 May 1911, p.3.

part of the Speaker's electorate,<sup>23</sup> and therefore politically neutral ground.<sup>24</sup> Once in the Westland electorate he held meetings in Rimu, Ross,<sup>25</sup> Hokitika,<sup>26</sup> and Kumara.<sup>27</sup> Like Massey, Herries had travelled through some particularly difficult and inaccessible parts of New Zealand, illustrating that Reform was committed to campaigning. When an interviewer suggested that a visit from an Opposition MP to the West Coast might not have been so well received in Seddon's time, Herries replied 'the truth is we would hardly have dared to go there at all'.<sup>28</sup> Herries had held a public meeting in the town where Seddon began his political career, and this sent a very strong signal to Ward and the Liberal Party that Reform was ready to attack them, even in the parts of New Zealand where the Liberals were strongest.

Herries was in Temuka in mid-May,<sup>29</sup> and then returned to the North Island. However, the battle was taken up almost immediately by Massey, who arrived in Christchurch about a week later.<sup>30</sup> Massey began this campaign in South Canterbury, speaking first in Waimate,<sup>31</sup> then Oamaru, where he was joined by Allen.<sup>32</sup> At both places it was reported that he was well received and drew large audiences. At Oamaru the question was raised of whether it was fair for Reform to campaign when Ward was out of the country. Massey pointed out that the government ministers were stumping the country in the same way.<sup>33</sup> Massey and Allen then travelled to Southland, with both speaking at Riverton<sup>34</sup> and Massey at Invercargill.<sup>35</sup> Again it was reported that the audiences were large, and in Invercargill's Municipal Theatre the ground floor was filled and the circle 'largely patronised'.<sup>36</sup> From Invercargill, Massey proceeded back up the country, stopping to give an address in Ashburton,<sup>37</sup> and touring around Bank's Peninsula, speaking at Akaroa. At Akaroa the Mayor introduced Massey and pointed out that the town had never had the pleasure of hosting a minister of the Ward administration.<sup>38</sup> Massey then returned to the North Island, giving interviews on the way.<sup>39</sup> Massey maintained that in 'every centre I visited I met a very large number of people who expressed themselves at the public

<sup>23</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. I, A-L, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, pp.335-336

<sup>24</sup> *Press*, 10 May 1911, p.11.

<sup>25</sup> *West Coast Times*, 12 May 1911, p.2.

<sup>26</sup> *West Coast Times*, 13 May 1911, p.2.

<sup>27</sup> *West Coast Times*, 16 May 1911, p.2.

<sup>28</sup> *West Coast Times*, 17 May 1911, p.4.

<sup>29</sup> *Press*, 19 May 1911, p.8.

<sup>30</sup> *Southland Times*, 23 May 1911, p.5.

<sup>31</sup> *Press*, 26 May 1911, p.6.

<sup>32</sup> *North Otago Times*, 27 May 1911, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> *North Otago Times*, 27 May 1911, p.1. For some examples of Liberal Cabinet ministers touring see: *Evening Star*, 6 February 1911, p.4; *Star*, 20 February 1911, p.1; *Alexandra Herald and Central Otago Gazette*, 12 April 1911, p.5; *Dominion*, 12 April 1911, p.6; *Star*, 2 May 1911, p.3; *Wanganui Herald*, 13 June 1911, p.5.

<sup>34</sup> *Southland Times*, 30 May 1911, p.5.

<sup>35</sup> *Southland Times*, 31 May 1911, p.5.

<sup>36</sup> *Southland Times*, 31 May 1911, p.5.

<sup>37</sup> *Ashburton Guardian*, 1 June 1911, p.4.

<sup>38</sup> *Press*, 3 June 1911, p.7.

<sup>39</sup> *Press*, 2 June 1911, p.8; *New Zealand Herald*, 7 June 1911, p.8.

meetings and elsewhere as being in strong sympathy with the party at present in Opposition'.<sup>40</sup> The only parts of the South Island that neither Massey nor Herries spoke in were the South Otago-Northern Southland electorates of Maitai, Clutha and Bruce and the Marlborough electorate of Wairau.<sup>41</sup> These four electorates were held by Reform MPs, suggesting that with limited time Massey and Herries had elected not to speak in places where Reform already had a strong local MP.

Reform was also campaigning in the North Island. Herdman spoke in Wanganui in March,<sup>42</sup> at the Wellington town hall in April,<sup>43</sup> and Levin in May.<sup>44</sup> During May, on his way north from his South Island tour, Herries spoke in Palmerston North.<sup>45</sup> In early June he toured the northern half of the Bay of Islands electorate with the newly chosen Reform candidate George Wilkinson.<sup>46</sup> Allen gave public addresses in Taumarunui,<sup>47</sup> Hamilton,<sup>48</sup> and Auckland City<sup>49</sup> in May and one in Devonport in June.<sup>50</sup> Again, the North Island tours and speaking engagements seemed to be largely focused on areas where there was a Liberal MP. The Waikato electorate had speaking tours from Massey and Allen, who also spoke in the Taumarunui electorate. Massey continued Herries tour of the far north visiting the electorates of Kaipara and Bay of Islands. Herdman's two speeches away from his Wellington base were in lower North Island Liberal electorates. In June the editor of the *Dominion* commented on the activity of the Reform Party and also noted that not only had Massey, Allen, Herdman and Herries travelled 'to preach the Reform gospel' but also that 'quite a number of other opposition candidates are touring their own electorates'.<sup>51</sup> This reinforces the notion that Reform was targeting areas where the sitting members were Liberals and explains why the South Island tours were more extensive. Reform was still weak in the South Island, holding nine of thirty-five seats, whereas in the North Island they held sixteen of forty-one seats.<sup>52</sup> There were more local MPs in the North Island who could conduct their own stump tours. As the *Dominion* noted, 'The personal element counts for a good deal in politics and it is unquestionable that no inconsiderable service was rendered to the party by Mr Massey meeting the electors in districts to which he had previously been a stranger'.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 7 June 1911, p.8.

<sup>41</sup> Neither spoke in Christchurch, but Massey returned there in July as part of a tour of city speeches. Ward's electorate of Awarua was also not visited because he was not in the country.

<sup>42</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 24 March 1911, p.4.

<sup>43</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 11 April 1911, p.8.

<sup>44</sup> *Evening Post*, 25 May 1911, p.3.

<sup>45</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 25 May 1911, p.5.

<sup>46</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 April 1911, p.6; *New Zealand Herald*, 19 June 1911, p.5.

<sup>47</sup> *King Country Chronicle*, 13 May 1911, p.3.

<sup>48</sup> *Dominion*, 15 May 1911, p.2.

<sup>49</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 16 May 1911, p.7.

<sup>50</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 June 1911, p.9.

<sup>51</sup> *Dominion*, 5 June 1911, p.4.

<sup>52</sup> This equated to about twenty-five percent of the South Island seats and about forty percent of those in the North Island.

<sup>53</sup> *Dominion*, 5 April 1911, p.4.

Because of Ward's absence, the House was scheduled to begin sitting in late July,<sup>54</sup> rather than the usual late June. Reform used this extra month to conduct a series of large town hall rallies in Wellington, Christchurch and Auckland. The first was in Wellington in early July and, as he was traveling down the Island, Massey took the opportunity to speak in Hastings,<sup>55</sup> the main centre of another Liberal-held electorate, Hawke's Bay. The Wellington speech was used as the launch for the Reform Party's manifesto, with many Reform MPs and candidates present on the stage.<sup>56</sup> The audience was somewhere between two and three thousand,<sup>57</sup> and the meeting ended with a resolution that 'the electors of the Dominion should take prompt steps to have the present government removed'. This was passed with 'cheers and loud applauding'.<sup>58</sup> Massey then travelled to Christchurch to hold his next rally. In the lead up to the meeting there had been an exchange, through the newspapers, between Massey and the Mayor of Christchurch, Tommy Taylor, who was also the Liberal MP for Christchurch North. It was normal for the Mayor to chair large meetings, regardless of his political affiliations, but Taylor wanted Massey to clarify a statement he had made in the House in 1910 regarding Dick Seddon junior's libel suit against Taylor in 1904.<sup>59</sup> At first Taylor refused to chair the meeting unless Massey apologised for the comment, but then said he would take the chair if no one else could be found.<sup>60</sup> The public exchange of letters, via newspapers, between the local Political Reform League and Taylor whipped up public interest, and on the night the *Press* estimated that between five and six thousand people tried to pack into the Choral Hall, a venue designed for about twelve hundred. The *Press* said the scenes at the door 'almost beggar description. . . that it was impossible to move in any direction except with the crowd' and the door-keeper 'had vanished with his hat knocked off and his coat ripped to pieces'.<sup>61</sup> About fifteen minutes before Massey was due to speak, Taylor announced that unless people left the Hall and the passages were cleared he would have to call off the meeting due to the dangerous overcrowding. There were some attempts to clear the hall, but these were frustrated by people still trying to enter. After consultation with the police, the meeting was abandoned, and the hall slowly cleared. There were attempts to persuade Massey to speak outside, either in Latimer Square or from the *Press* balcony, but he declined, and eventually the crowd dispersed. In summary the *Press* described the meeting as 'one of the most remarkable that has taken place in the political history of this city'.<sup>62</sup> After the excitement of Christchurch, Massey returned to Auckland, where

<sup>54</sup> Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, p.199.

<sup>55</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 4 July 1911, p.7.

<sup>56</sup> *Dominion*, 7 July 1911, p.6, had a list of those on stage.

<sup>57</sup> *Evening Post*, 7 July 1911, p.3 said no less than three thousand, the *Dominion*, 7 July 1911, p.6, said somewhere between two and three thousand.

<sup>58</sup> *Dominion*, 7 July 1911, p.6.

<sup>59</sup> A.R Grigg, 'Taylor, Thomas Edward', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2t16/taylor-thomas-edward>, accessed 3 February 2018.

<sup>60</sup> *Press*, 11 July 1911, p.7 had a summary of the letters.

<sup>61</sup> *Press*, 12 July 1911, p.10.

<sup>62</sup> *Press*, 12 July 1911, p.10.

he spoke to around eighteen hundred, although the *Herald* reported that about one thousand people were unable to get into the hall. Massey gave a speech very similar to that in Wellington, and it ended with a similar vote of confidence and desire to see the government changed.<sup>63</sup> These large meetings rounded off Reform's pre-session election campaign. They were designed to lay the Reform Party platform before large city crowds and to launch its policies in considerable advance of the Liberals, who were still hindered by Ward being out of the country.

## Selection of candidates

While Reform had been actively selecting candidates since 1910, the final selections were constrained by the electoral redistribution, due after the census in April 1911.<sup>64</sup> Despite the knowledge that there would be some changes in boundaries, and possibly new electorates, there were a trickle of reports about Reform candidates being chosen. It seems that one of Martin's responsibilities was to help with local candidate selection. For example, a conference of 'Opposition delegates' was held in Ohaeawai in April to select a candidate for the Bay of Islands seat. The report suggests that Martin joined the conference rather than organised it, and that he helped with the setting up of committees to support the chosen candidate, George Wilkinson.<sup>65</sup> Not all candidates were selected with Martin's help. For the Kaipara electorate, two names were put forward and a selection meeting was held in Ruawai, which took until eleven at night to reach a decision,<sup>66</sup> and in Oamaru the local Political Reform League held a selection meeting<sup>67</sup> at which Ernest Lee was nominated to be the Reform candidate.<sup>68</sup> However, it does appear that Martin intervened when there was no obvious local candidate. He visited Temuka in May 1911 to look for a candidate, with the names of Colonel Haywood and George Armitage mentioned as possibilities.<sup>69</sup> He also visited Nelson in early August to interview possible candidates,<sup>70</sup> and Thames in early September.<sup>71</sup>

Another area where Martin assisted was in settling competing claims for the Reform Party candidature. After George Sykes was announced as the Masterton Reform candidate in late 1910,<sup>72</sup> Alfred Herbert announced he would stand for Reform.<sup>73</sup> After a

<sup>63</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 July 1911, p.4.

<sup>64</sup> Alan McRobie, *New Zealand Electoral Atlas*, Wellington: Government Printing Office, 1989, p.75.

<sup>65</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 April 1911, p.6.

<sup>66</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 24 June 1911, p.8.

<sup>67</sup> *Oamaru Mail*, 22 July 1911, p.4; *North Otago Times*, 12 August 1911, p.2.

<sup>68</sup> *North Otago Times*, 16 August 1911, p.2.

<sup>69</sup> *Press*, 16 May 1911, p.6. George Armitage was the eventual candidate, he was also William Downie Stewart's brother-in-law. See: Yvonne M. Wilke, 'Armitage, Rachelina Hepburn', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/mi/biographies/3a18/armitage-rachelina-hepburn>, accessed 8 February 2018.

<sup>70</sup> *Colonist*, 1 August 1911, p.2.

<sup>71</sup> *Thames Star*, 8 September 1911, p.2.

<sup>72</sup> *Woodville Examiner*, 16 November 1910, p.2.

<sup>73</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 6 January 1911, p.8.

meeting Martin was unable to convince one to stand down,<sup>74</sup> and eventually they both went to the polls. Martin was more successful in the neighbouring Pahiatua electorate. Meetings began in April to choose a candidate,<sup>75</sup> and in May it was reported that the delegates had decided to ask James Cooper to contest the seat again.<sup>76</sup> He declined due to business commitments,<sup>77</sup> and this led to three other candidates coming forward, one of whom, Samuel Bolton, had stood for the Opposition in the seat in the 1902 election.<sup>78</sup> In July the local Opposition delegates met again and selected James Escott, but it was reported that Bolton was not happy and would stand anyway,<sup>79</sup> despite assurances given to Martin that he would abide by the decision of the meeting.<sup>80</sup> In August it was announced that Escott was the official Reform candidate for Pahiatua,<sup>81</sup> suggesting that Martin had convinced Bolton to stand by his pledge. An article in the *Woodville Examiner* about the selection meeting gives a small insight into how Martin ran these proceedings. The newspaper urged all party supporters to attend the meeting as each candidate had pledged to be bound by the decision, but Martin could override it if he believed that it was not representative of the party supporters in the electorate; and Martin's decision was final.<sup>82</sup> That Martin appears to have exercised considerable control over the competing claims to candidature suggests that Reform was beginning to operate like a mass political party.<sup>83</sup> The title of official Reform candidate meant something, and the idea of party loyalty and the importance of party backing seemed to convince those candidates who were not selected to stand down. Other seats where candidates were asked to stand down and did include Kaiapoi<sup>84</sup> and Taumarunui.<sup>85</sup> This loyalty was not complete, as seen in Masterton where Martin was unable to convince one candidate to stand down. However, the fact that Bolton was prepared to stand aside rather than running as an independent candidate suggests a growing willingness among Opposition candidates to seek the endorsement of the Reform Party and abide by the decision the party made.

By July 1911 Martin seemed confident that he would find a Reform candidate for every electorate. In a newspaper interview, he said that Reform was in a better position than 1908 and 'there were several electorates for which candidates have not yet been definitely selected but will not be allowed to go uncontested by a representative of the

<sup>74</sup> *Dominion*, 2 February 1911, p.9; *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 19 August 1911, p.5, had a letter to the editor suggesting it was Herbert who would not submit to selection by the party.

<sup>75</sup> *Woodville Examiner*, 15 April 1911, p.2.

<sup>76</sup> *Woodville Examiner*, 1 May 1911, p.2. Cooper had been a candidate for Masterton in 1902 and 1905, and Pahiatua in 1908.

<sup>77</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 17 May 1911, p.5.

<sup>78</sup> General Election, 1902, *AJHR*, 1903, H.26, pp.1-6.

<sup>79</sup> *Woodville Examiner*, 31 July 1911, p.2.

<sup>80</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 15 July 1911, p.5.

<sup>81</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 23 August 1911, p.5.

<sup>82</sup> *Woodville Examiner*, 27 July 1911, p.2.

<sup>83</sup> One of the attributes of a mass party is undertaking the organisation of elections, of which candidate selection is a part. See: Introduction, p.3.

<sup>84</sup> *Evening Star*, 29 July 1911, p.6

<sup>85</sup> *King Country Chronicle*, 25 October 1911, p.5.

Reform Party'.<sup>86</sup> The new boundaries were announced in August,<sup>87</sup> with the South Island losing a seat and the North Island gaining one.<sup>88</sup> About a week later the first list of Reform candidates appeared and there were seventeen seats in which there was no certain candidate. One of these, Waikato, had previously had a candidate, Richard Bollard, but he had chosen to stand for the new North Island seat of Raglan.<sup>89</sup> Another seat listed, Wanganui, had held a selection meeting in July,<sup>90</sup> but there were hints that there might be problems over a promise given to George Hutchison in 1909 that he would be the Reform candidate if he stood aside in the Rangitikei by-election.<sup>91</sup> The other absences again reflected the areas in which Reform had struggled in the past, particularly the South Island, where they needed ten more candidates, including four for Christchurch seats.<sup>92</sup> By October, Reform had managed to find candidates for Ohinemuri, Wanganui, Hutt, Timaru, Wallace and Invercargill, but no candidates had been found for the seats in Christchurch.<sup>93</sup> A list of candidates and their affiliations published a few days before the writs were issued in late November showed Reform still needed eight candidates. The seats where there was no Reform, or Reform endorsed candidate were: Auckland Central, Auckland East, Grey,<sup>94</sup> Christchurch East, Christchurch South, Lyttelton, Dunedin South, and Gisborne, which Carroll won uncontested.<sup>95</sup> Apart from Gisborne and Grey, all these seats were in urban areas. Although Martin had not met his goal of having all seats contested by a Reform Party candidate, the number of seats without a candidate had decreased from fifteen in 1908 to eight in 1911.<sup>96</sup>

In 1908 there had been several electorates in which agreements reached with independent candidates had led Reform to forgo the nomination of an official candidate. This practice occurred again in three seats during 1911. In Waikato, boundary changes left Reform without a candidate. Alexander Young's name was raised at the Political Reform League meeting which decided that previous candidate, Richard Bollard, should stand for Raglan.<sup>97</sup> However, after a meeting with the local League, Young declared himself non-party, but supportive of the Reform platform, so the League decided not to run a candidate against him.<sup>98</sup> Considering that Young went on to become a cabinet minister in a Reform Government,<sup>99</sup> it is probable that his choice not to be an official Reform

<sup>86</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 15 July 1911, p.5.

<sup>87</sup> *Auckland Star*, 15 August 1911, p.5.

<sup>88</sup> McRobie, p.75.

<sup>89</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 21 August 1911, p.2.

<sup>90</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 18 July 1911, p.7.

<sup>91</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 9 August 1911, p.3.

<sup>92</sup> *Press*, 22 August 1911, p.7.

<sup>93</sup> *Manawatu Herald*, 12 October 1911, p.2.

<sup>94</sup> The *Manawatu Herald* article listed a candidate for Grey as Alfred Russell, but his name was not put forward on nomination day, see: *Greymouth Evening Star*, 27 November 1911, p.1; Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p.39, listed Russell as an NZLP candidate.

<sup>95</sup> *Star*, 24 November 1911, p.2.

<sup>96</sup> This included seats where there was a pro-Reform independent or a candidate with whom Reform had reached an understanding.

<sup>97</sup> *Auckland Star*, 17 August 1911, p.5.

<sup>98</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 29 September 1911, p.2.

<sup>99</sup> J.O. Wilson, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record 1840-1984*, Wellington: Government Printing Office, 1985, p.247.

candidate in 1911 was influenced by his previous association with the Liberal Party.<sup>100</sup> He stood as their candidate in Tauranga in 1908,<sup>101</sup> and had been Liberal MP Henry Greenslade's campaign manager in 1905,<sup>102</sup> so there was some disquiet about Young's apparent change of political colours.<sup>103</sup> Both the Thames and Westland electorates had been strong areas of Liberal support and both had economies which were shifting from extractive industries to farming.<sup>104</sup> It is likely that the candidates in these electorates saw an opportunity to attract farmers, but were concerned that the label of 'Reform' might turn other voters away. There is evidence that Michel, the candidate for Westland, was sensitive to this,<sup>105</sup> with the *Greymouth Evening Star*, a pro-Liberal newspaper, accusing him of being a Reform candidate in disguise.<sup>106</sup> In Thames the candidate supported by Reform, Thomas Rhodes, described himself as the 'Liberal and Freehold candidate'.<sup>107</sup> The Opposition had been weak in Thames since the 1890s,<sup>108</sup> so it is probable that a candidate calling himself freehold and standing against a sitting government MP was considered the best that Reform could find. Overall there was a decrease in the number of independents who were supported by Reform, as there had been five in 1908. In some parts of New Zealand candidates still felt that being an official Reform candidate would hinder their chance of being elected, but the decrease in essentially 'Reform' candidates calling themselves 'independent' shows that negative image attached to Reform was disappearing and had become largely confined to the areas where Reform was weakest.<sup>109</sup>

## Reform and the labour parties

Another feature of Reform candidature in 1911 was that for the first and only time the party chose to endorse candidates who described themselves as 'labour'. In Dunedin

<sup>100</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 22 June 1912, p.2, called Young 'a staunch supporter of the Reform Party'. This appeared about six months after the election which suggests that Young was very quick to join Reform after he had been elected.

<sup>101</sup> General Election, 1908, *AJHR*, 1909, (S.2), H.30a, pp.1-8.

<sup>102</sup> *Waikato Times*, 24 November 1911, p.4.

<sup>103</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 18 October 1911, p.2; *Waikato Argus*, 1 November 1911, p.2; *Waikato Argus*, 2 November 1911, p.2; *Waikato Argus*, 3 November 1911, p.3; *Waikato Argus*, 4 November 1911, p.2; *Waikato Argus*, 6 November 1911, p.2; *Waikato Argus*, 11 November 1911, p.2

<sup>104</sup> B.D. Graham, 'Waikato Politics: A Study in the Relationship of Local and National Politics in the Early Twentieth Century', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1954, pp.206-207.

The 1901 Official Yearbook entry for Westland did not mention dairying as one of its industries, but by 1911 the region was described as having 'progressive butter-factories, creameries and a cheese factory' see: *New Zealand Official Yearbook*, 1901, pp.574-578; *New Zealand Official Yearbook*, 1911, p.915.

<sup>105</sup> *West Coast Times*, 8 August 1911, p.4; *Greymouth Evening Star*, 27 October 1911, p.8; *West Coast Times*, 16 November 1911, p.2; *West Coast Times*, 22 November 1911, p.1.

<sup>106</sup> *Greymouth Evening Star*, 13 November 1911, p.8; *Greymouth Evening Star*, 9 November 1911, p.3.

<sup>107</sup> *Thames Star*, 6 December 1911, p.2.

<sup>108</sup> They had not had an official candidate there since the formation of stronger party lines.

<sup>109</sup> Both Young and Rhodes won their seats and subsequently voted with Reform on the July 1912 no-confidence vote see: *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 158, 27 June – 14 August 1912, pp.378-379.

West, Reform told supporters to vote for Harry Bedford,<sup>110</sup> who was a self-described 'Independent Oppositionist'.<sup>111</sup> Bedford had a history of erratic party allegiances. In 1902 he had topped the poll for the then three-member seat of Dunedin City,<sup>112</sup> and some newspapers thought he would support the Opposition in the House.<sup>113</sup> However, he aligned himself with the left-wing Liberal independents like Tommy Taylor and George Laursen, eventually becoming part of the New Liberal group in 1905<sup>114</sup> and, like Taylor, lost his seat at that election.<sup>115</sup> By 1911 he was styling himself as an anti-government, pro-labour candidate. There was considerable debate about whether Bedford was a 'labour' candidate,<sup>116</sup> as the local Labour Representation Committee refused to endorse either him or the socialist candidate James Munro.<sup>117</sup> Bedford's speeches showed that he was fervently against the Government, and although he claimed labour support he did not express any overtly labour policy.<sup>118</sup> Despite his previous political alignment,<sup>119</sup> Reform appears to have thought that Bedford's strongly anti-Liberal stance was enough to suggest he would support them in the House. Fergus Munro, the only candidate to stand in the Buller electorate against long-serving Liberal MP James Colvin,<sup>120</sup> was similar to Bedford. He called himself 'Independent Labour', yet was also pledged to fight against the government.<sup>121</sup> Munro's name was attached to Reform,<sup>122</sup> but he denied that he was an Opposition candidate.<sup>123</sup> In Napier, the contest began as a three-way race between the sitting Liberal MP, Vigor Brown,<sup>124</sup> the Independent Labour candidate, Henry Hill, and the Reform candidate, Edward Crowley.<sup>125</sup> In mid-November 1911 Massey visited Napier to give a campaign speech,<sup>126</sup> and a report surfaced that Reform might consider supporting Hill.<sup>127</sup> Massey then confirmed in an interview that, in Napier, Reform and 'labour' were

<sup>110</sup> *Press*, 22 August 1911, p.2.

<sup>111</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 9 December 1911 p.4; *Evening Post*, 8 December 1911, p.3.

<sup>112</sup> General Election, 1902, *AJHR*, 1903, H.26, pp.1-6.

<sup>113</sup> *Evening Post*, 26 November 1902, pp.4-5.

<sup>114</sup> This was a radical group which broke from the Liberals in 1905, for more detail on this group see: Gary F. Witcher, 'The New Liberal Party, 1905', M.A. Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1966.

<sup>115</sup> Michael Gill, 'Bedford, Harry Dodgshun', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3b21/bedford-harry-dodgshun>, accessed 19 February 2018.

<sup>116</sup> *Evening Star*, 8 November 1911, p.10; *Evening Star*, 9 November 1911, p.3; *Evening Star*, 11 November 1911, p.8; *Evening Star*, 16 November 1911, p.3; *Otago Daily Times*, 17 November 1911, p.6; *Evening Star*, 21 November 1911, p.4; *Evening Star*, 28 November 1911, p.9; *Otago Daily Times*, 13 December 1911, p.8; *Evening Star*, 12 December 1911, p.6; *Otago Daily Times*, 14 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>117</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 7 November 1911, p.8.

<sup>118</sup> *Evening Star*, 4 November 1911, p.3; *Otago Daily Times*, 18 November 1911, p.4; *Otago Daily Times*, 6 December 1911, p.8; *Evening Star*, 11 December 1911, p.7.

<sup>119</sup> Another 'New Liberal', Francis Fisher, joined Reform in 1909 and this may have softened the party toward Bedford.

<sup>120</sup> Scholefield, vol. I, A-L, p.171.

<sup>121</sup> *Greymouth Evening Star*, 29 October 1911, p.3, however he was not mentioned in Gustafson's extensive list of labour candidates for 1911.

<sup>122</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 August 1911, p.8.

<sup>123</sup> *Inangahua Times*, 29 November 1911, p.2.

<sup>124</sup> C. Joy Axford, 'Brown, John Vigor', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3b53/brown-john-vigor>, accessed 19 March 2018.

<sup>125</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 11 November 1911, p.1.

<sup>126</sup> *Evening Post*, 15 November 1911, p.2.

<sup>127</sup> *Evening Post*, 15 November 1911, p.3.

trying to come to an understanding.<sup>128</sup> A day later it was announced that Crowley had withdrawn from the race in favour of Hill.<sup>129</sup> The *Hastings Standard* explained that after a meeting with Massey, the Reform Party were assured that Hill was anti-government and had many policies in common with Reform.<sup>130</sup> The party had decided that it was better to pool the anti-government resources to try and win what would now be a two-way race.<sup>131</sup>

The deals that Reform did in these three electorates are indicative of a notable change in policy. The move to endorse candidates who openly called themselves 'labour' demonstrated that Reform was attempting to work with political labour to unseat the Liberal Government. In 1908 Reform had tried to have one anti-government candidate per electorate which meant they endorsed some non-Reform candidates.<sup>132</sup> However, at that election the candidate chosen for endorsement was nearly always an anti-socialist, freehold independent, and in some cases a Reform supporter in all but name.<sup>133</sup> The change of stance in 1911 suggests that Reform was approaching political labour with the attitude of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'.<sup>134</sup> As early as May 1910 there was a report of a possible deal over voting between political labour and Reform. This stated that a 'well-known [Independent Labour Party]<sup>135</sup> party official' had said that a proposal had been put to Massey whereby the labour parties supporters would be told to vote Reform if there was no labour-endorsed candidate in their electorate.<sup>136</sup> This was immediately denied by both the Auckland leadership of the political labour movement, and by David McLaren, the only labour MP.<sup>137</sup> McLaren said that the proposition that Massey had been approached was 'absolutely without foundation' and that 'the suggestion that the Labour organisation will invoke under any circumstance that of the party misnamed the Reform Party is simply a silly canard'.<sup>138</sup>

However, it seems that Reform itself still had hopes that it could use political labour's dissatisfaction with the Liberal Party to its advantage. From 1910 there was a noticeable change in the speeches of the Reform MPs and candidates. In 1908 the Reform

<sup>128</sup> *Dominion*, 16 November 1911, p.6.

<sup>129</sup> M.D.N. Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics: 1890-1914', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1967, p.178.

<sup>130</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p.36, noted that Hill was an independent labour candidate, but was endorsed by the New Zealand Labour Party and the Reform Party.

<sup>131</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 17 November 1911, p.4.

<sup>132</sup> Rangitikei was an example where a potential Reform candidate stood aside, chapter four p.128,

<sup>133</sup> John Duncan, who stood for Wairau was a good example of this. See chapter four, p.130, for an explanation of his political allegiance.

<sup>134</sup> This tactic had been suggested in Christchurch for the 1896 election. At that time the city electorates had three candidates and the idea was put forward that the National Association do a deal with 'Labour' to squeeze out the Liberal candidates. See *Press*, 2 May 1896, p.5.

<sup>135</sup> The report used the term ILP, but at this stage it is probable they meant the New Zealand Federation of Labour, which was different from the militant 'Red Federation'. For an explanation of the differences and name changes see:

Peter Franks and Jim McAloon, *Labour: The New Zealand Labour Party 1916-2016*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2016, pp.55-58.

<sup>136</sup> *Evening Post*, 4 May 1910, p.6; Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.336, thought that this approach may have been an attempt to frighten the Liberals into taking labour parties more seriously.

<sup>137</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p.19.

<sup>138</sup> *Auckland Star*, 5 May 1910, p.4.

campaign had emphasised that socialism was something to be feared and portrayed the Liberals as a Trojan Horse for extreme socialism. As previously noted, at the 1908 Reform garden party Massey said of socialism that 'he would not speak as he did if he did not think the danger was very real'.<sup>139</sup> At the next garden party, held in 1910, he made no mention of socialism, instead focusing on government spending and the need to unlock more native land.<sup>140</sup> This change in the speeches given by Reform MPs and candidates suggests that they were trying to appear more conciliatory towards the political labour movement. Reform recognised that the rise of political labour would damage the Liberal Party and possibly benefit Reform. There were two advantages to being more open to working with political labour. The first was that there were labour supporters in electorates without a labour candidate and by appearing pro-labour Reform might gain some of these votes, which traditionally had gone to the Liberals. Secondly, Reform hoped that labour-aligned MPs would join them in an anti-government coalition. This scheme was not without risk. It was possible that once parliament met any new labour members would vote with the Liberals to give them a majority. However, Reform seems to have been prepared to take that chance, perhaps believing that it would be hard for a coalition of Liberal and labour members to hold together, leading to longer-term instability within the broad church of the Liberal Party. The Reform campaign for the 1911 election was clearly driven by deliberate strategy which considered wider New Zealand political trends.

## Reform's campaign strategy

Another area where strategy was evident is in candidates' speeches. An analysis of the published reports of Reform candidates' campaign speeches shows that they were very similar in style and content, following closely the Reform Party's official platform.<sup>141</sup> This platform was finalised and approved at a conference of Reform members in Wellington in early July,<sup>142</sup> but there are indications that the main points had been decided on earlier. Some of Massey's, Herries' and Allen's speeches in the first half of 1911 covered similar material.<sup>143</sup> The official platform was launched by Massey at the rally held in the Wellington town hall. It covered six points – finance, land, Legislative Council, civil service, local government, and industrial and social legislation. Massey dealt with each point, following the order laid out in the platform and expanding on each topic.<sup>144</sup> This format was then used by many Reform candidates. For example, Massey tied the rise in cost of living to

<sup>139</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 February 1908, p.6.

<sup>140</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 21 February 1910, p.6.

<sup>141</sup> It was possible to find good reports of speeches by thirty different candidates.

<sup>142</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 5 July 1911, p.4.

<sup>143</sup> For example: *New Zealand Herald*, 31 January 1911, p.6; *Press*, 28 March 1911, p.8; *Otago Daily Times*, 13 April 1911, p.4; *Waikato Argus*, 10 May 1911, p.2; *West Coast Times*, 13 May 1911, p.2; *Ashburton Guardian*, 1 June 1911, p.4.

<sup>144</sup> *Dominion*, 7 July 1911, p.4.

This speech was also distributed as a leaflet see: New Zealand Political Reform League, *The fight for reform: great meeting at the Town Hall - speech by Mr. Massey*, Wellington: Dominion, 1911, Pam 1911 POL3422, Alexander Turnbull Library.

the country's debt levels, which he claimed were due to over-borrowing. This point also appeared in the speeches of candidates in Dannevirke,<sup>145</sup> Wellington,<sup>146</sup> Motueka,<sup>147</sup> Waiau,<sup>148</sup> Waimate,<sup>149</sup> and Gore.<sup>150</sup> Another common topic was the seemingly excessive cost of railway construction. Massey said he was not against building railways but questioned how much they were costing per mile. Candidates as far apart as Bay of Islands<sup>151</sup> and Invercargill<sup>152</sup> also included this point in their speeches. There was some variation across the candidates' addresses, but there was a common pattern of using the platform points in the order given, tailoring them to electorate issues,<sup>153</sup> before ending with any other important local issues and the candidate's personal opinion on prohibition. For example, in more rural North Island electorates the second point, land reform, might occupy most of the speech and the civil service reforms not be mentioned.<sup>154</sup> Conversely, W.H.D. Bell, the candidate for Wellington Suburbs, spent much more time in his speeches emphasising the need for reform of the civil service and very little on land.<sup>155</sup> Despite these local adjustments, there was a remarkable uniformity to the speeches given by Reform candidates. Furthermore, an annotated scrapbook of Massey's speeches during the 1911 campaign suggests that the collector was checking for the platform points in newspaper reports, showing that the party was actively checking the newspapers to ensure that the campaign points were published.<sup>156</sup> This suggests an organised and controlled effort to present the Reform platform, both in speeches and newspaper reporting.

This similarity in content was noticed by both Liberal newspapers<sup>157</sup> and Liberal candidates. Ward accused Reform of 'accepting the machine-made speeches from the Conservative manufactory'.<sup>158</sup> One commentator suggested that Reform's speeches were so repetitive and predictable that it would be just as well to send a phonograph as to have a candidate reading them.<sup>159</sup> Although there is no surviving evidence of a candidate handbook, the commonality in structure and topics indicates that Reform was instructing

<sup>145</sup> *Bush Advocate*, 8 November 1911, p.5.

<sup>146</sup> *Dominion*, 27 October 1911, p.7.

<sup>147</sup> *Colonist*, 18 October 1911, p.2.

<sup>148</sup> *Press*, 4 October 1911, p.12.

<sup>149</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 4 November 1911, p.5,

<sup>150</sup> *Mataura Ensign*, 8 November 1911, p.3.

<sup>151</sup> *Northern Advocate*, 7 October 1911, p.4.

<sup>152</sup> *Southland Times*, 22 November 1911, p.7.

<sup>153</sup> Some good examples are: *Northern Advocate*, 7 October 1911, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 3 November 1911, p.9; *Woodville Examiner*, 13 October 1911, p.2; *Hastings Standard*, 3 October 1911, p.5; *Timaru Herald*, 28 October 1911, p.5; *Evening Star*, 5 October 1911, p.8; *Southland Times*, 22 November 1911, p.7.

<sup>154</sup> For example: *King Country Chronicle*, 11 October 1911, p.5; *Manawatu Standard*, 10 November 1911, p.5; *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 7 November 1911, p.5; *Stratford Evening Post*, 4 November 1911, p.5.

<sup>155</sup> *Dominion*, 27 October 1911, p.7.

<sup>156</sup> Election speeches of Mr Massey, 1911: Pq920 MAS 1911, National Library of New Zealand.

<sup>157</sup> *Manawatu Times*, 9 November 1911, p.4; *Wanganui Herald*, 9 November 1911 p.4. This editorial pointed out that both sides had 'machine-made speeches'; *Manawatu Times*, 2 December 1911, p.5.

<sup>158</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 8 November 1911, p.4.

<sup>159</sup> *Manawatu Times*, 15 November 1911, p.2.

candidates on what to say on the platform.<sup>160</sup> This suggests several aspects of party oversight and that Reform had a plan for the issues it wanted to be emphasised during the campaign. There must have been some consideration of policy areas Reform could campaign on and an awareness of the issues exercising the voting public. The rise in the cost of living was of considerable concern during the election,<sup>161</sup> and many Reform candidates blamed the increase on the government's imprudent handling of the country's finances.<sup>162</sup> This approach seems to have been considered some time in advance of the campaign itself to allow for information to be disseminated to candidates. Again, as with the early selection of candidates, this implies that Reform was organised well before the official campaign for the 1911 election began and that it had spent time considering its tactics. Furthermore, candidates actually followed the prescribed format and topics for speeches, which indicates that they were willing to be instructed by the party. This demonstrates a high level of party discipline, something noted by newspapers,<sup>163</sup> and shows that candidates considered being part of the Reform Party more important than the desire to shape their own campaigns.

Not only did Reform candidates have a conspicuous similarity in the content and structure of their speeches, they had another consistent theme. During the campaign Reform MPs and candidates continued to position themselves as the true 'liberals'.<sup>164</sup> For example the *Northern Advocate* described its local Reform MP Francis Mander 'as liberal as those who sit on the Government side of the House',<sup>165</sup> and the *Timaru Herald* said Massey represented 'the true type of liberal'.<sup>166</sup> In 1908 Reform had accused the Liberals of not being as their name suggested because they pandered to socialists or were actually socialists in disguise. In 1911 Reform used a new attack, accusing the Liberals of being wealthy men and therefore not qualified to be 'liberal'. This claim was given strength in June when it was announced that Ward had accepted an inheritable baronetcy, and that John Findlay, James Carroll and Arthur Guinness, all leading Liberal members, had accepted knighthoods.<sup>167</sup> This gave fresh ammunition to Reform, who, as Herbert, a Reform candidate for Masterton, pointed out, did not have 'a Knight among their ranks, nor a Baronet'.<sup>168</sup> This theme was used increasingly by Reform as the election campaign continued. The *Wairarapa Age* asked how many workers were left in the

<sup>160</sup> There were two produced for the 1914 election see: New Zealand Political Reform League, *General Election Campaign - 1914*, Wellington: Wright & Carman, 1914; New Zealand Political Reform League, *General Election Campaign - 1914 - No.2.*, Wellington: Ferguson & Osborn, 1914.

<sup>161</sup> It was of such concern that there was a Royal enquiry in 1912 see: 'Cost of Living in New Zealand', *AJHR*, 1912 (S.2), H.18.

<sup>162</sup> For examples see: *New Zealand Herald*, 20 October 1911, p.9; *Bush Advocate*, 8 November 1911, p.5; *Dominion*, 27 October 1911, p.7; *Colonist*, 18 October 1911, p.2; *Press*, 4 October 1911, p.12; *Timaru Herald*, 4 November 1911, p.5; *Mataura Ensign*, 8 November 1911, p.3.

<sup>163</sup> *Colonist*, 18 November 1911, p.3

<sup>164</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.330; Richard Shannon, 'The Decline and Fall of the Liberal Government: A Study in an Aspect of New Zealand Political Development, 1908-1914', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1953, p.107.

<sup>165</sup> *Northern Advocate*, 3 March 1911, p.4.

<sup>166</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 20 May 1911, p.4.

<sup>167</sup> Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, p.195.

<sup>168</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 17 July 1911, p.4.

Liberal-Labour Federation now it was headed by a Baronet.<sup>169</sup> The *Greymouth Evening Star* received a letter saying that the government had become 'far removed from Liberalism' and cited 'the acceptance of hereditary and other titles' as proof.<sup>170</sup> In a campaign speech, W.D.H. Bell, Reform candidate for Wellington Suburbs, asked his audience not to 'run away with the idea that the Reform Party is composed entirely of rich men. Just think it over and see if you don't know at least one rich man in the Government'.<sup>171</sup> In the question time of campaign meetings, candidates were asked if they favoured inherited titles,<sup>172</sup> to which a Reform candidate could answer no, but a Liberal candidate could not. On the Saturday before the election the *Dominion* produced an election supplement, which had wide circulation.<sup>173</sup> On the front cover was a picture of Seddon being carried by the people into parliament and beside it Ward portrayed as an aristocrat with servants.<sup>174</sup> Another tactic was to compare Ward with Massey. After giving a speech in Milton, James Allen was asked if he had confidence in Massey as his leader. He replied, 'that Massey was a man of the people, a poor man, comparatively, a small farmer and he had given the best years of his life to this country'.<sup>175</sup> A letter to the editor of the *Evening Star* also picked up on this theme saying that Massey was a relatively poor man when compared with Sir Joseph Ward.<sup>176</sup> In reply to an accusation from Thomas Mackenzie that Reform voters owned all the motor cars, the *Dominion* pointed out that the idea 'that Sir Joseph Ward, Bart., in his motor car is leader of the poor man's party, and that plain Mr Massey on foot stands for the plutocrat is funny'.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, the claim that Reform were the 'genuine liberals' was often used in the introduction of candidates' speeches,<sup>178</sup> suggesting that this was a point they had been told to emphasise while campaigning. Although the idea of Reform being 'true liberals' had been used in 1908, the basis and frequency changed in 1911.<sup>179</sup> It was used much more often and rather than trying to associate the Liberals with socialists, Reform instead began to connect the Liberals with privilege and wealth, a task made easier by Ward and other prominent Liberals accepting titles. This had the added benefit of shifting a common allegation that Reform was composed of 'rich men' to the Liberals, who were now led by a Baronet. It also helped Reform to align its message with political labour. Attacking privilege and wealth, instead of socialism, enabled Reform to criticise the Liberals without maligning labour.

<sup>169</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 31 October 1911, p.4.

<sup>170</sup> *Greymouth Evening Star*, 27 October 1911, p.8.

<sup>171</sup> *Dominion*, 21 November 1911, p.6.

<sup>172</sup> For example: *Horowhenua Chronicle*, 3 October 1911, p.3; *Nelson Evening Mail*, 9 November 1911, p.4; *Taranaki Daily News*, 11 November 1911, p.4.

<sup>173</sup> *Dominion*, 4 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>174</sup> *Dominion*, 2 December 1911, p.13.

<sup>175</sup> *Evening Post*, 2 November 1911, p.2.

<sup>176</sup> *Evening Star*, 15 November 1911, p.10.

<sup>177</sup> *Dominion*, 10 November 1911, p.6.

<sup>178</sup> For example: *New Zealand Herald*, 20 October 1911, p.9; *New Zealand Herald*, 7 November 1911, p.9; *King Country Chronicle*, 11 October 1911, p.5; *Woodville Examiner*, 13 October 1911, p.2; *Colonist*, 18 October 1911, p.2; *Timaru Herald*, 28 October 1911, p.5; *Timaru Herald*, 25 October 1911, p.6.

<sup>179</sup> E.P. Aimer, 'The Politics of a City: A Study in the Auckland Urban Area 1899-1935', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1958, pp.84-85.

Another aspect of the Reform campaign which shows they had a well-organised strategy was its printed propaganda. Reform published a series of fourteen pamphlets called 'Points for the People',<sup>180</sup> and, like the speeches by candidates, it had topics designed to address the issues which seemed to resonate with the electorate. It is unclear when Reform began to distribute these pamphlets, but the first 'Points for the People' was mentioned in a speech given by a Liberal candidate in Oamaru in late September,<sup>181</sup> suggesting production began around this time.<sup>182</sup> As the beginning of September was about fourteen weeks before the election, this would also match a pattern of issuing a new pamphlet every week. 'Points for the People' was printed in Wellington,<sup>183</sup> so the fact it was used in an Oamaru election campaign demonstrates that the pamphlets had a wide distribution. Each one was about three to four pages long and, like the candidates' speeches, followed the themes in the Reform platform: the financial ineptitude and corruption of the government, how the Liberals were a 'sham', that Reform were the true Liberals, and the government's mishandling of land policy. Although many of the subjects covered were close to those in Reform candidate's speeches, the printed medium had the added advantage of being able to lay out the figures, making some of the accusations easier to understand. Another feature of the pamphlets was that they quoted Hansard and candidates' speeches, the last two consisted entirely of such quotes. The close ties between the candidates' speeches and the printed propaganda displays the careful co-ordination in the Reform campaign.

## Reform and the Farmers' Political Protection Federation

While attacks on socialism were noticeably absent during the Reform campaign there was still a constituency which responded to such rhetoric. The vacuum left by Reform pulling back from criticising political labour was filled by another group: The Farmers' Political Protection Federation, formed in late 1910 by the North Canterbury Branch of the Farmers' Union.<sup>184</sup> At one of its first meetings it was declared that the Federation was 'simply a combination to educate the rank and file of the farming community to the danger that is looming ahead in the leaven of Socialism that is creeping into the politics of the country'.<sup>185</sup> The group appears to have been well funded,<sup>186</sup> and they appointed David Jones<sup>187</sup> as a fulltime organiser in February 1911.<sup>188</sup> Jones undertook a very vigorous

<sup>180</sup> Reform Party, *Political Reform Party's Points for the People*, Pam 1911 POL 3422, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>181</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 30 September 1911, p.4.

<sup>182</sup> The later ones quoted Hansard from September and candidate's speeches, showing that they were written progressively.

<sup>183</sup> It was produced by Wright & Carman, a firm which had Robert Wright, a Reform MP, as one of its partners. See: Wilson, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record*, p.247.

<sup>184</sup> *Press*, 27 October 1910, p.8.

<sup>185</sup> *Press*, 8 December 1910, p.7.

<sup>186</sup> *Press*, 8 December 1910, p.7.

<sup>187</sup> Jones had been previously active in farmers' groups. See chapter 4, p.123.

<sup>188</sup> *Press*, 23 February 1911, p.8. Jones had stood as an 'opposition' candidate in Ashburton in 1908 see: General Election, 1908, *AJHR*, 1909 (S.2), H.30a, pp.1-8.

publicity campaign, first in Canterbury<sup>189</sup> and Marlborough,<sup>190</sup> and then in the lower North Island.<sup>191</sup> Furthermore, the Farmers' Political Protection Federation was endorsed by the Farmers' Union,<sup>192</sup> although this was a controversial step.<sup>193</sup> In April 1911 Jones held his first public meeting at which he outlined the Federation's policy. He began by condemning socialism, declaring that it aimed to 'alter the whole source of production'. He went on to say that the Federation supported freehold, an alteration in the tax laws, the freeing up of native land and reduction of government debt.<sup>194</sup> Apart from the denunciation of socialism, all the policies were identical to Reform's.

It appears that the origins of the Farmers' Political Protection Federation were in a dispute between shearers and large sheep farmers. The Federation was against all farm workers, including shearers, using the Arbitration Court to gain wage awards,<sup>195</sup> in line with the Farmers' Union policy.<sup>196</sup> However, the Sheepowners' Federation, formed in 1902,<sup>197</sup> had entered into arbitration with the Shearers' Union,<sup>198</sup> the Sheepowners' president, Hugh Acland, saying at the 1911 annual meeting that it was a necessity for Sheepowners' to actively engage with the arbitration system.<sup>199</sup> A list of Sheepowners' Federation council members<sup>200</sup> shows that many of the men involved were also active within the Reform Party. For example, Acland was the president of the Canterbury Political Reform League,<sup>201</sup> David Macfarlane had stood for the Opposition in Ashley,<sup>202</sup> and then Reform in Hurunui,<sup>203</sup> and Henry Vavasour was a member of the Marlborough executive of the Political Reform League.<sup>204</sup> Therefore, it appears that the men who formed the Farmers' Political Protection Federation were concerned about the possibility that Reform might be favourable to rural workers entering the arbitration process. Another

<sup>189</sup> *Press*, 22 April 1911, p.6; *Press*, 29 April 1911, p.8; *Press*, 13 May 1911, p.3; *Press*, 22 June 1911, p.4; *Ashburton Guardian*, 26 August 1911, p.5; *Press*, 8 September 1911, p.9; *Press*, 11 September 1911, p.10.

<sup>190</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 12 July 1911, p.5.

<sup>191</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 16 September 1911, p.1; *Woodville Examiner*, 22 September 1911, p.2; *Manawatu Standard*, 22 September 1911, p.5; *Patea Mail*, 27 September 1911, p.3; *Horowhenua Chronicle*, 3 October 1911, p.4; *Hastings Standard*, 9 October 1911, p.4.

<sup>192</sup> *Evening Post*, 29 July 1911, p.9.

<sup>193</sup> *Waimate Daily Advertiser*, 12 May 1911, p.2; *Press*, 16 May 1911, p.7; *Taranaki Herald*, 19 May 1911, p.4; *Southland Times*, 20 May 1911, p.2; *Auckland Star*, 16 August 1911, p.2; *Press*, 19 October 1911, p.4; *Press*, 26 October 1911, p.5

<sup>194</sup> *Press*, 12 April 1911, p.10.

<sup>195</sup> *Press*, 27 October 1910, p.8.

<sup>196</sup> Tom Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise: A Comparative Study of the Origins and Early Phases of Development of the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales and the New Zealand Farmers' Union, 1880-1929', PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1977, pp.348-349. Brooking noted that the main centre for agitation against the forming of farm workers' unions was Canterbury.

<sup>197</sup> John E. Martin, 'Arbitration: The Sheepowners and the Shearers', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, no. 12, 1987, p.182.

<sup>198</sup> This had been done reluctantly see: Martin, 'Arbitration', p.183.

<sup>199</sup> Martin, 'Arbitration', p.185.

<sup>200</sup> Martin, 'Arbitration', p.184.

<sup>201</sup> *Press*, 16 September 1911, p.8.

<sup>202</sup> General Election, 1893, *AJHR*, 1894, H.19, pp.1-4.

<sup>203</sup> General Election, 1911, *AJHR*, 1912 (S.2), H.12, pp.1-14.

<sup>204</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 22 October 1912, p.8.

possibility as to why the Federation was formed is that there may have been some concern that being associated with Reform and Massey would be a liability in Canterbury, as both were perceived as being pro-North Island. Further weight is added to this argument by the fact that two 'Opposition' candidates, Charles Ensor in Riccarton and John D. Hall in North Christchurch, called themselves independents.<sup>205</sup> As the *Star* speculated, this could be because 'the name of Mr Massey is not one to conjure with in Canterbury'.<sup>206</sup>

Reform's attitude towards the Farmers' Political Protection Federation was one of indifference. The Federation did not harm Reform, and the fact that a group was preaching about the potential damage of socialism was probably very useful to them. It enabled the anti-socialist rhetoric to persist without damaging Reform's attempts to align with political labour. Perhaps the best indication that the Farmers' Political Protection Federation was useful to Reform during the 1911 election was that in May 1912 it was merged into the Canterbury Political Reform League.<sup>207</sup> At that point it was clear to Reform that it could not rely on political labour for support, so they no longer had the desire to appear conciliatory towards socialists and could once again take up an anti-socialist position.

## The 1911 election campaign

Despite having travelled extensively throughout New Zealand during the first half of the year, Massey continued to give campaign speeches while the House was sitting, speaking in Masterton,<sup>208</sup> Pahiataua,<sup>209</sup> Palmerston North,<sup>210</sup> and Levin,<sup>211</sup> which were all within a day's travel of Wellington. Once the House rose, he toured Taranaki, speaking mainly in the Egmont electorate,<sup>212</sup> where the sitting Reform MP, Bradshaw Dive, faced a strong opponent, Liberal Cabinet minister Thomas Mackenzie. Massey then travelled to Auckland to commence campaigning in his Franklin electorate, but during the journey he sprained his ankle,<sup>213</sup> and his campaign was further set back by the death of his father in early November.<sup>214</sup> Yet he resumed a series of public meetings in Franklin, speaking in Patumahoe,<sup>215</sup> Pukekohe,<sup>216</sup> Howick,<sup>217</sup> Papakura,<sup>218</sup> and Otahuhu.<sup>219</sup> Massey then

<sup>205</sup> Ensor was associated with the Farmers' Political Protection Federation, as was Hall's brother Wilfred, see: *Press*, 27 October 1910, p.8.

<sup>206</sup> *Star*, 3 November 1911, p.2.

<sup>207</sup> *Press*, 9 May 1912, p.6.

<sup>208</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 14 August 1911, p.5.

<sup>209</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 15 August 1911, p.5; *Hastings Standard*, 16 August 1911, p.2.

<sup>210</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 3 October 1911, p.6.

<sup>211</sup> *Horowhenua Chronicle*, 10 October 1911, p.2.

<sup>212</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 31 October 1911, p.5; *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 1 November 1911, p.5; *Opunake Times*, 3 November 1911, p.2.

<sup>213</sup> *Press*, 3 November 1911, p.9.

<sup>214</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 November 1911, p.8.

<sup>215</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 9 November 1911, p.9.

<sup>216</sup> *Northern Advocate*, 9 November 1911, p.5.

<sup>217</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 10 November 1911, p.7.

<sup>218</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 11 November 1911, p.8.

<sup>219</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 13 November 1911, p.4.

travelled south, speaking at Eketahuna, where he drew a crowd of six hundred, described at the time as the largest meeting ever held there,<sup>220</sup> and then at Napier on 14 November, where the Theatre Royal was described as 'packed, with many being unable to gain admittance'.<sup>221</sup>

By 16 November Massey was in the South Island, travelling to Invercargill. He gave a five-minute speech to one thousand people on the train station platform at Oamaru.<sup>222</sup> On 17 November he spoke at Winton, the main centre of Ward's electorate of Awarua. Described as the biggest political event ever held in Winton, over two thousand people turned out, with some people sitting on the stage and crowding into alleyways outside.<sup>223</sup> Massey then travelled north again, stopping in Timaru where he spoke at a public meeting with an audience of somewhere between sixteen and eighteen hundred.<sup>224</sup> He returned to Oamaru, speaking at the Opera House, which was again filled to overflowing. Ward had spoken in the same venue several nights before and the *North Otago Times* reported that the record crowd that had turned out to hear the Premier had probably been surpassed by Massey.<sup>225</sup> The electorates of Timaru and Oamaru were both held by government MPs, so the size of the crowds Massey attracted must have been of concern to the Liberals.

Massey had been scheduled to speak in Palmerston North the night he spoke in Oamaru,<sup>226</sup> but he had postponed that meeting when the Oamaru opportunity arose, and he arrived in Palmerston North on 22 November. In the final notice for the meeting, the *Manawatu Standard* stated that a large crowd was expected at the Opera House, where Massey would speak, and that no youths under twenty-one would be admitted, probably to prevent overcrowding and potential rowdiness.<sup>227</sup> As in Winton, the Opera House was filled to capacity and the stage had to be used for seating, the *Standard* estimating that the audience was over two thousand and many had to be turned away.<sup>228</sup> Massey went on to Auckland, where he addressed two meetings in the Waitemata electorate,<sup>229</sup> and one at Waiuku, in his own electorate of Franklin. This meeting was specifically to reply to Ward who had spoken there a few days before. By speaking in Waiuku, Ward had been attempting to emulate Massey's meeting at Winton. However, at Waiuku, Ward drew an audience of around two hundred and fifty,<sup>230</sup> whereas Massey spoke to over four hundred.<sup>231</sup> Massey then toured the smaller centres of Franklin,<sup>232</sup> and held large

<sup>220</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 14 November 1911, p.5.

<sup>221</sup> *Press*, 15 November 1911, p.10.

<sup>222</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 17 November 1911, p.5.

<sup>223</sup> *Southland Times*, 18 November 1911, p.3.

<sup>224</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 20 November 1911, p.4.

<sup>225</sup> *North Otago Times*, 21 November 1911, p.4.

<sup>226</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 17 November 1911, p.5.

<sup>227</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 22 November 1911, p.5.

<sup>228</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 23 November 1911, p.5.

<sup>229</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 November 1911, p.8.

<sup>230</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 24 November 1911, p.10.

<sup>231</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 28 November 1911, p.9.

<sup>232</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 29 November 1911, p.8.

public meetings in Grey Lynn<sup>233</sup> and Parnell,<sup>234</sup> both electorates held by Liberal MPs. He then travelled to Taumarunui, where he gave a speech in a packed Theatre Royal,<sup>235</sup> returning to Auckland to speak at Devonport on 4 December,<sup>236</sup> and Parnell the next night.<sup>237</sup> Massey spent the day before the election in Pukekohe, the main centre of his Franklin electorate, and gave his final speech of the campaign at Manurewa, close to his own home.<sup>238</sup>

Massey was not the only Reform MP touring the country. As in the first half of the year, Allen campaigned in electorates that were not his own. He travelled north to support Ernest Lee, the Reform candidate for Oamaru, speaking to four hundred at Palmerston,<sup>239</sup> and also holding a meeting in Waimate<sup>240</sup> to assist Francis Smith, the Reform candidate in Waitaki. On the week of the election he spoke in Bluff, the heart of Ward's power base, attracting an audience of about six hundred and fifty. At the end of the meeting a vote of confidence in Ward was called for and one for no-confidence in the government. Both were voted upon and the chairman declared that the numbers were about equal.<sup>241</sup> Herdman spoke to an 'overflowing meeting'<sup>242</sup> at Dannevirke to support the Waipawa Reform candidate George Hunter.<sup>243</sup> Patterns can be observed with the electorates Massey and the Reform MPs visited. Both Massey and Allen spoke in Oamaru, but also further north in Timaru, which suggests that Reform was targeting these two electorates and the adjoining Waitaki.<sup>244</sup> In the North Island, Taumarunui was a Liberal seat, but boundary changes and a strong Reform candidate had created the possibility that Reform could win. Pahiatua and Otaki were rural seats held by a Liberal MP who professed to be a freeholder, but had voted for leasehold in 1910,<sup>245</sup> and Masterton was also largely rural and had in Robert Hogg a long-serving, vocal, leasehold Liberal MP. Reform probably saw an opportunity to capitalise in these electorates on the Liberal indecision over the land issue. Grey Lynn<sup>246</sup> and Parnell had also undergone boundary changes which favoured Reform and the long-serving Liberal MP for Parnell had retired.

<sup>233</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 December 1911, p.9.

<sup>234</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>235</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 December 1911, p.9.

<sup>236</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 5 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>237</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 December 1911, p.10.

<sup>238</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 7 December 1911, p.10.

<sup>239</sup> *Auckland Star*, 27 November 1911, p.7.

<sup>240</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 30 November 1911, p.5.

<sup>241</sup> *Southland Times*, 4 December 1911, p.3.

<sup>242</sup> *Dominion*, 1 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>243</sup> *Bush Advocate*, 1 December 1911, p.7.

<sup>244</sup> After 1908, Oamaru, Waitaki, Temuka and Timaru were the only rural seats between Christchurch and Invercargill not held by Reform.

<sup>245</sup> See chapter four, p.141, for details of this vote.

<sup>246</sup> Reform had previously had strong campaigns in this urban seat, in 1905 the Opposition candidate had lost by 236 and by 889 in 1908 see: General Election, 1905, *AJHR*, 1906 (S.1), H.25a, pp.1-5; General Election, 1908, *AJHR*, 1909, (S.2), H.30a, pp.1-8.

Palmerston North, Egmont and Waitemata were Reform-held electorates, but the Reform candidates faced strong Liberal opponents.<sup>247</sup> The places where Massey, Allen and Herdman spoke illustrate the tactical way in which Reform approached the 1911 election.

In late July Tommy Taylor died suddenly.<sup>248</sup> The resulting by-election was seen as a test of the mood of the country, but it was not seriously contested by either Reform or the Liberals. The 'Liberal' candidate was Leonard Isitt, a close friend of Taylor's and like him, Isitt's first commitment was to prohibition.<sup>249</sup> The 'Reform' candidate was John D. Hall, a son of Sir John Hall,<sup>250</sup> and like Isitt, Hall did not appear to have a strong party conviction.<sup>251</sup> Martin had stated in an interview that he was not going to Christchurch to help with the campaign because 'there was no government candidate and the Opposition one was very strong'.<sup>252</sup> Isitt won by over seven hundred votes, a decrease in Taylor's majority.<sup>253</sup> It seems that the newspapers were divided along partisan lines as to what Isitt's victory signalled for the coming election.<sup>254</sup> However, given the strong role that prohibition had played in the by-election, Isitt's win was probably not a signifier of national feeling.

As the election drew closer, most commentators concluded that Reform would again increase its representation but would not be able to win a majority. Reform had to win sixteen seats, and not lose any, to make the forty-one needed to take the government benches. Not only did this seem challenging, but Reform were also fighting the perception of the Liberals as invincible, as they had never lost an election. The *Ashburton Guardian* used a mathematical formula of its own devising to predict that the government would be returned with forty-two seats whereas the Opposition would win thirty-four, a gain of nine.<sup>255</sup> The *New Zealand Herald*, a pro-Reform newspaper, thought that 'there may be no startling surprises on Friday morning, but the returns of the election will certainly show a great display of strength by [the] Opposition'.<sup>256</sup> The *Press* and the *Dominion* were the most stridently pro-Reform newspapers: both had claimed that the government might

<sup>247</sup> *Manawatu Times*, 25 September 1911, p.4, had an editorial which suggested that the Opposition 'campaign managers' were throwing a lot of resources at Palmerston as they were worried they might lose.

<sup>248</sup> Grigg, 'Taylor, Thomas Edward'.

<sup>249</sup> Allan K. Davidson, 'Isitt, Leonard Monk', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3i2/isitt-leonard-monk>, accessed 6 March 2018.

<sup>250</sup> *Dominion*, 2 August 1911, p.5.

<sup>251</sup> *Star*, 8 August 1911, p.2.

<sup>252</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 7 August 1911, p.5.

<sup>253</sup> General Election, 1908, *AJHR*, 1909 (S.2), H.30a, pp.1-8.

<sup>254</sup> For pro-Reform view see: *Dominion*, 18 August 1911, p.6; *Timaru Herald*, 18 August 1911, p.4; *Press*, 18 August 1911, p.6; *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 18 August 1911, p.4; *Otago Daily Times*, 18 August 1911, p.4; *Southland Times*, 19 August 1911, p.5.

For pro-Liberal view see: *Evening Star*, 18 August 1911, p.7; *Greymouth Evening Star*, 18 August 1911, p.4; *Marlborough Express*, 21 August 1911, p.4.

<sup>255</sup> *Ashburton Guardian*, 1 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>256</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 2 December 1911, p.6.

change,<sup>257</sup> as had the *Wairarapa Daily Times*.<sup>258</sup> Yet, in the week before the election, these newspapers were slightly more circumspect. The *Dominion* offered the opinion that Ward was about to meet 'that day of reckoning, so long delayed',<sup>259</sup> and the *Press* appealed to voters to turn out the government, but was not prepared to predict a Reform victory.<sup>260</sup> The *New Zealand Times* and *Star*, both pro-Liberal newspapers, were confident of a Liberal triumph. The editor of the *Times* wrote that 'the decision of the people to-morrow may be anticipated with confidence, it will be an emphatic declaration for a continuation of Liberal policy',<sup>261</sup> and the *Star* offered analysis from throughout the country on which seats the Liberals would win.<sup>262</sup> Perhaps the best indication of the general feeling came from the *Evening Post*, a politically neutral newspaper, which believed that the government would be returned with a reduced majority, basing its conclusion on 'independent reports from the electorates'.<sup>263</sup> There was no indication from any contemporary commentary that the Liberals were in a terminal decline, with most believing that Reform's new strength would dent the government, but would not be fatal to them.

Despite the prevailing feeling that the election would end with Reform bettering its position rather than winning a majority, there were hints in the last few days of the campaign that Reform was in the ascendancy. The party seemed to be campaigning particularly strongly in Wellington, as a 4 December rally in the Town Hall filled it to its capacity of four thousand, with an estimated two thousand overflowing into the streets.<sup>264</sup> The next night the Reform MP for Wellington Central, Francis Fisher, gave his last campaign speech in the Hall, to an audience of around three thousand.<sup>265</sup> Conversely the Liberals seemed tired - Ward, in particular, was being heckled at his meetings.<sup>266</sup> He was finding the campaign increasingly difficult, especially as Reform continued to take its message to his electorate. A meeting he held at Winton on 4 December ended in a disorderly fashion with the organisers having to turn out the lights to calm the audience, but still Ward was unable to make himself heard over the crowd.<sup>267</sup> On the Saturday before the election the *Dominion* published a ten-page pro-Reform election supplement. The newspaper claimed that it had a record distribution, having gone as far south as Awarua and to Parnell in the north.<sup>268</sup> It made extensive use of illustrations, and the content was based on the consistent messages from the Reform campaign.<sup>269</sup> There is no evidence that the Liberals produced a similar newspaper. The *Evening Post*, in the interests of neutrality, asked each of the three 'parties' to contribute a summary of their policies for its election

<sup>257</sup> *Dominion*, 20 November 1911, p.4; *Press*, 22 November 1911, p.10.

<sup>258</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 20 November 1911, p.4.

<sup>259</sup> *Dominion*, 2 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>260</sup> *Press*, 7 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>261</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 6 December 1911, p.6

<sup>262</sup> *Star*, 7 December 1911, p.2.

<sup>263</sup> *Evening Post*, 2 December 1911, p.11.

<sup>264</sup> *Dominion*, 5 December 1911, p.7.

<sup>265</sup> *Dominion*, 6 November 1911, p.8.

<sup>266</sup> *Press*, 29 November 1911, p.10; *New Zealand Herald*, 5 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>267</sup> *Press*, 5 December 1911, p.7; Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, p.201.

<sup>268</sup> *Dominion*, 4 December 1911, p.8

<sup>269</sup> *Dominion*, 2 December 1911, pp.13-24.

coverage. Allen submitted for Reform and McLaren for 'Labour'. It had been arranged that Sir John Findlay would submit for the Liberals, but he had been unable to do so, and this meant that the paper published only the Reform and 'Labour' articles.<sup>270</sup> As the campaign drew to a close Reform's planning and strategy continued to direct their electioneering. When compared to the Liberals, Reform was better organised, maintaining its core messages right to the end.

## The election result

The first ballot was held on 7 December, and there were majority results for forty-six seats. Of these Reform won twenty-five, the Liberals twenty and Thomas Rhodes, an independent candidate, won Thames.<sup>271</sup> The pro-Reform newspapers were jubilant, with the *New Zealand Herald* saying the government had received a shock and it could possibly lose on the second ballot.<sup>272</sup> The *Dominion* headline said that the result was a 'Political Upheaval' and a condemnation of Ward.<sup>273</sup> The pro-Liberal newspapers were a little more sanguine, the *New Zealand Times* expressed surprise but thought the final result would be a greatly reduced majority for the Liberals.<sup>274</sup> Both the *Auckland Star*<sup>275</sup> and the *Evening Star*<sup>276</sup> agreed that the Liberals would secure victory in the second ballot.

Of those won on the first ballot, Reform gained Auckland West, Waikato, Taumarunui, Waipawa, Oamaru and Dunedin Central, but lost Egmont and Selwyn. Waikato, Taumarunui, Waipawa and Oamaru had all been targeted by Reform, each electorate receiving at least one visit from Massey and another Reform MP. Auckland West and Dunedin Central were unusual in that they were Reform wins in highly urban seats.<sup>277</sup> The victory in Auckland West was probably due to the antipathy that labour-aligned supporters felt for the Liberal MP Charles Poole. In his analysis of the Auckland City seats, Aimer noted that the West Auckland campaign was particularly turbulent and that there was more interest in voting out the 'tory' MP (Poole) than a preference for the Reform candidate.<sup>278</sup> In Dunedin, the continuing strength of the craft unions meant that political labour movement was less militant and separatist than in other cities.<sup>279</sup> Statham's win in Dunedin

<sup>270</sup> *Evening Post*, 2 December 1911, p.11.

<sup>271</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.335.

<sup>272</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 8 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>273</sup> *Dominion*, 8 December 1911, p.5.

<sup>274</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 8 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>275</sup> *Auckland Star*, 8 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>276</sup> *Evening Star*, 8 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>277</sup> Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey 1908-1914?' in *A Great New Zealand Prime Minister? Reappraising William Ferguson Massey*, (eds) James Watson and Lachy Paterson, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2011, p.65, noted a significant increase in the percentage of first ballot votes for Reform in city seats between 1908 and 1911.

<sup>278</sup> Aimer, p.94 and p.105.

<sup>279</sup> Erik Olssen, Clyde Griffen, and Frank Jones, *An Accidental Utopia? Social Mobility and the Foundations of an Egalitarian Society 1880-1940*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2011, p.135.

Central was a reflection of Liberal decline without the corresponding move of voters to political labour seen in other inner city seats.<sup>280</sup> The loss of Egmont was against the trend in Taranaki, which had been solidly for Reform. Bellringer, in his study of the political trends in the province during the period, suggested that the Liberal candidate Thomas Mackenzie's victory may have been due to the fact he was the Minister for Agriculture. Bellringer observed that Taranaki felt politically neglected and the prospect of having a prominent cabinet member as the local MP may have swayed voters.<sup>281</sup> In Selwyn local issues around water rights seemed to have played a role in the loss of the long-serving MP Charles Hardy.<sup>282</sup> Reform had every reason to be pleased with the result of the first ballot. Outright victories in seats they had targeted indicated that the attention paid to organisation had achieved results.

With one week between the first and second ballot, campaigning recommenced immediately. Once again Reform showed that it was well-organised and prepared to continue electioneering. Massey began speaking again on 11 December, holding a meeting at Devonport in support of Alexander Harris, who was in a contest with a strong Liberal candidate, William Napier.<sup>283</sup> The following night Reform held a large meeting in Parnell to support the Reform candidate Samuel Dickson and Massey was joined on the platform by Francis Mander, Reform MP for Marsden.<sup>284</sup> On the same night Alexander Young, the newly elected MP for Waikato, spoke at Devonport with Harris.<sup>285</sup> Sir James Carroll had also gone to Auckland to support Napier,<sup>286</sup> but this appears to have had negative repercussions. Rumours that Massey was coming to Devonport by ferry after the meeting at Parnell meant that Carroll's meeting emptied out as the audience joined the open-air meeting of Harris and Young in the hope of hearing Massey. When he arrived, Massey was accorded a 'tremendous ovation', partly because he had been prepared to speak outside in what was described as inclement weather, whereas Carroll had not.<sup>287</sup> Both Masterton and Pahiatua required a second ballot and Herdman first spoke in Eketahuna,<sup>288</sup> then at what was described as a 'monster rally' in Masterton and lastly at Pahiatua.<sup>289</sup> Thomas Mackenzie also spoke in Pahiatua to support the Liberal candidate Robert Ross, but he was not well received and the vote of confidence in the Liberal Party was lost.<sup>290</sup> Allen travelled to Christchurch to support the two Opposition candidates in a second ballot, John D. Hall in Christchurch North and Charles Ensor in Riccarton. While holding an open-air meeting in Christchurch North, Allen was subjected to considerable

<sup>280</sup> Erik Olssen, *A History of Otago*, Dunedin: John McIndoe, 1984, pp.118-119.

<sup>281</sup> Brian S.E. Bellringer, 'Conservatism and the Farmers: A Study in the Political Development of Taranaki-Wanganui between 1899 and 1925', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1958, pp.183-184.

<sup>282</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 9 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>283</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. II, M-Addenda, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, p.115.

<sup>284</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 13 December 1911, p.7.

<sup>285</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 14 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>286</sup> *Press*, 14 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>287</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 14 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>288</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 12 December 1911, p.5.

<sup>289</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 13 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>290</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 12 December 1911, p.5.

heckling, which the *Press* described as 'unfair, unsportsmanlike and unbritish'.<sup>291</sup> However, after travelling to Wellington for a cabinet meeting,<sup>292</sup> Ward does not seem to have appeared on the platform at all, despite four Wellington seats having second ballots. Reform seemed better prepared for the second ballot competitions. They were able to mobilise support for their candidates and the contrast between Massey's campaigning and Ward's was striking. In the week between the two ballots it was Massey who was out engaging with the public.

One aspect of the election which became clearer after the first ballot was the role that the various labour parties and candidates would play in the formation of a government. Despite earlier denials from political labour that it would consider any kind of deal with Reform, the idea did not go away. A letter to the *Evening Post* in July 1911 called on those voters who wanted a 'Labour Government' to vote for Reform because 'when a "reform" party fails to reform then a more radical party will be voted in'.<sup>293</sup> There were some in the political labour movement who believed that while there remained an alliance between political labour and the Liberal Party the cause of socialism would not advance.<sup>294</sup> There was also the perception that a Reform Government would benefit political labour in that a conservative administration would cause voters to look towards more radical parties at the next election. Reform was aware of these theories. Speaking in Frankton,<sup>295</sup> Martin had said that Reform saw nothing wrong with a moderate labour party and that 'those who desired a Labour Government in New Zealand should put out the present party. . . for it was much easier to replace a party which had been in office three years than one which had occupied the benches for 23 years'.<sup>296</sup> However, any chance of an alliance between political labour and Reform was still repudiated by some in the labour movement. McLaren continued to insist that he would not vote with Reform to remove the Liberal Government, saying that he would try and work with the Liberals to eject their more conservative elements.<sup>297</sup> Leonard Isitt addressed the idea of the Reform-labour alliance in his campaign opening speech. He believed that there was some truth in the idea that putting Massey in power would consolidate the left by drawing the more conservative Liberals to Reform. Yet he also saw a danger in this, as a Massey-led Government might be very hard to remove, particularly once they had the ability to use 'roads and bridges'.<sup>298</sup> Labour-aligned candidates continued to distance themselves from Reform, pointing out that the policies of the two parties had very little in common.<sup>299</sup> It is also probable that political labour was attempting to separate themselves from associations

<sup>291</sup> *Press*, 13 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>292</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 11 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>293</sup> *Evening Post*, 8 July 1911, p.11.

<sup>294</sup> Mark E. Dunick, 'Making Rebels: The New Zealand Socialist Party, 1901-1913', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2016, pp.20-21.

<sup>295</sup> A railway township north of Hamilton.

<sup>296</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 17 August 1911, p.2.

<sup>297</sup> *Evening Post*, 4 November 1911, p.9.

<sup>298</sup> *Star*, 14 November 1911, p.1.

<sup>299</sup> For example: *Bush Advocate*, 20 October 1911, p.4; *Southland Times*, 26 October 1911, p.7; *New Zealand Times*, 17 November 1911, p.5; *Evening Post*, 25 November 1911, p.9; *Colonist*, 30 November 1911, p.3.

with either party as one of the objects of those who formed labour parties was to separate from the Liberals.<sup>300</sup>

The pro-Reform newspapers were instrumental in keeping the idea of a Reform-labour coalition alive. The *Dominion* looked for ways to promote the commonalities between political labour and Reform, usually choosing to emphasise that both parties wanted to replace the Ward Government and that those who wished New Zealand to advance should vote for an anti-government candidate, without regard to whether they were labour-aligned or Reform.<sup>301</sup> The *New Zealand Herald* continued to promote the idea that there was a deal between Reform and political labour to remove the government.<sup>302</sup> The *Timaru Herald* told voters, 'the only policy which Labour now can adopt in its own interests is to combine with the Reform Party for the destruction of their common foe'.<sup>303</sup> Furthermore, there were signals that Reform and labour candidates were working together in individual electorates. The case of Reform withdrawing from Napier in favour of Henry Hill has already been discussed,<sup>304</sup> and on the eve of the first ballot Martin held a joint meeting in Foxton with the labour-aligned candidate for Otaki, John Robertson.<sup>305</sup>

The relationship between the three parties became central to the result of the second ballot. Of the thirty seats, fourteen were contests between a Liberal and Reform candidate, and in eight of these a labour-aligned candidate had come third.<sup>306</sup> This meant that the labour votes were crucial. There were also six seats where the Reform candidate had come third, and four in which the Liberal was in the same position. In the only study of the second ballot in New Zealand, Hamer points out that the Liberals appeared to have a simplistic understanding of how the second round of voting would run. Hamer hypothesised that leading members of the party had thought that it would consolidate the Liberal-labour vote behind one candidate.<sup>307</sup> They had also believed that the brief period of time between the first and second ballot would mean that there would not be

<sup>300</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, pp.17-23.

<sup>301</sup> *Dominion*, 7 August 1911, p.4; *Dominion*, 7 October 1911, p.4; *Dominion* 27 November 1911, p.6; *Dominion*, 8 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>302</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 October 1911, p.8. The *Herald* seems to have been the originator of the 1910 reports. Other reports of labour parties and Reform working together include: *West Coast Times*, 21 September 1911, p.2; *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 10 October 1911, p.4; *Evening Post*, 12 October 1911, p.3; *Hastings Standard*, 14 October 1911, p.3; *Timaru Herald*, 21 October 1911, p.4; *West Coast Times*, 28 October 1911, p.2; *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 6 November 1911, p.4; *Hastings Standard*, 5 December 1911, p.4; *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 9 November 1911, p.4.

<sup>303</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 11 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>304</sup> See p.153.

<sup>305</sup> *Manawatu Herald*, 5 December 1911, p.2.

<sup>306</sup> The remaining six were either between a Liberal and an Independent (Kaipara, Christchurch East and Dunedin West), Reformer and an Independent, (Raglan and Christchurch North) or, in Nelson, two Independents. I have chosen to class Isitt, Christchurch North, and Atmore, Nelson, as independents because a Liberal candidate stood against them, even though they voted with the Liberals in the House. Allen Bell the Independent in Raglan once had the support of Reform but was disowned by the party after expressing republican views, so I also classed him as independent.

<sup>307</sup> This was reflected in the pro-Liberal newspapers, who used this to predict the Liberal's win see: *Auckland Star*, 8 December 1911, p.4; *New Zealand Times*, 8 December 1911, p.6; *Greymouth Evening Star*, 8 December 1911, p.4; *Evening Star*, 8 December 1911, p.6; *Star*, 9 December 1911, p.7.

enough time to strike deals.<sup>308</sup> The confidence Ward displayed after the first ballot may have been based on this. On paper, if every voter who had voted labour now voted Liberal, and vice versa where there was no Liberal candidate, then he may have thought he would gain over twenty seats in the second ballot, enough to retain his majority. Furthermore, he may have believed that the Liberals were in a fortuitous middle position, where they would gain votes from Reform in the cases where there was a Liberal and labour-aligned candidate.<sup>309</sup>

However, the Liberals had not accounted for voters and the other parties thinking more strategically. Voters knew how the country at large had voted and were influenced by this,<sup>310</sup> each voter had the opportunity to vote again and it was not safe to assume they would vote the same way they had in the first ballot. During the campaign Reform had shown an understanding that the labour vote and any successful labour-aligned candidates could be their key to victory and this careful courting now became very important. Almost as soon as it became clear who was through to the second ballot, Reform began offering support for the labour-aligned candidate in those electorates where there was no Reformer on the ballot. The three seats where Reform joined with a labour-aligned candidate were Grey Lynn, Wanganui and Otaki. It seems that in Grey Lynn, Massey was particularly interested in helping the labour candidate, John Payne, unseat the sitting MP, George Fowlds. Fowlds had been critical of Massey during the campaign<sup>311</sup> and Massey felt special antipathy to Fowlds because he was a leaseholder and a single taxpayer.<sup>312</sup> Reform believed that, if elected, these labour-aligned candidates would work with Reform to vote the Liberal Government out.

The labour movement also seemed aware that its attitude could shape the second ballot. As Reform was offering its votes to political labour where there was no Reform candidate, labour became neutral or even positive toward Reform. On the day of the results the *Evening Post* reported that the labour-aligned candidate for Wellington Central, William Young, who had come third in the first ballot, had recommended that his supporters should not vote for the Liberal candidate who had used motor cars to bring electors to the polls and therefore used money 'to defeat the ends of democracy'.<sup>313</sup> McLaren quickly pointed out that Young did not speak for 'the Party' and that any decision on who to support would come from 'a Party meeting'.<sup>314</sup> Yet at the meeting, held the next night, it was decided not to direct voters toward any one party, saying the only obligation that

<sup>308</sup> D.A. Hamer, 'The Second Ballot: A New Zealand Electoral Experiment', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 21, no. 1, 1987, p.107.

<sup>309</sup> Expressed in: *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 13 December 1911, p.2; *Evening Post*, 13 December 1911, p.3.

<sup>310</sup> Hamer, 'The Second Ballot', p.106.

<sup>311</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 May 1911, p.6; *New Zealand Herald*, 25 November 1911, p.8; *Auckland Star*, 4 December 1911, p.5.

<sup>312</sup> *Auckland Star*, 4 December 1911, p.5; *Dominion*, 4 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>313</sup> *Evening Post*, 8 December 1911 p.7. The use of motorcars was often portrayed as being dishonest, as it was still a novelty to ride in one and offering to drive people to the polls was perceived as a form of 'treating'.

<sup>314</sup> *Evening Post*, 8 December 1911, p.7.

members of the 'Labour Party'<sup>315</sup> had was to vote for pledged candidates.<sup>316</sup> This was a moderation of McLaren's previous stance,<sup>317</sup> which had been against any alliance with Reform, but may also have been shaped by the fact that there were labour-aligned candidates in all Wellington area second ballots, apart from Wellington Central. In Invercargill, Hawke's Bay, and Timaru, where the labour-aligned candidate had come third, those candidates' committees also decided to remain neutral.<sup>318</sup> In Christchurch, the defeated labour candidate for Riccarton, Dan Sullivan, had to publicly deny that he had done a deal with the Reform candidate.<sup>319</sup> Others in the movement were more open about supporting Reform, with the leader of the Auckland 'Labour Party' saying he was delighted with the result and promising to support Dickson, the Reform candidate in Parnell.<sup>320</sup> At Harris' last meeting, the vice-president of the Auckland Trade's and Labour Council spoke in favour of a Massey Government and announced that he had no faith in Ward.<sup>321</sup> Pat Hickey, a Socialist candidate who had made it on to the second ballot in Ohinemuri, also made a public bid for the votes of the defeated Reform candidate.<sup>322</sup> The formation of tentative alliances between the two seemingly diametrically opposed parties is a testament to the long-term strategy that Reform had in relation to political labour.<sup>323</sup> Reform had entered the 1911 election with considerable planning and foresight, by realising as early as 1910 that labour-aligned votes may be the key to a Reform victory.

Those who were hoping for a decisive result after the second ballot were disappointed. The election delivered Reform a total of thirty-seven seats, the Liberals thirty-two, labour-aligned candidates four and Independents three. Reform had gained a further nine seats, winning Parnell, Raglan, Hawke's Bay, Pahiatua, Masterton, Wellington Suburbs and Waitaki from the Liberals and Wellington East from McLaren. Parnell added a second Auckland urban seat to Reform's tally. Boundary movements had changed Parnell from a safe Liberal seat to a marginal one, but, as in Auckland West, labour support appears to have been a significant factor. The Liberal candidate Sir John Findlay was an unpopular choice as he had spent most of his political life in Wellington and there was backlash against the 'southern carpetbagger' who was also a knight.<sup>324</sup> Winning Raglan completed the sweep of Reform in the Waikato and the addition of Hawke's Bay

<sup>315</sup> The report was referring to the New Zealand Labour Party, formed in July 1910. See: Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p.22; Franks and McAloon, p.57.

<sup>316</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 9 December 1911, p.5.

<sup>317</sup> There is evidence that McLaren personally was still against any 'labour' involvement with Reform, so the resolution of the meeting may suggest that the party was split. *New Zealand Times*, 11 December 1911, p.5, had an article by McLaren about why Reform and 'labour' were opposed.

<sup>318</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 13 December 1911, p.5; *Southland Times*, 13 December 1911, p.5; *Timaru Herald*, 14 December 1911, p.5.

<sup>319</sup> *Star*, 12 December 1911, p.3.

<sup>320</sup> *Evening Post*, 9 December 1911, p.3.

<sup>321</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p.41, noted that 'labour' support for Reform candidates was a feature of the second ballot contest in Auckland; Shannon, pp.137-138, described the support for Reform among political labour in Auckland.

<sup>322</sup> *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 13 December 1911, p.2.

<sup>323</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, p.44, also noted Reform as supporting labour candidates, but thought that Reform was motivated by a desire for power, rather than having any genuine sympathy for the labour cause.

<sup>324</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.337.

and Pahiatua meant that the only Liberal rural seat south of Lake Taupo was Egmont. Reform had targeted the four east coast seats in the lower North Island,<sup>325</sup> and with the addition of Masterton, they now held all of them. During the campaign Reform had drawn large crowds in Wellington and this popularity was reflected in the result. Reform won all but one of the city seats and the semi-rural Wellington Suburbs. In Wellington City, the two candidates eliminated by the first ballot were both labour-aligned. The winning Reform candidate, Francis Fisher, appears to have received significant support from political labour, as he increased his vote on the second ballot by over eight hundred.<sup>326</sup> The candidates eliminated in Wellington East's first ballot had been Liberal. Here Alfred Newman increased his vote by about four hundred, while his opponent, the New Zealand Labour Party's Dave McLaren, increased his by almost eight hundred, but this was not enough for McLaren to retain his seat. This suggests that most Liberal voters chose political labour in the second ballot, but a small minority were not prepared to vote for McLaren. The difference in the voting patterns in these adjacent seats shows that the Liberals, in general, did transfer their votes to political labour, as the instigators of the second ballot had hoped, yet labour-aligned voters did not vote Liberal to the same extent. Reform's victory in Waitaki added it to the neighbouring Oamaru. Wins in both were also the result of the careful targeting of the east coast seats between Christchurch and Dunedin. Reform did lose one seat to the Liberals, that of Wairau, in the upper South Island. Here, the 1908 victory had been against the political tide as the top of the South Island was an area of Reform weakness. The Reform MP, John Duncan, had been elected in 1908 as an 'independent', despite having stood previously as an oppositionist, and there had been some agitation among voters about the fact that once in the House he had joined Reform.<sup>327</sup> An examination of the seats Reform gained in both ballots reveals that, like in 1908, the gains matched their targeted campaigning.

Since employing Martin in 1906, one of the activities that Reform had focused on was organising voters at the electorate level. The value of this is illustrated by the growth in the number of seats Reform won, while their overall share of the vote remained reasonably static. In 1905, the Opposition won fifteen seats and thirty percent of the vote, in 1908 they added ten seats, yet only gained twenty-eight percent of the vote. The percentage of overall vote increased in 1911 to thirty-five, and they won thirty-seven seats.<sup>328</sup> Comparing the number of seats gained to the number of seats that would have been allocated in a purely proportional system reveals a striking pattern.<sup>329</sup> In 1905 Reform won fifteen seats, less than they would have if they had been distributed proportionally, the number under that system being twenty-two. In 1908 the two numbers were similar, with Reform winning twenty-five, but proportionally they would have received twenty-one. Crucially, in 1911 Reform won thirty-seven seats, considerably more than the twenty-six they were

<sup>325</sup> These were Hawke's Bay, Waipawa, Pahiatua and Masterton. The fifth, Wairarapa, they already held.

<sup>326</sup> General Election, 1911, *AJHR*, 1912 (S.2), H.12, pp.1-14.

<sup>327</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 29 August 1911, p.8; *Marlborough Express*, 16 October 1911, p.7.

<sup>328</sup> Lipson, p.187, for the 1908 and 1911 elections. The second ballot results are used where applicable and the Māori seats are not included.

<sup>329</sup> Lipson, p.187.

proportionally entitled to.<sup>330</sup> This shows the importance that the Reform organisation played in the 1911 election. Not only did it enable them to stand more candidates in more seats,<sup>331</sup> but good organisation at an electorate level got supporters to the polls which in turn ensured they won seats. The building of a strong and active party organisation had been one of the key factors leading Reform to hold the most seats in the House.

Furthermore, the five seats in which Reform had helped either a labour-aligned or Independent candidate were lost by the Liberals. The three seats where a labour candidate won with Reform support were Grey Lynn, Wanganui and Otaki. In all three seats the Reform candidate had publicly endorsed the labour-aligned candidate, and in Wanganui the committee of the defeated Reform candidate joined with that of the labour candidate.<sup>332</sup> Massey also telegraphed that he supported Robertson, the labour candidate for Otaki.<sup>333</sup> Nelson and Kaipara were the seats where Reform supported an independent. In Kaipara, Reform supported Gordon Coates, who was in a second ballot contest with the sitting Liberal MP, John Stallworthy. Coates had styled himself as an 'Independent Liberal', and there had been a Reform candidate in the first ballot, but Bassett used the fact Coates had the backing of the former Reform MP, Alfred Harding, to claim that Coates was really a Reformer.<sup>334</sup> In Nelson the second ballot candidates both described themselves as Independents. Reform chose to support Harry Atmore, who had previously been interviewed by Martin as a potential Reform candidate.<sup>335</sup> Atmore had chosen to remain independent, although he also claimed he would not support a Ward Government.<sup>336</sup>

Because of the deals struck in these seats, some newspapers believed that Massey would have a majority once parliament met. The *New Zealand Herald* called the election a victory for Massey and believed he had the numbers, as Atmore and three labour-aligned MPs would vote with Reform, because Reform had helped them to win their seats.<sup>337</sup> Both the *Dominion*<sup>338</sup> and the *Press*<sup>339</sup> thought that Ward would not be able

<sup>330</sup> Reform was stronger in country seats, and the country quota was operating during the period discussed. It is possible that because the country quota ensured there were more country seats this gave an advantage to Reform. However, in his analysis of the effect of the country quota between 1919 and 1931, Robert Chapman found that Reform did not have an advantage as redistribution would have resulted in more urban seats and Reform was electorally strong enough to have gained extra urban seats. See: R.M. Chapman, *The Political Scene, 1919-1931*, Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969, pp.66-68. This also fits with Fairburn and Haslett's analysis of Reform having broad support, see: Fairburn and Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey?'; Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett, 'Voter Behaviour and the Decline of the Liberals in Britain and New Zealand 1911-29: Some Comparisons', *Social History*, 30, no. 2 May, 2005,

<sup>331</sup> Fairburn and Haslett, 'Who Voted for Massey?', p.65 noted that Reform's increase in the overall percentage of the vote can be partly explained by the increase in candidates.

<sup>332</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 13 December 1911, p.5.

<sup>333</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 12 December 1911, p.5; Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, pp.43-44.

<sup>334</sup> Michael Bassett, *Coates of Kaipara*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995, pp.32-33.

<sup>335</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 4 August 1911, p.5.

<sup>336</sup> *Dominion*, 28 August 1911, p.6.

<sup>337</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>338</sup> *Dominion*, 15 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>339</sup> *Press*, 15 December 1911, p.6.

to form a government, the *Timaru Herald* called on Ward to resign immediately,<sup>340</sup> and the *Waikato Argus* called Massey the next Prime Minister.<sup>341</sup> However, there was some caution expressed and a few papers thought the result was unclear. The *New Zealand Times* headline declared the parties to be very narrowly divided,<sup>342</sup> and the *Evening Star* believed that it would be hard for Ward to continue with the present numbers, but that it would also be difficult for Massey to form a government.<sup>343</sup> Even those papers which thought Ward might be able to command a majority had doubts about it lasting,<sup>344</sup> with the *Auckland Star* suggesting that it might be better to let Massey take office so the Liberals could re-group for an early election.<sup>345</sup> The *Evening Post* was alone in thinking that Ward might be able to pull together a stable majority, based on its political reporter's belief that the labour MPs and the Independents would vote with Ward.<sup>346</sup>

The election for the Māori seats was due to be held on 19 December, five days after the second ballot results. The result in these four seats was now crucial, as this was the number Reform needed to gain a majority. Conversely if all four were added to the Liberal total, it would give Ward almost the same number of seats as Massey, putting him in a stronger position. Since the advent of harder party lines in the 1890s, the Māori members had always voted with the Liberals, but this trend now appeared to be in some doubt. The *Dominion* was the first to suggest what might happen, stating that Māori members were fickle and would switch to Reform because they liked to be on the winning side.<sup>347</sup> However, the result of Eastern Māori was already known as Āpirana Ngata had been elected uncontested. Ngata had been a Liberal supporter in the past and there was no reason to believe that he would now switch to Reform. In Southern Māori, Tame Parata had stood down after being appointed to the Legislative Council,<sup>348</sup> but his youngest son Taare Parata<sup>349</sup> was standing and expected to win.<sup>350</sup> Both Northern and Western Māori had sitting MPs contesting against strong opponents. The European newspapers seemed to have little idea of how the elections in these seats would play out, but Te Rangi Hiroa,<sup>351</sup> the MP for Northern Māori, was predicted to win.<sup>352</sup> In Western Māori the

<sup>340</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 15 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>341</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 15 December 1911, p.2.

<sup>342</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 15 December 1911, p.1.

<sup>343</sup> *Evening Star*, 15 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>344</sup> *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 15 December 1911, p.2; *Stratford Evening Post*, 15 December 1911, p.5; *Horowhenua Chronicle*, 15 December 1911, p.2; *Oamaru Mail*, 16 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>345</sup> *Auckland Star*, 15 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>346</sup> *Evening Post*, 15 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>347</sup> *Dominion*, 15 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>348</sup> John Broughton and Matapura Ellison, 'Parata, Tame Haereroa', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2p4/parata-tame-haereroa>, accessed 19 March 2018.

<sup>349</sup> Angela Ballara, 'Parata, Katherine Te Rongokahira', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3p6/parata-katherine-te-rongokahira>, accessed 19 March 2018.

<sup>350</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 16 December 1911, p.8.

<sup>351</sup> M.P.K. Sorrenson, 'Buck, Peter Henry', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3b54/buck-peter-henry>, accessed 19 March 2018.

<sup>352</sup> *Auckland Star*, 16 December 1911, p.8; *Dominion*, 16 December 1911, p.6.

newspapers thought the incumbent MP, Henare Kaihau,<sup>353</sup> would lose, but were divided over who would take his place.<sup>354</sup> On the eve of the election the *Wairarapa Age* predicted that the Liberals would secure three Māori seats, those of Ngata, Te Rangi Hiroa and Parata, and that the winner of Western Māori would support Reform.<sup>355</sup> Once the results became clear, there was still no agreement among the newspapers as to which Māori MP supported which party. The *Dominion* said that it was a two-way split, predicting the new MPs Parata and Maui Pōmare, who had won the election for Western Māori, would support Reform and the two returning MPs the Liberals.<sup>356</sup> However, the *Wairarapa Daily Times* thought it highly unlikely that Parata would choose Reform as his father had been a staunch Liberal and it was likely that his son would be the same.<sup>357</sup> This proved to be correct and only Pōmare left the solid Liberal block.<sup>358</sup>

## The negotiations to form a government

The results in the Māori seats meant the outcome of the election was now dependent on the labour-aligned and Independent MPs. Reform held thirty-eight seats and the Liberals thirty-five, so either side would need to broker an agreement with some of the other seven MPs. A further blow was struck to Ward's chance of forming a government when it was announced that Thomas Wilford, Liberal MP for Hutt, was departing New Zealand for England, as he needed to have surgery for complications he had suffered from an appendicitis operation earlier in the year.<sup>359</sup> Massey refused to give Ward a pair for Wilford,<sup>360</sup> reducing Ward to thirty-four, meaning he had to convince all seven of the unpledged MPs to vote with him to gain the majority of forty-one. Between Christmas and New Year Ward met with his MPs in both the South<sup>361</sup> and North<sup>362</sup> Islands. The *Dominion* reported that they had a leak from the South Island caucus and that the Liberals hoped to carry on for three to six months by avoiding calling parliament.<sup>363</sup> This was further backed by the *New Zealand Herald*, which reported that Ward believed he had a majority of one so he could wait until the traditional time of June to face parliament.<sup>364</sup> The pro-Reform newspapers were not happy with the idea that the Liberals may attempt to deny Massey office until

<sup>353</sup> NZDB, 'Kaihau, Henare', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2k3/kaihau-henare>, accessed 19 March 2018.

<sup>354</sup> *Auckland Star*, 16 December 1911, p.8; *Dominion*, 16 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>355</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 18 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>356</sup> *Dominion*, 20 December 1911, p.9.

<sup>357</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 20 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>358</sup> Graham Butterworth, 'Pomare, Maui Wiremu Piti Naera', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3p30/pomare-maui-wiremu-piti-naera>, accessed 19 March 2018.

<sup>359</sup> Susan Butterworth, 'Wilford, Thomas Mason', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3w17/wilford-thomas-mason>, accessed 19 March 2018.

<sup>360</sup> Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward: A Political Biography*, p.206.

<sup>361</sup> *Dominion*, 29 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>362</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 30 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>363</sup> *Dominion*, 29 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>364</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 January 1912, p.6.

June,<sup>365</sup> and the *Dominion* implied that by delaying the calling of parliament, Ward was trying to hide his mismanagement from the incoming Reform Government.<sup>366</sup> Bassett believed that Ward had been prepared to call parliament in early January but had been convinced by his caucus meetings to delay.<sup>367</sup> Whatever Ward's intentions, the Governor, Lord Islington, confided to the Colonial Office that he had told Ward that delaying the meeting of parliament for six months when it was unclear who commanded the confidence of the House was unconstitutional and would place him in a difficult position.<sup>368</sup> On 8 January Ward announced that although he believed he had a majority and could wait until June, considering the fine balance of the two parties he had decided not to wait and parliament would meet on 15 February.<sup>369</sup> In response to this announcement Massey said that Ward had let the voters down by waiting so long to test the strength of the parties in the House and that he believed there had been 'wire-pulling' going on behind the scenes.<sup>370</sup>

Once a date had been set, speculation began as to which way the seven non-pledged MPs would vote. Three of these were independent, four were labour-aligned and all but one, Alfred Hindmarsh,<sup>371</sup> owed their seat to Reform support on the second ballot. It appeared that Hindmarsh would vote with Ward as he had promised to do so during the second ballot campaign in return for Liberal support.<sup>372</sup> There was a report in late December that Hindmarsh, William Veitch and Robertson had agreed to vote against the government, but this was an isolated statement.<sup>373</sup> Throughout the speculation in January Hindmarsh was always seen as a certain vote for Ward. It was also assumed that Coates and Thomas Rhodes would vote with Ward, based on the platform promises they had given.<sup>374</sup> However, there was considerable confusion around the intentions of the other four. In general, pro-Reform newspapers cited the promises of the three other labour-aligned members as proof that Massey had a majority,<sup>375</sup> with the *Dominion* pointing out 'We have shown again and again . . . that in addition to the 37 members of the Reform Party there are at least four or five other members *pledged to vote against the Government*'.<sup>376</sup> On the other hand, some suggested that it seemed unlikely that labour

<sup>365</sup> For example: *West Coast Times*, 3 January 1912, p.2; *Mataura Ensign*, 3 January 1912, p.4; *Manawatu Standard*, 4 January 1912, p.4; *Dominion*, 4 January 1912, p.4.

<sup>366</sup> *Dominion*, 2 January 1912, p.4.

<sup>367</sup> Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, p.203.

<sup>368</sup> Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, p.204.

<sup>369</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 9 January 1912, p.5.

<sup>370</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 9 January 1911, p.8.

<sup>371</sup> Kerry Taylor, 'Hindmarsh, Alfred Humphrey', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3h28/hindmarsh-alfred-humphrey>, accessed 19 March 2018.

<sup>372</sup> Michael Bassett, *Three Party Politics in New Zealand, 1911-1931*, Auckland: Historical Publications, 1982 p.5.

<sup>373</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 30 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>374</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 4 January 1912, p.4.

<sup>375</sup> *Dominion*, 4 January 1912, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 10 January 1912, p.8; *Manawatu Standard*, 13 January 1912, p.4; *Dominion*, 15 January 1912, p.4; *Timaru Herald*, 25 January 1912, p.4; *Southland Times*, 26 January 1912, p.4; *Dominion*, 8 February 1912, p.4; *Dominion*, 14 February 1912, p.4.

<sup>376</sup> *Dominion*, 2 February 1912, p.4, emphasis original.

would vote with Reform,<sup>377</sup> and the *Manawatu Herald* thought that 'Mr Massey made a tactical blunder by entering in to a hustings alliance with Labour', and that Veitch, Robertson and Payne would not repay his favours.<sup>378</sup>

It seemed that the remaining four MPs themselves were unsure. Harry Atmore, the unpledged Independent, seemed to side with Massey,<sup>379</sup> but refused to be associated with Reform.<sup>380</sup> Payne, one of the four labour-aligned MPs, had issued a statement in December saying that he had been elected by the workers of Grey Lynn not the Reform Party, and that he and the three other labour MPs would vote with Ward if he offered the Premiership to one and cabinet posts to the others.<sup>381</sup> This statement was considered presumptuous,<sup>382</sup> but it was also an indication that perhaps the labour-aligned members would not honour their pledges. As February approached Payne, in particular, seemed to suggest that he might not vote with Massey. In early February there had been a strike of tramway workers in Wellington. The disruptive effect of the strike had led both the *Evening Post* and the *Dominion* to criticise the leaders of the Tramway Union, and the Federation of Labour, whom they blamed for the Union choosing militant action.<sup>383</sup> Payne gave an interview towards the end of the strike in which he said that the *Dominion's* and the Reform Party's attitude toward the strikers meant that the labour-aligned members would be justified in voting against Massey.<sup>384</sup> Another idea that emerged was that Ward could resign as the three labour-aligned members were pledged to 'turn out the Ward Government' not the 'Liberal Government'.<sup>385</sup> Payne's declarations and the suggestion that the labour pledges may not be honoured pointed to the possibility that Reform might not be able to gain a majority.

The idea that another election might be needed had been proposed since the result of the second ballot became known.<sup>386</sup> An honest appraisal of the numbers also suggested

<sup>377</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 3 January 1912, p.7; *Star*, 6 January 1912, p.6; *New Zealand Times*, 12 January 1912, p.4.

<sup>378</sup> *Manawatu Herald*, 27 February 1911, p.2.

<sup>379</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 4 January 1912, p.4.

<sup>380</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 17 January 1912, p.4.

<sup>381</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 26 December 1911, p.6.

<sup>382</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 26 December 1911, p.6; *Wairarapa Age*, 27 December 1911, p.4; *Manawatu Times*, 27 December 1911, p.4; *Oamaru Mail*, 27 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>383</sup> *Dominion*, 1 February 1912, p.4; *Dominion*, 2 February 1912, p.4; *Evening Post*, 3 February 1912, p.4; *Dominion*, 3 February 1912, p.4; *Evening Post*, 6 February 1912, p.6; *Dominion*, 6 February 1912, p.4; *Evening Post*, 8 February 1912, p.6.

<sup>384</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 6 February 1912, p.5.

<sup>385</sup> Some historians have suggested that when Ward did resign it was a surprise, however the first reports that this was a tactical move he was considering appeared in early January. For Ward's resignation in mid-February see: Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, pp.206-207; Bassett, *Three Party Politics, 1911-1931*, pp.10-11; Shannon, pp.157-158; R.M. Burdon, *The New Dominion; a Social and Political History of New Zealand, 1918-39*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1965 p.4; B. H. Farland, *Farmer Bill: William Ferguson Massey and the Reform Party*, Wellington: B. Farland, 2008, p.109; Hamer noted reports from mid-January see: Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.343. For newspaper reports of Ward's possible resignation see: *Press*, 10 January 1912, p.8; *Manawatu Standard*, 26 January 1912, p.4.

<sup>386</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 25 January 1912, p.6; *Feilding Star*, 17 February 1912, p.2; *Ashburton Guardian*, 17 February 1912, p.4; *Poverty Bay Herald*, 28 February 1912, p.4; *West Coast Times*, 28 February 1912, p.2.

that even if Massey won a no-confidence vote, he could very quickly lose the next one. If the three labour-aligned MPs felt their pledge to him had been honoured by the first vote they then could, with a clear conscience, vote with the Liberals.<sup>387</sup> Although the pro-Reform newspapers continued to present the idea that Massey would be able to form a government, there is evidence that Reform was continuing to campaign in the belief that another election might be necessary. During January and early February Massey and the party conducted a series of public meetings. Mostly designed to congratulate the winning Reform MPs or to reward candidates, they had the added benefit of keeping Reform in the public eye. The first was held at Epsom, to celebrate the victory of Lang in Manakau and when Massey spoke he said that Reform was ready for whatever lay ahead.<sup>388</sup> A picnic was held for the new West Auckland Reform MP, James Bradney, which Massey also attended, showing his physical strength by winning a hundred-yard race.<sup>389</sup> Other centres where meetings were held included Hamilton,<sup>390</sup> Ellerslie,<sup>391</sup> Norsewood,<sup>392</sup> Waiau,<sup>393</sup> Christchurch,<sup>394</sup> Winton,<sup>395</sup> Wellington,<sup>396</sup> and Onewhero.<sup>397</sup> Furthermore, Reform held some election-style meetings designed to display strength and unity. The first, held in the Auckland Town Hall in late January, attracted an audience of over three thousand. The tone was one of triumph, 'See the Conquering Hero Comes' was played by the organist as Massey took the stage, and many Reform MPs also spoke.<sup>398</sup> On his way to Wellington for the February session, Massey also participated in garden parties and public meetings in Te Kuiti<sup>399</sup> and Feilding.<sup>400</sup> Again he was accompanied by Reform MPs, and crucially, Pōmare spoke at Feilding, which appeared to signal that he was part of the party. By contrast Ward spent the end of January and beginning of February touring the North Island in his car and indulging in some fishing.<sup>401</sup> Despite posturing by some newspapers, Reform seems to have been cautious about its ability to gain a majority. The party remained in electioneering mode and this stance may indicate that Massey and other senior party members felt that there was a distinct possibility that neither party would be able to form a stable majority.

<sup>387</sup> *Dominion*, 9 February 1912, p.4, presented this scenario, which was probably a reflection of what the Reform leadership was thinking.

<sup>388</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 12 January 1912, p.6.

<sup>389</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 January 1912, p.8.

<sup>390</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 January 1912, p.6.

<sup>391</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 January 1912, p.8.

<sup>392</sup> *Wanganui Daily Times*, 20 January 1912, p.4.

<sup>393</sup> *Star*, 22 January 1912, p.1

<sup>394</sup> *Star*, 25 January 1912, p.1

<sup>395</sup> *Southland Times*, 25 January 1912, p.7.

<sup>396</sup> *Dominion*, 2 February 1912, p.4.

<sup>397</sup> *Auckland Star*, 3 February 1912, p.9.

<sup>398</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 January 1912, p.9; Reform Party (N.Z.): Town Hall Auckland. Reform Party demonstration, Wednesday, January 24, 1912, Eph-A-Politics-1912-01, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>399</sup> *King Country Chronicle*, 10 February 1912, p.3.

<sup>400</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 13 February 1912, p.4.

<sup>401</sup> Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward: A Political Biography*, p.205.

## The February meeting of parliament

Two days before parliament was due to meet the *Evening Post* published an article entitled 'Will the Government Survive? A Surprise Predict'. The reporter said there had been good grounds to think that the Liberal Government would lose the vote of confidence, but there was now some reason to believe that the three labour-aligned members, and one independent, would vote with Ward, leaving parliament tied at thirty-nine a piece. The paper pointed out that if this happened the Speaker would have the casting vote, which, according to custom would have to be for the status quo and so the government would survive.<sup>402</sup> This report was discredited by some pro-Reform newspapers,<sup>403</sup> but it proved to be a remarkably accurate prediction. A two-week session full of unexpected twists began with the Speech from the Throne that signalled the Liberals had taken a lurch to the left, with the government indicating that it planned to adopt many of the labour election platforms.<sup>404</sup> This was seen as a blatant attempt by Ward to secure the undecided labour members.<sup>405</sup> The next sitting day Ward announced that he was stepping down as leader of the Liberals and would no longer be Prime Minister, no matter who won the vote.<sup>406</sup> This was followed closely by an announcement from Payne that he would now vote with the government,<sup>407</sup> suggesting that the two were linked. The *Dominion* greeted Payne's announcement by declaring that 'the Opposition defeated an alleged single-taxer and won a double-dealer'.<sup>408</sup> Massey's patience became strained, and he alleged that Payne had received money to change his vote, which then led to a breach of privilege complaint against him.<sup>409</sup> Rumours began flying about the last three unknown votes, those of Atmore, Veitch and Robertson. There were contradictory reports about which way these men would vote,<sup>410</sup> but it seemed that Atmore would be the decider.<sup>411</sup> When the vote was taken, in the early hours of 28 February, it was Atmore's choice to vote with the Liberals which produced the result the *Evening Post* had predicted. The parties were tied at thirty-nine and the Speaker voted with the government to secure a Liberal majority.<sup>412</sup>

The weeks of speculation were over and Reform's attempt at second ballot deals with

<sup>402</sup> *Evening Post*, 13 February 1912, p.8.

<sup>403</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 14 February 1912, p.8; *Dominion*, 14 February 1912, p.4.

<sup>404</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 17 February 1912, p.8; *Auckland Star*, 17 February 1912, p.5.

<sup>405</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 February 1912, p.6; *Mataura Ensign*, 17 February 1912, p.4; Shannon, p.155; Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, pp.205-206.

<sup>406</sup> *Press*, 22 February 1912, p.6; Shannon, p.158.

<sup>407</sup> *Evening Post*, 23 February 1912, p.3.

<sup>408</sup> *Dominion*, 23 February 1912, p.6.

<sup>409</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 24 February 1912, p.8, had a good summary of what occurred; Farland, *Farmer Bill*, pp.109-110.

<sup>410</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 14 February 1912, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 14 February 1912, p.8; *Dominion*, 14 February 1912, p.6; *Greymouth Evening Star*, 17 February 1912 p.4; *Auckland Star*, 19 February 1912, p.7; *Evening Star*, 20 February 1912, p.4; *Otago Daily Times*, 23 February 1912, p.5; *Colonist*, 23 February 1912, p.2; *Press*, 26 February 1912, p.7; *Timaru Herald*, 26 August 1912, p.4; *Horowhenua Chronicle*, 26 February 1912, p.3.

<sup>411</sup> *Hasting Standard*, 27 February 1912, p.5.

<sup>412</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 28 February 1912, p.5.

the three labour-aligned and two Independents had failed. Of those Reform had supported, only Veitch had voted with them.<sup>413</sup> Atmore received some criticism from Nelson voters who felt that they had been misled,<sup>414</sup> but most of the condemnation went to the two labour MPs, Payne and Robertson.<sup>415</sup> Atmore probably received less disapproval as he had been much clearer about his independence, whereas Veitch, Payne and Robertson had indicated that they would vote with Reform to remove the Liberal Government and had benefited from Reform votes. Some newspapers opined that the way Payne and Robertson had cited Reform's behaviour during the Wellington Tramway strike to explain their change in vote was weak. The *Wairarapa Age* summed up the general feeling by saying that Massey did not speak about the strike and that the MPs were upset about the attitude of a newspaper, not the party.<sup>416</sup> The *Wairarapa Age* was correct in pointing out that neither Massey or anyone associated with Reform had spoken publicly about the strike, so it does appear that Payne and Robertson were trying to justify their position. It is likely that both men had given the pledge thinking that they may never be called upon to fulfil it. Even with the knowledge that the first ballot had favoured Reform, it is possible that they did not believe that Massey would get enough seats to be in a position to call on their votes. In the week between the two ballots, those within Liberal circles seemed to think that the fact that it was mainly political labour or Liberal first ballot votes that were the ones to be redistributed meant that the remaining Liberal or labour candidate would win, swinging the election in Ward's favour. As Hamer points out, the second ballot did not work like this,<sup>417</sup> and Massey won the most seats. This had left the labour-aligned members in an inconvenient situation. The experience left Massey perturbed, as he had tried to reach out to political labour and been betrayed. His anger was evidenced by his accusations against Payne, which were out of character,<sup>418</sup> and his experience probably shaped his subsequent opinion of organised labour.

Once the Liberals had secured the confidence of the House, it adjourned until July. However, the future was less than clear. There was no indication as to who would lead the Liberal Party, or, if the vote of no-confidence was taken again, that they could win. When interviewed after the session, Massey had said he believed that a ministry which had a minority of seats, and many hangers-on to please, could not last very long, and ended by saying 'I certainly do not wish to rush the country into another election, but the coming session of parliament may show that there is no other way out of the difficulty'.<sup>419</sup> During March the Liberals appointed a new leader, Thomas Mackenzie, but the process seemed

<sup>413</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 158, 27 June – 14 August 1912, pp.378-379.

<sup>414</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 11 March 1911, p.6; *Nelson Evening Mail*, 22 March 1912, p.6; *Nelson Evening Mail*, 11 April 1912, p.6.

<sup>415</sup> *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 28 February 1912, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 29 February 1912, p.8; *Hastings Standard*, 1 March 1912, p.4; *Otago Daily Times*, 16 March 1912, p.10; *New Zealand Herald*, 19 March 1912, p.8; *Northern Advocate*, 21 March 1912, p.4.

<sup>416</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 26 February 1912, p.4.

<sup>417</sup> Hamer, 'The Second Ballot', p.106.

<sup>418</sup> Farland, *Farmer Bill*, p.110; W.J. Gardner, 'The Rise of W.F. Massey, 1891-1912', *Political Science*, 13, no. 1, 1961, p.23.

<sup>419</sup> *Press*, 4 March 1912, p.7.

to highlight the party's fractures, alienating a faction led by John Millar.<sup>420</sup> Mackenzie seemed aware of the precarious position of his government, and undertook a tour of the country in April and June.<sup>421</sup> Meanwhile Massey and other Reform Party MPs were doing the same. Massey toured Taranaki at the end of March,<sup>422</sup> and in April travelled to the South Island where he visited Christchurch,<sup>423</sup> Southland<sup>424</sup> and Dunedin.<sup>425</sup> In late May he also spent time in his own electorate<sup>426</sup> and the adjacent northern Waikato.<sup>427</sup> Other Reform MPs were also holding meetings; George Anderson, the Reform MP for Matura, visited the Ngaruwahia district,<sup>428</sup> and Massey took Anderson, William Nosworthy, the Reform MP for Ashburton, and David Buick, Reform MP for Palmerston North, with him on his visit to Southland.<sup>429</sup> This touring by both parties gave an election feel to the recess and suggests that both Mackenzie and Massey were aware that another election might be necessary in short order.

The appointment of Mackenzie as leader had driven further splits in the Liberal Party. The first sign that he might have a problem holding his majority together came in late March, when it was reported that Payne was now threatening to vote against the government because there had been no labour-aligned MPs included in the new cabinet.<sup>430</sup> However, a more serious threat was posed by Millar, who had hoped to become the leader. In late April he asked his election committee to release him from his pledge to vote with the Liberals.<sup>431</sup> He then travelled to Auckland,<sup>432</sup> where he gave a statement saying that he was positive that the government would be defeated when the House met, but that there would not be another election.<sup>433</sup> Further indication of Millar's alignment with Reform was seen when he held a public meeting in Dunedin in late May at which three Reform MPs spoke.<sup>434</sup> However, the defection of Millar was not enough to undermine the government's majority as Veitch's first vote had freed him from his pledge to Massey and he was now proposing to vote with the government. It was a signal from another MP, Gordon Coates, that he too had joined Reform which began to tip the numbers towards the party. He was invited to join Massey at the celebratory banquet held for him by his constituents. Although Coates did not attend he sent a congratulatory telegram<sup>435</sup>

<sup>420</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, pp.348-354.

<sup>421</sup> Bassett, *Three Party Politics*, p.13.

<sup>422</sup> *Stratford Evening Post*, 29 March 1912, p.3.

<sup>423</sup> *Press*, 11 April 1912, p.7.

<sup>424</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 18 April 1912, p.8; *Otago Daily Times*, 22 April 1912, p.3.

<sup>425</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 22 April 1912, p.4.

<sup>426</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 June 1912, p.8.

<sup>427</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 30 May 1912, p.8; *Waikato Argus*, 30 May 1912, p.2.

<sup>428</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 2 April 1912, p.8.

<sup>429</sup> *Dominion*, 17 April 1912, p.6; *Press*, 24 April 1912, p.10; *Manawatu Standard*, 24 April 1912, p.5.

<sup>430</sup> *Star*, 30 March 1912, p.7.

<sup>431</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 27 April 1912, p.4

<sup>432</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 29 April 1912, p.4.

<sup>433</sup> *Press*, 11 May 1912, p.10.

<sup>434</sup> *Evening Post*, 31 May 1912, p.3.

<sup>435</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 June 1912, p.8.

and then in June appeared on the platform with Massey at Helensville<sup>436</sup> and Dargaville.<sup>437</sup> After these meetings it was announced that Coates had also asked his election committee to relieve him of his promise to support the Liberals and his committee had expressed the preference for him to vote for Reform.<sup>438</sup>

## The July meeting of parliament

As the date for the resumption of parliament drew near, the opinion in the newspapers seemed to suggest that Reform had the numbers to win a no-confidence vote.<sup>439</sup> The Reform caucus met in the week leading up to the session and Massey emerged confident. He gave an interview to the *New Zealand Herald* in which he said that the Speech from the Throne had caused some Liberals to defect and that he was now sure that a majority of members were willing to work with him.<sup>440</sup> When compared to the excitement of February the new session seemed to hold an air of inevitability, the *Dominion* said 'the house is subdued and the debates lacklustre'.<sup>441</sup> The *Feilding Star* asked 'why is it that the electors of the Dominion are not throbbing with interest and palpitating with excitement', and noted they were getting more enquires about the score in the Cricket test match between Australia and England than the progress in parliament.<sup>442</sup> When the no-confidence debate came on 5 July it was not expected. The conclusion was forced by a government motion at 11.45pm to adjourn the debate for the night, which they lost thirty-nine to thirty-three. After a long debate which lasted most of the night,<sup>443</sup> the division was taken, and Reform won forty-one to thirty-three. Those who switched to Reform included Coates, Millar, Thomas Rhodes, Edward Clark, the 'Independent Liberal' MP for Chalmers, who had defected with Millar, and Vernon Reed, the Liberal MP for Bay of Islands.<sup>444</sup> Rhodes had hinted earlier that he might vote with Reform, having told a reporter that his only pledge was to support a freehold government.<sup>445</sup> Reed's vote came as a surprise,<sup>446</sup> and he was criticised for being the official Liberal candidate and then voting against his party, the *Evening Post* arguing he should seek a fresh mandate from his electorate.<sup>447</sup> Understandably Reform were jubilant and began triumphant shouting, but Massey did not allow this to continue. He gave a short speech and to mark the end

<sup>436</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 June 1912, p.14.

<sup>437</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 June 1912, p.8.

<sup>438</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 24 June 1912, p.8.

<sup>439</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 26 June 1912, p.8; *Taranaki Herald*, 26 June 1912, p.2; *Hastings Standard*, 27 June 1912, p.4; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27 June 1912 p.4; *Evening Star*, 27 June 1912, p.4; *Evening Post*, 29 June 1912, p.6; *New Zealand Herald*, 2 July 1912, p.8; *Manawatu Standard*, 2 July 1912, p.5.

<sup>440</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 June 1912, p.8.

<sup>441</sup> *Dominion*, 3 July 1912, p.6.

<sup>442</sup> *Feilding Star*, 5 July 1912, p.2.

<sup>443</sup> A detailed account appeared in Shannon, pp.185-187.

<sup>444</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.353.

<sup>445</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 2 July 1912, p.6

<sup>446</sup> *Evening Star*, 8 July 1912, p.4.

<sup>447</sup> *Evening Post*, 11 July 1912, p.6.

of eighteen years on the Opposition benches, the new Prime Minister had a victory party at Bellamy's before going home to sleep.<sup>448</sup> His new Reform Government was officially sworn in on 10 July 1912,<sup>449</sup> the first change of government in New Zealand for twenty-one years.

## Conclusion

The surety of support that Seddon and the Liberals had enjoyed during the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century suggested that 'modern' party politics was beginning to take hold in New Zealand.<sup>450</sup> However, the uncertainty after the 1911 election broke the lengthy period of clear election results, demonstrating that the New Zealand party system was being re-shaped. The emergence of Reform as the most organised and coherent political party New Zealand had experienced<sup>451</sup> shifted the way parties interacted. As Hamer points out, one problem the Liberals had was that they faced an organised and aggressive challenger.<sup>452</sup> Furthermore, the success of labour parties<sup>453</sup> in the election also indicated the beginning of three distinct parties,<sup>454</sup> another factor which led to the circumstances experienced in 1911. Yet, it was the development of Reform as a party which had the greatest impact on the election. Reform displayed long-term strategy, selected candidates early and recognised that a partnership with political labour might be the key to gaining a majority. Their campaign appeared intentional, with Massey and other MPs choosing carefully where to speak, what to say and targeting Liberal electorates they believed they could win. Reform showed sensitivity to the changes in New Zealand society that had the potential to affect the Liberal vote, and their election material focused on some of these areas. The Liberals were also fracturing, being unable to encompass both moderate and radical views. The Liberal weakness did help Reform and political labour, and both parties actively lobbied for disaffected Liberals. Yet, to win an election a party needs to campaign strongly, and as Massey said in his speech to the crowd gathered in Queen Street to hear the second ballot results, he had 'put up the biggest fight this country had ever seen'.<sup>455</sup>

<sup>448</sup> John E. Martin, *The House: New Zealand's House of Representatives 1854-2004*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2004, p.143.

<sup>449</sup> Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, p.215.

<sup>450</sup> Stephen Church, 'Electoral Systems, Party Systems, and Stability in New Zealand', PhD Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1998, p.145; Martin, *The House*, pp.144-145.

<sup>451</sup> W.J. Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power, 1912-1925', *Political Science*, 13, no. 2, 1961, p.1; Martin, *The House*, p.148. For a contemporary expression: *Dominion*, 1 July 1912, p.4.

<sup>452</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.331.

<sup>453</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, pp.36-45 had considerable detail of the various labour groups which contested the 1911 election.

<sup>454</sup> Raymond Miller, *Party Politics in New Zealand*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.30, dated the three-party era from 1916, when the Labour Party was formed. However, it is clear from the 1911 result that the disruptive effect of independent labour was affecting the party system; Bassett, *Three Party Politics*, pp.3-4, dated the three-party system from 1911.

<sup>455</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 December 1911, p.7.



## Chapter 6

# The Reform Party Organisation 1912-1915

*'The chief business of the gathering was to arrange a scheme of organisation and to arrange for the General Election'<sup>1</sup>*  
– William Massey

From 1891, when the National Association was formed, to 1912, when the first Political Reform League Dominion Conference was held, those who opposed the Liberals largely believed that good 'party' organisation was an essential element they needed to win elections. Apart from the period between 1899 and 1903, this belief had led Reform and its predecessors to pay considerable attention to political organisation. This thesis has contested the notion that the opposition to the Liberals was disorganised, arguing that the National Association was relatively well organised, but lacked a compelling political message and leadership. However, it was in the period between 1912 and 1915 that the Reform Party's efforts to build a strong organisation were most noticeable. The fact Reform had considerably better organisation than the Liberals has been recognised in previous studies,<sup>2</sup> but the party's strength is often attributed to the powerful presence of Massey. Furthermore, historians have tended to draw parallels between the Liberals under Seddon and Reform under Massey,<sup>3</sup> with Gardner presenting Reform's success as the result of Massey's political skills and neglecting the role of the party itself.<sup>4</sup> This chapter redresses the balance and argues that during this period Reform began to display attributes of a mass political party.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Massey, speaking on the purpose of the first Political Reform League Dominion Conference in 1912, cited in W.J. Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power, 1912-1925', *Political Science*, 13, no. 2, 1961, p.20.

<sup>2</sup> B.H. Farland, *Farmer Bill: William Ferguson Massey and the Reform Party*, Wellington: B. Farland, 2008, p.98; John E. Martin, *The House: New Zealand's House of Representatives 1854-2004*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2004, p.148.

<sup>3</sup> R.S. Milne, *Political Parties in New Zealand*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1966, p.169; Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.20.

<sup>4</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.20.

<sup>5</sup> The definition of a mass party is discussed in the introduction, see: p.3.

There is ample evidence that, from the inception of the Political Reform Leagues, the party itself was largely autonomous and Massey did not display the same level of control that Seddon did within the Liberal Party.<sup>6</sup> From 1906, when Richard Martin was employed as the League organiser, Reform had an ambitious scheme of local electorate organisation. This scheme owed much to the earlier National Association, probably because many of the men who were involved with the Political Reform League had also been part of the Association. The main growth in Political Reform Leagues occurred between 1912 and 1915. During this period the party had a national executive which met regularly, held annual conferences, and had an extensive network of active branches. By the outbreak of First World War there were Political Reform Leagues throughout New Zealand. Furthermore, the depth of the party's organisation was illustrated by the dramatic increase in its share of the vote in the 1914 election. It was only the electoral arrangement between the Liberals and the labour-aligned MPs that restricted Reform to a precarious one-seat majority. It seems that the structure and organisation of the Reform Party, combined with the political climate created by the 1913 strike, led to a substantial increase in votes for the party. Thereafter, League activity was suspended due to the pressures of wartime and the formation of the coalition National Government in 1915. The pre-War Reform Party was one of the high points of the Reform Party's organisation, and its success reinforced the idea that good, active political organisation was one of the keys to electoral success.

## The organisation and structure of the Political Reform League

In August 1912 the first Dominion Conference of the Political Reform League was held in Wellington. Originally the conference had been planned for early July, but the upheavals surrounding the change of government described in the last chapter caused the date to be changed.<sup>7</sup> One purpose of the conference was to develop a nationwide scheme of party organisation designed to produce further success at the polls.<sup>8</sup> The *New Zealand Herald* reported that at least two delegates from each branch would be present, ensuring that a wide range of Leagues would be represented.<sup>9</sup> When the conference convened, there were delegates from sixty-six general seats, and one from Eastern Māori.<sup>10</sup> Of those general seats not represented, eight were in the South Island. Four of them, Wakatipu, Westland, Grey and Buller, were a considerable distance from Wellington and the difficulty of travel may have been a factor. However, the Bay of Islands, another isolated area, sent three delegates, suggesting that the poor attendance from the South Island was more a reflection of the weakness of Reform organisation in Central Otago

<sup>6</sup> W.J. Gardner Papers, Script from interview notes with A.E. Davy, MS-Papers-6542, Alexander Turnbull Library. Davy portrayed Massey as the main promoter of the democratic selection of candidates by branches.

<sup>7</sup> *Auckland Star*, 9 July 1912, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 16 July 1912, p.5.

<sup>9</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 12 July 1912, p.8.

<sup>10</sup> *Dominion*, 3 August 1912, p.6.

and the West Coast.<sup>11</sup> On the first day, a committee of ten delegates from each island was appointed to consider the suggestions that branches had submitted for possible schemes of organisation, and this committee reported to the conference on the final day.<sup>12</sup> From the Constitution which was published after the conference, it appears that delegates endorsed an Executive Committee of eleven, which would be elected annually by delegates at the Dominion Conference. The Executive's role was to supervise the work of the branches and manage the League's employees, comprised of the General Secretary and the Organisers.<sup>13</sup> The branches, based in electorates, were the foundation of the organisation, with Provincial Executives being set up 'from time to time as the Executive may approve'.<sup>14</sup> This scheme was further refined at the 1913 Conference when, based on a remit from Auckland, the Provincial Executives were strengthened, and all the general electorates assigned to one of five Provinces.<sup>15</sup>

The scheme to create a nationwide organisational structure for the Political Reform League bore close resemblance to that which had been proposed for the National Association, but not implemented, in 1896.<sup>16</sup> It also appeared to draw heavily on the structure proposed for the Leagues by Vaile in 1905, and partially implemented in the Auckland Province. In particular, Vaile proposed that each electorate have branches, electing members to a central committee, and that each province have a Provincial Executive made up of members elected from the central committees. He also suggested a Colonial Executive made up of members elected from the Provincial Executives.<sup>17</sup> Vaile had been a very active, long-term, member of the Auckland National Association<sup>18</sup> and it seems that his experience with that organisation influenced his plans for the Political Reform League.

Furthermore, Vaile was not the only member of the Political Reform League connected to the National Association. From its inception, newspapers had characterised the League as a continuation of the Association,<sup>19</sup> a premise that was not without foundation. Massey was the most obvious example of someone who was vigorously involved in both organisations. However, there were many examples from throughout New Zealand.

<sup>11</sup> The other general electorates which did not send delegates were Invercargill, Bruce, Lyttelton, Hurunui, Waipawa and Thames.

<sup>12</sup> *Dominion*, 5 August 1912, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> New Zealand Political Reform League, *Constitution and Rules of the New Zealand Political Reform League: Adopted at a Conference of Delegates Held at Wellington on August 3rd and 5th, 1912*, Wellington: Dominion General Printing House, 1912, p.5.

<sup>14</sup> New Zealand Political Reform League, *Constitution and Rules of the New Zealand Political Reform League*, p.7.

<sup>15</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 October 1913, pp.15-16; D.R. Hill, 'Organization of the Reform Party in New Zealand', M.A. Thesis, Kansas State University, 1956, p.62.

<sup>16</sup> For more details of this see: chapter two, p.63.

<sup>17</sup> Suggestions by E.E. Vaile, Letters and other material relating to the New Zealand Political Reform League 1905-1908, NZMS 75, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>18</sup> National Association of New Zealand Auckland Branch, NZMS 1375, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library. Vaile is on a membership list which was probably produced in 1892 or 1893 and he was also receiving meeting notices as late as 1899.

<sup>19</sup> For discussion on this see chapter four p.132. This link was still being made in 1914 see: *Star*, 5 May 1914, p.2; *New Zealand Times*, 19 June 1914, p.4; *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 20 October 1914, p.5; *Auckland Star*, 27 November 1914, p.2; *New Zealand Times*, 7 December 1914, p.4; And as late as 1928, see: *Evening Post*, 6 July 1928, p.10.

In Auckland, Graves Aicken, Reed Bloomfield and John Upton were examples of men who had held leadership positions in the National Association and were members of the Political Reform League. R. Clinton Hughes, the president of the New Plymouth National Association, became a member of the Taranaki Political Reform League. The president of the Hastings Political Reform League, E. Heathcote Williams, had been a member of the National Association. Henry Vavasour was involved with the establishment of both the Marlborough National Association and Political Reform League. Using a list of National Association and Political Reform League members compiled from newspaper reports, it can be determined that approximately twelve percent of National Association members went onto be active in the Political Reform League.<sup>20</sup> The continuity of membership between the Association, which reached its peak in 1896, and the Leagues, which had a pre-First World War membership peak between 1912 and 1915, shows that there were men who remained consistently dedicated to organisations which opposed the Liberals. It also offers an explanation as to why the structures proposed for the National Association were similar to those which were used for the Political Reform League.

When Vaile put forward his suggestions in 1906, the Political Reform League was very much in its infancy and was unable to enact his elaborate scheme. Nevertheless, Vaile was involved in the organisation of the Political Reform League in Auckland, evidenced by lists of members in his papers,<sup>21</sup> and it was in the Auckland Province that the first efforts to use a structure akin to the one he had suggested can be seen.<sup>22</sup> In 1908 the first Auckland Political Reform League Provincial conference was held at which 'delegates representing branches of the league from all over the province were present'.<sup>23</sup> There is no indication of how these delegates were chosen, but by 1914, when the sixth such conference was held,<sup>24</sup> there were reports of local branches holding meetings prior to the Provincial Conference to select delegates, as suggested by Vaile.<sup>25</sup> It seems that Auckland Province was the only area where Vaile's ideas on structural organisation were put into practice prior to 1912. The Auckland Province had been the centre of opposition to the Liberals since the early 1890s and, as Vaile was very involved in the Auckland Political Reform League, it is not surprising that his ideas were first enacted there.

Another individual who seems to have been influential in the formation of the Political Reform League structure was E.F. Hemingway. He was based in Taranaki and his

<sup>20</sup> See appendix two, p.279, for more details.

<sup>21</sup> Names of persons who subscribed to the NZ Political Reform League last election, Letters and other material relating to the New Zealand Political Reform League 1905-1908, NZMS 75, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library. It is probable that this was made in preparation for the 1908 election, as Vaile was farming in the southern Bay of Plenty in 1911. Tony Nightingale, 'Vaile, Edward Earle', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3v1/vaile-edward-earle>, accessed 13 June 2016.

<sup>22</sup> B.D. Graham, 'Waikato Politics: A Study in the Relationship of Local and National Politics in the Early Twentieth Century', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1954, p.188, noted that the structure in the Waikato electorate was based on Vaile's suggestions.

<sup>23</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 13 June 1908, p.6.

<sup>24</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 20 June 1914, p.9.

<sup>25</sup> *Pukekohe and Waiuku Times*, 5 June 1914, p.3; *New Zealand Herald*, 17 June 1914, p.6.

correspondence shows he was a long-term friend of Massey's.<sup>26</sup> Gardner stated that Hemingway was part of a group of men picked by Massey to consider the draft constitution.<sup>27</sup> It is unclear what this committee was, whether it was part of the group which reported to the conference in 1912 or a separate group, as no record remains of it and Hemingway was not among the published lists of attendees at the 1912 conference.<sup>28</sup> However, an article published in *New Zealand Town and Country Life*, in October 1912, called Hemingway one of the Reform Party's leaders, saying that 'he had really laid the foundation of the Reform Party in New Zealand'.<sup>29</sup> Hemingway's name was not on the published list of members of the National Executive appointed at the conference, nor was he recorded as being present at any of their reported meetings in 1912<sup>30</sup> or 1913.<sup>31</sup> Yet he does appear on the list of committee members published in *New Zealand Town and Country Life* in October 1912,<sup>32</sup> and in *Light and Liberty* between May and October 1913. In 1913 it was reported that Hemingway had been offered the position of General Secretary of the party, which he turned down.<sup>33</sup> Hemingway's correspondence with Massey shows that they often discussed organisation and that Hemingway was attending Auckland regional conferences.<sup>34</sup> It is reasonable to suppose that Hemingway did have some influence over the eventual shape of the Reform Party structure, as he was a confidante of Massey's and appears to have contributed to party organisation at a national level.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, Gardner suggested that the model for the Reform Party's organisation came from the Primrose League, the British Conservative Party organisation.<sup>36</sup> The Primrose League was hugely successful, boasting over a million members by the 1890s.<sup>37</sup> Like the Reform League, the Primrose League had a Grand Council, and a similar structural relationship between that Council and its branches, which the Primrose League called 'habitations'.<sup>38</sup> Gardner based his assertion on Hemingway's membership of the

<sup>26</sup> Hemingway Papers, ARC 2006-189, folder one, Puke Ariki, has letters to and from Massey dating from 1906 to 1915.

<sup>27</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.21.

<sup>28</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.20, cited the conference minutes as evidence of Hemingway attending. However, these are not among the Hemingway papers in Puke Ariki.

<sup>29</sup> *Town and Country Life*, 9 October 1912, cited in Hemingway Papers, ARC 2006-189, folder five, Puke Ariki.

<sup>30</sup> *Evening Post*, 4 December 1912, p.8.

<sup>31</sup> *Dominion*, 11 August 1913, p.6.

<sup>32</sup> *Town and Country Life*, 9 October 1912, cited in Hemingway Papers, ARC 2006-189, folder five, Puke Ariki.

<sup>33</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 3 March 1913, p.8.

<sup>34</sup> Hemingway to Massey, 31 December 1906, Massey to Hemingway 8 February 1907, Massey to Hemingway, 7 March 1907, Massey to Hemingway, 26 March 1910, Massey to Hemingway, 10 May 1910, Hemingway Papers, ARC 2006-189, folder one, Puke Ariki.

<sup>35</sup> New Zealand Political Reform League to Hemingway, 23 April 1915, Hemingway Papers, ARC 2006-189, folder one, Puke Ariki. There is evidence that Hemingway had a long association with the League, as he gave an address at the Political Reform League Annual Conference in 1930 see: Albert Ernest Davy-newspaper cuttings, 4 Political Party papers, W.B. Sutch Papers, MS-Papers-7311-77, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>36</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.20.

<sup>37</sup> Diana Sheets, 'British Conservatism and the Primrose League: The Changing Character of Popular Politics, 1883-1901', PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 1986, p.3.

<sup>38</sup> Janet Henderson Robb, *The Primrose League 1883-1906*, New York: AMS Press, 1942, pp.54-55.

Primrose League,<sup>39</sup> suggesting that Hemingway's knowledge of the Primrose League may have influenced his thinking. Yet, Hemingway was not the only active Political Reform League member to have connections to the Primrose League. The Bell family had a close association to Sir John Gorst,<sup>40</sup> one of the main architects of the Primrose League, and W.H.D. Bell served on the Executive Committee of the Reform League from 1912 until mid-1914.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Robb pointed out that the structure chosen for the Primrose League was similar to that of other organisations active in Britain. In particular, she noted parallels between the Primrose League and the Orange Lodge, as well as Masonic Lodges.<sup>42</sup> Within the New Zealand context, the Political Reform League's structure also bore considerable resemblance to that of the Farmers' Union, which also used the three-tiered model of branches, provincial executives and national executive.<sup>43</sup> While Gardner's assertion that the Primrose League had a direct influence on the Political Reform League cannot be entirely discounted, the supporting evidence is largely circumstantial given that the structure chosen for the Political Reform League was similar to other organisations, and that the Primrose League's structure was not unique.

Once the foundation of the Political Reform League's national structure was laid down at the 1912 conference, it seems that the paid organisers were tasked with building branches and sections across the country. After working as the sole organiser for the League from mid-1906, R.R. Martin resigned in March 1912.<sup>44</sup> He admitted in January 1912 that the League had struggled in the South Island<sup>45</sup> and this may have been part of the reason why Martin's replacement, Carl Lindegren, was appointed as North Island organiser, rather than having a nationwide role.<sup>46</sup> In May 1912 David Jones became the organiser for the South Island,<sup>47</sup> after the merger of the Farmers' Political Protection Federation with the Political Reform League.<sup>48</sup> Jones had been the Farmers' Political Protection Federation organiser and it is probable that the position of South Island Political Reform League organiser was in part created to smooth the merger of the two groups. However, it was also an acknowledgement that Reform was still weak in the South Island

<sup>39</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.21, cited a Primrose League membership certificate, but there is not one present in the Hemingway papers.

<sup>40</sup> M.P.K. Sorrenson, 'Gorst, John Eldon', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1g15/gorst-john-eldon>, accessed 14 June 2016; W.J. Gardner, 'Bell, Francis Henry Dillon', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2b16/bell-francis-henry-dillon>, accessed 13 June 2016

<sup>41</sup> Although there is no record of W.H.D Bell's resignation, he left New Zealand with the Samoan Advance Party in August 1914 see: <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C38322?n=W%20H%20D%20Bell&ordinal=0&from=%2Fwar-memorial%2Fonline-cenotaph%2Fsearch>, accessed 14 May 2018.

<sup>42</sup> Robb, pp.37-38.

<sup>43</sup> Tom Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise: A Comparative Study of the Origins and Early Phases of Development of the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales and the New Zealand Farmers' Union, 1880-1929', PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1977, p.331.

<sup>44</sup> *Star*, 18 March 1912, p.3.

<sup>45</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 24 January 1912, p.2.

<sup>46</sup> *Press*, 14 April 1912, p.7.

<sup>47</sup> *Press*, 9 May 1912, p.7.

<sup>48</sup> See chapter five, p.159.

and that Jones, who was well-known in the Canterbury area,<sup>49</sup> may have a perceived advantage when representing the League. The role of the organiser was seen as critical in building the envisioned party structure and the expansion of the role in 1912 recognised this.

## The growth of the Political Reform League

Traditionally, it had been difficult to motivate electors to take an interest in political groups without the stimulus of an imminent election. However, the progress of the Political Reform League during the latter half of 1912 bucked this trend. This was an indication that it had one of the characteristics of a mass party, that of developing and expanding membership. The growth of the Leagues can partly be explained by the uncertainty around the political situation in the first half of the year, as another election was still seen as a possibility. Yet, the drive to grow the League network actually increased once Reform took office. This reflected Massey and other Reform leaders' strongly held belief that good organisation was the key to gaining more seats at the next election.<sup>50</sup> Even while in Opposition in the first half of 1912, plans were made to formalise the League's structure. This is evidenced by the planning of a Dominion Conference, where organisation was to be one of the main themes and by choosing official colours of red, white and blue.<sup>51</sup> In November 1912 Massey opened the Reform Club rooms in Auckland, speaking on the importance of organisation and the need for members to continue in their efforts to grow the League.<sup>52</sup> Massey stated in June 1913 that vigorous organisation was an important function of the party, and that the Dominion Executive was committed to supporting it.<sup>53</sup>

After Reform secured the government benches, both Lindegreen and Jones continued to found branches. Jones was interviewed in late July after returning from the lower east coast of the South Island. He stated that he had made considerable strides and that Reform was gaining in popularity in the South Island, particularly among the young. He had been asked to start Political Reform Leagues in both Dunedin and Invercargill and he used this as evidence of Reform's popularity. Jones also thought Reform was growing in Canterbury, and that North Canterbury was the best organised part of the South Island.<sup>54</sup> This was probably because North Canterbury was where the Farmers' Political Protection League had been based, so Jones would have been able to take advantage of

<sup>49</sup> He had been involved in farming organisations for some years and was one of those who led the campaign against the 1907 Land Bill. See chapter four, p.123.

<sup>50</sup> Milne, p.170, noted that Reform had a tendency to believe that good organisation, rather than good policy, would win elections.

<sup>51</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 March 1912, p.8. It seems that red was dropped as during the Egmont by-election in September 1912 the Reform colours were reported as being white and light blue. See: *Opunake Times*, 17 September 1912, p.2.

<sup>52</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 28 November 1912, p.5.

<sup>53</sup> *Press*, 5 June 1913, p.8.

<sup>54</sup> *Press*, 30 July 1912, p.8.

the existing networks. After the 1912 conference both Lindegren's and Jones' activity increased as they travelled around New Zealand, visiting established Leagues, which they re-organised using the rules laid down at the conference, and starting new ones. Lindegren began on the east coast of the North Island, working in Masterton,<sup>55</sup> Hawke's Bay<sup>56</sup> and Poverty Bay.<sup>57</sup> All these areas had previously had some form of League, but it seems that Lindegren was tasked with making sure that the branches were now in compliance with the constitution. He also visited some smaller centres, like Dannevirke, Takapau and Norsewood, starting Leagues there.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, another organiser was appointed in November to cover the Hawke's Bay and Poverty Bay areas.<sup>59</sup> Jones stayed closer to home, mostly focusing on Canterbury branches.<sup>60</sup> There were also Leagues which started without an organiser visiting. A new branch was formed at Te Puke and the Katikati League was revived.<sup>61</sup> A League was formed in Westland, based in Hokitika,<sup>62</sup> and became very active.<sup>63</sup> The Oamaru branch held a meeting in August at which the branch delegates spoke of their experiences at the conference and the new constitution was ratified.<sup>64</sup> By the end of 1912 there were active Political Reform Leagues across New Zealand, including places like Westland, where Reform had been weak.

Another consideration was that voters were ready to form and join Leagues, despite the next election being some years away. There is some evidence that concern about the development of labour parties was a driver of League growth. A series of labour unity conferences held in 1913<sup>65</sup> increased fear among some sectors of society that socialism, syndicalism or even anarchy might gain control of the country.<sup>66</sup> Speaking at the New Plymouth League's Annual General Meeting, Lindegren highlighted the activities of the Federation of Labour and suggested that the United Labour Party would target the Taranaki seat at the next election.<sup>67</sup> Those meeting to form a League in Matamata were told that it was important for Reform to organise to counter the good organisation of the 'Labour Party'.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the leaderless and disorganised state of the Liberals

<sup>55</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 14 August 1912, p.5.

<sup>56</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 12 October 1912, p.5.

<sup>57</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 26 October 1912, p.3.

<sup>58</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 31 October 1912, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 9 November 1912, p.5.

<sup>59</sup> *Press*, 20 November 1912, p.9.

<sup>60</sup> *Star*, 21 August 1912, p.4; *Press*, 28 August 1912, p.2; *Press*, 20 September 1912, p.8; *Star*, 5 October 1912, p.7; *Press*, 16 October 1912, p.2; *Press*, 18 October 1912, p.3; *Press*, 1 November 1912, p.8.

<sup>61</sup> *Bay of Plenty Times*, 23 August 1912, p.4.

<sup>62</sup> *West Coast Times*, 4 September 1912, p.2.

<sup>63</sup> *West Coast Times*, 9 October 1912, p.2; *West Coast Times*, 6 November 1912, p.1.

<sup>64</sup> *Oamaru Mail*, 21 August 1912, p.3.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Franks and Jim McAloon, *Labour: The New Zealand Labour Party 1916-2016*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2016, pp.62-63.

<sup>66</sup> Jim McAloon, 'The Making of the New Zealand Ruling Class' in *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand*, (ed) Melanie Nolan, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005, p.232.

<sup>67</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 20 September 1912, p.6; *Taranaki Daily News*, 20 September 1912, p.4.

<sup>68</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 30 July 1912, p.2.

prompted speculation that they were on the verge of collapse,<sup>69</sup> meaning that future electoral competitions could be between Reform and labour parties.<sup>70</sup> Industrial disputes had also increased – after being largely unknown in 1909, there were twenty-four in 1912.<sup>71</sup> Many concerned voters felt they were faced with the choice between a stable Reform Government or an uncertain, and possibly dangerous, Labour Government and this then led to an expansion of Political Reform Leagues.

Further evidence that the labour unrest was increasing League membership can be seen in the formation of branches in the Ohinemuri electorate. The first mention of branches being formed there was made at the 1912 Auckland Political League Provincial Conference.<sup>72</sup> Traditionally this area had been one where Reform, and its predecessors, had struggled, partly because it contained several mining centres. Since May 1912 mine workers at Waihi, the main town in the electorate, had been on strike. The strike came to a head on 12 November with the death of one of the strikers, Frederick Evans.<sup>73</sup> A few days earlier, the *New Zealand Herald* had reported an attempt to start a Political Reform League in the town.<sup>74</sup> This was formalised in February 1913, and the *Maoriland Worker* was in no doubt that it was a direct response to the strike.<sup>75</sup> The first half dozen subscriptions for *Light and Liberty* supposedly came from Waihi, a fact that was proudly mentioned in the first edition.<sup>76</sup>

Another area where Reform and its predecessors had struggled was the Nelson district. There were some indications in 1911 that Reform might be gaining ground in the Nelson electorate with an independent, Harry Atmore, winning despite rumours he would support Reform.<sup>77</sup> Motueka had been represented by Roderick McKenzie, a Liberal MP, since its formation in 1896,<sup>78</sup> but he had been a supporter of Millar, and came close to voting with Massey in July 1912.<sup>79</sup> In October 1913 Arthur Paape, a recently appointed Reform organiser, travelled to the Nelson area to begin forming Political Reform League

<sup>69</sup> After Mackenzie's resignation in July 1912, the Liberal Party had been run by committee until September 1913. See: Michael Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward: A Political Biography*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993, pp.218-219.

<sup>70</sup> For expressions of this see: *Press*, 15 January 1912, p.7; *Press*, 8 July 1912, p.8; *Feilding Star*, 15 August 1912, p.2; *New Zealand Times*, 14 October 1912, p.4; *Temuka Leader*, 7 December 1912, p.4; *Dominion*, 2 May 1913, p.4; *King Country Chronicle*, 16 August 1913, p.5; *Mataura Ensign*, 10 January 1914, p.4.

<sup>71</sup> Melanie Nolan, 'Introduction: 1913 in Retrospect: A Laboratory or a Battleground of Democracy?' in *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand*, (ed) Melanie Nolan, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005, p.23.

<sup>72</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 14 June 1912, p.2. One was also formed in Paeroa see: *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 21 April 1913, p.3.

<sup>73</sup> Franks and McAloon, p.61.

<sup>74</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 November 1912, p.10

<sup>75</sup> *Maoriland Worker*, 28 February 1913, p.3

<sup>76</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 May 1913, p.3.

<sup>77</sup> See chapter five, p.173, for more details.

<sup>78</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. II, M-Addenda, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, pp.27-28.

<sup>79</sup> D.A. Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988, p.353.

branches. Although the request for an organiser's visit had been placed in August,<sup>80</sup> by October the political atmosphere in Nelson was heightened due to the waterfront industrial action centred in Wellington, which was turning into a major strike.<sup>81</sup> Nelson farmers were concerned that the closure of ports would result in their crops being spoiled, with peas being specifically mentioned at a League meeting.<sup>82</sup> This was an area without a rail link, so farmers relied on shipping to move their produce. The Nelson district Political Reform Leagues grew steadily and Paape returned in May 1914, facilitating the formation of branches in the smaller centres like Upper Moutere, Brightwater and Tapawera.<sup>83</sup> An indication of how popular Reform had become can be seen in the six men coming forward at the selection meeting to choose a candidate for Motueka.<sup>84</sup> The increased militancy of political labour, and particularly the 1913 strike, clearly benefited Reform in the Nelson district.

The growth of the Political Reform League may also have been facilitated by the fact Reform was in government. There was a perception that the Liberals had rewarded their supporters with government positions. While the National Association and Reform had campaigned vigorously against this practice, some voters may have still believed that some benefit may accrue to them by being seen to support the government. Even if membership of a Political Reform League was unlikely to directly benefit a voter, local Leagues were often charged with making the arrangements when a minister, or Massey, visited. At the beginning of 1913 Massey and his ministers took advantage of the parliamentary recess to tour the country. Again, Massey visited the South Island, and members of the Waimate League were able to have supper with him.<sup>85</sup> In Christchurch, the Women's Branch of the local League had an afternoon tea with Massey,<sup>86</sup> and in May Massey stopped in Ohakune, where the local League members had lunch with him.<sup>87</sup> Herries was also active: in March he toured the far north, meeting with members of both the Ohinewai and Kaikohe League.<sup>88</sup> While in the South Island, the Marlborough League had lunch with him,<sup>89</sup> and the local league in Fairlie organised a function for him.<sup>90</sup> Francis Fisher, Minister for Customs,<sup>91</sup> visited the West Coast in February and the local League organised several events, including a supper exclusively for League members.<sup>92</sup> Involvement

<sup>80</sup> There had been a request from Nelson to the National Executive to form a branch in August. See: *Dominion*, 11 August 1913, p.6.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Franks, 'Chronology of Events' in *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand*, (ed) Melanie Nolan, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005, pp.11-12.

<sup>82</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 28 October 1913, p.2.

<sup>83</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 26 May 1914, p.4.

<sup>84</sup> *Colonist*, 28 May 1914, p.7, this was the first time Reform needed to hold a selection meeting for this electorate.

<sup>85</sup> *Press*, 19 March 1913, p.10.

<sup>86</sup> *Press*, 12 March 1913, p.2.

<sup>87</sup> *Auckland Star*, 6 May 1913, p.9.

<sup>88</sup> *Auckland Star*, 14 March 1913, p.7.

<sup>89</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 20 June 1913, p.5.

<sup>90</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 3 May 1913, p.9.

<sup>91</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. I, A-L, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, p.254.

<sup>92</sup> *West Coast Times*, 31 January 1913, p.2.

in the League meant a much greater chance of meeting men who had influence in the government, and this may have encouraged people to join the local League.

Another indication that the League was acting more like a mass political party was the process of candidate selection for the Egmont by-election, following Thomas Mackenzie's resignation to take up the role of High Commissioner in London.<sup>93</sup> At first it seemed that two Reform candidates might stand. Bradshaw Dive, the former Reform MP who had lost to Mackenzie, indicated that he wanted to stand, while Charles Wilkinson<sup>94</sup> also came forward.<sup>95</sup> Lindegreen was sent to Taranaki to try and convince one candidate to stand aside,<sup>96</sup> and he succeeded in getting both to agree to abide by the decision of a selection meeting.<sup>97</sup> Lindegreen then organised this meeting, which only those who were paid members of the local Political Reform League could attend. This caused some disquiet, as people were prevented from entering the meeting unless they signed the League pledge and paid the membership fee. In his defence Lindegreen said that this ensured that those present would abide by the result and reduced the chances of a split in the Reform vote.<sup>98</sup> When the meeting chose Wilkinson, Dive immediately withdrew and was thanked for his show of loyalty to the party.<sup>99</sup> The reaction of the newspapers to the exclusion of the general public from the meeting suggests that this was not a normal practice. However, it also shows that this selection method was successful in preventing multiple candidates, something that Reform had been trying to avoid for some time.<sup>100</sup> It also illustrates the power of the Reform organisation. Dive had only been out of parliament since December 1911 and may have had reasonable confidence that he could run his own campaign, yet he was prepared to let the local party choose who would be a candidate.

During 1913 and into 1914, the Political Reform League continued its emphasis on building the branch network of Leagues. By May 1913 the national membership of the League was reported to be 30 000.<sup>101</sup> In July 1913 Lindegreen resigned,<sup>102</sup> and his position was filled by Arthur Paape,<sup>103</sup> who had been involved in the labour movement in Southland.<sup>104</sup> He had been the secretary of the Sawmill Workers' Union, and travelled

<sup>93</sup> Tom Brooking, 'Mackenzie, Thomas', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3m18/mackenzie-thomas-noble>, accessed 13 November 2017.

<sup>94</sup> Bruce Ralston, 'Wilkinson, Charles Anderson', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3w18/wilkinson-charles-anderson>, accessed 11 May 2018.

<sup>95</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 7 August 1912, p.4.

<sup>96</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 17 August 1912, p.8.

<sup>97</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 21 August 1912, p.8; *Taranaki Herald*, 22 August 1912, p.7.

<sup>98</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 23 August 1912, p.4.

<sup>99</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 22 August 1912, p.5.

<sup>100</sup> This was seen in both 1908 and 1911, see chapter four, p.127, and chapter five, p.149.

<sup>101</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 May 1913, p.23.

<sup>102</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 27 July 1913, p.8.

<sup>103</sup> *Dominion*, 4 August 1913, p.4.

<sup>104</sup> For a summary of Paape's work with unions see: The Cyclopaedia Company, *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand: Otago & Southland Provincial Districts*, Christchurch: The Cyclopaedia Company, 1905,

with Tom Mann, a well-known British Labour organiser,<sup>105</sup> during his 1902 visit to Southland. *Light and Liberty* acknowledged Paape's past association with political labour and said he had been converted by the result of the Grey by-election.<sup>106</sup> Paape had been known in the Southland district for his love of organising,<sup>107</sup> and began in his new position by conducting an extensive tour of the Nelson district.<sup>108</sup> Although his predecessor had worked almost exclusively in the North Island, during 1914 Paape toured both Islands. In January he visited Gore,<sup>109</sup> and he was in Timaru to help with the selection of a candidate for the upcoming election.<sup>110</sup> He then visited the Nelson district again,<sup>111</sup> and by mid-February was in Northland.<sup>112</sup> Paape was in Nelson again in April,<sup>113</sup> and then spent most of May and the beginning of June in the central North Island.<sup>114</sup> The areas of the country that Paape visited appear not to have been covered by the other three Reform organisers. Jones was still active in Canterbury and a new organiser for the east coast of the North Island, Percival Witherby, had been appointed in October 1913.<sup>115</sup> At the end of 1913 David Fleming had been appointed as organiser for Otago-Southland.<sup>116</sup> Although these men were actively working in their respective areas,<sup>117</sup> it was Paape who seemed to do most of the touring. In an interview at the end of 1914, he told the reporter he had travelled 15 391 miles during the year.<sup>118</sup> This dedication to organisation meant that every European electorate in New Zealand sent delegates to the July 1914 Dominion Conference.<sup>119</sup> Reform had become a party with truly nationwide membership.<sup>120</sup>

p.836. He also stood as a labour-aligned candidate for Invercargill in 1902 and 1908. See: General Election, 1902, *AJHR*, 1903, H.26, pp.1-6; General Election, 1908, *AJHR*, 1909, (S.2), H.30a, pp.1-8. He was a member of the New Zealand Labour Party in 1911 see: *Southland Times*, 3 March 1911, p.4; *Southland Times*, 3 April 1911, p.2.

<sup>105</sup> Mark E. Dunick, 'Making Rebels: The New Zealand Socialist Party, 1901-1913', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2016, pp.25-30, had details of Mann's visit.

<sup>106</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 11 October 1913, p.30.

<sup>107</sup> *Southland Times*, 12 April 1913, p.10.

<sup>108</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 8 November 1913, pp.29-31 had a summary of his work in Nelson.

<sup>109</sup> *Southland Times*, 10 January 1914, p.5.

<sup>110</sup> *Evening Star*, 13 January 1914, p.4.

<sup>111</sup> *Colonist*, 6 February 1914, p.7; *Marlborough Express*, 9 February 1914, p.4.

<sup>112</sup> *Northern Advocate*, 21 February 1914, p.4.

<sup>113</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 15 April 1914, p.4.

<sup>114</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 11 June 1914, p.10.

<sup>115</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 24 October 1913, p.3.

<sup>116</sup> *Bruce Herald*, 29 December 1913, p.6.

<sup>117</sup> Jones' activity see: *Temuka Leader*, 15 January 1914, p.3; *Star*, 11 February 1914, p.1; *Press*, 3 March 1914, p.7; *Timaru Herald*, 30 March 1914, p.5; *Sun*, 24 June 1914, p.10; *Press*, 11 July 1914, p.5; *Ashburton Guardian*, 1 August 1914, p.4; *Waimate Daily Advertiser*, 14 September 1914, p.2.

Fleming's activities see: *Lake Wakatipu Mail*, 12 May 1914, p.4; *Dunstan Times*, 6 July 1914, p.4; *Clutha Leader*, 14 July 1914, p.5; *Otago Daily Times*, 30 September 1914, p.8; *Tuapeka Times*, 21 October 1912, p.3; *Southland Times*, 4 November 1914, p.6.

Witherby's activities see: *Poverty Bay Herald*, 14 May 1914, p.4; *Woodville Examiner*, 29 June 1914, p.3; *Dominion*, 20 November 1914, p.2.

<sup>118</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 29 December 1914, p.4.

<sup>119</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 31 July 1914, p.17.

<sup>120</sup> Richard S. Katz, 'Political Parties' in *Comparative Politics*, 3rd edition, (ed) Daniele Caramani, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p.204, noted this as an attribute of a mass party.

## The Reform Party newspaper

One of the positions created by the 1912 constitution was that of General Secretary, who was to 'conduct all correspondence of behalf of the Executive' and 'to prepare literary matter for distribution'.<sup>121</sup> It appears that this role was to monitor the League on a day-to-day basis and was quite distinct from the organiser's role. The addition of a permanent employee whose responsibility was party administration firmly placed the day-to-day running of Reform outside of the parliamentary wing, separating it from being a true cadre party.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, it enabled two functions of a mass party: organisation of membership and preparation for election campaigns. In June 1913 it was announced that Ernest James had been appointed to this role.<sup>123</sup> He was a journalist who had been actively involved in the Auckland League for at least six years.<sup>124</sup> The newspaper which he had previously worked for, *New Zealand Town and Country Life*, had been acting as a de-facto paper for the League since around 1911, publishing details of branch activities and Reform League propaganda.<sup>125</sup> It is not clear when James left the employment of *New Zealand Town and Country Life*, but he was the main writer for the League's newspaper *Light and Liberty*,<sup>126</sup> the first edition of which appeared in May 1913. James' association with the Reform Party was to be long lived. He worked for them until 1929,<sup>127</sup> and the Reform organiser during the mid-1920s, Albert Davy, counted him as his mentor.<sup>128</sup>

One of James' main roles was to oversee the publication of the League's newspaper, *Light and Liberty*. This was not the first attempt by the Political Reform League to publish a newspaper; it had produced three editions of a paper called *The Reformer* in 1905,<sup>129</sup> and the National Association had published a newspaper in the mid-1890s.<sup>130</sup> However, *Light and Liberty* was more ambitious than either of these ventures. Furthermore, it was indication of the strength of the party. Not only did Reform have the funds to run the newspaper, but it also had party members who were ready and willing to buy it. In the

<sup>121</sup> New Zealand Political Reform League, *Constitution and Rules of the New Zealand Political Reform League*, p.5.

<sup>122</sup> There is no evidence that the Liberals ever employed a General Secretary to manage the party. Edwin Gallichan is sometimes described as the General Secretary of the Liberal Party, but it seems that he was engaged in both secretarial and organising work, see: Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.309; *New Zealand Times*, 2 May 1907, p.5; *Auckland Star*, 3 February 1908, p.9; *Evening Post*, 29 January 1910, p.3; *Dominion*, 27 April 1910, p.4; *Marlborough Express*, 6 June 1914, p.4.

The United Labour Party employed 'Professor' Walter Thomas Mills as an organiser, and possibly his wife worked as the secretary, see: Franks and McAloon, p.60. The Labour Party had a voluntary secretary from 1916 to 1919, see: Franks and McAloon, p.81.

<sup>123</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 3 June 1913, p.8.

<sup>124</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 21 June 1913, p.11.

<sup>125</sup> There are only four surviving copies of the *Town and Country Life*, so it was difficult to ascertain exactly when they began publishing Reform Party 'news'.

<sup>126</sup> *Pukekohe and Waiuku Times*, 30 May 1913, p.1.

<sup>127</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.23. James retired in 1929, see: *Evening Post*, 31 August 1929, p.12.

<sup>128</sup> Diana Beaglehole, 'Davy, Albert Ernest', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, [www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4d8/davy-albert-ernest](http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4d8/davy-albert-ernest), accessed 1 February 2016.

<sup>129</sup> See chapter three, p.104, for more details.

<sup>130</sup> This had a similar name, *Liberty*. See chapter two, p.59, for more details.

first year it was produced in a magazine format and each edition had around forty pages. From June 1914 it changed to a broadsheet format, before ceasing publication after the 1914 election as the all-consuming nature of the First World War began to alter civilian life. In the first editorial, James declared the newspaper's purpose was to 'perpetuate the era of good government upon which New Zealand has entered'.<sup>131</sup> *Light and Liberty* contained a mixture of articles, stories and branch news. The articles were written in a light, appealing manner, presenting political issues and Reform policy. The June 1913 edition had an article about the unearned increment, saying the idea was fallacious and that if a Labour Party ever got into office and enacted their land policy it would be 'legalised robbery'.<sup>132</sup> In September there was an article explaining the role of the whip in parliament and how important they were to the unity of the Parliamentary Reform Party.<sup>133</sup> There were also rebuttals of criticisms of the government which had appeared in other newspapers,<sup>134</sup> with pages devoted to the 'lies' which appeared in the *New Zealand Times*.<sup>135</sup> There were also two story arcs, one about a farmer and his political awakening,<sup>136</sup> and another in the format of a fictional conversation between a reporter from *Light and Liberty* and a businessman. These 'Talks with Businessmen' were a long-running feature and covered various topics including, finance,<sup>137</sup> land settlement,<sup>138</sup> labour issues,<sup>139</sup> and defence.<sup>140</sup>

Another feature was letters to the editor. Unlike letters to the daily newspapers, the letters received by *Light and Liberty* were nearly always in the form of a question. The first edition, which appeared in May 1913, had a letters page, which was surprising as it implied that people were writing to the newspaper before it existed. The nature of the 'letters' suggest that not all were from genuine correspondents. The subjects they addressed seemed to be conveniently topical and often gave James a chance to rebut common criticisms of the government. Some were probably real, like the series in September 1913 which addressed rumours about splits in the Reform Party.<sup>141</sup> However, the style of the page, with the original letters not being published, and only those which asked questions being acknowledged, allowed the editor to control what questions he answered. For example, in the June 1913 edition, two letters were answered, one of which asked about 'state rights', which seemed to be another term for social security. This gave James a

<sup>131</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 May 1913, p.1.

<sup>132</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 June 1913, pp.17-18.

<sup>133</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 September 1913, pp.8-9.

<sup>134</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 December 1913, p.15.

<sup>135</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 June 1913, pp.11-13; *Light and Liberty*, 9 August 1913, pp.13-15; *Light and Liberty*, 13 September 1913, pp.19-21.

<sup>136</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 May 1913, pp.4-7; *Light and Liberty*, 27 June 1913, pp.7-9; *Light and Liberty*, 9 August 1913, p.18.

<sup>137</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 May 1913, pp.10-12; *Light and Liberty*, 13 September 1913, pp.22-24; *Light and Liberty*, 14 February 1914, pp.15-18; *Light and Liberty*, 21 March 1914, pp.11-13; *Light and Liberty*, 18 April 1914, pp.17-19.

<sup>138</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 June 1913, pp.14-16; *Light and Liberty*, 9 August 1913, pp.10-12; *Light and Liberty*, 8 November 1913, pp.20-22.

<sup>139</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 December 1913, pp.16-18.

<sup>140</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 23 May 1914, pp.17-19; *Light and Liberty*, 17 October 1914, pp.14-15.

<sup>141</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 September 1913, pp.12-13.

chance to point out how 'unfair' such a scheme was and went on to say that it would be 'so distasteful to the honest poor'.<sup>142</sup> In September 1913 there was a letter about the cost of the Otira Tunnel, with the reply giving James space to explain why it was important that the tunnel, begun under the Liberals, be finished, despite the significant expenditure.<sup>143</sup> A letter received in December 1913 about ministers' travelling allowances enabled James to lay out calculations to show that the Massey Government had spent less on ministers' travel in eight months than the Mackenzie Government had in its three months in office. This was in direct response to a question asked in the House by G.W. Russell, Liberal MP for Avon.<sup>144</sup> The nature and style of the letters to the editor suggests that they were another way of James promoting and defending party policy.

About one quarter of the paper was devoted to branch news. This was designed to be informative and to highlight particular areas of branch activity. The first edition in May 1913 contained a list of branches and instructions on how to start one.<sup>145</sup> In June the focus was on the Auckland Political Reform League,<sup>146</sup> probably because James was still based in Auckland and the newspaper was being published from there.<sup>147</sup> However, there seems to have been an effort to portray Reform as a nationwide movement. In this regard, the articles in the February 1914 edition of *Light and Liberty* were typical. There were reports of new centres in the Bay of Islands, and one from the Katikati branch about how its leader, C. Vesey Stewart, was a staunch Reform worker. There was information from Canterbury, with details of a new suburban branch in Cashmere Hills, and on progress in Nelson and Motueka. It ended with the proposed itinerary for Paape, the North Island organiser, who was planning to visit Northland.<sup>148</sup> The branch section also enabled James to communicate with branches, reminding them of the various duties they needed to perform, like Annual General Meetings,<sup>149</sup> recording the names of the officers of each branch,<sup>150</sup> and setting up committees to deal with branch duties like canvassing.<sup>151</sup> *Light and Liberty* was also used to target particular geographic areas. The December edition was distributed to 'several thousand electors in the Wairarapa and Masterton electorates',<sup>152</sup> suggesting a focus on growing the League in that area.

<sup>142</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 June 1913, p.18.

<sup>143</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 September 1913, pp.11.

<sup>144</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 December 1913, pp.10-11.

<sup>145</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 May 1913, pp.34-35.

<sup>146</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 June 1913, pp.26-27.

<sup>147</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 9 August 1913, p.27.

<sup>148</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 14 February 1914, pp.31-33.

<sup>149</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 9 August 1913, p.27.

<sup>150</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 December 1913, p.34.

<sup>151</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 14 February 1914, pp.30-31.

<sup>152</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 December 1913, p.5.

## Massey and the Reform Party organisation

The strong organisation in these years has been noted by several historians. Hill, in his thesis on Reform Party Organisation, described the party's organisation as a 'notable and solidifying accomplishment',<sup>153</sup> and Gardner described Reform as 'the first really solid party in New Zealand history'.<sup>154</sup> However, most have explained the success of the League and the party as a product of Massey's leadership and his tight control of both groups. Hill stated that Massey controlled the party, formulated policy and chose candidates.<sup>155</sup> Gardner described Massey as having tight control over the Reform Party and believed that the only difference between Seddon's control of the Liberal-Labour Federation and Massey's control of the Political Reform League was that the League was a live organisation.<sup>156</sup> Milne asserted that the Reform League, like the Liberal-Labour Federation, was an ornament, designed to give the appearance of member control, when really it was Massey who controlled the Party.<sup>157</sup> More recently, Bassett characterised the Reform Party as being 'very much under the control of the Prime Minister'.<sup>158</sup>

However, a close examination of how the Political Reform Leagues and the Parliamentary Reform Party worked together shows that Massey had much less control than Seddon. Although Massey may have been president of the Political Reform League, this appears to have been a courtesy title and there is little evidence that he exercised tight control. There are three aspects of party organisation where Massey differed from Seddon: the direction of the League, the formation of Reform Party policy and selection of Reform Party candidates. Under the 1912 constitution, the direction of the League was set by the National Executive Committee. The president of this committee was to be the leader of the Reform Party in the House, but the constitution signalled that this was meant to be a temporary arrangement, with the words 'for the time being' ending the section which outlined the president's role.<sup>159</sup>

It is not clear how soon after the 1912 conference the Executive held its first meeting, but it met five times in the subsequent year.<sup>160</sup> At the 1913 National Conference, elections were held for the Executive Committee, with the number expanded to fifteen. This committee then met in December 1913,<sup>161</sup> and in 1914 it met in February,<sup>162</sup> May,<sup>163</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Hill, p.34.

<sup>154</sup> W.J. Gardner, 'The Reform Party' in *Ends and Means in New Zealand Politics*, (ed) Robert Chapman, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1961, p.30.

<sup>155</sup> Hill, p.25.

<sup>156</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', pp.19-25.

<sup>157</sup> Milne, p.169.

<sup>158</sup> Michael Bassett, *New Zealand Prime Ministers: From Dick Seddon to John Key*, Mangawhai: David Ling Publishing Limited, 2017, p.84.

<sup>159</sup> New Zealand Political Reform League, *Constitution and Rules of the New Zealand Political Reform League*, p.5.

<sup>160</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 11 October 1913, p.10.

<sup>161</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 December 1913, p.24.

<sup>162</sup> *Dominion*, 5 February 1914, p.6.

<sup>163</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 24 May 1913, p.31.

and October.<sup>164</sup> Three reports appeared in *Light and Liberty* on what was considered at Executive meetings, and they all seemed to focus on discussions about the organisational arrangements,<sup>165</sup> possibly because one of the purposes of *Light and Liberty* was to communicate with branches about organisational matters. In the May 1914 report finances were discussed, with it being pointed out that the 'fighting fund' was not big enough to cover the potential expenses of the upcoming election.<sup>166</sup> Although *Light and Liberty* published these reports, it stated that most of the proceedings of the National Executive Committee were of a confidential nature.<sup>167</sup> There is no indication that Massey's vote on the committee held more weight than any other, although it is probable that his opinion would have been deferred to, and some reports suggested that he was an irregular attender of meetings.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, as the committee was chosen at the national conferences by votes from the delegates, Massey had no direct control over the membership.<sup>169</sup> Even when a casual vacancy occurred it appears that the League had a proscribed method for filling it, which did not include consulting Massey.<sup>170</sup> It is possible that Massey felt that he had such oversight over the party that the voting and meetings were only for show. However, the fact that Reform had a committee which had a constitutional right to direct the party was a departure from previous political party structures and suggests that Massey did not have the tight control that Seddon enjoyed.

Further evidence cited for Massey's tight hold on the Reform Party was the development of policy. It has been widely assumed that the Reform League was seen by Massey and the Parliamentary Party as being only a vehicle for organisation and that there was no allowance for League branches to bring forward policy remits at the National Conferences.<sup>171</sup> Yet, at both the 1913 and 1914 conferences, attempts were made to discuss policy. During the 1913 conference a special committee was convened on the first day to consider remits brought by the branches. On the second day it recommended that in future remits be limited to organisational matters and questions which were of a national character.<sup>172</sup> In the afternoon the conference discussed whether the Leader of the Opposition should be paid an honorarium equivalent to a minister of the crown. A letter was received from the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Association asking the League to affirm the principle that hotel workers should have one day off a week. It was decided that this topic was not of 'national importance' and neither was the Masterton

<sup>164</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 October 1914, p.7.

<sup>165</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 December 1913, pp.24-25; *Light and Liberty*, 14 February 1914, pp.28-30; *Light and Liberty*, 24 May 1913, pp.31-32.

<sup>166</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 24 May 1913, p.31.

<sup>167</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 14 February 1914, p.28.

<sup>168</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 December 1913, p.24 stated that Massey was absent from the December 1912 meeting; *Light and Liberty*, 14 February 1914, p.28, stated that Massey was late and only attended part of the meeting.

<sup>169</sup> Hill, p.40.

<sup>170</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 14 February 1914, p.29, reported on the resignation of E.C. Huie from the National Executive. He was replaced by the candidate who had polled next highest at the election held during the 1913 conference, Gilbert Carson.

<sup>171</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.20.

<sup>172</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 11 October 1913, p.17.

branch's attempt to discuss an improvement to the totalisator.<sup>173</sup> Before the 1914 conference branches were reminded that any remits brought must be about 'important national matters', with 'the time at the disposal of the delegates being all too limited to permit the discussion of purely local questions'.<sup>174</sup>

However, this did not prevent branches from trying to discuss matters of policy which were important to them. Both Taumarunui and Bay of Islands wanted more action on roading; West Auckland wished the League to support calls for a referendum on the Bible-in-Schools issue; and the Wanganui Women's branch brought several remits on the welfare of wives and children. Taumarunui and Bay of Islands were told that their issues were not of 'national importance' and West Auckland that theirs was a 'non-party' issue. However, the Wanganui remits were accepted without comment.<sup>175</sup> The Māori delegation also put forward a remit 'that in all future elections of Māori Members of Parliament, provision should be made for a secret ballot' and another that the government help Māori access agricultural training.<sup>176</sup> These were also accepted. So while it appears that there was some disquiet among the leadership of the League over branches bringing policy remits to national conferences, this did not prevent branches from doing so, and on some matters, which may have been less controversial, these remits were accepted. It seems that there was a desire on the part of members to put forward policy remits and some provision for these to be received, which suggests that Massey and the Parliamentary Reform Party were at least cautiously open to branches making policy suggestions. That the party membership had some say in the policy making process is another way in which Reform displayed the characteristics of a mass party.

Since 1908 the Political Reform League had been encouraging local branches to undertake candidate selection, apparently in the belief that this was the best way to ensure that each electorate had a single Reform candidate. It also had the advantage of contrasting the League's method with that of the Liberals, who, by 1908, seemed to rely on the second ballot as a selection method. Despite this, candidate selection is used as another example of Massey's control of the Reform Party, with both Hill<sup>177</sup> and Gardner<sup>178</sup> stating that Massey chose candidates. There was no provision for candidate selection in the 1912 constitution and Gardner cites this as evidence that candidate selection was under Massey's control.<sup>179</sup> Yet when a selection dispute arose in the Otaki electorate before the 1914 election, men from the Manakau League<sup>180</sup> objected when they heard a rumour that a candidate had been chosen. Those protesting cited a promise from the

<sup>173</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 11 October 1913, pp.19-20.

<sup>174</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 23 May 1914, p.32.

<sup>175</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 31 July 1913, pp.19-20; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 20 April 1915, p.4.

<sup>176</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 31 July 1913, p.18.

<sup>177</sup> Hill, p.25

<sup>178</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.20.

<sup>179</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.20.

<sup>180</sup> This was referring to a village between Otaki and Levin.

League Executive Committee that branches would be allowed to choose their own candidate.<sup>181</sup> This promise was honoured and Paape went to considerable effort to ensure that the meeting at which the candidate was selected was representative of all Reform branches in the electorate.<sup>182</sup> A similar situation occurred in Motueka, where the promise to let delegates from throughout the electorate choose the candidate was raised,<sup>183</sup> and this resulted in a selection meeting being held.<sup>184</sup> Another indication that branches asserted their right to choose was a remit brought to the 1914 conference. The combined Wellington Electoral committee, Raglan Electorate and Roxburgh branches, all asked for a minor change in the procedure around dealing with two or more candidates. Although the details of what they desired were not published, it appears they wanted to strengthen the power of the branches and remove the ability of the party leader to veto any candidate chosen by a branch.<sup>185</sup> The remit was rejected, and shows that even though the branches did have considerable control over candidate selection, the National Executive wished to retain the ultimate power of approval.

There were certainly incidences of the Executive interfering in candidate selection. The best example is in the Bay of Islands electorate in early 1914. This seat was held by Vernon Reed, who had been elected in 1911 as a Liberal candidate but had subsequently crossed the floor and joined Reform during the first half of 1912. As the sitting MP was 'Reform', the policy was that he had the first right to stand. However, George Wilkinson, the Reform candidate from 1911, had considerable local support, and many Reformers viewed Reed with suspicion, having fought two elections against him. A selection meeting was held in Ohaeawai in June and the local Leagues chose Wilkinson,<sup>186</sup> but this was rejected by the Executive. The branches decided to maintain their support for Wilkinson, based on the principle that the Leagues in each electorate had been given the freedom to choose the candidate.<sup>187</sup> Both Reed and Wilkinson stood, with Reed as the official Reform candidate, but he was forced to form his own League branches to organise his campaign.<sup>188</sup>

Although candidate selection has been used as evidence to show that Massey tightly controlled the Reform Party, this area of party activity seems to be one where he had only limited influence. Most of the time branches were free to choose who they wished as candidate, and this seems to have been standard practice, evidenced by the fact that when any interference was detected, branches very quickly asserted their right to choose. It appears that the only time branches' rights to choose a candidate were overridden was when there was a dispute over candidacy.

<sup>181</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 17 July 1914, p.7.

<sup>182</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 22 July 1914, p.3; *Dominion*, 4 August 1914, p.3.

<sup>183</sup> *Colonist*, 1 May 1914, p.3.

<sup>184</sup> *Colonist*, 28 May 1914, p.7.

<sup>185</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 31 July 1914, p.19.

<sup>186</sup> *Northern Advocate*, 5 June 1914, p.7.

<sup>187</sup> *Evening Post*, 11 June 1914, p.7.

<sup>188</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 18 June 1914, p.8.

## The 1914 election

The 1914 election posed a great difficulty for Reform. The strategy they had used in 1911 was defunct, due to Ward building a much stronger Liberal-Labour alliance and healing the fractures which had been present in 1911. This presented Reform with a more significant challenge than they had faced in 1911 and it is a testament to Reform's organisation that they were able to win the election. Reform had won thirty-nine seats in 1911 and gained a further three through defections during the first half of 1912.<sup>189</sup> After the final results of the 1914 election, Reform's presence in the House was reduced to forty-one seats,<sup>190</sup> but the party increased its share of the vote significantly to forty-seven percent. Reform lost seven seats, five in the North and two in the South Island. It appears that at least four seats were lost due to labour-aligned voters swinging back to the Liberals. As the Second Ballot Act had been repealed, there was a loose agreement between the Liberals and the labour parties to prevent splitting the anti-Reform vote.<sup>191</sup> In 1911, Dunedin North, Hawke's Bay, Waitaki and Wellington Central had all been won on the second ballot and there is evidence to suggest that in some of those seats the Reform candidate had benefited from the call for labour-aligned voters to choose Reform and remove Ward from office.<sup>192</sup> In 1914 these seats were all two-way races between Reform and one Liberal candidate, therefore consolidating the Liberal and labour-aligned vote, and leading to a Liberal victory.<sup>193</sup> Francis Fisher, MP for Wellington Central, was the Minister for Marine and Customs, and had been severely heckled during the campaign, so it was thought he might have trouble retaining the seat. However, the size of his loss, almost 2 500 votes, was a surprise,<sup>194</sup> and Fisher believed that his role in the 1913 strike led to his defeat.<sup>195</sup> Auckland West had been a two-way race between Liberal and Reform in 1911, but labour-aligned voters appeared have voted Reform.<sup>196</sup> By 1914 the bitterness of the strike had removed any illusions that Reform would benefit political labour and, in that electorate, labour-aligned supporters returned to voting Liberal.<sup>197</sup> Reform also lost Taumarunui and Wairarapa. Both of these were narrow defeats,<sup>198</sup> and in the case of Wairarapa, continued a long-standing rivalry between Walter Buchanan, the losing Reform MP, and J.T.Marryat Hornsby, with Hornsby unseating Buchanan for

<sup>189</sup> These were Vernon Reed, MP for Bay of Islands, Gordon Coates, MP for Kaipara, and Thomas Rhodes, MP for Thames.

<sup>190</sup> Michael Bassett, *Three Party Politics in New Zealand, 1911-1931*, Auckland: Historical Publications, 1982, p.20.

<sup>191</sup> Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, p.221.

<sup>192</sup> See chapter five, p.170.

<sup>193</sup> M.D.N. Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics: 1890-1914', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1967, pp. 195-196 had details of the Hawke's Bay contest.

<sup>194</sup> *Evening Post*, 11 December 1914, p.3.

<sup>195</sup> F.M.B. Fisher – miscellaneous papers, 86-129-01, Fisher Family: Parliamentary Papers, MS-Group-1401, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>196</sup> See chapter five p.166, for more detail.

<sup>197</sup> E.P. Aimer, 'The Politics of a City: A Study in the Auckland Urban Area 1899-1935', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1958, p.111.

<sup>198</sup> General Election, 1914, *AJHR*, 1915, H.24, pp.1-21.

the third time.<sup>199</sup>

Reform also won five seats from Liberal MPs and one from a labour-aligned member. In 1911 the solidly Liberal seat of Otaki had been won by a Labour candidate with Reform support.<sup>200</sup> By 1914 William Field, the ex-Liberal MP for the seat, had become a Reformer due to his opposition to the 1913 strike,<sup>201</sup> and was able to secure the seat. The growth of the Political Reform League in Nelson led to Reform winning both Nelson and Motueka. Although the Political Reform League was still weak in Dunedin, with no evidence of a strong League in the city,<sup>202</sup> the party won Dunedin West and Chalmers. Reform had a strong candidate in Dunedin West, William Downie Stewart, an ex-mayor of Dunedin, who, like Field, had become a Reformer because of the labour unrest during the 1913 strike.<sup>203</sup> The MP for Chalmers, Edward Clark, was an Independent who had supported Massey in the July 1912 vote, but he decided to retire at the election and the Reform candidate, James Dickson won the seat. Tau Henare also won Northern Māori as a Reform supporter,<sup>204</sup> so that Reform held two of the four Māori seats.

Despite the reduction in seats, Reform received forty-seven percent of the overall vote. This was a notable increase from 1911 when they won thirty-seven percent.<sup>205</sup> An analysis of where the gains were made shows that the attention to organisation contributed significantly to this, and it is very possible that they could have lost the election without the strong party organisation. Since its inception, one goal of the Political Reform League had been to stand a Reform candidate in every electorate and in 1914 they came very close to achieving this. The list of Reform candidates published in the November 1914 *Light and Liberty* listed a candidate for every seat except Auckland Central, where William Richardson was listed as an 'independent government supporter'.<sup>206</sup> In 1911 eight seats had gone uncontested, so the standing of candidates in all but one seat would have increased Reform's share of the vote simply by providing supporters with a candidate to vote for. This was compounded by the Reform candidates in Grey and Gisborne both attaining over forty percent of the vote where none had been registered for Reform in 1911. Reform also won Dunedin West, an electorate in which there had been no Reform candidate in 1911. Since 1911 Reform had increased the number of its paid organisers at a local level and five of the seats for which it had no candidate in 1911, but

<sup>199</sup> David Hamer, 'Buchanan, Walter Clarke', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2b46/buchanan-walter-clarke>, accessed 3 July 2017.

<sup>200</sup> See chapter five, p.173, for more details.

<sup>201</sup> Jean Mclean, 'Field, William Hughes', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3f6/field-william-hughes>, accessed 30 May 2018.

<sup>202</sup> A League was formed in December 1914, see: *Otago Daily Times*, 18 December 1914, p.8.

<sup>203</sup> Stephanie Dale, 'Stewart, William Downie', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3s35/stewart-william-downie>, accessed 5 July 2016.

<sup>204</sup> Bassett, *Three Party Politics*, p.20.

<sup>205</sup> This percentage is based on first ballot results as the best representations of voter's initial preferences.

<sup>206</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 21 November 1914, p.3.

stood one in 1914, were in areas covered by these local organisers.<sup>207</sup> This suggests that having someone who knew the area helped Reform to find candidates and contributed to the increase in votes.

Another major change between the 1911 and 1914 elections was the sharp decrease in the number of candidates standing as independents. In 1911 twenty men had stood as independents, with three winning seats,<sup>208</sup> and independents accounted for about seven percent of the overall vote.<sup>209</sup> In contrast, four independents stood in 1914,<sup>210</sup> and only one, Richardson, received a sizeable number of votes.<sup>211</sup> Richardson was standing in the only electorate not to have a Reform candidate, which suggests that Reform's ability to stand a candidate in all other electorates is probably part of the reason for the decline in independents. There had been a trend in previous elections for candidates with Reform leanings who were standing in strong Liberal areas to call themselves 'independent' and this seems to have disappeared by 1914. This led to an increased vote for Reform. In both Thames and Kaipara, the 1911 'independent' winners were re-elected as Reform candidates. Not only were these votes counted for Reform, but both candidates increased their share of the vote by five percent.<sup>212</sup> The virtual disappearance of the Independent appears to have been partly due to Reform's strong organisation ensuring a candidate in almost every electorate and led to the party expanding its overall share of the vote.

Not only was there a decrease in the number of independents, but the number of third candidates also decreased. In 1911 forty-seven seats had three or more candidates, which fell sharply to eighteen in 1914. About two-thirds of this can be explained by the reduction in independents, the rest seems to be a product of a loose alliance between the Liberal Party and political labour. Furthermore, the repeal of the Second Ballot Act forced the Liberals to have more discipline in candidate selection. This growth in two-way competitions appears to have favoured Reform and partially explains their increased share of the vote. This is best illustrated by the seats which had multiple candidates in 1911, and in which Reform lost a two-way battle in 1914. In 1911 Hutt had four candidates, but the sitting Liberal MP, Thomas Wilford, had won on the first ballot, gaining fifty percent of the vote while the Reform candidate received thirteen. In 1914 Hutt was a two-way contest between Wilford and Albert Samuel, the Reform candidate. Wilford still polled well, raising his share to fifty-six percent of the vote, but the Reform increase was greater, more than tripling its share of the vote to forty-three percent. This pattern was

<sup>207</sup> These were Gisborne covered by Witherby, Christchurch East, South and Lyttelton covered by Jones, and Dunedin West and South, covered by Fleming.

<sup>208</sup> These were, Coates in Kaipara, Thomas Rhodes in Thames and Isitt in Christchurch North.

<sup>209</sup> Leslie Lipson, *The Politics of Equality: New Zealand's Adventures in Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948 p.187.

<sup>210</sup> Party allegiances are taken from *Evening Post*, 11 December 1914, pp.3-4.

<sup>211</sup> General Election, 1914, *AJHR*, 1915, H.24, pp.1-21. The overall percentage obtained by independents was so small that Lipson did not register it. See Lipson, p.187.

<sup>212</sup> In Kaipara, Coates received thirty-six percent in the 1911 first ballot and the official Reform candidate seventeen percent, a combined total of fifty-three percent. In 1914 Coates increased that to fifty-eight percent. In Thames, Rhodes received forty-nine percent as an independent in 1911 and fifty-four percent as a Reformer in 1914.

also observed in Ohinemuri, where Reform's vote increased from twenty-eight to forty-nine percent, in Riccarton, where it went from thirty to forty-two percent and in Timaru, it went from twenty-six to forty-two percent.<sup>213</sup> All three of these seats had very active Political Reform Leagues. Furthermore, in two of the seats Reform lost in 1914, Waitaki and Hawke's Bay, it increased its share of the vote by about ten percent. In his analysis of the election in Hawke's Bay, Campbell observed that there was good Reform organisation in the electorate, so the defeat was a bitter blow.<sup>214</sup> The fact that Reform increased its share of the vote in seats it lost partly explains why it did not convert its large share of the vote into seats. It also demonstrates how the strong organisation led to a substantial increase in overall vote, as good party structures produced more votes, even in seats Reform did not win.

Overall the 1914 election strongly demonstrated the polarisation between political parties. The sharp drop in independents and the rise in two-way races points to a strong division between Reform and the loose Liberal-labour alliance. This was caused by the fissures exposed during the 1913 strike. Some historians have denied that the strike influenced the 1914 election. Shannon, when explaining the Liberal loss, said that it was caused by the peculiarities of the first-past-the-post electoral system,<sup>215</sup> and Bellringer stated that the strike had no effect in the Taranaki seats he examined.<sup>216</sup> Gardner thought the war was responsible for Reform's loss of seats, due to the suspension of organising in August.<sup>217</sup> However, Bassett,<sup>218</sup> Richardson,<sup>219</sup> and Watson believed that the 1913 strike was a crucial factor in Reform's increased share, with Watson describing the strike as having 'brought a major influx of votes to the government'.<sup>220</sup>

As previously explained, the growth of militant political labour had benefited Reform by encouraging voters to join Leagues and become actively involved in the party, and was a factor behind the strong organisation it had developed before the 1914 election. However, it can also provide a basis for understanding the large share of the vote Reform received in 1914. Reform and its predecessors had always believed that organisation was one of the key factors in electoral success. Yet, as illustrated by the 1890s, organisation was not enough, Reform needed to have a message that resonated with the voter. The 1913 strike enabled Reform to portray itself as the party of stability against the anarchy of the strike. The June 1914 edition of *Light and Liberty* had the theme of 'under

<sup>213</sup> All these electorates held second ballots in 1911. The first ballot figures are used as the best example of electors' initial decisions.

<sup>214</sup> Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics', p.207.

<sup>215</sup> Richard Shannon, 'The Decline and Fall of the Liberal Government: A Study in an Aspect of New Zealand Political Development, 1908-1914', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1953, p.242.

<sup>216</sup> Brian S.E. Bellringer 'Conservatism and the Farmers: A Study in the Political Development of Taranaki-Wanganui between 1899 and 1925', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland 1958, p.202.

<sup>217</sup> Gardner, 'W.F. Massey in Power', p.22.

<sup>218</sup> Bassett, *Three Party Politics*, p.16; Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward*, p.222.

<sup>219</sup> Len Richardson, 'Parties and Political Change' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, (ed) Geoffrey W. Rice, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.217.

<sup>220</sup> James Watson, 'Parliamentarians and the Great War' in *New Zealand Society at War 1914-1918*, (ed) Steven Loveridge, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2016, p.52.

which flag?', implying that a vote for Ward would give power to the Red Feds and lead to 'industrial anarchy and the betrayal of democracy'.<sup>221</sup> The connecting of the Liberals to militant political labour had been used before, in the 1908 campaign,<sup>222</sup> but this message now had greater resonance due to the strike. Once New Zealand was at war, Reform attempted to present itself as the 'patriotic choice', linking a vote for Reform to loyalty to the British Empire.<sup>223</sup> For the November *Light and Liberty* the theme of 'under which flag?' was used again, with the added emphasis on the need for strong government in these 'days of storm and stress and grave national peril'.<sup>224</sup> Although Reform had a narrow majority when parliament met in 1914, it had received a huge share of the overall vote. This can be explained by a combination of their strong organisation and a compelling political message.

Although New Zealand was at war during the 1914 election, this had only a small effect on the campaign. At the outbreak of war in August there had been a brief truce in party hostilities<sup>225</sup> and Massey had asked the Political Reform League organisers to stop work.<sup>226</sup> However, this was a brief hiatus and by late September parties were campaigning again.<sup>227</sup> It appeared that as late as December 1914, the Political Reform League was continuing as normal, with a new League being formed in Dunedin.<sup>228</sup> During the first half of 1915 the Reform organisers were active,<sup>229</sup> but this can be partially explained by the four by-elections caused by electoral petitions.<sup>230</sup> Yet by mid-1915 the war had caused a major alteration in New Zealand political life. It seems that only the Women's Leagues were meeting, and they were sewing comforts for soldiers.<sup>231</sup> The all-consuming nature of the war, particularly the shocking losses in the Dardanelles, made political organisation seem improper.

On the fourth of August 1915, exactly one year after Britain declared war on Germany, Massey announced to the House that New Zealand would have a National Government for the duration of the war. This was formed as a coalition between Reform and the Liberals and as part of the agreement between himself and Ward, Massey stated that there would be 'a cessation of party wrangling and party warfare for the whole period of the

<sup>221</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 30 June 1914, p.5.

<sup>222</sup> See chapter four, p.121.

<sup>223</sup> Campbell, 'Hawke's Bay Politics', pp.201-202; J.D. Prince, 'Northland Politics 1899-1929', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1966, pp.198-199; Shannon, p.230; Barry Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence: The Origins and Establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party, 1900-19*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1980, p.86; Richardson, p.216.

<sup>224</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 21 November 1914, p.1.

<sup>225</sup> Watson, 'Parliamentarians', p.50.

<sup>226</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 10 August 1914, p.9.

<sup>227</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 30 September 1914, p.8.

<sup>228</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 18 December 1914, p.8.

<sup>229</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 4 February 1915, p.6; *New Zealand Herald*, 1 March 1915, p.7; *Taranaki Herald*, 9 April 1915, p.2; *Stratford Evening Post*, 12 April 1915, p.8; *New Zealand Herald*, 28 April 1915, p.9; *New Zealand Herald*, 12 June 1915, p.9.

<sup>230</sup> Bassett, *Three Party Politics*, pp.16-19.

<sup>231</sup> This is discussed in chapter seven, p.228.

War'.<sup>232</sup> Later that month it was announced that all the Political Reform Leagues would cease organising and that 'the league's organisers will be withdrawn forthwith'.<sup>233</sup> After a holiday in Australia,<sup>234</sup> Paape, the North Island organiser, took a job managing a hotel in Auckland.<sup>235</sup> David Jones, the organiser for the Canterbury area, had stepped down in October 1914 when he announced that he was standing as the Reform candidate for Kaiapoi.<sup>236</sup> David Fleming, the Otago-Southland organiser was working as an insurance agent by mid-1915,<sup>237</sup> and Percival Witherby, the Hawke's Bay organiser, became the general secretary of the Empire Service League.<sup>238</sup> In 1916 the Reform Party office in Wellington was still open,<sup>239</sup> but by 1918 the space was occupied by Herdman and Kirkcaldie, Solicitors.<sup>240</sup> It is difficult to know whether the office had closed or moved. From what is known of James' employment, it seems that he continued to work for the Party during the war,<sup>241</sup> which suggests that they may have kept a skeleton staff. This marked the end of the first stage of the development of the Reform Party. Until the National Government was terminated in 1919, it ceased to do most of the functions normally associated with a political party.

## Conclusion

Between 1912 and 1915 the Political Reform League became the best organised political group in New Zealand. It developed an effective party structure, headed by a National Executive with strong branches. Leagues were active throughout New Zealand and the convening of three dominion-wide conferences was a testament to its national nature. The vigour of the League had been noted by other historians, but this achievement had previously been attributed to Massey's tight control. However, a closer examination of how the League's structure worked in practice shows that Massey did not have the level of control previously assumed. Under its constitution, drawn up in 1912, control of the League was vested in the National Executive, which was elected at National Conferences. Massey was a member, but there is no evidence that he exerted any more control than the elected representatives. Furthermore, the National Conferences provided a platform for branch members to bring policy remits, which they did, despite attempts to limit their scope. The League also developed a process for candidate selection which vested power in the hands of branches. Attempts to circumvent this process resulted in protests

<sup>232</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.172, 24 June- 4 Aug 1915, p.652.

<sup>233</sup> *Evening Post*, 23 August 1915, p.8.

<sup>234</sup> *Dominion*, 27 August 1915, p.6.

<sup>235</sup> *Evening Post*, 17 February 1916, p.6.

<sup>236</sup> *Sun*, 15 October 1914, p.6.

<sup>237</sup> *Clutha Leader*, 3 August 1915, p.2.

<sup>238</sup> *Evening Post*, 7 May 1917, p.3.

<sup>239</sup> *Wise's New Zealand Post Office Directory 1916*, Dunedin: H Wise & Co, 1916, p.971.

<sup>240</sup> *Wise's New Zealand Post Office Directory 1918*, Dunedin: H Wise & Co, 1918, p.958.

<sup>241</sup> W.J. Gardner Papers, Script from interview notes with A.E. Davy, MS-Papers-6542, Alexander Turnbull Library; *Evening Post*, 31 August 1929, p.12.

from members. There were incidents of interference in the process by the National Executive, but these appear to have occurred only when there was a dispute within the electorate. These three factors gave the League some of the characteristics of a mass party and signal that branch members had considerably more influence within the Reform Party than those in the Liberal Party had enjoyed. The attention paid to building the strong branch networks is reflected in the substantial number of votes Reform received at the 1914 election. Although the final result left Reform with a decrease in seats and a one-seat majority, it secured almost half of the overall vote. This achievement reflects both the vigorous organisation and their presentation of a compelling political message arising from the 1913 strike. However, by the time parliament met in mid-1915 the brutal reality of the War was apparent, and this made party politics seem pointless. After the war the Political Reform League took some time to recapture the organisational strength it had between 1912 and 1915. The three years before the First World War were one of the high points of the Reform Party's organisation.

## Chapter 7

# Organisation for Māori and Women

*'Don't forget, Ladies, you are Electors'*<sup>1</sup>  
– *The Farmers' Political Protection Federation*

From the point when the National Association was formed, the opposition political organisations from which the Reform Party emerged aimed to form a broad-based party.<sup>2</sup> To achieve this both the National Association and the Political Reform Leagues attempted to include women and Māori in their organisations. The participation of both these groups in political parties has been under-investigated.<sup>3</sup> One body of work concentrates on the women's suffrage movement, and on women's non-party political activities,<sup>4</sup> with several historians asserting that the attainment of women's suffrage led to a substantial decrease

<sup>1</sup> *Woodville Examiner*, 15 September 1911, p.2. This appeared in an advert for a public meeting held by the Farmers' Political Protection Federation, see chapter 5, p.159 for more details.

<sup>2</sup> D.R. Hill, 'Organization of the Reform Party in New Zealand', M.A. Thesis, Kansas State University, 1956, p.38.

<sup>3</sup> Linda Moore, 'Gender Counts: Men, Women and Electoral Politics 1893-1919', M.A. Thesis, University of Canterbury, 2004, p.16 argued that gender is rarely considered by historians of electoral politics and p.119, she noted this lack of research.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Brookes, *A History of New Zealand Women*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016, pp.122-133 and pp.145-161; Patricia Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987; Megan Hutching, *Leading the way: How New Zealand Women Won the Vote*, Auckland: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010; John E. Martin, *The House: New Zealand's House of Representatives 1854-2004*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2004, pp.112-113; Len Richardson, 'Parties and Political Change' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, (ed) Geoffrey W. Rice, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp.205-206.

The five pre-war political groups covered in *Women Together* were presented as apolitical. See: Anne, Else (ed), *Women Together: A history of women's organisations in New Zealand: Ngā rōpū wāhine o te motu*, Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, pp.72-84.

in women's political activity.<sup>5</sup> While the contribution women made to the Labour movement has been explored,<sup>6</sup> there has been no examination of how women were involved in the two main parties of the pre-First World War era.<sup>7</sup> This chapter will argue that women were more politically engaged than has been previously believed, because their role in political parties has been largely overlooked. Similar observations can also be made in relation to Māori, although the process by which the political allegiances of Māori-seat candidates were formed during this period is difficult to ascertain. Most existing research on the period covered by this chapter addresses Māori unity movements and their interactions with the Crown,<sup>8</sup> rather than any engagement with established political parties.<sup>9</sup> Yet there is evidence that first the National Association, and then Reform, engaged with women and Māori and that Reform actively formed branches specifically for both groups. These attempts seem to have coincided with a growing desire by both women and Māori to participate in political parties. It appears that both groups were turning away from their previous non-party stance, suggesting that they recognised a different strategy was needed to continue advancing their political goals. This chapter will first consider the engagement of women and then Māori with the National Association and following on to

<sup>5</sup> Anne Else, 'Introduction' in *Women Together: A history of women's organisations in New Zealand: ngā rōpū wāhine o te motu*, (ed) Anne Else, Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1993, p.viii; Roberta Nicholls and Dorothy Page, 'National Council of Women' in *Women Together: A history of women's organisations in New Zealand: Ngā rōpū wāhine o te motu*, (ed) Anne Else, Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1993, p.82; Sandra Coney, 'Melville, Eliza Ellen', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3m51/melville-eliza-ellen>, accessed 29 June 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Some examples that deal with the involvement of women in the Labour movement before the First World War are: Hilary Stace, 'Janet Fraser - Making Policy as Well as Tea' in *Peter Fraser, Master Politician*, (ed) Margaret Clark, Wellington: Dunmore Press 1998; Melanie Nolan, 'Gender and the Politics of Keeping Left: Wellington Labour Women and Their Community: 1912-1949' in *Communities of Women*, (eds) Barbara Brookes and Dorothy Page, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2002; Libby Plumridge, 'Labour in Christchurch: Community and Consciousness, 1914-1919', Master of Arts, University of Canterbury, 1979; Margaret Thorn, *Stick out, Keep Left*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1997; Margaret Wilson, 'Women and the Labour Party' in *The Labour Party after 75 Years*, (ed) Margaret Clark, Wellington: Department of Politics, Victoria University of Wellington, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> D.A. Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988, is the only published history of either party, and did not consider the role women may have played in the Liberal Party; Raewyn Dalziel, 'Auckland Women's Political League' in *Women Together: A history of women's organisations in New Zealand: Ngā rōpū wāhine o te motu*, (ed) Anne Else, Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1993, p.79, notes the existence of an Auckland Women's Liberal League.

<sup>8</sup> For example: Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney, and Aroha Harris, *Tangata Whenua: A History*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2014, pp.318-349; Richard S. Hill, *State Authority, Indigenous Autonomy*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004, pp.31-127; Richard S. Hill and Vincent O'Malley, *The Māori Quest for Rangaitatanga/Autonomy 1840-2000*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2000, pp.12-16; Michael King, 'Between Two Worlds' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, (ed) Geoffrey W. Rice, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp.293-296; R.J. Martin, 'The Liberal Experiment' in *The Maori and New Zealand Politics*, (ed) J.G.A. Pocock, Auckland: Blackwood & Janet Paul Ltd., 1965, pp.46-54; Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle without End*, 2nd edition, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2004, pp.165-181; John A. Williams, *Politics of the New Zealand Maori: Protest and Cooperation 1891-1909* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

<sup>9</sup> Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, p.229, noted the existence of a Māori Liberal-Labour League in Masterton in 1904, but this is the only mention of such groups so the extent of them is unknown; Shelia McClean, 'Maori Representation 1905-1948', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1950, considered the elections in Māori seats and gave brief coverage of the role of party allegiance; Paul Moon, *Ngapua: A Political Life of Hone Heke Ngapua*, MHR, Auckland: David Ling Publishing Limited, 2006, had some discussion about Ngapua's relationship with political parties, particularly pp.195-206 and p.224.

engagement with Reform. It begins this consideration with the 1893 election, the first in which women could vote, and ends in 1915 when the all-consuming nature of the war meant that political organisation largely ceased.

Both the National Association and the Political Reform League recognised the importance of campaigns targeting female voters. From 1893 until the National Association folded it consistently tried to attract women, encouraging female membership and opening a branch specifically for women. The cessation of organising between 1900 and 1904 affected women's branches and the women's Political Reform Leagues that followed were relatively slow to emerge. The first was formed in Wellington in 1909, and by 1912 there were several very strong, active branches. Another feature of women's involvement in the League was that in smaller centres, where there were insufficient people to form a women's-only branch, women worked alongside men and were welcomed on controlling committees. The main purpose of women's Leagues was to provide support during election campaigns. However, the women members of the League were also interested in wider political issues affecting women, including the election of women to local bodies, whether women should be able to stand for parliament, and the suffrage movement in Britain. Reform was vigorous in its attempts to win the votes of women, and there was a strong message from both the party and parliamentary leadership that women party workers were a key factor in Reform winning elections. Women were also active within the party and used it to promote their own goals of greater political representation.

The National Association had made some efforts to reach out to Māori voters and, after the 1911 election, Reform also made a concerted effort to connect to Māori by organising Political Reform Leagues in the Māori electorates. It seems that Māori were interested in Reform, with Leagues being formed in Eastern Māori, while some interest was shown in the other North Island Māori seats. In 1914 Reform selected candidates for all four Māori seats, retaining Western Māori and winning Northern Māori. Their involvement in the League shows Māori to be engaged in the political process and interested in political parties. This demonstrates that Māori were active agents, trying innovative approaches in an effort to gain recognition of their grievances. The committed participation of women and Māori in the Political Reform League shows that both groups were involved in party politics and sought to use parties to further their own political aspirations.

## **The National Association and Women**

When women's suffrage was obtained in September 1893, it was only six weeks before the rolls closed for the 1893 election. The proximity of the election meant that there was little time for the two main groupings, the Liberals and the Opposition, to campaign among women. Furthermore, given that there was only a brief period of time to register the newly

enfranchised women, considerable emphasis was placed on their enrolment.<sup>10</sup> However, once it became clear that women would be able to vote in the election the National Association began preparing. It announced that the Association would help women exercise their vote and that 'the secretary was ready and willing to afford all information and assistance in the matter'.<sup>11</sup> A few days later, at the weekly council meeting of the Auckland National Association, the first woman member was enrolled, Elizabeth Bernecker of Hobsonville.<sup>12</sup> At the 1893 Annual Meeting women's enfranchisement was praised, as 'the council has a strong conviction that the measure will result in a great good'.<sup>13</sup> The matter of women's branches was raised, but it was decided that although they might be needed in the future, at present the Association would welcome as many women as possible to ordinary membership.<sup>14</sup> There seems to have been no direct targeting of women by the National Association during the 1893 election. This is probably because there was limited time between gaining the franchise and the election, meaning that even the most prepared group would have struggled to organise effective canvassing.

By early 1894 it was clear that the National Association would welcome contributions from women members. At the first 1894 quarterly meeting, held in March, the topic of Legislative Council reform was discussed. It was proposed that the voting qualification for an elected Council be based on rate-payer suffrage, but this was opposed by the women present, as the fact many of them did not pay rates would lead to their disenfranchisement.<sup>15</sup> As the Association spread in 1895 new branches also accepted women members. In October 1895, the Canterbury branch reported it had admitted women members,<sup>16</sup> as did Wellington<sup>17</sup> and Hawke's Bay.<sup>18</sup> From the surviving membership list, the New Plymouth Branch had fifteen female members, around 20 percent of the total.<sup>19</sup> In late 1895 the Canterbury National Association decided to remove the membership fee for women, allowing them to join for free.<sup>20</sup> Wellington followed this in early 1896,<sup>21</sup> and it was decided at the March 1896 Dominion-wide conference that no membership fees would be charged to any women who wished to join the Association.<sup>22</sup> Why this decision was made is unclear, but it could have been recognition that many women did not have independent access to money and that payment of a subscription could be a hindrance to female membership. Women were also encouraged to attend the political rallies organised by the Association. As the campaign for the 1896 election began the Association

<sup>10</sup> Grimshaw, pp.96-97.

<sup>11</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 21 September 1893, p.5.

<sup>12</sup> *Auckland Star*, 23 September 1893, p.4.

<sup>13</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 29 September 1893, p.6.

<sup>14</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 29 September 1893, p.6.

<sup>15</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 23 March 1894, p.6. For other reports of women attending council as opposed to general meetings see: *New Zealand Herald*, 1 May 1896, p.6; *Press*, 5 September 1896, p.7.

<sup>16</sup> *Press*, 12 October 1895, p.7.

<sup>17</sup> *Evening Post*, 11 January 1896, p.2.

<sup>18</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 29 January, p.2.

<sup>19</sup> List of members, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki.

<sup>20</sup> *Star*, 30 November 1895, p.6.

<sup>21</sup> *Evening Post*, 11 January 1896, p.2.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of the proceedings of the delegates to the conference of the sections of the National Association of New Zealand, National Association of New Zealand Taranaki Branch, ARC 2001-375, Puke Ariki.

organised meetings to publicise their cause and candidates. The first was held in Napier in March, at which the leader of the Opposition, Captain Russell, was the main speaker. The dress circle was reserved for 'ladies and those accompanying them'<sup>23</sup> and the report of the meeting noted the attendance of a 'great many ladies who evinced much interest in the proceedings'.<sup>24</sup> Russell then spoke in Auckland in mid-April and the same pattern was followed, with the dress circle being reserved for women and a large number attending the meeting.<sup>25</sup> Both the waiving of fees, and the encouragement given women to attend National Association sponsored meetings, showed a willingness to remove any possible barriers to political participation.

One of the debates among women in the suffrage movement was whether women should work through the established political structures or take a more independent stance and use non-party organisations for education and lobbying.<sup>26</sup> This debate was played out in the relationship between the Auckland Women's Political League and the National Association. The League had been formed out of the Franchise League, which had been set up to campaign for women's suffrage. Once the right to vote had been obtained, the Franchise League had decided to dissolve and reform as the Women's Political League.<sup>27</sup> At a meeting in mid-1894, the League was asked to pass a resolution condemning the government's borrowing scheme. This was too much for some members, who accused the chairman, Amie Daldy, of trying to bring 'a party turn'.<sup>28</sup> Debate ensued and eventually the League split, because some thought it was being run in the interests of the National Association.<sup>29</sup> Those who had criticised Daldy for bringing party to the League formed a Liberal Women's Political League,<sup>30</sup> although the leader of the new group was quick to point out that they would not be bound to any existing organisation.<sup>31</sup> The Women's Political League continued and apparently quickly regained the lost membership.<sup>32</sup> In December 1895 the League began discussing whether to affiliate with the Association.<sup>33</sup> This debate continued into 1896 when the matter was raised twice, with the concern being that affiliation would mean that the women members of the League would be bound to vote for National Association candidates.<sup>34</sup> There were no further reports of the matter being discussed at Women's Political League meetings, so the outcome of the proposed affiliation is unknown. However, the League continued to function for some time after the Association collapsed, so it is probable that it chose to

<sup>23</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 28 March 1896, p.3.

<sup>24</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 31 March 1896, p.2.

<sup>25</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 April 1896, p.6.

<sup>26</sup> Grimshaw, p.97; Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1959*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992, p.61, notes the same tensions in Britain after women obtained the vote in 1919.

<sup>27</sup> *Auckland Star*, 2 December 1893, p.2.

<sup>28</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 8 August 1894, p.6.

<sup>29</sup> *Auckland Star*, 25 August 1894, p.2.

<sup>30</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 22 August 1894, p.4; Dalziel, 'Auckland Women's Political League', p.79.

<sup>31</sup> *Auckland Star*, 25 August 1894, p.2.

<sup>32</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 22 August 1894, p.4.

<sup>33</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 4 December 1895, p.5.

<sup>34</sup> *Auckland Star*, 3 June 1896, p.4; *New Zealand Herald*, 8 July 1896, p.6.

remain separate.<sup>35</sup>

Another example of an established women's group asking to be affiliated was seen in Christchurch, where the Canterbury Women's Institute<sup>36</sup> approached the Association in May 1896. It is unclear why this group wanted to come alongside the Association, but, like the Women's Political League, the outcome of the request is unknown. It is possible that these established groups wished to forge a relationship with the Association because they thought that women's political interests were best served by partnering with established political structures.<sup>37</sup> However, in this period, this belief was still in the minority, with many women's groups believing that non-partisanship was the best way for women to work together for political advancement.<sup>38</sup>

A further reason for the National Association being so welcoming of women was that it recognised their value in conducting election campaigns. Several researchers have noted that during the 1890s men and women were seen to inhabit different political spheres and it was believed that the most fitting way to reach women was through other women.<sup>39</sup> As mentioned, the Auckland Association signalled in 1893 that it would consider setting up a women's branch, but no evidence exists that they did so. However, in Christchurch there was an active core of women and a woman's section was begun in 1896. It seems that this arose out of the campaign for the Christchurch City by-election which had taken place earlier in the year. The Association candidate, Charles Lewis, had a separate Ladies' Committee,<sup>40</sup> which appears to have been given the task of canvassing women.<sup>41</sup> Lewis' unexpected win was partly attributed to women campaigning strongly for him.<sup>42</sup> Reports of a desire to form a women's branch in Christchurch emerged in May 1896,<sup>43</sup> and the first separate meeting was held in June. Attended by about thirty women it was decided to form a women's section because 'ladies were politically equal to men and should work shoulder to shoulder with them'.<sup>44</sup> This section began having regular meetings,<sup>45</sup> and when the Association decided to move to bigger offices they made provision for

<sup>35</sup> Dalziel, 'Auckland Women's Political League', p.80.

<sup>36</sup> Margaret Lovell-Smith, 'Canterbury Women's Institute' in *Women Together: A history of women's organisations in New Zealand: Ngā rōpū wāhine o te motu* (ed) Anne Else, Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1893, pp.75-76.

<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to note that both these women's groups ended up joining the Labour Party. This could suggest that they were more interested in being part of a political party than other, contemporary women's organisations. See: Dalziel, 'Auckland Women's Political League', p.74; Lovell-Smith, p.76.

<sup>38</sup> Raewyn Dalziel, 'Political Organisations' in *Women Together: A history of women's organisations in New Zealand: Ngā rōpū wāhine o te motu* (ed) Anne Else, Wellington: Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1993, p.56.

<sup>39</sup> D.A. Hamer, 'Centralization and Nationalism 1891-1912' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, (ed) Keith Sinclair, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990, p.150; Moore, p.37.

<sup>40</sup> *Press*, 11 January 1896, p.8.

<sup>41</sup> *Press*, 1 February 1896, p.7.

<sup>42</sup> *Poverty Bay Herald*, 23 April 1896, p.3.

<sup>43</sup> *Press*, 14 May 1896, p.4.

<sup>44</sup> *Press*, 1 June 1896, p.4.

<sup>45</sup> *Press*, 13 June 1896, p.2; *Press*, 17 July 1896, p.4; *Star*, 8 August 1896, p.6; *Press*, 15 August 1896, p.9; *Press*, 30 August 1896, p.4; *Press*, 16 October 1896, p.4.

a separate room for the women to meet.<sup>46</sup> There were reports of two other women's committees, in Dunedin<sup>47</sup> and Hawke's Bay,<sup>48</sup> but nothing else could be found about these groups.

After the 1896 election the work of women in both Christchurch and Dunedin was commented upon. In Christchurch, a meeting was held to celebrate the Opposition's relatively successful election, and although the work of the women's section was valued, the Association believed that there was still a considerable amount of work that could be done to mobilise women voters.<sup>49</sup> In the Dunedin Branch's 1897 Annual Report, pleasure was expressed at the election result and women were specially thanked for their efforts in turning out female voters.<sup>50</sup> Even after the National Association began to wane after 1896, it still had strength in Christchurch and there is evidence that the women's branch continued at least into 1897. In February 1897, the Association received a letter from the National Council of Women asking if they wished to send a delegation from the women's section to the annual conference.<sup>51</sup> Initially, three women were chosen,<sup>52</sup> but they were then withdrawn as the Association decided that it could not support the political aims of the Council, although it was not clear what they disagreed with.<sup>53</sup> There is no subsequent evidence that the Christchurch women's section kept meeting, or that any other women's branches were formed. At the 1899 Christchurch Annual General Meeting, women were mentioned with reference to their importance in 1896 and a desire was expressed to see them continue their excellent work.<sup>54</sup> Yet it appears that there were no separate women's sections and there is no indication of women working for the Opposition in the 1899 election, possibly due to the general decline in the Association. The activity of women in a partisan organisation, like the National Association, reflected that some women were interested in being involved in party style politics. However, there is no research on women's engagement with the Liberals, so it is difficult to know if the National Association's efforts were motivated by a desire to reach women or a reaction to Liberal efforts to do the same.

## Women's Political Reform Leagues

The first signs that the Opposition was preparing to re-start political organisation came in 1904 with the formation of the Political Reform League.<sup>55</sup> At first there was no direct attention paid to women, apart from the occasional meeting advertisement that ended

<sup>46</sup> *Press*, 17 September 1896, p.4.

<sup>47</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 7 August 1896, p.3.

<sup>48</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 4 August 1896, p.3.

<sup>49</sup> *Press*, 19 December 1896, p.8.

<sup>50</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 17 March 1897, p.3.

<sup>51</sup> *Press*, 26 February 1897, p.4.

<sup>52</sup> *Press*, 22 March 1897, p.3.

<sup>53</sup> *Press*, 29 March 1897, p.5.

<sup>54</sup> *Star*, 29 July 1899, p.8.

<sup>55</sup> See chapter three, p.98.

with 'ladies welcome'.<sup>56</sup> The Pukekohe Political Reform League had been one of the first established and after its 1906 Annual General Meeting it was noted that its controlling committee contained both men and women.<sup>57</sup> The Taranaki League also tried to get women committee members at its Annual Meeting.<sup>58</sup> By 1907 the Pukekohe League had formed its own Ladies' Committee, which had ten members,<sup>59</sup> and the Taranaki League signalled it planned to form another.<sup>60</sup> A further indication that the Political Reform League was trying to attract women was the setting of subscriptions in the South Otago district - men's membership payments were set at two shillings and six pence and women's at one shilling.<sup>61</sup> With 1908 being an election year the League did attempt to recruit women to its cause. At the 1908 garden party, Richard Monk, an ex-Opposition MP,<sup>62</sup> spoke directly to women saying 'He wanted the women of New Zealand to show that in their hands democracy would become pure and true and he wanted them to stand out . . . for it was a vital question for every woman who was helping her husband to establish a home for their children in this country'. Monk also asked them to 'form yourselves into great battalions, and vote for your homes, or the homes you hope to have'.<sup>63</sup> Despite this appeal the League did not form any women-specific sections, although there was a report of David Buick, the Opposition candidate for Palmerston, having a women's committee.<sup>64</sup> Vaile's list of supporters of the Auckland Political Reform League contained two women.<sup>65</sup> It is possible that this was a record of those who contributed financially to the League, which would have only been possible for women of independent financial means. Even though the League recognised the importance of women voters, at this stage there was no formal structure to allow for women to be organised directly by other women. This is possibly a reflection of the level of organisation the League had achieved in 1908. Its main goal was to become a nationwide organisation, and it appears that it was focusing on establishing branches rather than creating any gender-based groups.

The 1908 election was a considerable success for the Opposition, and shortly afterwards, in early 1909, it formally adopted the name Reform Party.<sup>66</sup> In June of 1909 the Political Reform League established a branch in Wellington, which had the first women's section of the League.<sup>67</sup> The women seemed to be considerably more active than the male section, with reports of their meetings appearing almost monthly on the women's

<sup>56</sup> *Clutha Leader*, 11 July 1905, p.4; *Evening Post*, 11 September 1905, p.4; *Waikato Times*, 24 April 1907, p.3; *Poverty Bay Herald*, 11 June 1907, p.3.

<sup>57</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 19 May 1906, p.9.

<sup>58</sup> *Taranaki Daily News*, 29 October 1906, p.3.

<sup>59</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 31 May 1907, p.6.

<sup>60</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 17 September 1907, p.3.

<sup>61</sup> *Bruce Herald*, 29 August 1907, p.5; *Bruce Herald*, 5 September 1907, p.4.

<sup>62</sup> Guy H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. II, M-Addenda, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940, pp.90-91.

<sup>63</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 February 1908, p.6.

<sup>64</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 24 October 1908, p.5.

<sup>65</sup> National Association of New Zealand Auckland Branch, NZMS 1375, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland City Library.

<sup>66</sup> See chapter four p.131.

<sup>67</sup> *Dominion*, 23 June 1909, p.3.

pages of the Wellington newspapers. It is difficult to know whether this was an accurate reflection, or whether there was simply more conscientious reporting of women's meetings. From the reports, it seems that the women's meetings combined political organisation with education. For example, at a meeting in early March 1910, a paper was read on whether women should sit in parliament.<sup>68</sup> Yet the next meeting, held a fortnight later, was dedicated to the organising of a fundraising social dance.<sup>69</sup> Other topics covered at women's meetings included, party government,<sup>70</sup> compulsory military training,<sup>71</sup> and some which reflected the gendered nature of the audience, like women's work,<sup>72</sup> and the 'present-day' child.<sup>73</sup> It seems that the Women's League was combining the educative aspect expected from women's non-party organisations with some of the needs of a political party, like fundraising. In this way it acted as a bridge between what was expected of women's political groups, to provide 'political education', yet the League never pretended to be apolitical, they were open about their affiliation to the Reform Party.

The Wellington Women's Political Reform League was also partly responsible for the spread of women's branches of the League. In August 1911 a by-election had been held in Christchurch North and the Reform candidate, John D. Hall, had a strong ladies' committee.<sup>74</sup> From this committee came the desire to form a women's League in Christchurch. Octavia Newman, president of the Wellington Women's League,<sup>75</sup> and the wife of Dr Alfred Newman, ex-MP and Reform candidate in the 1911 election,<sup>76</sup> travelled to Christchurch to speak at the inaugural meeting. In her speech she urged women to work together to remove the present Liberal Government from office.<sup>77</sup> The Christchurch branch then met at least once in 1911.<sup>78</sup> This branch was then boosted in 1912 by a split in the Canterbury Women's Social and Political League which occurred when the president of the Social and Political League, Rose St Barbe Haslam, wanted to merge that League with the Women's Political Reform League. In a discussion reminiscent of that which took place when the Auckland Women's Political League tried to join the National Association,<sup>79</sup> Haslam argued that the Social and Political League needed to shed its apolitical stance if they wanted women to have influence. However, most members disagreed and those wishing to be part of the Women's Political Reform League left the Social and Political League.<sup>80</sup> The Wellington branch also helped to start a Women's League in Waikanae,<sup>81</sup>

<sup>68</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 4 March 1910, p.7.

<sup>69</sup> *Evening Post*, 11 March 1910, p.9.

<sup>70</sup> *Evening Post*, 13 August 1909, p.3.

<sup>71</sup> *Evening Post*, 20 October 1909, p.9.

<sup>72</sup> *Evening Post*, 5 November 1909, p.9.

<sup>73</sup> *Evening Post*, 8 April 1910, p.9.

<sup>74</sup> *Evening Star*, 18 August 1911, p.7.

<sup>75</sup> *Evening Post*, 5 March 1912, p.9.

<sup>76</sup> John Stenhouse, 'Newman, Alfred Kingcome', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3n4/newman-alfred-kingcome>, accessed 13 December 2017.

<sup>77</sup> *Press*, 12 August 1911, p.8.

<sup>78</sup> *Press*, 20 September 1911, p.12.

<sup>79</sup> *Press*, 9 August 1912, p.8.

<sup>80</sup> *Press*, 6 September 1912, p.9.

<sup>81</sup> *Dominion*, 8 October 1912, p.2.

and in Palmerston North, where a delegation of five women visited.<sup>82</sup> The influence of this branch in encouraging the growth in Women's Leagues was also noted by Massey, who said that women in other parts of the country had taken their lead from the Wellington Women's branch.<sup>83</sup>

Although the Wellington Women were prepared to travel to start new Women's Leagues, it was more common for these to be established by women who were interested in supporting Reform. In May 1912 an advertisement appeared in the *Marlborough Express* calling on those interested in forming a women's branch of the Political Reform League to meet with Jon Duncan, the 1911 Reform candidate,<sup>84</sup> in a local tea room.<sup>85</sup> A branch was duly formed, and it became one of the most stable women's branches in the League.<sup>86</sup> In July, a women's branch was formed in Hamilton,<sup>87</sup> although it seems that many of the women were actually based in Cambridge.<sup>88</sup> In August there was an announcement that Women's Leagues would be formed in Auckland, but it is probable that there had been some prior planning as they had appointed an honorary organiser, Nellie Von Sturmer.<sup>89</sup> Auckland being the power base of the Reform movement, women's Leagues were quickly formed. When the first Auckland Women's Annual General Meeting was held in March 1913, it was reported that there were nine women's branches in the Auckland Province with a total membership of six hundred.<sup>90</sup> Westland<sup>91</sup> and Wanganui,<sup>92</sup> were the other areas where women's branches were formed.

Looking at where the Women's Leagues flourished, it appears that it was easier to establish them in the bigger centres. Apart from Blenheim and Westland, the other four places where the Leagues thrived, Auckland, Wanganui, Wellington and Christchurch were among the biggest urban centres in New Zealand.<sup>93</sup> Although there were attempts to start Women's League's in smaller places, Palmerston North being an example, these did not seem to prosper in the same way.<sup>94</sup> This suggests that the League was attractive to women who were living in urban settings and it is probable that urban life afforded women more opportunity to participate in the life of a political group.<sup>95</sup> One aspect that

<sup>82</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 15 October 1912, p.5.

<sup>83</sup> *Dominion*, 5 August 1912, p.6.

<sup>84</sup> Scholefield, vol. II, M-Addenda, p.221.

<sup>85</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 11 May 1912, p.5.

<sup>86</sup> They were still meeting in 1915.

<sup>87</sup> *Waikato Argus*, 20 July 1912, p.2.

<sup>88</sup> See *Waikato Argus*, 8 July 1918, p.2 for a list of women who joined the Cambridge branch, there was considerable overlap between this list and those who set up the Women's Political Reform League.

<sup>89</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 26 August 1912, p.12.

<sup>90</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 March 1913, p.5.

<sup>91</sup> *West Coast Times*, 4 September 1912, p.2.

<sup>92</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 25 November 1912, p.4; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 19 April 1913, p.3.

<sup>93</sup> *New Zealand Official Yearbook*, 1913, p.112, Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington and Dunedin were the four largest centres, followed by Invercargill and Wanganui.

<sup>94</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 10 October 1912, p.5, was the first recorded meeting of the Palmerston North Women's Political Reform League; *Manawatu Standard*, 11 December 1912, p.4, was the last recorded meeting of the Palmerston North Women's Political Reform League.

<sup>95</sup> Of the five pre-First World War women's political groups in *Women Together* four were entirely urban and were based in the four centres that had Women's Reform Leagues. See: Anne, Else (ed), *Women Together*, pp.72-84.

may have encouraged urban Leagues was the density of city populations. Having enough women concentrated in one area, who were interested in supporting Reform, would have made it easier to gather the numbers needed to form a branch. Another issue would have been the reliance of farms on family labour, which meant that rural women often had little spare time to attend meetings. Harriet Newcombe, a British suffrage campaigner who visited New Zealand in 1913, observed that New Zealand women participated less in political life, which she attributed to the 'onerousness of housekeeping in the Dominion'.<sup>96</sup> As public transport grew in cities, and technology took some of the burden of house work, urban women were finding it easier to be active outside of the home. However, Dunedin, which was the fourth biggest centre in New Zealand during this period, did not develop a Women's League. Erik Olssen noted that women were largely absent from politics in Caversham, a suburb of Dunedin, during the period under consideration in this chapter. It is possible that Dunedin women were not as politically active as those in other centres and more research about women and Liberals would add to our understanding of the gendered nature of the Dunedin political scene.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the Reform Leagues were weaker in Dunedin.<sup>98</sup> There had been a short lived branches,<sup>99</sup> but a branch aligned with the 1912 Reform Party structure was not initiated until 1914.<sup>100</sup> These factors could explain why there were no women's Political Reform Leagues in Dunedin.

The Women's League was not always viewed favourably by the newspapers, being attacked in two ways. The first concentrated on the type of women who were attracted to the League. Soon after the Women's League was formed in Auckland, the *Observer* published a cartoon portraying its main function as being to make lists of the 'na-icest people',<sup>101</sup> suggesting there was an element of snobbery to membership of the League. This stereotype was reinforced in March 1913, when the *Observer* published an allegation that membership of the Women's League was growing because they offered a guarantee of at least one invitation to Government House.<sup>102</sup> The *Star* also associated the Christchurch League with society women, saying that women of the 'shopkeeper type' were not welcome.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, it suggested that women were attracted to the League for the wrong kinds of reason, they joined for social advancement, not political activity.<sup>104</sup> The second type of attack focused on the political nature of the League. Such

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This pattern was the opposite of that observed in the women's branches of the Primrose League, where rural areas tended to have the largest branches see: Janet Henderson Robb, *The Primrose League 1883-1906*, New York: AMS Press, 1942, pp.134-135.

<sup>96</sup> *Evening Post*, 16 February 1914, p.9.

<sup>97</sup> Erik Olssen, *Building the New World*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995, p.182.

<sup>98</sup> It has been argued that in Dunedin the Liberal-Labour alliance lasted longer than other cities and this may have led to a lack of support for an anti-Labour party see: Peter Franks and Jim McAloon, *Labour: The New Zealand Labour Party 1916-2016*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2016, p.67 and p.74.

<sup>99</sup> See chapter four, p.101.

<sup>100</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 18 December 1914, p.8.

<sup>101</sup> *Observer*, 21 September 1912, p.12.

<sup>102</sup> *Observer*, 15 March 1913, p.11.

<sup>103</sup> *Star*, 22 June 1914, p.5.

<sup>104</sup> *Star*, 8 October 1913, p.4.

criticisms gave the idea that the Women's Leagues were not really political organisations as women were not interested in political ideas. After it was announced that the Christchurch Women's League had over three hundred members, the *Star* signalled it was suspicious of women's political societies, claiming they were a front for discussing matters like clothing.<sup>105</sup> The *Southland Times* also made fun of the Women's Political Reform League, imagining what the House would be like if women became MPs and formed a Women's Political Reform Party. The article portrayed women as being mostly concerned about shopping and clothes and not prepared to follow parliamentary procedure when reprimanded.<sup>106</sup> When the Auckland League announced the topics of its forthcoming speakers, the *Observer* thought that the women might depart the lecture not quite understanding the subject, but they would be consoled by the copious tea and cakes.<sup>107</sup>

The development of women's branches demonstrates that the Political Reform League was committed to forming groups through which they could reach women voters. Where there was no will to form a separate women's branch, women were able to be part of the controlling committees of the general branches. When a League branch was formed in Raglan in 1912, women were elected as general members as an interim measure until a separate women's branch could be established.<sup>108</sup> There is no record of a Raglan women's branch being formed, but this electorate did send a female delegate to the first National Conference.<sup>109</sup> In Masterton the general committee consisted of ten men and ten women.<sup>110</sup> As the movement grew there seemed to be more desire on the part of the League to form women's sections. Lindegren promised a visit from Nellie von Sturmer in her role as organiser to help both Stratford<sup>111</sup> and Hastings<sup>112</sup> organise women's branches. However, in June 1914 the Hastings League decided not to set up a women's branch and instead incorporated women onto the committee.<sup>113</sup> Women were also able to hold positions of responsibility within the general Leagues. Although Westland did have a separate Women's League, the Hokitika Branch had a female secretary.<sup>114</sup> When delegates were nominated for the Otaki selection meeting in August 1914,<sup>115</sup> four women were chosen.<sup>116</sup> During the 1914 campaign, Ada Hadfield, the president of Wellington Women's League was the main speaker at a meeting in Hawera to support the Reform candidate for Patea.<sup>117</sup> It appears that the Political Reform League preferred to set up separate women's branches where possible. However, women were welcome on general

<sup>105</sup> *Star*, 12 April 1913, p.6.

<sup>106</sup> *Southland Times*, 11 August 1913, p.2.

<sup>107</sup> *Observer*, 2 August 1913, p.16.

<sup>108</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 30 May 1912, p.8.

<sup>109</sup> *Dominion*, 3 August 1912, p.6.

<sup>110</sup> *Wairarapa Age*, 15 August 1912, p.4.

<sup>111</sup> *Stratford Evening Standard*, 9 October 1912, p.4.

<sup>112</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 29 October 1912, p.4.

<sup>113</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 5 June 1914, p.3.

<sup>114</sup> *West Coast Times*, 13 July 1914, p.1.

<sup>115</sup> See chapter six, p.202, for more detail.

<sup>116</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 7 August 1914, p.5.

<sup>117</sup> *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 7 December 1914, p.5.

committees and were able to hold office, could help with selection of delegates and were asked to speak to general audiences during election campaigns.

Another way that women were included in the life of the League was through the pages of *Light and Liberty*. From the first edition, in May 1913, the branch news contained a special section for the Women's League. The news was dominated by the established Leagues in Christchurch, Blenheim, Wellington, Wanganui and Auckland. The reports were mainly about the monthly meetings each branch held, which seemed to be supplied by the branches. For example, Rose Haslam, president of the Christchurch Branch, wrote in June 1913 that the meetings were 'strictly educational, and not associated with anything like social distraction'.<sup>118</sup> To show how serious the women in Christchurch were, it was reported that they had a lecture on proportional representation, after which a mock election was held so as the ladies could practice what they had learnt.<sup>119</sup> The Auckland Branch provided a list of recent topics from their meetings which included, military reserve nursing, the creed of health, and Māori land laws.<sup>120</sup> Other news focused on administrative issues, like the Blenheim branch becoming an incorporated society,<sup>121</sup> the Annual General Meetings,<sup>122</sup> and the formation of new branches.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Nellie von Sturmer, the honorary women's organiser, wrote articles about the importance of women participating in politics. The first, entitled 'Women's Sphere in Politics', outlined how women who joined the League were interested in good government, and did not neglect the duties of home and family by running around endlessly engaged in political meetings. A League member was a woman who had an 'intelligent interest in political questions, and a knowledge of what was going on in the country'.<sup>124</sup> Another article emphasised how women could 'impart a much higher standard of public life and morals, if they are earnest over the business'.<sup>125</sup> The inclusion of women's branch news and articles stressing the importance of women in political life illustrates that women's roles in the League were valued.

The participation of women in the full life of the League is illustrated by their attendance at the three national conferences. At the first, held in August 1912, the Blenheim Women's League was represented by three of its members, while Canterbury Women's League sent two delegates as did Auckland.<sup>126</sup> Two general branches sent female delegates, Otago Central and Raglan. Although women attended and two were elected to the National Executive, there was no published record of their contribution. In 1913

<sup>118</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 June 1913, p.35.

<sup>119</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 May 1913, p.28; *Press*, 11 October 1912, p.3.

<sup>120</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 9 August 1913, p.33.

<sup>121</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 June 1913, p.35.

<sup>122</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 9 August 1913, p.31; *Light and Liberty*, 9 August 1913, p.36; *Light and Liberty*, 13 September 1913, p.31; *Light and Liberty*, 23 May 1914, p.34.

<sup>123</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 13 September 1913, p.31; *Light and Liberty*, 8 November 1913, p.33.

<sup>124</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 May 1913, pp.8-9.

<sup>125</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 27 June 1913, pp.21-22.

<sup>126</sup> *Dominion*, 3 August 1912, p.6.

the women's branches held their own conference the day before the general one began. Eighty women attended, but they almost exclusively represented four parts of the country: Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Wanganui. Blenheim, the second oldest Women's League, sent two delegates as did Masterton.<sup>127</sup> This separate women's conference was not repeated in 1914, but prior to the conference there were reports of female delegates being chosen,<sup>128</sup> and the Wanganui Branch discussed and passed remits to take to the conference.<sup>129</sup> The presentation of these remits was mentioned in reports of the conference,<sup>130</sup> but there was no detailed reporting of that year's conference delegates, so it is difficult to know how many women attended. Once again two women were elected to the National Executive, which suggests that there had been no deterioration in the position of women in the party.<sup>131</sup> The overall picture of women's status in the League was that they were members on an equal footing with men, able to participate in national conferences and sit on the Executive Committee.

## Women's Political Lobbying

As mentioned, Women's Leagues were also places where women could discuss political ideas. One aspect that the Women's Leagues focused on was female representation on elected bodies. Initially this seems to have been limited to women gaining seats on Hospital Boards and City Councils. In 1909 a change to the Hospital and Charitable Institutions Act opened Hospital Boards to rate-payer election. Even more women became eligible to stand and vote for Boards when the basis for voting was changed in 1910 to a residential qualification.<sup>132</sup> That same year, Mary Richmond stood for the Wellington Hospital Board and the Women's League expressed their pleasure at her candidacy.<sup>133</sup> In 1913 the Auckland Women's League supported Ellen Melville in her bid to become a city councillor and Dr Florence Heller's candidature for the Hospital Board.<sup>134</sup> Both these women were elected, and Melville became the first female city councillor in New Zealand.<sup>135</sup> In 1919 she became the first female Reform Party candidate for parliament, although she had a troubled relationship with the party.<sup>136</sup> In Wellington, League members Dr Daisy Platts-Mills and Mary Richmond<sup>137</sup> were successful in their bids for seats

<sup>127</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 11 October 1913, p.23.

<sup>128</sup> *Nelson Evening Mail*, 9 July 1914, p.4; *Marlborough Express*, 14 July 1914, p.5; *New Zealand Herald*, 20 June 1914, p.9.

<sup>129</sup> *Dominion*, 17 June 1914, p.2.

<sup>130</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 31 July 1914, p.20.

<sup>131</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 31 July 1914, p.20.

<sup>132</sup> Jean Drage, 'The Invisible Representatives', *Political Science*, 45, no. 1, 1993, p.83.

<sup>133</sup> *Evening Post*, 11 March 1910, p.9.

<sup>134</sup> *Star*, 16 April 1913, p.7.

<sup>135</sup> The first women city councillor in Wellington, Annie McVicar, was also active in the Women's Political Reform League, see: Beryl Hughes, 'McVicar, Annie', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, accessed 3 July 2018.

<sup>136</sup> Coney, 'Melville, Eliza Ellen', <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3m51/melville-eliza-ellen>.

<sup>137</sup> *Dominion*, 6 May 1913, p.2.

on the Wellington Hospital Board, with Platts-Mills topping the poll.<sup>138</sup> The League's support for women serving on Hospital Boards was consistent with the prevailing belief that women had a 'special sphere' of influence.<sup>139</sup> Hospital Boards, which dealt with the sick and needy, were ideal places for women to bring a 'feminine influence'.<sup>140</sup> In this regard the League was not radical in its support for female Hospital Board members, but neither was it conservative, as there were still those in society who held that the role of women was to remain in the home.

However, there was a group of women within the League who were campaigning for a more radical proposal – for women to be elected to parliament. At a 1911 meeting the Wellington Women's Branch had held a mock parliament where the women pretended to be MPs. Although light-hearted, it was critical of the male MPs, 'disenfranchising' them for the way they had piled the country with debt.<sup>141</sup> By 1913, it seems that the issue had created a split within the League, illustrated by a debate at the 1913 Women's Branch Conference. The Wanganui branch presented a remit asking for Reform to support the election of women to parliament. They wanted the government to show its commitment to removing what they termed the 'disability of female electors' by changing the proposed Bill for reformation of the Legislative Council, so that women could be elected to the Upper House.<sup>142</sup> Despite considerable discussion this remit was not passed by the conference. Another attempt was made with the proposal by the Wellington Suburbs branch that, instead of female MPs, a committee of experienced women be convened to contribute to any legislation that might affect women and children. This motion tried to employ the 'separate spheres' argument, by limiting women's influence to matters concerning 'women and children'. Once again, this idea was debated at length but eventually voted down.<sup>143</sup> Even though neither of these proposals made it to the main conference, a minority of women in the Leagues wanted women to be eligible to stand for parliamentary election. As the remits were not discussed at the main conference it is difficult to infer what opinion was held by the whole of the Reform League.

However, it is possible to gain some insight into the Reform Party's attitude to women MPs from the passage of the Legislative Council Reform Bill. Council reform had been one of the policy themes of both the National Association and the Reform Party. After gaining power Reform began work on overhauling the Council, with the main alteration being that the Council would be an elected house, rather than one appointed by the current government. There were several issues in getting the Bill through the Council, as it was reluctant to vote for a change that could see many of its own members lose their seat.<sup>144</sup> By 1914 Reform had appointed new Councillors who supported the party

<sup>138</sup> *Dominion*, 3 May 1913, p.2.

<sup>139</sup> This belief was expressed by Nellie Von Sturmer in *Light and Liberty*, 27 May 1913, pp.8-9.

<sup>140</sup> Sandra Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, Auckland: Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, 1993, p.50.

<sup>141</sup> *Dominion*, 5 September 1911, p.11.

<sup>142</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 11 October 1913, p.23.

<sup>143</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 11 October 1913, p.27.

<sup>144</sup> W.K. Jackson, *The New Zealand Legislative Council*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1972, pp.169-170.

and it again presented a Council Reform Bill. The 1914 revision differed from previous versions in that it allowed for women to stand for election. This change was one of the reasons that the Council sent the 1914 Bill back to the House of Representatives, as the Councillors were not prepared to accept women in their midst unless the lower house did so. Subsequently, the Bill was altered to allow women to stand for the Council when they gained the right to stand for the House.<sup>145</sup> It is unclear what prompted Reform to include a provision which allowed for women to be elected to the Council. However, as this was raised by women at the 1913 conference, it was probably an issue which was being discussed by the wider party.<sup>146</sup> It signalled that Reform believed that women should be able to sit in parliament, and foreshadowed the eventual law change, introduced by the party in 1919, which enabled women to stand for election to the House of Representatives and be appointed to the Legislative Council.<sup>147</sup>

Another aspect of political life that Women's Leagues were interested in was the suffrage movement in Britain. Initially, the League was supportive of British suffragettes,<sup>148</sup> but by early 1913 the increasing militancy of a wing of the British movement had become a point of concern.<sup>149</sup> At the 1913 Auckland Women's League Annual General Meeting the president, Amy Campbell, used her report to 'express our regret that there are those of our sex who have forgotten their womanhood and duty as British subjects'.<sup>150</sup> This sparked a vigorous debate among the women present as to whether Campbell should be expressing such an opinion in her report when not all members agreed with her. This was further heightened by the presence of a 'lady visitor from England' who criticised the League for not doing more to encourage women into public life. She noted that there were very few women on public boards and finished with the remark that 'New Zealand women, who are looked on as being lucky by their English sisters, make very little use of their opportunities'.<sup>151</sup> At the same time two British suffrage campaigners were traveling around New Zealand, Harriet Newcombe, the secretary of the New Zealand and Australian Women Voters' Association and Margaret Hodge, a London social worker.<sup>152</sup> Although Newcombe and Hodge were associated with the constitutional wing of the suffrage movement, Hodge, in particular, defended the militant suffragettes.<sup>153</sup> The two women spoke in March at a Wellington Women's League meeting, and in general their message was well received, but they were bombarded with questions about the militancy of the British suffrage movement.<sup>154</sup> Despite Newcombe and Hodges' justification

<sup>145</sup> Jackson, pp.171-172.

<sup>146</sup> *Dominion*, 6 November 1914, p.2, reported that a paper on why women should be able to stand for the Legislative Council was read at a Women's League meeting.

<sup>147</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol.184, 28 August- 2 October 1919, pp.963-980, this Bill was passed with very little controversy, with it being an almost unanimous cross-party vote.

<sup>148</sup> *Dominion*, 20 August 1909, p.3.

<sup>149</sup> Constance Rover, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain 1866-1914*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967, pp.82-83.

<sup>150</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 March 1913, p.5.

<sup>151</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 March 1913, p.5.

<sup>152</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 17 February 1913, p.5.

<sup>153</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 21 February 1913, p.5.

<sup>154</sup> *Dominion*, 4 March 1913, p.6.

of suffragette militancy, the Women's Reform Leagues continued to denounce the militant movement. In April the Christchurch Women's League passed a motion saying they disapproved of the suffragettes' methods,<sup>155</sup> and in July wrote a letter to the *Daily Mail*, to inform the British public that New Zealand women did not condone the militant movement.<sup>156</sup>

On their return to Britain, Newcombe and Hodge published a report on the state of women's groups in New Zealand. In it they called New Zealand women 'backward' and cited the Women's Political Reform Leagues as being part of the problem because they were based on party, not principle.<sup>157</sup> In reply, the Leagues countered that Newcombe and Hodge had criticised them because they did not support the militant suffragettes.<sup>158</sup> This debate illustrates the interest that the League had in the wider political issues affecting women. Although they may not have agreed with the tactics of the British suffragettes, League members were prepared to enter into debate about the movement.

## Did Women Vote for Reform?

Both the Opposition of the 1890s and the Reform League were assiduous in the attention they paid to women voters. The Reform Party was particularly vocal about how important women workers and voters were to them. Herries said at a meeting in Palmerston North that 'when you had them (the ladies) on your side you had practically won',<sup>159</sup> and the dedication that the Wellington Women's League showed in the 1911 and 1914 campaigns was cited as playing a large role in Reform's success in that area.<sup>160</sup> In the Executive report to the 1913 conference included a commendation for 'the energy and enthusiasm of the many ladies who give so much of their time and ability for furthering the Reform cause'.<sup>161</sup>

However, whether the attention paid to women translated into votes is difficult to measure. Although the numbers of men and women who voted in each electorate is available it is not possible to accurately discern whether women were more likely to vote for one party or another. Linda Moore has tried to approximate differences in gender voting using statistical methods.<sup>162</sup> Studying data for elections from 1893 to 1919 she

<sup>155</sup> *Press*, 11 April 1913, p.8.

<sup>156</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 23 July 1913, p.7; Martin Pugh, *The March of Women: A Revisionist Analysis of the Campaign for Women's Suffrage 1866-1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp.202-210, argued that the militant suffrage movement was in decline from 1912 and pp.216-223, that the militant strand was not typical of the movement as a whole, which aligned the Women's Reform League opinion with the majority of the movement in Britain.

<sup>157</sup> *Evening Post*, 16 February 1914, p.9.

<sup>158</sup> *Sun*, 19 February 1914, p.4.

<sup>159</sup> *Manawatu Standard*, 13 September 1910, p.6.

<sup>160</sup> *Dominion*, 23 January 1912, p.4; *Auckland Star*, 15 November 1912, p.8; *Star*, 9 May 1913, p.4; *Dominion*, 14 December 1914, p.2.

<sup>161</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 11 October 1913, p.10.

<sup>162</sup> Moore, pp.18-56.

found that women preferred conservative candidates up until 1908, and then began to move away from Reform around 1914.<sup>163</sup> She also found that the 1911 election was unusual, as women's turnout exceeded men's in a number of electorates.<sup>164</sup> She explained this by citing a growing political awareness among women,<sup>165</sup> which matched the growth in Women's Reform Leagues. A closer examination of Moore's electorate analysis shows that Reform's share of women's votes was increasing in the Wellington area between 1908 and 1914.<sup>166</sup> This suggests that the work of the Women's Reform League in Wellington was having some effect. Unfortunately, Reform did not have many official candidates in Auckland and Christchurch in either the 1908 or 1911 elections. This makes it difficult to track any effect of the Women's Leagues in those cities, as there is insufficient data to compare women's voting patterns before the Leagues were organised, with those in 1914 when the Leagues were well established. However, in Wanganui Reform's share of women's votes in the elections between 1908 and 1914 remained steady, suggesting that the League there was attracting committed female Reform voters. Moore's work is an estimate of how women voted and the true voting patterns between genders cannot be known. However, her work does indicate that in the Wellington area women were choosing to vote for Reform in greater numbers. Considering the strength of the Women's League in Wellington it seems that they may have had the influence that was attributed to them.

At the end of 1914 the Women's Branches of the Political Reform League were in a robust position. However, like the Men's branches the events of the war began to change their focus. In March 1915, the Marlborough Women's league decided to begin meeting fortnightly to work for the poor of Britain and Belgium Relief Fund.<sup>167</sup> Later that same month, the Auckland Women's League formed a Navy Relief Fund,<sup>168</sup> and in May the Wellington Women began fundraising for soldiers' comforts.<sup>169</sup> In Wanganui, the Women's League organised a weekly sewing circle,<sup>170</sup> at which 'women of all political colours' were welcome.<sup>171</sup> As with the general Reform League it seems that political organisations were now seen as improper and secondary to war work.

The popularity of the Women's Reform Leagues' in the pre-First World War period suggests that the way women were engaging in political activity was changing.<sup>172</sup> The Leagues were very open about being a partisan organisation which existed primarily to

<sup>163</sup> Moore, p.208.

<sup>164</sup> Moore, p.118.

<sup>165</sup> Moore, p.119

<sup>166</sup> Moore, pp.278-281.

<sup>167</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 11 March 1915, p.4.

<sup>168</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 24 March 1915, p.8.

<sup>169</sup> *Dominion*, 7 May 1915, p.3.

<sup>170</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 25 May 1915, p.4.

<sup>171</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 1 June 1915, p.4.

<sup>172</sup> Jon Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp.83-87, argued that British women were becoming more involved in political campaigning in the first years of the twentieth century despite not being able to vote, suggesting that this change may not be unique to New Zealand.

promote a political party. Previously, many political organisations for women had declared themselves to be non-partisan, even when it appeared that they did favour one party over another.<sup>173</sup> The way the League presented itself was a departure from this, and many women were prepared to join the Political Reform League, suggesting that women were becoming more interested in party politics. In her study of women's interactions with the Labour Party in Wellington, Melaine Nolan found that women's involvement in labour politics was increasing. Although most of the evidence Nolan presents is post-1918, she found that Labour women developed similar structures to the Women's Reform Leagues, with special branches and their own conferences.<sup>174</sup> A lack of research on the ways the Liberals interacted with women means that it is difficult to know if they too were attracting women members. From Nolan's research and the activities of the women in the Political Reform League, it seems that women were turning away from non-political groups and engaging with political parties. This suggests that some women may have been disillusioned with the lack of progress made by the non-partisan approach and were now looking for new ways to further their political goals. When the Canterbury Women's Social and Political League split in 1912, the leader of those who wished to join the Women's Reform Leagues said that 'if the League [meaning the Social and Political] declared itself to be non-party, then it would get no material support from any party, it being useless really to both'.<sup>175</sup> The eventual trajectory of some prominent members of the Women's League adds weight to this. Of the women who became the first elected to Hospital Boards, City Councils and eventually stood for parliament, members of the Women's Political Reform League were well represented. This suggests that these were women who wanted more than the right to vote, they also wanted to be equal with men in representation. It appears that the popularity of Women's Reform Leagues is illustrative of a growing engagement by women in political parties, which was a departure from previous attitudes. This suggests that women were looking for new ways to further their political influence.

## Māori Engagement with the National Association

It is widely assumed that in the 1890s Māori were largely focused on internal politics, which were being played out through the forums of the Kotahitanga parliament and the Kīngitanga.<sup>176</sup> However, there is some evidence that Māori were interested in party-style politics,<sup>177</sup> and engaged with the National Association. Throughout most of its existence

<sup>173</sup> The best example of this was the Wellington Women's Social and Political League. Despite being led by Seddon's widow it maintained its non-party stance when accused of being a Liberal organisation see: *Temuka Leader*, 14 October 1913, p.3.

<sup>174</sup> Nolan, pp.148-149.

<sup>175</sup> *Press*, 9 August 1912, p.8.

<sup>176</sup> King, 'Between Two Worlds', pp.293-294.

<sup>177</sup> Tom Brooking, *Richard Seddon: King of God's Own*, Auckland: Penguin, 2014, pp.192-256, covers Seddon's, and, to some extent, the Liberals' relationship with Māori.

the National Association paid little attention to Māori as voters, but in 1895 the Association rooms were used by Hone Heke Ngapua, the MP for Northern Māori, to address a large number of his Te Arawa supporters. Ngapua began by extolling his audience to be 'educated in the politics of the country'. He then went on to criticise the Liberal Government, saying that it had broken its promises to Māori, and asked the audience to be wary of any statements from the government promising them justice.<sup>178</sup> Although Ngapua is generally regarded as a Liberal supporter,<sup>179</sup> both Paul Moon and Tom Brooking note that he had a fraught relationship with Seddon and that he was often closer to Massey,<sup>180</sup> having more conservative inclinations than the Liberal Party.<sup>181</sup> As Massey was a leading member of the Auckland National Association, it is possible that Ngapua's use of the Association's rooms was a reflection of this. Furthermore, Ngapua's denunciation of the government fitted the message of the National Association. The fact that they welcomed him and let him use their rooms shows that they were supportive of all who attacked the government. Even if they were not specifically reaching out to Māori, the National Association appears to have been interested in promoting an anti-government message to Māori voters and Māori were prepared to engage with a Pākehā organisation which endorsed the same political messages.

Some historians have noted that the beginning of the twentieth century brought a change in the way Māori MPs and candidates were engaging with parties. Towards the end of the 1890s the Kotahitanga movement was in decline.<sup>182</sup> Although Seddon attempted to replace Kotahitanga with Māori councils, by 1905 Māori engagement with these was waning,<sup>183</sup> and they were exploring new ways of engaging in the political world. This was particularly apparent among those who had been educated at Te Aute College, where students were encouraged to adopt Pākehā values while pursuing a Māori agenda.<sup>184</sup> Sheila McClean, in her thesis on Māori representation between 1905 and 1948, argued that Āpirana Ngata was a strong 'party' MP, putting Liberal policy before the ideals of Māori, and was not critical of Liberal Māori policy as he did not wish to embarrass the party.<sup>185</sup> She also noted that the assumed wide support for the Liberals among Māori was not true, pointing out that Maui Pōmare was publicly supporting Opposition policies as early as 1905.<sup>186</sup> McClean also observed that there were discussions about whether Māori members should unite and form their own 'Māori Party'.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>178</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 15 January 1895, p.6.

<sup>179</sup> Freda Rankin Kawharu, 'Ngapua, Hone Heke', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2n12/ngapua-hone-heke/related-biographies>, accessed 11 July 2018.

<sup>180</sup> Moon, p.205.

<sup>181</sup> Brooking, *Richard Seddon*, p.256. Moon, had considerable detail on Ngapua's relationship with Seddon, particularly, pp.72-73, pp.132-134, p.142, p.200, p.222; *Evening Post*, 12 December 1914, p.6, described Ngapua as 'supporting the then Opposition' during his time in parliament.

<sup>182</sup> King, 'Between Two Worlds', p.295.

<sup>183</sup> Hill, *State Authority, Indigenous Autonomy*, pp.50-62.

<sup>184</sup> Hill, *State Authority, Indigenous Autonomy*, pp.43-47; King, 'Between Two Worlds', pp.294-295; Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou*, p.173.

<sup>185</sup> McClean, pp.18-19.

<sup>186</sup> McClean, p.23.

<sup>187</sup> McClean, pp.25-26.

These trends indicate that Māori were engaging more with the party system in the first decades of the twentieth century. Māori were aware of the hardening of the party lines, were choosing sides and were recognising that they too could form a 'party'.

## Māori and the Political Reform League

These trends were highlighted by the 1911 and 1914 elections. Before 1911 there was no evidence that the Political Reform League or the parliamentary Reform Party were paying any attention to Māori voters. However, the close result in the European seats meant that suddenly, attention focused on the election for the Māori seats, held five days later. The scrutiny concentrated on which side the Māori members would support; if all four voted with Ward then the number of seats he held would be almost equal with Massey. The election of, and subsequent alignment of, Pōmare with Reform gave Massey a much-needed extra seat.<sup>188</sup> The adherence of the other three Māori MPs to the Liberals also signalled a change. Not only were they showing that party loyalty was more important than the 'ear of the government' but it was the first time that the Māori MPs had been split along party lines. This was an indication Māori were seeking new ways to further their political influence. Like women, they were recognising that the previous non-partisan approach had not fulfilled their political aspirations. They recognised that parties were now part of New Zealand's political life and were prepared to use parties to advance their political goals.

This is also reflected in the actions of the Political Reform League. In July 1912 it was reported that a hui was held in Manoeka, a Māori village on the western side of Te Puke, to discuss a letter they had received from Lindegreen, the Reform League North Island organiser. Its purpose was to request help in organising a Political Reform League for the Eastern Māori electorate and to ask if it would be possible to send delegates from the electorate to the Dominion Conference. The hui seemed to consider these requests positively, with some arguing that aligning themselves with the party of the Prime Minister would ensure that their grievances were heard. However, the hui ended with the decision to seek further consultation from other Te Arawa tribes.<sup>189</sup> The list of delegates at the Reform League Dominion-wide conference of 1912 records that a delegate did attend from Eastern Māori, Mohi te Ahikoia. It is probable that te Ahikoia was from the North Island East Coast, suggesting that he was not from the rohe Lindegreen originally contacted.<sup>190</sup>

Lindegreen continued to reach out to Māori. In October 1912 he visited Hastings where te Ahikoia was present and asked a question about 'Leagues for the Natives'. Lindegreen replied that there were already some 'native' branches in the Tauranga area,<sup>191</sup>

<sup>188</sup> For more details see chapter five, p.174.

<sup>189</sup> *Bay Of Plenty Times*, 17 July 1912, p.6.

<sup>190</sup> *Dominion*, 3 August 1912, p.6. This suggests that the letter that those at Manoeka received may have been part of a series sent to various Māori settlements

<sup>191</sup> *Hastings Standard*, 29 October 1912, p.4.

and in a November interview with the *New Zealand Herald*, he stated that there were 'active native branches' on the East Coast'.<sup>192</sup> This organising work continued in 1913. In the far north over one thousand Māori supporters gathered to meet Massey in Wairoa,<sup>193</sup> and Herries met with a large number of Māori Reformers at Kaikohe.<sup>194</sup> In the Bay of Plenty, Lindegren formed Political Reform League branches in Taneatua,<sup>195</sup> inland from Whakatane, Whakarewarewa,<sup>196</sup> and Ngongotaha, on the western shore of Lake Rotorua.<sup>197</sup> The meeting at Whakarewarewa was reported in *Puke ki Hikurangi*, the newspaper of the Kotahitanga movement.<sup>198</sup> Furthermore, it was announced that a Māori organiser had been appointed, George Hall of Tauranga,<sup>199</sup> and that he would begin by traveling among the central North Island tribe of Ngāti Tūwharetoa.<sup>200</sup> Another indication that Reform was serious about reaching out to Māori voters was the publication of a monthly Māori language newspaper, *Ko Rauru Ki Tahī*.<sup>201</sup> The name suggests unity or togetherness, being about strands woven together. Regrettably, it appears that no copies of the newspaper have survived.

It is difficult to know why Reform began to extend its organising work among Māori voters. It is possible that the result of the 1911 election alerted them to a constituency that they had not considered. However, it also coincided with a more concerted effort to reach women, suggesting that it was partly a result of having better organisational and funding structures which then allowed Reform to dedicate more time to Māori.

The Māori delegations at the 1913 and 1914 Dominion-wide conferences were larger than 1912 and in both years Māori participated fully. The 1913 delegation was led by Rawiri Turi and represented several Hastings tribes. Turi addressed the conference saying the tribes he represented approved of the Reform Party, and that he wanted aid to set up branches of the League. He also indicated that Māori were willing to give money and time to get a government supporter elected for Eastern Māori.<sup>202</sup> At the 1914 conference an even greater role was played by Māori. Once again there was a delegation from the Hastings area, and they were joined by groups from Whakarewarewa and Tauranga.<sup>203</sup> They put up a remit, requesting that Māori candidates be elected using a secret ballot, 'so that voters may be relieved of the necessity of openly declaring for whom they

<sup>192</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 11 November 1912, p.5.

<sup>193</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 14 January 1913, p.9.

<sup>194</sup> *Auckland Star*, 14 March 1913, p.7.

<sup>195</sup> *Dominion*, 25 February 1913, p.4.

<sup>196</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 26 February 1913, p.8.

<sup>197</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 28 February 1913, p.8.

<sup>198</sup> *Puke ki Hikurangi*, 28 February 1913, p.6.

<sup>199</sup> He had been Lindegren's initial contact in the Bay of Plenty see: *Bay Of Plenty Times*, 17 July 1912, p.6.

<sup>200</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 28 February 1913, p.8.

<sup>201</sup> *Press*, 6 March 1913, p.10; *Southland Times*, 8 March 1913, p.5.

<sup>202</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 11 October 1913, p.18.

<sup>203</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 31 July 1914, p.17.

intend to vote'.<sup>204</sup> This was passed by the conference, and other issues were raised included agricultural training for Māori and recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>205</sup> Two Māori delegates gave speeches at the Saturday night social function and led a haka to close the proceedings.<sup>206</sup> The participation of Māori delegates at Dominion Conferences shows that not only was the Reform League reaching out to and welcoming Māori, but that Māori were actively engaging with the League.

As the 1914 election approached, Reform candidates were selected for the four Māori seats. The first candidate speculations to emerge were in Northern Māori in April,<sup>207</sup> and in May the *Dominion* gave the names of men who had been selected for the three Māori seats which had Liberal MPs.<sup>208</sup> In July there was a report that a representative conference had been held to select the Reform candidate for Eastern Māori. There had been about six candidates to choose from, and Hetekia Te Kani Pere, the son of Wi Pere,<sup>209</sup> was eventually chosen.<sup>210</sup> In Western Māori there had been some concern about Pōmare's choice to support Reform,<sup>211</sup> but a hui of between five and six hundred met in October to hear Carroll and Pōmare speak for their respective parties. After the speeches a vote was taken and confidence was expressed in Pōmare.<sup>212</sup> All four Māori seats had Reform candidates, and in Eastern Māori, where Reform seemed to be strong, it was a two candidate race between Liberal and Reform.<sup>213</sup> The poll for the Māori seats was held the day after the election and, as the outcome of the European poll was uncertain, once again the result was important. Pōmare retained Western Māori for Reform and Tau Henare, a candidate listed by the newspapers as Reform,<sup>214</sup> although not the official Reform candidate, won Northern Māori.

At first, the newspapers thought that the Māori seats had been divided evenly between the two parties, and therefore did not affect the outcome of the election.<sup>215</sup> However, there was some doubt cast on Henare's allegiance to Reform, with reports stating that he would follow in the footsteps of his predecessor Te Rangi Hiroa (Peter Buck),<sup>216</sup>

<sup>204</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 31 July 1914, p.18.

<sup>205</sup> *Light and Liberty*, 31 July 1914, pp.17-18.

<sup>206</sup> *Evening Post*, 20 July 1914, p.2.

<sup>207</sup> *Nothorn Advocate* 7 April 1914, p.7; *Northern Adocate*, 27 April 1914, p.6.

<sup>208</sup> *Dominion*, 13 May 1914, p.6.

<sup>209</sup> Alan Ward, 'Pere, Wiremu', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2p11/pere-wiremu>, accessed 17 July 2018. Wi Pere had been the MHR for Eastern Māori from 1893 to 1905.

<sup>210</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 4 July 1914, p.5.

<sup>211</sup> Michael King, *Te Pūea: A Biography*, Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977, pp.59-64, detailed the support for Pōmare from the Kīngitanga, and how his 1911 victory, deposing Henare Kaihau, a long-time supporter of the Kīngitanga, caused shock throughout the movement; *King Country Chronicle*, 22 May 1912, p.5.

<sup>212</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 21 October 1914, p.9.

<sup>213</sup> General Election, 1914, *AJHR*, 1915, H.24, pp.1-21.

<sup>214</sup> *Press*, 14 December 1914, p.6; *Evening Post*, 12 December 1914, p.6.

<sup>215</sup> *New Zealand Times*, 12 December 1914, p.8; *Sun*, 12 December 1914, p.2; *Evening Post*, 12 December 1914, p.6.

<sup>216</sup> M.P.K. Sorrenson, 'Buck, Peter Henry', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3b54/buck-peter-henry>, accessed 19 March 2018.

who had supported the Liberals.<sup>217</sup> When approached for comment, Massey seemed to believe that Henare would side with Reform saying he believed him to be 'a perfectly straight and perfectly honourable man'.<sup>218</sup> The uncertainty around the position of Henare lasted into 1915, with the Liberal newspapers reporting that he had declared himself independent,<sup>219</sup> but the Reform papers said it was certain he would vote with the government.<sup>220</sup> Henare had to fight off an unsuccessful electoral petition,<sup>221</sup> and during the hearing it was alleged that the Liberal Opposition had brought the petition because Henare had refused to guarantee his support for them.<sup>222</sup> Despite this appearing to signal Henare's support for the government, he continued to refuse to say which party he would vote for.<sup>223</sup> This continued until parliament met in June, when he chose to sit with Coates<sup>224</sup> and joined the first Reform caucus meeting,<sup>225</sup> finally choosing the party with which he had been initially aligned.

Reform's attempt to win Māori voters may have been tumultuous, but its strategy proved relatively successful, gaining another Māori seat. It is not known if Reform had any Leagues in Northern Māori or if *Ko Rauru Ki Tahī* had been distributed in the electorate, so it is difficult to know how much of Reform's success can be attributed to organising work. In Eastern Māori, where the only known Māori Reform Leagues were based, Ngata was re-elected.<sup>226</sup> However, Ngata had been returned uncontested in 1911 so the standing of a candidate in this seat signals that Reform was making progress among the voters of Eastern Māori. Reform's efforts to find candidates for the Māori seats in 1914, and their eventual success, holding Western Māori and gaining Northern Māori, shows that Reform was aware of the importance of Māori voters and that the party was actively seeking that vote.

## Conclusion

Previously, there has been very little attention given to either female or Māori participation in pre-First World War political parties. However, the involvement of both in the National Association, and then the Political Reform League and Reform Party, suggests these sections of society were engaged in party politics. From when women obtained the vote in 1893, the National Association welcomed female members and, in Christchurch, set up

<sup>217</sup> *Auckland Star*, 16 December 1914, p.2; *Northern Advocate*, 16 December 1914, p.5; *Evening Post*, 16 December 1914, p.8; *Otago Daily Times*, 17 December 1914, p.6.

<sup>218</sup> *Dominion*, 17 December 1914, p.6.

<sup>219</sup> *Auckland Star*, 19 December 1914, p.6; *Evening Star*, 22 December 1914, p.1.

<sup>220</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 January 1915, p.4; *Otago Daily Times*, 1 February 1915, p.2.

<sup>221</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 8 February 1915, p.5; *Northern Advocate*, 4 March 1915, p.5.

<sup>222</sup> *Dominion*, 5 March 1915, p.6; *Northern Advocate*, 11 March 1915, p.2.

<sup>223</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 6 March 1915, p.9.

<sup>224</sup> *Press*, 25 June 1915, p.6; *Evening Post*, 28 June 1915, p.8.

<sup>225</sup> *Sun*, 24 June 1915, p.10; *Sun*, 28 June 1915, p.3.

<sup>226</sup> Ranginui Walker, *He Tipua: The Life and Times of Sir Āpirana Ngata* Auckland: Viking Books, 2001, pp.106-110, detailed Ngata's first election campaign in 1905, but Walker does not discuss the 1914 election.

a women's only branch. Although women were slow to become involved with the Reform League, by 1913 there were several flourishing women's branches as well as women members of general branches. Women had the same membership rights as men, attended national conferences, made policy recommendations and there were two women on the National Executive Committee of the League. Women's Political Reform Leagues were also an avenue for engagement in wider political activity, with members standing for Hospital Boards, City Councils, and lobbying for women to be eligible for election to parliament.

The National Association paid some attention to Māori voters, particularly when they disagreed with the Liberal Government, but it was the Political Reform League which recognised the potential of the Māori vote. After 1911 the League was active in the Māori electorates, setting up Leagues in Eastern Māori, appointing a Māori organiser, and publishing a Māori language newspaper. Reform's efforts to reach Māori voters were also illustrated by the 1914 election, when an official Reform candidate was selected for each Māori seat. Reform retained Western Māori and won Northern Māori, signalling that its political message was reaching that constituency. Although it had been assumed that in the period before the First World War both Māori and women were engaging in politics through non-party organisations, the involvement of both groups with the National Association and then the Political Reform League shows that this was not always the case.

There has been little research on the engagement of either women or Māori with the Liberal Party, so it is not known whether their interest in Reform was unique to that party, or symptomatic of a wider change within society. However, the engagement with an established political party suggests that women and Māori were active within parties and saw them as a way to achieve their political goals.



# Conclusion

*'But it is no forlorn hope you are asked to join to-night. You are members of a large and well organised army, well equipped and in good heart'* <sup>1</sup>

– Heinrich von Haast

Between 1887 and 1915 the New Zealand party system was transformed from one where elections were often organised and fought on a local basis, to one with two well-defined, nationwide political parties, and the nucleus of a third. Although there was resistance to the idea of 'party', it decreased significantly during these decades. This was mirrored by a growing definition of party lines, illustrated by the lack of independent candidates in the 1914 election. The rise of Reform explains these changes.<sup>2</sup> Although there was an aspect of action and reaction between the two parties, it was those on the 'anti-liberal' side who led the expansion of 'party' style organisation. Previously, the role that Reform, and its predecessors, played in the development of political parties in New Zealand has been overlooked. This partly occurred because of the belief that parties of the left were the first mass parties, and partly because there was little research on the Reform Party. This thesis has shown that those who opposed the Liberals played an important role in the emergence of mass political parties in New Zealand. Furthermore, it helps to explain why the New Zealand party system changed significantly between the end of the nineteenth century and the First World War.

This thesis has argued that, from the point when an 'anti-liberal' identity emerged at the 1887 election, and particularly in the 1890s, some of those who opposed the Liberals placed considerable emphasis on building a strong 'party' style movement. This was demonstrated through the National Association, which acted as de-facto political organisers for the Opposition. This revises prior scholarship which has described the Opposition of the 1890s as disorganised. Furthermore, once Massey became leader of the Opposition in 1903 he revitalized its extra-parliamentary organisation through the Political Reform League. The League employed a professional political organiser in 1906 and built a network of branches which culminated in the formation of the Reform Party in 1909. It has previously been argued that the Reform Party was controlled by Massey, in the same way that Seddon controlled the Liberal Party. Yet the structure and practice

<sup>1</sup> Heinrich von Hasst, in his speech opening the 1914 Political Reform League Conference, cited in *Light and Liberty*, 31 July 1914, p.8, von Hasst was the president of the Wellington Political Reform League

<sup>2</sup> See Introduction, p.3, for further explanation of change in party systems.

of the Reform Party's organisation suggests otherwise, and by 1915, it was the most established and extensive political party in New Zealand.

Furthermore, the emergence of an 'anti-liberal' block, which developed into 'the Opposition' and then the Reform Party highlights responses to political labour in a New Zealand context. The greatest growth in an anti-socialist or 'reform' identity occurred around the introduction of policies which might be perceived as leading to land nationalisation. 'The land question' was one of the issues which sparked the formation of the National Association in 1891, and the 1907 Land Bill opened an effective attack on the Liberal Government. During the period covered in this thesis the form that political labour would take in New Zealand was still unclear, and therefore the responses to it were still under development. However, by 1915 Reform was the New Zealand 'anti-socialist' party.

Chapter one argued that the development of the Reform Party can be traced back to the 1887 election when the first nationwide, extra-parliamentary, groups emerged. These were called either the Financial Reform Association, the Political Reform Association, or, as was the case in Auckland, the Financial and Political Reform Association. The Associations' main purpose was to campaign for the removal of the Stout-Vogel Government. This movement differed from previous extra-parliamentary groups in that it attempted to affect the outcome of a general election in an organised way and was spread throughout the whole of New Zealand. Although the Financial and Political Reform Associations had ceased activity by 1889, they had policies, and members, in common with later groups like the National Association and the Political Reform League. This suggests that the Financial and Political Reform Associations were the precursors to these groups. Furthermore, the Associations saw the term 'Political Reform' first identified with those who might be considered conservatives or in opposition to the Liberals.<sup>3</sup> The importance of the 1887 election to the development of the New Zealand party system is also underlined by the voter turnout, which had much more in common with elections in the 1890s than those of the 1870s and 1880s. Therefore, the 1887 election is where the New Zealand party system first displayed attributes associated with a mass franchise.

In chapter two it was argued that the Opposition were often better politically organised than the Liberals during the 1890s. This was because the National Association undertook organisation for the Opposition. Moreover, it contended that the reason for the Opposition's electoral failures of the 1890s was not disorganisation, but that those who opposed the Liberals were unable to capture the political mood of the 1890s. Although the National Association had been previously examined, chapter two showed that it was a truly national organisation, which began in Auckland, but by 1896 had active branches throughout New Zealand. For the duration of its life the National Association was primarily an extra-parliamentary organisation, controlled and organised at a grass-roots level.

<sup>3</sup> This association continues, the ACT Party's 2018 conference considered a name change, with the preferred choice being 'Reform Party', see: NewstalkZB, 'The Reform Party? David Seymour talks potential name change for ACT', <https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/on-air/the-weekend-collective/audio/the-reform-party-david-seymour-talks-potential-name-change-for-act/>, retrieved 20 August 2018.

MHRs were members, and some held important offices, but it was never controlled by those who led the parliamentary Opposition. This is in direct contrast to the Liberals, whose two organising bodies between 1891 and 1899<sup>4</sup> were both controlled by the parliamentary leader of the party. The national nature and the extra-parliamentary control of the National Association distinguishes it from other, contemporary, political organisations. During the nine years it existed the Association played an important role by being the Parliamentary Opposition's de-facto organising body.

Throughout its life the National Association was insistent that it was not a party, and nor did it support any party. Yet, this seems a contradiction as it clearly had close ties with the Parliamentary Opposition and it never supported a candidate that stood as a Liberal. The denial of party seems to have been driven by two factors. During the 1890s political parties were, in the minds of some, associated with sectionalism and were perceived as being symptomatic of those who placed their own interests above those of the country. The National Association's desire to appear as a group which represented all New Zealanders led them to distance themselves from a label of 'party'. Furthermore, there were those within the Opposition who were unable to adjust to the changing political landscape of the 1890s. The men who dominated the Parliamentary Opposition in 1890s were largely part of the inter-connected colonial elites. They had been raised to believe that they should govern because of their social position and training, and therefore found it difficult to adjust to a political environment where someone like Seddon could become Premier. This led them to believe that their losses were due to not having the 'right' men as candidates, and they were sceptical about whether political parties and organisation were really needed.

The loss of the 1899 election left the Opposition in disarray. However, chapter three demonstrated that between 1900 and 1905 it came to terms with the need for sound party organisation and underwent some fundamental changes in personnel. As a result of the 1902 election six new Opposition members were elected. These men were all self-made, most had been born in New Zealand, and they had no connection with the colonial elite which had tended to dominate the Opposition in the past. This changed the Opposition caucus, and enabled Massey to secure the leadership, a position which had been vacant since 1900. Massey embodied the renewed sense of energy and a different approach. He conducted a series of 'stump' tours during 1904 and 1905, demonstrating the new attitude of his party. The change in the Opposition was also signalled by the development of an extra-parliamentary group to provide political organisation. Called the Political Reform League, it originated in Auckland sometime in 1904, and by the 1905 election it had branches in the four main centres and some rural service towns.

Furthermore, the Opposition was aided by the changes occurring in New Zealand society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Increasing urbanisation coincided with

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<sup>4</sup> These were the Liberal Association started by Ballance in late 1891 and the Liberal-Labour Federation, started by Seddon in 1899.

a growing economic dependence on the export of primary produce. This led to the belief that towns and cities were reliant on farmers for economic prosperity, the so-called 'farmer backbone'. The Opposition were fully aware of this and they actively worked to become identified as the party which supported the rural economy. The connection between the Opposition and the rural sector was further aided by the result of the 1902 election when the Farmers' Union supported all six of the new MPs. The Union professed to be politically neutral, yet it appears that it did have a role in the revitalisation of the Opposition. Despite the renewed sense of purpose, the 1905 election was a setback for the newly enlivened Opposition. However, Massey did not let the severe defeat weaken his resolve. He continued to promote the idea that extra-parliamentary organisation was key to electoral success.

In both the 1908 and 1911 elections there was a strong swing towards Reform, which enabled them to form a government in 1912. In chapter four it was argued that this swing was largely a product of the active and strategic way that the Opposition, and subsequently the Reform Party, approached elections, carefully tailoring its messages to win votes. The previous explanations for the rise of Reform has cast them as the passive benefactors of the diminishing Liberal hegemony. However, this view discounts the energetic and organised way in which the Massey-led Opposition approached elections. As the debate around land tenure became more heated in 1907, Reform took advantage of the splits it was causing within the Liberals. Reform and its predecessors had been pro-freehold since 1891, and the party used its long policy pedigree to present a pro-freehold message. Another issue that Reform was able to exploit was a growing political labour movement. In the lead-up to the 1908 election Reform was very quick to establish itself as the anti-socialist party. It began to call the Liberals 'closet socialist' and claimed the title 'true liberal party' for itself.

The Opposition also continued to build the Political Reform League as its organising body. This enabled active campaigning by spreading its policy and growing its voter base. This work was undertaken by a full-time organiser, who began work in 1906. Like the National Association, the Political Reform League was very much a political organisation built by voters, rather than MPs. The success of the Opposition strategy can be seen in the 1908 election when they gained nine new members and began to appear as a real threat to the Liberals. This feeling of confidence is illustrated by the Opposition taking on the name Reform Party shortly after the 1908 election. The name Reform suggested something new and was in keeping with the idea that the Opposition were a 'liberal' party. It also signalled that the party was seriously contending to be the next government.

The uncertainty around the result of the 1911 election marked the end of a lengthy period of clear outcomes which had been a product of the Liberal domination. It also signalled that the New Zealand party system was being re-shaped. Reform emerged as the most organised and coherent political party New Zealand had experienced and this, combined with the growing strength of political labour, changed the way the parties were

interacting. Previously, it has been argued that these alterations occurred due to changing economic and social conditions leading to a Liberal decline. However, this explanation does not credit Reform with agency. The political shift signalled by the result of the 1911 election was largely due to Reform being a well-organised, active party, which had a message that resonated with the voting public. From the 1908 election, Richard Martin, the Reform organiser, kept up his vigorous activity and the League grew significantly between 1909 and 1911. During the campaign Reform candidates displayed strong similarities in the material they covered in their speeches and this matched with the printed propaganda that the party produced. This demonstrated that Reform was diligently controlling its election campaign and carefully considering how its policies were presented to the voter.

Moreover, Reform also showed a deeper understanding of the possibilities for deals and coalitions which were offered by the change to a second ballot electoral system in 1908. From 1910 it began to display a softer attitude toward political labour, as a strong labour vote was likely to undermine the Liberals. Furthermore, Reform seemed to understand that by working with labour-aligned candidates they could form a coalition to remove the Liberals from office. Some labour-aligned leaders were quick to dismiss the idea that they might work with Reform yet there is strong evidence that some did.

Reform was able to build a political organisation which had many attributes of a mass party, as was argued in chapter six. Some of these features were having a strong, nationwide, branch structure, a democratic method for the appointment of officers and holding nationwide conferences. Furthermore, Reform used membership fees to fund its activities, and employed both organisers and a general secretary to administer the party. The robust structure of Reform has been noted by historians, but the common explanation for this has been Massey's effective political management, with parallels being drawn with Seddon's control of the Liberal-Labour Federation. However, a close examination of the structure and interactions within the party show that Massey did not exercise total authority. Branches had considerable autonomy over candidate selection and attempted to influence policy by bringing remits to the National Conferences. The 1914 election demonstrated the mass nature of Reform, as it won forty-seven percent of the overall vote. This accomplishment reflects both Reform's vigorous organisation and its ability to present a compelling political message.

Another aspect of a mass party that Reform displayed was its desire to achieve a broad base of support. Previous studies have paid little attention to the participation of either women or Māori in the two main pre-First World War political parties. Yet the involvement of women in the National Association, and Māori and women the Political Reform League, suggests that they were strongly engaged with party politics. Women were welcomed as members of the National Association from 1893, and the Christchurch Association set up a women's branch. The Political Reform League had women's branches and welcomed women as members. Women could hold office in the Leagues, attended

conferences as full delegates, and there were two women on the National Executive Committee. The Political Reform League recognised the value of women's votes, but women also saw the League as a way to accomplish their own political ambitions.

Māori interaction with the National Association occurred where they found common ground in opposition to Seddon and the Political Reform League endeavoured to seek Māori votes. After the 1911 election the League began to build a network of branches among Māori. They appointed a Māori organiser and published a newspaper in Te Reo Māori. The Māori relationship with Reform indicates that they were engaging more with political parties, and that they saw party politics as another avenue through which to pursue their attempts to gain rangatiratanga.

New Zealand political parties are understudied,<sup>5</sup> and this thesis greatly increases our knowledge about the formation and early development of the Reform Party. It has deepened the understanding of the organisation of those who opposed the Liberals, as well as expanding our knowledge of party formation in the New Zealand context. However, it only foreshadows development of the Reform Party beyond the formation of the National Government in 1915. There is further research to be done on how the Reform organisation was sustained during the First World War and how it was rebuilt in the inter-war period. Furthermore, Reform played a significant role in the formation of the National Party which has, to date, dominated post-Second World War political life in New Zealand. Additional research on Reform would increase our knowledge of the initial stages of the National Party and may go some way to explaining the role of that party in the New Zealand system. Moreover, it could clarify how National became one of the most successful mass parties in the western world.<sup>6</sup>

One aspect the development of Reform reveals how political groups in New Zealand responded to socialism and political labour. In the period studied, 1887-1915, it was unclear what form a socialist or labour type party would take. Yet, Reform and its predecessors consistently placed themselves in opposition to much that might be considered socialist. As the Labour Party was formed in 1916, a year after this study finished, further research on Reform would deepen our understanding of how politicians and the electorate perceived the entrance of the Labour Party in to the party system. Additionally it could add to our knowledge around the decline of the Liberals during the 1920s.

Another promising area for further research is the interaction between the Farmers' Union and political parties. Although the Union's motto, 'Principles not Party',<sup>7</sup> professed that it was non-party, the research undertaken for chapters three, four and five of this thesis showed that this was not always the case. There has been previous research on

<sup>5</sup> Peter Franks and Jim McAloon, *Labour: The New Zealand Labour Party 1916-2016*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2016, p.18.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond Miller, *Party Politics in New Zealand*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.74.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Brooking, 'Agrarian Businessmen Organise: A Comparative Study of the Origins and Early Phases of Development of the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales and the New Zealand Farmers' Union, 1880-1929', PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1977, p.339.

the Union and its role as a pressure group,<sup>8</sup> but there has been no in-depth examination of how the Union interacted with political parties, at any stage of its existence. Considering the close links between the Opposition, Reform, the Farmers Political Protection Federation and the Farmers' Union uncovered in the research for this thesis, the political activity of the Union would be a fruitful area of exploration.

As noted in chapter seven, the role of both women and Māori in the pre-First World War political parties is understudied. Although this thesis goes a considerable way towards examining the interactions and positions of these groups with regard to Reform, there is still a gap in our understanding of how the Liberals reached out to both women and Māori. There is also little research on how either women or Māori viewed the Liberals, and whether this changed over the period covered in this thesis. This is another area which would benefit from further investigation and would add to the research presented in this thesis by giving greater context to the trends that have been observed.

The First World War interrupted Reform's development as a party, but it was clear in 1915 that it was considerably better organised than the Liberal or labour parties. Reform had its genesis in the 1887 election, when the first nationwide extra-parliamentary groups emerged which used the term 'political reform' and held some policies which would become part of the Reform platform. During the 1890s the right to freehold land became an issue which defined those who opposed the Liberals, and the National Association the organising vehicle for their political campaigns. However, the series of losses sustained by the Opposition in the 1890s left their leaders disillusioned. It was Massey who was able to inject new political energy into the Opposition. He returned to the name 'political reform' for the organising body, and the Opposition changed its name to the Reform Party in 1909. One consistent theme of some of those who opposed the Liberals was that of the importance of developing a 'party' style organisation. This emphasis on organisation is seen in all three of the groups they formed, and this level of organisation by those on the 'anti-liberal' side of politics has previously been unrecognised. By 1915 the Reform Party had set the standard for organisation of a political party in New Zealand.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert James Bremer, 'The New Zealand Farmers' Union as an Interest Group: Some Aspects of Farm Politics, 1918-1928', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1966; L. Cleveland, 'An Early New Zealand Farmers' Pressure Group', *Political Science*, 18, no. 2, 1966; R.J. Duncan, 'The New Zealand Farmers' Union as a Political Pressure Group 1900-1912', M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1965.



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# Appendix 1 – Calculations of population-based turn-out for elections from 1881 to 1914

## Official turnout verses Population-based turnout

Usually turnout at elections is calculated by the actual number of votes cast divided by the number of voters registered. Called official turnout, it assumes that the electoral rolls are an accurate reflection of those eligible to vote. Nagel pointed out that using the number of registered voters can be misleading due to inaccuracies with the roll.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, by using registered voters as the denominator, it is possible to miss pointers that the population as a whole is disengaged from the political process through choosing not to register.<sup>2</sup> Nagel contends that using the age-eligible population, derived from the census, as the denominator gives a more accurate idea of election turnout. This is particularly true of New Zealand as the five-year census and three-year election cycle ensures that census data is often fairly accurate when applied to electorates. New Zealand has the added advantage that our qualifications for voting are such that most of the age-eligible population can vote, so those captured by the census are likely to be representative of the whole voting population.<sup>3</sup>

The use of registered voters as the denominator becomes even more problematic when looking at the turnout for elections between 1881 and 1914 as there seems to be considerable error in the rolls. Using the census data for the 1887 and 1890 elections it seems that the rolls contained more voters than there were eligible men. For both these elections, it was legal to be registered in any electorate in which the voter owned property, but from 1890 onwards the elector could only vote in one electorate.<sup>4</sup> This implies that some eligible men would be counted twice or more, raising the number of voters registered above the number of actual men. Māori who owed property on individual title could, if they chose, register on the general roll,<sup>5</sup> and since the census did not count Māori at

<sup>1</sup> Jack H. Nagel, 'Voter Turnout in New Zealand General Elections, 1928-1988.', *Political Science*, 40, no. 2, 1988, p.18.

<sup>2</sup> Nagel, p.19.

<sup>3</sup> Nagel, p.17.

<sup>4</sup> Atkinson, p.77.

<sup>5</sup> Alan McRobie, *New Zealand Electoral Atlas*, Wellington: Government Printing Office, 1989, p.47.

TABLE 1 : The population-based turnout (PBT) for each election from 1881 until 1914 compared to the official turnout (OT).

Election Year	Votes Cast: 1881-1887 <sup>a</sup> Number of Voters: 1890-1914	Number of voters registered <sup>b</sup> voters registered	Age-Eligible Population <sup>c</sup>	Estimate of Age-Eligible Population in Non-Contested Electorates	PBT	OT <sup>d</sup>
1881	69 230	120 972	139 564	14 442 (11)	55.3%	66.5%
1884	74 672	137 686	150 327	15 500 (11)	55.4%	60.5%
1887	111 911	175 410	157 503	9 230 (5)	75.5%	67.1%
1890	136 337	183 171	167 792	14 210 (6)	88.7%	80.4%
1893	220 082	302 997	298 482	11 713 (3)	76.7%	75.3%
1896	258 254	337 024	352 625	0	73.2%	76.1%
1899	279 330	373 744	382 810	15 234 (1)	75.9%	77.6%
1902	318 859	415 789	412 996	0	77.2%	76.7%
1905	395 657	476 473	503 842	0	78.5%	83.3%
1908	428 648	537 003	537 142	0	79.8%	79.8%
1911	492 912	590 042	587 093	14 023 (1)	86.0%	83.5%
1914	521 525	616 043	610 869	0	85.3%	84.7%

<sup>a</sup> From J.O. Wilson, *New Zealand Parliamentary Record 1840-1984*, Wellington: Government Printing Office, 1985, p.286.

<sup>b</sup> From Neill Atkinson, *Adventures in Democracy: A History of the Vote in New Zealand*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2003, p.244.

<sup>c</sup> The figures in brackets are the number of seats represented.

<sup>d</sup> From Atkinson, p.244.

this stage it could explain some of the discrepancy. Taking these factors into account, it is more than likely that the number of registered voters would exceed the number of eligible men counted in the 1886 and 1891 census. However, the difference is substantial, at around 18 000 for 1887 and 15 000 for 1890 so it is highly unlikely that the above explanations could account for all of this. It is probable that the rolls for these two elections were not very accurate because of major boundary redistributions. The electoral boundaries underwent significant change before the 1887 election due to the Representation Act passed earlier that year which specified that each electorate should contain roughly the same population.<sup>6</sup> The boundaries then underwent another major alteration before the 1890 election as Parliament had voted to reduce the number of members from ninety-one to seventy.<sup>7</sup> It seems that since both of these changes occurred in the months leading up to the respective elections it is unlikely that the rolls were carefully revised.<sup>8</sup> The problem with imprecise rolls is also seen in 1893, with the law extending franchise to women being passed six weeks before the election, leaving little time to compile accurate rolls. Furthermore, the rolls for 1908, 1911 and 1914 appear to also be inaccurate as the number of registered voters is slightly higher than the age-eligible population. There were major electoral redistributions in both 1907<sup>9</sup> and 1911<sup>10</sup> which probably led to flaws within the rolls which do not seem to have been corrected.

## Methodology

To calculate PBT from 1881 until 1887 the actual votes cast was used as the numerator, for 1890 onwards, the number of electors is used. The denominator is the age-eligible population calculated from the relevant census<sup>11</sup> minus the estimated age eligible populations for those electorates which did not have a contest.

Using the age-eligible population as the denominator is not without issue. Those seats in which there was no contest need to have their populations discounted because the voters in those seats could not turnout. This is particularly important when trying to compare turnouts at each election, if those who could not turnout are not removed then a true comparison between elections is difficult as a high number of uncontested seats would lead to a low number of votes cast. For example, in both 1881 and 1884 there were eleven uncontested seats, approximately twelve percent of all seats. This dropped

<sup>6</sup> McRobie, p.51.

<sup>7</sup> McRobie, p.55.

<sup>8</sup> McRobie, p.51 and 55 the Electoral Commission had one month to redraw boundaries in 1887 and nine in 1890.

<sup>9</sup> McRobie, p.71.

<sup>10</sup> McRobie, p.75,

<sup>11</sup> Calculated from *Census of New Zealand, October 1916: Part II - Ages*, p.1. The nearest census to the election was chosen. For those years that were between census, the growth between census was divided by five and then added in proportion to the older census. For example: for 1908, the difference between the 1906 and 1911 census was 83 251, or 16 650 per year. Two times 16 650 was added to the 1906 figure to obtain an estimation.

in 1887 to five but rose again in 1890 to six, which is a higher proportion than 1887 due to the reduction in the total number of seats.<sup>12</sup> This high proportion of non-contested seats can reduce both the OT and PBT turnout unless the age eligible population of these seats are removed from the denominator.

To obtain a more accurate figure for those who could vote an estimation of the eligible population of each electorate, at each election, between 1881 and 1914, was made. This was done by calculating the proportion of the population over twenty-one using the relevant census and applying these proportions to the populations in each electorate. For elections between 1881 and 1890 the male and female populations were separated to provide a more accurate figure because country electorates tended to have more men and city more women. Once an estimation was calculated for each seat then the number of possible voters in each uncontested seat was deducted from the age-eligible population, giving a more accurate figure to use as the denominator.

Another issue when calculating the turnout is using the number of votes cast as a measure of the number of people voting. The first problem concerns plural voting, which was allowed in the 1881, 1884 and 1887 elections. It is impossible to know how many exercised this right and there is anecdotal evidence that the improvements in transport during the 1880s was making plural voting easier.<sup>13</sup> From the 1890 election onwards, official statistics contained the number of electors voting. This was changed because the numbers of votes cast became an unreliable measure of people voting, due to the introduction of the four three-members city seats.<sup>14</sup> These were created by the 1890 boundary changes and it meant that electors in those seats could cast three votes. The distortion this created in votes cast compared to actual voters is shown by the 1890 election in which 150 025 votes were cast by 136 337 voters. However, the figure of 136 337 voters gives us an idea of whether the number of votes in 1887 was greatly distorted by plural voting. The number of voters in 1890 is an 18 percent increase from the number of votes cast in 1887. Some of this increase can be accounted for by there being more eligible voters, there was a seven percent increase in men aged twenty-one and over between the 1886 and 1891 census.<sup>15</sup> This reduces the difference to around eleven percent suggesting that the 1887 count of votes, and possibly those in elections preceding 1887, is a somewhat accurate measure of the numbers of men voting. Although the vote count for elections before 1890 are a slightly higher figure than the number of electors it seems that those exercising plural votes was quite small and therefore using the number of votes cast will still provide a reasonable estimate of the numbers of voters.

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<sup>12</sup> Wilson, p.286.

<sup>13</sup> Atkinson, p.77.

<sup>14</sup> McRobie, p.55. These were Auckland City, Wellington City, Christchurch City and Dunedin City.

<sup>15</sup> Calculated from *Census of New Zealand, October 1916: Part II - Ages*, p.1.

## Appendix 2 – Lists of membership overlaps between the Political and Financial Reform Associations, the National Association and the Political Reform League

TABLE 2: Men who were members of both the Political and Financial Reform Associations and the National Association.

W.B. Anderson	Otago
Edmund Bell	Auckland
A.C. Begg	Otago
H.J. Beswick	Canterbury
Joseph Blades	Auckland
W.R. Bridgeman	Auckland
John Bridgewater	Auckland
William Brown	Otago
John Buchanan	Auckland
E.W. Burton	Auckland
G.A. Buttle	Auckland
C.E. Button	Auckland
W. Chrystal	Canterbury
Theo. Cooper	Auckland
W.E. Crowther	Auckland
J.E. Denniston	Otago
F.W. Ewington	Auckland
D.H. Hastings	Otago
T.M. Hocken	Otago
J.H. Hopkins	Canterbury
J.M. McLachlan	Auckland
E. McManus	Auckland
W. Morgan	Gisborne
W. Reece	Canterbury
S.T. Seddon	Waikato
H.E. Shacklock	Otago

H. Thomson	Canterbury
J.H. Upton	Auckland
Samuel Vaile	Auckland
F.J. von Sturmer	Waikato
James Wallis	Auckland
W.D. Wood	Canterbury

TABLE 3: Men who were members of both the National Association and the Political Reform League.

*(Those with asterisks were members of all three groups.)*

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Graves Aickin	Auckland
J.G.W. Aitken	Wellington
E. Allan	Mangere
James Allen	Otago
A.M. Barriball	Franklin
William Bayly	New Plymouth
W.H. Beetham	Masterton
A.H. Blake	Canterbury
W. Reed Bloomfield	Auckland
J.O. Bridgeman	Auckland
William Brown	Otago
James Brown	Otago
John Brown	Auckland
Henry Brown	Auckland
G.W. Browne	New Plymouth
J.R. Brunt	Canterbury
C.H. Burnett	Feilding
E.W. Burton	Auckland *
H. Burton	Auckland
Gilbert Carson	Wanganui
W.K. Chambers	Gisborne
James Cooper	New Plymouth
F.P. Corkill	New Plymouth
Harry Davis	Canterbury
Alfred Brandon	Wellington
John Duthie	Otago
F. Edgecumbe	Waikato
John Elliot	New Plymouth
Robert Farrell	Auckland
John Fisher	Auckland
John Fisher	Waikato
James George	New Plymouth

Francis Gribben	Auckland
R. Hart	Canterbury
William Heslop	Hawke's Bay
James Howden	Auckland
R. Clinton Hughes	New Plymouth
James Hughes	New Plymouth
Francis Hull	Auckland
George Hunter	Hawke's Bay
J.D. Hunter	Gore
George Hutchinson	Wanganui
John Ingram	Canterbury
F.R. Jackson	Wanganui
John Jamieson	Canterbury
Matthew Kirkbride	Mangere
F.Y. Lethbridge	Feilding
Thomas Lisle	Canterbury
Thomas MacGibbon	Mataura
William Massey	Mangere
C.F. Maxwell	Auckland
Patrick McLean	Hawke's Bay
R.D.D. McLean	Hawke's Bay
W.W. McArthur	Auckland
Francis Mander	Auckland
A. Megget	Otago
H. Middleton	Southland
John Millar	Southland
Richard Monk	Auckland
W. Morgan	Gisborne
J.H. Murray	Feilding
Henry Okey	New Plymouth
C. Parnham (jrn)	Canterbury
James Paul	New Plymouth
William Reece	Canterbury
Donald Reid (jrn)	Otago
C.W. Reid	Canterbury
John Roche	Auckland
D. Ross	Auckland
J.G. Rutherford	Pukekohe
Thomas Scott	Otago
Stanley Shaw	New Plymouth
C. Shipherd	Franklin
G. Simpson	Otago
H.W. Smith	Auckland
F. Smith	Marlborough
C.B. Stone	Auckland
W.N. Sturges	Waikato
D.E. Theomin	Otago
W. Hampton Thorp	Auckland

J.H. Upton	Auckland *
E.E. Vaile	Auckland
P.A. Vaile	Auckland
H.D. Vavasour	Marlborough
James Wallis	Auckland
G. Watt	Waikato
E.H. Williams	Hawke's Bay
J.L. Wilson	Kaiapoi
H.H.D. Wily	Franklin
J.B. Young	Franklin