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'TURNING TRAMPS INTO TAXPAYERS' - THE DEPARTMENT
OF LABOUR AND THE CASUAL LABOURER IN THE 1890s.

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in History at Massey University

Peter John Gibbons

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To my parents.

PREFACE.

This thesis (or essay, since it is in scope and shape an exploratory essay rather than a monograph) studies an aspect of the growth of Government administration in New Zealand. The thesis suggests that a major expansion of administration took place in the Liberal period, 1891-1914, and within this general context analyses the work of one Government Department, the Labour Department; showing how that Department tackled the problem of unemployment in the 1890's, and how its administration tended gradually to control and to coerce recalcitrant elements among the unemployed. The Labour Department has been taken, in effect, as a 'test case'.

The direction of the study might be shown more clearly by reference to J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit.¹ Bilbo and the Dwarves, it will be recalled, made the acquaintance of a mountain which sadly contained the dreaded Goblin King and his minions; it also contained (happily for the continuance of the story) many tunnels, ranging from a Great Hall down to little apertures in the bowels of the hill. Here we may call the mountain the Liberal period, the Great Hall - which we investigate hurriedly - the Liberal bureaucracy, one of the lesser halls is the Labour Department, and then one of the tunnels off that is the unemployment business of the Department's work.

Like Bilbo, I did not have time or room to investigate all the other

1. For those not initiated, see J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit, Third edition (London, 1966), pp. 51 and following.

tunnels on the way - I simply took one that led down. Unlike Bilbo I did not find a 'precious', no 'mainspring' of the Liberal period, no ring to bind them all, although in the concluding section I have tried to describe a glimpse of one. But it has been an interesting journey. I should point out here that some of the related topics that have no detailed place between these covers I have been examining further, especially the Labour Department generally in the Liberal period, the co-operative system, and the effect of prosperity on the general citizenry to 1914.

A few other matters may be briefly noted here. The quotation used in the title, 'turning tramps into taxpayers', is out of H.D. Lloyd's Newest England, from page 199.² The 'List of Sources' at the end of the thesis, is merely that, and not a bibliography; the only books listed are those to which reference has been made in footnotes. It is pertinent to draw the attention of future researchers to a certain circumscription in the sources of this thesis. The thesis was prepared in a secondary centre with limited source materials, supplemented by brief periods of research in Wellington. Neither libraries nor newspaper offices in Palmerston North have holdings of local newspapers for the period 1890 to 1897.³ The absence of archival documentation is not wholly due to my locale; the early records of the Department of Labour were destroyed by fire in 1952.⁴

2. H.D. Lloyd, Newest England (New York, 1900).

3. G.H. Scholefield, A Union Catalogue of New Zealand Newspapers, second edition, revised by J.D. Wilson and J.S. Gully (Wellington, 1964) p. 44. I have checked at the Palmerston North Public Library and the Massey University Library.

4. See P.S. Cocks, 'Archives', An Encyclopedia of New Zealand, ed. A.M. McLintock (Three Volumes, Wellington, 1966), I, p. 80. I have checked this statement with librarians at the National Archives, Wellington.

One of the more pleasant aspects of writing a thesis is the assistance readily offered by so many people. I would thank first of all Professor W.H. Oliver, who first suggested an examination of the attitudes of the first head of the Labour Department, Edward Tregear, and who subsequently supervised the thesis - as well as superintending the 1969 Massey history honours class study of the Liberal period, during which sessions many of the implications of this thesis were thrashed out. My gratitude is due to other members of the History Department of Massey University: Mr G.V. Butterworth for several references; Mr B. Poff, who lent me a paper of his on nineteenth century English administration and the ideas of O. MacDonagh;⁵ Dr W.P.N. Tyler for reading the first draft and pointing out deficiencies in organisation, infelicities of style and rank obscurities.

My thanks go to three members of Massey University English Department: Mr P. Alcock, who helped put Tregear in his literary context and who lent me two of his articles in typescript; Dr W. Broughton, who provided information on sources of Tregear's life; and Miss Claire-Louise McCurdy. Librarians have been patient and kind; I offer my thanks to the Librarians of the Palmerston North Public Library; of the General Assembly Library; of National Archives, especially to Miss J. Hornabrook; of the Alexander Turnbull Library and to the staff of the photographic section of that library; and of Massey University Library, especially to Miss Margaret Rodger, head of the Reference Section.

Members of the 1969 history honours class at Massey have assisted in

5. O. MacDonagh, A Pattern of Government Growth, 1800-60 (London, 1961). MacDonagh's main ideas appear on pp. 15-21, and pp. 320-50.

the gestation of this thesis with both trenchant criticism and enthusiastic encouragement over a considerable period. I would thank Messrs L.H. Barber, R.H. Voelkerling, P.K. Charan, M.K. Fitzgerald, T. Kenyon, and K.L. Stewart, and Miss Susan Bindoff. Other helpers with tea and sympathy, discussion and interest, have been: Mr M. Turner, Mr P. Berquist, Miss Prudence Fullarton, Miss Diane Wills, Miss Joan Boddy, and Mrs Susan Wenmoth, all of Palmerston North; and Mr H.T. Van Roon, Mr M. Calder, Mr W. de Beurs, and Mr and Mrs J.D. Peoples, all of Auckland.

In a more general way, my gratitude is due to those historians of Auckland University, 1964-66, and Massey University, 1969, who taught me some of the techniques and delights of history; and to my fifth-form history class at Edgcumbe College in 1968. The latter were not great scholars (even a trifle unwilling) but they reminded me again that history can be fun after some academics and sixth-formers had made it seem quite dreary.

My parents I have thanked in another place. It is fitting to conclude by thanking those who typed this thesis: Miss Heather Reid and Mrs Margaret Brogden of Massey University, for typing portions of the first draft; and Mrs Gail Ring of Palmerston North, who has typed successive drafts and this final version, showing interest and enthusiasm throughout. Any credit for neatness and accuracy of presentation belongs to her.

Massey University History Department,
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P.J. Gibbons

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LIST OF MAPS.

- I. Map showing the Offices and Agents of the Department of Labour in the North Island, c. 1907.

- II. Map showing the Offices and Agents of the Department of Labour in the South Island, c. 1907.

Both Maps are located after the List of Sources, following page 119.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.

AJHR	<u>Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives.</u>
<u>Journal</u>	<u>Journal of the Department of Labour.</u>
'Letters from Men of Mark'	Letters from Men of Mark in New Zealand to W.P. Reeves, in London. Photocopy in Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, of original MSS held in the British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics.
NZH	<u>New Zealand Herald.</u>
NZBC Tape	Tape recording, held in the Archives of the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, Timaru, of a radio programme, 'The Forgotten Man', compiled by Basil Clarke, first broadcast in April 1961. The programme recorded memories of Edward Tregear by his daughter, Mrs Vera Robinson, and his three grandchildren, Mrs Vera Tregear Middlebrook, Mrs Bessie Dobbs, and Mr H.T. Robinson.
PD	<u>New Zealand Parliamentary Debates.</u>

See also the Note on Citation, on the following page.

NOTE ON CITATION.

In order to render footnotes as clear and as readable as possible some deviations from orthodox and/or traditional methods of citation have been made. For instance, some of the abbreviations normally italicised (i.e., underlined in typescript) are not italicised in this thesis. For the same reason the abbreviation *ibid.* is nowhere underlined. Volume numbers for the Parliamentary Debates are given as Arabic numerals to increase ease and speed of reference. For that reason also I have included before the volume number the year of the volume. References to the Debates, therefore, are in the same style as in K. Sinclair's William Pember Reeves: New Zealand Fabian. Alternatively there seemed little point in cluttering up references to the Appendices with volume numbers. Where a reference is given to the Appendices, *ibid.* is used in the subsequent footnote only when the reference is to the same paper. The style 'Report' appears in several places; this is to refer to Edward Tregear's annual report (as secretary of the Labour Department) to the Minister of Labour laid before the House of Representatives. In the years 1891-1895 the numbering of pages in his 'Report' is Arabic-style; from 1896 onwards the secretary's 'Report', and the reports of Labour Agents and Inspectors, are numbered in the Roman-style. The page numbering of the Journal is by month for 1893 and 1894, and consecutively throughout the year in 1895 and later. In view of this change, the simplest and clearest reference is simply to month and year, so that the volume numbers have been omitted.

I recognise all that has been done, all that is doing for the advancement of our race and its intellectual improvement. Nay, I would help it on, because I believe the Right should be done, fearless of consequences; but I see fast closing around us one wing of the great net in the augmented power of the State over personal action. Let me exemplify my meaning. If we take the individual at his earliest stage - that of the infant - we find that law first compels the registration of the babe; then its vaccination; then its education. Grown to manhood he must have some means of support. If he marries it must be registered and in set form; when he dies the certificate of his death and burial are produced before authorities. This close inspection by the State-power is growing with every hour Closer and closer round every act of our lives, our births, our labours, our pastimes, our marriages, our deaths, will the web of the State be drawn. Not necessarily for evil this; for good, that is, for the "greatest good of the greatest number"

- Edward Tregear, 1887¹

1. E. Tregear, "The Union." Motion: "That a state of high civilisation ...", (Wellington, 1887), p. 5.