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**Trading Our Way:  
Developments in New Zealand's Trade Policy  
1930s to 1980s**

**A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
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## Abstract

This thesis examines developments in New Zealand trade policy from the 1930s to late 1980s. Over this period New Zealand's trade activities changed from being very narrow in scope and highly controlled, to being greatly diversified and liberalised. This thesis investigates successive New Zealand governments' ideas about how external trade should be developed over that period, and why they instigated substantial changes in the nature of trade policy. The research identifies the dominant ideas, and influences, that shaped those changes.

Because trade has been so central to the New Zealand economy, this thesis holds that ideas about trade development have been intrinsically linked to more general economic, political and social objectives for the country.

This research has been built on an understanding that trade policy over this time had many dimensions that were located in both the domestic and foreign policy realms. In domestic terms, trade policy was focused on achieving economic and industrial development objectives. From these perspectives, trade policy was developed in ways that sought to ensure security and opportunity for the domestic economy and for New Zealand society. The substantial changes from regulated trade to liberal trading within the domestic context can be viewed in relation to the story of import licensing's existence. The growth of diversity of goods traded can be viewed in terms of the changes in domestic production priorities.

In the realm of foreign policy, diplomatic pursuits focused on pursuing New Zealand's national interest through trade development. Trade policy was focused on achieving access for markets through political means, and advancing New Zealand's interests in the economic and political international arenas. From this perspective, trade policy informed diplomatic strategies that sought to enhance New Zealand's 'place in the world'.

The research highlights the challenges for New Zealand of pursuing external trade to meet its own objectives while operating within economic and political contexts over which it had little influence. Most ideas and policy decisions made over the period can be viewed as stemming from some form of external influence. Trade policy tended to develop in response to external changes rather than through independent initiative.



# Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	v
List of Tables and Graphs	viii
Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1
1. A Colonial Legacy? New Zealand Trade Policy in the 1930s	25
2. Loyalty and Commitment: World War Two and the Early Post-War Period	79
3. Challenges to Traditions: The 1950s and 1960s	139
4. Development to Deregulation: The 1970s and 1980s	205
Conclusion	289
Bibliography	301

## List of Tables and Graphs

### GRAPHS

1.1 New Zealand Export Trade 1924 – 1939	41
1.2 Destinations of New Zealand Exports 1920 – 1939	55
1.3 Manufacturing in New Zealand	66
1.4 Factory Production in New Zealand 1924-1938	67
1.5 New Zealand External Trade 1920 – 1939	68
2.1 New Zealand Import Trade: Countries of Origin 1939-1955	131
3.1 Destinations of New Zealand Exports 1945 – 1960	146
4.1 New Zealand Exports vs. Imports	229
4.2 New Zealand Export Destinations by Proportion	237
4.3 New Zealand Exports to Australia, 1966 – 1981	238

### TABLES

1.1 New Zealand Pastoral Production and Exports, 1935	32
1.2 Trade with Commonwealth Countries, 1938	56
2.1 New Zealand Supplies to US Troops through Lend-lease, 1942-1945	93

## Abbreviations

AJHR	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives
ANZUS	Australia New Zealand United States Security Treaty
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library
CER	Closer Economic Relations/ Australia New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Agreement
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (United Nations)
EDC	Export Development Conference
EEC	European Economic Community/European Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Area
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IDC	Industries Development Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITC	International Trade Commission (USA)
ITO	International Trade Organisation
MEC	New Zealand Monetary and Economic Council
MERP	Manufacturers' Export Research Programme
MP	Member of Parliament
NA	National Archives
NAFTA	New Zealand Australia Free Trade Agreement
NDC	National Development Conference
NZIER	New Zealand Institute for Economic Research
NZIIA	New Zealand Institute of International Affairs
NZIPA	New Zealand Institute of Public Administration
NZMF	New Zealand Manufacturers' Federation
NZMPB	New Zealand Meat Producers' Board
NZOYB	New Zealand Official Yearbook
NZPD	New Zealand Parliamentary Debates
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RTAA	Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act (USA)
SEATO	South East Asian Treaty Organisation
SMP	Supplementary Minimum Prices
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
US, USA	United States of America
WEA	Workers' Educational Association
WTO	World Trade Organisation