

22  
409  
35  
ar



The New Zealand Legion  
In Manawatu-Wanganui  
1933-1935

A research exercise presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement for a  
Bachelor of Arts with Honours in History at Massey University

Elizabeth Ward

February 2011

MASSEY UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



1061951695

Table of Contents

Abbreviations.....	1
Introduction.....	3
Chapter One 'The need for national unity' The establishment and spread of the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui.....	7
Chapter Two 'A body of determined men' Membership of the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui .....	17
Chapter Three 'Nation before Party' The issues that interested the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui.....	31
Chapter Four 'The Legion is still alive' The decline and political legacy of the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui.....	39
Conclusion.....	45
Bibliography.....	51

Abbreviations

AJHR *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representative.*

NZOYB *New Zealand Official Year Book.*

## Introduction

The 1930s were a time of economic uncertainty in New Zealand and this uncertainty flowed through to the political realm, not least on the conservative side of politics. The Coalition Government, the main conservative political choice, appeared ineffective in dealing with the Depression and introduced policies that alienated many of its supporters. A movement began which sought alternative answers to the problems New Zealand was facing. It had its genesis in 1932, appeared nationally in February 1933, and was called the New Zealand Legion. The Legion grew rapidly during 1933, but its popularity was short lived and it was mostly a spent force by the end of 1935. This research exercise will look at the New Zealand Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region and proposes to answer the following questions:

- When did the Legion begin in Manawatu-Wanganui and why?
- Who joined the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui and why?
- What issues was the Manawatu-Wanganui Legion interested in?
- What happened to the Manawatu-Wanganui Legion and when did it stop meeting?
- Did the Manawatu-Wanganui Legion and/or its members leave a lasting political legacy?

The Legion has been seen in three different ways by historians. A number of contemporary and later observers suggested that it had a fascist undercurrent. The accusations of fascism were mostly levelled at the Legion by the left. Walter Nash believed the Legion had fascist undertones<sup>1</sup> and his Labour colleague, Dr D.G. McMillan, wrote a pamphlet comparing the Legion with Nazism.<sup>2</sup> Later historians who thought the Legion to be fascist included Keith Sinclair,<sup>3</sup> Tony Simpson<sup>4</sup> and Denys

---

<sup>1</sup> Keith Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1976., 1976, p.102

<sup>2</sup> D.G. McMillan, *New Zealand Legion: What is it what are its objects*, Oamaru: Mail Office, 1933.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969, p.245.

<sup>4</sup> Tony Simpson, *The Slump: The Thirties Depression: Its Origins and Aftermath*, Auckland: Penguin, 1990, p.67.

Trussell.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand Michael Pugh wrote a Masters thesis in the early 1970s that concluded the Legion was simply a form of conservative protest against the Coalition Government's increasing the exchange rate in January 1933.<sup>6</sup> This approach was endorsed by Gerard Campbell in a local study of the Otago Legion<sup>7</sup> and by James Belich,<sup>8</sup> Len Richardson<sup>9</sup> and P. J. Gibbons.<sup>10</sup> A third view was encapsulated in R.M. Burdon's description of the Legion as 'lost'.<sup>11</sup> This view saw the Legion as a harmless organisation which failed because of the political ineptness of its leaders. Erik Olssen also saw the New Zealand Legion as 'politically naive'.<sup>12</sup> In recent years the New Zealand Legion has not been mentioned in some general histories,<sup>13</sup> but there has been some new research on the Legion.<sup>14</sup> This research is critical of Pugh's 'conservative protest' thesis. Matthew Cunningham describes the Legion's place on the political spectrum as 'conservative radicalism'<sup>15</sup> while Adam Allington calls the Legion the 'closest thing to a fascist movement in New Zealand History'.<sup>16</sup>

At its peak the Legion was a large political organisation, but very little primary source material about it has survived. Newspapers are consequently the main source for this exercise. Information was gained from Wellington, Manawatu and Wanganui newspapers<sup>17</sup> from 1932 to 1934, and up to 1946. The Legion's own newspaper *National Opinion* and its later incarnation, *Legion*, were also

<sup>5</sup> Denys Trussell, *Fairburn*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1984, p.142.

<sup>6</sup> Michael C. Pugh, 'The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1969.

<sup>7</sup> Gerard Campbell, 'The New Zealand Legion in Otago 1933-1935' B.A. Honours Exercise, University of Otago, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> James Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, Auckland: Penguin Press, 2001, p.257.

<sup>9</sup> Len Richardson, 'Parties and Political Change', in Geoffrey W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.225.

<sup>10</sup> P.J. Gibbons, 'The Climate of Opinion', in Geoffrey W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.328.

<sup>11</sup> R. M. Burdon, *The New Dominion*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1965, p.175.

<sup>12</sup> Erik Olssen, 'Depression and the War' in Keith Sinclair (ed), *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990, p.216.

<sup>13</sup> Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin, 2003; Giselle Byrnes (ed.) *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009; are two examples of recent, popular publications that do not mention the Legion.

<sup>14</sup> Adam Allington, 'Gold Shirts in God's Own? The Extreme Right in New Zealand during the 1930s Depression,' B.A. Honours Exercise, Victoria University of Wellington, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Cunningham, 'Conservative Protest or Conservative Radicalism? The New Zealand Legion in Comparative Context' *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, p. 3. (publication planned for 2011)

<sup>16</sup> Allington, p.5.

<sup>17</sup> *Evening Post; Levin Daily Chronicle; Manawatu Evening Standard; Manawatu Daily Times; Feilding Star; Wanganui Herald; Wanganui Chronicle; Taihape Times; Rangitikei Argus.*

used. Another source was local histories, not only of Palmerston North<sup>18</sup> and Wanganui<sup>19</sup>, but also of the smaller settlements that had branches of the Legion.<sup>20</sup> The internet has proved a rich source of information about individual members of the Legion, in particular cemetery records, births, deaths and marriages and the Auckland War Memorial Museum's Cenotaph database.<sup>21</sup> For those Legionnaires not born in New Zealand, various genealogy websites have been very helpful.<sup>22</sup> The more traditional, paper-based, street directories, electoral rolls and the index of service personnel and reserves from World War One were also useful.<sup>23</sup>

In Chapter One the beginnings of the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui will be examined. The role of the exchange rate crisis and the formation of the Legion centres in Wanganui and Manawatu will be discussed. Chapter One will also look at how the Legion grew throughout the region, examine how the activists of Palmerston North and Wanganui went about spreading the Legion message, and attempt to gauge how successful they were.

---

<sup>18</sup>Robert H. Billens, *From Swap to City: Official Souvenir 1887-1937: Commemorating the Diamond Jubilee of the City 1937*, Palmerston North: K and B Print, 1937; I. R. Matheson, *Council and Community: 125 Years of Local Government in Palmerston North 1877-2002*, Palmerston North: Palmerston North City Library, 2003; I. R. Matheson, *The Birth of Palmerston North*, Palmerston North: Manawatu Standard, 1971; G. C. Petersen, *Palmerston North: A Centennial History*, Wellington: A H and A W Reed, 1973.

<sup>19</sup>Bruce Attwell, *The Wharves of Wanganui*, Wanganui: Hilltop Publishing, 2006; Arthur P. Bates, *Focus on Wanganui*, Wanganui: Wanganui Newspapers Ltd, 1984; J.P. Belcher, *Wanganui 1856 to 1929*, Wanganui: Evans, Cobb & Sharpe, 1930; L.J.B. Chapple, and H.C. Vetich, *Wanganui*, Hawera: Hawera Star Publishing Company Ltd, 1939; M.J.G. Smart, and A.P. Bates *The Wanganui Story*, Wanganui: Wanganui Newspapers Ltd, 1972.

<sup>20</sup>George Abbott, *Maxwell Nukumarū: A History*, Wanganui: The Print Place, 1998; Pamela, Benson, *History of Rongotea*, Palmerston North: Rongotea School Centennial Committee, 1981; R. E. Clevely, *Bunnythorpe and District*, Wellington: A H and A W Reed, 1953; E. Feist and H.F. Richardson, *Bush People and Pasture: The story of the Waitotara County*, Wanganui: Waitotara County Centennial Committee, 1983; R.A. Wilson, *Bulls: A History of the Township*, Palmerston North: Keeling & Mundy, 1963; Anthony Dreaver, *Levin: the making of a town*, Levin: Horowhenua District Council, 2006.

<sup>21</sup>Auckland War Memorial Museum Cenotaph Data Base  
<http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph/locations.aspx>  
Internal Affairs, Birth Death and Marriage online register  
<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home/>

<sup>22</sup>Ancestry  
<http://www.ancestry.com.au>  
Find My Past  
<http://www.findmypast.co.uk>

<sup>23</sup>Electoral Roll, Palmerston North, 1931, 1935; Electoral Roll, Oroua, 1931, 1935; Electoral Roll, Otaki, 1931, 1935; Electoral Roll, Manawatu, 1931, 1935; Electoral Roll, Rangitikei, 1931-1935; Electoral Roll, Wanganui, 1931, 1935; Stone's Street Directory, 1933.

Chapter Two will consider local membership of the Manawatu and Wanganui Legion. By focusing on known members, it will look at the age profile of membership, classify the occupations of members and discuss whether the Legion was particularly attractive to ex-servicemen. It will also cover other aspects of public life that Legionnaires were involved in.

The issues that interested the Legion at a local level will be discussed in Chapter Three. These issues have much in common with what the Legion promoted nationally, particularly electoral reform. Other issues included local body issues, economic issues and defending themselves from political attacks.

Chapter Four will cover the decline of the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region. It is difficult to pin-point the exact dates when the local Legion ceased to be active but an effort has been made to piece together what was happening with the Legion in 1934 and into 1935. This chapter will also look at the political life of ex-legionnaires after the failure of the Legion.

The New Zealand Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region was very vigorous during 1933. Its activities tailed off during 1934, and it appears to have been a spent force by 1935. Although the Legion in the area attracted much attention, holding large meetings with reports of many members, its brief life has left it forgotten.

'The need for national unity': The establishment and spread of the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui

In 1933 the Manawatu-Wanganui Region was still in the grip of the Depression. The reception of the Legion in the area is partly related to how the exchange rate rise of January 1933 was received and partly due to a more general sense of disorder and betrayal.<sup>1</sup> Wanganui's longer history of commercial and urban life, combined with its political history, meant that the Legion began strongly there. In Palmerston North the Legion struggled to get organised. In keeping with its strong start, Wanganui had a much more active branch than Palmerston North, although it is difficult to gauge whether Wanganui's activity actually spawned working branches. The Manawatu division, based in Palmerston North, had branches in Bulls, Levin, Ashhurst-Pohangina, Bunnythorpe, and Rongotea. The establishment and progression of the Legion through the region certainly owed much to the exchange rate crisis of January 1933. But this was not the only factor that determined the early development and spread of the Legion locally.

Wanganui was one of New Zealand's oldest European settlements, New Zealand Company settlers having arrived there in 1841.<sup>2</sup> Wanganui's growth was fuelled by its port and it became a city in 1924. In 1933 it was New Zealand's fifth largest urban area.<sup>3</sup> Wanganui was the administrative centre for the region, with branches of government departments and a high court. Its size and urban nature meant that Wanganui identified strongly with larger cities, but by 1933 the increased use of rail and road to move goods around New Zealand meant that Wanganui's status as a commercial centre was declining.<sup>4</sup> Its rural hinterland was hilly, and dominated by sheep farming. To the west there was the rural town of Waverly and to the east Marton. The Wanganui region extended as far north as Taihape, a railway town near the centre of the North Island.

Supreme,  
in 1931

<sup>1</sup> For example unemployment had peaked in Palmerston North during the winter of 1932, but was worsening in Wanganui during 1933, peaking in winter of that year, *AJHR*, H-35, Report of the Unemployment Board, 1931-1935.

<sup>2</sup> M.J.G. Smart, and A.P. Bates *The Wanganui Story*, Wanganui: Wanganui Newspapers Ltd, 1972, p.52

<sup>3</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 14.2.33, p.3.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Attwell, *The Wharves of Wanganui*, Wanganui: Hilltop Publishing, 2006, p.115.

Palmerston North was settled later by Europeans than Wanganui, surveys beginning in 1866.<sup>5</sup> By 1933 Palmerston North had been a city for three years and was a rail hub with a growing education and commercial sector.<sup>6</sup> Surrounding Palmerston North were the Manawatu plains, which were dominated by dairying. To the west were the service towns of Feilding and Bulls and to the south Levin. In 1933 Palmerston North's population was similar to Wanganui's yet it was still seen as a rural service town.<sup>7</sup>

When the Legion was being set up in February and March, Wanganui proved more enthusiastic than Palmerston North. In previous research on the Legion, its initial stages have been explained as part of the protests against the increase in the exchange rate, which occurred in January 1933. Pugh places great importance on the exchange rate crisis, saying that it 'was especially significant in alienating importers, retailers, and even manufacturers from the Government'.<sup>8</sup> Campbell, in his study of the Otago branch of the Legion, agrees with Pugh, saying that the exchange rate crisis was the catalyst for the emergence of the Legion.<sup>9</sup> However, the fact that William Downie Stewart, the Coalition Finance Minister who resigned as a protest against the rise in the rate, was a Dunedin Member of Parliament may have given the issue more resonance in Otago.

Protests about the raising of the exchange rate took place in Palmerston North, Feilding and Wanganui in January and February 1933. The initial meetings were organised by the respective Chambers of Commerce and Palmerston North's was held on 30 January 1933.<sup>10</sup> Described as 'the largest public meeting held for many years',<sup>11</sup> it packed the Opera House, which seated 1030.<sup>12</sup> There were nine speakers, one of whom, Fredrick Nathan, went on to head the Legion in Palmerston

---

<sup>5</sup> I. R. Matheson, *Council and Community: 125 Years of Local Government in Palmerston North 1877-2002*, Palmerston North: Palmerston North City Library, 2003, p.12.

<sup>6</sup> Matheson, pp.30-31.

<sup>7</sup> Palmerston North, 23500, Wanganui, 27650, *NZOYB*, 42<sup>nd</sup> ed. Wellington: Government Printer 1934, p.66.

<sup>8</sup> Michael C. Pugh, 'The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1969, p.180.

<sup>9</sup> Gerard Campbell, 'The New Zealand Legion in Otago 1933-1935' B.A. Honours Exercise, University of Otago, 1986, p.6.

<sup>10</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 28.1.33, p.7.

<sup>11</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 31.1.33, p.2.

<sup>12</sup> Matheson, p.25.

North. None of the other speakers appears to have become involved in the Legion. Nathan's speech was particularly notable for that fact that he supported the Government's actions. He began by saying 'I am definitely in favour of the higher rate of exchange. If it were a good thing last week, it would have been a better thing two years ago.'<sup>13</sup> The only other speaker who defended the Government was J.A Nash, the government Member of Parliament for Palmerston North.

It was a similar story in Feilding. The Chamber of Commerce also convened a meeting on 30 January. The Chamber was to vote on the motion that the Feilding Chamber of Commerce condemned 'the action of the Government in raising the rate of exchange at an artificial figure.' Two later Feilding members of the Legion were present at this meeting. Carl Hausmann spoke against the Government, believing it 'had made a serious blunder'.<sup>14</sup> Albert Kellow, the other Feilding Chamber member who went on to join the Legion, held a different opinion. With the members split, six for and six against the motion, Kellow, as chairperson, had the deciding vote. He voted against the motion, defeating it.<sup>15</sup>

In Wanganui there were two meetings to discuss the exchange rate. On 30 January the Chamber of Commerce held a meeting for business people in the City Council Chambers.<sup>16</sup> There were several speakers, and a motion was passed unanimously to condemn the rise in the exchange rate.<sup>17</sup> Hugh Jenkins, editor of the *Wanganui Chronicle*, gave a long speech against the rise and he was well prepared with facts and figures. Jenkins would become one of the founders of the Legion in Wanganui. A small article appeared in the *Wanganui Herald* on 8 February saying that his speech 'had made a marked impression on its hearers, and many members of the general public have expressed a desire to hear Mr Jenkins deal with the subject again on the Opera House platform'.<sup>18</sup> He did so on 9 February, in a meeting that was advertised as also dealing with the central bank and

---

<sup>13</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 31.1.33, p.2.

<sup>14</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 31.1.33, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 31.1.33, p.2.

<sup>16</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 30.1.33, p.8.

<sup>17</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 1.2.33, p.11.

<sup>18</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 8.2.33, p.8.

sales Tax.<sup>19</sup> This meeting filled the Opera House, which seated 1025,<sup>20</sup> although the *Wanganui Chronicle* reported over 1400 people attended.<sup>21</sup> Jenkins was one of the speakers and several motions were passed protesting against the high exchange rate, sales tax and inception of the reserve bank. It also called for the circulation of a petition asking the Governor-General to dissolve Parliament.<sup>22</sup>

In the Manawatu area the sense of crisis surrounding the lifting of the exchange rate probably had some bearing on enthusiasm for the Legion, but protest against it does not appear to have been the prime motivation for those starting the organisation. The protests against the exchange rate rise certainly seemed to have more resonance in Wanganui. This is probably explained by Wanganui's greater identification with city interests, finance, importing and manufacturing. These interests tended to see the rise as being unjustified intervention and unduly favouring the interests of the rural sector. Protest against the rise in the exchange rate was not the only factor drawing support for the Legion and for some Legionnaires, who approved of the Government's actions, it was clearly not a motivation for joining. Indeed the national organisation of what would become the Legion was under way in late 1932.<sup>23</sup> The initial meeting of the organisation, which was called New Zealand National Movement, was held in Palmerston North in July 1932. A member of the council was from Palmerston North, but the identity of this person is not known.<sup>24</sup> At the December 1932 meeting of the Palmerston North Chamber of Commerce, members expressed their dissatisfaction with the Government, suggesting that what was needed 'was a dictator or a body of determined men who would adopt some definite plan'.<sup>25</sup> So the desire for some radical new direction was present locally before the exchange rate crisis. The protest meetings throughout the region

---

<sup>19</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 9.2.33, p.1.

<sup>20</sup> Arthur P. Bates, *Focus on Wanganui*, Wanganui: Wanganui Newspaper Ltd, 1984, p.34.

<sup>21</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 10.2.33 p.8.

<sup>22</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 10.2.33, p.8.

<sup>23</sup> *Wanganui Herald* 12.4.33 p.10, letter from AN Feild saying that the national organiser for the Legion, Major Sherston, visited him in December 1932 asking him to help with organisation of what would become the Legion.

<sup>24</sup> Pugh, p.200.

<sup>25</sup> *Evening Post*, 7.12.32, p.10.

conveyed a heightened loss of faith in the Government since it had given an assurance in December that there would be no change in the rate.<sup>26</sup>

During February and March 1933 Campbell Begg travelled the length and breadth of New Zealand organising divisions of the Legion. These meetings were secretive; they were not open to the press and attendance was by invitation only. He flew into Palmerston North on 1 March, held a meeting and then drove on to Wanganui. There he held a conference and arranged an invitation list before he flew to Wellington. He returned to Wanganui on 4 March to hold an invitation-only meeting, which about 20 'prominent' citizens attended.<sup>27</sup> At this meeting a committee was formed, which met the next day and formed a division of the New Zealand Legion. In Palmerston North Begg did not find setting up a division easy. He returned there on 7 March, and held a meeting, which formed a committee to arrange a further meeting. There was a division formed, but it was described in Begg's itinerary as 'not representative'.<sup>28</sup> He returned again on 17 March for the invitation-only meeting at which a division was formed. Since Begg finished his travels on 26 March, Manawatu was one of the last divisions to be formed.<sup>29</sup>

The better reception of the Legion in Wanganui possibly reflects the existing political situation in the two cities. In 1933 Wanganui was represented in parliament by W A Veitch, who had aligned himself with a number of parties over the 22 years he had been an MP. He was originally a moderate Labour MP, and in the 1920s he had allied himself with the various incarnations of the Liberal Party. In 1931 he stood as the Coalition candidate, which may have discomfited Reform supporters as they had campaigned against him for 20 years.<sup>30</sup> The MP for Palmerston North, J A

---

<sup>26</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 1.2.33.p.11; *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 31.1.33, p.2.

<sup>27</sup> *Tairāpapa Times*, 2.6.33 p.3, from a speech given by Brown describing the beginnings of the Legion in Wanganui.

<sup>28</sup> New Zealand Legion, Hawke's Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion Papers, MSS & Archives, A-38, File 1, Folder 1, 'Itinerary in forming N.Z Legion', Special Collections, University of Auckland Library. It is unclear as to what 'not representative' means possibly it is an indication that Begg did not have enough interest.

<sup>29</sup> New Zealand Legion, Hawke's Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion Papers, MSS & Archives, A-38, File 1, Folder 1, 'Itinerary in forming N.Z Legion', Special Collections, University of Auckland Library.

<sup>30</sup> K L Stewart 'The Ballance Tradition and its Permeation in Wanganui', M.A. Thesis, Massey University, 1970, p.103.

Nash, was also long serving, having been an MP 15 years in 1933. In contrast he had been elected as a Reform candidate and remained so until the forming of the Coalition. This meant that in Palmerston North right-wing voters could feel that they still had representation. In Wanganui there would appear to have been more room for a new political organisation than in Palmerston North.

The Wanganui Division of the Legion was very active between April and July 1933. Once Begg had set up a committee, the local organisation was encouraged to hold a meeting to rouse interest among the general public. Wanganui held its first public meeting on 26 April in the hall of St. Paul's Church, Guyton Street.<sup>31</sup> The attendance was somewhere between 150 and 200.<sup>32</sup> Since there was no public advertisement for this meeting in either newspaper, other means must have been used to inform those who attended. According to the *Wanganui Chronicle*, 65 people signed as members and 'A further meeting of members is to be held shortly to elect officers and after that general public meetings arranged.'<sup>33</sup> In early May, a report in the *Wanganui Chronicle* stated that 'Since the holding of a meeting of the New Zealand Legion in Wanganui speakers have been enlisted and a good team of men and women have expressed their willingness to take the platform to expound the objects of the league[sic].'<sup>34</sup> This team began a series of public meetings in the suburbs and countryside surrounding Wanganui. The first of these interest meetings was held in Fordell, east of Wanganui, and Maxwell, just west of the city, on 12 May.<sup>35</sup> During the second half of May the Legion's speaking teams went as far west as Waverly, holding a meeting there on 25 May,<sup>36</sup> and covered the smaller country settlements, Upokongaro, (13 May)<sup>37</sup> Westmere, (16 May)<sup>38</sup> Okoia, (23 May) Whangaehu, (25 May)<sup>39</sup> and Kaitoke (30 May)<sup>40</sup>. The fact that they were able to hold meetings in two such widely separated places as Waverly and Whangaehu on the same night suggests they

---

<sup>31</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 27.4.33, p.10.

<sup>32</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 27.4.33, p.10, says 200; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27.4.33, p.8 says 150.

<sup>33</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27.4.33, p.8.

<sup>34</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 8.5.33, p.6.

<sup>35</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 13.5.33, p.8; *Wanganui Herald*, 13.5.33, p.8.

<sup>36</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 25.5.33, p.1.

<sup>37</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 15.5.33, p.6.

<sup>38</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 17.5.33, p.8.

<sup>39</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 20.5.33, p.1.

<sup>40</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 29.5.33, p.1.

had enough speakers to make two teams. They also covered all of suburban Wanganui between 17 May and 24 May, often holding two meetings a night.<sup>41</sup> They went as far east as Marton, holding a meeting there on 30 May.<sup>42</sup> The last interest meeting they held was in Taihape on 1 June.<sup>43</sup> The Legion also opened an office in Wanganui city in late June 1933. It was on Victoria Avenue, the main shopping strip.<sup>44</sup>

Reports of some of the Wanganui Division's local meetings appeared in the press. At Fordell it was reported that a committee was elected and arrangements made for further meetings.<sup>45</sup> At Waverly about 130 people attended, a greater number than expected. The venue had to be moved from a church hall to the Town Hall supper rooms at the last minute to accommodate the large numbers.<sup>46</sup> There is only one report of a suburban meeting, in the Aramoho Boatshed. A number of questions were asked, but there was no record of anyone joining.<sup>47</sup> Aramoho was a more left-leaning suburb of Wanganui and this could explain its response to the Legion.<sup>48</sup> The last two meetings the Wanganui Legion held were in the towns of Marton and Taihape, each of which had its own newspaper. In Marton the *Rangitikei Advocate* reported the meeting but made no mention of any new members or of the starting up of a local branch.<sup>49</sup> In Taihape surprise was expressed at the large size of the meeting, although no attendance number is mentioned. The *Taihape Times* reported that 'a big proportion of those present signed cards of membership.'<sup>50</sup> The Wanganui Legion held a lot of meetings, but there was only one press report of these meetings actually ending in the formation of a local committee. Because of this it is difficult to gauge how successful the Wanganui Legion was in setting up branches in the surrounding area.

---

<sup>41</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 16.5.33, p.1.

<sup>42</sup> *Rangitikei Advocate*, 29.5.33, p.1.

<sup>43</sup> *Taihape Times*, 2.6.33, p.3.

<sup>44</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 29.6.33, p.14.

<sup>45</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 13.5.33, p.8.

<sup>46</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27.5.33, p.5.

<sup>47</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 23.5.33, p.12.

<sup>48</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 4.5.33, has local body election results. Of the five highest polling candidates at the Aramoho booth four were Labour.

<sup>49</sup> *Rangitikei Advocate*, 29.5.33, p.4.

<sup>50</sup> *Taihape Times*, 2.6.33, p.3.

In Palmerston North there was no media reporting of the division holding a first public meeting similar to that in Wanganui, but it did hold meetings in three country locations. The first was in Ashhurst on 29 June, at which about 40 people signed membership cards.<sup>51</sup> The next was in Bunnythorpe on 6 July<sup>52</sup> and the last on 11 September in Rongotea.<sup>53</sup> Palmerston North also had a youth branch, which was formed in July.<sup>54</sup> All of these branches elected committees. A report on the Manawatu Division, which appeared in *National Opinion* in November, stated that 'Arrangements are now in hand for a "big-push" in Palmerston North and centres will ultimately be formed in the various suburbs.'<sup>55</sup> Like Wanganui, Palmerston North set up a recruiting office. Palmerston North's was slightly more modest than Wanganui's, being a booth in The Square. It was used for enrolling members and selling copies of *National Opinion*, for which there was apparently a good demand.<sup>56</sup> It appears from the press that Palmerston North was not as vigorous as Wanganui in organising meetings in the surrounding area, but Palmerston North may have set up more permanent branches.

Feilding, Bulls and Levin were part of the Manawatu Division and there were attempts to start Legion branches in these towns. The Palmerston North branch does not seem to have given any support to Bulls or Feilding, but members of the Palmerston North Legion actively supported Levin. Henry Free, from the Palmerston North Legion, spoke at the first meeting in Levin, which was held on 2 June. Begg also spoke and about 400 people attended.<sup>57</sup> At the end of the meeting a number of people signed membership cards, and the nucleus of the movement in Levin was formed.<sup>58</sup> They held another public meeting in July at which a delegation of Palmerston North members was present

---

<sup>51</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 30.6.33, p.8.

<sup>52</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 7.7.33, p.12.

<sup>53</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 14.9.33, p.10.

<sup>54</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 13.7.33, p.8.

<sup>55</sup> *National Opinion*, 30.11.33, p.14.

<sup>56</sup> *National Opinion*, 5.10.33, p.7.

<sup>57</sup> *Evening Post*, 3.6.33, p.12. this is remarkable considering Levin had a population of about 2 500, Dreaver p. 196.

<sup>58</sup> *Levin Daily Chronicle*, 5.6.33, p.7.

and Fredrick Nathan, chairman of the Manawatu Division, spoke.<sup>59</sup> Levin also set up a country branch in Ohau, a rural settlement to the south.<sup>60</sup> In Bulls there was a very active organiser, Colonel Charles Powles. He seems to have formed the nucleus of a branch which invited Sir Andrew Russell to speak on 13 September. It was a successful meeting, with between 150 and 200 people attending.

<sup>61</sup> The next week another meeting formed a branch and elected officers.<sup>62</sup> In Feilding it seems that the attempts to start a branch were unsuccessful. Begg spoke in Feilding on 9 August, supported by Albert Kellow, the Chamber of Commerce member whose vote had defeated the protest motion against the exchange rate rise.<sup>63</sup> Advertisements for meetings appeared in the local paper on 16 August and 31 August that had similar wording about forming a branch.<sup>64</sup> However, a report on the Manawatu Division in *National Opinion* in October 1933 stated that branches had been formed in Bulls, Bunnythorpe, Ashhurst, Pohangina and Levin.<sup>65</sup> The lack of any mention of Feilding suggests that the efforts to create a branch had failed.

The beginning of the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui area owed much to the exchange rate crisis of January 1933, but it was not the only factor. The Legion certainly became stronger in Wanganui, where protests against the rising of the rate were louder. However, the fact that the head of the Legion in Manawatu supported the rise suggests that there were other factors involved in the formation of the Legion in the area. The exchange rate protests were symptomatic of growing disillusionment and distrust of the Government and the general perception of crisis. Because the right in Wanganui had lost their candidate when the Coalition formed in 1931, it had more space for a new political movement. Although Wanganui tried to set up branches earlier and held more meetings than Palmerston North, it is difficult to gauge how many of Wanganui's meetings resulted

---

<sup>59</sup> *Levin Daily Chronicle*, 8.7.33, p.6.

<sup>60</sup> *Levin Daily Chronicle*, 12.7.33, p.4.

<sup>61</sup> *Manawatu Daily Times*, 18.9.33, p.3; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 16.9.33, p.5 says 200; *National Opinion*, 5.10.33, p.7, says 150.

<sup>62</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 25.9.33, p.2.

<sup>63</sup> *Feilding Star*, 10.8.33, p.5.

<sup>64</sup> *Feilding Star*, 16.8.33, p.1; *Feilding Star*, 31.7.33, p.8.

<sup>65</sup> *National Opinion*, 5.10.33, p.7.

in branches, whereas Palmerston North set up four, and there were branches in two of the towns in the Manawatu division's area. The Legion's reception and spread in the Manawatu-Wanganui was fuelled by a number of factors, but it was a reflection of the growing dissatisfaction with the Government's approach to dealing with the Depression.

## Chapter Two

### 'A body of determined men': Membership of the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui

The New Zealand Legion aimed to appeal to all New Zealanders. If asked to whom the Legion appealed, members were directed to reply 'To all men and women over the age of 18 years of all classes and creeds'.<sup>1</sup> The membership records the New Zealand Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui area seem not to have survived, which makes it difficult to gauge how many members there were in the area. However, the *Wanganui Chronicle* stated that sixty-five people joined at the initial interest meeting in Wanganui in April 1933.<sup>2</sup> The *Manawatu Evening Standard* reported about fifty members at an organising meeting before Begg's August visit to Palmerston North<sup>3</sup> and Levin had approached fifty members when they held a meeting to elect office holders.<sup>4</sup> Despite reports of membership cards being signed, about forty in Ashhurst<sup>5</sup>, and a 'large number', in Taihape<sup>6</sup> and Waverly<sup>7</sup>, it is possible that attendance at the meeting, signing the card and the payment of membership fee may have been the only contact many members had with the Legion. Pugh speculates that interest meetings may have been the only Legion meetings in country areas,<sup>8</sup> and press evidence in Manawatu-Wanganui region suggests this could be true. Despite the great interest shown in the Legion by people in Taihape, for example, there was no record in the *Taihape Times* of the Legion holding another meeting.

A search of the Wanganui and Palmerston North newspapers yielded the names of eighty-five members, usually very active branch members, who spoke, organised a meeting, or served on a committee. By using genealogical records it has been possible to discover the ages, occupations,

---

<sup>1</sup> Hawke's Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion, Papers, MSS & Archives A-38, file 2, folder 2, Special Collections, Auckland University Library.

<sup>2</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27.4.33, p.8.

<sup>3</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 3.8.33, p.8.

<sup>4</sup> *Levin Daily Chronicle*, 15.7.33, p.6.

<sup>5</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 20.6.33, p.8.

<sup>6</sup> *Taihape Times*, 2.6.33, p.3.

<sup>7</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27.5.33, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> Michael C. Pugh, 'The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression', M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1969, pp.91-92.

public lives and war records of these members and thereby gain some understanding as to what sort of person was attracted to the Legion.

Pugh and Simpson argued that the Legion was an organisation of older men.<sup>9</sup> It was possible to find the ages of seventy-eight members in 1933. Of the seven for which an age could not be found, five were women. The records for women were more difficult to track down because they changed their name at marriage. Even where it was possible to find their maiden name, or their maiden name was given, they were more difficult to find on electoral rolls and street directories. Without confirmation of their first names, usually found in electoral rolls, it was more difficult to find their year of birth in birth, death and marriage records. The other two untraceable records were men from the Palmerston North Youth Branch. Younger people are much more difficult to find information about, probably because they were more transient. We can assume that these men were young, probably aged under 30, but they have not been taken into account in the following age calculations (Figure 1). The overall average age of members was 46.5. Pugh did not calculate an average for his sample of members, but the most common age in his sample was 40-44, followed by 45-49, suggesting that the average would be somewhere in the mid-forties.<sup>10</sup> It may appear that the Legion in the area was dominated by older men. To assess this, the age of Legion male members was placed alongside that of males in the general population of the region (Figure 2). From this graph it can be seen that the age group 40-45 was over-represented in Legion ranks. Wanganui had a very active core of younger men with the secretary and one of the most active speakers being 36 and 34 respectively, and the chairperson 41, despite the fact that Wanganui had an aging population.<sup>11</sup> It is possible that the actual rank-and-file membership, who were not sufficiently active to have their names mentioned in newspaper reports, had a younger profile, since it is likely that older members took on the leadership role because of their greater life experience. The age pattern of members in

---

<sup>9</sup> Pugh, p.107; Tony Simpson, *The Sugarbag Years*, 3 ed., Auckland: Godwit, 1997, p.166.

<sup>10</sup> Pugh, p.107.

<sup>11</sup> *Population Census 1936*, (Vol IV), Wellington: Government Printer, p.20.

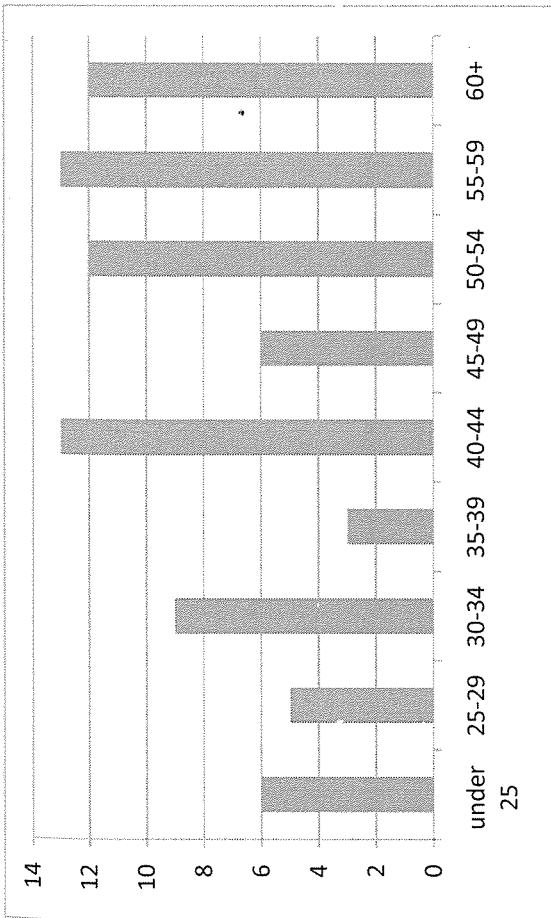


Figure 1 – Age of known members of New Zealand Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui area

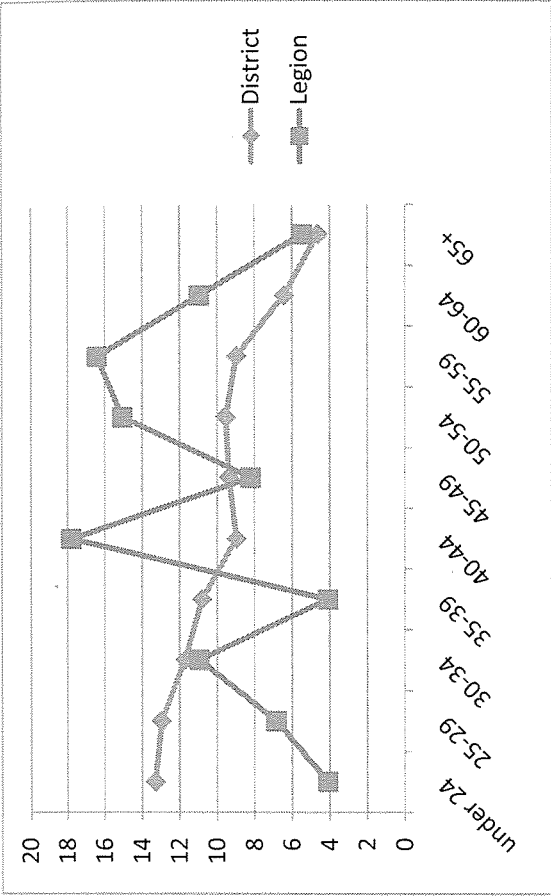


Figure 2 – Age of known New Zealand Legion male members in Manawatu-Wanganui area compared with general male population of Region. Data source for general population: 1936 Census.

Area	Professionals				Businessmen			Rural			Total
	Lawyers	Education	Doctors	Others	Large Businessmen	Small Businessmen	Sheep Farmers	Other Farmers	Other		
Palmerston North	4	1	1	3	5		1		2	17	
Manawatu Country				1		2	6	9	2	20	
Levin			1			4	1	2		8	
Feilding					2					2	
Bulls	1	1				1	3			6	
Wanganui	2	3	1	4		3				13	
Wanganui Country							2	2		4	
Taihape	1						1			2	
Total	8	5	3	8	7	10	14	13	4	72	
	11%	7%	4%	11%	10%	14%	19%	18%	6%		
	33%				24%			37%			6%

Figure 3 – Occupation of known members of the New Zealand Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui area.

the Manawatu-Wanganui region certainly shows that the New Zealand Legion attracted members across the adult age spectrum, but with some concentration in the early forties.

There has been little discussion about the gender balance in the Legion. Campbell did not mention women in the Otago Legion in his chapter on membership<sup>12</sup> and Pugh's sample of one hundred and seventy-one contained only three women.<sup>13</sup> In the Manawatu-Wanganui sample, 12% of members were women. Women members were concentrated in four branches. Bunnythorpe had three women members on their committee, all wives of other committee members.<sup>14</sup> The Palmerston North youth branch had five women committee members,<sup>15</sup> and Levin one.<sup>16</sup> In Wanganui there was a very active women member, Mrs Jessica Wickham. She was part of a team of branch members who set up centres and spoke at public meetings. Although she is the only evidence that remains of women members in Wanganui, some of the public advertisements for meetings of the Legion placed in newspapers contain the line 'Ladies are specially invited to attend all meetings' or 'Ladies especially invited'.<sup>17</sup> Advertisements for meetings in Levin also used the line 'Ladies specially invited'.<sup>18</sup> The absence of records of ordinary members obviates any assessment of how successful these advertisements were, but on the basis of the Manawatu-Wanganui branches, it seems that women were more involved in the New Zealand Legion than previously assumed.

Typically the New Zealand Legion is described as being an organisation of professionals and sheep farmers.<sup>19</sup> In Manawatu-Wanganui area professionals and farmers were certainly the most common occupation of members. Using the 1933 and 1935 electoral rolls and *Stone's 1933 Street*

---

<sup>12</sup>Gerard Campbell, 'The New Zealand Legion in Otago 1933-1935' B.A. Honours Exercise, University of Otago, 1986, pp.38-52.

<sup>13</sup>Pugh, p.108.

<sup>14</sup>*Manawatu Evening Standard*, 7.7.33, p.12.

<sup>15</sup>*Manawatu Evening Standard*, 13.7.33, p.8.

<sup>16</sup>*Levin Daily Chronicle*, 8.7.33, p.6.

<sup>17</sup>*Wanganui Herald*, 20.5.33, p.1; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 29.5.33, p.1; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 3.6.33, p.1;

*Wanganui Herald*, 7.6.33, p.10; *Wanganui Herald*, 28.8.33, p.1.

<sup>18</sup>*Levin Daily Chronicle*, 6.7.33, p.8.

<sup>19</sup>Tony Simpson, *The Slump: The Thirties Depression: Its Origins and Aftermath*, Auckland: Penguin, 1990, p.67; Len Richardson, 'Parties and Political Change', in Geoffrey W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.225.

*Directory*, the occupations of seventy-two members were obtained. In line with the convention of the time, all the women were noted as spinster, wife or widow, despite the fact that the single women may have had jobs outside of the home. Because of this, only the occupations of the men are included in Figure 3. They have been broken into four groups; professional, businessmen, rural and other.

The biggest occupational group consisted of farmers. Their proportion is higher than Campbell and Pugh found in their analyses of membership,<sup>20</sup> almost certainly because Manawatu-Wanganui area contained a large amount of rural land. The number of farmers is particularly noticeable in the Manawatu area. There are two possible reasons for this. The Manawatu Division, which stretched from Otaki to Bulls, covered a large area of fertile farmland, and the predominance of dairying in the Manawatu allowed for closer settlement. The figure is also slightly distorted because it was easier to find the names of the country members in the Manawatu area than in Wanganui. Both the Palmerston North newspapers published committee lists for the Ashhurst-Pohangina branch and the Bunnythorpe branch. None of the country branches in Wanganui had similar lists. Another issue with the occupation group 'farmer' is that there is a substantial difference in types of farmer. A farmer with a large sheep run was more like the owner of a large business than a farmer on a small dairy farm, who was more of a small businessman. Using the list of sheep owners from the 1930 *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* these two categories of farmers have been split. There were fourteen large sheep farmers and thirteen other farmers. So it appears that the Legion held a significant attraction to farmers, no matter the size of their operation, though large sheep farmers appear to be over-represented.

The other large occupational grouping that joined the Legion consisted of professional men. Both previous theses on the Legion found that the membership had a high percentage of lawyers<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Pugh, p.103; Campbell, p.39.

<sup>21</sup> Campbell, p.39; Pugh, p.103.

and this pattern is seen in Manawatu-Wanganui area.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, two members of the Wanganui Legion had trained as lawyers, but were working in other professions in 1933.<sup>23</sup> There are two notable differences in the Manawatu-Wanganui figures compared with previous research. The membership contained three doctors, whereas both Pugh and Campbell found a higher proportion of these.<sup>24</sup> This is possibly explained by lower number of doctors in the region<sup>25</sup> and the probability that Campbell's figure was inflated by the presence of the medical school in Dunedin. The other difference is the higher number of members with jobs in the education sector (7%). Campbell did not include a category for education in his study. Pugh did however, and it accounted for 3.5% of his sample. The higher proportion of those involved in education was at least partly caused by an active group of Wanganui Collegiate teachers. The overall percentage of professionals involved in the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui area was slightly lower than previous research on the Legion suggested, but considering the region contained no large cities, professional are sustainably over represented.

Compared to other studies, the Manawatu-Wanganui Legion had a smaller proportion of businessmen.<sup>26</sup> This is likely to be a reflection of a larger proportion of farmers and the fact that neither Palmerston North nor Wanganui were large centres of commerce. There were, however, local businessmen active in the Legion. In Feilding, for instance, the only two members whose names are known were both substantial businessmen. There were no large businessmen active in Wanganui, possibly a sign that manufacturing was growing in Palmerston North rather than Wanganui, a trend that became more visible after World War Two. In Levin, a large proportion of the members were small businessmen. Neither Bunnythorpe nor Ashhurst had much in the way of

---

<sup>22</sup> For example the 1936 census lists 51 people in Wanganui and 50 in Palmerston North involved in legal work (this includes clerks and students).

<sup>23</sup> Hugh Jenkins, *Who's Who 1932* p.212; Eric Wills <http://shadowsoftime.co.nz/university25.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Pugh, p.103; Campbell p.39.

<sup>25</sup> In the 1936 census there were a total of 204 people employed in the health category in Palmerston North and Wanganui, in Dunedin there were 396.

<sup>26</sup> Campbell, p.39 found 29.51%. Pugh, p.107, did not separate small businessmen from other middle income earners. He separated out large businessmen only, which were 9% of his sample.

commerce, yet both these centres attracted members who were small businessmen. Despite the lower proportion of businessmen when compared to other studies, the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui was certainly attractive to them.

Actual motivations for joining the Legion are difficult to discern. Pugh explains the high proportion of professionals in the Legion by saying that they were being squeezed by deflation reducing their fees.<sup>27</sup> Campbell suggests that their business interests may have been particularly affected by the exchange rate change.<sup>28</sup> Why farmers were attracted the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region is unclear, as the raising of the exchange rate had benefited them. However, not all farmers were positive about the exchange rate rise, some believing that it would cause Britain to bring in tariffs to protect its own farmers from a flood of cheap New Zealand products.<sup>29</sup>

Personal business interests may have provided some impetus for people to join the Legion, but the sense that New Zealand was heading towards a crisis probably had more bearing Legion membership. Henry Free, when speaking about why he joined the Legion, said that 'he believed that the ideals annunciated by it [the Legion] were such as, if put into practice, would prove to be one of the greatest forces in the life of New Zealand. "If you have an organisation prepared to put service before self you are going to have a force that will tell in the long run."<sup>30</sup> The idea of service before self probably sheds light on why the Legion may have been attractive to professionals, who often see their role in society as representing the interests of others.<sup>31</sup> These ideals may have particularly resonated with lawyers, whose professional life is focused on the representing of others, and may explain the why they were attracted to the Legion in a greater proportion than any other profession. Since rural communities typically contained few professionals, the role of representing others was taken by prominent farmers, which may account for the fact that the Legion seems to have been

---

<sup>27</sup> Pugh, p.104.

<sup>28</sup> Campbell, p.40.

<sup>29</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 4.2.33, p.6; *Wanganui Herald*, 4.3.33, p.9.

<sup>30</sup> *Levin Daily Chronicle*, 5.6.33, p.7.

<sup>31</sup> James Watson, 'Crisis and Change : Economic Crisis and Technological Change between the World Wars, with Special Reference to Christchurch, 1926-36 ', PhD Thesis, University of Canterbury, 198, p.527.

attractive to all types of farmers, not just sheep farmers.<sup>32</sup> Although business interest may have motivated people to join the Legion, it is more likely that the decision to join the Legion was fuelled by the sense of crisis and the desire to do something about it.

Reinforcing the idea that Legion members were interested in service is the number that were involved in other areas of public life. There were a high number of Legionnaires serving in local government, 17% of the sample, with at least one in seven of the twelve centres for which some members are known. The most prominent local body politician was the head of the Manawatu Division, Fredrick Nathan, who had been mayor of Palmerston North<sup>33</sup>, and Henry Free was a city councillor.<sup>34</sup> In Wanganui the deputy Mayor, Fredrick Symes,<sup>35</sup> was a member of the Legion, as was Alexander Halligan, who was a city councillor and a member of the power board.<sup>36</sup> The smaller centres of Bulls,<sup>37</sup> Feilding,<sup>38</sup> Waverly,<sup>39</sup> Bunnythorpe,<sup>40</sup> and Ashhurst- Pohangina<sup>41</sup> had a least one Legion member who was also elected to a local body. There were also five Justices of the Peace who were Legionnaires<sup>42</sup> and one Legion member on the unemployment relief committees in Palmerton North and Wanganui respectively.<sup>43</sup> The fact that Legionnaires were also involved on local bodies indicates that they were interested in serving and speaking for what they saw as the public interest.

The Legion members' public service was not confined to local body politics. Some of the other activities that Legion members were involved in included school boards,<sup>44</sup> the SPCA,<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Simpson, *The Slump*, p.68.

<sup>33</sup> I. R. Matheson, *Council and Community: 125 Years of Local Government in Palmerston North 1877-2002*, Palmerston North: Palmerston North City Library, 2003, p.92.

<sup>34</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 10.5.33, p.2.

<sup>35</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 15.3.33, p.5.

<sup>36</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 4.5.33, p.5.

<sup>37</sup> J.E. Walker, *Manawatu Daily Times*, 18.9.33, p.3.

<sup>38</sup> A.J. Kellow, *Manawatu Daily Times*, 13.10.33, p.3.

<sup>39</sup> T. Alexander, *Wanganui Herald*, 14.8.33, p.9.

<sup>40</sup> C. Anderson, *Manawatu Daily Times*, 14.9.33, p.9.

<sup>41</sup> W. Howell, *Manawatu Daily Times*, 14.9.33, p.3; H.W. Smart, *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 10.11.26, p.2.

<sup>42</sup> J.D. Balmer; W.B. Duthie; W. Howell; A.J.Kellow; A.W. Trass; from listings, *Stones Street Directory 1933*.

<sup>43</sup> W.R. Brown, *Wanganui Herald*, 17.3.33 p.9; K.G. Chamberlain, *Manawatu Daily Times*, 17.4.34, p.6.

<sup>44</sup> W.B. Black, *Manawatu Daily Times*, 17.4.34, p.8; C.N. Rabone, *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 3.8.33, p.5; A.E. Halligan, *Wanganui Herald*, 2.5.33, p.5.

<sup>45</sup> H.B. Free and J.C. Wickham, *Evening Post*, 2.3.33, p.6.

Agricultural and Pastoral Societies,<sup>46</sup> and the Aerodrome Society.<sup>47</sup> Membership of Rotary clubs was common in the membership of the Palmerston North and Wanganui branches. In Wanganui, the Legion Secretary was also the Rotary Secretary.<sup>48</sup> In Palmerston North the Chairman of Rotary was a member of the Legion and the Legion Secretary had been the Rotary Secretary.<sup>49</sup> There were also Legionnaires who were officers of the Farmers' Union, including the Vice-President of the Wanganui Farmers Union, Andrew Melville, and the National Vice-President of the Women's Division, Jessica Wickham.<sup>50</sup> In Campbell's study he observed that there was considerable overlap between the Chamber of Commerce in Dunedin and Legion membership, but there was no similar overlap in the Manawatu-Wanganui region. There were Legionnaires who were members of the Chambers of Commerce in Wanganui, Feilding, Palmerston North and Levin, but as far as is ascertainable, the overlap was one or two members, not comparable to the eleven that Campbell found in the sixty-one Otago members he studied.<sup>51</sup> The number of public service organisation that Legion members were involved in appears to have been a reflection of their interest in public life and public service.

The appeal of the Legion to those who served in World War One has been debated. Pugh maintained that, despite the military rhetoric employed by the Legion, it held no particular appeal for returned servicemen. He claimed that the absence of men aged 35-39 in his sample showed that the Legion was not attractive to World War One servicemen 'It is also remarkable that the age group which probably bore the brunt of the War, represented only 8.9% in the Legion sample.'<sup>52</sup> For the purposes of this study of the Manawatu-Wanganui region, the age of most World War One soldiers will be taken as falling between 20 and 45.<sup>53</sup> This is based on the minimum age for volunteers being 20, and the maximum age for conscription 45. In his book on conscription in World War One,

---

<sup>46</sup> L.B. Wall, G.H. Scholefield, *Who's Who in New Zealand* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), Wellington: L.T. Waking Ltd., 1944, p.341.

<sup>47</sup> K.G. Chamberlain, *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 21.10.61, p.8.

<sup>48</sup> S.R. McCallum, *Wanganui Herald*, 3.7.33, p.2.

<sup>49</sup> K.G. Chamberlain, <http://www.pnrotary.co.nz/secretaries.php>;

W.G. Black, <http://www.pnrotary.co.nz/presidents.php>.

<sup>50</sup> A.P. Melville, *Wanganui Herald*, 25.5.33 p.13; J.C. Wickham, *Wanganui Herald*, 19.6.33, p.2.

<sup>51</sup> Campbell, p.45.

<sup>52</sup> Pugh, p.105.

<sup>53</sup> James Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, Auckland: Penguin Press, 2001, p.99.

Paul Baker notes that the average age of the first-round of volunteers was 24, although he believes it would have been slightly lower because recruiting officers often turned a blind eye to 19 year olds enlisting.<sup>54</sup> Using the slightly lower age of 23, the average soldier who volunteered in the first two years of the war would have been aged around 42 in 1933. This means that Pugh's assertion that those who had bore the brunt of the war were aged 35-39 in 1933 is too narrow. It is more likely that those aged 38-45 in 1933 were the generation that served. Campbell had a different opinion to Pugh. He believed that the Legion was attractive to ex-servicemen, finding twelve in his sample of sixty-one.<sup>55</sup>

There is plenty of circumstantial evidence that the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanagnui region would appeal to ex-servicemen. Military rhetoric was used in the first public meeting in Wanganui, which was held on 26 April, the day after ANZAC Day. Dr Williams, one of the speakers, called on the people present to draw on the spirit of loyalty and self-sacrifice that animated the Army ranks during World War One.<sup>56</sup> Another factor that may have attracted ex-servicemen to the Legion was the influence of Sir Andrew Russell, who was a prominent Legionnaire. Russell had led the New Zealand Division on the Western Front and was National President of the Returned Servicemen Association in 1933.<sup>57</sup> He spoke at public meetings in Palmerston North,<sup>58</sup> Feilding<sup>59</sup> and Bulls<sup>60</sup> and had spoken at the ANZAC Day service in Wanganui,<sup>61</sup> the day before a Legion public meeting.

To assess whether the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui had a higher percentage of servicemen than might be found in the general population, the military records of local members were obtained, using the Auckland War Memorial Museum's Cenotaph data base. In the sample

---

<sup>54</sup> Paul Baker, *King and Country Call: New Zealanders, Conscription and the Great War*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988, p.15.

<sup>55</sup> Campbell, p.43-44.

<sup>56</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 27.4.33, p.10-11.

<sup>57</sup> Chris Pugsley, 'Russell, Andrew Hamilton 1868 - 1960'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 22 June 2007, URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>.

<sup>58</sup> *Manawatu Daily Times*, 9.8.33, p.7.

<sup>59</sup> *Feilding Star*, 10.8.33, p.5.

<sup>60</sup> *Rangitikei Argus*, 14.9.33, p.5.

<sup>61</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 26.4.33, p.3.

there are seventy-three male members whose age is known. Nineteen were too young to have served in World War One. This number includes two members who were 21 in 1918. Because the age of conscription was 21 they would almost certainly have been called up if they had been old enough before the end of the war. Either they were too young or the war ended before they could see active service. At the other end, eleven were too old to be likely to have served in World War One. These are men aged 46 and over in 1918. Conscription went up to age 45, but men close to their 45th birthdays were generally not put on active service.<sup>62</sup> Despite this, there is one man in this age group who served in World War One. This leaves forty-three members, or 59%, who were in the age group that could have served in World War One. Eighteen of these men served in World War One and two other men in this group had seen active military service, one in the South African War, the other as a volunteer in the years before World War One. In New Zealand about 40% of men of military age in the period 1914-18 served in World War One.<sup>63</sup> Because about 12% of these men were killed, the proportion of men of their age group who served dropped to around 28% of men after the war.<sup>64</sup> By contrast, in the Legion membership sample 44 % of the men of military age served in World War One, much higher than the national average. This figure does not include the two men who served prior to World War One. Furthermore, returned servicemen had a high post-war mortality rate, so it is possible that by 1933 their proportion of the general population had dropped even lower.<sup>65</sup> Figure 2 provides further evidence that the Legion was attractive to servicemen locally, the age group 40-45 was a smaller proportion of the population than it should have been, suggesting that this was group hit hardest by the war. Yet it is this age group that is one of the largest represented in the Legion. The New Zealand Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui was certainly attractive to ex-servicemen.

---

<sup>62</sup> The most famous example of this Michael Joseph Savage who was conscripted in 1917 when he was 45, he was classified as fit only for 'home service'. Barry Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave: A biography of Michael Joseph Savage* Auckland: Penguin Books, 1986, p.97.

<sup>63</sup> Belich, p.96.

<sup>64</sup> These figures are from J.M. Winter, *The Experience of World War One*, London: Macmillan, 1988, p.207.

<sup>65</sup> Parsons, Gwen A., "The Many Derelicts of the War? Repatriation and Great War Veterans in Dunedin and Ashburton, 1918-1928", PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 2008, p.192.

By using genealogical tools, it has been possible to build a picture of what kind of people joined the legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region. The overall average age of members was 46.5 and the region contained a reasonable proportion of women members, more than had been found in previous studies. The largest occupation group of members was farming, but the number of professionals in the Legion is disproportionately high when compared to their presence in the community. The reasons people had for joining the Legion possibly included business interests, but also the desire often felt by professionals to represent the public interest. This is also reflected in the number of Legionnaires who were involved in other public service areas. The evidence from the Manawatu-Wanganui sample indicates that World War One veterans were over represented as members. Despite its intentions, the Legion does not seem to have appealed to all ages and creeds, but disproportionately to professional men and those who served in the war.



## Chapter Three

### 'Nation before Party': The issues that interested the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui

The New Zealand Legion was largely a response to depression conditions. The ideas and issues it promoted nationally were presented as solutions to the crisis that New Zealand faced. Reports of meetings and letters to the editor indicate that this was also the case in the Manawatu-Wanganui region. The most commonly discussed issue was parliamentary reform. The Legion was opposed to party politics and devised reforms to remove 'sectional interests' from Parliament. It was also interested in reforming local bodies, something that could have particular resonance at a local level. Because solutions to the Depression were the main driver, economic reforms also interested the Legion. Another issue that the Legion faced in the Manawatu-Wanganui region was defending itself from attacks, particularly by the left.

The perception that New Zealand was undergoing a national crisis in 1933 was important to the Legion. Allington believes that the riots of mid 1932 played a part in its formation.<sup>1</sup> Certainly the local Legion described itself initially as 'an emergency movement to meet a national crisis'.<sup>2</sup> Although this crisis was never named as the Depression, William Brown, Chairman of the Wanganui Legion, speaking at the first public meeting of the Legion in that city, referred to the country being 'perilously close to bankruptcy and financial and social chaos'<sup>3</sup> and went on to speculate that there was 'The possibility of a much more serious state of emergency'.<sup>4</sup> Speaking at Levin, Alan Free described the purpose of the Legion as meeting a national emergency.<sup>5</sup> Somewhat surprisingly when the crisis was mentioned, it was never explicitly tied to the alteration of the currency rate in January 1933. Instead it was framed as a problem of individual selfishness. John Gordon, speaking to the Ladies' Bridge Club in Palmerston North, said 'that the people were largely responsible for the

---

<sup>1</sup> Adam Allington, 'Gold Shirts in God's Own? The Extreme Right in New Zealand during the 1930s Depression' B.A. Honours Exercise, Victoria University of Wellington, 2009, p.19-20.

<sup>2</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 23.2.33, p.2.

<sup>3</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27.4.33, p.8; *Wanganui Herald*, 27.4.33, p.10-11.

<sup>4</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27.4.33, p.8; *Wanganui Herald*, 27.4.33, p.10-11.

<sup>5</sup> *Levin Daily Chronicle*, 5.6.33, p.7.

existing state of affairs',<sup>6</sup> echoing the circular 'Common Questions for Speakers', which was sent out by the Legion Head Office. Speakers were told that the people themselves were responsible for the present state of affairs, 'Because they have been pampered and live in artificial luxury...Because they are divided into sections each of which blames the other for its misfortunes...'<sup>7</sup> The idea that the country was divided was discussed regularly, particularly when referring to the present crisis. This was possibly an oblique reference to the exchange rate rise. Many critics of the rise argued that farmers' interests had been put before those of urban dwellers and the country was being divided.<sup>8</sup> Occasionally this division was presented as referring to class divides and class warfare,<sup>9</sup> but the general idea was that there were divisions, created by selfishness, which were aggravating the crisis.

The Legion argued that party politics and the current parliamentary system encouraged these divisions. In a meeting at Levin the opinion was expressed that town vs. country divide was accentuated by 'the activities of political parties'.<sup>10</sup> Because of this, the most common issue for the Legion in the Manawatu –Wanganui region was parliamentary reform. A letter to the editor of the *Manawatu Daily Times* from a member of the Legion said, 'The people of New Zealand are responsible for the present absurd system of government and the people themselves must rectify the position.'<sup>11</sup> The Legion claimed that being members of political parties meant MPs were unable to consider matters put before them in an unbiased manner.<sup>12</sup> According to William Brown, once the party whip was removed, Parliament would have 'men and women who have energy and understanding to enable them to deal with national problems, and who are completely and fully independent'.<sup>13</sup> Parliamentary reform and party politics were the most commonly mentioned issues in advertisements for meetings and in reports of what was said at them. It was a main point in the

---

<sup>6</sup> *Manawatu Daily Times*, 12.12.33, p.8; *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 13.12.33, p.5.

<sup>7</sup> Hawke's Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion, Papers, MSS & Archives A-38, file 2, folder 2, Special Collections, Auckland University Library.

<sup>8</sup> This was raised at exchange rate protest meetings in Palmerston North and Wanganui, *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 31.1.33, p.2 and *Wanganui Herald*, 1.2.33, p.11.

<sup>9</sup> Both Begg and Parry refer to it in when speaking in Wanganui, *Wanganui Herald*, 8.6.33, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> *Levin Daily Chronicle*, 15.7.33, p.6.

<sup>11</sup> *Manawatu Daily Times*, 8.8.33, p.8,

<sup>12</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 7.4.33, p.10.

<sup>13</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 27.4.33, p.10.

speeches Begg gave when he held public meetings in Wanganui and Palmerston North.<sup>14</sup> In advertisements, the Legion usually mentioned parliamentary reform in a general way, saying people should give their attention to electing men and women who would adhere to their promises<sup>15</sup> or saying that democratic institutions need defending.<sup>16</sup> At meetings the speakers were more prepared to attack political parties. At Aramoho, a suburb of Wanganui, the speaker called for the total abolition of the present party system of government and emphasised that this was the foundation rock on which the movement was building up its membership.<sup>17</sup> Fredrick Nathan, speaking in Rongotea, a country town near Palmerston North, opened with a denunciation of the present method of party government.<sup>18</sup> It was nearly always the party system that was attacked as the problem; it was portrayed by Legionnaires in the region as a direct manifestation of the selfishness of the nation.

To place the blame for the country's crisis at the feet of the party system was easy but to remain credible the Legion had to propose how it would 'secure a government composed of men and women of integrity'.<sup>19</sup> At this point the Legion hit the barrier that all anti-party, political groups, come up against. How can you reform parliament without forming a party and getting elected? The Legion had several ideas to try and overcome this obvious contradiction. Initially it talked about how they would educate the public. Brown described the education of the public as an important responsibility of the Legion.<sup>20</sup> Sir Andrew Russell, speaking at Bulls, said, 'One of the objectives of the Legion lay in educating people to go into questions of the day and then form a considered opinion on them.'<sup>21</sup> However, education is difficult if you don't have concrete policies to place before the public. As 1933 progressed, the Legion had more ideas for reforming Parliament. These were tinkering with the current system by reducing the size of parliament, having an elected cabinet, not

---

<sup>14</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 8.6.33, p.5; *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 9.8.33, p.12.

<sup>15</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 22.5.33, p.10.

<sup>16</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 5.8.33, p.8.

<sup>17</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 23.5.33, p.12.

<sup>18</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 14.9.33, p.10.

<sup>19</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 13.7.33, p.8.

<sup>20</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27.4.33, p.8.

<sup>21</sup> *Rangitikei Advocate*, 14.9.33, p.5.

necessarily on party lines, and electing the upper house. Some of these ideas were promoted by Fredrick Nathan in Palmerston North at two public meetings,<sup>22</sup> but there is no record of this occurring in Wanganui.

Possibly the most radical idea for parliamentary reform the Legion advocated was to change the electoral system to proportional representation (PR). The Legion newspaper, *National Opinion*, had articles discussing other countries' electoral systems and provided ideas on how branches could form study groups to consider PR.<sup>23</sup> However, there is no evidence that PR was mentioned in any public meetings of the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region. This may be because the form of PR the Legion was proposing was similar to Single Transferable Vote, a complicated method to describe in a public meeting. On the other hand, there is some evidence that PR may have been discussed in Palmerston North branch meetings. Reports of meetings in August<sup>24</sup> and September mention that government reform was discussed, and PR was specifically mentioned in September.<sup>25</sup> In November John Stewart, managing director of *National Opinion*, visited Palmerston North and discussed political reform with members.<sup>26</sup> Parliamentary reform was the most common and consistent issue mentioned by the Legion in the area although it appears that Palmerston North was more interested in PR than Wanganui.

The Legion was also concerned with the issue of local body reform. In the 1930s New Zealand had many more local councils and boards than it does now. The Legion proposed to amalgamate some of these, and return to the provincial system of government, abandoned in 1875.<sup>27</sup> The idea behind local body reform was to remove some of the bureaucracy that came with having many small local boards. In the Manawatu-Wanganui Legion there was reasonable experience of local body politics, with 17% of the sample of members compiled for this study having served on a local board of some type. Despite this, the issue only gained traction in the Manawatu

---

<sup>22</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 8.9.33, p.8; *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 14.9.33, p.10.

<sup>23</sup> *National Opinion*, 21.9.33, p.9; *National Opinion*, 3.5.34, p.14.

<sup>24</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 3.8.33 p.8.

<sup>25</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 8.9.33 p.8.

<sup>26</sup> *National Opinion*, 30.11.33 p.14.

<sup>27</sup> Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin, 2003, p.232.

area. Fredrick Nathan mentioned the large number of local bodies, and the inefficiencies they caused, in a speech to the Levin Legion.<sup>28</sup> At the end of 1933 a dispute arose in the Manawatu area between the Palmerston North Borough Council and the Manawatu-Oroua Power Board over the rating charged to the Palmerston North area. The Borough Council took the Power Board to court and Fredrick Nathan referred to this in the speech he gave a public meeting in Rongotea as an example of why reform of local bodies was needed.<sup>29</sup> Local body reform was also mentioned as one of the topics for discussion at a November meeting of members in Palmerston North,<sup>30</sup> where the court case may have helped this issue gain traction. There could be several reasons why local body reform did not receive the same attention as national political reforms. Local councils were viewed more favourably than national government in relation to the Depression. In the local press the Government was blamed for the crisis, but local councils were the relievers of distress because they controlled the relief programmes. They were not always seen as beneficent, but they were seen trying to help the unemployed at a local level. The fact that a number of members of the Legion locally were involved in local bodies may have also muted criticism. The more distant national government was an easier target for the problems caused by the depression.

The Legion may have viewed the cause of the Depression in New Zealand to be largely political but they also considered the economic system to be an issue. The Legion has been portrayed as being in favour of a free market,<sup>31</sup> yet from the beginning they declared themselves to be 'convinced that a planned economic system is necessary'.<sup>32</sup> The question of how New Zealand's economy could be reformed was a particularly live issue in Wanganui. The Gonville Centre held a meeting at which an address on 'Economics' was presented by Eric Wills,<sup>33</sup> the commerce teacher at

---

<sup>28</sup> *Levin Daily Chronicle*, 8.7.33, p.6.

<sup>29</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 14.9.33, p.10.

<sup>30</sup> *Manawatu Daily Times*, 14.11.33, p.8.

<sup>31</sup> For example, Tony Simpson, *The Slump: The Thirties Depression: Its Origins and Aftermath*, Auckland: Penguin, 1990, p.68, describes the Legion as wanting an end to state intervention in business.

<sup>32</sup> Hawke's Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion, Papers, MSS & Archives A-38, file 1, folder 1, Special Collections, Auckland University Library.

<sup>33</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 16.8.33 p.8.

Wanganui Collegiate.<sup>34</sup> They also held a lively discussion on the Reserve Bank, which concluded 'that the measure might well provide a much needed stabilising effect on the currency, but it should be thoroughly weighed before being embarked upon'.<sup>35</sup> An idea that roused a lot of interest in Wanganui was the proposal for a scripted stamp plan. The proposal was to try to increase employment and the circulation of money by using a form of promissory note rather than cash to pay wages. The *Wanganui Chronicle* played a large role in publicising this issue. A large article appeared in the newspaper explaining the idea<sup>36</sup> and it also printed the information booklet that was sent to all branches of the Legion.<sup>37</sup> The publication of the details of the scripted stamp plan stimulated several letters to the editors of both Wanganui newspapers. While one criticised the scheme as inflationary,<sup>38</sup> another called it 'ingenious'<sup>39</sup> and a letter from a well-known Social Credit supporter pointed out that the Legion's policies were similar to Major Douglas's ideas.<sup>40</sup> Despite local interest in the scripted stamp plan, the Legion in Wanganui was at pains to point out it was only an idea, and not official Legion policy.<sup>41</sup> Another unconventional economic idea that was national Legion policy had a mixed reception in the Manawatu-Wanganui region. In October 1933 Begg announced his 'plan' for stimulating the New Zealand economy. It included accepting unemployed immigrants from Britain to pay off New Zealand overseas debt and increase New Zealand's population, thereby boosting internal consumption. Previously the *Wanganui Chronicle* had been very favourable to the Legion, but it ran an article that called the plan 'crude and fantastic'. The 'Begg Plan' was discussed in Palmerston North when John Stewart, manager of the *National Opinion* visited.<sup>42</sup> *National Opinion* reported that the plan 'aroused considerable interest' and Stewart's talk,

---

<sup>34</sup> Don and Bruce Hamilton, *Never a Footstep Back; a History of the Wanganui Collegiate School, 1854-2003*, Wanganui: Board of Trustees, Wanganui Collegiate School, 2003, p.1529.

<sup>35</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 26.9.33, p.6.

<sup>36</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 2.8.33, p.11.

<sup>37</sup> Hawke's Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion, Papers, MSS & Archives A-38, file 1, folder 2, circular 6/2/63, Special Collections, Auckland University Library.

<sup>38</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 5.8.33, p.8.

<sup>39</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 28.7.33, p.3.

<sup>40</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 5.8.33, p.11.

<sup>41</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 25.7.33, p.6; *Wanganui Herald*, 25.7.33, p.5.

<sup>42</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 11.11.33, p.2.

which contained full details of the plan, was 'enthusiastically received'.<sup>43</sup> This was the only recorded discussion on economic issues in Palmerston North, but there was an article published in *National Opinion* about road and rail transport between Palmerston North and Wellington. The article accused the Government of running trains at a loss, thereby putting the livelihood of road carriers at risk.<sup>44</sup> The author was not named but it may well have been written by a Palmerston North Legion member as a report from the Palmerston North branch mentions that there was an article from one of its members in *National Opinion*.<sup>45</sup> Economics appears to have been a lively issue for the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui area.

Another issue that the Legion faced in the Manawatu-Wanganui region was defending itself from attacks. In Palmerston North these tended to come from Labour supporters whereas in Wanganui it was Social Creditors who were the main critics. In each case the content was similar. The most common attacks centred on the supposed secretive nature of the Legion and questioned who was backing it. In Wanganui the Legion felt it necessary to state more than once that the Legion was not 'a secret society, or a townsman's move to gain some advantage over country people or a bankers' organisation to squash currency reform'.<sup>46</sup> At a meeting in Levin the question of whether the Associated Banks were financing the Legion was asked.<sup>47</sup> In Palmerston North there was a letter-writing campaign to the *Manawatu Evening Standard* that coincided with Begg's visit on 8 August. It was led by a well-known Labour supporter, Victor Christensen. The first letter appeared on 5 August. It was anonymous and accused the Legion of being secretive, asking 'Has the Legion a platform and if so are there any planks in the platform?'<sup>48</sup> The next letter appeared on 7 August and was signed by Victor Christensen. He accused the Legion of being elitist and secretive. He also made use of D.G. McMillan's pamphlet, *The New Zealand Legion: What is it, what are its objectives*, lifting much of his

---

<sup>43</sup> *National Opinion*, 30.11.33, p.14.

<sup>44</sup> *National Opinion*, 10.8.33, pp.8-9.

<sup>45</sup> *National Opinion*, 5.10.33, p.7.

<sup>46</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 23.5.33, p.12; Similar wording, *Wanganui Herald*, 24.5.33, p.12.

<sup>47</sup> *Levin Daily Chronicle*, 8.7.33, p.8.

<sup>48</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 5.8.33, p.2.

criticism from it.<sup>49</sup> Christensen continued to write critical letters through August, once accusing the Legion of wanting a dictatorship.<sup>50</sup> Letters written in defence of the Legion were all anonymous. There were also critics of the Legion in Wanganui. C.L. White, a Social Credit supporter, was the most regular writer, but anonymous writers also questioned the Legion on its activities and motives.<sup>51</sup> In Wanganui the leadership was active in rebuttal, but it is difficult to know if the Palmerston North leadership played an active role in defending the Legion, due to the anonymous nature of the pro-Legion letters to the Palmerston North newspapers.<sup>52</sup>

The New Zealand Legion was formed as a reaction to the Depression. The fact that it was trying to offer solutions to that crisis meant that finding such solutions drove the issues they were interested in. The main issue for the Legion in the Manawatu- Wanganui was electoral reform, especially the removal of party politics and modifying Parliament to make it more efficient. Conversely local body reform seems to have been a live topic only in Manawatu. Economic issues were also a recurrent topic for the local Legion with a Wanganui centre holding discussion evenings on the current economic crisis, while some of the Legion's more unconventional economic ideas became issues in Wanganui and Palmerston North. The Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui also had to spend time defending itself from attacks. These tended to come from Labour and Social Credit supporters. The issues that interested the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region reflected those that the Legion promoted nationally, in that they were focused on proposed solutions to the Depression.

---

<sup>49</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 7.8.33, p.2.

<sup>50</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 21.8.33, p.8.

<sup>51</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 10.6.33, p.8; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 13.6.33, p.6; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 16.6.33, p.5; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 24.6.33, p.8.

<sup>52</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 13.6.33, p.10; *Wanganui Herald*, 4.7.33, p.9; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 8.9.33, p.6; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 8.7.33 p.8; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 26.6.33 p.6; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 17.6.33 p.9; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 14.6.33 p.6.

## Chapter Four

### 'The Legion is still alive': The decline and political legacy of the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui

The Legion had begun strongly and continued to gain membership through the winter of 1933, but by 1934 interest was waning. It is difficult to know when the Legion branches stopped functioning in the Manawatu-Wanganui region. There were no press reports of local branch meetings in 1934, but there is evidence of branch activity. In Wanganui there were strains between Legionnaires and Begg's immigration plan alienated members. The very active Chairman stepped down in October 1933 and the last report of a legion meeting appeared in the press in December 1933. The Palmerston North Chairman also stepped down in late 1933. However, the branch does not appear to have suffered from a lack of leadership and was active during 1934. With the fading of the Legion, many ex-Legionnaires turned their interest in public life and politics to other groups.

By September 1933 there were signs that the initial enthusiasm for the Legion in Wanganui was wavering. A letter to the editor of the *Wanganui Chronicle*, published on 6 September 1933, asked, 'Can you inform me if the movement is still alive in Wanganui?'<sup>1</sup> William Brown, the Chairperson of the Wanganui branch replied, assuring the writer that 'the Legion is still alive'.<sup>2</sup> At the same time a very public disagreement broke out between two prominent local members. Hugh Jenkins and Ulric Williams had been foundation members of the Wanganui Legion, sharing the speaking at the first public meeting in April 1933.<sup>3</sup> These men began debating the conditions at the nearby work camp for the unemployed men building the Parapara Road. Jenkins maintained that the men at the camp had nothing to complain about, that the conditions were adequate. Williams believed Jenkins to be wrong and thought the conditions at the camp caused moral deterioration of the men.<sup>4</sup> At one point Williams challenged Jenkins to debate the matter publicly.<sup>5</sup> In October 1933 a

---

<sup>1</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 6.9.33, p.6.

<sup>2</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 8.9.33, p.6.

<sup>3</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 27.4.33, p.10-11.

<sup>4</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 29.9.33, p.12.

<sup>5</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 22.9.33, p.9.

stinging criticism of Begg's immigration plan was published in the *Wanganui Chronicle*. Written by R. A. Wilson, it ended by saying 'Our salvation does not lie in schemes like those proposed Dr. Begg.'<sup>6</sup> Hugh Jenkins was the editor of the *Wanganui Chronicle*, so the article's appearance in his paper suggests that he was ideologically parting ways with the Legion. Another member of the Wanganui Legion, Henry Veitch, praised the Begg plan in an article which appeared in *National Opinion*.<sup>7</sup> These disagreements indicate that the Legion in Wanganui was fracturing. The Legion in Wanganui had begun strongly but by September 1933 there were falling out between members and disagreements with Legion policy.

It seems from press evidence that Wanganui's early strength was partly due to the strong leadership shown by the branch Chairman, William Brown. He was a very active speaker<sup>8</sup> and wrote letters to the editors of both Wanganui newspapers defending and promoting the Legion.<sup>9</sup> In October 1933 Brown stepped down as Chairman of the Wanganui Division due to ill health.<sup>10</sup> The fact that the report of his resignation in *National Opinion* does not name a successor suggests that Wanganui had been unable to find another leader. This corresponds with what happened in the Hastings Centre, whose leader also resigned in October 1933.<sup>11</sup> He was not replaced and this led to the centre going backwards.<sup>12</sup> The last press report of Legion activity in Wanganui appeared as an advertisement for a meeting of members in early December 1933.<sup>13</sup> There was no further mention of local Legion activity in either Wanganui newspaper. However, as part of a membership drive in 1934, *National Opinion* published the names of local secretaries. Wanganui appears on this list, which appears in 21 June 1934 and was carried for five issues. *National Opinion* folded in September

---

<sup>6</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 11.10.33, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> *National Opinion*, 18.1.33, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> He was the most regular speaker at reports of meetings, for example, Taihape, Marton, Upokongaro, Waverly.

<sup>9</sup> He wrote 4 letters to editor, *Wanganui Chronicle*, 8.7.33, p.8; 8.9.33, p.6; *Wanganui Herald*, 13.6.33, p.10, 4.7.33, p.9.

<sup>10</sup> *National Opinion*, 19.10.33, p.7.

<sup>11</sup> Hawke's Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion, Papers, MSS & Archives A-38, file 5, folder 1, Morrison to Tonkin, Special Collections, Auckland University Library.

<sup>12</sup> Hawke's Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion, Papers, MSS & Archives A-38, file 2, folder 3, Russell to Head Office, Special Collections, Auckland University Library.

<sup>13</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 7.12.33, p.1.

1934, but in November the Legion attempted to resurrect it with a newspaper called *Legion*. It ran to four editions, three of which contained lists of contacts for those wishing to join the Legion.

Wanganui does not appear on those lists, which indicates that the Legion branch was inactive by the end of 1934. It is difficult to know when the Legion finally closed in Wanganui, but the resignation of the active Chairman and subsequent press evidence suggests that it was inactive from the end of 1933 and had collapsed by November 1934.

Palmerston North also had a change in leadership in late 1933. Fredrick Nathan, the local branch chairman resigned his position, also due to ill health. A report of his resignation appeared in *National Opinion* and the new Chairman was named as David Wylie. *National Opinion* also reported that the secretary, Kenneth Chamberlain, was taking a long trip to Australia and was being replaced temporarily.<sup>14</sup> It seems that the Palmerston North Legion had the leadership depth to be able to replace two office holders. As in Wanganui there were no reports in the press of Palmerston North Legion meetings in 1934. On the other hand, there is more evidence that the Palmerston North branch was active. It contributed in July to the 'News from Divisions' section of *National Opinion*, describing itself as 'quietly active'.<sup>15</sup> Palmerston North appeared on the list of local secretaries to contact for membership enquires, with Chamberlain's name reappearing as the secretary in July 1934, suggesting that Palmerston North Legion still had enough life to attract him back after he returned from Australia. Palmerston North did appear in the list of contacts published in *Legion*, indicating that branch was still functioning as late as November 1934.<sup>16</sup> There is another indication that the Palmerston North Legion may have been active even into 1935. In the lead up to the 1935 election, the Legion published a list of recommended candidates in the *Evening Post*. It recommended A.E. Mansford<sup>17</sup> for the Palmerston North electorate, suggesting that Legion Head

---

<sup>14</sup> *National Opinion*, 30.11.33, p.14.

<sup>15</sup> *National Opinion*, 7.6.34, p.14.

<sup>16</sup> *Legion*, 1.11.34, p.8; *Legion*, 16.11.34, p.3.

<sup>17</sup> Mansford was the Mayor of Palmerston North 1931-1947. Michael C. Pugh, 'The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression', M.A., University of Auckland, 1969, p.104, states that the Mayor of Palmerston North was a Legion member. I have been unable to substantiate this claim.

Office thought there was still interest in the Legion in the Palmerston North area.<sup>18</sup> It is difficult to tell when the Legion stopped functioning in Palmerston North, but there are indications that it was active during 1934, and possibly into 1935.

It is reasonable to assume that the Legion was moribund in the Manawatu-Wanganui region by the end of 1935. Even though the Legion had ceased to exist, some ex-legionnaires continued with their involvement in political life. In Palmerston North three ex-legionnaires became city councillors. In 1938 Walter Black was elected to council, followed by Frank Opie in 1941 and Kenneth Chamberlain in 1944.<sup>19</sup> The same pattern does not appear in Wanganui, with no ex-Legionnaires being elected to council in the years after 1935, though it is possible that some stood but were not elected.<sup>20</sup>

Another area of political life in which ex-legionnaires became involved was the National Party. It was not possible to find records of the formation of the National Party in the Wanganui area, but Henry Veitch, an ex-Legionnaire, stood as the National Candidate for the Wanganui electorate in 1938<sup>21</sup> and Hugh Jenkins attended the initial meetings of the Dominion Council of the National Party<sup>22</sup> and spoke at an open-air meeting of National Party in Wanganui.<sup>23</sup> In the Palmerston North branch of the National Party there were three ex-Legionnaires, one of whom, John Gordon, was selected as the National candidate for the 1941 election, which was cancelled due to the War.<sup>24</sup> In the smaller country towns that had Legion branches there were ex-Legionnaires who went on to hold leadership positions in the National Party. In Bunnythorpe an ex-Legionnaire was

---

<sup>18</sup> *Evening Post*, 25.11.35, p.2.

<sup>19</sup> I.R. Matheson, *Council and Community: 125 Years of Local Government in Palmerston North 1877-2002*, Palmerston North: Palmerston North City Library, 2003, pp.94-97.

<sup>20</sup> Information on Wanganui councillors supplied in an email from Simon Bloor, archivist at Whanganui District Council.

<sup>21</sup> Don and Bruce Hamilton, *Never a Footstep Back; a History of the Wanganui Collegiate School, 1854-2003*, Wanganui: Board of Trustees, Wanganui Collegiate School, 2003, p.271.

<sup>22</sup> Pugh, p.199.

<sup>23</sup> *Evening Post*, 11.1.38, p.14.

<sup>24</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 4.3.41, p.2, 22.5.46, p.5; *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 13.8.41, p.8, the other two ex-legionnaires were Frank Opie and Gordon Rowe.

the chairman of the local National Party,<sup>25</sup> as was the Chairman of Rongotea<sup>26</sup> and Pohangina Valley, which also had a committee member who was an ex-Legionnaire.<sup>27</sup> Two ex-Legionnaires were involved in the Manawatu electorate branch of the National Party. Quentin Wilson was the President and Leonard Wall was on the finance committee.<sup>28</sup> After Legion activity ceased, several ex-Legionnaires continued their involvement in political life.

The attraction of ex-Legionnaires to the National Party presents a new reason why people were involved in the Legion. It seems that Legionnaires were generally interested in politics, and particularly on the right. It is possible that part of the motivation for joining the Legion was political ambition. The continued political activity and success of some ex-Legionnaires suggests that they may have seen the Legion as the political force that would replace the Liberal-Reform coalition. They may well have joined the Legion in the hope that it would provide a credible right-wing alternative to Labour, but also be a medium for their own political ideals and ambitions. When the Legion crumbled toward the end of 1934, they looked for other political vehicles, and that space was eventually filled by the National Party.

There is no conclusive evidence as to when the Legion ceased to operate in the Manawatu-Wanganui region. It would seem that Palmerston North continued to function longer than Wanganui, which was beset by division over policy and lack of leadership. Some ex-Legionnaires continued their political activities. In Palmerston North three became city councillors, and the National Party seems to have provided an outlet for those ex-Legionnaires who still had an interest in politics. A number of ex-Legionnaires in the Manawatu-Wanganui region went on to hold office in the National Party. This suggests that their motivation for joining the Legion may owe something to political ambition as in the more famous examples of Keith Holyoake and Sidney Holland.<sup>29</sup> The life

---

<sup>25</sup> Allan McKenzie, *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 3.5.39, p.10.

<sup>26</sup> Albert Burgess, *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 22.6.37, p.3.

<sup>27</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 17.6.38, p.5.

<sup>28</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 10.5.39, p.2.

<sup>29</sup> Tony Simpson, *The Slump: The Thirties Depression: Its Origins and Aftermath*, Auckland: Penguin, 1990, p.68.

of the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region was about two years, but Legionnaires continued to be active in political life.

## Conclusion

In the organisation's own pamphlet, *Light on the Legion*, the author suggested 'some persons may feel suspicious about the New Zealand Legion...they may have a notion that the Legion will flash like a comet in the national sky and suddenly disappear.'<sup>1</sup> In the Manawatu-Wanganui region the Legion was a flash in the sky. Despite good attendances at interest meetings and reports of large numbers of membership cards being signed, the Legion seems to have largely vanished from the region by the end of 1934.

The exchange rate crisis of January 1933 has been used to explain the formation of the Legion.<sup>2</sup> Protests against the rise in the rate were certainly held in both Palmerston North and Wanganui, with Wanganui's protest meeting being the greater. Subsequently, the Legion began strongly in Wanganui. During Campbell-Begg's two visits to Wanganui, in early March 1933, he was able to set up a division,<sup>3</sup> which ran a public meeting on 26 April.<sup>4</sup> Begg had to visit Palmerston North three times to achieve the same result<sup>5</sup> and there is no record of the Manawatu Division holding a public meeting similar to that in Wanganui. From this, it does appear that the exchange rate crisis was instrumental in the formation of the Legion, but it was not the only factor. Indeed, the eventual head of the Manawatu Division, Fredrick Nathan, was in favour of the exchange rate rise,<sup>6</sup> suggesting that the formation of the Legion in the area was not just related to protest on that issue. The general sense of crisis, brought about by the Depression, also played a role and 'the crisis' was often mentioned at Legion meetings. In Wanganui the sense of political crisis may have been greater

---

<sup>1</sup> Hawke's Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion, Papers, MSS & Archives A-38, file 1, folder 4, *Light on the Legion*, Special Collections, Auckland University Library, p.5.

<sup>2</sup> Michael C. Pugh, 'The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression', M.A., University of Auckland, 1969, p.188; Gerard Campbell, 'The New Zealand Legion in Otago 1933-1935' B.A. Honours, University of Otago, 1986, p.6.

<sup>3</sup> New Zealand Legion, Hawke's Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion Papers, MSS & Archives, A-38, File 1, Folder 1, 'Itinerary in forming N.Z Legion', Special Collections, University of Auckland Library.

<sup>4</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 27.4.33, pp.10-11.

<sup>5</sup> New Zealand Legion, Hawke's Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion Papers, MSS & Archives, A-38, File 1, Folder 1, 'Itinerary in forming N.Z Legion', Special Collections, University of Auckland Library.

<sup>6</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 31.1.33, p.2.

because a political vacuum had been created on the right due to the selection of W.A. Veitch, a left-leaning politician, as the Coalition candidate in the 1931 election.<sup>7</sup>

The names of eighty-five members of the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region were obtained from local newspapers. By using genealogical tools it was possible to discover the age, gender, occupation, and features of the public lives of these members. It is impossible to characterise the typical Legionnaire, but there are some aspects of the membership sample that stand out. There were a high percentage of men aged 40-44 when compared with their cohort in the local community. There were more women involved in the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui when compared with previous studies of membership.<sup>8</sup> Farming was the most common occupation of Legionnaires, but professionals accounted for a large proportion of members and were vastly over-represented when compared with their presence in the region. Legion members were also disproportionately involved in local body politics and many were active in service groups. The membership sample contained a much larger share of ex-servicemen than would be found in the general population, so the Legion in the area clearly appealed those who had served in World War One. We can only speculate on why people joined the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui, but the large number of professionals and those already involved in some form of public service points to members' desire to serve the community and alleviate the Depression.

The Depression was central to the issues that the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region focused on. It looked to the reform of Parliament, particularly the removal of party politics, as the answer to the crisis caused by the Depression. Local body reform and economic issues were also discussed, including responses to policies put out by Legion Head Office. In addition the Legion spent some time defending itself from attacks, which came mainly from Labour and Social Credit supporters.

---

<sup>7</sup> K.L. Stewart 'The Ballance Tradition and its Permeation in Wanganui', M.A. Thesis, Massey University, 1970, p.103.

<sup>8</sup> Campbell, pp.38-52; Pugh, p.108.

Despite its strong start, the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region had a life of only about two years. It is difficult to know when branches stopped meeting, but there is evidence to suggest that Wanganui was inactive by the end of 1934. It is possible that Palmerston North continued to be active for slightly longer, but by 1935 the New Zealand Legion had become moribund in the region.

Although the Legion ceased to function, its members continued their political activity. In Palmerston North several ex-Legionnaires became city councillors. Ex-Legionnaires also became involved in the National Party: two former members were selected to stand as National Party candidates in the region, and other members held office within local National Party branches. It seems that those New Zealand Legion members who still wished to be active in politics after the Legion folded found a home within the National Party.

One of the most enduring questions about the Legion concerns its relationship to fascism. Some contemporary commentators, particularly those from the left, believed the Legion had fascist overtones,<sup>9</sup> although accusations of fascism have often been used by the left as a term of abuse rather than a considered judgement.<sup>10</sup> Pugh rejected the idea that the Legion could be called a fascist movement,<sup>11</sup> but questions about the Legion's relationship with fascism have been raised again in recent research.<sup>12</sup> Yet difficulties remain when assessing the fascist nature of a movement. There have been many attempts at distilling a definition of fascism, but even when individual points are extracted there are some points that were part of the more general interwar political milieu.

Many non-fascist political parties contained some of the principles we associate with fascism, like

---

<sup>9</sup> The best example of this is D.G. McMillan, *New Zealand Legion: What is it what are its objects*, Oamaru: Mail Office, 1933, in which the Legion is compared to 'Hitlerism'.

<sup>10</sup> Roger Eatwell, 'Universal fascism? Approaches and Definitions' in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, (ed), *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2001, p.16.

<sup>11</sup> Pugh, p.190.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Allington, 'Gold Shirts in God's Own? The Extreme Right in New Zealand during the 1930s Depression' B.A. Honours, Victoria University of Wellington, 2009; Matthew Cunningham, 'Conservative Protest or Conservative Radicalism? The New Zealand Legion in Comparative Context' *Journal of New Zealand Studies* (publication planned for 2011).

anti-communism, nationalism and radical solutions to crisis in capitalism.<sup>13</sup> It is perhaps more fruitful to assess the Legion in terms of what it had in common with recognised fascist groups, rather than provide an absolute yes or no answer to the question of whether it should be defined as 'fascist'.

Reflecting on what is now known about the New Zealand Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui region, there are several aspects that it had in common with groups that embraced the fascist label. One of the most obvious is the large number of World War One veterans that were members of the Legion. Michael Mann studied the membership of fascist groups in an attempt to find what the members had in common. The most commonly shared trait among the members was being a soldier or a veteran.<sup>14</sup> The Legion was also intended to be a mass movement and the numbers that attended meetings were comparatively large when compared to the population of towns they were held in. Another feature that the Legion had in common with fascist groups was its goal of reforming the political system. Eatwell describes this characteristic as part of the radical nature of fascist groups.<sup>15</sup> The Legion's radical side was also expressed in its economic policies. The Legion was in favour of a planned economy and believed in taking policies from the left and the right,<sup>16</sup> which was part of its drive to create national unity. Both of these aspects are shared with fascist groups. There are features of fascism missing from the Legion, most obviously the Legion didn't use military symbolism, like uniforms, and it lacked a strong, charismatic leader and leadership principle. Stanley Payne attempts to distinguish other right-wing groups from truly fascist groups.<sup>17</sup> Under his classifications the Legion would be described as radical right, which is similar to the description that Matthew Cunningham reached in his recent work, calling the Legion an expression of

---

<sup>13</sup> Larsen, p.727.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.27.

<sup>15</sup> Eatwell, p.34.

<sup>16</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, 29.4.33, p.3, carried an article written by a Wellington Legion member, a Mr Leicester. As part of the argument for political reform he stated that Labour has good policies but had been unable to enact them due to being in opposition.

<sup>17</sup> Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995, chapter one covers how Payne distinguishes between right-wing groups.

conservative radicalism.<sup>18</sup> From this study of the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui area it appears that it did have some characteristics in common with fascism and the Legion was far more politically radical than Pugh portrayed it.

Another consideration is whether the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui area was influenced by fascist-leaning groups in other countries. There is no evidence that there was direct contact between any overseas groups and the Legion in the area. However, it is apparent that the Legion in the area was aware of fascist-leaning groups overseas and the possible similarities between them and itself. Speaking in Marton, William Brown thought it necessary to state that the Legion 'was not a New Guard nor an Old Guard; it was not a Fascist body.'<sup>19</sup> Brown did admit to some overseas influence while speaking in Taihape where he mentioned a group similar to the Legion was started in Victoria 30 years ago and that went on to have success in elections.<sup>20</sup> Pugh was able to contact Eric Campbell, the former leader of the New Guard, the Australian organisation to which Brown was referring. Campbell remembered a New Zealand organisation contacted him during the Depression but it is unclear whether this was the Legion.<sup>21</sup> There appears to have been some awareness of similar overseas group among the Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui, but no evidence was found that there was any direct influence or contact between it and these groups. This does not mean, of course, that future local studies of the Legion may not discover such influences or contacts.

This study of the Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui area owes much to local newspapers. They provided not only a rich source of Legion activities but also additional information about Legionnaires. The other advantage of using local newspapers is the immersion in the news of the period. It is possible not only to gain information about the Legion, but what others were thinking

---

<sup>18</sup> Cunningham, p.7.

<sup>19</sup> *Rangitikei Argus*, 31.5.33, p.4.

<sup>20</sup> *Taihape Times*, 2.6.33, p.3.

<sup>21</sup> Pugh, p.208.

and writing about the politics of the time. This study also made extensive use of technology. The growing availability of primary historical material on the internet was invaluable.<sup>22</sup>

The Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui began as a conservative reaction to the Depression. During its brief period of political fame it drew in many prominent local citizens, yet, as elsewhere, it was unable to sustain its mix of right-wing politics and more radical policies.<sup>23</sup> The Legion may have flashed across the sky of the region like a bright comet, but a number of its members went on to be very active in the local National Party.

---

<sup>22</sup> As an example this study was given a late boost by the release of the *Evening Post*, up to 1945, on "Papers Past".

<sup>23</sup> Stanley Payne maintains in his description of radical right groups that they were weak because they found it harder to span across all classes and often alienated the ruling elite with their radical policies. Payne, p.17.

## Bibliography

### Primary Material

#### New Zealand Official Documents

*Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives,*

- |                 |                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| H-11b, 1930.    | Department of Labour Annual Report. |
| H-23b, 1930.    | Annual Sheep Returns.               |
| H-35 1931-1935. | Report of the Unemployment Board.   |

*Electoral Roll 1931*, Palmerston North; Oroua; Otaki; Manawatu; Rangitikei; Wanganui.

*Electoral Roll 1935*, Palmerston North; Oroua; Otaki; Manawatu; Rangitikei; Wanganui.

*New Zealand Official Year Book*, 42<sup>nd</sup> ed. Wellington: Government Printer 1934,

*Population Census 1936*, Wellington: Government Printer.

#### Pamphlets

*Light on the Legion*, Wellington, 1933.

McMillan D.G., *New Zealand Legion: What is it what are its objects*, Oamaru: Mail Office, 1933.

#### Newspapers

*Evening Post*, Wellington, 1932-1938.

*Feilding Star*, Feilding, 1933-1934.

*Levin Daily Chronicle*, Levin, 1933.

*Manawatu Daily Times*, Palmerston North, 1933-1934.

*Manawatu Evening Standard*, Palmerston North, 1926-1944.

*National Opinion*, Wellington, 1933-1934.

*Legion*, Wellington, 1934.

*Taihape Times*, Taihape, 1933.

*Rangitikei Argus*, Marton, 1933.

*Wanganui Herald*, Wanganui, 1933-34.

*Wanganui Chronicle*, Wanganui, 1933-34.

#### Websites

Ancestry

<http://www.ancestry.com.au>

Auckland War Memorial Museum Cenotaph Data Base

<http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/Cenotaph/locations.aspx>

Find My Past

<http://www.findmypast.co.uk>

Horowhenua District Council Cemeteries

<http://www.horowhenua.govt.nz/Online-Services/Cemetery-Search/>

Internal Affairs, Birth Death and Marriage online register

<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/home/>

Manawatu District Council Cemeteries

[http://www.mdc.govt.nz/asp/publicregisters.asp?level1=public\\_registers&level2=cemetery\\_search](http://www.mdc.govt.nz/asp/publicregisters.asp?level1=public_registers&level2=cemetery_search)

Palmerston North City Council Cemeteries.

<http://www.pncc.govt.nz/ServicesAndFacilities/OnlineServices/CemeteryAndCremationSearch.aspx?FirstNames=&LastName=opie&YOD=&CemteryID=0>

Shadows of time

<http://shadowsoftime.co.nz/university25.html>

Wellington City Council Cemeteries.

<http://www.wellington.govt.nz/services/cemeteries/search/search.php>

#### Miscellaneous

St John's Branch New Zealand Society of Genealogists, New Zealand WW1 Service Personnel and Reserves Index.

Stone's Street Directory, 1933.

## Secondary Material

### Books and Articles

- Abbott, George, *Maxwell Nukumarū: A History*, Wanganui: The Print Place, 1998.
- Attwell, Bruce, *The Wharves of Wanganui*, Wanganui: Hilltop Publishing, 2006.
- Baker, Paul, *King and Country Call: New Zealanders, Conscription and the Great War*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988.
- Bassett, Michael, *The Depression of the Thirties*, Auckland: Heinemann, 1967.
- Bates, Arthur P., *Focus on Wanganui*, Wanganui: Wanganui Newspapers Ltd, 1984.
- Begg, R. Campbell, *The Secret of the Knife*, Norwich: Jarrod, 1965.
- Belcher, J.P., *Wanganui 1856 to 1929*, Wanganui: Evans, Cobb & Sharpe, 1930.
- Belich, James, *Paradise Reforged*, Auckland: Penguin Press, 2001.
- Benson, Pamela, *History of Rongotea*, Palmerston North: Rongotea School Centennial Committee, 1981.
- Berggren, Lena, 'Swedish Fascism: Why Bother?', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37: 3 (2002), pp 395-417.
- Billens, Robert H., *From Swamp to City: Official Souvenir 1887-1937: Commemorating the Diamond Jubilee of the City 1937*, Palmerston North: K and B Print, 1937.
- Birch, Catherine and Audrey Cox, *Rowe Family History*, Palmerston North: Rowe Reunion Committee, 1999.
- Blinkhorn, Martin, *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-Century Europe*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990.
- Brewer, John D., 'Looking Back at Fascism: A Phenomenological Analysis of BUF Membership', *Sociological Review*, 32: 4 (1984), pp 742-60.
- Burdon, R. M., *The New Dominion*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1965.
- Byrnes, Giselle, (ed.) *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Chapple, L.J.B., and H.C. Veitch, *Wanganui*, Hawera: Hawera Star Publishing Company Ltd, 1939.

- Clevely, R. E., *Bunnythorpe and District*, Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1953.
- Cunningham, Matthew, 'Conservative Protest or Conservative Radicalism? The New Zealand Legion in Comparative Context' *Journal of New Zealand Studies* (publication planned for 2011).
- Dreaver, Anthony, *Levin: The Making of a Town*, Levin: Horowhenua District Council, 2006.
- Eatwell, Roger, *Fascism: A History*, London: Pimlico, 2003.
- Eatwell, Roger, 'Universal fascism? Approaches and Definitions' in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, (ed.), *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2001.
- Elenio, Paul, *Alla Fine Del Mondo - to the Ends of the Earth, a History of Italian Migration to the Wellington Region*, Wellington: Petone Settlers Museum and the Club Garibaldi, 1995.
- Feist E. and H.F. Richardson, *Bush, People and Pasture: The Story of the Waitotara County*, Wanganui: Waitotara County Centennial Committee, 1983.
- Fielding, Steven, 'Never a Gabriel over Whitehall: Fictional Representations of British Party Politics During the Mosley Era', *Contemporary British History*, 23: 4 (2009), pp 559-72.
- Gentile, Emilio, 'I Fasci Italiani All'Estero. The 'Foreign Policy' in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, (ed.), *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2001.
- Gibbons P.J., 'The Climate of Opinion', in Geoffrey W Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Griffin, Roger, *The Nature of Fascism*, London: Routledge, 1993.
- Gustafson, Barry, *From the Cradle to the Grave: A Biography of Michael Joseph Savage* Auckland: Penguin Books, 1986.
- Gustafson, Barry, *The First 50 Years: A History of the New Zealand National Party*, Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986.
- Hagemann, Albrecht, 'The Diffusion of German Nazism' in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, (ed.), *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2001.
- Hamilton, Don and Bruce, *Never a Footstep Back; A History of the Wanganui Collegiate School, 1854-2003*, Wanganui: Board of Trustees, Wanganui Collegiate School, 2003.
- Irvine, Peter (ed.), *Wanganui Collegiate School Register: from 1854 to 2003*, (7<sup>th</sup> ed.), Wanganui: Wanganui Collegiate Schools Old Boys and Old Girls Association, 2003.
- King, Michael, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin, 2003.
- Larsen, Stein Ugelvik, 'Was there Fascism outside Europe? Diffusion from Europe and domestic impulses' in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, (ed.), *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against*

- Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2001.
- Linehan, Thomas, *British Fascism, 1918-1939 : Parties, Ideology and Culture*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Mandle, W. F., 'The Leadership of the British Union of Fascists', *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 12: 3 (1966), pp 360-83.
- Mann, Michael, *Fascists*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Matheson, I. R., *The Birth of Palmerston North*, Palmerston North: Manawatu Standard, 1971.
- Matheson, I. R., *Council and Community: 125 Years of Local Government in Palmerston North 1877-2002*, Palmerston North: Palmerston North City Library, 2003.
- Monigatti, Rex, *Manufacturing in the Wellington Region 1895-1995*, Wellington: Wellington Manufacturers' Association, 1995.
- Olssen, Erik, 'Depression and the War' in Keith Sinclair (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Payne, Stanley G., *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.
- Perkins, John and Andrew Moore, 'Fascism in Interwar Australia' in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, (ed.), *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2001.
- Passmore, Kevin, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Petersen, G. C., *Palmerston North: A Centennial History*, Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1973.
- Pugh, Martin, *"Hurrah for the Blackshirts!": Fascists and Fascism in Britain between the Wars*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2005.
- Pugh, Michael C., 'The New Zealand Legion, 1932-1935', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 5: 1 (1971), pp.49-69.
- Pugsley, Chris. 'Russell, Andrew Hamilton 1868 - 1960'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 22 June 2007  
URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>
- Richardson, Len, 'Parties and Political Change', in Geoffrey W Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Roberts, Nigel, and Tim Bale 'Plus Ça Change...? Anti-Party Sentiment and Electoral Change: A New Zealand Case Study', *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 40: 2 (2002), pp.1-20.
- Scholefield, G.H., *Who's Who in New Zealand* (3<sup>th</sup> ed.), Wellington: L.T. Waking Ltd., 1932.

- Scholefield, G.H., *Who's Who in New Zealand* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), Wellington: L.T. Waking Ltd., 1944.
- Shennan, A. W. H., 'The Parliamentary Opposition to the Front Populaire and the Elections of 1936', *The Historical Journal*, 37: 3 (Sep 1984), pp 677-95.
- Simpson, Tony, *The Scrim-Lee Papers: C.G. Scrimgeour and John A. Lee Remember the Crisis Years 1930-1940*, Wellington: A.H. and A.W. Reed, 1976.
- Simpson, Tony, *The Slump: The Thirties Depression: Its Origins and Aftermath*, Auckland: Penguin, 1990.
- Simpson, Tony, *The Sugarbag Years*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Auckland: Godwit, 1997.
- Sinclair, Keith, *A History of New Zealand*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969.
- Smart, M.J.G. and A.P. Bates *The Wanganui Story*, Wanganui: Wanganui Newspapers Ltd, 1972.
- Tait, P. S., *In the Chair: The Public Life of Sir John Ormond*, Waipukurau: CHB Print, 1989.
- Thurlow, Richard, *Fascism in Britain : From Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts to the National Front*, London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1998.
- Trussell, Denys, *Fairburn*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1984.
- Umland, Andreas, 'Redefining the Concept of Generic Fascism', *European History Quarterly*, 39 (2009), pp.298-309.
- Wierzbicka, Cynthia, *The Wilson Story*, Palmerston North: Simon Printing Co., 1973.
- Wilson, R.A., *Bulls: A History of the Township*, Palmerston North: Keeling & Mundy, 1963.
- Winter, J.M., *The Experience of World War One*, London: Macmillan, 1988.
- Wright-St Clair, R.E., *Caring for People; Wanganui Hospital Board 1885-1985*, Wanganui: Wanganui Hospital Board Centennial Celebrations Committee, 1987.

#### Thesis and Research Exercises

- Allington, Adam, 'Gold Shirts in God's Own? The Extreme Right in New Zealand during the 1930s Depression' B.A. Honours Exercise, Victoria University of Wellington, 2009.
- Campbell, Gerard, 'The New Zealand Legion in Otago 1933-1935' B.A. Honours Exercise, University of Otago, 1986.
- Parsons, Gwen A., 'The Many Derelicts of the War'? Repatriation and Great War Veterans in Dunedin and Ashburton, 1918-1928', PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2008.
- Pugh, Michael C., 'The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression', M.A. thesis, University of Auckland, 1969.

Stewart, K.L., 'The Ballance tradition and its permeation in Wanganui', M.A. thesis, Massey University, 1970.

Watson, James, 'Crisis and Change : Economic Crisis and Technological Change between the World Wars, with Special Reference to Christchurch, 1926-36 ', PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, 1984.