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SUPPLY AND DEMAND IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT:
PATEA DISTRICT, 1872-1917.

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in History at Massey University.

Edward Martyn Clifford
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PREFACE

'Local government' is "that element of the whole structure of government which is concerned essentially with the administration of affairs of a peculiarly local significance."¹ The definition given in An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, broad as it is, identifies certain local institutions as being outside the sphere of local government. These bodies include education authorities, domain boards and cemetery trusts.² I, however, deviate from this interpretation to include such institutions within the scope of a local government study. Domain boards, cemetery trusts and education authorities, like other units of local government, owe their origin, powers and functions to some New Zealand statute and, thus, cannot be omitted on that count. Also, in many instances, domain boards or cemetery trusts, and territorial local authorities, such as county and borough councils and town boards, were one and the same. This, in itself, suggests that domain and cemetery management was an integral part of the local government system. Domains, cemeteries and schools were facets of the social environment to be provided by local authorities, and cannot be divorced from local government as such.

In the past, local government has not attracted a fraction of the attention from history and political science researchers that central government has. This lack of interest is partially attributable to previous treatment of local government topics by commentators and researchers. Those studies that have been made in the field of local government in New Zealand have been primarily concerned with the powers and functions of local authorities. This has tended to establish a stereo-typed picture of local authorities as dull, almost lifeless, parochial administrative institutions, levying rates on the community in order to perform fundamental but monotonous tasks such as road and footpath formation and maintenance, and the provision of drainage facilities. A chapter or two on local government is invariably found in local histories, which, while important to a total understanding of any country's history, tend to be very parochial and often tedious. Thus, the local government section is usually, likewise, 'bogged down' in local details concerning

1. A.H. McIntock (ed.), An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, three volumes, Wellington, 1966, I, p.841.

2. *ibid.*

roads and bridges, reservoirs and rubbish dumps. Only recently have researchers³ turned to another aspect of local government, that is, the personalities involved in local government institutions.

This thesis combines something of both approaches in an examination of local government within a particular geographical area. While the study revolves around the functions and powers of various local bodies, the dominant theme running through the thesis is the question of demand and response. What did the settlers demand of their local authorities, and what was the nature of the response they received from those institutions? Did certain needs receive priority, and how effective were local authorities in catering for these needs and aspirations? Naturally, a certain amount of local detail has to be included in such a study, but whenever appropriate, local developments have been placed in a New Zealand-wide context. This relationship between colonial trends in local government and the situation in one particular region of the colony is reinforced by the treatment of a number of ideas which, while contributing to the central theme, are also worthy of individual consideration. These include centralization and decentralization of governmental administration, the local government 'system' of 1876, local government and the 'long depression', 'the administrative revolution' during the 1890s, town-country relations, local government reform, and personalities. These ideas provide a framework within which to discuss settler aspirations and demands, and the local bodies' responses to these.

A much greater amount of research into local government in different areas of the colony is needed before an adequate evaluation of local government in New Zealand could be attempted. In the past, critics of New Zealand local government have been too ready to base their conclusions on evidence found in official government sources, without examining the evidence to be found in the country's newspapers, and in individual local authorities' archives. The viewpoint of the centre has

3. K.C. McDonald, City of Dunedin: A Century of Civic Enterprise, Dunedin, 1965; Peter T. Faid, "North Otago - The Electors and the Elect. A Study of Local Government", unpublished M.A. thesis, Canterbury University, 1967; G.W.A. Bush, Decently and In Order. The Government of the City of Auckland, 1840-1971; the Centennial History of the Auckland City Council, Auckland, 1971; K.M. Mooney, History of the County of Hawke's Bay, Part 1, Napier, 1973.

tended to overshadow that of the periphery. Only time and a large amount of research can correct this imbalance.

The Patea area was not chosen for this thesis for any reasons of familiarity to the writer, but as the result of approaches made by the Patea County Council to Massey University for a student to engage in historical research into the county's administration. The writer took up the suggestion, but broadened the topic to include, not only county government, but also other units of local government within the district. This approach permits more meaningful conclusions to be drawn as to settler demands and local authority responses, and also to relations between the various local bodies within the area. A study of more than one local government institution allows a recognition of trends within, and attitudes to, local government, with more relevance to the situation over the entire country.

Certain features in the history of the Patea, or southern Taranaki region, however, mark this area as interesting and worthy of intensive study. These features include the fact that the area was confiscated from the Maori by the Government in the 1860s, an action which impeded the district's development; the division of responsibility for the area's administration between two provincial governments; and the constitution within the district of most of the different units of local government, both territorial and ad hoc, provided for by New Zealand law.

The area used in this study coincides with the Patea County boundaries at any particular point in time after the constitution of the county in 1876. For discussion of the area during the provincial period, the Patea-Waverley district, as defined by Bremer, has been used. This includes all that territory between Kai Iwi and Hawera, seaward of the Confiscation Line. For definition of the district's boundaries after 1876, readers should refer to figures 1 & 3 within the text.

The area of the County of Patea, as originally constituted, was approximately 1344 square miles. With the separation of the district north of the Manawapou River in 1881, Patea County was reduced to approximately 1150 square miles. By 1917, the county's area had been whittled down to 626 square miles.

Population figures for the district are difficult to ascertain because of the uncertainty of the area to which the figures pertain.

During the 1860s, the population of the Patea district was almost entirely made up of soldiers. By 1870-71, the population was estimated to be between 250 and 550 people. In 1881, Patea town had a population of 840. Patea geographical county's population was recorded in 1886 as being 2861; 3046 in 1901; and 5153 in 1915.⁴

The period covered in this thesis, 1872 to 1917, was chosen partly because it was over that period that the 'rise and fall' of the original local bodies within the Patea district, the road boards, occurred. The constitution of the Patea East, Patea West, and Hawera Road Boards in 1872 marked an important step in the local government history of the area, and the merging of the last of the road districts into the county in 1917 ended an era in the district's local government. To make such a study finish at 1917, with the end of road board administration in the district, seemed a more appropriate point than, for example, 1900, a year with little relevance to the subject, other than the fact that it marked the turn of the century. Time did not permit a longer period to be studied, and 1917 ends a convenient forty-five year span.

A note about the use of certain place names in the text will help to clarify any confusion readers might have. Prior to 1876, the township now known as Waverley was called Wairoa. Presumably the existence of two Wairoa's in the North Island prompted the western town to change its name. In April 1881, the town of Carlyle became officially known as Patea. This was to eliminate any confusion concerning the town's correct title. In the text, the use of these place names depends upon the period in which they are referred to; that is, Wairoa is used when referring to Waverley before 1876, and Carlyle is used when referring to Patea prior to 1881.

The bulk of the thesis is based on material derived from primary sources, such as local authority minute books, letter books and other records. The abundance of such sources held by the various local bodies in the Patea district made the writer's task much easier. The availability of local body records is essential to an adequate investigation of any local government institution, and an attempt must be made to ensure the preservation of as many of these sources as possible. The growing interest being shown in local body centenaries

4. These figures include the population of Patea borough and Waverley township.

throughout New Zealand is helping to highlight the value of local government sources and the need to preserve these manuscripts. The retention of records of now defunct local bodies by other local authorities and libraries is an important aspect of this preservation process. The possession of road board and harbour board records by the Patea County Council was invaluable to the writer's research.

Newspapers were used to provide an indication of the rate-payers' reaction to their local authorities, and to supplement the minutes of local body meetings. Editorial and correspondence columns provided an insight into settler attitudes to local administration, as well as giving some indication of ratepayers' interest in local government affairs. Unfortunately, many of the volumes of the Patea Mail, or the Patea County Press, as it was known after 1888, were not available for perusal because of General Assembly Library policy. However, this handicap was partially overcome by the existence of scrapbooks of newspaper clippings concerned with local government, held in the archives of some of the local bodies in Patea.

A number of the minute and letter books used were unpaginated. These particular books have been identified in the bibliography, while in the footnotes they can be recognized by the fact that only the date of the minute or letter is recorded, instead of both the date and the page number.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR	<u>Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives</u>
NZ Gazette	<u>New Zealand Gazette</u>
NZS	<u>New Zealand Statutes</u>
PD	<u>Parliamentary Debates</u>
EH	<u>Evening Herald</u>
HS	<u>Hawera Star</u>
PCP	<u>Patea County Press</u>
PM	<u>Patea Mail</u>
HTB	Hawera Town Board
PBC	Patea Borough Council
PCC	Patea County Council
PERB	Patea East Road Board
PHB	Patea Harbour Board
PWRB	Patea West Road Board
WTB	Waverley Town Board

INTRODUCTION

One of the main causes of the late outbreak was the division of authority which existed in the district.

Memorandum by Fox, 1 Nov. 1869,
AJHR, A.-4.

Two, usually incompatible, tendencies were in operation in New Zealand politics and administration from the late 1860s. The combined force of these two opposing factors culminated in 1876 in the demise of those semi-federal institutions, the provincial governments.¹ This "unholy alliance", for the provinces at least, comprised the principles of centralization, as shown by a gradual absorption of provincial functions by the central government, and of decentralization, as depicted in the steady transfer of provincial powers and responsibilities to lesser, both in size and function, but more numerous administrative authorities.

The physical configuration of the new colony had been an important determinant in prompting the British Parliament to pass the New Zealand Constitution Act in 1852, which established six provinces under local legislatures, and a General Assembly to attend to colonial affairs. Physical distance and the consequent lack of adequate communications, together with the distinct social particularities of the settlements, ruled out the possibility of creating one centralized administrative system for New Zealand; thus the responsibility for government in the localities was assigned to the provinces. Their major role was to be that of colonization agency, opening up the land for settlement by migrants recruited by the provincial authorities. But just as the main settlements were isolated from each other, so were their respective colonization procedures. Uniformity was not a strongpoint of early New Zealand government, and the field of local government was no exception. No guidelines had been laid down by central authorities for administering to the inevitable social and economic demands of the settlers, as the diversity of "systems" show. Powers and functions of local authorities differed from province to province, and the New Provinces Act, 1858, only compounded the problem.

1. Other factors were also important in the abolition of the provinces. See W.P. Morrell, The Provincial System in New Zealand, 1852-76, second revised edition, Christchurch, 1964, pp.270-85.

All earlier attempts to provide a basic pattern for local government throughout the colony had failed dismally. The Municipal Corporations Act, 1842, met with the disapproval of the British Parliament, while the Municipal Corporations Ordinance, 1844, the Public Roads and Works Ordinance, 1845, and the Constitution Act, 1846, succumbed to the inaction of the colonial authorities. The legislation relating to municipalities carried the stigma of English inheritance. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 proved hardly appropriate to the circumstances of a newly-settled colony with a European population of only eleven or twelve thousand.

Amongst the great diversity in local government, there stood one principle common to all the provinces: to utilize locally-derived revenue locally. But even this attitude was to cause rifts within provinces. Settlers in Hawke's Bay, Wanganui, Southland and other out-lying districts interpreted the word "local" differently from their counterparts in and near the provincial capitals. The "Compact of 1856" assigned the revenue from the sale of land to the provinces, supposedly to be utilised in the improvement of the local areas from which it was derived, along with the responsibility for the administration of those lands. But it was here that a major dilemma arose for the provincial authorities. The greater share of the Land Fund from the sale of waste lands was derived from the out-lying districts, but it was the more densely-populated areas of the provinces which warranted, and usually were granted, the largest proportion of revenue for public works, particularly roads and bridges. In most instances, the deprived inhabitants were not slow in voicing their dissatisfaction, and agitating for separation from the existing provinces. The New Provinces Act, 1858, ostensibly relieved some of this discontent;² at the same time helping to undermine the provincial system.

Intra-provincial discontent and the consequent proliferation of the provinces, the over-indulgence of the provincial authorities in a spate of borrowing in the early 1860s with all its repercussions, and the inconsistent nature of administrative development throughout New Zealand, brought into play the two opposing tendencies of centralization and decentralization. The year 1867 can be heralded, to all intents and purposes, as the opening year of the "campaign", albeit unintentional, to squeeze that element of

2. Hawke's Bay, Southland, and Marlborough were not backward in taking advantage of this legislation.

semi-federalism out of colonial politics.

The gross indebtedness of the provinces led the colonial government in Wellington to forbid any further borrowing on their part after 1867; an action which, in preventing one undesirable trend, gave birth to another: "log-rolling".

Although the effectiveness of provincial colonization programmes varied depending on the resources available, immigrants flowed in steadily. They had come looking for better opportunities in the new land, but more often than not had been "seduced" by a distorted, if not false, picture of colonial life sold to them by "immigrant-hungry" provincial agents, who were often as unfamiliar with colonial conditions as their recruits. Increased population demanded some devolution of powers and functions from the provincial authorities to more localized institutions. Each provincial government made provision for such decentralization in its own time and in its own manner, and thus, to a certain extent, sowed the seeds of its own destruction. It was to be these decentralized units of administration which were eventually to supplant the provinces.

As the colony's population increased, and small settlements were planted throughout the provinces, there developed a distinctive division of interests between town and country. The town dwellers desired streets and footpaths, drainage systems, and recreational facilities. The rural settler needed access to his property, and at least a formed main road by which his supplies and produce could be conveyed. The frequent neglect on the part of provincial authorities to supply even these basic services aroused cries for separation.

The necessity for some form of separate organization for the towns had been realised as early as 1842 by the proposers of the Municipal Corporations Bill, who wrote in the preamble:

Whereas it is necessary that provision should be made for the good health and convenience of the inhabitants of towns and their neighbourhood, [sic] and whereas the inhabitants themselves are best qualified as well by their more intimate knowledge of local affairs as by their more direct interest therein, effectively to provide for the same, and whereas the habit of self-government in such cases hath been found to keep alive the spirit of self-reliance and a respect for the laws and to prepare men for the due

exercise of other political privileges, be it therefore enacted³

Municipalities were constituted in the main settlements. However, it was only in 1867 that the central government provided for the consolidation of previous legislation, mostly provincial, concerning urban areas. The Municipal Corporations Act of that year made it possible for residents of any existing city, town, or district with more than 250 householders within a certain area to receive municipal institutions upon the presentation of a petition to that effect.⁴ Despite the permissive nature of the statute, towns were no longer largely confined to, and dependent upon, provincial legislation. The Act included a set of model by-laws to guide the municipal councils in the performance of their functions, for example, in the provision of streets, sewerage systems, lighting, a water supply, market-places, charitable institutions, pounds, and recreational facilities.⁵

A similar measure for rural local government was also debated by the House of Representatives in 1867. This Local Government Bill⁶ included the provision that up to thirty per cent of the revenue from land sales was to be expended within the district in which the land had been sold. The central government was prepared to grant a 2:1 subsidy on road board rates up to the value of 1s. in the £. Provincial governments were to be given the authority to constitute counties from one or more road districts; the counties, unlike the road boards, being able to anticipate their revenue by borrowing. Although the validity of provincial laws regulating the activities of the boards and councils was in question, the House rejected this measure as an attempt to relegate the provinces to a minor place in administrative affairs.

Local government continued almost as haphazardly and unfettered as before. The County of Westland Act, 1867,⁷ gave that former district

3. Cited in Hon. W.E. Parry, "Early Urban Government in New Zealand," New Zealand Journal of Public Administration, III, 2, 1940, p.13.

4. NZS, 1867, p.257.

5. *ibid.*, pp. 343-72.

6. Information in this paragraph drawn from PD, 1867, 1, pp. 307-330, 383-408.

7. NZS, 1867, pp. 375-77.

of Canterbury most of the powers of the provinces, save that of legislation. This Westland also received when it was granted provincial status in 1873.⁸ Across the Southern Alps the Timaru and Gladstone Board of Works was set up by an Act of Parliament⁹ in 1867 to co-ordinate the work of four road boards and a municipal council. Three years later, the Kaikoura Road and Education Board in Marlborough province held its inaugural meeting.¹⁰ Single-purpose local administrative bodies were also springing up throughout the colony: education boards, harbour boards, river conservation boards, cemetery trusts, sanitary boards.

However, from beneath this veneer of independence and diversity was to gradually emerge a definite trend towards decentralized units of local government. The provinces, partly through their own efforts, were being relieved of a growing number of functions, which was to make them increasingly dispensable.

As well as delegating former provincial responsibilities to smaller, "on-the-spot" units, the central government took over certain duties previously within the provinces' domain. In 1870 Vogel's Immigration and Public Works scheme relieved the provinces of some of their responsibilities in the sphere of colonization. The inability of all but the wealthiest of the provinces, Canterbury and Otago, to effectively fulfil their colonizing role and the consequent loss of this function, strengthened colonial opinion as to the futility of the further existence of such obsolete and superfluous governmental units. The application of Vogel's development policies to the New Zealand situation aided considerably the process of releasing the main settlements from their naturally-enforced seclusion, and of arousing a previously dormant "colonial consciousness" in the European settlers. The extinction of the provincial system seemed imminent, but when it arrived the politicians in Wellington had not devised a comprehensive local government scheme to succeed it. They failed to take advantage of a "clean slate" to legislate afresh to avoid at the outset the implementation of a system which could, and did, lead to a proliferation of local authorities.

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8. *ibid.*, 1873, pp. 131-34.

9. *ibid.*, 1867, pp. 379-82.

10. J.M. Sherrard, Kaikoura. A History of the District, Kaikoura, 1966, p. 300.

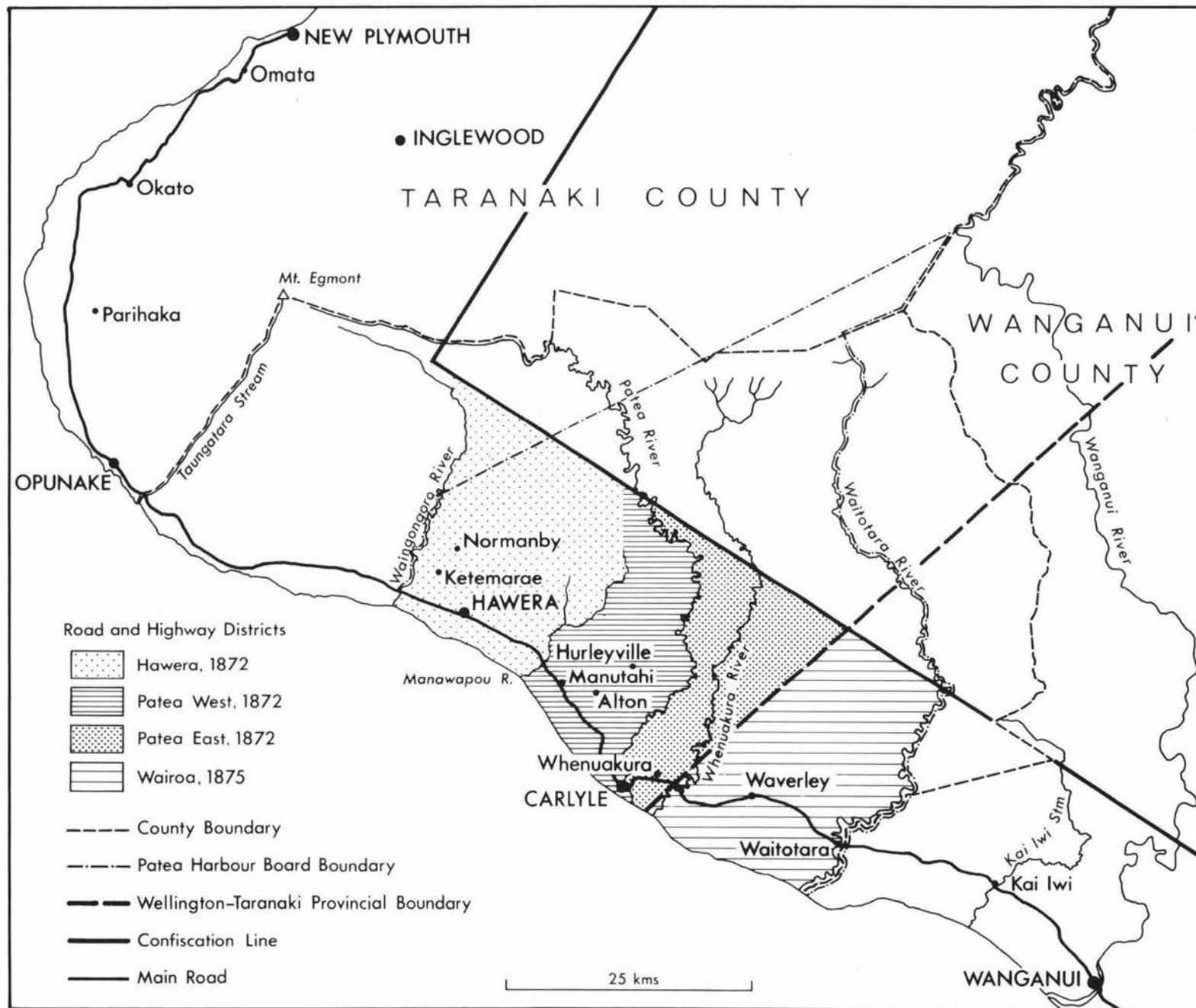


FIG. 1. PATEA COUNTY, 1877

The problems of local government under the provinces were exemplified and even accentuated in the case of the Patea district. This area, extending from the Waitotara River northwards to the Waingongoro Stream, was probably unique among out-lying districts in that it was plagued not by one, but by a combination of problems and reverses.

The provincial boundaries drawn in 1853 divided the Patea district between the provinces of Wellington and New Plymouth,¹¹ thus placing the area at the extremity of both provinces. In addition to the neglect that this isolation from the provincial capitals entailed, the portion of the district to the north-west of the Patea River was but a very small area of the most impoverished of the six original provinces, Taranaki. This province had proved "impotent" in its role as colonizer; a condition no less attributable to the Maori disturbances prevalent there in the 1860s and to the retaliatory confiscation of tribal lands by the central government in 1864, as to the general inefficiency of its provincial administration. Combined, these factors acted to retard the intensive settlement of the entire province, but especially that of the Patea district.

Events subsequent to the purchase by the colonial government of the Waitotara Block, between the Kai Iwi Stream and the Waitotara River, from the Wanganui Maoris, and to the sale of sections to settlers in October, 1864, provided the central government with a pretext for confiscating the Patea district. The move by settlers to take up their land provoked the defiance of the Ngati Ruanui tribe, which was immediately deprived of its lands through the New Zealand Settlements Act, 1863. Apart from the expropriation of the Maoris' land, the confiscations dispossessed the provincial governments of vital revenue from the Land Fund as the general government controlled all confiscated land until it was sold or returned to the Maoris. Eight years elapsed before a significant amount of these lands was opened for sale, and thus was restored to the control of the provinces.

The Hauhau uprisings led by Titokowaru, which followed closely on the confiscations in the later 1860s, not only discouraged prospective settlers from taking up land in the district, but also caused a significant out-migration of European inhabitants, some to take temporary

11. Renamed Taranki as from 1 January, 1859; NZS, 1858, p.280.

refuge in Wanganui or Nelson, others never to return. A delay in the distribution of land grants to military settlers had meant many grantees left the district at the expiration of their term of service, while others on receiving their land, sold it to speculators. Thus, much land was left unoccupied. Settlers were not attracted to the lands originally set aside for military settlement because of the provincial authorities' inability and reluctance to provide public works.¹² During these years of virtual neglect by the provinces, the Patea district settlers were obliged to look to the colonial government for local development.

With an end to the uprising in 1869-70, the central government proceeded to sponsor the re-settlement of the Patea district by "subsidising" the ferry services over the Waitotara and Whenuakura Rivers, and by having an adequate coach road between Wanganui and Patea prepared by Volunteers and the Armed Constabulary.¹³

Several attempts during the late '60s to goad, through petitions, the Wellington Provincial Council into forming an adequate dray track between Patea and Wanganui had made little headway against attitudes such as that expressed by the Provincial Secretary to the council in 1868;

My own opinion is that you will commit an act of very great injustice towards the rest of the Province if you ever contribute a single farthing towards opening up districts in which the lands have been either confiscated, given away, or acquired from the natives by direct purchase.¹⁴

The responsibilities of the respective provincial and central governments were ill-defined and invited evasion; a course all too readily seized upon by Wellington and Taranaki officials.

Although much of the confiscated land was unavailable for settlement until after 1873, the advent of peace and a measure of security saw the return of many of the voluntary exiles and others to take up land in the countryside or to settle on sections in the newly-formed town of

12. Ione M. Bremer, "The Early Development of the Patea-Waverley District: A Study of the Problems of Settling Confiscated Land", unpublished M.A. thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1962, p.34.

13. AJHR, 1870, A.-4, p.14.

14. EH, 23 May 1868; cited in Bremer, p.166.

Carlyle, near the mouth of the Patea River. This increase in numbers afforded strength and confidence to settlers dissatisfied with the ineffectiveness and neglectful attitude of the provincial governments in Wellington and New Plymouth, and emboldened them to agitate even more vigorously for separation. This local movement was to reach its zenith in 1872-73, and although not directly appeased the settlers were consoled by a growing suspicion that the provinces' "day of judgement" was near at hand.

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