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THE BALLANCE TRADITION
AND ITS PERMEATION IN WANGANUI.

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

K.L. Stewart,

1970.

PREFACE

I would like to express my appreciation to my supervisor Professor W.H. Oliver who suggested the general topic of this thesis; to Mr P.J. Gibbons and Mr R.H. Voelkerling for their comments and to my sister Mrs B. Drake for typing it.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The form of abbreviations adopted follows the system used in K. Sinclair, William Pember Reeves : New Zealand Fabian (Oxford, 1965). Page numbers are used only when they are necessary for easy reference. Abbreviations used in the text are as follows:

AJHR	<u>Appendices to the Journals of the New Zealand House of Representatives</u>
PD	<u>New Zealand Parliamentary Debates</u>
NZYB	<u>New Zealand Year Book</u>
ASRS	Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants
FOL	Federation of Labour
MW	<u>Maoriland Worker</u>
NZLP	New Zealand Labour Party
RR	<u>Railway Review</u>
SDP	Social Democratic Party
UFL	United Federation of Labour
ULP	United Labour Party
WC	<u>Wanganui Chronicle</u>
WH	<u>Wanganui Herald</u>
WWF	Waterside Workers Federation

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Much of the history written about New Zealand tends to be focused at the national level. What happens in the main centres and at national conferences is investigated, and, from this generalizations are produced which are often used to explain what was happening in New Zealand as a whole. Labour history is a case in point. Writers tend to deal with what was happening in the West Coast of South Island and in the four main centres. For such writers, because there was a considerable amount of discontent in these areas between 1908 - 1914, it follows that there was a considerable amount of discontent amongst New Zealand labour in general. Dr Sutch is one such writer. In his book Poverty and Progress in New Zealand¹ he frequently takes a few isolated examples and generalizes from these to stress the elements of conflict present in New Zealand history. Writers such as Sutch tend to ignore what was happening in the secondary centres, and who is to say that these are not the more typical of New Zealand. Are the Federation of Labour and the West Coast miners typical of New Zealand labour in this period or are the watersiders of Wanganui who, during the 1913 strike, adhered to the Arbitration Act more typical? Historians have deliberated on the actions of the West Coast miners, but where is

¹ W.B. Sutch, Poverty and Progress in New Zealand (Wellington, 1969).

the explanation for what happened or failed to happen in Gisborne, Palmerston North or Wanganui? Unless we know what happened in such centres as these we are not in a position to make valid generalizations as to what New Zealand labour was doing at any particular time. The noisy and the flamboyant are not necessarily representative of the whole, rather the opposite is more often the case.

In a recent Hocken Lecture, Towards a New History, Professor W.H. Oliver points to this general problem and suggests the usefulness of regional history. Regional history can supply the building blocks with which we can build a valid national history. If such an approach was followed it would be difficult for writers such as Conrad Bollinger² to use what W.J. Gardner describes as the theory of "Two Nations"³ when dealing with labour problems of the early 20th Century. It is only possible to see a class warfare in action by carefully ignoring what was happening in much of the country. New Zealand was too complex and too small in scale to produce clearly defined groups of a class nature at this stage. As Oliver has pointed out, social evolution in New Zealand has gone on between a high floor and a low ceiling and between these

2 Conrad Bollinger, Against the Wind (Wellington, 1968).

3 W.J. Gardner, Colonial Conservatism : The New Zealand Experience 1890 - 1912 (unpublished article).

narrow limits there has been great mobility. ⁴

While the main centres and the West Coast of South Island seemed to be in an uproar in 1912-13 Wanganui remained calm. Why was this? The aim of this thesis is to investigate the unionist and political activity of Wanganui as a secondary centre; to explain not only why no unrest took place in 1912-13 but also to discover what was essentially different about this secondary centre compared to what happened in Wellington in 1912-13. For this purpose the study has been concentrated around the unionistic and political activities of W.A. Veitch. It is easiest to centre this study around Veitch because he was politically paramount from 1911-35. Frequently he initiated patterns but to a large extent he was able to retain power because he reflected patterns and responded to the actualities of Wanganui politics.

The "Ballance Tradition" was the key factor in Wanganui politics. No politician could hope to gain power in Wanganui unless he remained within the limits it imposed. Veitch was keenly aware of this and his political career is an example of the "Ballance Tradition" in action. This was not an ideological tradition. There was little room in Wanganui for ideology as militant labour was to discover. The "Ballance Tradition" was largely one of attitude and of

4 W.H. Oliver, "Reeves, Sinclair and the Social Pattern," in P. Munz (ed.), The Feel of Truth (Wellington, 1969).

(4)

political behaviour which encouraged cooperation between working class and middle class, reflecting the Liberal synthesis of the 1890's. It stressed broadly humanitarian goals which were to be achieved by an evolutionary process. It saw the needs of Wanganui as a whole and was opposed to specifically sectional demands.

CHAPTER IITHE WANGANUI BACKGROUND

In the early 20th Century Wanganui was a rapidly growing town. Its population rose from 8,175 in 1906 ¹ to 14,702 in 1911. ² This rapid growth in population can be illustrated by comparing Wanganui's population increase with that of Palmerston North, New Plymouth and New Zealand as a whole (See Figure one, page 6). During these years of rapid expansion there was great optimism as to the future of Wanganui, but this high growth rate was based on an unstable economic structure. The effect of the Depression on Wanganui's population, as shown by Figure one, amply illustrates this. Wanganui's population declined from 1929 until the mid 1930's and did not reach its 1929 total again until 1946. ³ Palmerston North and New Plymouth by contrast continued to grow.

Wanganui's hinterland was (and is) a basically poor one. (See Figure two, p. 8 for a map of the hinterland). It has been suggested that without the presence of a port it is probable that Wanganui would not have grown to much

1 NZYB, 1907, p. 130.

2 NZYB, 1912, p. 118.

3 Population of Wanganui:

1929 29,300

1936 25,761

1945 28,200

(6)

Population
(thousands)

NZ
Population
(Millions)

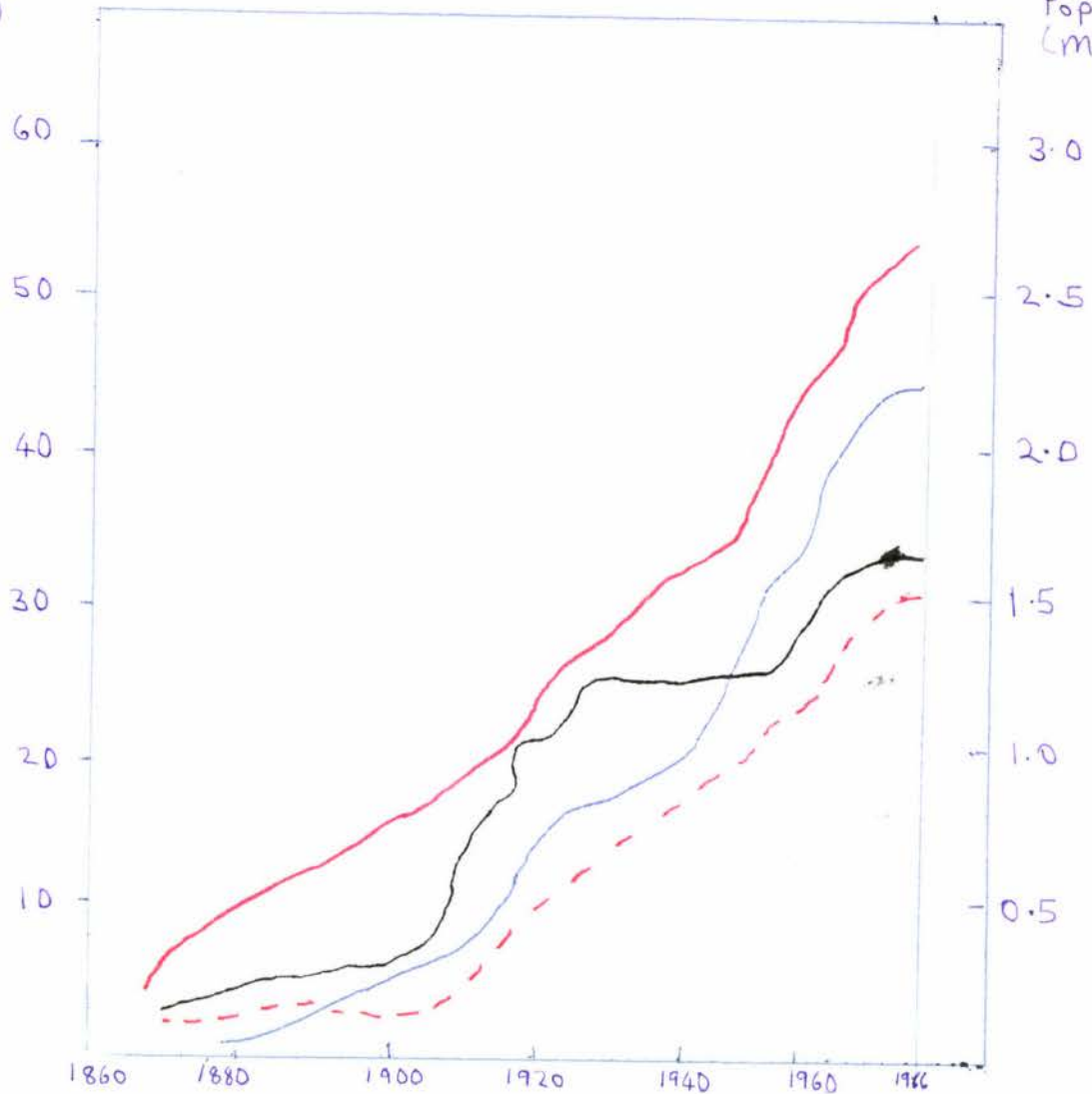
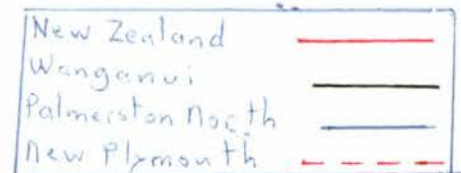


FIGURE ONE

Comparison of Population Growth
for Wanganui, Palmerston North
and New Plymouth for 1860 to 1966. *



*Source Introducing Wanganui, p.166.

more than 10,000 in population ⁴. Wanganui's rapid growth and prosperity in the early 20th Century was based not so much on its industry, although this helped, but rather on its role as a major distributing centre based on its port. It was the contraction of this role as a distributing centre which caused Wanganui's subsequent economic problems.

The continuing importance of Wanganui as a distributing centre was based on two main factors - adequate communications inland from Wanganui and an improved harbour. In 1911 the Wanganui Herald voiced this need:

One of the greatest needs commercially speaking which Wanganui has today is a railway through its hinterland linking up with the main trunk line and serving the fertile district lying between the town and the inland centres of Raetihi and Ohakune. Such a railway is as necessary to Wanganui's commercial prosperity as a deep sea port. In fact the harbour goes hand in hand with the inland railway as a factor in the future progress of Wanganui. ⁵

In both these realms Wanganui was to be faced with frustration. Geographically speaking the heavily dissected erosion-prone hill country of Wanganui's hinterland meant that the construction and maintenance of roads was most expensive. Settlement is sparse and there are few tributary

4 S.M. King, "Wanganui Harbour", in B. Saunders (ed.), Introducing Wanganui (Palmerston North, 1968), p. 69.

5 WH, 7 Nov. 1911.

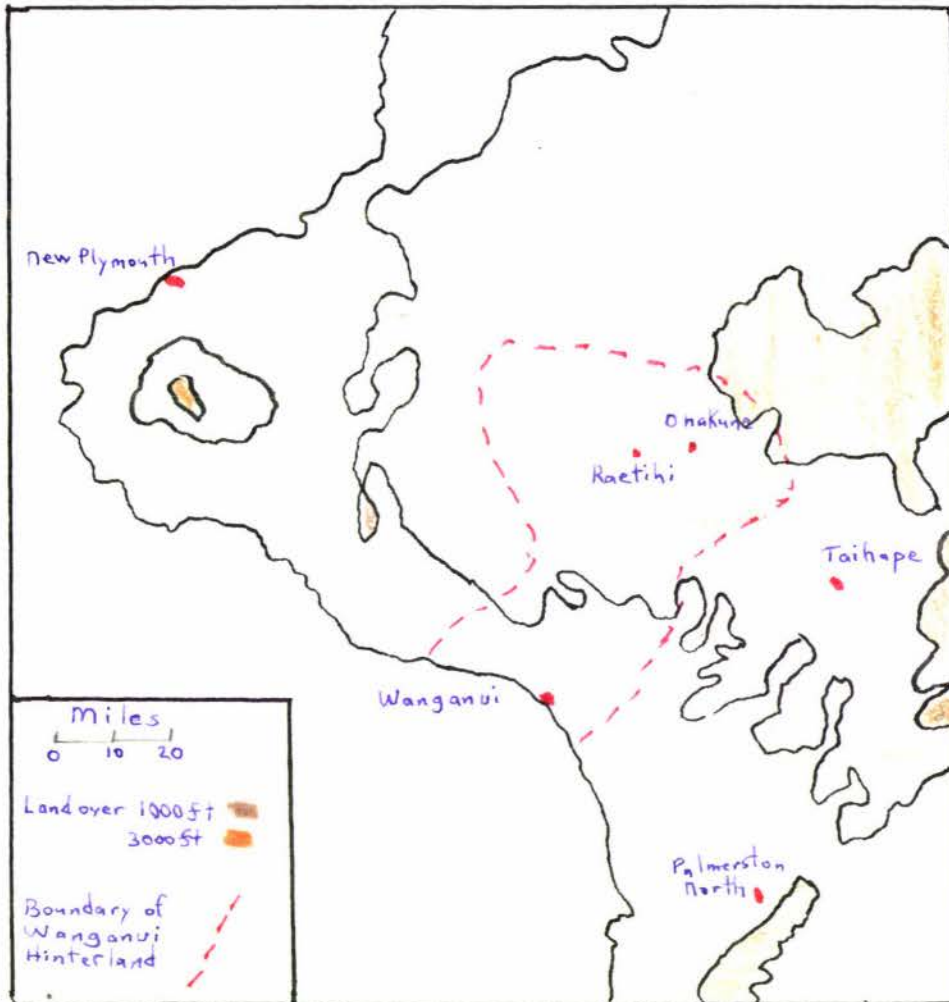


FIGURE TWO

Location of Wanganui Hinterland. *

*This comprises the counties of Waimarino, Waitotara and Wanganui. This definition of the Wanganui Hinterland is that used by the Department of Internal Affairs.

roads. Wanganui is not in a nodal position in relation to its hinterland and much traffic by-passes the town. The Parapara Road is the only major road to cross the area south to north and even in 1970 it leaves much to be desired as a main road. These problems existed in 1900 and they still exist today.

The questions of the privately owned transport service on the Wanganui River, the Parapara Road and a Wanganui-Raetihi Railway were problems raised year after year in Parliament by the members for Wanganui. In 1907, James Hogan asked the government whether they would seriously consider the advisability of constructing a branch railway line to connect Wanganui via its hinterland with the main trunk and thereby open up an immense tract of good land ⁶. In 1908 Hogan emphasised the fact that the Raetihi Parapara Road, which he had been hammering at for years, was still included in the backblock road vote. The minister did not seem to realise that it was a main arterial road. ⁷

Throughout his term as Liberal M.P. for Wanganui, Hogan extracted little response from a Liberal Government for these pressing Wanganui needs. His political successor Veitch, although elected on a Labour Party platform

6 PD, 1907, 139, p. 795.

7 PD, 1908, 145, p. 816.

showed great diligence in presenting Wanganui's needs before Parliament, but he had no more success than did Hogan.

Oliver, writing on Gisborne politics, suggests after viewing the career of W.D. Lysnar that the day of the uncompromising local advocate was over by the 1920's and that the way in which to obtain local advantage was to be a party regular for the unreliable supporter would either be ignored or hated, but never heeded. ⁸

As far as Wanganui was concerned however it would appear that the electorate rather than the individual M.P. was ignored. With the defeat of Veitch in 1935 Wanganui became a solid Labour Party seat for 34 years. During this period Wanganui continued to languish and under a Labour M.P. fared no better than it did under Veitch. Indeed the election of W. Tolhurst as National M.P. for Wanganui in 1969 largely represents a protest against Wanganui's position in the wilderness. It is significant to note Tolhurst's maiden speech to the House of Representatives when he said:

Our only access, the Parapara Road, is more important to Wanganui than any other road in or around the city. Logically the farmer would prefer - distance and community wise - to use our city, but twenty to thirty miles of thirty to forty miles per hour highway is just not acceptable on today's standards. Bounded by the sea and with a limited farming belt the future of the city must lie in developing the community to the North. ⁹

⁸ W.H. Oliver, Typescript of History of Gisborne.
⁹ WH, 8 April 1970.

This is almost what was being said sixty years ago.

Veitch continually stressed Wanganui's problems in the House. In regard to the hoped for Wanganui - Raetihi railway line, Veitch emphasized that such a line had become a commercial necessity for the development of the district. In his opinion the Wanganui district was, so far as railway and road communications were concerned, worse off than any other part of New Zealand. Only a few miles outside Wanganui in almost every direction there could be found nothing but bridle-tracks ¹⁰. The river service was for Veitch an equally pressing matter.

Nothing will satisfy the people of Wanganui short of a state transport service on the river. The settlers along the Wanganui River are entitled to some protection . . . This monopolist firm is checking the progress of the whole community. It is like a great octopus sucking the life blood out of the settlers. ¹¹

Access to its hinterland and an adequate port were thus the fundamentals for the continuing expansion of Wanganui. Frustration in these two areas are partly to blame for the economic stagnation which has taken place in the city. Wanganui came into being because of the river, and shipping has been the main factor in its development. The development of internal communications and of refrigeration were also important to the town's growth. In 1878 Wanganui was connected by railway to Longburn, while in 1886 the

¹⁰ PD, 1913, 164, p. 580.

¹¹ PD, 1913, 164, p. 180.

route to Wellington was opened. It was found cheaper to rail goods from Manawatu to Wanganui and then ship them by sea to Wellington than it was to rail them directly from Manawatu to Wellington. The development of railways to begin with helped to consolidate Wanganui's position as a transportation and distribution centre.

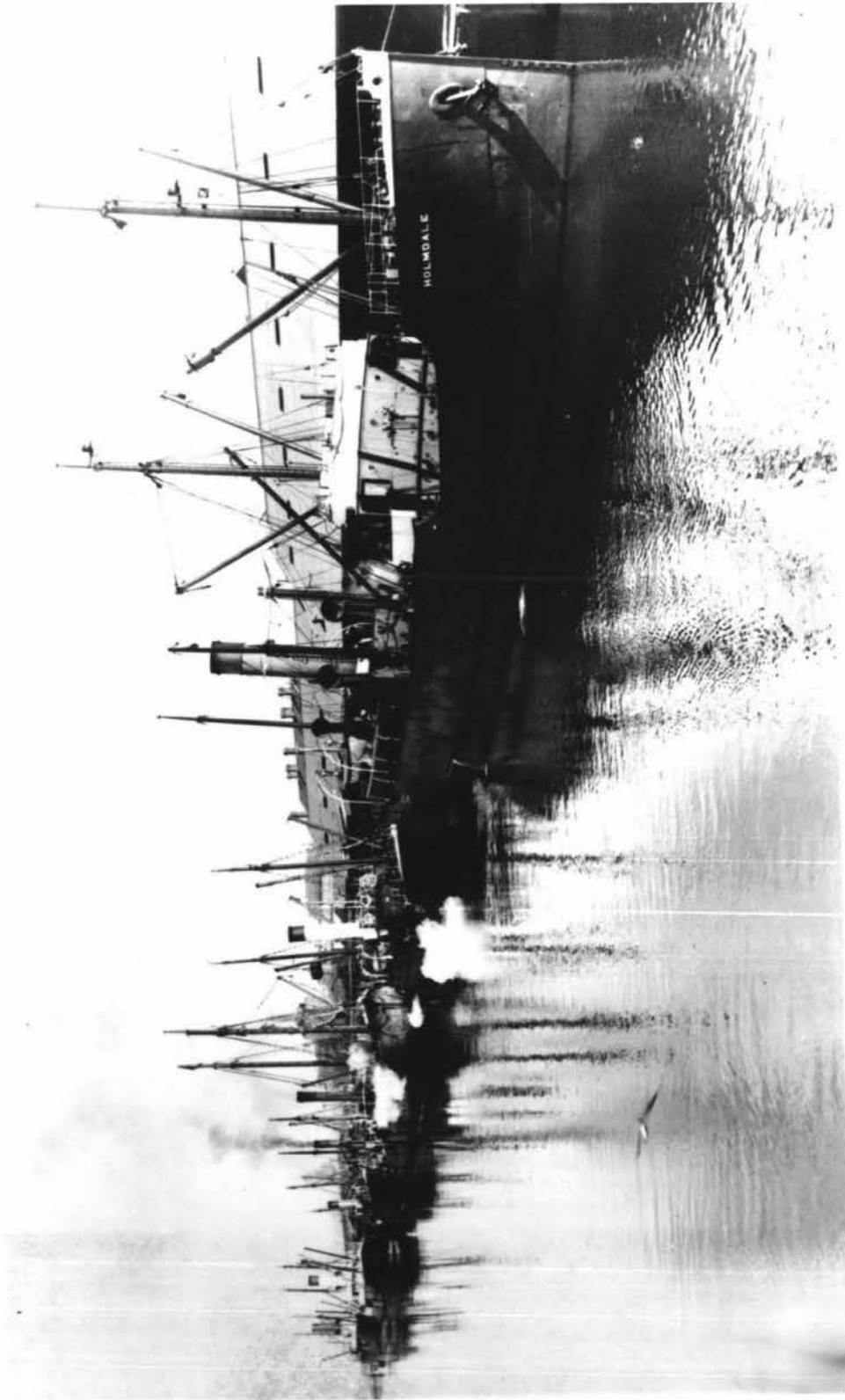
The introduction of refrigeration facilitated the development of the hitherto unfarmed back country of Wanganui's hinterland, which was opened up between 1900 and 1910. Shipping of frozen meat began in 1891 when the Wanganui Freezing Company was opened. By 1907 the average annual output was between 230,000 and 250,000 sheep and lambs and 3,000 to 5,000 cattle a year. ¹²

This expansion of trade made a deep sea port desirable for Wanganui. Goods had to be transported out to sea by lighters to the overseas ships which anchored one to two miles off shore. In 1908 for example the Wanganui Freezing Company employed two lighters to carry frozen meat from their works to the ocean liners, each lighter carrying about 1,600 carcasses at a time. ¹³

Despite the lack of a deep sea port Wanganui was holding its own as a port up until the 1st World War.

12 Cyclopedia of New Zealand, Vol. 6, (Christchurch, 1908), p. 612.

13 Cyclopedia, p. 612.



Town Wharf, Mangarui in the early 1920s.
(Photo: Mangarui Museum)

In 1900 the port ranked in tenth place as an export port while in 1913 it had fallen one position into eleventh place. ¹⁴ In imports Wanganui held seventh position as a port in 1900 and had slipped to eighth position in 1913. ¹⁵ These figures did not give cause for alarm, however, as the Harbour Board had plans for major improvements to the port and it was hoped that Wanganui would develop into a major deep sea port. It was not until the late 1920's that optimism over the port turned sour. Between 1914 - 1926 £350,000 was borrowed for port development. Between 1923-30 eighty-three overseas ships visited Wanganui but these were largely concerned with imports not exports. Figure Three (Page 15) shows the great imbalance between imports and exports handled by the port. Overseas shipping companies disliked calling at ports around the New Zealand coast. They advocated centralization and were successful in their attempts to prevent the growing importance of Wanganui as an export port.

Combined with this threat to the port came another - railway competition. As Veitch told Parliament in 1932; the Wanganui district was suffering severely as a result of the railways policy of carrying goods long distance at a loss. ¹⁶

14 NZYB, 1914, p. 339.

15 NZYB, 1914, p. 381.

16 PD, 1932, 234, p. 432.

Tonnage
(thousands)

Imports —
Exports —

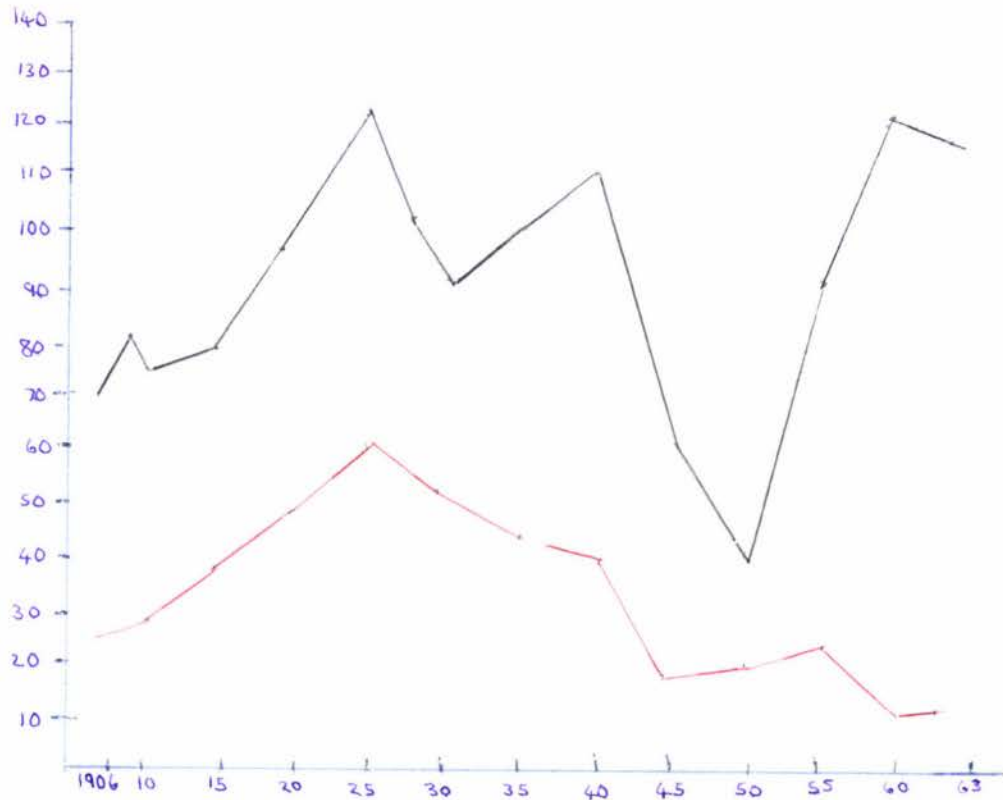


FIGURE THREE

Tonnage of Imports and Exports Handled
by Wanganui between 1906 and 1963. *

* Source Introducing Wanganui, p.68.

Until the early 1930's Wanganui's role as a distributing centre reached out as far as Taumarunui, Dannevirke, Stratford and Palmerston North. With lower costs for long distance railway transport it became economical for some of these districts to rail direct to Wellington rather than to ship through the port of Wanganui. This for example happened to the valuable Manawatu trade which was no longer shipped through Wanganui but was railed direct to Wellington. This undermining of Wanganui as a transport centre was largely responsible for its decline during and after the depression, just as the rapid development of this role was important for its relatively boom condition up until the late 1920's.

Although important, until the development of light industries in the 1930's industrialism was not as significant as trade in the development of Wanganui and was not responsible for the rapid growth. Chief industries in Wanganui in the 1900's were coach building, meat freezing, iron pipe manufacturing, sash and door, furniture making, biscuits and confectionery, engineering, brewing, soap making, sause and pickles and railway workshops. ¹⁷

C. Simkin points out that the period of a rapid increase in factory production took place before 1906 and that between 1906 - 1911 factory employment actually decreased by 3,000 over New Zealand as a whole. ¹⁸

17 Cyclopedia, Vol. 6, p. 590.

18 C.S.F. Simkin, The Instability of a Dependent Economy (Oxford, 1951), p. 179.

In contrast to this national trend Wanganui showed a considerable increase in factory employment during this period. In 1906 there were in Wanganui 160 factories employing 1,259 operatives (1,022 males and 237 females)¹⁹ while the end of 1911 the figures had risen to 295 factories employing 1,727 operatives (1,202 males and 525 females).²⁰ The neighbouring centre of Palmerston North showed a decline in the numbers employed in this period from 232 factories with 1,564 operatives in 1906²¹ to 265 factories with 1,438 operatives at the end of 1911,²² a drop of 126 employees. During a period of national stagnation in the development of industrial employment Wanganui maintained a steady development. This steady expansion of the town meant that there was a continual demand for both skilled and unskilled labour and during the period 1906 to 1914, apart from the short 1909 depression, work was not difficult to obtain in Wanganui. The 1906 Labour Department Report noted that "workers in all branches have experienced, on the whole, a prosperous year. Unskilled labour has had a good year."²³ 1908 was a year of exceptional prosperity. A high level of activity in the building trade created a demand for skilled labour that could not be met. Difficulty was being experienced in keeping up with the demand for housing. There was a large demand for unskilled labour.²⁴

19 AJHR, 1906, H-11, p. xxii.

20 AJHR, 1912, H-11, p. xlvii.

21 AJHR, 1906, H-11, p. xxi.

22 AJHR, 1912, H-11, p. xlvi. The Palmerston North figures are not broken down into male and female.

23 AJHR, 1906, H-11, p. xxii.

24 AJHR, 1908, H-11, p. xxxv.

During the early part of 1910 a certain degree of depression was felt with the building trade most affected. A large number of labourers were out of work but later in the year the situation improved.²⁵ This depression was of short duration however for in the following year the Labour Department Report noted "This year has been a very prosperous one . . . no real difficulty in placing good men."²⁶

The 1912 Report expressed the generally buoyant note of the Wanganui economy. "Trade and business generally have maintained a high standard. Throughout the year there has been no real difficulty in dealing with the applications for employment. The tramway extension work and the boroughs new water works have employed all the pick and shovel men offering".²⁷

Trade Union membership in Wanganui shows a rapid increase after 1905. In 1905 there were only three employee unions with a total of 156 members and of this number 108 were members of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.²⁸ By 1909 there were seven employee unions with a total of 492 members. The ASRS accounted for almost half this total with 231 members²⁹. The Wanganui Waterside Workers Union was listed for the first time with 69 members. In 1911

25 AJHR, 1910, H-11, p. xliv.

26 AJHR, 1911, H-11, p. xli.

27 AJHR, 1912, H-11, p. xlvii.

28 AJHR, 1906, H-11A.

29 AJHR, 1910, H-11A. ASRS membership is listed as a national total. Source for Wanganui total Railway Review, 4 June 1909.

there were nine employee unions with a total membership of 758.³⁰ Of this total 245 were members of the ASRS³¹ and 159 were members of the Waterside Workers Union. Thus the railwaymen and the watersiders together totalled over half the trade union membership in Wanganui in 1912 and were by far the two most important unions.

The ASRS being pre-eminent among Wanganui trade unions had an important influence on the developing political character of the town. In Chapter III it is suggested that the Wanganui Herald was instrumental in shaping a political style for Wanganui based upon cooperation between workers and small business men. It is probable that the influence of the ASRS was a major factor in why the workers of Wanganui accepted this political alliance with the middle class. The ASRS was a moderate organization opposed to radicalism and its general tenor was in harmony with what the Herald was trying to do. The political influence of the ASRS is shown in the fact that the members of Parliament for Wanganui between 1905 - 1969 were all ex-railway men. Several of Wanganui's mayors, including the one in office in 1970 have also been railway men.

The importance given to the ASRS is only impressionistic and it is not based on a detailed study. Time was not available to examine railway membership of the Labour

30 AJHR, 1912, H-11A for membership excluding the ASRS.
31 RR, 2 June 1911.

Party and of local bodies. Yet specific cases such as the election of Veitch in 1911 with railway backing show this influence at work.



Statue of John Ballance
Moutoa Gardens, Wanganui.

CHAPTER IIIPOLITICS : BALLANCE STYLE

In the early 20th Century there was a ghost abroad in Wanganui. All those who courted political office and who wished to strike a responsive note among the local electorate paid homage to it. The ghost's name was John Ballance.

John Ballance, journalist and proprietor of the Wanganui Herald Newspaper Company, held ministerial rank in the Grey ministry of 1878-79 and in the Stout-Vogel ministry of 1884-87. He became premier of New Zealand in 1891 and held that post until his death in 1893. Ballance was Member of Parliament for Wanganui from 1879-81 and from 1884-93. The so called "Ballance Tradition" that was to develop after the death of this great son of Wanganui was largely the work of Archibald Willis, Ballance's business partner, and the Wanganui Herald of which Willis became proprietor at Ballance's death.

The conservative Opposition point of view which was propounded by the morning newspaper the Wanganui Chronicle had, after 1899, to wait seventy years before a politician of its persuasion gained the Wanganui seat.¹ Being therefore the consistent exponent of the victorious

1 In 1969 W. Tolhurst gained the Wanganui seat for the National Party. Between 1899 and 1969 Wanganui had always been held by a variation of Liberal and Labour.

candidate the Wanganui Herald was able to develop an ill defined set of political attitudes which it called the "Ballance Tradition". Such was the success of this political approach that Wanganui remained a liberal seat until 1935. It needed a depression for Labour to obtain this seat which, without the peculiar character of Wanganui, one might have expected it to have gained earlier. What then was this "Ballance Tradition"? It was in part a rhetorical device. Its use was somewhat analogous to an American referring to the values of the Founding Fathers. It gave legitimacy to one's position without necessarily saying very much about it. It also meant Ballance's emphasis on labour reforms; of opposition to monopoly and privileges; of vigorous, honest government. In general terms it meant harmony and co-operation, or in other words the classic liberal alliance between the workers and the small businessman. It was from such an alliance that Veitch gained his support and until 1935 Wanganui existed as a political anachronism, it was a liberal town when such liberalism elsewhere had long been out of fashion.

W.A. Veitch, a shrewd and astute politician, fully recognized the value of wearing the mantle of Ballance and events were to prove him correct in his assessment. The 1911 election in which Veitch gained the Wanganui seat

from the sitting Liberal M.P. shows the importance of Ballance in Wanganui politics. Hogan, the defending member, stoutly maintained that those in power were following the policy of Ballance.² The disillusionment with the Liberals, which had been developing since about 1900, had by 1911 reached the stage where the workers of Wanganui were no longer prepared to believe this. Therefore when Veitch presented himself and the Labour Party as the successors of Ballance they were prepared to listen. Veitch told the electors of Wanganui in 1911 that Ballance had taken the motto "government of the people for the people by the people" and that he had lived up to it but that the same could not be said for the present members of the House. The policy of the Labour Party,³ according to Veitch, was that of the greatest of New Zealand statesmen, the late John Ballance of whom Wanganui was so proud. The Labour Party, he said, had come to realize that the Liberals had deviated from the policy laid down by Ballance and that it wanted to revert back to that policy.⁴ A more overt courting of the Ballance Tradition would be difficult to imagine. The electors listened to Veitch and gave him their votes.

In 1914 when Veitch successfully defended his seat the custodian of the mantle of Ballance, the Wanganui Herald

2 WH, 8 Nov. 1911.

3 See chapter IV for a fuller discussion of this.

4 WH, 25 Oct. 1911.

acknowledged him as the rightful heir of Ballance:

True to their democratic instincts the electors of Wanganui by a very substantial majority have re-elected the democratic candidate and by an overwhelming vote demonstrated their fealty to the liberal cause. The older local residents still remember the great battles which Mr Ballance fought on behalf of democracy . . . small wonder that the combined liberal and labour vote should be so large. 5

Veitch never lost a chance to associate himself with Ballance. While New Zealand was engaged in fighting the First World War, Veitch could still feel it relevant to ask in a question in parliament that the statue of Ballance in Parliament grounds be replaced with a better one "more in keeping with that deceased statesman's achievements and exalted talents." 6

The sway of Ballance in the Wanganui electorate was greater after, than before his death. In the 1890 election Ballance defeated the conservative candidate Carson by the small margin of 808 votes to 781, gaining 52% of the vote cast.

The results by polling booth were as follows: 7

- 5 WH, 11 Dec. 1914.
- 6 PD, 1914, 172, p.457.
- 7 WH, 7 Dec. 1890.

	John Ballance (Opposition)	G. Carson (Ministerial)
Fordell	54	40
Mosstown	25	23
Courthouse x	542	549
Aramoho x	95	30
Okoia	20	31
Brunswick	28	32
x urban booths	<u>808</u>	<u>781</u>

Of the total of 1,589 votes cast, 1,216 were in the town of Wanganui and 373 were cast in outlying areas. It is significant to note the high vote Ballance received at Aramoho. It was this vote which enabled him to win the seat. It was at Aramoho that the railwaymen lived.

At this stage the Liberals were an unknown quantity. Indeed, Ballance referred to his own party simply as the "Opposition".⁸ Ballance died before he was able to reap the votes which his position as leader of the Liberal Government would have brought him in his electorate.

In 1890 industrial development was still in its infancy and Wanganui was still more important as a servicing centre for its hinterland. It was not until the 1899 election with the realization that the Liberals were

⁸ See Wellington Evening Post, 1 Oct. 1890, for Ballance's policy speech.

the party of rural development and with the example of their labour legislation, that the tradespeople and workers of Wanganui joined together in a union that was to last until 1935.

In the by-election of June 1893 occasioned by the Premier's death Ballance's business partner, Willis, stood as Liberal candidate while Gilbert Carson, proprietor of the Wanganui Chronicle, stood once more for the Opposition. Willis won by 1,031 votes to Carson's 622 giving him 66% of the vote cast. The following are the polling booth totals: ⁹

	G. Carson (Opposition)	A. Willis (Liberal)
Wanganui x	414	735
Okoiā	33	15
Mosstown	19	24
Castlecliff x	3	42
Brunswick	26	25
Aramoho x	28	99
Fordell	34	54
x Urban	<u>622</u>	<u>1,031</u>

The polling booth at Castlecliff, where the waterside workers lived, gave Willis 93% of their vote while the predominantly railwaymen at Aramoho gave him 78% of their vote. Sympathy at the death of the late Premier was probably the cause of the high urban vote for Liberal.

That Wanganui was not yet a Liberal establishment was demonstrated by the 1896 election in which Carson defeated Willis by the small margin of 2,098 votes to 2,044.

The voting by polling booths was as follows: ¹⁰

	G. Carson (Opposition)	A.D. Willis (Liberal)
Wanganui x	1,515	1,281
Castlecliff x	24	92
Kai Iwi	23	51
Okoia	73	25
Aramoho x	198	321
Brunswick	50	21
Fordell	64	67
Maxwell	39	43
Mosstown	44	78
Whangaehu	27	12
Upukongaro	41	53
x Urban	<u>2,098</u>	<u>2,044</u>

In the urban areas, in comparison with the 1893 figures, the Opposition dominated Wanganui and made substantial gains in Castlecliff and Aramoho. As yet the ghost of Ballance was not abroad.

1899 is an important election for it marks the beginning of the Liberal synthesis in Wanganui. The tradesmen of the town with an eye on rural development which would bring more money into their pockets and the

workers, who had benefitted from the activities of Reeves and Tregear, at last realized that the Liberals rather than the Opposition were the party to support. This change was not dramatic, but it was there.

In 1899 Willis was once again the Liberal candidate. As a publisher and the proprietor of the Wanganui Herald he was a successful businessman. He represented the dominant group in the Wanganui Liberal Party - the businessmen of the town. The workers of the town did not yet desire their own candidate but from this date onward there was a swing left by the workers which was to culminate in the election of the Labour candidate Veitch in 1911. As the dissatisfaction over the cost of living and the Arbitration Court awards grew so did the move left among voters.

The beginning of this shift can be seen in its incipient form in the election of 1899 when John Murphy, a local wheelwright, stood as an Independent Liberal. Murphy claimed, that although Willis had been put forward as candidate for the Liberals by the local branch of the Liberal Federation, it was a well known fact that the Liberals wanted a change in candidate. According to Murphy, Willis had told the Federation that he would not support labour measures, especially the Master and

Apprentices and Eight Hour Bills, for the simple reason (to Murphy at least) that if the former became law he (Willis) would have to discharge all boys employed in his shop and employ men. Murphy claimed that "Willis is like all the rest of the conservatives, raking in the shillings and hoarding them up like the rest of the misers." Basically Murphy was dissatisfied with Willis's half hearted support as far as the sectional demands of the workers were concerned. If he was elected he promised to rectify this. Murphy's Aramoho meeting was not impressed. In their vote of thanks, approved by a vote of 500 to 40, was included the following:

. . . that seeing the choice of Liberal Candidate has already been decided by the Liberals of Wanganui through the Liberal Federation this meeting expresses its opinion that he (Murphy) be respectfully asked to stand aside for the chosen candidate of the Liberal Party. 11

The results of this election by polling booth were as follows: 12

	G. Carson (Opposition)	J. Murphy (Independent Liberal)	A. Willis (Liberal)
Wanganui x	1,398	65	1,672
St. Johns x	246	16	333
Castlecliff x	28	3	134
Kai Iwi	23	2	50
Westmere	74	-	19
Aramoho x	160	6	392

11 WH, 12 Oct. 1899.

12 WH, 7 Dec. 1899.

	G. Carson (Opposition)	J. Murphy (Independent Liberal)	A. Willis (Liberal)
Brunswick	50	2	30
Fordell	71	1	66
Maxwell	48	2	43
Mosstown	36	12	67
Upukongaro	35	1	72
x Urban	<u>2,169</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>2,878</u>

As can be seen from the above figures Murphy polled poorly in the predominantly working class areas of Aramoho and Castlecliff. The time was as yet premature for a candidate representing the labour wing of the Liberals.

In 1902 the Opposition had a new candidate J.W. Baker; his campaign suffered because he refused to canvass the electors. Not doing so would, in his opinion, "foster self-reliance and induce all to think for themselves." ¹³ He criticized the Government for its extensive borrowing and for its failure to develop the land around Wanganui. ¹⁴ Willis reminded the electorate of his efforts at furthering Wanganui's interest in parliament - his advocacy of the Parapara Road and river improvements.

As in 1899 a representative of the working man, Patrick Lundon, stood as an Independent Liberal. Lundon

13 WC, 20 Oct. 1902.

14 WC, 31 Oct. 1902.

managed to attract 1,200 electors to the Drill Hall which the Chronicle described as one of the largest election meetings yet seen in Wanganui. He told the electors that he was a liberal in every sense of the word but that he reserved the privilege of criticizing both men and measures. Lundon felt that more attention should be paid to the needs of the working man. He called for the nationalization of the traffic on the Wanganui River and for the establishment of state coal mines. ¹⁵

The election results were Willis 2,866, Baker 1,428 and Lundon 586. Baker's rather too casual approach was partly to blame for the Opposition's poor showing. Its share of the vote fell from 48% in 1899 to 29% in 1902. Another factor in the Opposition's loss of votes was the changes in the electoral boundaries. In 1902 Wanganui had become almost an entirely urban electorate and the Opposition could no longer rely on the rural vote. The voting by polling booths was as follows: ¹⁶

	J.W. Baker (Opposition)	P. Lundon (Independent Liberal)	A.D. Willis (Liberal)
Drill Hall x	980	397	1,908
Liverpool Street x	218	58	339
Aramoho x	106	95	372
Mosstown	45	17	46
Castlecliff x	43	12	148
Sedgebrook x	36	7	53
x urban	<u>1,428</u>	<u>586</u>	<u>2,866</u>

15 WC, 7 Nov. 1902.

16 WH, 26 Nov. 1902.

Willis obtained a majority in all booths while Lundon polled best amongst the railwaymen at Aramoho. On the surface this election was a sweeping victory for Willis.

The situation was dramatically reversed in 1905 and it is somewhat difficult to explain the situation that resulted. The 1905 elections in general were characterized by two factors - the large number of candidates, especially independent Liberals and the emergence of sectional voting. The workers were beginning to demand their own representatives. Willis, it was increasingly felt, with his business connections was not sufficiently interested in the problems of the workers. How true this was is difficult to tell. Willis spoke in Parliament on most topics of concern to urban labour. It was probably the attitude of the workers rather than the actions of Willis that had changed.

In the 1905 Election James Hogan stood as an Independent Liberal. He told an election meeting at the Opera House that he supported the present Government but added that it needed strong followers. At the present, according to Hogan, the rank and file of the Liberals were weak. What was needed were men who would lift up their voices. He did not specifically criticize Willis. Hogan advocated state flour mills and the reduction of taxes on the necessities of life. He supported the leasehold and

the establishment of a state bank. He concluded by stressing an "Advance Wanganui" policy.¹⁷ The policy was one which would have particular appeal to the workers of the town.

James Hogan was born in Wanganui in 1874. He entered the Eastown Railway Workshops at the age of 19. He was employed for eleven years as a machinist before resigning this position in 1905 in order to stand for Parliament.¹⁸ Hogan had been prominent in railway affairs and had at one time been secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. He was well known locally and had a solid basis of support in the 231 members of the local branch of the ASRS.

To meet the challenge on his left Willis, the defending M.P., refused to give Hogan press coverage in the Herald, reporting only one meeting of Hogan's campaign. The Chronicle on the other hand could only welcome Hogan's candidacy, for he posed no threat to the Opposition candidate and hopefully he might allow him to win by splitting the Liberal vote.

Seddon was alarmed at the profusion of Independent Liberals who were offering themselves for election and went on tour to bolster up the official Liberal candidates.

17 WH, 4 Oct. 1905.

18 Cyclopedia, p. 590.

He spoke at Aramoho in favour of Willis telling the audience that he was no lover of strange faces. Skilled platform speaker that he was, Seddon did not have an easy time. Supporters of Hogan heckled from the audience while Hogan himself spoke from the floor. ¹⁹

The following evening Seddon spoke at the Wanganui Opera House to a capacity audience. He told the electors that if the four liberal candidates who were at present standing for the Wanganui seat went to the poll the seat would be lost and Wanganui would be represented by an opponent of the Government. "I'll speak in plain terms - the seat will be lost and you will wake up next morning and wonder why you had been so stupid." ²⁰ In the event five candidates stayed the course. The results by polling booths were as follows: ²¹

	W.G. Bassett (Official Opposition)	R. Gatenby (Independent Liberal)	F. Haselden (Opposition)	J.T. Hogan (Independent Liberal)	A.D. Willis (Official Liberal)
Drill Hall x	568	193	445	1,305	888
Liverpool St.x	196	51	96	258	207
Aramoho x	63	5	58	327	174
Eastown x	16	1	11	101	40
Sedgebrook x	13	1	-	61	30
Taylorville x	89	8	77	169	161
Castlecliff x	20	34	7	99	54
Mosstown	23	34	19	66	15
St Johns x	68	4	23	36	21
x urban	<u>1,056</u>	<u>331</u>	<u>738</u>	<u>2,512</u>	<u>1,589</u>

19 WH, 23 Nov. 1905.

20 WH, 29 Nov. 1905.

21 WH, 7 Dec. 1905.

It can be seen from the above figures that Hogan made considerable inroads into the railway areas of Aramoho and Eastown and the waterside workers area of Castlecliff. Although the results are somewhat confused by the presence of five candidates it is obvious that the labour section of the Liberals had deserted Willis.

The Wanganui Chronicle put Willis's defeat down to "an emphatic protest against ministerial interference with the rights and privileges of the electors." ²² Seddon's attempts to pressure the liberals of Wanganui to vote for Willis had been a mistake.

In response to the vote splitting that occurred in 1905 due to the profusion of liberal candidates a Second Ballot Act was passed through parliament in 1908. Under this system a candidate needed to secure more than half the valid vote cast. If this did not happen a second ballot was to be held between the two candidates with the highest number of votes. It was hoped that this Act would save the Liberal Party from redundant candidates and that it would also secure its left flank. The more strategic conception behind the Bill was to prevent the formation of an independent labour movement. It was an attempt to fit the developing labour movement into the Liberal system.

²² WC, 7 Dec. 1905.

Both in the 1908 and the 1911 elections the Second Ballot backfired in Wanganui as far as the Liberals were concerned. As will be subsequently shown, in 1908 the right wing Liberals voted with the Opposition on the second ballot and in 1911 the supporters of Reform voted for Labour on the second ballot.

In 1908 by virtue of the fact that he was Liberal M.P. for Wanganui Hogan was the official Liberal candidate. He defended his party's administration and stressed his close attention to local needs. ²³

The Wanganui Herald was surprisingly magnanimous towards Hogan. In an editorial it wrote:

Mr Hogan has done remarkably well for a young member . . . and it is not unreasonable to assume that should he be favoured with another term his future record will completely eclipse his past useful tenure of office. ²⁴

Despite these sentiments the business sector of the Liberal Party attempted to regain the Wanganui seat and they put up their own candidate, the mayor of Wanganui Mr MacKay, who stood as a Progressive Liberal. He said that he would support the present government as long as it followed the progressive policy laid down by those illustrious men, Ballance, Seddon and MacKenzie. He attempted to compete with Hogan on his own ground by advocating industrial

23 WH, 28 Oct. 1908.

24 WH, 28 Oct. 1908.

conciliation and state control of industry.²⁵ This represented a determined attempt to re-obtain the ascendancy the business community had lost when Willis had been defeated in 1905. In reality however, MacKay's views were little different from those of the Opposition candidate and he posed no real threat to Hogan.

The results by polling booths were:²⁶

	Hogan (Liberal)	Hutchison (Opposition)	MacKay (Independent Liberal)
Drill Hall x	1,466	953	920
Mosstown	72	47	32
Eastown x	149	37	48
St. Johns x	57	114	28
Castlecliff x	121	50	102
Taylorville x	151	118	83
Masonic Hall x	103	72	70
Gonville x	86	48	44
Aramoho x	321	151	114
Liverpool St. x	488	254	250
x urban	<u>3,041</u>	<u>1,882</u>	<u>1,710</u>

As Hogan did not obtain half of the votes cast a second ballot was required. MacKay did not give Hogan any active support on the second ballot campaigning.

In the second ballot Hogan obtained 3,599 (558 more votes than on the first ballot) while Hutchison polled

25 WH, 24 Oct. 1908.

26 WH, 25 Nov. 1908.

2,860 votes (978 more). This suggests that about two-thirds of MacKay's supporters voted for Hutchison. Whereas the combined liberal vote in the first ballot had been 72% of the total vote it declined to 55% on the second ballot. The Lyttleton Times predicted such a situation when it commented: "Where the feeling between two sections of the Liberal Party is at all pronounced the second ballot will encourage the friends of the rejected candidate to express their disappointment by voting against their own political convictions." ²⁷

The voting by polling booths shows this shift. ²⁸

	Hogan	Hutchison
Drill Hall x	1,792	1,580
Liverpool St. x	595	331
Masonic Hall x	103	92
Aramoho x	389	209
Eastown x	149	41
Taylorville x	195	218
Gonville x	77	66
Castlecliff x	157	119
Mosstown	78	66
St. Johns x	64	138
x urban	<u>3,599</u>	<u>2,860</u>

As can be seen, compared with the first ballot many of MacKay's votes went to Hutchison. Castlecliff is an example

²⁷ Lyttleton Times, 16 Oct. 1908.

²⁸ WH, 25 Nov. 1908.

of this. On the second ballot Hogan obtained 36 more votes than he received on the first ballot while Hutchison increased his vote from 50 to 119 on what were, on the first ballot liberal votes.

CHAPTER IVTHE 1911 ELECTION

1908 was the high point of the Liberal Government from the point of votes gained. The Liberals obtained 60% of the valid vote cast in the European seats. This was the highest popular vote ever received by any party in New Zealand. ¹

In 1908 it was still possible for all men to hope for all things from the Liberal Party. It was between the 1908 and 1911 elections that labour dissatisfaction with the Liberals came to a head. Ward's legislative holiday of 1908 was a clear sign that little could be expected by labour from the Liberals. The 1908 Arbitration Amendment Act was described by the National Trades and Labour Councils' Parliamentary Committee as the most "cunningly devised, insidious and dangerous measure from the stand point of the workers and public well being that had ever been submitted." In 1909 coming on top of the Arbitration Amendment Bill was a sharp bout of unemployment. The Liberals could offer labour no more than a revamped arbitration system and the advice that they would have to work harder if they wanted more. By attempting to retain the support of his rural right wing, Ward neglected the sectional demands of labour and lost its support.

¹ The next highest popular vote was obtained in 1938 when Labour gained 55.8% of the total vote.

The cost of living was a matter of close concern to the working class as Veitch's considerable interest in the subject testifies. Since about 1900 a growing mood of discontent among workers over the Arbitration Court awards had been developing. By 1905-06 the Arbitration Court had reached a fairly rigid state. Tregear noted that the Court had become simply an instrument "for interpreting and standardizing wage rates in terms of the cost of living." Whether or not the real income of the worker was increasing between 1900 - 1910 is not altogether clear. W.B. Sutch and J.B. Condliffe are of the opinion that the real wage of the worker was falling.² Sutch for example writes: "By 1906 real wages - the power to buy goods and services and pay rent - were lower than when the Arbitration Act was passed in 1894, and by 1913 they were lower still."³

The Cost of Living Commission which reported to Parliament in 1912, and of which Veitch and Tregear were members, claimed that there had been an increase in the purchasing power of wages. Taking 1896 as a base year with an index figure of 100 for the purchasing power of wages, it indicated that the index figure had risen to 118 by 1911, suggesting an 18 per cent increase in the purchasing power of wages between 1896 - 1911.⁴ Simkin

2 W.B. Sutch, Poverty and Progress, p. 159 and J.B. Condliffe, New Zealand in the Making (London, 1930), pp. 328-43.

3 Sutch, Poverty and Progress, p. 159.

4 AJHR, 1912, H-18, p. xlix.

tends to support the idea that the position of the worker was improving. After considering the evidence available he concludes that between 1895 and 1910 prices were remarkably stable and that wage increases over this period would not have been absorbed by inflation. He feels that there was a substantial rise in real income after 1895, in which the workers shared.⁵

During this period then the workers were probably becoming discontented by the Court's refusal to become an instrument of profit sharing and felt that while they were being tied down to a relatively fixed standard of living the farmers and businessmen were securing the fruits of the country's considerable economic progress.

The Trades and Labour Councils at their annual national meeting in 1904 called for the setting up of an independent Labour Party. This was achieved in the Independent Political Labour League which contested the 1905 elections. Out of the nine candidates put up in 1905 seven lost their deposit. At the 1909 conference of the Trades and Labour Councils it was decided to set up a new political organization which it was hoped would function more efficiently. In 1910 the New Zealand Labour Party was set up. The policy of the Labour Party was the gradual public ownership of all the means of

5 C. Simkin, The Instability of a Dependent Economy, p. 199.

production, distribution and exchange. More specific planks in the party's programme were a state bank, retention of remaining crown land, unemployment insurance, 46 hour week, abolition of the Legislative Council, proportional representation, expansion of the pension system and a minimum legal wage.⁶ Although progressive this programme was in no way revolutionary. The Labour Party sought to improve the conditions of the workers within the existing framework of society, using proper constitutional processes. Labour was to be respectable. It was concerned with the dignity of labour, that the workman should become a respected member of the community. Such sentiments were in tune with the general composition of the Trades and Labour Councils. They tended to consist of skilled craft unions, who had no sympathy for syndicalism.

William Andrew Veitch was born at Port Monteith Perthshire, Scotland in 1870. The son of a primary school teacher he worked for the Post and Telegraph Office until he was 17 at which time he migrated to New Zealand. Shortly after arriving in New Zealand he joined the Railways where he served for twenty-two years in the locomotive branch. He was a very prominent member of the ASRS during his railway career. For three years he was secretary of the ASRS at Cross Creek and subsequently president of the

⁶ Manawatu Daily Times, 27 Jan. 1912, gives the Labour Party platform.

(45)



W.A. Veitch as President of the ASRS
1909.

ASRS. ⁷ Veitch was a member of the Railway Superannuation Board and had been on the Railway Appeal Board until resigning in protest when one of its decision was overruled by the Minister of Railways. ⁸

Subsequent to his election as member of Parliament he served on the Wanganui Harbour Board and was on the Wanganui River Trust and Domain Board. Veitch was Minister of Labour, Mines and Transport in the Ward Government of 1928-30 and Minister of Railways in the Forbes Government of 1930-31.

Veitch had been president of the ASRS at a time when the organization was in a state of upheaval. He had to deal with the development of sectionalism, in which the locomotive and firemen attempted to set up their own union. Although a locomotive man himself, Veitch fought strenuously to stop a split from developing in the ASRS. He presided over a reorganization of the ASRS and his cool and quiet personality helped him to maintain stability during a very difficult period. He was shrewd, careful and unflamboyant. Mr Wheeler, editor of the Railway Review, wrote that Veitch showed moderation and reasonableness in his dealings and was not given to extravagancy of method or language. ⁹

7 MW, 2 Dec. 1914.

8 RR, 30 July 1909, p. 229

9 RR, 8 March 1912, p. vii.

It was his experience as president of the ASRS that made Veitch decide to stand for parliament. The period from 1908 onwards was one of retrenchment in the Railway service. Veitch was engaged in a bitter fight to prevent the eroding away of the conditions of the railwaymen.

We are not going to call a strike or do anything inconsistent with our duty to the state which employs us, but we must and we will use every legitimate means to prevent the utter destruction of the Society's work over the last fifteen or twenty years. 10

Veitch told a national conference of the ASRS in Wellington in 1911 - "I regret to say that the relationship between myself and the Minister of Railways has become seriously unsatisfactory." 11 Several branches suggested that the ASRS should affiliate with outside labour organizations. Veitch however opposed this. The way to deal with these problems was, in his view, political activity. Accordingly he became a candidate in the 1911 election.

Veitch gave some of his reasons for standing for parliament to the Railway Review:

The last two sessions of parliament have failed to deal with the railwaymen's petitions and the conditions of the workers throughout New Zealand have not improved. During recent years the rich have become richer and the poor poorer and there is no

10 RR, 8 April 1910, p. 135.

11 RR, 10 March 1911, p. 109.

hope of improving the position until the useful people organize themselves into a political party in advance of the present parties to see that justice is done. 12

Veitch resigned from the Railways in 1911 in order to stand for parliament, as public servants were not allowed to stand for election. He was invited to stand for the Wanganui seat by a group of railwaymen and other workers of Wanganui who desired a representative of labour to stand for the seat. 13 Although Veitch had exchanged hard words with the Wanganui locomotive men over the threat of the formation of a separate locomotive union, this group was friendly towards Veitch's candidacy. The Railway Review wrote "As evidence of the Wanganui locomotive men's good feelings towards Veitch we are gratified to be able to mention that they have started a special fund in aid of his campaign and that some of the most active promoters of it are those who were foremost in opposition to him on the sectional issue." 14

What Veitch's relationship to the Labour Party was at this date it is difficult to tell. He was not a member of it while president of the ASRS. His candidacy for Wanganui was proposed by an informal body of workers. The material available does not say when he joined the party. It was probable that it was very close in time to the 1911 election.

12 RR, 15 Dec. 1911, p. 588.

13 RR, 20 Oct. 1911, p. 489.

14 RR, 20 Oct. 1911, p. 490.

This all boded ill for Hogan. The railwaymen up until now had been his chief supporters. If they were prepared to desert him it was highly probable that the rest of the workers in Wanganui would do the same.

The Wanganui Chronicle was not displeased to see Veitch standing as a candidate. As in 1908 there was a possibility that the liberal vote would be split thus allowing the Opposition to win. The Chronicle adopted a condescending attitude towards Veitch.

We have in fairness to remember that Mr W.A. Veitch is a novice. He has, as it were, just stepped straight from the cab of his engine to the political platform and consequently it would be unreasonable to expect him to be polished. 15

At this stage however Veitch was no rude engine driver. As president of the ASRS he had done much committee and conference work and had addressed many branch meetings. As he told Parliament in 1912:

. . . when I entered parliament I thought I would have to acquire a good deal more of refinement and polish than I had as a trade unionist. I find however that I have not been strongly impressed in that direction. 16

The Wanganui Herald, which had never quite forgiven Hogan for defeating Willis, adopted a friendly attitude towards Veitch:

15 WC, 25 Oct. 1911.

16 PD, 1912, 157, p. 296.

We are not of those who fear that it would be a disaster to the welfare of New Zealand if the Labour Party held the reins of office. 17

Hogan was on the defensive. In his election campaign he expressed a certain amount of dissatisfaction with the government but could see no better party to support. He admitted that the government had failings and that it was not progressive enough for his democratic ideas. He was not infrequently in disagreement with the government's views, but in general the Liberal Government was following the policy laid down by Ballance.¹⁸ This was a somewhat impossible position for a candidate to be in. Hogan was the official candidate of the Liberal Party. If a candidate expresses a lack of confidence in his own party it is little wonder that the electorate will display a similar lack of confidence. Hogan was in the position that Veitch would find himself in 1935. It was not so much that the member for Wanganui was out of touch with his electors, but rather it was the case that he was attached to a party that was discredited. In 1911 the Liberals were discredited in the eyes of the Wanganui workers, just as in 1935 the Coalition was discredited, not Veitch personally.

Veitch carefully moulded his campaign so that he would appear not only as encompassed by, but actually the champion of, the Ballance Tradition of politics. It was quite obvious

17 WE, 1 Nov. 1911.

18 WH, 8 Nov. 1911.



Victoria Avenue, Wanganui 1911.
(Photo: Wanganui Museum)

to Veitch that the votes of the workers alone were an insufficient base on which to be elected. He would have to capture the traditional liberal vote and this is what he set out to do.

Thus he stressed the point that the Labour movement was not a wild revolutionary one which would plunder the community in the interest of the pick and shovel men. Veitch said that the Labour Party was concerned with the interests of all. The shopkeeper equally with the shopman was the victim of the monopolies which the Labour Party wanted to destroy. The country wanted a more enlightened and democratic programme and, claimed Veitch, the Labour Party was offering a platform that was not in the interest of any one section but of the whole community.¹⁹

Despite the obvious dissatisfaction that existed at the present state of politics the prohibition issue generated more interest than did the actual election itself. Full page advertisements supporting prohibition appeared in both daily papers. Extra interest was aroused by the presence in town of "Professor" W.T. Mills. Mills had been invited to conduct a lecture tour in New Zealand by the executive of the Trades and Labour Council. Mills visited Wanganui during the election campaign and divided his time between supporting Veitch and speaking on the prohibition issue.

¹⁹ WH, 31 Oct. 1911. The ideas which Veitch put forward can be seen outlined in chapter V.

On 31 October at a meeting presided over by Veitch, Mills spoke of the problem of land monopoly and unearned increment, charging that both the Liberals and the Reform Party had side stepped the issue.²⁰ Later in the month Mills addressed a crowded meeting on the need for a Labour party.²¹

More interest was shown however in Mills's lectures on prohibition. A full Opera House listened to him speak on "Alcoholic Degeneracy" while standing room only was left in the Druids Hall when he spoke on "The Schoolhouse and the Grogshop."²² Veitch refused to either support or condemn prohibition. He was too consciously aware of the large body of people he would offend if he took a stand on the issue. It was expedient to be neutral.

In 1911 the Wanganui electorate had become wholly urban.

On the first ballot for the election of candidates the results were Veitch (Labour) 2,295, Hogan (Liberal) 2,220, Hutchison (Reform) 1,690, MacKay (Independent) 1,117.²³

That Veitch had captured a large amount of the working class vote is shown in the results of the following working class districts.²⁴

- 20 WH, 1 Nov. 1911.
- 21 WH, 28 Nov. 1911.
- 22 WH, 27 Nov. 1911.
- 23 AJHR, 1912, H-12, p.3.
- 24 AJHR, 1912, H-12, p.3.

	Hogan	Hutchison	MacKay	Veitch
Keith St.	271	199	119	322
Aramoho	114	66	39	176
Gonville	123	89	51	182

The votes gained here by Veitch would have otherwise gone to Hogan.

During the election campaign Veitch had given a pledge that in a vote of no confidence he would vote against Ward.²⁵ Because of this undertaking the Reform supporters were advised through the Wanganui Chronicle to vote for Veitch on the second ballot.²⁶

The result of the Second Ballot by polling booths was as follows:²⁷

	Veitch	Hogan
Drill Hall	2,045	1,556
Keith St.	544	322
Aramoho	258	167
St Johns	109	51
Gonville	282	181
Castlecliff	169	159
Taylorville	179	123
Wanganui East	356	281
Masonic Hall	122	94
	<hr/> 4,064	<hr/> 2,934

That Reform supporters voted for Veitch on the Second Ballot is illustrated by the fact that Veitch obtained

25 WH, 11 Dec. 1911.

26 WC, 13 Dec. 1911.

27 AJHR, 1912, H-12, p.3.

his highest majority at St Johns, the most select suburb in Wanganui.

Wanganui now had a Labour member of parliament but it was the labour of John Ballance, not the labour of Semple or Holland. When they voted for Veitch the workers of Wanganui had not deserted the Ballance Tradition. Rather it was the case that under the leadership of Ward the Liberals had deserted the ideas of Ballance. Veitch was firmly in the Wanganui political mainstream.

The 1911 election represents the culmination of a trend in politics which can be seen in its incipient form in John Murphy in 1899. This was a move to the left and the rise of labour to political power. The notable factor of this re-orientation was that it never strayed out of the framework called the "Ballance Tradition". Labour was moderate and it was respectable. Murphy in many ways was the prototype of the Wanganui labour politician. He was a skilled tradesman who commanded respect in the community. He never moved outside of political action as the means of dealing with labour grievances. The labour leader was well aware of the folklore of the town. He was often a local born and bred like Hogan. Those who came from the outside, such as Veitch, had to conform to the Ballance style of politics in Wanganui if they wished to command support.

Veitch never strayed out of the limits imposed on him by the realities of Wanganui politics. He was well aware that if he had joined the Federation of Labour or even the Labour Party of 1916 his career as member of parliament for Wanganui would have been at an end.

Politics was conducted Ballance style in Wanganui. The proponents of syndicalism, revolutionary socialism, or any other "ism" had this to contend with if they wished to preach the "word" to Wanganui. Militant labour could never understand Wanganui, it was for them a mystery. The Maoriland Worker only once touched on what was essentially the essence of the situation in Wanganui when it wrote, commenting on the 1914 election results, ". . . the town that elected Ballance has proved to be incapable of re-action." 28

28 MW, 16 Dec. 1914.

CHAPTER VWANGANUI AND THE "NEW RADICALISM"

The response to labour problems adopted by Veitch and the NZLP of 1910 was essentially a restoration of the Labour half of the old Liberal-labour alliance of the early 1890's. The emphasis was on political rather than industrial action. Moderate Labour was anti-monopolist rather than socialist; progressive and humanitarian rather than radical. This position probably represented the attitude of most workers in New Zealand. Labour in general was more concerned with practical reforms than it was in changing the basic structure of society.

There was however a second approach to labour problems and this was imported into New Zealand in the first decade of the 20th Century. This was a radical-revolutionary approach which was adopted by the FOL set up in 1909 and by the Socialist Party. Whereas the moderates wished to see the Arbitration Court reformed the radicals emphasized economic bargaining outside the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. This was to be achieved by the simplification of the union structure, bringing about a centralization and consolidation of strength. Politically this new radicalism aimed at the overthrow of the capitalist system desiring to replace it with a socialist-cooperative commonwealth. Its ideas were closely linked to those of the

contemporary international socialist movement.

The groups which supported the radicals tended to be the unskilled and semi-skilled workers and those who had a minimal stake in society. The miners of the West Coast, the flax millers of Manawatu and unskilled workers of the four main centres were the chief supporters of radicalism. Although numerically not large the new radicalism had an importance out of proportion to its size due to the calibre of its leaders and the enthusiasm of its followers. Veitch's position had the support of the silent majority of the workers but this group was often politically apathetic. One result of the liberal consensus in Wanganui was a weak trade union and labour movement. Moderateness and apathy were often the reverse sides of the same coin. ¹

What were the factors which made for militancy, or conversely moderateness in ones approach to labour problems? The model put forward by S.M. Lipset ² can be used to give a possible explanation which is highly plausible for this militant-moderate cleavage. This is the idea of cross cutting cleavages. Extremism is nourished by isolation and a lack of exchange of ideas. The greatest degree of militancy between 1908 and 1914 was to be seen among such groups as

1 For the development of radicalism in the labour movement see R.T. Newman, Moderates and Militants in the New Zealand Labour Movement 1901-1913 (Unpublished thesis, CUC, 1948).

2 S.M. Lipset, Political Man (London, 1960).

the flax millers and the West Coast miners. Such isolated groups had strong reasons for social discontent plus a social structure favourable to intra-group communications and unfavourable to cross class communications. For example, on the West Coast coal miners in 1910 may have felt that their employment as miners was a permanent condition as other nearby employment opportunities would be minimal and the feeling that one had no alternative employment opportunities would be present. A group of people such as these miners, under the stress of working conditions which were bad and vulnerable, may have taken up militant unionism or socialism as a compelling means of saying something about themselves and the society in which they lived. Such a pattern of activity would seem to give the possibility of change from subservience to dominance.³

It is also possible that in large cities, such as Wellington, social interaction was also more likely to be within economic classes to the extent that some working class groups may have been able to exist in a sub-culture of their own with a minimum of contact with other groups.

In general these conditions, listed above, were probably the extreme in New Zealand. Oliver has put forward a useful way of viewing New Zealand society.⁴ This is to see

3 This is based on oral comments made by Professor Oliver.

4 W.H. Oliver, "Reeves Sinclair and the Social Pattern."

New Zealand as a society of social mobility. Rather than taking political action of a class conscious nature there is an attempt to improve one's position by social mobility. Where the possibility of social mobility exists, or appears to exist, there is a reduction in collective efforts at social change. Living in an open class society with a developing economy the majority of New Zealanders would believe in the prospect of personal betterment.

Such a theory fits in with the Wanganui situation. As noted in Chapter II Wanganui in the period around 1911 was experiencing moderately boom conditions. Employment was plentiful and there was great optimism as to the future. Politically there was an alliance between the workers and the small businessmen of the town. Thus Wanganui can be fitted into the Lipset model. It could be said that the town provided an excellent example of cross cutting cleavages which mitigated against the formation of a self conscious working class. No one sector of the town could dominate; workers, small businessmen, and larger businessmen together formed a balance. Such a situation as this would allow for a maximum amount of communication between the various groups. This is a useful way in which to view the Wanganui situation.

Wanganui had been connected by railway to Wellington in 1886 and was in no way physically isolated from the rest of the country but there was what could be described as an ideological isolation, rather surprising for what was the largest town in North Island outside of Auckland and Wellington. Wanganui labour was not self conscious in a class sense. The industrial unrest of 1908-14 scarcely ruffled the calm of the town. During the waterside strike of 1913 one would have to look very hard to find any evidence of the bitterness to be seen for example in Wellington. ⁵

This lack of involvement with militant labour appears to have been a two way process. There is a curious paucity of material about Wanganui in the national labour papers, such as the Maoriland Worker and the Transport Worker. While there is considerable mention made of, and reports received from, neighbouring Palmerston North and Manawatu, Wanganui is virtually ignored. When it is infrequently referred to, Wanganui is treated with a certain amount of awe, as a place which is almost beyond the comprehension of the Maoriland Worker. It would appear that Wanganui had been given up as a "dead loss" as far as militant labour was concerned. A letter to the Maoriland Worker from

5 See Chapter VI for a discussion of the Waterside strike.

a Wanganui correspondent complained:

Now as far as I can remember no organizer or delegate of the New Zealand Federation of Labour has held a meeting or addressed an organization in this town for over twelve months or maybe the last two years. How then can we expect the unions of this town to uphold the Federation when they know absolutely nothing about its policy except from what they hear from the other crowd and absorb from the nice things the press publish about the Federation of Labour? 6

A contributor to the Maoriland Worker commented that in his opinion Wanganui had been badly neglected in respect to good labour speakers. 7 Even when the representatives of extreme labour did visit Wanganui they received little support. In 1912 a branch of the Socialist Party was set up in Wanganui with ten members. 8 Socialist Parties had been set up in other centres as early as 1902. The national secretary of the Socialist Party, Fred Cooke, visited the infant Wanganui branch in January 1913. Local trade unionists who he talked to were indifferent, or even hostile to his ideas.

He wrote of his visit:

The people here (Wanganui) are about ten years behind the main centres in progressive thought. Socialism is a sealed book to most of them. They know nothing of it and declare that they

- 6 MW, 19 July 1912.
- 7 MW, 2 May 1913.
- 8 MW, 8 Nov. 1912.

don't want to know anything of it . . .
well they are fighting an uphill battle our
comrades in Wanganui. 9

Organizers of moderate labour fared little better.
When W.T. Mills held a meeting in Wanganui in 1913 to
explain the Unity campaign and to lecture on socialism and
industrial unionism only between 50 and 60 people attended
his meeting. This number consisted of local Labour and
Socialist Party stalwarts. The mass of the workers were
indifferent. 10

Yet in spite of this there was a certain degree of
complacency towards Wanganui on the part of the Federation
of Labour. It thought that Wanganui labour could be
converted if only the effort was made to do so. Thus the
Maoriland Worker could write:

Although the isolated union on the Wanganui
River which calls itself the Dominion
Executive of the Waterside Workers Federation
11 still drags a few officially run unions
at its heels this can only last until such
time as our organizers pay a visit to these
places, put the gospel of industrial
unionism before the rank and file and heave
the detractors over the side and enroll the
watersiders in the Federation of Labour. 12

By supporting Veitch the workers of Wanganui
demonstrated their views on the role that labour should

9 MW, 24 Jan. 1913.

10 MW, 25 Apl. 1913.

11 See Chapter VI for a detailed discussion of this.

12 MW, 29 Mar. 1912.

play. The degree to which Veitch's political ideas coincided with those of his electorate is a matter of speculation. They would probably be close to those of the railway workers as it was in the ASRS that Veitch developed most of his ideas. The non-class conciliatory policies he put forward would be acceptable to the general liberal voter. Veitch drew his main support from the wage earning and lower middle class areas of Wanganui. Although it is beyond the scope of this work to study the social support for Veitch's ideas his long tenure as M.P. for Wanganui suggests that his views were acceptable to these groups.

Although he was elected as a member of the Labour Party Veitch was, in parliament, an Independent. Four members were elected in 1911 representing labour but they in no way constituted a party inside parliament. As J. Payne pointed out, Veitch was the only Labour Party representative in parliament. Robertson was a Socialist while Hindmarsh, supposedly a Labour Party man, was of doubtful loyalty. Payne himself was an Independent. Payne proposed that cooperation between the four labour members should take the form of discussing labour matters for the general good but to in no way bind the free and independent action of any labour man. ¹³

13 Auckland Weekly News, 28 Dec. 1911, p.20.

Veitch was not tied down to a party line and was able to act as he saw fit. The industrial troubles of the period gave him an opportunity to expound his views at length both within the House and outside. He was widely listened to and soon gained the reputation of being the spokesman of sane labour, gaining the respect of moderate circles, a fact which the Maoriland Worker commented upon with irony:

Mr W.A. Veitch, M.P. should be a happy man. The Christchurch Press has on more than one occasion given him its hearty commendation. This is an honour we believe no other Labour leader has attained to. One day last week the Press said that Mr Veitch's opinions carry more weight than those of any other member of the Labour Party. 14

Early in 1912 it was common rumour that Veitch had been offered a cabinet post by Ward (the portfolios of Labour and Railways) as part of his attempt to stave off defeat. 15

The problem of the Arbitration Court was for Veitch a major concern. It was while he was president of the ASRS that he first proposed changes in the Arbitration Court. Veitch put forward the idea of creating an intermediate body to arbitrate on the demands of the railway service. He thought that the Arbitration Court did not under-

14 MW, 4 Apl. 1913.

15 RR, 9 Feb. 1912, p.8. MW, 12 Jan. 1912. "That there are men who cannot be bought even by cabinet posts is a sign of the times," said the MW.

stand railway technicalities and failed to inspire confidence among railwaymen. ¹⁶

For Veitch the principle of arbitration and conciliation was the most satisfactory way of dealing with industrial disputes. While he was president of the ASRS a considerable amount of pressure had been put on the executive from within the railways to affiliate with the Federation of Labour. Veitch however was opposed to the use of the strike weapon as a means of labour progress. Strikes in his view usually ended in disaster. Labour should be organized to get what it wanted without resorting to such means. Justice could only be achieved by political organization. ¹⁷

Veitch put these views before parliament. He told the House that the question of the Arbitration Court was one of the most important matters they had to face. ¹⁸ The fact that there was a judge in the chair of the Court was, in Veitch's view, a mistake. An economist would be better, for a legal mind was not suited to the task of adjudicating between wage earners and employers. ¹⁹ There could be no improvement in the Court until its functions had been extended; " . . . until such time as the court has the power to conduct industrial investigations

16 RR, 30 June 1911, p.287.

17 RR, 8 March 1912, Supplement, p.7.

18 PD, 1912, 157, p.304.

19 PD, 1913, 162, p.542.

and to fix the relationship between wages and prices very little good can result from its work." ²⁰

This led to the theme that was most dear to Veitch's heart. Whereas the Federation of Labour used the devil figure of the capitalist class exploiting the workers, Veitch's devil figures were the trusts and combines. Once these had been abolished the road of the worker would be, if not free, considerably cleared. "The fight today is not between the worker and his employer, it is between the people and the great monopolies," ²¹ Veitch told parliament in 1913. In Veitch's thinking there was a close connection between the cost of living and the functions of the Arbitration Court. To deal with the problems created by trusts Veitch advocated that a Board of Industrial Investigation be set up which, in conjunction with the Arbitration Court and the Labour Department, would keep the Government informed on economic developments and would allow the Government to deal with the problems of monopoly when they arose. ²² Veitch was of the opinion that commercial monopolies in New Zealand were so complete that it was practically impossible for the small businessman to compete. Because of this the trusts were able to force up the cost of living. In part due to Veitch's demands, a commission on the cost

20 PD, 1912, 159, p.26.

21 PD, 1913, 162, p.542.

22 PD, 1913, 162, p.540.

of living was set up which reported to parliament in 1912.²³ The Commission's chairman was Tregear while Veitch was a member. The findings of the Commission asserted that Veitch's trusts and combines were not merely the figment of an overheated imagination. "The evidence that the Commission has been able to collect proves conclusively that trusts, combines and monopolies operate extensively in the commerce of this country." The Commission also obtained evidence which showed that the Merchants' Association had restrained trade in their own favour, boycotted independent traders and had forced up prices.²⁴

When asked by the Maoriland Worker if the Commission had proved the existence of trusts Veitch replied - "New Zealand has not got trusts. Trusts have got New Zealand."²⁵

Veitch was beginning here to sound as if he was propounding the "history as a conspiracy theory" which had been so attractive to the Populists in USA in the late 19th Century. The Populists were a rural group who thought that they saw a conspiracy between the railways and the grain elevator companies to exploit them. Such protests against trusts and combines tended to be small town and rural in nature. It provided for the unsophisticated mind

23 See AJHR, 1912, H-18. for its report.

24 AJHR, 1912, H-18, p. lxiv.

25 MW, 6 Sept. 1912.

an easily understood explanation of complex problems. The agrarian radicals in New Zealand, those who sought to establish a Country Party in the 1920's were such a group. They maintained that the country's economic and political life was dominated by financial magnets concerned to feather their nests at the farmers' expense. In their view there existed a financial conspiracy directed against the farmers. To a certain extent Veitch fits into this pattern. His emphasis on trusts and combines was essentially an unsophisticated way of viewing problems. This situation was probably an occupational hazard of Veitch's political career. He never became a member of a tightly organized party. He was normally a member of a makeshift grouping and for much of his career in parliament he was a lone advocate faced by the solid wall of the party system.

Because he did not belong to a major political party and being unable to see the possibility of obtaining office in the foreseeable future Veitch advocated a change in the structure of parliament which would do away with the rule by party that existed.

"I can see no reason," said Veitch in 1912, "why the present system of government should not be displaced for a better one." ²⁶ He felt that government had degenerated into the rule of the party boss. Veitch's concern was

26 PD, 1912, 158, p.647.

occasioned by an increasing awareness of the growing power of the cabinet in decision making and the decline of the House into little more than a debating chamber. The solution he proposed was for the executive to be elected by members of parliament.

As well as an elective executive Veitch proposed proportional representation. Under the present system he felt that different sections of the community had control over other sections for their own benefit. Proportional representation would allow for all sections of the community to be reasonably well represented:

I want the abolition of one man government which makes the Prime Minister a king. I want to see our parliament run on much more progressive and democratic lines. 27

From his position as an independent member in the House Veitch quickly became aware that measures that did not originate in the cabinet had little chance of getting passed in the House. At regular intervals Veitch put forward proposals for proportional representation but they received little support. He was swimming against the tide on this matter. The party boss system had to be lived with. Veitch was one of a dying breed, the independent. If one wished to advance personally in the House or to obtain favourable attention for one's electorate it paid to be a partyman. Only those who despaired of their party obtaining the reins of power followed Veitch's lead; the

27 PD, 1912, 160, p.543.

independent reformer or perhaps the Liberal in the early 1920's conscious of his party's declining fortunes.

In 1911 Veitch had advocated the abolition of the Upper House on the grounds that it performed no useful function,²⁸ but as he became concerned with the problem of party boss rule he changed his mind. He told Wanganui electors in 1922 that in view of some of the hasty legislation he had seen pushed through the House he now thought that the Legislative Council did serve a purpose.²⁹

On the question of land, Veitch had only a limited interest. Like most urban supporters of labour he was a leaseholder and opposed the sale of remaining crown land. He thought that those who obtained unearned increment on land should be taxed.³⁰ Part of the increased cost of living Veitch blamed on inflated land values and land monopolists.³¹ It should not be thought however that he emphasized the land question. He had little sympathy for Fowld's attempt to make his single tax idea a main plank of the United Labour Party in 1912.³²

Veitch was vitally concerned with the problems of the political organization of labour. After his election to

28 PD, 1912, 158, p.271.

29 WC, 8 Nov. 1922.

30 WH, 21 Oct. 1911.

31 PD, 1912, 157, p.298.

32 H. Roth, "Buying a Labour Party : Fowlds, Mills and the U.L.P.," Political Science, (Sept. 1968), p.28.

parliament he spent part of his time attempting to arouse interest amongst the workers in the Labour Party. For example Veitch was the principal speaker at a meeting held in Palmerston North on 26 January 1912 to set up a Palmerston North branch of the Labour Party. Here Veitch referred to the experience in Australia which he said showed that Labour was capable of being the government. People were beginning to realize, he told his Palmerston audience, that the Labour movement was not one of which to be ashamed. ³³

A great gap lay between Veitch with his advocacy of parliamentary activity and abhorrence of strikes and the FOL with its emphasis on the strike weapon and suspicion of parliament. In spite of this he believed in the possibility that labour could and should unite and that it should unite for a political purpose. He warned parliament of the problem that confronted the country:

It is to be hoped that the people will realize the power that they have in their hands by using their power in parliament, but if parliament declines to redress the grievances of the poor people of the country - if we fail to bring reform by evolution - there is nothing surer than it will be brought about by revolution all over the world. ³⁴

It is difficult to see how Veitch could have hoped to come to terms with such intransigent men as Webb and

³³ Manawatu Evening Standard, 27 Jan. 1912.

³⁴ PD, 1912, 158, p.274.

Semple, especially if he wanted a labour movement modelled on his lines. Veitch's attitude over the 1912 Unity Conference displays his cautious approach, an approach which would make it impossible for him to come to terms with the FOL.

This conference was convened by the Trades and Labour Councils and was the brain child of their imported organizer, W.T. Mills. The FOL and the Socialist Party refused to attend as the "Unity Scheme" failed to mention the class struggle. Thus the conference was left to deal with unity among the moderates. The Trades and Labour Councils and the Labour Party were united to form the United Labour Party. Veitch became a member of the Dominion Executive Council of the ULP with special responsibility for transport workers. At first Veitch advised the ASRS to have nothing to do with Mills' unity scheme until the constitution was altered so that the railwaymen could not be involved in a strike. This was done and Veitch could feel confident in July 1912 to advise railwaymen in Christchurch to join the ULP. He told the Christchurch railwaymen that he thought that it would not be long before the ULP and the FOL would be united. ³⁵

In 1912 the FOL became involved in the Waihi miners' strike which began on 13 May and dragged on until 30 November.

35 RR, 26 July 1912, p.344.

The executive council of the ULP prepared a statement condemning the strike but decided only to issue it in the event of the FOL calling a general strike. Some members of the council wanted the statement published but others including Veitch were opposed to this. The following telegram was sent to J.T. Paul, the president of the ULP by John Robertson M.P.:

McCullough, Veitch, Tregear and self feel strongly it is unwise and opposed to labour principle . . . to do anything which might be used to the detriment of the workers who, right or wrong are fighting common enemy. Therefore oppose publication of resolution. 36

The Waihi strike had the effect of bringing many in the ULP into closer sympathy with the FOL. At the same time the FOL saw that without political activity their efforts would once more founder on the Arbitration Act.

The executive of the ULP was divided over the unity proposals of 1913. Mills, Tregear and about half of the executive supported them. Veitch was somewhere in the middle. Although not actually opposing participation he was very doubtful about it.

On 2 July 1913 the Unity Congress met with representatives of the FOL, ULP, ASRS and Socialist Party. The ULP was poorly led by Paul and the FOL dominated the proceedings

A strike clause which provided for strikes to be used under central direction and control was accepted by the Congress. In response to this the more moderate labour men such as Veitch, Paul and Fowlds walked out of the Congress as did the executive of the ASRS. The executive council the ASRS withdrew, it told its members, because it became early apparent to them that the meeting was controlled by the extreme section of labour.³⁷ The executive were supported in their action by member branches. The Wanganui branch of the ASRS was well satisfied and endorsed the action taken.³⁸

Veitch expressed his disappointment and dissatisfaction over the Unity Congress to the Railway Review. In his opinion the Congress had failed to realize the essential lines of policy necessary for the workers' welfare. The FOL was overwhelmingly represented in the Congress committees he claimed and their ideas were forced through without compromise. Veitch found himself in the position of being anxious for unity and prepared to compromise on some points, only to be faced with a group of people who were not prepared to compromise at all. The only terms on which the ULP could associate itself with the new movement would be those of complete surrender on all points of difference with the FOL, the Federation retaining

37 RR, 25 July 1913, p.282.

38 RR, 22 Aug. 1913, p.361.

its characteristic ideas intact. "It is the old Federation with a new name and the addition of 'Professor' Mills to whom they are heartily welcome," commented Veitch peevishly realizing that the moderates in the ULP had been out manoeuvred. 39

The Unity Congress set up two bodies, the United Federation of Labour and the Social Democratic Party. Veitch tended to exaggerate the revolutionary nature of these two groups. Apart from its Marxist flavoured preamble the constitution of the SDP was very similar to that of the ULP. The crux of the matter was the use that was to be made of the strike weapon. The constitution of the UFL was drawn up on a centralized and hierarchical pattern with the final power to call strikes and sympathy strikes in other industries resting with the national executive. Veitch and other moderates were opposed to this system of centralization. They wanted the local unions to be autonomous, it must be left for the individual unions to decide whether or not they would strike. The moderates feared what would happen if extreme labour were to control such a national system.

Those members of the ULP who withdrew from the Congress decided to keep the ULP in existence. They elected a new executive with Paul as chairman and of which Veitch was a member. The RoundTable noted that the members of the ULP
39 RR, 25 July 1913, p.310.

Remnant consisted largely of the former members of the NZLP who had somewhat unwillingly entered the ULP at the time of the Unity Conference in May 1912. ⁴⁰

In July a Declaration of Principles was issued declaring the policy of the ULP to be evolutionary and constructive in character and aimed by consistent revision and improvement of the existing conditions of society to advance the well being of the people as a whole, and not merely the sectional interests of a class. The party stood for conciliation and arbitration and for the use of the strike weapon only in the last resort. ⁴¹ Veitch proclaimed:

The people of New Zealand are faced today with two great evils, conservatism on the one hand and anarchy on the other and no political party can retain confidence or win it unless it definitely disassociates itself from both extremes. The United Labour Party has decided to continue as before and its battlecry will not be "the wage earners against the employer" but "the people against the monopolists." ⁴²

These were very fine sentiments but in reality the ULP hardly existed anymore. Mills had admitted that the ULP proper was "still in a provisional state, no single affiliated group having organized or elected its own representative to the Dominion Executive" while the Round Table claimed that the ULP had "never attained to any very tangible existence." ⁴³ What did exist of the ULP tended to go over to the SDP. All but two branches of the ULP joined

40 Round Table, Vol IV, Dec. 1913, p.187.

41 Auckland Star, 12 July 1913.

42 RR, 25 July 1913, p.311.

43 Roth, "Buying a Labour Party", p.34.

the SDP, and lacking in funds and organization the ULP Remnant hardly existed further than on paper. The ULP quietly faded away. Only one candidate, Fowlds, used the label of the ULP in 1914.

Veitch in effect had cut himself adrift from the mainstream of the labour movement. His refusal to become part of the SDP marks the beginning of his eventual return to the Liberal Party. With political labour coming under the sway of Holland there was only one direction for him to move and that was towards the right.

Veitch and Wanganui were in the Liberal-labour tradition of Ballance and there was no place for such a system in the labour politics of the SDP. This merely serves to underline the fact that Veitch was a labour politician on a liberal vote. He was an old fashioned "lib-lab" and that is why his decision to join the Liberals in 1922 was the logical outcome of his search for a political home.

CHAPTER VIMODERATE LABOUR UNDER PRESSURE:WANGANUI WATERSIDERS AND THE 1913 STRIKE.

Only once was the moderate position adopted by Wanganui labour really put to the test and this was during the 1913 Waterside Strike. This strike, with its clashes between unionists and special police in the main centres, created an atmosphere of bitterness and this was a situation which would show just how solidly based the Ballance synthesis was in Wanganui.

In 1906 a New Zealand Waterside Workers Conference was held in Wellington with the primary object of setting up the New Zealand Waterside Workers Federation. The main purpose of the Federation was to draw together the isolated unions of waterside workers throughout New Zealand so that "as a Federation they could go to parliament for redress of grievances as a united body."¹

By 1908 there was a growing tendency to criticize and condemn the working of the Arbitration Court among some groups of watersiders. A lack of faith was developing in the Arbitration Court's ability to improve the conditions of the watersiders. The lack of confidence tended to extend to the WWP which was supposed to regulate the

¹ Report of the New Zealand Waterside Workers Conference, 1906, p.6.

dealings of the various unions with the Court. In fact the situation was that the unions were still divided and tended to negotiate their own awards individually.

In 1911 the FOL decided to try and bring the watersiders under their banner. Ross, Semple and Hickey drafted an open letter to the waterside workers unions calling on them to affiliate with the FOL. This appeal coincided with the watersiders own growing dissatisfaction with the WWF. The deciding factor which caused a general desertion from the WWF to the FOL was a large conference conducted by the FOL in Wellington in January 1912 with the object of obtaining better conditions for waterside workers. This conference resulted in a second conference at which the waterside unions present formed themselves into a Transport Workers Federation as a branch of the FOL. In July 1912 J. Reed, the president of the WWF, wrote to its secretary, G. Mackay of Wanganui:

Its no use wasting ink in vain regrets, but one cannot help regretting the turn events have taken when one thinks that less than twelve months ago the WWF was a complete organization of practically the whole of the waterside workers from Auckland to the Bluff . . . Now we are left with just a remnant of our former combination and through the action of the FOL, a house divided against itself. 2

The unions which came under the banner of the FOL were Dunedin, Auckland, Wellington, Westport, Patea, Foxton, Lyttleton, Nelson, Greymouth, Picton and Timaru. The ports of Wanganui, Gisborne, Napier and Bluff were all that still adhered to the WWF. Hickey wrote that "One of Organizer Semple's greatest achievements was the swinging of the waterside workers from the old fashioned and useless WWF into the FOL." ³

This was the situation that existed amongst the waterside workers unions when the 1913 Waterside Strike took place. The course of the Waterside Strike is well known. The strike was precipitated by cessation of work by the Wellington shipwrights on 18 October 1913. On 22 October the waterside workers union put the dispute in the hands of the FOL. On 10 November the FOL called a general strike.

Veitch and other moderate labour leaders misinterpreted the strike to a certain extent. They were of the opinion that the FOL had deliberately provoked it. This confirmed their worst misgivings over the Unity Conference which had been held earlier on in the year. The ULP described the strikes as causing "disruption, disaster, chaos and unnecessary suffering." ⁴

³ P.H. Hickey, Red Fed Memoirs (Wellington, 1925), p.44.

⁴ New Zealand Herald, 15 Nov. 1913.

Not all of the waterside workers unions followed the lead of the FOL and came out on strike. The WWF adhering to the Arbitration Act refused to strike. The most dominant union in the WWF was the Wanganui Waterside Workers Union which held half of the offices on its national executive. It was in Wanganui that policy largely originated. The Macriland Worker referred to the WWF as that "isolated union on the Wanganui River which calls itself the Dominion Executive of the WWF." 5

The FOL refused to recognise the WWF and attempted to negotiate with the member unions separately. As the member unions of the WWF ignored the FOL, the FOL decided to approach the men directly and to convert them to the FOL's cause. Such a direct approach would show whether or not the Wanganui watersiders, as individuals, really supported what was being done in their name.

On 31 October three agitators dispatched by the FOL appeared on the Wanganui wharves where gangs of men were at work unloading ships. They attempted to persuade the men to stop work but their oratory fell on deaf ears and the men continued working. One of the agitators received rough handling from some of the men who resented his interference. The police had to be called, not to prevent the watersiders from being subverted, but to prevent the FOL agitators from

coming to harm. 6

Even at a later date when many of the local watersiders were unhappy at the WWF executive's overtures to the "bogus" Wellington union the FOL still had no success in its appeals to the watersiders of Wanganui. On 19 November four FOL delegates who had arrived by train from Wellington the previous night, attempted to get the watersiders to stop work. To begin with the four men attempted to hold a meeting of watersiders during the day but the men refused to stop work to listen to them. They finally managed to get ten financial members of the union to sign a request for the calling of a special meeting for that evening. However the secretary of the local union whose permission was needed for such a meeting to take place was nowhere to be found. The local union president refused to have anything to do with the matter. The FOL delegates were finally reduced to calling a meeting themselves in an unsigned advertisement in the Wanganui Herald for 8 p.m. that evening in the Central Hall. The meeting was a complete failure. Present were about twelve waterside workers and a few general labourers, in all a total of twentyfour men. There was uncertainty over whether or not to proceed with the meeting but it was decided to continue. The gentlemen from the FOL spent their time hurling uncomplimentary epithets at the watersiders of

6 WH, 31 Oct. 1913.

Wanganui in general and at the president and the executive of the WWF in particular. ⁷ These two incidents show that the watersiders of Wanganui wanted nothing to do with the FOL and that in the final analysis, despite certain dissatisfactions, they solidly supported the stand taken by the WWF. Their loyalty to the arbitrationist position won for the local watersiders the appreciation of the businessmen of the town - a further condemnation of their position in the eyes of the FOL. The bitterness engendered elsewhere by the strike showed no signs of endangering the liberal consensus in Wanganui. A representative meeting of Wanganui businessmen held on 14 November voted unanimously to show their recognition of the watersiders loyalty in a practical way. It was decided to make a substantial contribution to the union fund after the present troubles had ceased so as not to give the FOL the chance of saying that the money represented a bribe. ⁸

At a Harbour Board social on 9 November an atmosphere of general good will prevailed. Those present felt a certain amount of self satisfaction over the cordiality that existed between the watersiders and the Harbour Board. There were no barricades to be seen - only expressions of goodwill. Mr Bignell, a member of the Harbour Board, said

7 WC, 20 Nov. 1913.

8 WC, 15 Nov. 1913.

that he was proud of the position taken by watersiders in Wanganui. Veitch, who was present, stated that he was proud of the relationship that existed between employers and employees in Wanganui. He said that if such a spirit of mutual cooperation and understanding as existed in Wanganui existed in other centres, then the present unfortunate strike would have never taken place.⁹

Mr Hogan said that "happily the Harbour Board considered its employees and the officers and men employed by the board responded loyally and the result was the present feeling of goodwill . . . displayed by all concerned."¹⁰

This Harbour Board social symbolizes the harmony that existed between Veitch's ideas of how the labour movement should be conducted and those of the people who he represented. Veitch had not been theorizing in a vacuum. The position adopted by the Wanganui Waterside Union and the WWF can not be faulted in terms of the theory that Veitch had been propounding on how the labour movement should conduct itself.

The neutral position adopted by the local watersiders was not without strain. As few ports were open because of the strike, there was a growing tendency to divert ships to Wanganui from other ports, in particular Wellington. On 29 October Mackay, secretary of the WWF, told a reporter that many of the local men were unhappy about goods being

⁹ WH, 10 Nov. 1913.

¹⁰ WH, 10 Nov. 1913.

railed from the port of Wanganui to Wellington and that if such a course of action was adopted to a considerable extent they might be forced against their own wishes to strike. ¹¹ On 4 November some men declined to work, this being done on their own initiative and not on that of the union. They considered that the shipping companies were imposing on them by sending them ships which had been refused unloading in other ports. It was decided to discuss the matter at the annual general meeting of the union which was to be held that evening. ¹² At the meeting discussion on the problem of the strike continued until after midnight when the following resolution was carried:

That this union adheres to its previous resolution to work all cargoes handled by union labour until it receives further instructions from the WWF. ¹³

During the course of the strike the FOL declared Timaru a scab port. Timaru was registered under the Arbitration Act but was not a member of the WWF. Mackay said that the WWF must support any union registered under the Act and to refuse to uphold the Act in its entirety would be a distinct breach of the rules under which they were registered.

As to the arbitration union set up in Wellington in an attempt to break the strike the WWF was in a difficult

11 WH, 31 Oct. 1913.
 12 WH, 4 Nov. 1913.
 13 WH, 5 Nov. 1913.

position. Mackay said that the Wanganui watersiders considered it a bogus union, not formed by genuine watersiders but by free labour to meet the exigencies of the moment. In spite of this it had to be recognized that it was duly registered under the Arbitration Act which the WWF had strictly adhered to. ¹⁴ The problem of whether or not to recognize the Wellington union was crucial. The WWF had preached adherence to the Act and consistently refused to strike. To be consistent it would need to recognize the union. On the other hand the attitude of the Government and the use of special police made this course of action distasteful. The way of moderate labour was not easy. It was finally decided to invite the arbitration union in Wellington to affiliate with the WWF. A telegram was sent to this effect from Wanganui signed by the president and the secretary of the WWF. ¹⁵ "We believe affiliation of your union with us would be best step possible at the present time in interest of workers of Dominion," was how the telegram began.

Mackay told the press:

Our unions have stood loyally by the Act. We believe that if watersiders generally had not abandoned the Act in favour of the extreme policy of the FOL the present crisis would not have arisen. ¹⁶

¹⁴ WH, 8 Nov. 1913.

¹⁵ See WC, 10 Nov. 1913, for the text of this telegram.

¹⁶ WC, 10 Nov. 1913.

Mr Smith, the secretary of the Wanganui Waterside Workers Union, expressed moderate labour's fears as to what the FOL was attempting to do:

If the FOL was left to continue without opposition it would bring the country to a state of ruin, a state to which the leaders of the FOL will never cease trying to bring about if left to their own ideas of governing the labour movement. 17

It was felt by the WWP that the present position was being forced on the arbitrationists by the FOL, an organization with which the WWP had no connection or sympathy. An equitable adjustment in the opinion of the WWP, could have been secured without precipitating a crisis. By inviting the Wellington union to affiliate it would demonstrate to the other watersiders of New Zealand that adherence to law and order was the best method of settling the present dispute. To those members of the WWP who opposed the affiliation of the Wellington union Mackay said that the only alternative was to take sides with the FOL whose tactics had demoralized the whole country. 18

There was a considerable amount of dissatisfaction amongst the Wanganui watersiders over the recognition of the Wellington union. Fifty-three watersiders signed the

17 WC, 11 Nov. 1913.

18 WH, 11 Nov. 1913.

following petition:

We the undersigned members of the Wanganui Waterside Workers Union wish to state our objection to the action taken by the president and secretary of the WWF in asking the new union formed in Wellington to affiliate with our Federation . . . it is against the principles of unionism to so deal with a union formed by the employers for the purpose of breaking up any workers' organization. 19

In spite of these objections a meeting held in Wanganui of the executive of the WWF passed the following resolution:

That affiliated unions of the WWF be instructed to recognize unions whose registration under the IC and A Act has been accepted by the registrar of unions. 20

On Sunday 16 November a meeting of over 200 local trade unionists met to discuss the strike. It condemned the attitude adopted by the government and the use of special constables. It also condemned the executive of the WWF:

That this meeting of trade unionists condemns the attitude of the executive of the WWF in holding out the right hand of friendship to bogus unions formed by special constables and farm workers. 21

Such an attitude while quite understandable considering the emotional attitude of the time when labour was being faced with a hostile government and employer class, was

19 WC, 12 Nov. 1913.
20 WC, 15 Nov. 1913.
21 WH, 17 Nov. 1913.

inconsistent. As Mackay told the Wanganui watersiders, if they condemned the WWP executive they also condemned themselves. ²² One could either support arbitration or the FOL but not both at the same time. The workers of Wanganui sub consciously realized this and apart from the above two resolutions attacking the WWP executive for their action in recognizing the Wellington union the local workers acquiesced. Wanganui remained calm and the General Strike called by the FOL slowly collapsed.

Veitch viewed the strike as a struggle between two types of anarchists, the FOL and the Employers Federation. He thought that the leadership of both sides were fighting for control of the country for their own purposes. He condemned the FOL for being too extreme in its views, claiming that the strike weapon which was its principal weapon was utterly useless when it came to a real trial of strength:

The Federation's experience at Waihi should have taught it this - yet in face of this bitter experience it allowed itself to be forced into another more disastrous and hopeless struggle. ²³

Veitch felt that the outcome of the present struggle would justify the opinion that he had always held and advocated; that the only effective course open for the

²² WH, 11 Nov. 1913.

²³ WC, 3 Dec. 1913.

workers to pursue was to combine to get better representation in parliament. ²⁴

The Maoriland Worker during the course of the strike had written:

Throughout New Zealand the fight is on;
let us close our ranks and swear eternal
fidelity to the cause and to each other
. . . to do that means solidarity, absolute
and certain victory. ²⁵

Labour's solidarity was a myth, a fact which Hickey realized after the defeat of the 1913 strike. Despite the fact that the ULP lacked organization and a coherent following it did represent the views of a large number of New Zealand workers. Hickey wrote:

I submit that a greater factor than even Masseyism was the existence in God's own country of a horde of unorganized and, because unorganized, ignorant members of the working class. ²⁶

Wanganui was part of Hickey's "unorganized" and "ignorant" workers. It was on such workers as these that the ambitions of the FOL foundered.

As the 1914 election approached the forces of labour were in disarray. The FOL had been defeated but moderate labour was unable to capitalize on this situation. The FOL had prospered because of the enthusiasm and drive of

24 WH, 3 Nov. 1913.

25 MW, 26 Nov. 1913.

26 MW, 11 March 1914.

its members. The ULP was unable to find and tap such a wellspring in the ranks of moderate labour. Veitch, despite his hopes over concerted labour political activity, faced the 1914 elections as an Independent Labour candidate. The Labour Party he hoped to bring into being was as far away as ever.

CHAPTER VIITHE CONSOLIDATION OF A POLITICAL TRADITION:WANGANUI POLITICS 1914-35

In the 1914 election Veitch stood as a "United Labour" candidate. Maintaining the position he had adopted in 1913 he refused to have anything to do with the SDP. He also stressed the point that he was not a member of Ward's party. Veitch said that he stood by the principles of the ULP; "that was my position last election and it will be my position through this election." ¹

Veitch's refusal to cooperate with the Social Democrats brought him into closer contact with the Liberals. The Herald noted in 1916 that:

Veitch has been driven into closer and closer relations with the Liberals and is now regarded for all practical purposes as a member of the more progressive wing of that organization. ²

He still sat with the other labour members in parliament but he showed signs of becoming increasingly uncomfortable in this company. ³

Veitch finally broke with the labour grouping in parliament over the issue of conscription. The Social Democrats were strongly opposed to the Military Services.

1 WH, 11 Nov. 1914. This was not strictly correct as the ULP did not exist in 1911 and it no longer existed in 1914. It was the sentiment that counted however.

2 WH, 19 July 1916.

3 WH, 2 Aug. 1916.

Bill which introduced conscription in 1916. Veitch however stated his support for the Bill clearly to the House:

Every man who is not heart and soul with us is against us in this great national crisis; the man who is not prepared to do his part in the defence of the nation when its liberty is in danger is not with that nation and the sooner he gets out the better. We do not want him. 4

When the Labour Party was set up two months later Veitch shifted his seat in parliament away from the Labour Party members to a place among the Progressive Liberals who made up the bulk of the non party Opposition. 5

Although he stood in the 1919 election as "Moderate Labour" Veitch was able to state emphatically, "I would not vote for Holland what ever happened. I have made up my mind on this point." 6

The reason which Veitch stressed for not joining the Labour Party was his anti-party position. He said that he had no wish to be bound by the decisions of a caucus. Control by a group was for Veitch the essence of intrigue and the very antithesis of democracy. 7 He told R.M. Chapman in an interview:

- 4 PD, 1916, 165, p.80.
- 5 WH, 2 Aug. 1916.
- 6 WC, 14 Nov. 1919.
- 7 WH, 20 Nov. 1919.

I absolutely fought my own fight . . .
I was never a cast iron party man but
applauded the principle and never the
agent. I'm vain enough to believe most
of my support was personal just because
I spoke my mind openly on all questions
and I got support from all sections
because they could believe what I said. 8

Veitch claimed that the Labour Party did not really
have the interests of the workers at heart and that it was
cooperating with the Reform Party to smash the Liberals. 9

The reasons which Veitch gave only in part explain why
he failed to join the Labour Party. A major reason was the
fact that such a move would not have been accepted by
many of his electors. The Wanganui Chronicle stated the
position clearly:

Mr Veitch is not lacking in astuteness and
he knows none better than in the estimation
of the majority of his constituents he
would have been discredited beyond all hope
of redemption had he lent himself to the
furtherance of the obstructive tactics of
the labour socialist extremists. 10

Veitch in the opinion of the Chronicle was "a popular
hail fellow - well met chap" but had too much of the eel's
propensity to be a satisfactory representative. 11 This
description, although hostile, contained a basic truth.

- 8 R.M. Chapman, The Significance of the 1928 General
Election (Unpublished thesis, AUC, 1948).
9 WH, 2 Dec. 1919. The Manawatu Evening Standard and
the Wairarapa Age were quoted by the Herald as supporting
the idea that there was an unholy alliance between
Reform and Labour in 1919.
10 WC, 13 Nov. 1919.
11 WC, 22 Nov. 1919.

Veitch, a canny Scotsman, trimmed his ideas to what the electorate wanted. His were the politics of reality - cautious and practical. Veitch was above all pragmatic. He was for the Herald the ideal Wanganui politician:

His attitude is such that he cannot but be acceptable to the bulk of the Wanganui electors who ever since they sent a member to parliament have been marked by a strong democratic and progressive spirit without any liking for extremism on one hand or reaction on the other. 12

This view of Veitch's wide base of support was correct. Veitch's advocacy of the needs of the worker gained him all but the more radical votes of this group. His condemnation of Holland and his stress on better communications for the Wanganui district in parliament won him the confidence of the business community.

Veitch, with the active support of the Herald, regularly reminded the electors of Wanganui that he was the legitimate political descendant of Ballance. After his victory in the 1922 election the Herald proclaimed:

Wanganui has again proved its determination to adhere to the tradition founded by its old member John Ballance. 13

Veitch told an election meeting in 1931 that the spirit of Ballance still lived in the politics of New

12 WH, 11 Nov. 1919.

13 WH, 8 Dec. 1922.

Zealand and especially in Wanganui. "He has always been my ideal in public life" Veitch affirmed.¹⁴ The Labour Party of 1916 could not until the 1930's, be fitted into this political framework and Veitch was not foolish enough to try to make it do so.

Figure Four on page 98 gives a summary of election results in Wanganui between 1914 - 1935.

The appearance of Hogan as an "Independent Liberal" candidate in 1914 worried Veitch who suggested that there should be a ballot of Liberal and Labour supporters to see who should stand but Hogan refused. Veitch was concerned that the liberal-labour vote would be split allowing the Reform candidate to win. The results however indicated that Veitch had consolidated his position as the representative of the Liberal voter and in no polling booth did Hogan poll more votes than Veitch, including the exclusive St Johns booth.

St Johns	Hogan	Parani	Veitch	
	28	134	34	15

Although still an independent retaining his distaste for being committed to a party, 1919 marks the effective beginning of Veitch's position as a Liberal. In this election,

14 WH, 1 Dec. 1931.

15 WH, 4 Dec. 1914.

FIGURE FOURWANGANUI GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS 1914-1935

			<u>Percentage of valid vote cast received by the winning candidate.</u>
<u>1914</u> ¹			
Hogan	(Independent Liberal)	2,056	
Parani	(Reform)	2,387	
Veitch	(United Labour)	3,227	35.64
<u>1919</u> ²			
Cuttle	(Reform)	2,637	
McIlvide	(Labour)	1,266	
Veitch	(Moderate Labour)	4,340	52.65
<u>1922</u> ³			
Coull	(Reform)	3,438	
Ross	(Labour)	728	
Veitch	(Liberal Labour)	4,451	51.78
<u>1925</u> ⁴			
Coull	(Reform)	3,189	
Rogers	(Labour)	2,083	
Veitch	(National)	4,055	43.27
<u>1928</u> ⁵			
Lewis	(Reform)	2,482	
Rogers	(Labour)	2,584	
Veitch	(United)	4,557	47.55
<u>1931</u> ⁶			
Rogers	(Labour)	4,206	
Veitch	(Coalition)	4,740	53.07
<u>1935</u> ⁷			
Bain	(National)	1,579	
Cotterill	(Labour)	4,433	46.66
Hogan	(Independent Liberal)	487	
Veitch	(Democrat)	3,079	

1 WH, 4 Dec. 1914.

2 WH, 11 Dec. 1919.

3 AJHR, 1923, H-33.

4 AJHR, 1926, H-33.

5 AJHR, H-33, 1929.

6 WH, 3 Dec. 1931.

7 AJHR, H-33, 1936.

he was supported by the local Liberal organization and was opposed by a Labour Party candidate. The Labour candidate made slight inroads into the working class areas but as the following polling booth totals show they were not as substantial as those made by Reform.

	Cuttle	McIlvide	Veitch	
Aramoho	396	214	123	
Castlecliff	324	112	111	16

Between the 1919 and 1922 election Veitch had become part of a loosely organized group consisting of moderate labour and liberal members of parliament which came to be known as the Wilford-Veitch combination.¹⁷ The low vote received by the Labour candidate in 1922 is explained in part by his lack of funds and the refusal of the City Council to let him use the Opera House.¹⁸ The Reform candidate polled very well due to the fact that he was well known locally and was a very forceful character.

In 1925 Veitch at last formally joined the ranks of the Liberals who were parading under the label of "National." The Liberals had adopted a position which appealed to Veitch's anti-party feelings. Veitch told his Wanganui electors that the Nationalists had decided that party politics should be abandoned and that politics should be raised to a higher plane.¹⁹

16 WH, 11 Dec. 1919. Aramoho and Castlecliff polling booths will be used as two representative working class booths to show the level of support Veitch achieved among the workers of Wanganui.

17 WH, 8 Nov. 1922.

18 WH, 10 Nov. 1922.

19 WH, 9 Oct. 1925.

For this election the Labour Party made a shrewd choice in its candidate, W.J. Rogers. Rogers was a well known figure in the Wanganui trade union movement. He became mayor of Wanganui in 1927. It became increasingly difficult to smear the Labour Party with such a candidate. Rogers was largely responsible for making Labour respectable in Wanganui. Labour improved its position considerably, polling over 2,000 votes but these were concentrated in working class areas and even here Veitch was maintaining his position as the following figures show: ²⁰

	Coull	Rogers	Veitch
Aramoho	134	230	317
Castlecliff	61	158	182

As long as Veitch was able to hold his working class vote neither Labour nor Reform would be in a position to defeat him and during the 1920's this was what Veitch was able to do very successfully.

Despite the continued loyalty to Liberalism in Wanganui, 1925 represented a severe set back for the National Party at a country wide level. Forbes commented on the election that "so far as the Opposition is concerned the last election practically wiped out any opposition that could have had an effect on the Government's action." ²¹ It looked as if the Liberals were finished as a political force at the end of 1925. Yet in spite of this they were in

²⁰ AJHR, 1926, H-33.

²¹ R.M. Chapman, The Political Scene 1919-1931 (Auckland, 1969), p.44.

power in 1929 as the United Government. For this dramatic revival Veitch must be given a large share of the credit. He described the role he played in the Liberal revival to R.M. Chapman:

I wasn't satisfied with the efforts that were being made. There wasn't aggression enough and I went out to revive the Liberal Party in New Zealand . . . I toured Otago and Southland and most of the Auckland Province holding a meeting six nights a week. I got hold of the people I knew in order to get together groups of Liberals who could set about selecting candidates. 22

This one man crusade on the part of Veitch was very typical of the man. It shows his disregard for the problems of party organization. All through his career Veitch was concerned to get all the useful people together but this was usually done on an adhoc basis. He never achieved a grouping with a strong organisational basis.

Labour edged into second place in Wanganui in 1928 but Veitch maintained a comfortable majority of almost 2,000 votes and still dominated the working class areas of the town.

	Lewis	Rogers	Veitch	
Aramoho	104	298	371	
Castlecliff	25	133	207	23

Veitch came to the 1931 elections at a distinct disadvantage. The United Party had merged with Reform to form a Coalition and it was as the Coalition candidate

22 R.M. Chapman, Significance of the 1928 Election, pp.44-45. For the formation of the United Party see pp.46-48.

23 AJHR, H-33, 1929.

that Veitch appeared in 1931. This was an uncomfortable role for rather than being the representative of moderate labour Veitch found himself representing Reform as well. As he had been a minister in the Ward and Forbes governments he could hardly revert back to the position of Independent Labour. By being the Coalition candidate Veitch was associating himself with a government that was becoming increasingly unpopular due to the problems posed by the Depression. Rogers was able to use the unpopularity of additional taxes and wage cuts to great effect.²⁴ Veitch was in grave danger of moving to the right of the political mainstream in Wanganui and thus suffering a similar fate to that which had befallen Hogan in 1911. This danger was emphasized by the fact that for the first time in his political career Veitch was on the defensive. Labour Party supporters disrupted his meetings by organized heckling. His final election meeting in 1931 degenerated into a general uproar and the police had to be called to restore order.²⁵

The Herald condemned the rowdiness of the Labour supporters as being unfitting for citizens of Wanganui:

The last thing Mr Ballance desired to bring about was the creation of the class bitterness that is so much the stock in trade of the Labour-Socialist politicians at the present time.²⁶

24 WH, 24 Nov. 1931.
 25 WH, 1 Dec. 1931.
 26 WH, 29 Nov. 1931.

The results of the 1931 election showed that Veitch had cause for worry. Much of his hard core support had gone over to Rogers as the following totals illustrate: ²⁷

	Rogers	Veitch
Aramoho	432	230
Castlecliff	279	138

1,952 people on the roll failed to vote. A large proportion of this group were Reform supporters. They were unable to bring themselves to vote for a man who had been their political opponent for 20 years.

Between the 1931 and 1935 elections Veitch became increasingly convinced that the Coalition would be defeated the next time it faced the polls. With a combination of expediency and principle Veitch left the Coalition and joined the newly formed Democrat Party. The policy of this party was one that would appeal to Veitch as it was similar to that of the Labour Party of 1910. The Democrats promised to increase pensions, reduce unemployment, and to nationalize industry. Veitch described the party as being a non socialist alternative to Labour that did not aim at class legislation. The Herald wrote that "careful study of the Democrat proposals reveal that the same wonderful results achieved by Mr Ballance . . . can be achieved again today." ²⁸

27 WH, 3 Dec. 1931.
28 WH, 28 Oct. 1935.

Although they were not prepared to admit the fact, both the Herald and Veitch must have realised that the Labour Party in 1935 was no longer the revolutionary party it had once appeared to have been. If Veitch had not been committed to an anti-labour position he would probably have felt happy in the shoes of the Labour candidate. The Labour Party in 1935 was very much like the Labour Party that Veitch had wanted in 1911. It was somewhat ironical that the champion of moderate labour should find himself in the position that he did in 1935.

If 1935 had been a normal year the electors of Wanganui would have probably accepted the Democrat Party as they had accepted the groupings that Veitch had belonged to during the previous 24 years. The electors of Wanganui tended to vote for Veitch the man, rather than for the party or grouping that he may have been a part of. But in 1935 the workers of Wanganui did the only thing one could have expected of them given the economic conditions of the time. They voted for the Labour Party.

In comparison with 1931 the Labour vote remained static while Veitch's coalition vote was now shared with Reform. If rather than leaving the Coalition Veitch had attempted to unite the non-Labour factions around himself he may have been able to stave off defeat. The polling booth totals for St Johns Hill in 1935 suggest that many Reform supporters were prepared to vote for Veitch. ²⁹
29 AJHR, 1931, H-33.

St Johns Hill	Bain	Cotterill	Hogan	Veitch
	131	71	5	119

As Cotterill received only 46.66% of the vote there is no reason why Veitch could not have duplicated the 1931 situation.

In 1914 Veitch had said that labour was not foolish enough to cooperate with Reform, the Party that was friends with the squatters and the Union Company. It would have been a betrayal of his political principles to have done so now. 30

Veitch was defeated but the Ballance tradition still lived on and a new champion for it needed to be found. Despite its past opposition to the Labour Party, two weeks after the Labour victory the Herald wrote:

We are of the opinion that Mr Savage today is in a very similar position to that of Mr Ballance in 1890. If Savage builds on the Ballance-Seddon tradition wisely and carefully . . . 31

This comment is not as opportunistic as it might first appear. The Labour members of parliament from 1935-69 were supported by the same people who had supported Veitch. In a sense the Labour Party became the custodians of the Ballance tradition in 1935.

30 WH, 11 Nov. 1914.
31 WH, 28 Nov. 1928.

There is a general, if vague impression among many people in Wanganui in 1970 that the politics of the city are still guided by the principles laid down by John Ballance. The Ballance tradition has become a part of the folk-lore of Wanganui.

CONCLUSION

The history of Wanganui between 1890 and 1935 shows a region which responded in terms of its own experience to the problems that it confronted. Wanganui, a rapidly growing town until the late 1920's, was confident of a great future. This optimism was shared by both worker and businessmen alike. A political style and a method of conducting labour relations was developed based on the memory of John Ballance and fostered by the Wanganui Herald, based to a considerable extent on this economic growth. This Ballance, or liberal concensus owed little to national trends, it developed and operated largely independently of them. This is why militant unionism had such a poor response in Wanganui, why the Socialist Party secretary, Fred Cooke, met with such a negative response when he visited the town and why the FOL delegates were manhandled at the port in 1913. On the national level in 1913 workers and special police faced one another with bitterness. The Socialists were proclaiming a class warfare. In Wanganui the Harbour Board held a social at which employer and employee mingled amiably. The employers and employees in Wanganui owed their allegiance to the local Wanganui way of doing things, not to what was happening in Wellington. Thus it is false to assume therefore that because there was bitterness on the waterfront in Wellington this was the case in Wanganui. What of other secondary centres; did they reflect the national trend or did they, like Wanganui, have their own character, their

own way of doing things for their own reasons?

Although Veitch progressed through a large number of political labels he represented a way of doing politics that was to continue until 1969, for his Labour successor in 1935 was really carrying on where Veitch left off. The Labour Party of 1935 was the Labour Party for which Veitch had been looking in 1911. It was only when the Labour Party became moderate and fitted into the mainstream of the Ballance Tradition that it was accepted by the electors of Wanganui. The Labour M.P.s between 1935-69, Cotterill and Spooner, were both railwaymen and carried on where railwaymen Hogan and Veitch had left off. They had both, like their two predecessors, cut their political teeth in the ASRS. There was remarkable continuity between the ideas of president of the ASRS Veitch and the other railwaymen M.P.s. Even in 1969 when Wanganui elected a National M.P. this was done for Wanganui reasons. A swing of 2,000 votes from Labour to National in 1969 had little explanation at the national level.

The experience in Wanganui serves as a reminder of the parochial character of the secondary centres. Despite the fact that it was a major distributing centre Wanganui maintained its own identity. There is a tendency to overlook the fact that regions in New Zealand have their own autonomy. Under

the Provincial System of government this regionalism achieved political expression. Yet with the abolition of the provinces there has been a tendency to see New Zealand's interest as being national. The experience of Wanganui and other secondary centres, such as Gisborne, should serve to act as a warning to those who would too quickly make national generalizations. The experience in Wanganui is not necessarily an example of a deviation from the norm. Rather it may be that Wanganui is an example of a region and merely one of many regions with their own character, problems and experiences. History is not limited to the main centres and this is the validity of regional studies.

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