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SIR JOHN MCKENZIE AND THE ORIGINS AND GROWTH  
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE 1891-1900.

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

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PREFACE

Although two theses have examined John McKenzie's activities as Minister of Lands in a fairly detailed way, they have virtually ignored his actions as Minister of Agriculture. This one-sided concentration has meant that we know very little about McKenzie's achievements as Minister of Agriculture, even though they were of equal importance in the short term and have proven to be more important in the long term. Agricultural legislation passed by John McKenzie was as creative as his land laws and made up of many more statutes. This proliferation of laws relating to agricultural matters was largely explained by the fact that major problems were covered by separate statutes, whereas McKenzie's Land Acts and W.P. Reeves' labour laws were concentrated in one or two massive acts, which were extraordinarily comprehensive. Nevertheless, the agricultural laws passed by John McKenzie were on a similar scale to his land acts and to the labour legislation of Reeves, in terms of legislative output, legislative energy and powers created for the government. Furthermore, the administration of the Department of Agriculture affected nearly as many people as did the running of the Department of Lands and Survey. Today, much of the agricultural legislation introduced and passed by John McKenzie still has a direct effect on our lives, both in the city and on the farm. Town milk supply continues to be examined by employees of the Department of Agriculture; cowsheds are still regularly inspected by government officials; sheep are dipped within certain time limits, as they were in the 1890's; and slaughtering has been carried out in licensed abattoirs under the supervision of government inspectors ever since 1900. On the other hand, lease in perpetuity is now obsolete and only of interest in school text books and learned journals. Obviously, then, a study of John McKenzie's actions as Minister

of Agriculture is long overdue. The urgent need for such an investigation and the stringent word limits placed upon the exercise, has meant that the thesis is almost exclusively concerned with John McKenzie as Minister of Agriculture. It only looks at his work as Minister of Lands in a general way in an attempt to explain the formulation of his agricultural policies and the development of his distinctive ministerial style.

The thesis concentrates on the period 1891-1900, when John McKenzie held ministerial office, but research was begun from around 1878 when the first Sheep Act to be passed by the central government was introduced. This work on earlier developments has proven to be valuable, for it has clearly shown that John McKenzie was not an innovator but rather a consolidator. The thesis also moves into some tentative speculation after 1900, in an attempt to assess the political implications of John McKenzie's agricultural policies.

It must be made clear that the nature of this research exercise has been considerably shaped by the sources used, or more correctly by the lack of sources available. Investigation was originally carried out into the activities of the agricultural inspectorate, but it was soon discovered that a virtual archival vacuum existed for the 1890's, as there are no known files of the early years of the Department of Agriculture in existence. A few files do survive for the 1880's, and these have been incorporated to indicate the lines of development before the department was set up in 1892. To make matters worse, the Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture were almost totally made up of technical detail. There was no clearly defined bureaucratic philosophy expressed in them as there was in Tregear's Department of Labour reports and virtually no account of administrative structures and functions. So research was literally forced to move more in the direction of the activities and personality of the first

Minister of Agriculture, John McKenzie himself.

Here further problems were encountered. No personal collection of papers or manuscripts related to John McKenzie survive. An open letter to the Otago Daily Times requesting information, drew a reply which revealed that McKenzie's house at Heathfield, including his library, was burnt down in 1967 and almost totally destroyed. Furthermore, John McKenzie did not seem to write many letters that have been preserved. There is not one piece of correspondence to or from him in the Ballance collection of over 700 letters, only two letters concerning technical details of McKenzie's mortgage are found in the massive Robert Stout collection of letters and there are a meagre two letters written to James Wilson of Bulls, in 1892, regarding a visit there and the question of the flax bonus, in the Fisher Family Papers. It is not really surprising, therefore, that researchers have largely ignored this extremely important political figure and have concentrated on his actions as Minister of Lands rather than as John McKenzie the man.

Nevertheless, information can be extrapolated from other places. The Parliamentary Debates have revealed where pressures for change came from and what various interest groups thought about McKenzie's policies, while providing a considerable amount of administrative detail through answers given to questions asked in the House. They also contain much information on McKenzie's official attitudes and to a lesser extent his personal views and changes in them, over the years. Other official publications like Bills Thrown Out and New Zealand Statutes contain details of legislative and administrative precedent and practice. Year books have provided some information on administrative structures and functions, as have the Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives and the Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture. The Appendices and Reports have also brought to

light a little information on the implementation of laws. "Letters from the Men of Mark" written to William Pember Reeves, held in the Alexander Turnbull Library, suggested that John McKenzie's relationship to Seddon, Ward and Reeves was more important and complex than has formerly been supposed. An interview with John McKenzie's niece, Mrs. H.M.M. Davie, and a working through of his will, helped to fill out bibliographical detail. Newspaper editorials and cartoons gave an indication of the way in which John McKenzie, the man, the politician and the administrator, was viewed by the public. Newspapers also provided some evidence on the reception of his agricultural policies, but time was not available for the mammoth task of properly working over newspaper responses to the implementation of McKenzie's agricultural legislation; a task made even more difficult by the lack of surviving small town papers for the 1890's and the general disinterest of city based papers in such essentially rural matters which lacked any great news value. Then an attempt was made to put together the jig-saw puzzle with its many missing pieces.

Finally, it must be made clear that as this is very much a pioneer piece of research, as well as being a mini-thesis, with severe time and word limits, it poses more questions than it answers. The only claim made is that it is a pioneer examination, with the many inadequacies of such 'new' research, of the other side of John McKenzie the politician, legislator/administrator, that is as Minister of Agriculture rather than as Minister of Lands. Any attempt to assess the larger political and administrative implications of his actions as Minister of Agriculture must only be treated as suggestion, not as well tested fact. But surely the job of the historical researcher is to open up new avenues of research, to ask questions and present problems for others to solve, thereby increasing our knowledge of the past, rather than neatly sealing up a topic and stamping it closed.

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Abbreviations

AJHR	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives
'Letters from Men of Mark'	Letters from Men of Mark in New Zealand to the Hon. W.P. Reeves, British Library of Political and Economical Science, London School of Economics.
ODT	Otago Daily Times
PD	New Zealand Parliamentary Debates
Year Book	Official New Zealand Year Book

C O N T E N T S

PREFACE	i
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	viii
ABBREVIATIONS	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v

INTRODUCTION 1

## CHAPTER I

Sir John McKenzie -  
The Man and the Myth.

## CHAPTER II

John McKenzie's Ministerial Style

## CHAPTER III

The Minister of Agriculture  
in Political PerspectiveCONCLUSIONBIBLIOGRAPHY

LIST OF FIGURES  
AND TABLES

		<u>Facing Page</u>
I	Photo of Sir John McKenzie	2
II	Cartoon of the defence of Ward	10
III	Cartoon of the Liberal "angelic host"	11
IV	Cartoon of a domestic quarrel between Richard Seddon and John McKenzie	12
V	Cartoon of McKenzie's ministerial school	13
VI	Diagram of Legislation Consolidated by McKenzie's Laws	27
VII	Diagram of Administrative Developments which preceded the establishment of the Department of Agriculture	28
VIII	Photo of butter grading	35
IX	Photo of the Staff of the Central Office 1909	44
X	Graph of the growth in numbers of Departmental employees	45
XI	Diagram of the changing structure of the Department of Agriculture	46
XII	Diagram of the changing functions of the Department of Agriculture	48
XIII	Photo of J.D. Ritchie	49
XIV	Diagram of the concensus of agricultural producers	52
XV	Cartoon of John McKenzie crushing the small butcher	63
XVI	Photo of T.Y. Duncan	69
XVII	Photo of R. McNab	70

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is essentially concerned with the examination of an exceptional minister in action; a man who wanted to keep power to himself and who, because of his nationwide identity, achieved through his activities as Minister of Lands, would have found it impossible to have even attempted to hide behind a complex of departmental machinery. The paternalistic, quasi-feudal ministerial style of John McKenzie stood in marked contrast to the accepted pattern of political life in the 1890's which saw a massive transfer of power to bureaucratic processes. In view of this pre-bureaucratic ministerial style it was not surprising that John McKenzie considerably shaped administrative and legislative developments related to agriculture up till his retirement in 1900. Yet even he was only able to slow down the transfer of real power and control of organisational detail to the bureaucracy; that is from the man to the institution itself. After his retirement the considerable powers and responsibilities that he had created for the Minister himself were taken over by the bureaucratic machine in the form of the Department of Agriculture. This development was accompanied by extremely rapid administrative growth and a considerable rise in the importance and power of the Under-secretary. Apart from anything else the huge volume of paper work that McKenzie brought upon the Minister meant that the continuation of such a highly personalised style would be impossible.

The argument is developed in three chapters. The first chapter provides a brief biography of John McKenzie within the framework of the 'man' and the 'myth'. It attempts to show that John McKenzie's personal characteristics interacted with forces outside his control in leading him to adopt a distinctive ministerial style. Some new evidence on the part played by John McKenzie within the Liberal ministry has



Sir John McKenzie. Minister of Lands and Agriculture  
1891 - 1899. Alexander Turnbull Library.

been introduced in an attempt to show that his political importance was greater than has formerly been supposed. It appears that he was a kind of rural advocate and an exceptionally loyal party man who strongly supported Seddon and that his name stood as a symbol of integrity, at a time when the Liberals were badly in need of such a symbolic counter to opposition accusations of corruption. The chapter concludes by suggesting that John McKenzie took the responsibilities of the portfolio of agriculture as seriously as those of lands, because he realised that land settlement was not enough in itself. National prosperity could only come from keeping up with world demands and competition through the stricter regulation and standardisation of production and marketing practices and an increasing use of scientific farming methods.

The second chapter makes up the bulk of the thesis as it is concerned with an examination of John McKenzie's ministerial style as such. Particular emphasis is placed on the extremely personalised nature of this ministerial style, and the way in which he consolidated earlier laws, centralised the operations of administration and increased the comprehensiveness and coerciveness of regulations. The chapter ends by comparing administrative growth under John McKenzie's tutelage to that immediately following his retirement. A definite pattern seems to emerge: namely that extremely rapid departmental growth and changes of function came immediately after John McKenzie's retirement. This suggests that John Douglas Ritchie may have played the role of a kind of unsung Tregear within the agricultural sector, and that the processes set in motion by John McKenzie could not be contained by a minister lacking his quasi-charismatic political appeal and ability to handle masses of administrative detail. As long as John McKenzie was in command he attempted to shape part of the nation's destiny in his own image and did not allow a Tregear or a Hogben to remake New Zealand's agricultural structures

and functions behind closed doors.

From here the thesis moves outside its basic legislative/administrative orientation in an attempt to set the Minister of Agriculture's actions in political perspective. This third chapter suggests that John McKenzie was working within a kind of concensus of agricultural producers. The existence of such a concensual grouping meant that agricultural regulations were treated as concensus rather than crisis issues, while ideological differences within this context were almost totally absent. As a result cross-voting in the House on agricultural bills was relatively common and divisions tended to centre around the manoeuvres of local and more colony-wide commercial interest groups, rather than around political parties. John McKenzie then was not only able to pass so many agricultural laws without alienating great numbers of rural voters because of his quasi-charismatic qualities and his distinctive ministerial style, but because he was able to associate himself with the interests of this concensual group and to act upon their demands.

In conclusion two major suggestions are made. The first is that John McKenzie's ministerial actions in the field of agricultural policy formulation and legislative and administrative development were in actuality nearly as important as his activities carried out under the portfolio of lands. Secondly, the suggestion is offered for future researchers to refute, confirm or more probably qualify, that John McKenzie was a kind of rural vote magnet within the Liberal party and that the agricultural policies of his successors, T.Y. Duncan and R. McNab - men who lacked his symbolic rural farmer association, intense personal involvement in the portfolio of agriculture and apparently high-minded concern for improved production practices - possibly came to take the votes of many rural dwellers away from the Liberal party. In other words, the general movement of farmers away from the Liberals was not

simply related to the leasehold/freehold and roads and bridges issues, but also concerned other government practices which directly affected the day to day life of the farmer. Rabbit destruction and cow shed inspection, as well as the personality and approach of the Minister himself, were other factors which must be taken into consideration if we are to understand the increasing organisation and relevance of the opposition of agricultural producers to the Liberal government that occurred between 1900 and 1912.

John McKenzie's years as Minister of Agriculture saw important and creative legislative and administrative developments, which were on a similar scale to his more well known land laws or the Labour acts of W.P. Reeves. Yet his ministerial style was distinctly pre-bureaucratic at a time when massive bureaucratic growth seems to have been considered as a general solution for the nation's political, administrative, economic and even social problems.

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CHAPTER 1

John McKenzie the Man and the Myth

A quick resumé of the life and political career of John McKenzie, the man, and the development of the political myth which surrounded his name, is essential to an understanding of his actions as Minister of Agriculture (1891-99) in the Ballance and Seddon administrations.

Standard accounts always emphasize the important effect the memory of crofter evictions in Scotland had on the young John McKenzie, especially in explaining his hatred of land monopoly and absentee ownership. This juvenile influence was undoubtedly important, but John was not the son of "an evicted highland crofter"<sup>1</sup> as W.H. Oliver claims. His father was, rather, a relatively successful tenant farmer who ran between 1,500 and 2,000 sheep and 40 to 50 head of cattle.<sup>2</sup> Such a farm can hardly be called a croft. Probably as a result of this misconception the evictions have been emphasised at the expense of the type of society into which John was born in 1838. Although detailed personal papers are not available, we at least know that life in early nineteenth century highland Scotland was lived within the restricted confines of a face-to-face society; a situation where members of the community were well known to one another and had dealings on a personal and direct level. John McKenzie's marked preference in later life for face-to-face negotiations and his mistrust of impersonal, bureaucratic administration throughout his years in ministerial office, suggests that his upbringing in this type of society had important long-term consequences.

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1 W.H. Oliver, The Story of New Zealand, p. 141.

2 R.M. Burdon, New Zealand Notables, Series 2, pp. 65, and a personal interview by the writer with Mrs. H.M.M. Davie, Sir John McKenzie's niece, 24-11-71.

Sinclair's claim that John McKenzie "left a small farm in Scotland for another in Otago"<sup>3</sup> also needs qualification. On his arrival in New Zealand in 1860, he first found work as a shepherd for the Otago run holder, Johnny Jones.<sup>4</sup> He had to wait until 1865 before he moved on to a small farm of eighty acres.<sup>5</sup> From there he moved to a rough bush-clad farm of 1,000 acres at Dunback in 1874.<sup>6</sup> His final move, in 1886, was to a superior 800 acre farm known as "Heathfield",<sup>7</sup> near Shag Point. In 1892, on this property, he ran a maximum of 1,700 sheep.<sup>8</sup> He seems to have been financially comfortable when he died in 1901 for he bequeathed gifts of £500 each to his two married daughters.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly then by the time John McKenzie became Minister of Agriculture he was neither a small nor a pioneer farmer. He belonged rather to the category of the relatively successful, well established, medium-sized farmer. Bearing this in mind, it is easier to understand why his agricultural legislation was geared more to the needs of the farmer who was already established, and in a position to help himself to a certain extent - at the least able to afford expenses associated with shed inspection and adequate fencing - rather than the pioneer.

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3 K. Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, p. 174.

4 R.M. Burdon, New Zealand Notables, p. 69.

5 *ibid.*, p. 72.

6 *ibid.*, p. 75.

7 *ibid.*, p. 103.

8 AJHR, 1892, H-30, "Annual Sheep Returns", p.83 .

9 Official Will of John McKenzie, paragraph 14, Dunedin Supreme Court, 9 pages.

John McKenzie began his political career in 1871, when he joined the Otago Provincial Council.<sup>10</sup> From the very beginning he became interested in the land question advocating the "deferred payment system" and stricter occupancy and improvement clauses on lands held under pastoral lease, including periodic inspection. Between 1875 and 1881 he gained experience in local administration on the Waikouaiti County Council. In 1881 he was elected to the House of Representatives as a member for Moeraki and first drew attention to himself by introducing the McKenzie clause, limiting the size of pastoral lease lands, into William Rolleston's Land Act Amendment Act of 1882.<sup>11</sup> During the following year he carried out an enquiry into and proved the existence of "dummyism", or the holding of land under false title, within the Otago province.<sup>12</sup> From 1884 onward he gained valuable experience in the intricacies of parliamentary politics as opposition whip. In the same year he also demonstrated his interest in the development of more scientific farming methods by travelling as official New Zealand delegate to the Sydney Stock Conference.<sup>13</sup> During these years in opposition McKenzie developed a mistrust of reliance on other people, as his continuing efforts to prevent land aggregation were frustrated by the inability of the government to do anything positive about the problem.<sup>14</sup> In 1890 he led another enquiry into "dummyism" and in 1891 was appointed to the position of Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Immigration.

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10 Votes and Proceedings of the Otago Provincial Council, 1875, 34, p. 53.

11 PD, 1882, 43, p. 599.

12 C.D.R. Downes, "Lands for the People The Life and Work of Sir John McKenzie", unpublished M.A. Thesis, Otago University, 1954, p. 74.

13 *ibid.*, p. 110.

14 *ibid.*, pp. 80-111.

From 1891 until his resignation in 1900, John McKenzie achieved mythological stature mainly through the passing of his Land Act of 1892, which introduced the new tenure "lease in perpetuity" and the Land for Settlements Act of 1894, which gave the State the right of compulsory re-purchase. A combination of the fame achieved through the passing of these two acts and the departure of Reeves in 1896, led McKenzie to assume the number two position within the Liberal Ministry until his health rendered him virtually useless as a minister in 1900.

John McKenzie's importance within the Liberal ministry both in terms of the everyday workings of government and of political symbolism, was also linked to four other factors which have been understated or overlooked by the writers of general histories and by the more specialist studies of B.J. O'Brien<sup>15</sup> and C.D.R. Downes. These factors were: the assumption of the role of a type of rural advocate by John McKenzie; McKenzie's loyalty to the Liberal party; the closeness of his personal and political relationship with Ward, and to a lesser extent with Seddon and Reeves; and finally the national (colony-wide) identity that was created for "Jock" McKenzie by newspaper editorials and cartoons.

During his years as a Minister of the Crown, McKenzie was a kind of "rural advocate" in that he rarely spoke on matters other than those directly affecting the rural populace. A quick breakdown of items on which John McKenzie spoke in the House between 1891 and 1899, shows that approximately 51 per cent of his indexed speeches were concerned directly with land matters, 29 per cent with agriculture and forestry, 13 per cent with roads and bridges, and only 6 per cent with "other" issues. Many of these "other" issues simply involved points of procedure and those speeches related to questions like education, evidenced that John McKenzie was almost solely concerned with advocating the rural viewpoint. During the debate on the Middle Districts

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15 B.J. O'Brien, "The Land Policy of John McKenzie", unpublished M.A. Thesis, Canterbury University, 1949.

New Zealand University College Bill of 1894, for example, he went as far as suggesting that money would be better spent on dairy factories rather than on higher education, and that the professional men of the city should endow the College themselves.<sup>16</sup> This persistent advocacy of rural interests suggests that McKenzie's real political importance lay in his ability to draw rural votes to the Liberal party. He had to be careful therefore, as Minister of Agriculture, not to alienate country voters either through implementing unpopular regulations on the one hand, or through ministerial inaction on the other, as he was one of the few Liberal leaders with both the symbolic and the practical rural association required to attract the votes of this political sector.

John McKenzie was also an extremely loyal party man who apparently always voted with the Liberal government.<sup>17</sup> Writing to Reeves in London in 1897, he complained that "it would be nothing if we had only to fight our opponents but we have occasionally a number of our friends to fight. For instance, during last session and during the present election there has been a great want of unity in the party."<sup>18</sup>

McKenzie clearly demonstrated his personal loyalty by falling into line with the Liberals' advocacy of borrowing, tariffs and a state bank, even though he was opposed to all three policies when he joined Ballance's ministry in 1891. He even went as far as leading the defence of the Bank of New

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16 PD, 1894, 84, p. 115.

17 This statement has not been absolutely tested but B.J. O'Brien, C.D.R. Downes and myself have been unable to discover any instance where McKenzie voted against the party.

18 'Letters from Men of Mark', McKenzie to Reeves, 16th Feb., 1898, p. 171.



PARLIAMENT PROCEEDS TO THE BUSINESS OF THE SESSION.

The Honorable Jock: Now, then, ye Sassenachs, open the door and let our friend Ward in, or, by the shades of my Highland forefathers, me and Dick Seddon will pull the House down about your ears.

Monday, 11 March 1885.  
 C. F. Osborn and Fred Lancer.  
 13

Jock's defence of Ward. The caption reads:

"The Honorable Jock: Now, then, ye Sassenachs, open the door and let our friend Ward in, or, by the shades of my Highland forefathers, me and Dick Seddon will pull the House down about your ears."

Seddon Papers, 3/61, National Archives.

Zealand against severe opposition attacks in 1895 and 1896,<sup>19</sup> and speaking in favour of the tariff<sup>20</sup> and the Customs and Excise Duties Bill in 1895.<sup>21</sup> In the sense of being a 'loyal party man'<sup>22</sup> McKenzie was a modern politician who expected his Liberal colleagues to vote unanimously on every measure that the government brought forward.

Certain correspondence in the "Letters from Men of Mark" collection suggests that McKenzie's relationship to the other three members of the Liberal big four - Seddon, Ward and Reeves - was more important and complex than had formerly been supposed.

It seems that McKenzie and Joseph Ward were close friends and that McKenzie even considered Ward to be something of a protégé. Evidence for this unlikely relationship was first hinted at by a report on McKenzie's operation in England in 1899. Evidently McKenzie called Ward to the operating theatre itself, but left Pember Reeves anxiously hovering on the edges of London.<sup>23</sup>

This slight suggestion of a close relationship between the two men was substantiated by a letter from Patrick Mawhinney, John McKenzie's private secretary, to Reeves,

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19 PD, 1896, 92, pp. 467-469.

20 PD, 1895, 90, p. 256.

21 PD, 1895, 90, p. 492.

22 'Letters from Men of Mark', McKenzie to Reeves, 22 Nov., 1897, p. 183.

23 The Manawatu Herald, 7 Sept., 1899.



EYE TO EYE AND HAND IN HAND.

PREMIER DICK (to his Heilan' Lieutenant): Eh, mon Jock, the wish is father to the thought with them when they say there's dissension in the Cabinet. We're as happy as a pair of turtle doves or a couple of winged angels—ain't we, Jock?

The two Liberal "giants" in harmonious accord.

The caption reads:

"Premier Dick (to his Heilan' Lieutenant): Eh, mon Jock, the wish is father to the thought with them when they say there's dissension in the Cabinet. We're as happy as a pair of turtle doves or a couple of winged angels - ain't we Jock?"

Seddon Papers, 3/61, National Archives.

concerning the funeral of Sir John. Mawhinney noted "Of all his friends here Sir Joseph was the one he clung to, and Mr. Ward very often went out of his way to stop at Heathfield a night to cheer the sick man up."<sup>24</sup> This friendship between two such entirely different individuals begins to make more sense on closer consideration. After all, McKenzie's land legislation could not have been really effective without Ward's Government Advances to Settlers Act, 1894, and the floating of loans in London for land development. As McKenzie did not speak once during the debates on the Advances to Settlers Bill, it seems that he implicitly trusted Ward. Furthermore, McKenzie resolutely defended the honour of Ward during the Bank of New Zealand controversy. Opposition members in the House tried to make great play of Ward's bankruptcy but McKenzie would not allow them to drag private affairs into public view.<sup>25</sup>

It also seems likely that McKenzie was much closer on the personal level to W.P. Reeves than has formerly been supposed. Reeves' son was McKenzie's godson,<sup>26</sup> suggesting that they were far more than political acquaintances. Throughout the letters McKenzie also lamented the fact that Mrs. Reeves did not write more frequently and expressed the view that both he and Seddon missed the support of Reeves and Ward during the wrangles of the session of 1897.<sup>27</sup>

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24 'Letters from Men of Mark', Mawhinney to Reeves, 12 Aug., 1901, pp. 221-222.

25 PD, 1896, 92, p. 49.

26 'Letters from Men of Mark', McKenzie to Reeves, 22 Nov., 1897, p. 184.

27 'Letters from Men of Mark', McKenzie to Reeves, 16 Feb., 1898, pp. 189 and 190.



A DOMESTIC QUARRELL.

"No, the Hon. McKenzie and I never quarrel only as man and wife do."—Premier Seddon in the Horowhenua Bill debate.

Seddon and McKenzie's disagreement over the Horowhenua Bill is nothing more than a marital tiff. The caption reads:

"No, the Hon. McKenzie and I never quarrel only as husband and wife do." —Premier Seddon in the Horowhenua Bill debate. (Seddon's words echo McKenzie's).

Seddon Papers, 3/61, National Archives.

The letters to Reeves are also interesting in showing that McKenzie had come to fully accept Seddon as leader by 1897, even though he had initially supported Sir Robert Stout's claim for the premiership in 1893. He wrote "Seddon is a wonderful man and can get through a tremendous amount of work."<sup>28</sup> So by this time it seems that the two men had become a team who seldom interfered with each other's policy. Perhaps the relationship was best summed up by McKenzie himself in answer to a charge in the House that a split had occurred between Seddon and the Minister of Lands. McKenzie countered the accusation by pointing out that Mr. Seddon and he were like a good husband and wife who had differences of opinion but remained loyal to each other.<sup>29</sup> This relationship further helps to explain how these two giant men have come to be accepted as the pillars of the early Liberal government in both national myths and history books. It also shows that once again John McKenzie the man was very much a political realist who threw his full weight behind the political leader who was most successful in getting bills related to land and agricultural matters passed into law.

Constant and widespread newspaper coverage of John McKenzie's activities as Minister of Lands ensured that he soon gained a colony-wide identity. Editorials continually debated the usefulness or otherwise of his land policies. Cartoons of McKenzie in papers like the New Zealand Observer and Freelance, which claimed to be "Smart, but not vulgar; fearless but not offensive; independent but not neutral; unsectarian

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28 "Letters from Men of Mark", McKenzie to Reeves, 16 Feb., 1898, p. 191.

29 PD, 1897, 98, p. 630.



THE MINISTERIAL SCHOOL.—HON. JOCK AS DOMINIE.

The newspaper correspondents wire that the Hon. John McKenzie will boss the work of the Cabinet while Premier Seddon is away in Hobart. Also, that the Hon. Hall-Jones is the Minister whose work is giving least satisfaction.

The number two man left in charge of lesser ministers.  
The caption reads:

"The newspaper correspondents wire that the Hon. John McKenzie will boss the work of the Cabinet while Premier Seddon is away in Hobart. Also that the Hon. Hall-Jones is the Minister whose work is giving least satisfaction."

(Hall-Jones with the dunce's cap, Carroll shooting peas.)

but not irreligious",<sup>30</sup> made considerable play of his huge frame and broad face and usually pictured him in kilt and tam o'shanter. All in all, it was impossible for McKenzie to be a little-known minister virtually hidden by departmental machinery, for the six-foot four-inches tall, eighteen-stone Scot was a giant in both the physical and symbolic sense. If a farmer or producer of agricultural goods found the government's agricultural policies to be beneficial he knew exactly where to direct his praise and if he found them repressive or irritating, he knew whom to blame.

Newspapers in general and particularly the pro-Liberal papers like the New Zealand Times for example, also helped to develop the myth of 'honest Jock'. The Liberal party made great use of this symbolic association of John McKenzie with uprightness, especially during the previously mentioned defence of the Bank of New Zealand when McKenzie successfully shielded the government against charges of dishonesty and patronage. His symbolic halo probably became even more important after 1896, with the departure of William Pember Reeves, for by this time Richard Seddon and Joseph Ward had become increasingly associated with patronage and Ward had been disgraced by the Monk on New Zealand scandal.

Whether McKenzie was as scrupulous behind the scenes, however, as he was on the Parliamentary stage is open to doubt.

Accusations that John McKenzie was guilty of some dubious actions in the case of the Pomohaka estate purchase of 1894, had some justification. The price paid of two pounds ten shillings per acre was excessive, as the land had originally been purchased for ten shillings per acre back in 1869. Worse still, the Waste Land Commission that investigated the purchase was little more than a face-saving device, as its ranks included six ministerial partisans. J.D. Ritchie, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and nephew of the vendor, had

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30 Seddon Papers, 3/61, National Archives.

also acted in a dubious fashion by destroying all correspondence with his uncle and the Minister that was related to the matter.<sup>31</sup> Both McKenzie and Ritchie were vindicated but the controversy over the purchase revealed that the actions of 'Honest Jock' were not always beyond reproach.

George Hutchison also revealed in the debate on the 1898 Dairy Industry Bill that John McKenzie was a member of the Advisory Board of the Colonial Consignment and Distribution Company, an organisation based in England which made its profits from the marketing of colonial primary produce.<sup>32</sup> The Minister was quick to remove any suggestion of corruption by pointing out that the Company referred to was concerned solely with the distribution of dairy produce in England, not with the regulation of dairy production inside New Zealand.<sup>33</sup> The link with such a non-state profit making organisation is interesting, for John McKenzie's name is not usually associated with such companies.

John McKenzie was also a tough, political pragmatist who was prepared to compromise to get legislation through. The change from perpetual lease in the 1891 Land Bill to the lease in perpetuity of the 1892 Land Act, provided the best known example of this characteristic. His understanding of parliamentary procedure was also more extensive than is generally supposed, as he demonstrated in 1898 by assisting Seddon to suspend standing order 55 to allow the session to

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31 Christchurch Press, 24 Oct., 1894.

32 PD, 1898, 105, pp. 60-61.

33 PD, 1898, 105, p. 63.

continue till Christmas-time. This manoeuvre enabled him to introduce his three allied agricultural bills of that year.<sup>34</sup> But even if McKenzie, like most successful politicians, was a little unscrupulous in reality, his name was associated throughout the 1890's with a much higher degree of integrity than the petty patronage of lesser political figures. Probably a combination of this symbolic association with scrupulous honesty and John McKenzie's obvious sincerity and careful personal supervision of administrative detail, enabled him to maintain the clean image of the Department of Agriculture. Try as they might, anti-ministerial newspapers and members of the opposition were unable to blacken either the name of the Minister or the Department. Under his supervision it remained a "model Department"<sup>35</sup> and this branch of the Liberal bureaucracy was kept free from the shadow of Tammany Hall.

Even though John McKenzie gained most of his mythological fame and his high ranking within the Liberal ministry as a result of his actions as Minister of Lands, he took the responsibilities of the portfolio of agriculture with equal seriousness. As W.H. Oliver has suggested, the bringing of scientific advice to the farmer and "helping him maintain standards" was more characteristic of John McKenzie than land nationalisation "or any other objective not connected with the immediate attainment of his goal";<sup>36</sup> lands for the people.

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34 PD, 1898, 105, p. 392.

35 Timaru Herald, 26 Aug., 1893.

36 W.H. Oliver, The Story of New Zealand, p. 145.

After all, the development of highly productive and efficient farm units was an essential complement to the unlocking of the land. In his letter of resignation to the Liberal caucus, John McKenzie stated that his main aim during his political career had been to assist in making New Zealand "the happiest and most prosperous country under the sun."<sup>37</sup> McKenzie considered that New Zealand could only achieve such nation-wide prosperity by producing a much greater quantity of agricultural exports which were of sufficiently high quality to answer the needs of overseas buyers. The state was the only enterprise large enough to bring about these improvements and the newly established Ministry and Department of Agriculture, founded in 1892, were the instruments through which these changes could be brought about. Furthermore, as the first functioning Minister of Agriculture,<sup>38</sup> McKenzie had the special duty of ensuring that the almost new portfolio would prove beneficial to the entire colony. If the pioneer Minister of Agriculture set a good example, his successors would be more likely to do their utmost to assist the nation's major industry. Consequently, it was not really surprising that John McKenzie was an extremely active administrator and passed a mass of legislation touching many aspects of New Zealand's agricultural industry.

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37 O DT, 29 June, 1900.

38 The portfolio of Agriculture was actually created under Atkinson's last ministry, L.G. Wild, The Life and Times of Sir James Wilson of Bulls, p. 98 and PD, 1891, 70 & 71, but G.F. Richardson was unable to do anything as Minister of Agriculture as the ministry to which he belonged lost power later in the same year and John McKenzie was appointed Minister of Agriculture, New Zealand Gazette, 1891, Vol. I, p. 100.

CHAPTER II

John McKenzie's Ministerial Style.

John McKenzie's concern to assist New Zealand's agricultural *industry* to the utmost of his ability and his personal preference for direct face to face negotiations, interacted with his actual and symbolic importance within the Liberal ministry to give him a distinctive ministerial style. His ministerial style was distinctive in that it was highly personalised and decidedly pre-bureaucratic. The intense personal relationship between John McKenzie and the portfolio of Agriculture meant that he was directly responsible for shaping administrative changes in the 1890's and for introducing the large number of laws related to agricultural matters that were passed between 1891 and 1900. The first major agricultural law that was passed under John McKenzie's direction was the Birds Nuisance Act of 1891, which broadened the scope of the Small Birds Nuisance Act of 1882, in an attempt to rid the colony of all bird pests through assisting the efforts of local bodies to overcome the problem.<sup>39</sup> His major legislative achievements of 1892 were the Manure Adulterations Act and the Dairy Industry Act. The former act set out to prevent the sale of fraudulent manures to farmers by making a vendor's guarantee a prerequisite of sale,<sup>40</sup> which could be checked out by a government analyst on request of the buyer. The Dairy Industry Act<sup>41</sup> was essentially a new piece of legislation which aimed to standardise dairy production and marketing practices, through compulsory and uniform government grading, branding and inspection of dairies. It was followed up by acts of 1894 and 1898. The Dairy Industry Act of 1894 added

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39 N.Z. Statutes, 1891, No. 37, pp. 293-294.

40 N.Z. Statutes, 1892, No. 33, pp. 276-280.

41 *ibid.*, No. 30, pp. 177-180.

inspection of cattle and milking practices, in an attempt to improve hygiene standards and regulate the industry in a more satisfactory manner.<sup>42</sup> The 1898 Act carried things even further by passing control of town milk supply over to the Department of Agriculture, while introducing tests for tuberculosis in cows and making aid available for the erection of dairy factories.<sup>43</sup> McKenzie's major agricultural law of 1893 was the massive Stock Act, which brought the operations of several earlier and separate acts, under the one statute.<sup>44</sup> It was followed by amendments of 1895 and 1896, which respectively prevented the night driving of stock<sup>45</sup> and provided compensation for destroyed beasts.<sup>46</sup> The Agricultural and Pastoral Statistics Act of 1895 gave the minister the power to collect information on an extremely wide range of topics,<sup>47</sup> while the Fencing Act of the same year consolidated earlier laws related to this question and extended its regulations to apply to Maori lands.<sup>48</sup> The only really important act related to agricultural matters that was passed in 1896 was the Orchard and Garden Pests Act.<sup>49</sup> It was designed to prevent the introduction of such overseas pests into New Zealand, through strict inspection of fruit and plant imports at ports of entry. This Act was also aimed at stopping the spread of

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42 N.Z. Statutes, 1894, No. 48, pp. 373-380.

43 N.Z. Statutes, 1898, No. 22, pp. 72-78.

44 N.Z. Statutes, 1893, No. 51, pp. 235-256.

45 N.Z. Statutes, 1895, No. 38, pp. 143-146.

46 *ibid.*, No. 31, pp. 122-124.

47 *ibid.*, No. 43, pp. 157-158.

48 *ibid.*, No. 32, pp. 110-122.

49 N.Z. Statutes, 1896, No. 45, pp. 134-138.

orchard and garden pests within New Zealand by giving government inspectors the right to destroy diseased trees or plants within orchards and to issue fines for lack of care in the dressing of trees and the control of pests. John McKenzie failed to get any bills passed into law in 1897, but passed the Rabbit-proof Wire Netting Fences Act in 1898, which provided loans for the erection of such fences,<sup>50</sup> along with the previously mentioned Dairy Industry Act and Stock Act Amendment. Finally, both the Noxious Weeds Act and the Slaughtering and Inspection Act of 1900 were first introduced as bills by John McKenzie. The former Act was introduced in bill form as early as 1893<sup>51</sup> and when it was finally passed it set out to prevent the careless farmer growing weeds to the detriment of his neighbour, through the inspection of both seeds for sale and of farm land itself. Government inspectors were given the right to issue heavy fines to farmers or seed firms who encouraged the spread of such weeds.<sup>52</sup> The latter Act was first introduced as a bill in 1897<sup>53</sup> and when passed was little different in essence from the original bill. Briefly it laid down that all meat for consumption in towns of over 2,000 population should be carried out in licensed abattoirs and that all such meat had to be first inspected by government officials, before it could be released on to the open market.<sup>54</sup>

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50 N.Z. Statutes, 1898, No. 29, pp. 112-118.

51 Bills Thrown Out, 1893, No. 40.

52 N.Z. Statutes, 1900, No. 10, pp. 20-26.

53 Bills Thrown Out, 1897, No. 75.

54 N.Z. Statutes, 1900, No. 38, pp. 197-214.

Most of the legislation passed between John McKenzie's retirement in 1900 and the coming to power of Massey's administration in 1912, was concerned with amendments and refinements to McKenzie's laws rather than with the introduction of new or more comprehensive laws. The only real exception was the Apiaries Act of 1906, which gave inspectors the right to destroy diseased bees.<sup>55</sup>

John McKenzie was therefore directly responsible for an extraordinary burst of legislative creativity and accompanying legislative energy. But it must be made clear that both his legislative effort and his administrative activities were concerned with the consolidation of earlier laws and administrative developments, rather than with innovation. Most of his laws were not new and even the setting up of the Department of Agriculture in 1892 was closely related to earlier administrative developments. Consolidation was accompanied by centralisation of the administration and implementation of laws regulating agricultural practice. Yet this consolidation did not mean that legislative and administrative processes were halted. On the contrary, John McKenzie accelerated earlier developments not only through the simple act of consolidation, but by making laws more comprehensive, thereby increasing the range of <sup>the</sup> state's regulation of agricultural practice. In his efforts to make the control of abuses more effective, John McKenzie also made his regulations increasingly

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55 N.Z. Statutes, 1906, No. 50, pp. 138-139.

coercive. This intensification of coercive regulation meant that the activities of stock inspectors were widened to cover a great number of duties, that the powers delegated to them were stepped up and that the government's war on pests like the rabbit and the small bird was escalated. Indeed, the inspectors of the Department of Agriculture had such wide ranging powers that the Department could have become a tyrannical organisation, but John McKenzie overcame the danger through the directness and openness of his ministerial actions. His ability to answer problems with direct action, in a manner that was above suspicion of ulterior motives, meant that the farmer was generally aware of the minister's high-minded concern for their welfare. Though he may have been something of a despot, he was at least a benevolent one. Finally, John McKenzie's highly personalised, pre-bureaucratic ministerial style meant that rapid administrative growth came only after his retirement, even though the mass of laws that he introduced and the administrative changes that he made, brought into existence the latent forces that made massive administrative expansion possible.

(i) John McKenzie's Personalised Ministerial Style

John McKenzie was <sup>something of</sup> a bureaucratic primitive, in that he tended to regard <sup>the</sup> portfolio of Agriculture as a virtual extension of his own personality. Consequently, he personally shaped government agricultural policies while in office and took an enormous work load on himself; a practice which helps to account for his ill health. His reluctance to delegate to under-secretaries and unwillingness to make use of 'sophisticated' bureaucratic machinery, is clearly shown by a speech in the House, by his letter of resignation to the Liberal caucus, and by the fact that he personally answered nearly every question in the House related to agriculture up to the end of 1898, demonstrating an impressive command of administrative detail.

In the Ministerial Salaries and Allowances Bill of 1895, John McKenzie made it clear that he was very much the minister in charge, the "real head of his Department".<sup>56</sup>

He said:-

it is the duty of the Minister to look personally into papers, especially certain papers of importance, and see what they can do in the interests of the country to save money or devise better things than the Under-Secretary recommends...I can assure the House that there has not been a year I have been in office that I have not saved several thousands of pounds to the colony by looking after the interests of the department. I do not blame the Secretaries for any neglect of duty, but they have not the practical knowledge in dealing with matters which Ministers have.<sup>57</sup>

Similar sentiments were echoed in John McKenzie's letter of resignation of 27 June, 1900, to the Liberal caucus. He noted that opponents of the Liberals criticised ministers for spending too much time on departmental matters and that these details should be left to under-secretaries. In answer to this criticism he said: "considering the enormous number of questions and debates in Parliament on matters of purely departmental detail, it seemed to us [the Liberal ministers] to be both prudent to try and master them ourselves, and to do it meant long hours of weary work."<sup>58</sup>

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56 Timaru Herald, 8 Aug., 1901,

57 PD, 1895, 91, p. 833.

58 ODT, 29 June, 1900.

Whether this claim is true for all Liberal ministers is perhaps a little doubtful, but it certainly is true for John McKenzie as Minister of Agriculture. A careful working over of questions<sup>59</sup> in the House related to agriculture shows that McKenzie personally answered most of them. Whether questions were related to rabbits, flax-working machinery, dairying, outbreaks of plant or stock diseases, handling of New Zealand produce in London, or employees of the Department of Agriculture, John McKenzie seemed to have an answer at his fingertips. If he did not have the answer he made it clear that the matter would be investigated. For example, Mr. Joyce (Member for Lyttleton) asked for Mr. Flatman (Member for Geraldine) if North Island mutton was being branded "Canterbury". John McKenzie replied, possibly with tongue in cheek, that he did not think that this was so, but that the matter would be immediately investigated.<sup>60</sup> Or again, Mr. Buchanan questioned the Minister of Agriculture about some cattle killed at Sunnyside in 1898 because they were suspected carriers of tuberculosis. John McKenzie replied immediately that 19 of 63 animals had shown a positive test. Some had been killed but no authority had been given to dispose of them. All of which went to prove that legislation was needed on the topic.<sup>61</sup> When Mr. Tanner asked if the government's attention had been drawn to the success of an obscure East Asian fodder plant (sacaline) in Australia, John McKenzie replied that he was aware of it and that some had been purchased for research purposes.<sup>62</sup> His replies then revealed a considerable command of

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59 A thorough working through of these questions revealed a considerable amount of administrative detail that would probably be contained in the **missing** files of the Department of Agriculture for the 1890's.

60 PD, 1896, 94, p.238.

61 PD, 1898, 105, p. 398.

62 PD, 1895, 88, p. 389.

detail, a practical working understanding of the way in which his policies functioned and usually demonstrated that the government already had matters "under consideration or investigation". These questions in the House seemed not only to provide a kind of barometer for measuring public opinion, but enabled the Minister of Agriculture to demonstrate that something positive was being done, that he was personally very much aware of what was happening and of the kind of action that was needed in the future.

John McKenzie increased his own dominance by giving the Minister considerable powers through enacting the right of Orders in Council in all his major agricultural legislation.

The Stock Act of 1893 gave the Minister very wide powers as members of the opposition like Buchanan, Captain Russell and later George Hutchison were quick to point out.<sup>63</sup> The phrase "This Act includes regulations hereunder" meant that the Minister could virtually make what regulations he liked. John McKenzie claimed that the authority to issue such Orders in Council was very necessary for the rapid suppression of any outbreaks of disease,<sup>64</sup> as the 1880 pleuro pneumonia outbreak had previously demonstrated. In later legislation he also revealed that he did not sufficiently trust the House or other Departments to allow them to make regulations on agricultural matters. In the 1898 Dairy Industry Act for instance, he kept the right to grant loans for the establishment of dairy factories under control of the Minister of Agriculture, rather than placing such loans under the operation of the Advances to Settlers Act,<sup>65</sup> as some members, like Massey, suggested.<sup>66</sup> It was not surprising, therefore, that

63 PD, 1893, pp. 216-219 and PD, 1893, 81, p. 820.

64 *ibid.*, p. 821.

65 A separate office was established under the Advances to Settlers Act, which was supervised by a 'Superintendent' and a general board appointed by the Governor - consisting of the "Colonial Treasurer, the Public Trustee, the Government Insurance Commissioner, the Surveyor-General, the Solicitor-General and the Commissioner of Taxes", N.Z. Statutes, 1894, pp. 184-5.

66 PD, 1898, 105, p. 59.

opposition members like Hutchison should accuse him of attempting to become a "universal provider",<sup>67</sup> of patronage. McKenzie's reply to this accusation was simply that there was only one person who could form a judgment over loans, namely the head of the institution in which the dairy department was found.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps the most witty summing up of John McKenzie's practical, if somewhat pontifical tendency, to keep nearly all power over agricultural regulations with the Minister, was provided by Mr. Tanner in the 1898 debate over the Noxious Weeds Bill, when he quipped that it would require a "very wise despot" to make it workable.<sup>69</sup>

McKenzie also seemed to use the Agricultural, Pastoral and Stock Committee as a means of keeping personal control over agricultural matters, as well as a kind of rural sounding board on the reception of his policies.<sup>70</sup> Many questions were referred to the Committee to avoid wasting time in House debates. For example, when Buchanan asked *the Minister* in 1895 if the government had considered the appointment of a bacteriologist, McKenzie replied that he did not think that such an appointment would be worthwhile. Nevertheless, he moved a motion to place the matter before the Stock Committee.<sup>71</sup> McKenzie probably did this because he was able to deal directly with other rural representatives on a personal level in committee; a kind of face-to-face level of negotiations that would not be possible in normal House debate. He continued to add members to the Committee up to his retirement from office, especially when they became vocal on agricultural matters.

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67 PD, 1898, 105, p. 60.

68 *ibid.*, p. 64.

69 PD, 1898, 102, p. 519.

70 This Committee included several of the most prominent members of the opposition grouping including W.C. Buchanan, Thomas Mackenzie and Sir John Hall. PD, 1893, 79, p.72.

71 PD, 1895, 87, pp. 26-27, and p. 592.

Mr. Buddo,<sup>72</sup> for example, was placed on the Agricultural Committee in 1895 after he had come to speak with increasing frequency on agricultural matters. After this appointment, John McKenzie seemed to co-operate more easily with him. Now the two men faced each other directly as Minister and Committee member, as personalities, almost as headmaster and prefect, rather than indirectly as a member of government and a representative of constituents. John McKenzie, the individual, thereby maintained his dominant position.

He remained the real head of his department throughout his term in office, because of this prebureaucratic style which necessitated the use of such devices as the creation of orders in council, to ensure that he kept full control of law making, administration and policy formulation. His grip only began to weaken in 1899, when he travelled to England for a major operation.

(ii) John McKenzie the Consolidator

John McKenzie was a consolidator of earlier legislative and administrative developments rather than an innovator, as the accompanying diagram clearly shows. Most of the legislation passed by him was neither new nor experimental. As he himself pointed out, in introducing the 1893 Stock Bill, he was simply consolidating earlier statutes within a single bill<sup>73</sup>. This move was highly commended by the Otago Daily Times,<sup>74</sup> even though other aspects of the Bill were heavily criticised, but several members of the opposition appeared to be unaware<sup>75</sup> that most of the powers given to inspectors by the Stock Bill had already been conferred by earlier Acts. The Sheep Act of 1878,

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72 PD, 1895, 88, p. 132.

73 PD, 1893, 81, p. 213.

74 ODT, 29 August, 1893,

75 PD, 1893, 81, pp. 216-226. For example, Wright of Ashburton, p. 217.

Small Birds Nuisance Act 1882		Birds Nuisance Act	1891
Adulteration Prevention Act 1880	Thomas Mackenzie's Bill 1891	Manure Adulteration Act	1892
		Dairy Industry Act	
Sheep Act 1878 (Amendments 1881,82,84,86,87,88)	Diseased Cattle Act 1881	Sheep Act 1890	
Rabbit Nuisance Act 1881 Amendments 1882,1886,1890		Cattle Act 1890	
Stock Act			1893
Branding Act 1880			
Public Health Act 1876	Municipal Corporations Act 1886	Dairy Industry Act	1894
Adulteration Prevention Act 1880			
Fencing Act 1881 and Amendments 82,88,93		Agricultural and Pastoral Statistics Act	1895
		Fencing Act Amends 96,98 (Stock Act Amendment)	
Codlin Moth Act 1884	Bills of 1886,1888,1892 1895 Phylloxera Bill	Orchard and Garden Pests Act	1896
		Dairy Industry Act (Stock Act Amendment)	1898
Fencing and Rabbit Nuisance Acts		Rabbit-proof Wirenetting Fences Act	
Slaughterhouse Act 1877 and Amendments 1879,84,88,91,94,95,96		Slaughtering and Inspection Act	1900
Californian Thistle Eradication Bills 1887,88,89,99	Noxious Weeds Bill 1893 on	Noxious Weeds Act	
Diagram Showing Acts and Rejected Bills of the Central Government that were consolidated by John McKenzie's agricultural legislation.			

the Brands and Branding Act of 1880, the Diseased Cattle Act of 1881, a series of Rabbit Nuisance Acts, 1876, 1880, 1881, and 1882 and Amendments 1886 and 1890, the Small Birds Nuisance Act of 1882, the 1884 Codlin Moth Act and the Sheep Act and Cattle Act of 1890, had all given extremely wide powers to government inspectors in an effort to control these various agricultural problems. Ordinances to assist the control of stock diseases went back as far as 1849 on the provincial level.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the powers granted to inspectors were used particularly in the attempt to rid the colony of sheep scab<sup>77</sup> and to prevent the spread of a suspected outbreak of pleuro-pneumonia in 1880. On the first count the Stock Department was eventually successful with New Zealand being declared scab-free in 1893. In the latter case inspectors Naden and Runciman carried out their task with such zeal that a petition with 180 signatures was sent to the Stock Department from farmers in the Waikato and Waipa districts, complaining that two healthy beasts had been killed as suspected carriers of pleuro-pneumonia.<sup>78</sup> Considerable powers were given to local bodies for the destruction of small birds under the 1882 Small Birds Nuisance Act, including the right to use poisons like arsenic.<sup>79</sup> Thomas MacKenzie attempted to pass a Californian Thistle Eradication Bill<sup>80</sup> in 1887, 1888 and 1889, which was

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76 List of repealed ordinances in 1878 Sheep Act, N.Z. Statutes, No. 31, p. 160.

77 Continued activity is shown by the reports of Chief Inspector Bayley, AJHR, H section, 1886 - "Annual Sheep Returns" and 1891 "Rabbit Nuisance Report".

78 "Returns and Letters of the Sheep and Cattle Branch", 1873-76, I/A 72/1 National Archives, Naden was discharged as he was only temporarily employed to deal with the suspected outbreak of pleuro-pneumonia, and Runciman became the first manager of the Waikato Dairy Factory Company, AJHR, H-9, 1884, p. 9.

79 N.Z. Statutes, 1882, No. 14, pp. 21-22.

80 Bills Thrown Out, 1887, 1888, 1889.

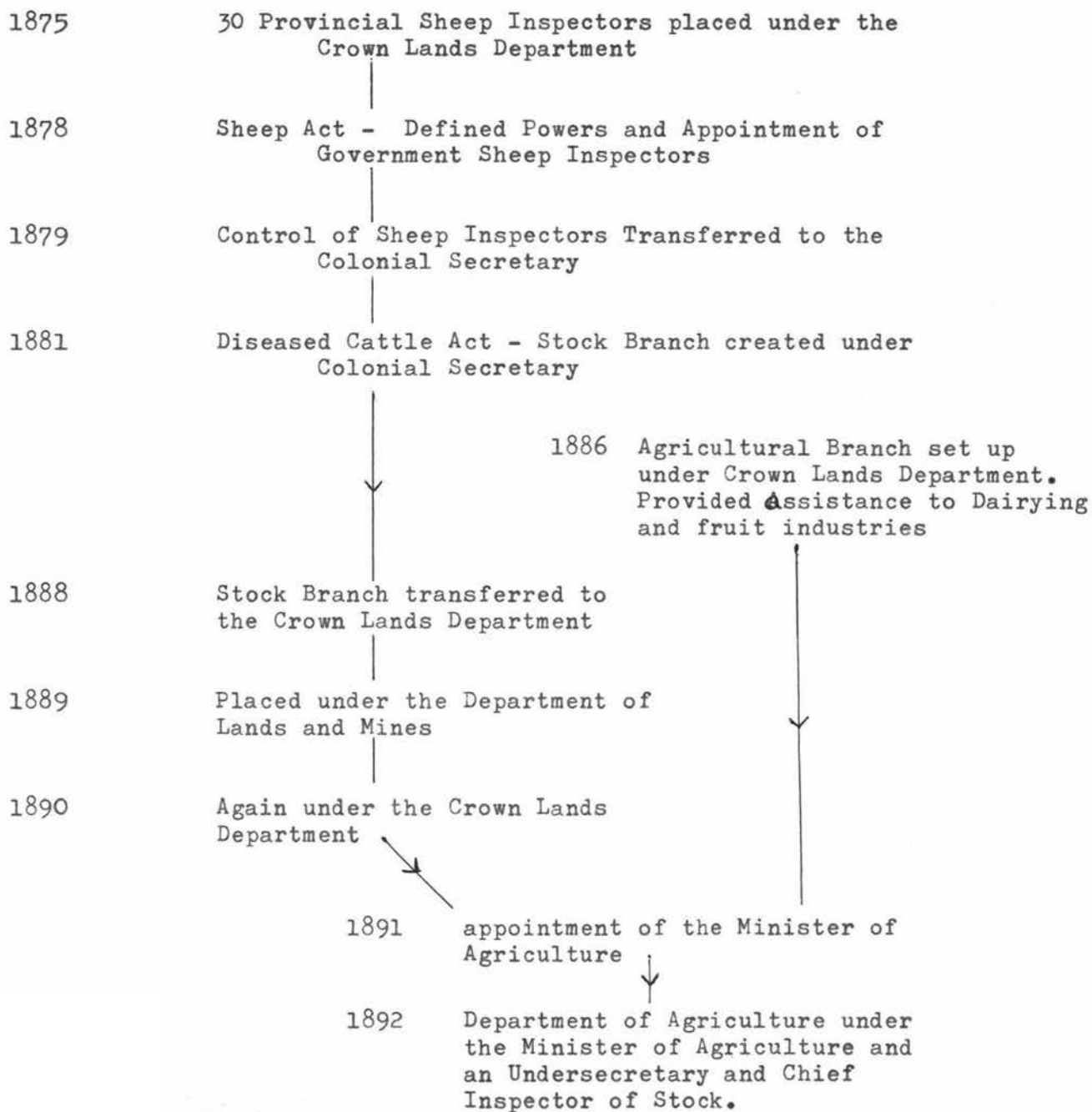


Diagram showing administrative developments which preceded the setting up of the department of Agriculture from B.M. O'Dowd "Short Historical Notes on the Department of Agriculture", Series List for Department of Agriculture, National Archives.

nearly as coercive as John McKenzie's Noxious Weeds Bill, that finally became law in 1900. It even proposed that inspectors be appointed with the right of entry into private property to prevent the spreading of seeds infected with weeds.<sup>81</sup>

A call for concerted government action against rabbits came as early as 1876 from Robert S. Cuthbertson, Secretary of the Southland Agricultural and Pastoral Association. Writing to Vogel he declared that "Government interference is urgently called for by the national character of this calamity", and added that such interference was not unparalleled for Virgil had recorded that a Roman legion was called in to destroy rabbits on the Balearie Isles.<sup>82</sup> The rabbit problem took up much space in debates and newspapers of the 1880's and the call for increased government activity to eradicate the pest became stronger as the years went by. John McKenzie himself, in the House, called for greater action against rabbits<sup>83</sup> and the need to reorganise the Stock Department. The New Zealand Farmer in 1885 brought to the attention of its readers the platform of the Bathurst Farmers' Union, which included the need for a Department of Agriculture presided over by a practical agriculturalist.<sup>84</sup> Later, in December of the same year, the paper went on to recommend that in the absence of a "long talked of" Department of Agriculture, the government should provide sufficient funds to the Agricultural and Pastoral Associations to carry out similar functions.<sup>85</sup> In 1886, an

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81 Bills Thrown Out, 1889, Cl. 8, pp. 2-3.

82 "Returns and Letters of the Sheep and Cattle Branch", 1873-86, I/A. 72/1, National Archives,

83 PD, 1882, 41, p. 606.

84 New Zealand Farmer, October, 1885, p. 306.

85 Ibid., December 1885, p. 370.

Agricultural Branch was created under the direction of the biologist, T.W. Kirk, as part of the Crown Lands Department. This Branch was mainly concerned with the promotion of the dairy industry and the fostering of fruit growing, as well as investigating silk culture,<sup>86</sup> but it was practically useless as it had to work on an annual budget of around £,5000. Between 1888 and 1892 the Stock Department, created under control of the Colonial Secretary in 1881, was passed to the Minister of Lands then to the Minister of Mines and Lands, and back to the Minister of Lands. Finally, in 1892, it was amalgamated with the Agricultural Branch and became the Department of Agriculture, under the supervision of the Minister of Agriculture.

It must also be stressed that nearly all of John McKenzie's actions as Minister of Agriculture were not new by world standards. On the contrary, he was very much aware of what was going on in the wider world and often referred to overseas precedents in defence of his legislation. In 1891 in reply to Captain Russell's queries concerning the establishment of a Department of Agriculture, McKenzie replied that he was corresponding with the Agricultural Bureaus of Great Britain, North America and France, rather than "rushing into" the establishment of such an institution in New Zealand.<sup>87</sup> Defending the 1894 Dairy Industry Bill he pointed out that its regulations were not nearly as drastic as those of Canada, the United States or Victoria. Furthermore, grading was largely responsible for the success of the Victorian Dairy Industry.<sup>88</sup> The tighter control of slaughtering conditions was, as he pointed out, partly a response to higher standards demanded by

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86 B.M. O'Dowd, "Short historical notes on the Department of Agriculture", Series List for the Department of Agriculture, National Archives.

87 PD, 1891, 74, pp. 867-868.

88 PD, 1894, 86, pp. 642 and 644.

overseas buyers.<sup>89</sup> The colony's continuing prosperity was dependent on its ability to keep up with such rising standards.

This awareness of overseas developments in agricultural matters was also shared by other more enlightened members of the rural sector. Walter Clarke Buchanan of Wairarapa, for instance, made constant reference to such developments in his speeches in the House. During the 1894 Dairy Industry Bill debate he also referred fully to developments within the Victorian Dairy Industry, but he attributed its success to adequate chilling facilities rather than grading.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, papers like the New Zealand Farmer and "The Settler" section of the Auckland Weekly News, were full of items concerning overseas developments in agriculture, from the Grange movement<sup>91</sup> in the United States, to Royal Shows in England. Clearly, John McKenzie shared this awareness of overseas advances in agricultural techniques and administration and borrowed unashamedly when he considered such copying to be beneficial.

Along with John McKenzie's attempts at consolidation went a cautiousness, a refusal to rush into things at unnecessary expense.

In 1895 T.Y. Duncan, McKenzie's successor as Minister of Agriculture, asked the government if they intended to provide aid to dairy factories. McKenzie replied that the difficulty was "want of means", even though he realised that such aid was extremely desirable.<sup>92</sup> Other members continued

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89 PD, 1898, 105, p. 341.

90 PD, 1894, 86, p. 635.

91 N.Z. Farmer, October, 1885, p. 308.

92 PD, 1895, 88, p. 279.

to question him on this matter, but such aid was not forthcoming until the 1898 Dairy Industry Act Amendment Act. By this time many members felt that it was no longer necessary and that it was so heavily hedged around with conditions that it would prove to be "of no avail to settlers".<sup>93</sup> Again, the Minister refused to get departmental leaflets bound for Agricultural and Pastoral Associations in spite of continued requests for the privilege, as binding was too expensive.<sup>94</sup> Total departmental expenditure was only £31,086,<sup>95</sup> in 1892, little more than the £25,818<sup>96</sup> allowed to run the Stock Department in 1891. Even by 1899 total expenditure had only risen to £59,373<sup>97</sup>, a small figure when compared to the £137,280<sup>98</sup> spent on the department in 1902.

(iii) Centralisation

John McKenzie's consolidation of earlier legislative and administrative developments was accompanied by centralisation of the actual implementation of his laws and of the operations of the department. Regulation of agricultural matters was taken away from local bodies and brought more under the control of the central government.

The Agricultural and Pastoral Statistics Act of 1895, for instance, placed the responsibility for the collection of such information on the Minister of Agriculture rather than leaving it up to the Registrar-General's Department. The Act stated:

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93 PD, 1898, 105, p. 44 (Mr. McGuire).

94 PD, 1894, 85, p. 456 (Mr. Montgomery, Ellesmere).

95 Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1899, p. xviii.

96 PD, 1891, 75, p. 264.

97 Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1899, p. xx.

98 AJHR, 1902, B-2, "The Appropriation Account", p. 4.

- "that Account  
 3 (2) Shall be so taken as to supply full and accurate information on such of the subjects referred to in the Schedule hereto as the Minister for Agriculture from time to time directs;
- 4 for the purposes of such account, the Minister may from time to time divide the colony into districts, appoint Enumerators and Sub-enumerators for each district, and define their duties and functions and fix their remuneration." 99

In this way, more useful and detailed information could be collected and statistics could be found altogether in the official Year Book and departmental reports. The Labour *Department* did not obtain the power to collect such a wide range of statistical information until 1903. This fact suggests that McKenzie was able to gain this extraordinary power for his department through his forcefulness as a minister while hardworking bureaucrats, like Tregear, Under-Secretary for Labour, had to wait many more years for a similar privilege.

The Dairy Industry Act Amendment Act of 1898,<sup>100</sup> showed a similar concern with centralising operations in taking away the regulation and inspection of town milk supplies from borough councils and placing it under the care of the Department of Agriculture. Likewise, the Slaughtering and Inspection Act of 1900<sup>101</sup> made the establishment of abattoirs in towns of over 2,000 population compulsory and subjected all meat for sale to examination by qualified government inspectors.

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99 N.Z. Statutes, 1895, No. 43, p. 157.

100 PD, 1898, 105, p. 42.

101 N.Z. Statutes, 1900, No. 38, pp. 197-214.

McKenzie indicated when answering a question of Major Steward's in 1895 concerning the nuisance of small birds, that as **Minister** he considered local bodies "were neglecting to do their duty". He added that unless they did something active, compulsion would have to be tried by the government itself.<sup>102</sup>

These comments stood in marked contrast to McKenzie's criticism of centralism while he was in opposition, between 1881 and 1890. In the debate on the Small Birds Nuisance Bill, 1882, he argued that the problem must be dealt with by local bodies only. Again, in the 1888 debate on the California Thistle Eradication Bill, he claimed that control of the problem should be left with local bodies and that they should have the power to appoint their own inspectors.

Clearly then, while in opposition, he preferred local body control, but by the 1890's he could see the greater advantage, or even the necessity, for more centralised control. Evidence of the failure of local government to satisfactorily implement agricultural regulations was abundant. For example, diseased milk and meat were still being supplied to the public in 1898 even though borough councils had been given power by earlier acts to prevent these abuses.<sup>103</sup> The only solution seemed to lie in the bringing of these matters within the direct orbit of the government; the one organisation with sufficient capital resources, legislative powers and managerial and scientific skills to handle agricultural problems efficiently. At the same time, John McKenzie brought these matters closer to himself, to a place where he could keep an experienced eye on them.

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102 PD, 1895, 90, p. 17-18.

103 The Adulteration Prevention Act of 1880 gave the Governor power to appoint inspectors of weights and measures and analysts of food and chemicals. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1886 gave borough councils the power to prevent the sale of diseased food and the right to use inspectors and analysts appointed under the earlier Act to prove or support their case, as well as the right to appoint Inspectors of Nuisances under the Public Health Act of 1876, for the same purposes. N.Z. Statutes, 1880, No. 20, pp. 103-104 and N.Z. Statutes, 1886, No. 50, cls. 287-308, pp. 445-451.

(iv) More Comprehensive Regulations

John McKenzie's years in office were by no means solely taken up with consolidating earlier laws and administrative developments. He also accelerated both legislative and bureaucratic processes by increasing the comprehensiveness of government control and extending the range of government activity in relation to the agricultural industry.

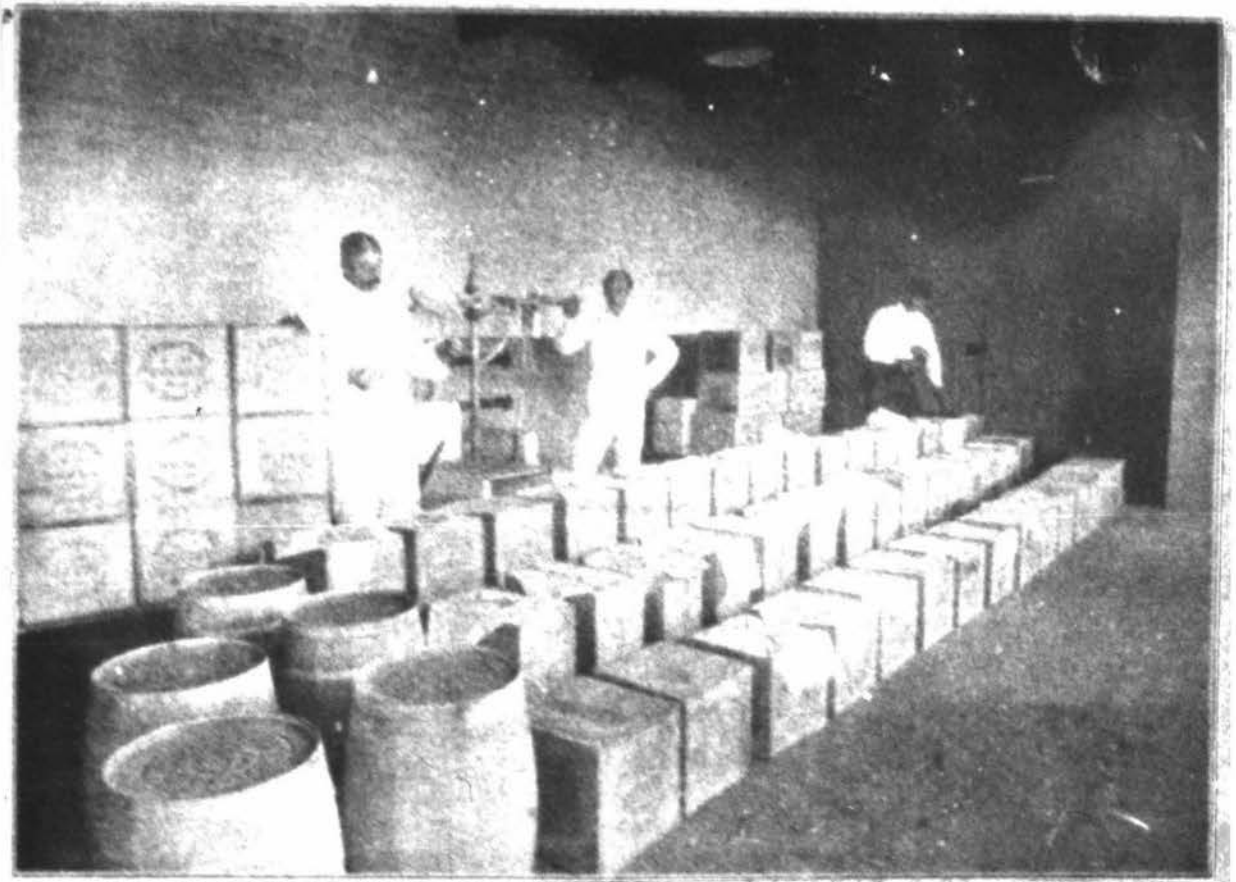
A comparison of John McKenzie's three Dairy Industry Acts clearly illustrates how his legislation became more comprehensive as the years went by.

The first Act of 1892 was, as McKenzie himself said, "a new class of legislation",<sup>104</sup> which merely aimed to regulate and standardise the quality of New Zealand's export butter through grading and branding. Because of its newness this measure could easily be modified and the 1894 Act represented a direct response to considerable pressure from both inside and outside the House for changes. The Hon. Mr. Jenkinson, a member of the Legislative Council from Canterbury, requested that some more efficient system of dairy inspection be implemented, for the 1881 Public Health Act Amendment Act had become a dead letter. Medical officers and inspectors of nuisances were so overburdened with work that they were unable to perform their duties as inspectors of dairies. To support his case he produced copies of letters from the Secretary of the British Medical Association and read out the relevant section of the report of the Hospital and Charitable Aid Board.<sup>105</sup> The 1894 Agricultural Conference, the bi-annual meeting of Agricultural and Pastoral societies throughout New Zealand, held in Christchurch, also called for changes in the Dairy Industry Act.<sup>106</sup> In particular, they asked that more attention be paid

104 PD, 1892, 77, p. 92.

105 PD, 1894, 83, pp. 306-7 and 85, pp. 303-4.

106 The New Zealand Country Journal, 1894, pp. 320-321.



McKenzies dairy legislation in action - butter grading.  
Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1906.

to factories and the condition of milk supplied to them. They suggested that inspectors should use all their power to detect any evidence of infected milk and added that all dairy farmers should be made to use coolers and that proper cooling facilities be provided at ports and by the railways. Obviously, the criticisms of this conference carried considerable weight for they represented the views of practising farmers from every part of New Zealand. Neither the conference nor the groups represented by Mr. Jenkinson were disappointed, for the new Act appointed inspectors of dairies who had the right to enter not only dairies but also cowsheds, to inspect milking practices and cattle themselves,<sup>107</sup> as well as the actual manufacture of butter and cheese. The Minister also showed that he meant business by instituting fines of up to £50<sup>108</sup> for a single breach of the new regulations.

The 1898 Act went even further. Rigorous testing of cows for tuberculosis was introduced and control of town milk supply was passed over to the Department of Agriculture.<sup>109</sup> The power to test animals for tuberculosis was complemented by the 1898 Stock Act Amendment which provided for compensation of half the market value of all destroyed beasts.<sup>110</sup> The second half of the Act made loans available for the establishment of dairy factories thereby increasing the involvement of the government with the dairy industry. Furthermore, the Minister also made it clear that he wished to progress even further by eventually making pasteurisation and sterilisation of milk compulsory, a possibility kept open by the creation of considerable powers for the Minister, under Orders in Council.<sup>111</sup>

107 N. Z. Statutes, 1894, 48, p. 373-380.

108 *ibid.*, clause 24, p. 379.

109 N.Z. Statutes, 1898, no. 22, pp. 72-88, especially pp. 72-80.

110 N.Z. Statutes, 1898, no. 31, pp. 122-125.

111 PD, 1898, 105, p. 43.

Legislation based around earlier Acts was also expanded to cover a wider range of topics in an attempt to gain comprehensiveness. Perhaps this pattern was more typical for the Dairy Industry Acts represented a new type of legislation. An example of this kind of development occurred when the 1884 Codlin Moth Act was expanded to include any "plant, fungus, parasite, insect or any other thing which in his [the Governor's] opinion, is likely to introduce any disease into the colony",<sup>112</sup> by the Orchard and Garden Pests Act of 1896. This Act obviously set out to prevent the introduction of everything possible, not only codlin moth and phylloxera. The Governor was given the right to appoint single ports of entry, quarantine stations and government inspectors to ensure that this wide range of pests were kept under control.<sup>113</sup> It will be seen that the greatly increased comprehensiveness of the new regulations made evasions much more difficult than under more specific laws, like the Codlin Moth Act, which it repealed.

(v) Coercive Government Regulation

a) The Departmental Inspectorate

An ever increasing army of government inspectors was also a major characteristic of John McKenzie's years as Minister of Agriculture; a necessary complement to the expanding comprehensiveness of legislation regulating agricultural practice.

112 N. Z. Statutes, 1896, No. 45, Clause 3 (2), p. 135.

113 *ibid.*, pp. 135-137.

The activities of sheep, cattle and rabbit inspectors were extended to include horses, pigs, canaries, dogs, poultry and pigeons, by the Stock Act of 1893. As mentioned previously, dairy inspectors were added by the Dairy Industries Act of 1894 and inspectors of orchards by the Orchard and Garden Pests Act of 1896. These functions were not made separate from those of the inspectors of stock, however, until 1901.<sup>114</sup> Inspectors of fruit were introduced in 1900 at the four major ports.<sup>115</sup> Inspection of noxious weeds was added to the duties of the stock inspector by the Noxious Weeds Act of 1900 and a new group of meat inspectors<sup>116</sup> were appointed under the Slaughtering and Inspection Act of the same year. Inspectors seemed to be becoming so numerous that Massey quipped that two classes of colonists were rapidly developing "those who were Inspectors and those who were inspected".<sup>117</sup>

These men had extremely wide powers as George Hutchison was quick to point out during the committee stage of the 1893 Stock Bill. Inspectors of stock had come to hold nearly as much authority as police constables with their right of entry to kill diseased beasts.<sup>118</sup> Mr. Herries and Mr. Hutchison went even further in the debate on the 1898 Dairy Industry Bill, with vivid descriptions of the tyranny that inspectors could inflict if they followed the law to the letter. Herries exclaimed that the activities of inspectors would cause "nothing short of a revolution in the country amongst the settlers".<sup>119</sup> In his efforts to outdo Herries, Hutchison suggested that "If one-tenth part of the powers proposed to be arrogated to Inspectors by this Bill were attempted to be exercised there would be something like a rising", and the Minister would run the risk of "being burned in effigy and hung...on the nearest telegraph pole".<sup>120</sup>

114 Year Book, 1901, pp. 45-46.

115 Year Book, 1900, pp. 45-46.

116 *ibid.*

117 PD, 1896, 93, p. 156.

118 PD, 1893, 81, pp. 820-821.

119 PD, 1898, 105, p. 55.

120 *ibid.*, p. 60.

John McKenzie answered these criticisms by pointing out that inspectors were the only people whom he could trust to honestly attempt to enforce regulations. During the Rabbit Pest debate of 1893, he claimed that inspectors and fines were essential if "negligent people" and indeed "everyone" was to be made "to do his duty".<sup>121</sup> It is interesting to note that while in opposition McKenzie had been critical of government inspectors. In 1882<sup>122</sup> he had moved a motion to have the work of rabbit inspectors thoroughly investigated and in the following year had claimed that small farmers were being mistreated by inspectors.<sup>123</sup> McKenzie probably changed his attitude towards inspectors because once he found himself in office he discovered that they were absolutely necessary, as only agricultural "police" under his supervision could be trusted to enforce his regulations.

(v) b) Pest Eradication

John McKenzie's regulations were not only coercive in paternalistically compelling the producer to follow the practices that the government considered to be the most advantageous, but in the "escalation" of the virtual "holy war" against any unfortunate organism that the Minister happened to label a pest.

The "pest" had suffered the wrath of the colonist from the earliest days of settlement and was attacked by the central government from 1878 onwards with the passing of the Sheep Act. Introduced pests and microbes threatened the future

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121 PD, 1893, 80, p. 515.

122 PD, 1882, 41, p. 606.

123 PD, 1883, 44, p. 330.

of the colony in a much more real and even more sinister way than the imagined invasion of angry "Mongolian hordes". An outbreak of contagious stock disease could conceivably ruin the nation's agricultural industry and therefore its entire national destiny in a matter of a few days. Rabbits mounted a continual and seemingly increasing attack on the nation's prosperity. In response to these threats John McKenzie took upon himself the almost divinely sanctioned task of repelling the invader and preventing him from coming back.

In 1891 he agreed in all sincerity with Mr. Edwin Blake, member for Avon, when Blake suggested that poisoned grain should be dropped from the guard-vans of trains all over the country in an effort to stamp out the bird nuisance.<sup>124</sup> Back in 1882, John McKenzie had listened with equal seriousness to Mr. Steward in the Small Birds Nuisance Bill debate when Steward declared that the "pert, mischievous" sparrow was indeed the bird who killed "Cock Robin".<sup>125</sup> Footrot was added to the sheep diseases that had to be eradicated and a special enquiry was carried out into the scourge in the Marlborough district during 1894.<sup>126</sup> Specific experiments were undertaken at Waverley Station to find a definitive cure for intestinal diseases of North Island sheep.<sup>127</sup> An outbreak of anthrax at Ohaupo in 1895 prompted immediate action. The area was sealed off, diseased beasts isolated for inspection by the government veterinary surgeon and the threat kept in check.<sup>128</sup> From 1895

124 PD, 1891, 72, p. 348, <sup>and</sup> p. 350.

125 PD, 1882, 41, p. 659.

126 PD, 1894, 86, p. 81.

127 *ibid.*, pp. 4 - 5. - John McKenzie in reply to Massey.

128 PD, 1895, 89, p. 281-282.- John McKenzie in answer to Massey and Buchanan.

onwards imported grape vines were introduced to the country only through Wellington, in an effort to prevent phylloxera from entering the colony. Loans were made available for the acquisition of wire netting,<sup>129</sup> by the Rabbit-Proof Wire Netting Fencing Act of 1898, while bonuses were being offered throughout the 1890's for the discovery of an effective means of eradicating the rabbit pest. Guns, dogs, stoats, weasels and poison were all tried on this obnoxious species of vermin with only limited success. Two pomologists and an assistant entomologist were appointed to assist in the fight against undesirable micro-organisms. John McKenzie then seemed to carry out a virtual "crusade" against public enemies Nos. 1, 2 and 3, the microbe, the rabbit and any bird which caused damage to crops or stock.

(vi) Directness and Openness of Ministerial Actions

All these various activities of McKenzie's were carried out in a direct and open manner. Demands of pressure groups were answered by the presentation of bills and the passing of laws or by positive administrative response. As these actions were carried out in a very open way, the Minister and his department were kept free from charges of patronage and did not become tyrannical in their enforcement of regulations. McKenzie's ability to do something positive about the problems presented to him also greatly reduced the effectiveness of opposition criticisms of his ministerial actions.

A good example of McKenzie's positive legislative response to demands for government action was the presentation of the Rabbit-proof Wire-netting Fences Bill of 1896.<sup>130</sup> It represented a response to pressures both from within and outside the House and to both Liberal and opposition groupings. Thomas MacKenzie, one of the leading members of the opposition, was particularly vocal on the need for aid in the setting up

129 N. Z. Statutes, 1898, No. 29, pp. 112-118.

130 Bills Thrown Out, 1896, No. 138.

of rabbit-proof fencing and even went as far as suggesting that wire-netting should be tendered for in England and sent out as ballast to save freighting costs.<sup>131</sup> Alexander Wilson Hogg, Liberal member for Masterton, quipped that government policies to control the rabbit pest had proved to be "utterly futile".<sup>132</sup> They could only be compared with "the traditional old lady who tried to sweep the ocean by means of an ordinary broom". The only solution he could see was a great increase of wire-netting fences. Frederick Robert Flatman, Liberal member for Geraldine, frequently asked the Minister to do something about the rabbit invasion of South Canterbury.<sup>133</sup> The Timaru Herald had made similar criticisms two years earlier by pointing out that inspectors were not enough as the numbers of rabbits were increasing, a fact which even Mr. Ritchie, secretary for Agriculture, had acknowledged in his Annual Report.<sup>134</sup>

The presentation of a bill which made loans available for wire-netting fencing by declaring rabbit fences a public work seemed to satisfactorily answer those demands, as little more was heard of the matter.

A good example of McKenzie's ability to initiate administrative action in response to House questions occurred in 1895 in answer to a query of Mr. Charles Hall, member for Waipawa. Mr. Hall claimed that certain rabbit inspectors were continuing to fine settlers who had followed regulations as set down in the law. Would the Minister do anything about this abuse? John McKenzie immediately asked for the names

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131 PD, 1895, 87, p. 240.

132 *ibid.*, p. 238.

133 *ibid.*, p. 99.

134 Timaru Herald, 26 Aug., 1893.

of the inspectors involved and made it clear that he would contact the Rabbit Boards concerned and introduce remedies if necessary.<sup>135</sup> As no further questions were asked on the matter, it seems that McKenzie's direct administrative action must have remedied the situation. This example also illustrates how open McKenzie's actions were. What he did was clear for all to see and demonstrated a real concern at the suggestion of dubious actions by officers of his department. Such an investigation by the Minister himself freed the department from any suggestion of corruption and removed the grounds for further criticism.

McKenzie's ability to respond to demands with such speed was assisted by the efficiency of his memory, particularly in regard to administrative detail. His powers of memory were clearly demonstrated during the 1894 session when Dr. Alfred Kingcombe Newman, member for Wellington Suburbs, asked the Minister if cattle statistics would be collected in the same manner as sheep statistics. McKenzie was quick to point out that the questioner had voted against the clause in the 1892 Stock Bill making this provision. Dr. Newman tried to deny this charge by claiming that he had only voted against the cattle tax, but McKenzie pressed home the advantage by pointing out that the same clause provided for the collection of statistics. Dr. Newman begrudgingly had to agree that he was contradicting himself.<sup>136</sup>

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135 PD, 1895, 87, p. 506.

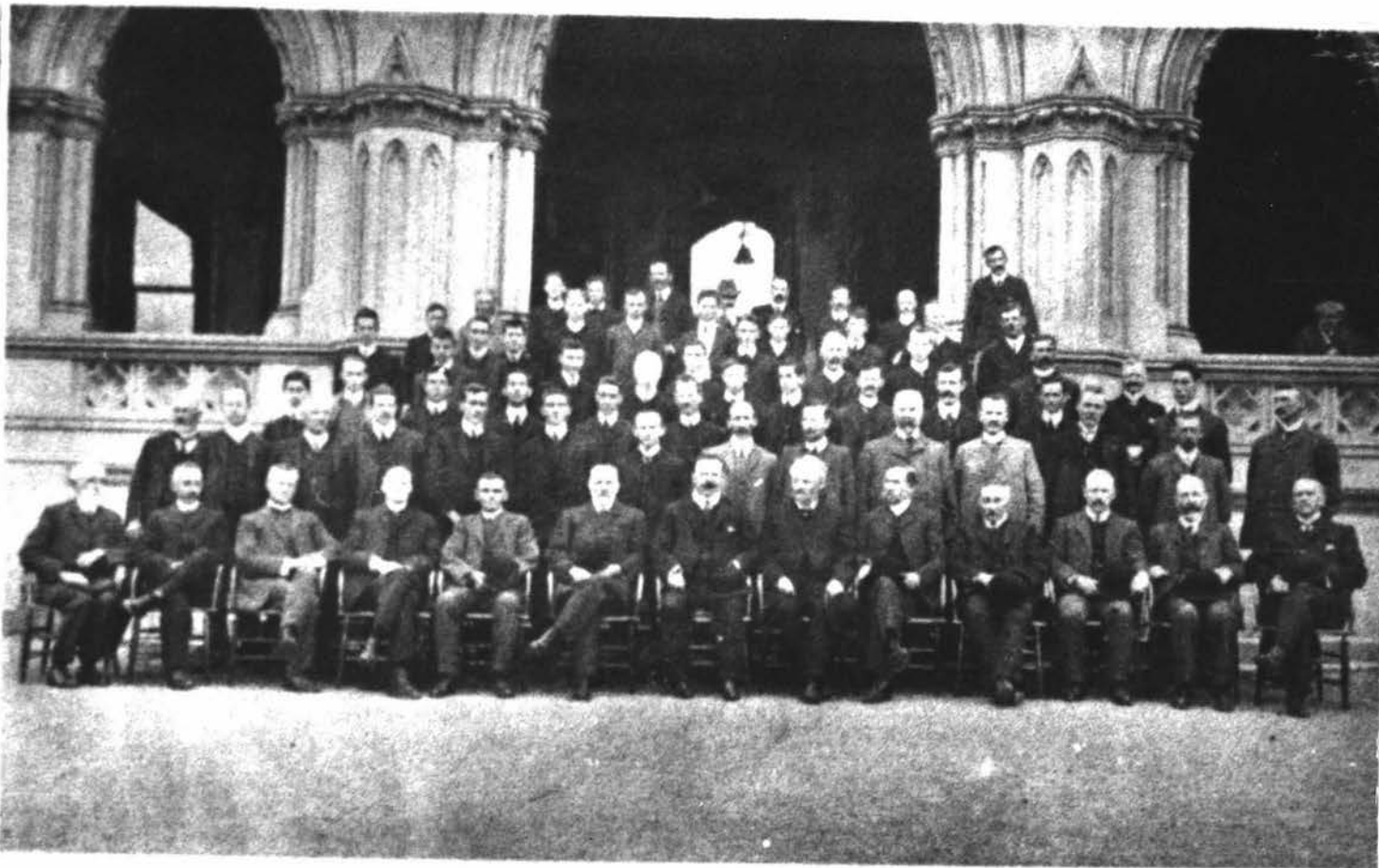
136 PD, 1894, 83, p. 395.

(vii) Personality versus Process An Administrative Revolution after John McKenzie

Administrative growth within the Department of Agriculture after John McKenzie's retirement, in terms of total numbers of persons employed and structural and functional change was so considerable that it could be said to approximate an "administrative revolution".<sup>137</sup> Even John McKenzie's pre-bureaucratic style would probably not have stopped such developments, but he does seem to have succeeded in slowing them down, proof of which is provided by the very concentrated period of rapid administrative growth in the early 1900's and by the pinched shape of the graphs which have been drawn to illustrate this change.

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137 Recently the tentative suggestion has been made that if there was a Liberal revolution in government, it was an administrative rather than a political or social one - particularly and generally by W.H. Oliver. Towards a New History (Hocken Lecture), Dunedin 1970, and W.H. Oliver, Challenge and Response Study of the Development of the East Coast Region, Gisborne, 1971; and more specifically by P.G. Gibbons, "Turning Tramps into Taxpayers - The Department of Labour and the Casual Labourer in the 1890's", unpublished M.A. thesis, Massey University, 1970. Gibbons' thesis suggests that administrative growth in the case of the Labour Department was so rapid in the early years of the twentieth century that it constituted a virtual revolution, in terms of the increase in the numbers of people employed by the Department, the extension of activities it carried out and of structural and functional change within this department.



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE. WELLINGTON: RT HON. THE MINISTER, OFFICERS, AND STAFF, MARCH, 1909.

The outcome of rapid administrative growth - a large number of employees at the central office. Note the many cadets in the back rows. Thomas Mackenzie as Minister of Agriculture.

Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1909.

The important effect that John McKenzie's pre-bureaucratic attitudes had in slowing down administrative expansion is shown by the fact that rapid increase of departmental employees came only after his retirement. When the Department of Agriculture was first set up in 1892, it employed a total of 38 persons, including 32 stock inspectors.<sup>138</sup> By 1899, McKenzie's last year of effective control, total numbers of employees had only increased to 62, including 41 stock inspectors,<sup>139</sup>. Within the next three years the department more than doubled in size, employing 145 persons,<sup>140</sup> an advance only partly accounted for by the creation of meat inspectors when McKenzie's Slaughtering and Inspection Bill was passed into law in 1900. After 1902, growth became extremely rapid. By 1908 the department was employing 378 persons.<sup>141</sup> Numbers remained around this total until Massey's policies of retrenchment and civil service reform cut back departmental size after 1912. This same pattern of rapid administrative growth in the early 1900's is reflected in the increasing size of the annual departmental reports. The 1894 report consisted of 236 pages and remained about this size throughout the 1890's, but jumped up to 325 pages in 1899. Within two years it almost doubled to 447 pages and reached a maximum of 570 pages in 1908. After 1909 the reports were cut back to around 200 pages and <sup>were</sup> further reduced to around 100 pages by Massey's administration.<sup>142</sup>

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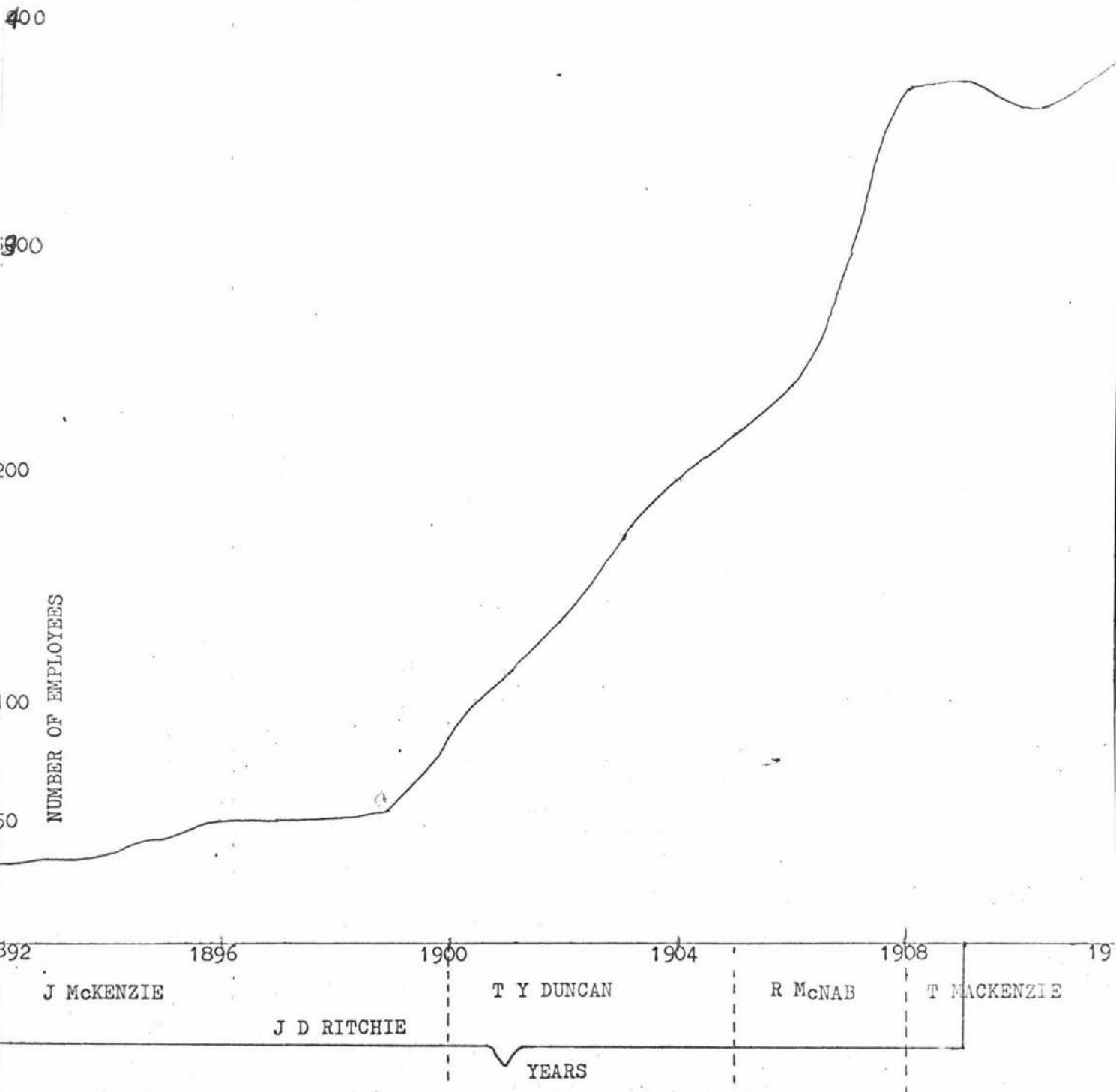
Year Book, 1892, p. 42.

139 Year Book, 1899, pp. 44-45.

140 Year Book, 1902, pp. 49-50.

141 Year Book, 1908, pp. 61-64.

142 Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1894-1899; 1899-1901; 1909-1920.



Graph showing the growth in total numbers of Department of Agriculture employees. Figures taken from Yearbooks which do not include temporary staff (e.g. rabbit agents) as does the "Appropriations Account", AJHR, B-7.

Administrative expansion after John McKenzie's retirement involved major structural changes as well as a rapid increase in the total number of departmental employees. The Department of Agriculture maintained an unchanged structure while McKenzie was in charge. It was simply made up of a Chief Office from where the Minister, the Under-Secretary, a clerk and various experts directed operations through the agency of the stock inspectors.<sup>143</sup> Major re-organisation first came in 1902, when the department was divided up into a Head Office, a London Office and five separate divisions. The Head Office was staffed by the Under-Secretary, a compiler of statistics and clerks of the correspondence and accountant's branches. The London Office was run by one man in the form of the Produce Commissioner, while the divisions were placed under the supervision of various experts or chiefs. These divisions were the Veterinary Division under the control of a Chief Veterinary Surgeon, which included meat inspectors in its numbers; the Dairy Division under a Dairy Commissioner which controlled the activities of dairy instructors and graders; the Biological and Horticultural Division under the biologist T.W. Kirk, which employed pomologists and fruit inspectors; the Chemical Division, which simply consisted of B.C. Aston, the chemist, and assistant, and the Poultry Division under the charge of the Poultry expert, which engaged poultry graders and poultry station attendants. Hemp-graders, dairy inspectors, overseers of experimental farms and caretakers of quarantine stations were as yet uncategorised, being placed together in a kind of miscellaneous grouping. Stock Inspectors still carried out their operations under regional chiefs who were directly responsible in turn to the Under-Secretary, who held the post of Chief Inspector of Stock.<sup>144</sup>

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143 Year Book, 1892, p.42 and 1899 pp. 44-45.

144 Year Book, 1902, pp. 49-50.

1899

CHIEF OFFICE

Minister
Undersecretary and Chief Inspector of Stock
Chief Clerk
Clerk and Biologist
3 Pomologists
3 Veterinarians
Produce Commissioner
Dairy Commissioner
6 Dairy Instructors and Graders
Poultry Expert

STOCK INSPECTORS

Regional Chiefs and Inspectors

1907

Minister

HEAD OFFICE

Undersecretary
Chief Clerk, Clerks, Cadets

ACCOUNTANTS OFFICE

Accountant, Clerks, Cadets
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- Veterinary Division
- Dairy Division
- Biological and Horticultural Division
- Publications Division
- Poultry Division
- Chemical Division
- Fibre Division
- Viticultural Division - Viticulturalist
- Manure Sterilising Division
- Livestock and Agricultural Division

The Changing Structure of the Department of Agriculture 1899 and 1907.

Three new divisions were added in 1904, namely the Statistics, Viticultural and Bone Sterilising divisions. The numbers of separate Dairy Inspectors were increased and autonomous inspectors of Rabbits and Noxious Weeds appointed. Stock inspectors still carried out rabbit and noxious weed inspection, but the new inspectors were concerned exclusively with these jobs.<sup>145</sup> Then in 1907, organisation became even more complex and divisions more prolific. The Accounts branch of the Head Office was set up as a separate entity, a new Fibre division established which employed hemp graders and a massive Live Stock<sup>and</sup> Agricultural Division introduced, under the supervision of a Chief Inspector of Stock and Director of Experimental Farms, who was quite separate from the Under-Secretary. This new division not only included inspectors of stock, dairies and Noxious Weeds in its ranks, but brought overseers and caretakers of experimental farms and quarantine stations under its control. Clerks and cadets were also found in fairly large numbers among the staff of the many divisions.<sup>146</sup> Bureaucracy had literally run amuck and the size, specialisation and complexity of organisation was far different than that of John McKenzie's simply structured and relatively small department.

In 1910 the Department of Agriculture was amalgamated with the departments of Commerce and Tourists and its organisation simplified in the interests of efficiency and reduced government expenditure on the civil service. It was restructured into a Head Office with four sub-sections, a group of District agents and four divisions. These divisions were the Livestock and Meat Division which directly supervised the activities of veterinarians and meat and stock inspectors; the Fields and Experimental Farms Division, which included managers and overseers of experimental farms, hemp graders and inspectors of rabbits and noxious weeds; the Orchard, Gardens and Apiaries Division to which orchard and apiary instructors and inspectors of imported fruit belonged; and

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<sup>145</sup> Year Book, 1904, pp. 52-54.

<sup>146</sup> Year Book, 1907, pp. 57-59.

finally the Dairy Produce Division which controlled the actions of dairy instructors and inspectors.<sup>147</sup> Massey further simplified departmental organisation in the interests of thrift, but did not deviate markedly from the pattern established by Thomas MacKenzie as Minister and F.S. Pope as Under-Secretary in 1910.

These massive structural alterations forced changes in the functions of the department and in the working relationships of its various branches and sub-divisions. Perhaps the best way to illustrate these changes is to look at the differences in the role played by departmental personnel associated with the dairy industry during and after John McKenzie's period in office, and the alterations in the relationship between the stock inspectors and the rest of the department.

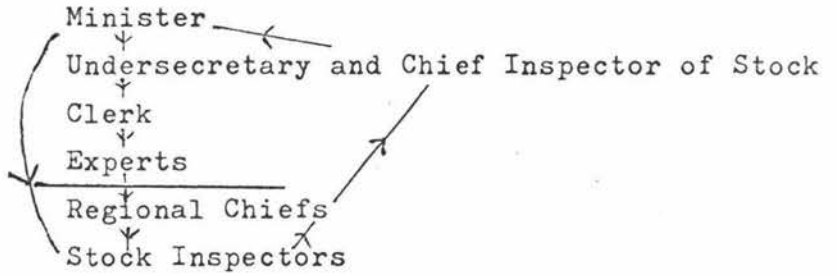
While John McKenzie was Minister of Agriculture, the workings of the department were extremely simple. Various experts worked with the Minister, the Under-Secretary and a clerk at the central office. These experts advised the Minister, who generally used the stock inspectors to implement his policies. T.W. Kirk filled the role of assistant clerk as well as that of government biologist in the first few years of the department's history. The early dairy instructors and graders worked from within the central office and were immediately responsible to the Under-Secretary, as were the stock inspectors, as Ritchie jointly held the position of Chief Inspector of Stock.

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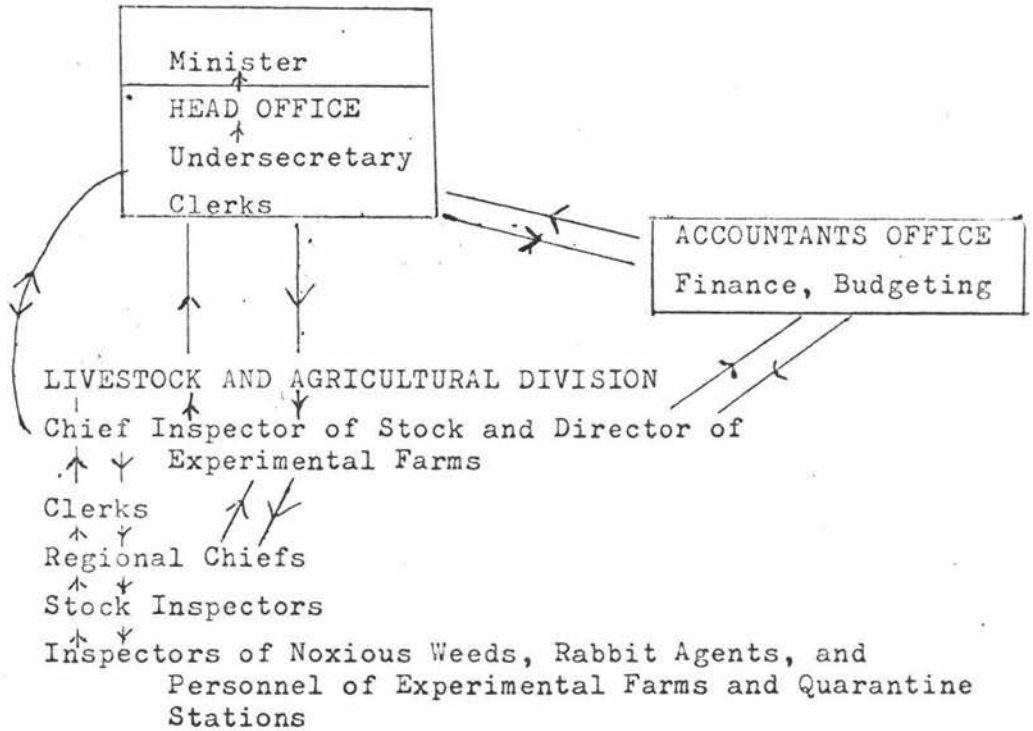
147 Year Book, 1910, pp. 63-65.

1899

CHIEF OFFICE



1907



Changing functions of the Department of Agriculture as Illustrated by a Comparison of the Relationship between the Stock Inspectors and the Cent Office 1899 and 1907.

The organisational changes of 1902 made the workings of the department far more complex. Dairy instructors and graders now worked within the Dairy Division which was quite separate from the central office. They were now directly responsible to the Dairy Commissioner rather than to the Under-Secretary. The Under-Secretary's position was also changed in that he now controlled the Head Office separate from the Minister. Furthermore, the appointment of a few dairy inspectors, separate from the inspectors of stock, in 1902, represented an increasing degree of functional specialisation, as did the appointment of separate inspectors of noxious weeds and rabbits, in 1904.

The structural changes of 1907 complicated the workings of the department even further. Now the Dairy Division employed its own clerks rather than relying on the Head Office to carry out its clerical functions. Demands for research grants and financial assistance would have to go through the Accountant's Office, on their way to the Head Office, instead of going direct to the Under-Secretary and Chief Inspector of Stock. Ten separate inspectors of dairies were now employed, but they were responsible to the regional chief inspectors of stock rather than directly to the Under-Secretary. These regional chiefs were responsible in turn to the Chief Inspector of Stock and Director of Experimental Farms, who was quite separate from the Under-Secretary and headed the new **Dive Stock** Division. The employment of clerks by the Livestock Division indicated that paper work was becoming too heavy for the ordinary stock inspector to handle without full-time clerical assistance. Furthermore, the stock inspector was effectively placed at one remove from the Minister's control. The organisational streamlining of 1910 simplified the workings of the department to a certain extent and Massey's administration refined it further.

In essence these changes meant that if the Minister



The unsung Tregear of the Agricultural sector?  
J.D. Ritchie Secretary for Agriculture, 1892-1909.  
Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1909.

desired to introduce a bill after 1907 he had to ask his Under-Secretary to approach the appropriate divisional head, to contact the required expert for technical advice. This roundabout system of operations contrasted with the directness of John McKenzie's ministerial actions. Unlike his successors, he was always in a position where he could cut out the Under-Secretary if necessary and go personally to the appropriate expert within the Chief Office, for the required advice. The considerable distancing of the Minister from the actual workings of the Department of Agriculture that had occurred by 1907 contrasted vividly with John McKenzie's direct and immediate involvement with the total functioning of the department.

Clearly then, an administrative revolution in terms of the size, structure and functions of the Department of Agriculture did occur after McKenzie's term in office. The minister provided much of the basic legislation required to institute such a revolution but it was left to the Under-Secretary to carry it through. This pattern of development therefore raises some interesting questions concerning the relationship of the Minister and his Under-Secretary. Obviously, John McKenzie cannot take all the credit for the legislative and administrative advances that he made, as J.D. Ritchie must have drawn up many of the laws and initiated some administrative changes. Indeed, the Otago Daily Times credited Ritchie with the drafting of the massive Stock Bills of 1892 and 1893.<sup>148</sup> But Ritchie's role was severely limited by McKenzie's view that the Under-Secretary was the servant and not the master. Once Ritchie found himself under the supervision of weaker ministers like T.Y. Duncan and Robert McNab, whose knowledge of agricultural matters was considerably less than McKenzie's, he seemed to be able to bring about such rapid administrative and organisational change by 1907, two years before he was

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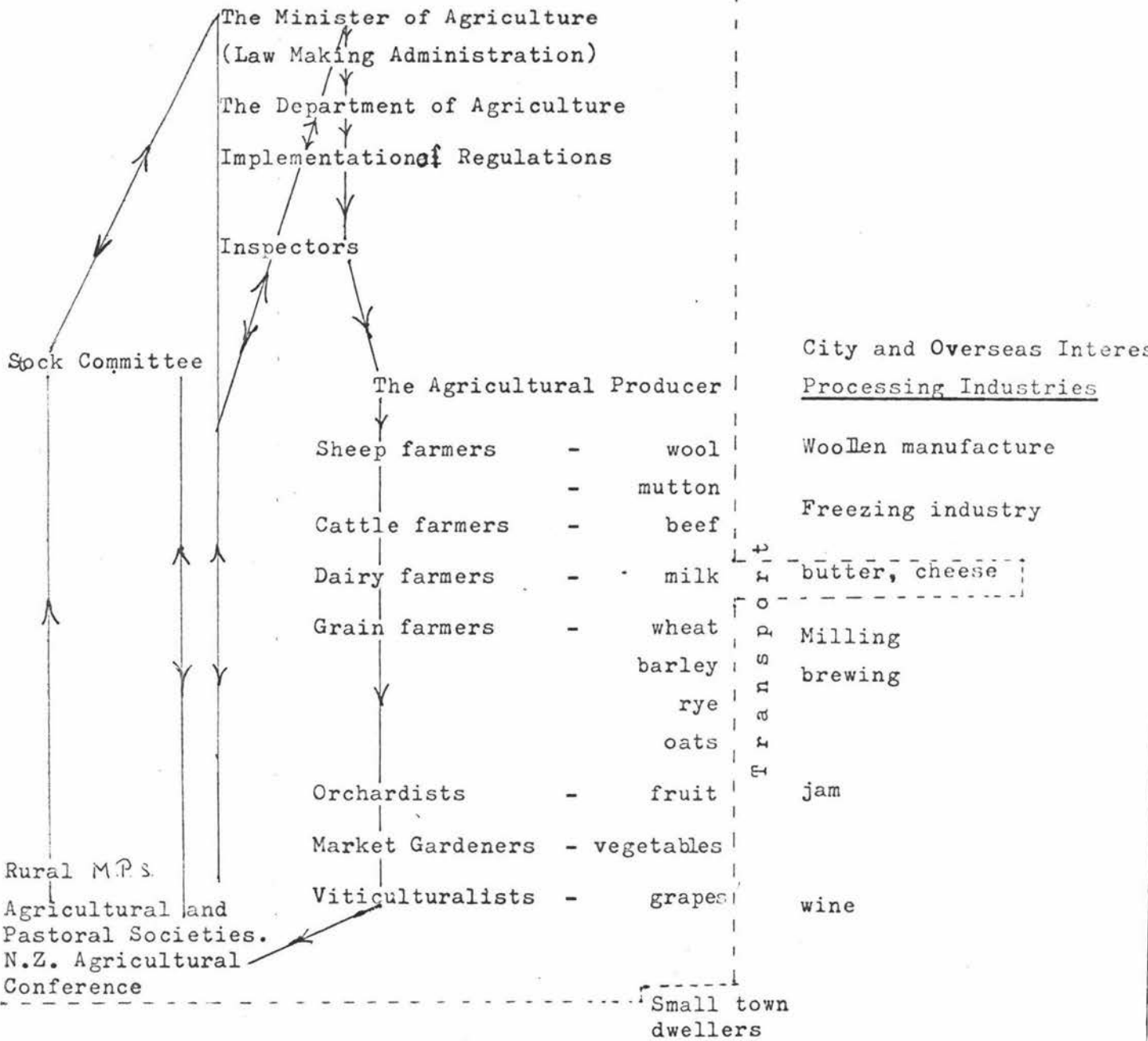
148 ODT, 29 Aug., 1893.. . .

transferred to the post of Land Purchase Commissioner, that a new impersonal bureaucratic style was firmly established for the Department of Agriculture. This overtly bureaucratic approach seemed to fit in with the pattern of administration followed by other government departments in the early 1900's, especially that of Labour. Here we have the contrast of styles between the paternalistic Minister with his clearly established identity, personally keeping control of developments and the bureaucrat, efficiently and unobtrusively working his silent revolution.

### CHAPTER III

#### The Minister of Agriculture in Political Perspective

John McKenzie's agricultural policies were not formulated and implemented inside a political vacuum. His administrative and legislative activities then, must be placed in their wider political context to gain a more complete picture of the Minister of Agriculture in action. He seems rather to have been influenced by and worked with a kind of consensus of agricultural producers. This consensual grouping was closely defined as it was almost entirely made up of practising agriculturalists. The management of the freezing and woollen industries was not, therefore, part of the consensus, as it was also associated with considerable urban, labour and overseas interests. Even the manufacture of wine and the sale of fruit and vegetables was only partially controlled by orchardists and market gardeners. The only processing industry that was directly involved with the consensus was the manufacture of dairy produce, as farming interests owned most of New Zealand's dairy factories. The consensual grouping was also found inside the larger sphere of rural politics, for the term "rural" generally includes small town dwellers and covers the activities of urban interest groups such as land speculators. Neither of these groups was directly affected by McKenzie's agricultural regulations, and they did not in turn significantly influence the construction and exercising of the Minister's laws, except when he attempted to protect the general public from the sale of diseased milk and meat. The consensus was, therefore, essentially one of men on the land to which John McKenzie himself belonged, a factor which helps to explain why he was able to work so successfully with this consensual grouping.



A Diagrammatic Approximation of the Concensus of Agricultural Producers that seemed to exist for the 1890's.

The existence of this concensus was important in that it meant John McKenzie's agricultural policies were not treated as crisis issues. There was basic agreement with McKenzie's primary aim of fostering national prosperity through the provision of maximum government assistance to the dairying, sheep, grain and fruit industries on the one hand and all out effort to eradicate pests on the other. Disagreement centred around the methods of bringing about these advances; that is with the means rather than the ends. In contrast to other questions like leasehold as against freehold tenure, which also directly affected the rural populace, there were no great ideological differences over matters like pest eradication, fence erection, and the introduction of improved farming methods. It is not surprising within this kind of situation that concepts like "party" had little real meaning. Divisions seemed to have rather shifted around the infighting of various local and more nation-wide commercial interest groups. Consequently, cross-voting within the House on agricultural bills was common, even though parliamentary groupings may have become more clearly defined in relation to these matters, by the late 1890's. Yet the existence of such a concensus did not mean that McKenzie's policies were free of criticism. Sometimes the Minister's actions were severely condemned by certain interest groups within the larger concensus, especially on the local level. But such criticisms were nearly always directed at the existing or proposed methods of implementing regulations, rather than at the ultimate aim of achieving expanded and more efficient production. The 1898 debate on the Slaughtering and Inspection Bill probably demonstrates as well as any instance, how meaningless concepts like "party" were in this context, while indicating that the concensus began to disintegrate when the representatives of urban and secondary industry interests also became involved.

Evidence of the existence of such a concensus was first suggested by the fact that rural members who belonged to the antiministerial grouping often supported John McKenzie's agricultural bills. Sir John Hall, for instance, made it clear that he was very much in favour of the 1892 Dairy Industry Bill<sup>149</sup> and the Stock Bill of 1893.<sup>150</sup> Thomas Mackenzie was personally thanked in the House by the Minister for his assistance in drawing up the Manure Adulteration Bill of 1892. Evidently Thomas had first introduced the measure in 1891 in an effort to protect farmers against the sale of fraudulent manures and had continued to carry out amendments of the bill in committee, which made it workable and greatly assisted in helping to pass the law in 1892.<sup>151</sup> Captain Russell, interestingly enough one of the chief supporters of the Sheep Act of 1878,<sup>152</sup> wanted to go even further than the Minister in an effort to rid the colony of stock disease. He suggested that district chief inspectors of stock should all be qualified veterinary surgeons. The proposal was impractical as John McKenzie pointed out, for the colony could not afford to employ a large number of these experts and no veterinarian would be prepared to do the paper work required of a stock inspector.<sup>153</sup> This suggestion of Captain Russell's may seem contradictory when compared to his severe criticism of the powers given to the Minister and inspectors during the Stock

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149 PD, 1892, 77, p. 93.

150 ODT, 29 Aug., 1893.

151 PD, 1892, 78, p. 733.

152 PD, 1878, 29, p. 631.

153 PD, 1895, 89, pp. 282-283.

Bill debate of 1893, but it is probably explained by the fact that the increased incidence of stock disease in the North Island posed a very real threat to him personally.

The support of men like Sir John Hall and Captain William Russell begins to make sense on closer consideration. Such men belonged to a well established group of big farmers<sup>154</sup> who considered themselves to be something of an elite group, roughly corresponding to the gentry sector of English society. It was in the interests of their continued prosperity to be aware of overseas advances in agricultural techniques and to favour the introduction of scientific farming methods and stricter regulation of abuses. Production increases that resulted from improved farming methods could only make them more prosperous while greater control of wandering diseased sheep, rabbits and other pests lessened the likelihood of sudden economic and social ruin.

While Opposition members sometimes supported McKenzie's agricultural policies, generally staunch supporters of the Liberal ministry like A.W. Hogg, and the future Minister of Agriculture, Robert McNab, were highly critical of some of the Minister's measures.

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154 Hall ran 32,647 sheep in 1893, and Russell carried 18,516 sheep on his two stations in 1898. AJHR, 1893, H-32, "Annual Sheep Returns", p. 75, and AJHR, 1898, H-23, B, p. 35, while Buchanan owned 13,000 acres of land. Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, G.L. Scholefield, (ed.), I, p. 113.

A.W. Hogg was not only critical of John McKenzie's handling of the rabbit pest problem but also pointed out during the 1894 Dairy Industry Bill debate that the excellence of Irish products was achieved without dairy industry bills and "harrassing Inspectors". He claimed that in too many cases inspectors of the Stock Department inflicted "gross injustices" on the producer. Because of this abuse of legal powers manufacturers of cheese and butter should have some form of tribunal in which to defend themselves.<sup>155</sup>

In 1896 Robert McNab actually voted with George Hutchison, one of John McKenzie's greatest political enemies, when Hutchison moved that the 1895 Stock Act Amendment, making night driving of sheep illegal, be repealed.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, McNab's name does not even appear on the voting list while clauses of the 1898 Dairy Industry Bill were being debated in committee.<sup>157</sup> Before the bill was passed into its third reading he twice voted with Opposition amendments to individual clauses.<sup>158</sup> Such opposition from within the party considerably perplexed McKenzie, particularly in 1898 when he had great difficulty in even getting his three agricultural bills laid before the House. It is not surprising, therefore, that he complained of a "want of unity in the party" and condemned the debate on the Masters and Apprentices Bill for being a complete farce which delayed the introduction of his own bills and frustrated the demands of the small settler and bush farmer.<sup>159</sup>

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155 PD, 1894, 86, p. 643.

156 PD, 1896, 93, p. 253.

157 PD, 1898, 105, pp. 66-69.

158 *ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

159 PD, 1898, 104, pp. 727-728.

Occasionally a different pattern of voting occurred when nearly every interested member solidly swung behind McKenzie's opposition to the whims of one or two individuals. A good example of this kind of concord was evident in the rabbit pest debate of 1893. G.F. Richardson, member for Mataura, found that he was the only speaker who favoured the continuation of the rabbit tinning industry<sup>160</sup>, as all the other participants in the debate wished to be rid of the pest.<sup>161</sup> T.Y. Duncan, member for Oamaru, and McKenzie's successor as Minister of Agriculture, admitted in an earlier debate that he was the chief partner in a rabbit factory, but conceded that rabbit farming for nine months of the year was a bad thing and agreed that the pests should be eradicated.<sup>162</sup> John McKenzie and Sir John Hall seemed to express the general opinion of the House when they pointed out that rabbit farming only encouraged the pest.<sup>163</sup> The national interest won out over that of the Southland farmer.<sup>164</sup>

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160 PD, 1893, 80, p. 512.

161 *ibid.*, pp. 509-520, including Buchanan, Captain Russell, Thomas MacKenzie, Relleston, Valentine and Hogg.

162 PD, 1892, 78, p. 758.

163 PD, 1893, 80, pp. 515-517.

164 It is interesting to note that Robert McNab, another Southland representative (member for Matarua), was also associated with the rabbit tinning industry, as an amusing poem in his papers revealed. Entitled "Bunny's Lament at the Loss of Rab McNab", it insinuates that as Minister of Agriculture, 1906-1908, McNab was stopping hunting and poisoning of rabbits for one half of the year to allow rabbit factories to function. The poem began, "O wae is me, pair Bunny cried,  
McNab has gone, oor only shelter"

and ended,

"Cruel Fortune's blow has struck us baith,  
Guid-bye, McNab, a lang guid-bye."

McNab Papers Scrapbook, Vol. IV, p. 47, Q.993.1, MS 47, ATL. In the same set of papers there is also a letter from Southland rabbiters, requesting McNab to allow the tinning industry to continue as most Southland farmers were dependent on this extra source of income for survival. Personal Correspondence, 24 Feb., 1906.

A comparison of voting on the Land for Settlements Bill and the Dairy Industry Bill of 1894 shows clearly that patterns of support were far less clearcut in the case of McKenzie's agricultural legislation than for his land legislation. Something approximating a party division seems to have occurred in the final vote for the Land for Settlements Bill. Those members with general sympathies towards the Liberal ministry, with the exception of three of the Maori members - Heke, Pere and Te Ao - voted solidly with McKenzie. The better known opposition members voted solidly against the Minister.<sup>165</sup> This type of voting contrasted quite markedly with the vote on clause 11 of the Dairy Industry/<sup>Bill</sup> which stated that milk must be cooled and aerated once it had left the cow. Supporters of McKenzie's Land Bill, like Hogg, Lawry, O'Regan and W. Kelly, voted against McKenzie on this issue. The Maori members on the other hand now voted with the Minister. Several members of the anti-ministerial grouping, including Buchanan, Crowther, Lang, Thomas MacKenzie and James Wilson, gave the Minister their support.<sup>166</sup> This support is largely explained by the fact that Buchanan was the Chairman of the Greytown and Clareville dairy factories;<sup>167</sup> Wilson was an advocate of scientific farming throughout his life<sup>168</sup>; Thomas MacKenzie was a director of the Inch Clutha cheese factory,<sup>169</sup> and Lang was a Waikato Dairy farmer,<sup>170</sup> who would directly benefit from improved production methods. Party

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165 PD, 1894, 85, pp. 94-95.

166 PD, 1894, 86, p. 645.

167 Dictionary of N.Z. Biography, I, p. 113.

168 L.G. Wild, The Life and Times of Sir James Wilson of Bulls.

169 PD, 1894, 86, p. 638.

170 Cyclopedia Company Limited, Cyclopedia of New Zealand, II, p. 739.

divisions then do not seem to have been as important in the case of the Dairy Industry Bill, which was rather characterised by cross voting of rural members of parliament who had a particular interest in the improvement of dairy production methods and increased output. This type of cross voting did not always occur and probably became less frequent towards the end of the 1890's as parliamentary opposition to McKenzie's agricultural bills seemed to become more organised. In introducing the Dairy Industry Bill of 1898, the Minister complained that he would no longer refer regulations to the Stock Committee to be torn to pieces "by party feeling".<sup>171</sup> Before 1896 he had only been too glad to refer matters to this committee and had placed several antiministerial members on it to reduce the strength of party feeling, by working with them as practical agriculturalists rather than as Liberal or opposition sympathisers. The vote later in the debate on an amendment put forward by Pirani, indicated that McKenzie's complaint was more than an expression of personal frustration. Antiministerialists like Russell, Wason, G. Allen, Buchanan, Duthie Massey and Hutchison solidly supported Pirani's proposal that loans for the setting up of dairy factories, should be made available through the Advances to Settlers office. Pro-government supporters, including A.W. Hogg, rejected the amendment and voted it out. It seems then that the consensus of agricultural producers was probably beginning to weaken on the parliamentary level by 1898, but this did not mean that the consensus as such was breaking up, for the change was largely explained by a new determination on the part of the parliamentary opposition to block as many government measures as possible. Furthermore, criticisms were still aimed at details of implementing regulations, not at the need to assist the dairy industry and to prevent the sale of diseased milk to the public.

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171 PD, 1898, 105, p. 95.

The existence of a concensus of agricultural producers did not rule out the possibility of severe criticism of ministerial policy, as the hostile opposition to the proposed Codlin Moth Bill of 1892 within the Auckland province, revealed. Numerous letters from orchardists in "The Settler" or the country dweller's section of the Auckland Weekly News, from areas as far apart as Albertland and Omaha in the North and Clevedon and Ohaupo in the South, roundly condemned the Bill.<sup>172</sup> The paper's own journalist, Agricola, was also extremely critical of the measure.<sup>173</sup> An editorial of August 20th, 1892, went as far as claiming that the expenses of a new government department were being thrown onto the shoulders of a few fruit growers.<sup>174</sup> This rather parochial opposition must have proven effective for no law concerning the fruit industry was passed until the Orchard and Garden Pest Act of 1896. Furthermore, this law itself was so emasculated in committee that Ritchie complained that it was practically "useless".<sup>175</sup> So considerable opposition did arise from within the concensus, but it was aimed at proposed methods of implementing change, not at the idea of assisting the fruit industry and freeing it from pest infestation.

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172 Auckland Weekly News, 13 Aug., 1892, p. 33.

173 Auckland Weekly News, 16 July, 1892, p. 34.

174 Auckland Weekly News, 20 Aug., 1892, p. 32.

175 Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, 1897, p. xvi.

Perhaps the debate which best illustrates the complexity of the divisions and interest group rivalries over agricultural matters, was the debate on the 1898 Slaughtering and Inspection Bill. This debate clearly shows how both commercial and local interest groups fought with and against one another, rendering party divisions meaningless in the process.

The Slaughtering and Inspection Bill represented an attempt by McKenzie to prevent the sale of diseased meat to both the public of New Zealand and overseas buyers. He hoped to prevent abuses through a rigid system of government inspection and the compulsory establishment of abattoirs in towns of over 2,000 population. The bill was first introduced in 1897 and had been carefully worked over by the Stock Committee before its re-introduction. As part of the close investigation of the problems associated with such legislation, the Stock Committee had taken evidence from local bodies, freezing companies and small butchers. In response to the evidence produced by the small butchers the Committee had decided to strike out the clause which gave local bodies the right to delegate powers given under the bill. John McKenzie opposed this omission, but let the amendment go through as he thought it would give the bill a greater chance of passing. The Minister added that the bill was not a party measure, but rather represented an attempt to rid the nation of a major abuse.<sup>176</sup>

The actual debate revealed that the bill was not treated as a party measure, for divisions were far more complex than those of Liberal against Conservative, or Government against Opposition. At first glance major urban-rural groupings can be distinguished, but a closer reading indicates that a more accurate generalisation about the debate would be that advocates of the consumers' interests argued their case against advocates of producers' interests.

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176 PD, 1898, 105, pp. 339-341. J. McKenzie introducing the Bill.

McKenzie himself stood for the interests of the consumer, but this apparently homogenous grouping was further broken down into three sub-groups. Stevens, member for Manawatu, asked for protection of towns of under 2,000 population as no provision was made within the bill for such settlements. Duthie, member for Wellington City, a former mayor and a director of the Gear<sup>177</sup> Meat Company, put forward the case of the local bodies whom he claimed were being robbed of their powers by the freezing companies and government interests. John McKenzie seemed to represent the ordinary, virtually anonymous, consumer.

The advocates of the producers themselves also represented three interest blocks - the freezing companies, the small butcher and his associated supplier of meat, the small farmer.

W.C. Buchanan spoke first as representatives of the freezing companies with which he was directly connected as Chairman of the Wellington Meat Export Company.<sup>178</sup> He argued that freezing companies should be allowed to maintain their own system of grading and opposed the bill for its unnecessary interference. At the same time he tried to strengthen his case by pointing out that the small butcher would be placed in a hopeless position if the bill was passed into law.<sup>179</sup>

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177 Cyclopedia of New Zealand, I, p. 262.

178 PD, 1893, 79, p. 224.

179 PD, 1898, 105, pp. 341-342.

John Duthie, generally one of the severest critics of government administration and one of the leading figures within the parliamentary opposition, turned around and savagely attacked Buchanan. He claimed that along with the producers Buchanan had been responsible for blocking similar measures for the last ten years. Only a proper system of inspection and "thorough control" of slaughtering conditions under the auspices of local bodies would provide any satisfaction.<sup>180</sup> So it seems that his concern for the protection of local body power against the encroachment of either government or commercial monopolies won out over hopes of personal achievement within the freezing industry. This attitude is partly explained by the fact that Duthie was one of the largest ironmongers in the country, whose vested interests were directly threatened by any such monopolies.<sup>181</sup> The independent member for Palmerston North, Mr. Pirani,<sup>182</sup> then pleaded the case of the small butcher. He claimed that by making slaughtering in abbatoirs compulsory, the small butcher would virtually have his property confiscated. He also added that the regulations of home killing within farming districts should be made more rigid.<sup>183</sup>

William Massey supported Pirani's defence of the small butcher by claiming that the bill would only cause hardship to the many Aucklanders who were dependent on that occupation for their livelihood. He also added that home killing regulations had now become unduly rigorous.<sup>184</sup> Lawry, who was also a farmer and Liberal member for Parnell,<sup>185</sup> sided with Massey by asking how

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180 PD, 1898, 105, p. 343.

181 Cyclopedia of New Zealand, I, p. 262.

182 Pirani was also deeply involved in local body politics, economically as well as socially. He owned the Manawatu Evening Standard, was chairman of the Licensing Committee, President of the Manawatu and West Coast Agricultural and Pastoral Association and personally worked with the fire brigade and friendly societies. *ibid.*, p.1142.

183 PD, 1898, 105, pp. 344-45.

184 *ibid.*, pp. 350-351.

185 Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, I, p.488.



Crushing Social Pests. The caption reads:

"The McKenzie: It's not a man I'm crushing. It's only a small butcher, who sells rotten meat, and what is he after all but a sassenach and another social pest."

Seddon Papers, 3/61, National Archives.

John McKenzie, the defender of the small man, could kill the small butcher by playing into the hands of the "big monopolist".<sup>186</sup> Charles Wilson, Liberal member for Wellington Suburbs, and a journalist who was interested in country matters,<sup>187</sup> introduced the case of the small farmer whom he claimed was dependent for his livelihood on the small butcher.<sup>188</sup>

Only Frederick Flatman, Liberal member for Geraldine, who ran a farm which was about the same size as John McKenzie's, spoke out in full support of the bill. He agreed with the Minister that local bodies would never successfully enforce correct slaughtering procedures, and that proper government inspection should therefore be made compulsory. Flatman added that he was not surprised at the opposition of small farmers in the Wellington area to the bill, for these men had sizeably increased their income by illegally introducing diseased meat into the city market, through the agency of small butchers.<sup>190</sup> Surprisingly few objections were raised to Flatman's accusations, probably indicating that they carried a considerable degree of validity. The Minister himself rounded up the debate by pointing out that most speakers had conveniently forgotten about the consumer. He chastised the House for ignoring the innocent buyer of meat in their efforts to kill the bill and made it clear that he was annoyed with the Stock

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186 PD, 1898, 105, p. 349.

187 Cyclopedia of New Zealand, I, pp. 464-465.

188 PD, 1898, 105, p.353.

189 Cyclopedia of New Zealand, III, p. 872.

He owned a 900 to 1,000-acre sheep farm on which he also grew wheat.

190 PD, 1898, 105, pp. 356-357.

Committee for delaying the Bill's introduction. In support of the Bill he read a report from the chief meat inspector for the Auckland province, which clearly stated that small butchers were selling "rotten meat". He also chided Auckland members for the self-interest they displayed in opposing the Bill and pointed out that it was absurd to talk of diseased meat as confiscated property.<sup>191</sup> But in spite of McKenzie's protests, the opposition of the various groups represented in this debate was not overcome until 1900, when the Bill was passed into law. Obviously, then, the wrangling which was involved and the relationships which existed between the various interest groups as revealed in this debate, were extremely complex; far more complex than Government/Opposition, North Island/South Island divisions, even though such large entities were not entirely disassociated from the struggle. Also, the consensus of agricultural producers seemed to become blurred when city interest groups such as small butchers and local bodies, became directly involved with the farmer. Perhaps, then, it is only safe to talk of such a consensus in relation to more genuinely practical matters directly associated with production, such as the eradication of stock disease and assistance in building rabbit-proof fences.

This, then, was the kind of political context in which John McKenzie worked as Minister of Agriculture. It was not only his strong personality and his open and direct pre-bureaucratic ministerial style which enabled him to pass so many laws regulating agricultural practice without alienating many rural voters; his ability to associate himself with the interests of the agricultural producer and to consider and act upon their demands in both general and more specific ways was equally important.

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191 PD, 1898, 105, pp. 358-360.

A good example of the general way in which John McKenzie worked and associated with the concensual group of agricultural producers, was his sending of all agricultural bills to Agricultural and Pastoral societies for recommendations and criticisms, prior to their introduction in Parliament.<sup>192</sup> These suggestions were also considered in the Stock Committee. By including revisions in the final version of a bill, John McKenzie actually took the views of the agricultural producer into consideration, thereby making them part of the law-making process. This practice made violent rejection of regulations more difficult, for as the recipients had apparently participated in the formulation of laws, they had themselves as well as the minister to blame for any unfavourable features. Through practices like this, John McKenzie directly associated himself with the interests of the concensual group whom he represented as Minister of Agriculture.

Perhaps the best specific example of the way in which McKenzie acted upon the demands of the consensus of agricultural producers was his acceleration of the establishment of the Department of Agriculture between 1891<sup>and</sup> 1892. This action represented a response to pressure from the parliamentary opposition and to requests of the 1892 Agricultural Conference, the two-yearly meetings of the Agricultural and Pastoral Societies of New Zealand.

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192 e.g. PD, 1893, 81, p. 213.

"Or again in 1891 John McKenzie sent out a memorandum to the Agricultural and Pastoral Societies asking for their views on any subject relating to the welfare of the agricultural and pastoral industries. The replies included the need to eradicate codlin moth and suggested that a uniform system of ear marking should be introduced, that two veterinarians and a Minister of Agriculture be appointed and that legislation on the small bird nuisance be made more compulsory. All these demands were answered in some way in John McKenzie's agricultural laws. AJHR, 1891, H-39.

In a debate on a report of the Noxious Woods Committee in 1891, Captain William Russell, along with W.C. Buchanan, Sir John Hall, James Wilson and M.J.S. (Scobie), MacKenzie suggested that John McKenzie would do great service to the land by setting up a "Bureau of Agriculture".<sup>193</sup> Weight was added to these demands by the notion of the Agricultural Conference of May 1892, calling for the establishment of a "properly equipped" Department of Agriculture. They acknowledged the appointment of J.D. Ritchie as Secretary on 31st March, 1892, but pointed out that this was not enough.<sup>194</sup> The notion was seconded by yet another prominent member of the Opposition, Thomas MacKenzie, Secretary of the Agricultural Conference.

In reply to the Opposition during this debate, John McKenzie clearly stated that he did not see how the government could undertake the appointment of inspectors and graders of butter and flax. He suggested that such work should be left to "private enterprise".<sup>195</sup> A little earlier in the debate on the report of the Stock Committee, he had said that he did not think it was ever supposed by the House that a "separate and expensive Agricultural Department" would ever be set up, although he was investigating the matter.<sup>196</sup> An institution similar to the Department of Agriculture had also been mentioned in the speech from the throne.<sup>197</sup>

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193 PD, 1891, 74, pp. 960-62.

194 N.Z. Country Journal, 1892, pp. 296 and 300-301.

195 PD, 1891, 74, p. 963.

196 *ibid.*, pp. 867-868.

197 L.J. Wild, Sir James Wilson of Bulls, p. 98.

Despite his earlier reluctance, the Department was set up by the end of 1892, with the appointment of a chief clerk, a veterinarian, a dairy instructor and a fruit expert, to the central office under the supervision of the Minister and Secretary.<sup>198</sup> Obviously then John McKenzie had moved at a greater speed than he had originally intended, to keep both Opposition members of parliament and the Agricultural and Pastoral Associations satisfied. The demands of the Conference represented the wants of a large part of the rural community; demands which McKenzie could not ignore in the interests of the newly formed Ministry, which as yet lacked real political stability. On the other hand, the establishment of the Department was not wanted by everybody, as Rolleston for example was strongly opposed to the idea of a central Bureau of Agriculture.<sup>198</sup> McKenzie realised it would be impossible to please everyone and therefore chose to please the majority,<sup>199</sup> while positively answering the demands of the consensus of agricultural producers by setting up the institution they wanted.

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198 Despite a careful working through of the Gazettes, I have been unable to find the exact date which marked the official establishment of the Department. Only the appointments of Ritchie and John Sawers, Dairy Instructor, are actually recorded in the Gazettes. 1891, vol. II, p. 1595.

199 PD, 1891, 70, pp. 72-73.

### CONCLUSION

Two major conclusions can be drawn from this research. Firstly, it can be said with a considerable degree of certainty that John McKenzie's actual importance as Minister of Agriculture was nearly as great as his importance as Minister of Lands. Secondly, and far more tentatively, it can be suggested that John McKenzie was the key political personality in attracting the votes of a large number of agricultural producers to the Liberals, while keeping farmers who supported opposition candidates relatively contented.

The sheer mass of agricultural laws passed by John McKenzie shows that he was far more than a land reformer. Yet he has not been remembered in national myth as Minister of Agriculture, for the very mundaneness and non-controversial nature of his agricultural regulations ensured that this aspect of the man would not become legendary. Folklore seems to be concerned with exceptional and spectacular incidents with overtones of ideological confrontation, rather than with the normal day to day phenomena which are not associated with conflict and dissent. His legislative creativity as Minister of Agriculture also means that the traditional view that the basic policy of the Liberals in the 1890's was to get people on the land and to provide them with money,<sup>200</sup> is an oversimplification. The Liberals, headed by John McKenzie, seemed to want to go further than this by converting newly settled farms into highly productive units within the minimum time, through the provision of maximum government assistance in terms of expertise and regulation rather than through simple financial aid. Opening up the land for settlement was only the first step towards making New Zealand the "happiest and most prosperous country under the sun".

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200 R.T. Shannon. "The Decline and Fall of the Liberal Government, A Study In An Aspect of New Zealand Political Development, 1908-1914", unpublished M.A. thesis, Auckland University, 1953; p.246.

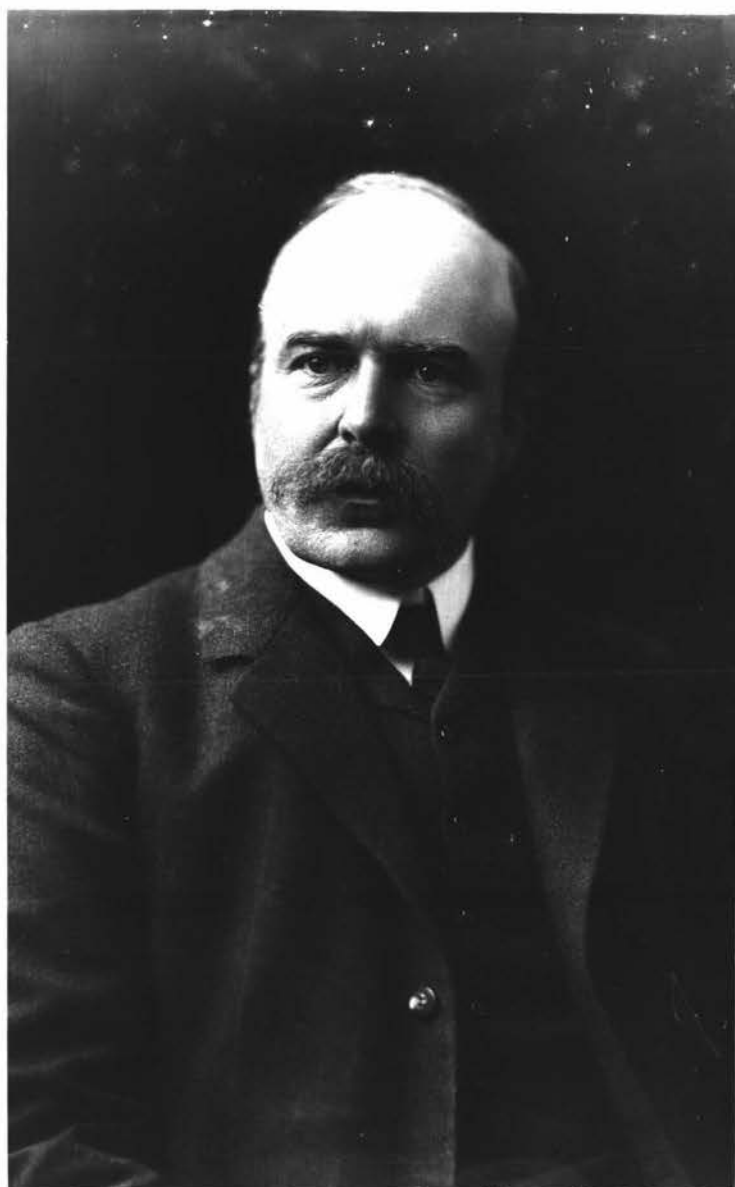


A weak man as McKenzie's successor?  
T.Y. Duncan, Minister of Agriculture 1900-1905.  
Alexander Turnbull Library.

When one takes into consideration the kind of political context in which John McKenzie was working as Minister of Agriculture as well as his personalised ministerial style, the tentative suggestion can be made that he was the key figure in holding some of the so-called "right-wing" groups of farmers amongst the **ranks of the Liberals, while rendering the** opposition of other agricultural producers relatively meaningless. Seddon and Ward had increasing difficulty in compromising the demands of the agricultural producer with those of city interest groups after John McKenzie's death, a task made more difficult by the fact that neither of these leaders was a practising farmer. John McKenzie's successors as Minister of Agriculture, T.Y. Duncan and Robert McNab, lacked his symbolic association with the agricultural producer and were placed at a greater distance from them by the massive administrative growth that took place after 1900. Consequently, coercive regulations that may have been seen as overanxious expressions of John McKenzie's high-minded concern to encourage the establishment of improved production methods and to rid the colony of pest infestation, could <sup>have</sup> easily become indicative of a bureaucratic monster that was not interested in the welfare of the agricultural producer at all. There is some slight evidence which suggests that the dangers inherent in many of John McKenzie's agricultural regulations did come to make his successors unpopular. Within a few months of John McKenzie's death an editorial in the Evening Post severely criticised Duncan's ministerial policies. It stated that:-

Ever since the late Sir John McKenzie retired from the Ministry, the farming interests have been seriously neglected...The Premier has never evinced any great knowledge of the farmer's needs or any great sympathy for their aspirations. He has talked vaguely of things he would do for them...During the past few years it has become more and more apparent that, so far as country matters are concerned Sir John McKenzie was the strong man of the Ministry. Unless there is a distinct change of policy...and the Departments of Land and Agriculture become once more live and energetic branches of the Administration, the Ministry may suffer a rude awakening at the next general election.201

201 Evening Post, 12 Nov., 1901, from W.D. McIntyre and W.J. Gardner, Speeches and Documents on New Zealand History, p.215.



Collector of historical documents rather than an efficient administrator? An unpopular minister who lost the support of many agricultural producers for the Liberals?  
R. McNab Minister of Agriculture, 1905-1908.

Alexander Turnbull Library.

Furthermore, the rapid fall of McNab as Minister of Agriculture in 1908 was not only related to the leasehold/freehold issue, but to his proposed dairy regulations<sup>202</sup> and probably to his rabbit eradication policies. Clearly then the gradual, if complex, movement away of the consensus of agricultural producers from the Liberals and the increasing militancy, organisation and consolidation of their opposition between 1900 and 1912, was not only related to issues like leasehold as against freehold tenure, the need for further roads and bridges and fear of urban radicalism, but to the more humdrum day to day contact of the government and <sup>the</sup> agricultural producer. Every day the government made its presence felt through inspection carried out by its employees and fines issued by them, as well as through the enforcement of compulsory practices such as dipping sheep, dressing trees and destroying rabbits. This very direct and at times aggravating contact between the department and the man on the land, meant that the personality of the Minister would have been important in influencing the agricultural producers' judgement of the government's policies. Ministers like Duncan and McNab, who were distanced from the agricultural producer by a complex of bureaucratic machinery, would have had a much more difficult task in satisfying the demands of this interest group than a man who directly associated himself with the practising agriculturists and turned bureaucratic processes to their advantage. The growth of an explicit sectional consciousness amongst farmers after 1900 must have been influenced by the personalities of McKenzie's successors, for an implicit sectional consciousness certainly existed for the 1890's and probably went back to the earliest days of settlement, but it only became aggressive, organised and relatively meaningful after 1900.

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202 B.S.E. Bellringer, "Conservatism and the Farmers, A Study in the Political Development of Taranaki - Wanganui Between 1899 and 1935.", unpublished M.A. thesis, Auckland University, 1958, p. 313.

Finally, John McKenzie's uncomplicated prebureaucratic and almost despotic ministerial style seemed to enable him to achieve far more in terms of legislative output than the complex, depersonalised and essentially bureaucratic style of his successors. Furthermore, his policies seem to have satisfied the demands of the agricultural producer with much greater success than the more elaborate and larger scale aid offered by his successors. Benevolent despotism seems, therefore, to have gone a long way further to building "God's own country", than the bureaucratic philosophy which became popular in the 1890's, and came to dominance in the early twentieth century. Yet, ironically, the very laws that John McKenzie passed rendered the continuation of such a personalised ministerial style virtually impossible. Almost inevitably process came to triumph over personality.

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## I

## Official

A Manuscript

B Printed

## II

## Unofficial

A Manuscript

B Newspapers

C Contemporary  
Published Material

D Published Articles

E Secondary Works

F Theses

G Miscellaneous

Note: This Bibliography is confined to documents and works directly relevant to the present study and makes no claim to be a comprehensive listing of published and unpublished material, relating to the agricultural and administrative history of New Zealand.

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