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Palmerston North, 1893-1902.

A study of his political career.

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

B. Symondson

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I remain entirely responsible for any error or omissions that remain.

B. Symondson  
Wellington 1977

## ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR	-	Addendices and Journals of the House of Representatives.
BPIC	-	Ballance Papers Inward Correspondence.
BPOC	-	Ballance Papers Outward Correspondence.
EP	-	Evening Post.
FS	-	Feilding Star.
MES	-	Manawatu Evening Standard.
NZPD	-	New Zealand Parliamentary Debates.
WLBM	-	Wellington Land Board Minutes.

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## Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the political career of F. Pirani, who represented the Palmerston North electorate from 1894 to 1902. Pirani entered the House a liberal, but within a few years was in strong disagreement with the Liberal government on several issues, so in 1896 he stood as an independent liberal. From 1898 Pirani believed a change of government would be to New Zealand's advantage, and in 1902 he was an opposition candidate. Despite this transformation in political colours only on the land question was there a major change in Pirani's views in the years he was in the House. This at first sight is contradictory, and this thesis, by a detailed study of Pirani's political career and beliefs, is intended to clarify this situation. It is also hoped that the thesis would be a first step in the analysis of local Manawatu politics in the latter part of the nineteenth-century. Other regions, for example Canterbury, Taranaki and the Waikato, have been studied in depth, but the Manawatu's timing and pattern of development was, it is suggested, unique, and this alone suggests that a study of its local politics would prove fruitful to those considering the wider picture.

The value, and the limitation, of a thesis are considerably determined by the methodology and the sources used. Sources are to an extent independent of methodology, but methodology frequently determines both the way and the extent to which different sources are used. The politics of the Canterbury region for the period 1870-1890 has been studied in detail in a number of



theses. In all cases the theses were concerned with local politics usually with only a single election and hence a heavy reliance was placed upon local newspapers, and a booth-by-booth analysis of election results. This led Bohan,<sup>1</sup> in particular, to the conclusion that party played no role in the politics of the period. Millar<sup>2</sup> believed that the polling-booth method did not allow issues their due, and Evans pointed out that "there is no getting away from the fact that on some issues a two-party division existed, and in parliament with much more certainty than in the electorates."<sup>3</sup> I believe the comments of Millar and Evans to be very important, and I have therefore attempted to explain in detail Pirani's career at both the national and local level, and also the influence that each had on the other.<sup>4</sup> Because of this I believe the result is a better building block towards a more complete understanding of the politics of the period than would otherwise be the case.

It need hardly be said that previous research has analysed both the politicians and issues of the 1890's in considerable detail. However, I believe that the very existence of this thesis, as well as its conclusions, point to a complete gap in previous research, the detailed study of the secondary figures. Of the major figures Seddon, McKenzie and Reeves have been studied both well and in detail, Ballance and Ward have received quite inadequate treatment. Of the issues land has received detailed and capable treatment, the liquor question is in a much less satisfactory situation. At least, however, in all these cases

attempts have been made, and the gaps are obvious. The findings and conclusions of this thesis suggest that, as with many other topics, one cannot assume the local details are insignificant, simply because the broad, national sweep of events has already been considered. Rather this thesis has, I believe, shown the need for similar studies of other secondary political figures. A detailed study of A. W. Hogg, for example, would be not only useful in itself, but would almost certainly allow fruitful contrasts and similarities with F. Pirani.

Modesty was not part of Pirani's character, nor was conciseness part of his style. As a result Pirani's nine years in the House provide a body of speeches which provide indispensable core material on Pirani's political career and beliefs. The speeches have been supplemented by the private papers of Seddon and Ballance, and newspapers. The voluminous newspaper clippings which form part of the Seddon papers were particularly useful in discussion of the elections as regrettably there is not extant a continuous series of either the Manawatu Evening Standard or the Manawatu Times, a gap in the sources only partly filled by the continuous run of the Feilding Star.

I have frequently quoted the Manawatu Evening Standard as if it was Pirani speaking. The newspaper was owned from 1892 by the Pirani family, and only on the issue of federation with Australia did I ever find a disagreement between the paper and Pirani. Theses and secondary sources have been widely used for particular topics but only Clarke has even a paragraph concerned solely with Pirani.<sup>5</sup>

Any consideration of Liberal party politics in the 1890's must give some consideration to the differing attitudes of Ballance and Seddon. The contrast between the two is particularly important in this thesis because Pirani entered the House principally due to Ballance, and he soon believed that Seddon was betraying the ideals of Ballance. Pirani's subsequent years of conflict with Seddon were in part a clash of personalities, but it is also suggested that between Pirani and Seddon there were fundamental differences as to the means and ends of liberalism.

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- 1 Bohan E. "The General Election of 1879 in Canterbury". (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury), 1958.
  - 2 Millar D. P. "The General Election of 1884 in Canterbury. Being a Study of Politics Within the Province of Canterbury, New Zealand". (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury), 1960. pp. iii, iv.
  - 3 Evans A.M. "A Study of Canterbury Politics in the Early 1880's With Special Reference to the General Election of 1881". (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury), 1959. p.34.
  - 4 A University of Otago Ph.D. by John H. Angus, covering the period 1873-1893 confirms the value of looking at politics at both the local and the national level. Unfortunately this thesis was not available for study, as it had not been presented at the time research on the present thesis was finished.
  - 5 Clarke J. C. "The New Zealand Liberal Party and Government 1895-1906". (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Auckland), 1962.