

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

IN

CANTERBURY

1880 - 1893

A thesis

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by

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The development of industry and the associated problems of sweated labour within the newly developed industries are examined. The emerging awareness of the working class of the necessity for trade union organisation in order to safeguard their rights to a reasonable standard of living and the organisation of these trade unions is discussed. The rise of confidence among trade unionists and their involvement in the Maritime Strike of 1890 emerges as a critical influence. The defeat of the unions in the strike and the subsequent move towards political representation by working men emerges during the late 1880's. The alliance between Liberal and Labour influences in parliament is discussed.

PREFACE

This thesis outlines the major factors in the development of the labour movement in Canterbury during the years 1880-1893. The year 1890 has been seen by many historians as a crucial one for the emerging trade union movement and this thesis examines the events leading up to those years and the effects of the 1890 Maritime Strike on the development of the Canterbury trade union movement.

Much of the material for this thesis comes from trade union records and newspapers. Such material has many inconsistencies as the union records present the view of the union concerned especially in instances of strikes and stoppages. The Lyttelton Times was edited by William Pember Reeves from 1889-1891 and his articles in that newspaper expressed his interest in labour groups of Canterbury. Since collecting material for this thesis, the Kaiapoi Woollen Manufacturing Company has closed its Christchurch branch, but thanks are due to the staff who permitted me to research the remains of the factory records. Thanks are also due to Mr Cleland of the Kaiapoi and District Historical Society for his permission to use the photographs in the museum's collection.

Special thanks are due to my supervisor, Dr Len Richardson, whose patience and useful suggestions greatly assisted me in the preparation of this thesis. Thanks also to my friends, especially Peter Towers, for his understanding and help in meeting deadlines.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, whose loving assistance has made the completion of this work possible.

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- the staff

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AJHR</u>	Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives
<u>LT</u>	Lyttelton Times
<u>PD</u>	Parliamentary Debates
<u>TLC</u>	Trades and Labour Council
WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION : CHRISTCHURCH

IN THE 1880'S

The foundation of the province of Canterbury was established as early as 1848 when, under the leadership of the Canterbury Association plans were laid for the establishment of a colony in New Zealand, that would represent all the best aspects of English society. In response to plans for assisted immigration to Canterbury, settlement in the province proved to be popular among the English immigrants and the population of Canterbury rose rapidly from 2 551 in 1871 (1) to 130 307 in 1889. (2)

As with the rapid increase in population, the establishment of public works and buildings within the province was also rapid due to a large extent, to the public works programme instituted by Sir Julius Vogel in the 1870's. Under Vogel's scheme, twenty million pounds were borrowed from Britain to establish roads, railways and communication networks within the colony. At the same time large numbers of immigrants were recruited in Britain to work in New Zealand to provide the manpower necessary for the public works and in time, to provide the basis for a sound working population for the colony.

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1. Vogel, J. The Official Handbook of New Zealand.
p. 125.
 2. Statistics of New Zealand, 1890, p 8.

A large number of immigrants recruited under the Vogel scheme came to Canterbury and were absorbed into the development schemes that were building the province. Works that stimulated the growth of the province were the road from Christchurch to Hokitika, the railway lines from the city to Lyttelton and the extension of the northern railway to Amberley.

The city of Christchurch itself was, in the 1870's, undergoing large scale development and change. The first settlers were accustomed to life in tents and makeshift huts but as the population increased, wooden, stone and sometimes brick buildings were more frequently erected. (3) Notable buildings were established within the boundary of the four avenues of the city, many of which still stand today and are important landmarks. The Provincial Council Chamber buildings were established in the 1860's, the first public library was erected in 1862 and in 1870, the Canterbury museum was opened. (4) The establishment of the city was not complete without its trees which were planted in large numbers by many of the English immigrants. Some brought seedlings from their homeland while others cultivated what cuttings were available in their garden plots.

3. Morrison, J.P. The Evolution of a City. p 134.

4. *ibid*, p 133.

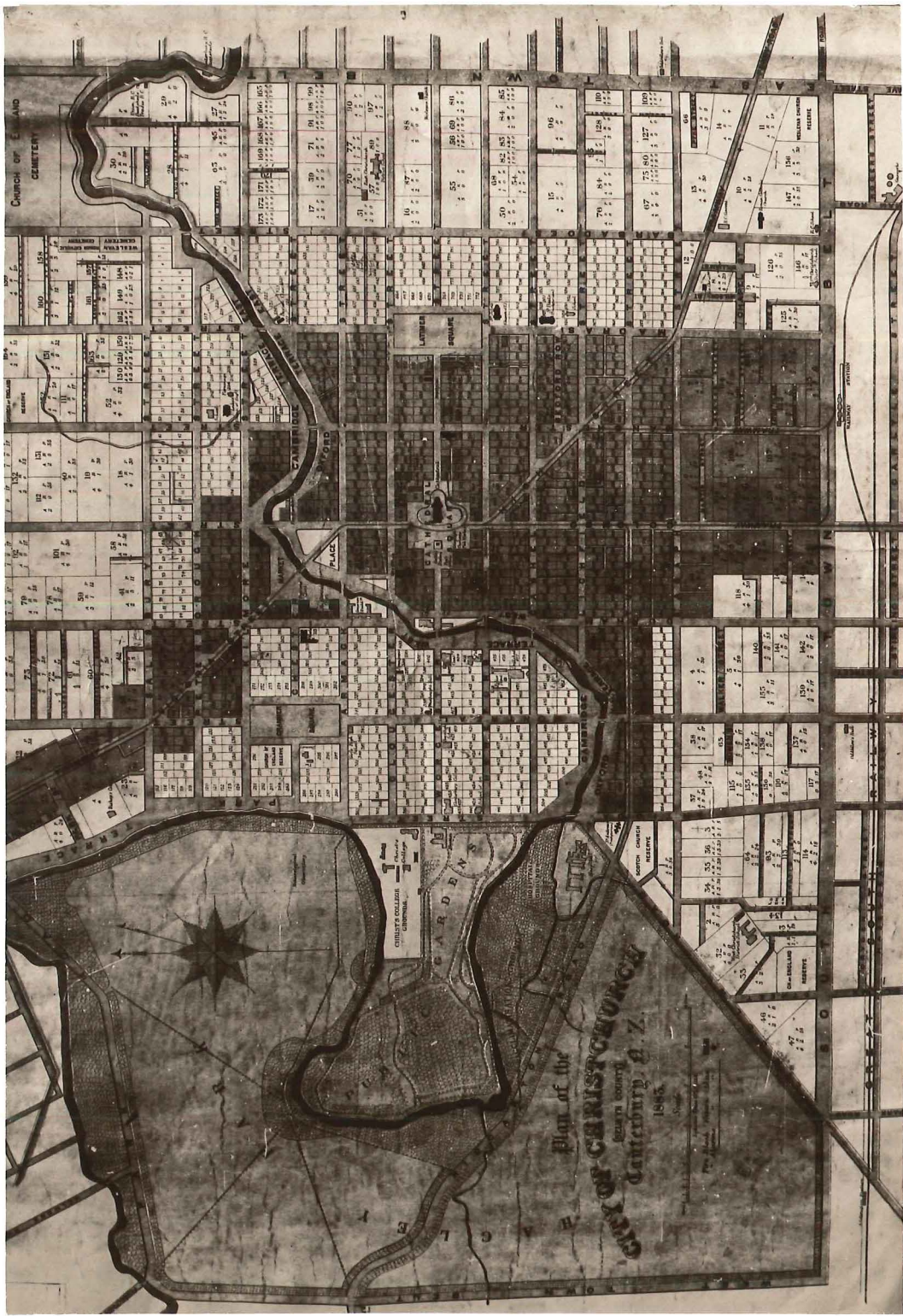


Figure 1.

At first the population of the city was concentrated in the central city area, but as the population increased, many moved to the suburbs. The development of industry within these areas had much to do with the consolidation of the population within these suburbs. The suburb of Sydenham was one of the first areas within reach of the city to be called a borough, and its development was greatly affected by the Addington railway workshops which were established in 1879. (5) The growth of the Addington workshops brought an increasing number of people to live in the area and at the same time stimulated consumer demands in the area, so that businesses and shops were established to serve the workers.

One of the more popular areas for building a home was St Albans. Here wooden houses and extensively cultivated gardens were evident as early as the mid 1880's, though settlement of the area was further facilitated by the consolidation of the North road.

The suburbs of Riccarton and Fendalton were both the established properties of large landowners throughout the 1880's. The Riccarton Bush was the home of the Deans family until 1914 and Fendalton then went under the name of Fendall Town and was the estate of the Fendall family.

5. Christchurch City Council minutes 16 Feb 1879.

The other area of the city that was popular for early settlement was the suburb of Linwood which was easily accessible to the city and which by 1890, had a large number of small wooden houses lining the dusty roads. An important entity on its own, Lyttelton stood out during the 1880's as the major port of the province, but was also noted for its own community spirit and sense of establishment. Many settled in Lyttelton because of the ready availability of work, but the active social life, in terms of plays and concerts, that was provided in Lyttelton made it one of the liveliest centers of settlement in the province.

The greatest period of development of the province came in the 1870's and the 1880's with the stimulus of Vogel's immigrants and the emergence of industry as a means for producing cheap locally made goods. Centered in Sydenham, many new industries were established and old workshops were extended. Production was centered around the raw materials that were more readily available in the South Island and concentrated on products that were in demand on the home market. In the 1880's, the largest employers of industrial labour were the Addington railway workshops and the Kaiapoi Woollen Manufacturing Company. Much of the industrial life of Sydenham was centered around Carlyle Street which ran beside the railway. Here a number of warehouses were established as well as small scale manufacturing companies which

specialised in the production of agricultural implements. (6)

Other industries which developed in the Sydenham area were ham and bacon curing works, soap and candle works, flour mills, coach factories and breweries. By the middle of the 1880's a more novel industry flourished in the area. "Three so-called bicycle manufactories existed in Colombo Street in 1888." (7) The bicycle craze caught on early in the flat city and both men and women were frequently seen peddling around the city for their enjoyment. It was not, however, until the 1900's that the bicycle became a mode of transport for working men and women.

Like the Addington workshops, the Kaiapoi Woollen Manufacturing Company employed a large number of unskilled labourers and the situation of the workshop in the centre of the city made it easily accessible to a large number of workers. The clothing factory which was situated in Cashel Street, employed 475 hands by 1888 and provided many women with opportunities for work. (8) The factory itself was in the early 1880's considered to be the pride of the province with modern machinery and a bonus system to provide keen workers with a chance to earn higher wages. However, as industry developed

6. Morrison, J.P. The Evolution of a City. p 99.

7. *ibid*, p 103.

8. *ibid*, p 95.

within the area and the locally made products had to compete with cheaper imported products, the conditions for those who worked in the manufacturing establishments in Canterbury deteriorated.

The development of manufacturing in Christchurch in the 1880's provided the basis for combination of pastoral and industrial occupations. In comparison with the other cities within the colony, the 1881 Census showed Canterbury as third in housing manufactories within the colony and by 1900 Christchurch had become the leading industrial city of New Zealand.

The immigrants who provided the labour for the establishment of these new factories had come to New Zealand in search of improved living conditions and better wages. At first, living costs in Canterbury were high as stocks were largely provided by direct import from Sydney. In his handbook for intending immigrants, Vogel gives the details of some of the basic provisions. In 1873 butter varied in price from 9d to 1s 2d per lb, cheese was from 6d to 9d per lb while the price of a loaf of bread was between 6d and 7d per loaf. (9)

Once the population grew, many of these prices dropped as there were many established small farms close to the city to provide the inhabitants with a fresh and more easily available supply of food. In 1890, the price

9. Vogel, J. The Official Handbook of New Zealand.
p 142.

of butter was 7d to 1s per lb, cheese varied between 5d to 6d per lb while bread still cost 6d per loaf. (10)

The wages of the consumers who were to purchase most of this food also varied throughout the period. Vogel's handbook gives details of the rates of wages according to information provided by employers. Thus in 1873, a good carpenter could earn 10s to 11s per day, a good plumber could earn 12s, housemaids could earn 20 to 25 per annum with board, and tailors 3 10s to 4 per week. (11) It is interesting to note that Vogel makes the distinction in wages between new arrivals and residents of the colony. In the drapery trade he notes that experienced hands with Colonial experience received 80s per week while experienced hands who were new arrivals received only 50s to 60s per week. (12) Colonial hands who had gained experience of the less developed techniques that were used in many of the local workshops were thus more highly paid than new arrivals.

The ruling rates that applied to working men and women in 1890, were in many cases markedly different to earlier wage rates and also varied in different areas of the colony. In 1890 a carpenter in Canterbury could earn 9s per day, a plumber could expect 10s per day and a housemaid would be paid between 8s and 12s per week. (13)

10. Statistics of New Zealand, 1890, p 232.

11. Vogel, J. The Official Handbook of New Zealand.
pp 135-136.

12. *ibid*, p 136.

13. Report on the Statistics of New Zealand, 1890, p III.

The fall in the rate of wages can to some extent, be attributed to the depression of the 1880's in which the oversupply of labour and the low prices for goods forced down prices and wages. The widespread unemployment that occurred at this time meant that what employment was available was keenly sought after and many workers undercut each other in the price that they set on their labour. Wages within the colony also varied as the demand for a particular type of skilled labour was sought for a time, until the project was completed. In this period wages were particularly low in Auckland, probably due to an oversupply of skilled labour. The table on the following page indicates the contrast in the ruling rates of wages in the major districts of New Zealand in 1890. (14)

In order to deal with the growing problems that were associated with the development of industry and the increasing division of labour, the 1880's saw the establishment of a large number of organisations that were both employer and employee initiated. The employees in many of the emerging factories and workshops slowly became aware of the importance of their strength as a consolidated interest. The hardships that many faced during the depression made them susceptible to employers' attempts to cut costs by reducing wages and by lowering

14. Report on the Statistics of New Zealand, 1890, p III.

STATISTICS OF NEW ZEALAND, 1890

	Auckland	Wellington	Canterbury	Otago
Agricultural and Pastoral -				
Farm-labourers, with board, per week	10/ to 20/	15/ to 25/	15/ to 20/	15/ to 20/
" without board, per day	6/	7/ to 7/6	6/ to 8/	-
Ploughmen, with board, per week	10/ to 20/	20/ to 30/	17/ to 25/	15/ to 27/6
Reapers	10/ to 15/	25/ to 30/	30/ to 40/	20/ to 25/
Shepherds, with board, per annum	£45	£40 to £100	£52 to £65	£50 to £65
Station-labourers, with board, per week	12/ to 20/	15/ to 20/	15/ to 20/	15/ to 20/
Artisans -				
Masons, plasterers, per day	8/ to 9/	9/ to 15/	8/ to 10/	10/ to 12/
Bricklayers, per day	7/ to 10/	10/ to 12/	10/	10/ to 12/
Carpenters " "	7/ to 10/	9/ to 10/	9/	9/ to 12/
Plumbers " "	7/ to 8/	10/ to 12/	10/	8/ to 12/
Painters " "	6/6 to 8/	7/ to 10/	9/	8/ to 12/
Shoemakers " "	7/ to 8/	8/ to 10/	10/	8/ to 10/
Servants -				
Married couples, without family, with board, per annum	£50 to £70	£65 to £90	£65 to £75	£60 to £75
Grooms, with board, per week	15/ to 20/	20/ to 30/	20/ to 25/	15/ to 25/
Cooks " " " " "	15/ to 20/	10/ to 30/	15/ to 25/	13/ to 20/
Laundresses " " "	8/ to 15/	12/ to 25/	12/6 to 17/6	12/ to 24/
Housemaids " " "	8/ to 12/	10/ to 25/	8/ to 12/	10/ to 15/
Needlewomen, without board, per day	3/6 to 4/6	3/6	8/ to 12/*	7/ to 20/*
General labourers without board per day	6/	6/ to 8/	7/	5/ to 9/
Seamen, with board, per month	£5 to £7	£7	£7	£4 to £7
Tailors, without board, per day	8/ to 10/	8/6 to 10/	10/	6/ to 12/
Dressmakers, without board, per day	3/6 to 4/	3/6 to 8/	15/**	3/ to 6/
Storemen " " " "	6/ to 7/	8/ to 9/	45/**	8/ to 10/
Compositors " " " "	7/ to 12/	10/	55/**	10/

* Per week, with board

** Per week, without board

factory standards in areas such as hygiene. Unions were formed to safeguard the rights of employees and the 1880's saw the establishment of large numbers of new trade unions. Some of the unions that were established in the 1880's were: the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union, the Operative Bootmakers' Society, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, the Bookbinders' Union, and the Domestic Servants' Union. The extension of union organisation to the establishment of a TLC ensured that the unions were organised and that they dealt with industrial disputes in a cohesive manner. The development of the role of these trade unions and their movement from individual bargaining to parliamentary representation for the working man is discussed further in this thesis.

At the same time as the labour movement consolidated during the decade 1880-1890, the employers, whose numbers and purchasing power had risen dramatically, also moved towards organisation in order to achieve solidarity in the actions that they took. In 1890 the Canterbury Employers formed an Association which was mainly in response to the difficulties that employers faced during the Maritime Strike.

Employer and employee groups were not the only organisations that were formed during the 1880's, for the depression of those years fostered many organisations which were established in answer to a specific need

expressed by some group within society. There were a large number of Working Mens Associations and benevolent societies within the city which were established to provide protection for those who were members, in time of financial distress. Temperance societies abounded although the temperance stronghold was in the suburb of Sydenham.

Political associations sprang up to educate and to provide a forum for discussion of political issues. A number of Peoples' Political Associations were established in the late 1880's and interest in these organisations spread to the suburbs with the establishment of the St Albans and Stanmore Political Association. (15) In 1887, a Canterbury branch of the Knights of Labour was formed which was based on a similar society in the United States.

The extension and development of the retail industry saw the establishment of the Early Closing Association in 1884 which was a middle class organisation, which aimed to shorten the working hours of shop assistants.

The establishment and consolidation of the city of Christchurch in the 1880's saw a period of great social and industrial change. The town of the swamps and the flax bushes which had thwarted the farms of many

15. LT, 4 Jul 1884.

of the early settlers had become, by 1880, a well established industrial town. It became increasingly difficult to maintain a harmony between the different sectors whose interests diverged. This thesis examines those years and the struggles that became evident as the struggle between Capital and Labour.

CHAPTER 2

ANTI-SWEATING AGITATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
TRADE UNIONS IN CANTERBURY : 1880-1890

The outcry in the late 1880's by trade unionists, clergymen and members of parliament against the appearance of sweated labour in New Zealand industry caused dismay and amazement among the many British who had emigrated to New Zealand in search of better opportunities, quality of life and improved living conditions. The society that the new immigrants sought to create in New Zealand was one based on the Wakefieldian plan of systematic colonisation; a transplant of all the better segments of English society to a new land which would be characterised by an absence of the criminal and poverty stricken classes of England.

However, as New Zealand society became more complex and the population increased, the simplicity and ideals of the early society began to be obscured. The growth in population was accompanied by developments in the industrial sphere. Towns were established, farms sprang up in the bush areas and the drive for economic development began. It was to encourage economic growth that Vogel's scheme of "men, money and markets" was instituted in the 1870's, a scheme which instituted public works throughout the country which were financed by large sums of money borrowed from abroad. Between 1870 and 1880

twenty million pounds was borrowed from Britain and used as a basis for the construction of roads, railways, bridges, telegraph lines and public buildings.

However the economy which was buoyed up by imported capital was bound to collapse and in the early 1880's the slump began. Bankruptcies were frequent, credit contracted, mortgage sales abounded and unemployment was widespread. New Zealand's chief exports of wool, grain and gold were no longer gaining the returns of previous years. A number of small manufacturing industries had begun to establish themselves in New Zealand but they had to compete with German, American and English manufactures. In order to compete, many New Zealand manufacturers tried to cut costs by employing cheap labour and they encountered no difficulty in achieving this end as labour was abundant. Competition for jobs became keen as family men competed with boys for jobs that paid starvation wages. It was under these conditions that sweated labour developed.

The concept of sweating as it developed in New Zealand was understood in different ways by different members of society. Sweated labour had existed for some time in Britain, and the conditions which created it were not immediately apparent in New Zealand. The problem of sweated labour was investigated in New Zealand in 1890 by a special government commission which, in its report, indicated confusion as to the exact definition of sweated

labour. The report of the Commission stated that:

"The system known in London and elsewhere as "sweating" and which seemed at one time likely to obtain a footing in some of our cities, does not exist." (1)

The London system of sweated labour which was described in the report of the Commission originally applied to the East End trades in London, where the subcontracting system existed as a means for manufacturers to gain cheap labour with no responsibility for themselves as to hours and conditions of labour. Under the subcontracting system, a contractor could establish an agreement with a large manufacturer to make a certain number of garments for an agreed price. The subcontractor would then deliver these materials into the homes of the sub-contractors who worked for him. This system was organised in such a way that those who were employed by the sub-contractor had little contact with their employer, had to provide their own place of work and were paid according to the number of garments that were completed rather than by the number of hours worked. Many of those who were employed under this system were women who were in need of a supplementary wage in order to support their families. They were often prepared to work long hours for little return.

1. AJHR Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 3.

In Britain, the subcontract system was accepted as the cause of sweated labour. The subcontractor was easily discernible as the scapegoat and was seen as a callous employer concerned mainly to keep his labour costs at a minimum and at the same time to market his goods at a competitive price. Public concern in Britain grew as to the extent and pervasiveness of the sweating problem and in the 1870's a House of Lords investigation into the problem of sweating was carried out. The investigation showed that subcontracting was not the cause of sweated labour in all areas in which it was found. The subcontractors themselves were often working in miserable conditions, facing long hours and only a small or negligible amount of profit. The subcontract system could not be excluded from the many causes of sweating, but it was only one of the many industrial relationships which could contribute to the establishment of sweated conditions. The House of Lords' investigation threw new light on the problem of sweated labour for it became clear that sweating was not caused by a particular type of labour relationship, but was perpetuated by a wide range of conditions such as long hours, low wages and competition for employment.

The report of the Sweating Commission in New Zealand did not altogether clarify the problem of definition of sweated labour. The Commission as a whole considered that the London system of sweating did not

exist in New Zealand. Such a conclusion was indeed valid for widespread use of the subcontract system was uncommon among New Zealand manufacturers. The majority of the Commissioners also considered that complaints of long hours and reduced wages were "almost inevitable wherever competition is keen." (2) The Commissioners thereby accepted the idea that long hours and low wages were an inherent part of the capitalist system and competition necessitated the establishment of such conditions of labour. Acceptance of the London definition of sweating also absolved the manufacturers in New Zealand of any responsibility in making moves to upgrade working conditions or to limit the continuation of such problems as widespread employment of boy labour.

However in an appendix to the Report of the Sweating Commission, three of the appointed Commissioners, the Reverend R. Waddell, D.P. Fisher and C. Allan, dissented from many aspects of the majority report. They felt that the statement that the London system of sweating did not exist in New Zealand was misleading. They accepted the view of Beatrix Potter, an English children's story-writer and philanthropist, who defined sweated labour as consisting of "overcrowding or insanitary workshops or living rooms, long and irregular hours, constantly falling prices and low wages." (3) Waddell,

2. AJHR Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p iii.

3. ibid.

Fisher and Allan felt that if this definition was accepted, there was abundant evidence of sweated conditions in the colony.

Public concern which developed in the colony over the problem of sweated labour conditions grew up around the minority report. Since 1888, when Waddell first expressed concern over the worsening labour conditions in Dunedin, it became clear that long hours, low wages and poor working conditions were the causes of sweated labour. As the economic situation worsened, the concern over sweated labour conditions grew.

Awareness of the problem emerged first among the middle classes who developed a paternalistic concern for those who were the victims of necessity. In proposing a Royal Commission to investigate the sweating system, R.M. Taylor, M.P. for Sydenham, a working class electorate, spoke of young women who were seen "carrying home bundles of work to do after-hours for a mere pittance." (4) Others who supported the anti-sweating campaign were motivated by Christian principles of kindness and charity to one's fellows. Sir Robert Stout, the Dunedin lawyer and parliamentarian, in speaking to the motion to establish the Commission, exhorted his audience "to endeavour to carry out that great command which was given some 1860 years ago, that we should do unto another as we would have another do unto us." (5)

4. NZPD, 1889, p 39.

5. ibid.

The investigation of the problem of sweated labour which was provided by the New Zealand Sweating Commission was based on evidence which was presented by members of the public who came forward. Many who presented evidence to the Commission commented on or complained of conditions under which they worked.

The evidence presented to the Commission in Christchurch revealed much of the state of industrial conditions within the province. Evidence varied from the more trivial complaints of Misses A.P. and A.W. of having to stand all day in drapery establishments, to the evidence of Thomas E. Cooper, a Christchurch journeyman at Whitcombe and Tombs.

Cooper spoke of the place in which he and some of the girls worked as being unfit to be a place of employment.

"It was made out of an old stable and part of a bottling store, and is badly ventilated. During the summer, wet sacks have to be put on the roof. During one afternoon 6 girls had to leave as they could not stand the heat of the room." (6)

There were many other complaints about the conditions of work. Miss B.A. who worked as a tailor at the Kaiapoi factory for seven years complained of conditions on the top floor of the factory.

"I know that sometimes there is hardly an arms length between them - they are very close in some parts. The foul air rises through the well in the middle of the factory." (7)

6. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p iii.

7. ibid, p 54.

Conditions such as those described by Thomas Cooper and Miss B.A. reflect a lack of responsibility by employers to safeguard certain standards, for the welfare of their employees. They also represent a failure of the Factory Act which was passed in 1879, to deal with an investigate conditions of labour. The inspection of factories which was carried out was often lax and inadequate and many factory inspectors were often prepared to overlook failures to meet the full requirements of the Act. Mr B.Q., who worked as a tailor, told the Commission that although he sometimes worked from 5 am until 9 pm at night he never saw an inspector at the factory. (8).

With fierce competition for employment, many wage earners were forced to work long hours in order to safeguard their jobs and maintain a living wage. Many complaints of long working hours were brought before the Commission and these related to both retail and industrial establishments. Mr A.X., a shop assistant, complained of working from 5 am until 9 at night and on "Saturday night until eleven o'clock. You feel as if you can hardly stand up." (9) Mr B.J., a tailor, worked from 5 am until 9 or 10 pm while Edward McLeary, a foreman at Whitcombe and Tombs, told the Commission, "the boys worked 11 hours and forty minutes a day for four solid months." (9)

8. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 54.

9. ibid, p 45.

Complaints about hours of labour, particularly among shop assistants, aroused in Christchurch the development of the Early Closing Association. This movement was described by Robert Clark, its secretary, as being composed of persons who have had "20 to 30 years experience in general retail business and are convinced that the general health and wellbeing of the employees will be conserved by early closing." (10) This association was not initiated by the shop assistants themselves, but was formed by paternalistic employers and shopowners. The movement was not an assertion of the rights of shop assistants but a movement on behalf of the employers in order to preserve the respectability of the retail trade.

Members of the association were divided as to the responsibility for the extended hours which operated in the 1880's. Clark blamed the middle class whom he felt came to shop late in the evening and on Saturday morning when they could shop earlier any day of the week. However the Chairman of the association, the Reverend Flavell, considered that it was mostly the working people who came to shop on Saturday after 6 pm as this was their pay day. Another view^{was} put forward by Charles Partridge Hulbert, a hat manufacturer and outfitter, who asserted that Saturday in Christchurch was traditionally the

10. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 40.

farmers market day, and early closing would deprive farmers of an opportunity to shop. (11)

Members of the association did not attempt to uncover underlying economic reasons for the existence of long hours. Rather they sought to explain the problems in terms of the needs of different classes to shop late. Association members were interested only in immediately apparent causes and they failed to perceive the relationship between long hours and the existing low rate of economic growth. The downturn in the economy greatly increased the employer's need to cut production costs especially in manufacturing, where products had to compete with cheap overseas imports. The side-effects of cutting costs were immediately apparent in terms of hours, wages and conditions under which employees worked. The Early Closing Association was a paternalistic attempt to limit the hours of labour without affecting the profitability of the owners and retailers.

Throughout the 1880's, the Early Closing Association continued to campaign actively for shorter working hours within the New Zealand retail trade and advocated Saturday as a half holiday for all retail establishments. Through its newspaper, The New Zealand Early Closing Advocate, members of the association were exhorted "to close their respective places of business at 6 pm on Saturday evenings when it is shown to their satisfaction

11. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 41.

that the public are not inconvenienced thereby." (12)
 The Christchurch branch of the Early Closing Association organised demonstrations outside the establishments of shop-keepers, namely those of Gray and Strutz, both of whom broke their agreement with local authorities to close their places of business at 9 pm on Saturday.

As trade unions became more widespread and better organised in 1889-1890, the character of the early closing movement changed as trade unionists became interested in the issue. The harsh conditions under which many worked provided evidence of the need for union action and leaders gained confidence from the new wave of union activity in New Zealand and abroad.

In May 1890, the trade unions and workingmen's societies in Christchurch met to discuss early closing. Under the chairmanship of the Reverend Flavell, 50 trade unions and associated societies were represented at a meeting which passed a motion publicly calling for eight hours to constitute a legal days work.

The trade union involvement in the Early Closing movement was evident in the new urgency with which the campaign was conducted. Scarcely had the union involvement been formalised, than a series of demonstrations was launched to compel Wardells, a prominent grocery store, to accept early closing. Continued demonstrations were

12. LT, 27 Mar 1890.

κ(were) supported by a threatened boycott and Wardells chose not to put the threat to the test. On May 21 they publicly capitulated with an announcement in the Lyttelton Times which stated "... as the members of different trade unions constitute a large percentage of customers they will close at 6 on Saturdays." (13)

This victory cemented the position of the unionists within the association which then affiliated to the Canterbury TLC. Affiliation was scarcely completed when, a month later, the Association changes its name to the New Zealand Shop Assistants Union "... so that all would recognise that the association was a full union." (14)

In addition to the problem of long hours, many who presented evidence to the Sweating Commission were concerned about the abuses of child labour and the apprentice system. John Kennedy, an inspector of factories, noted the abundance of boy labour between the age of 14 and 18 years. (15) F.S. Parker, the President of the Tailors, Tailoress and Pressers Union, told the Commission about one establishment that "... then employed nine men, had three now and upwards of 50 girls." (16)

13. LT, 21 May 1890.

14. ibid, 27 Jun 1890.

15. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 35.

16. ibid, p 39.

Abuses of the apprenticeship system became widespread as masters and owners sought to utilize cheap child labour without offering any trade training. Master AV, aged 10 years, worked at Whitcombe and Tombs but not as an apprentice, although he took the position "... on the understanding he was to learn the bookbinding trade."

(17) A bitter tale is told by Mr A.Y. aged 26 years, who went into the bootmakers' trade but learnt only "bottoming" which involved attaching the soles to shoes, and as a result his knowledge of the trade remained incomplete. His wages were extremely low, "Nothing a week for a year, then five shillings a week for two years, for the remainder, ten shillings." After five years Mr A.Y. started out on his own but found that there were "Twice as many bootmakers as are wanted. I have practically thrown away thirteen years of my life." (18)

The apprenticeship system began for many labourers, a steady decline in their labouring life towards low wages, long hours and poor conditions. Matthew Baxter, the secretary of the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union, found that many girls worked three months for nothing, after which they would get 2s 6d per week. They would then be put on piecework "... but before they had completed their apprenticeship or gained the knowledge of how to make a garment." (19) As economic conditions

17. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 43.

18. ibid, p 50.

19. ibid.

deteriorated, boys and girls were increasingly taken on in preference to men as they were more malleable and provided cheaper labour than adult males.

Those who were least able to resist the evils of sweated labour were those who were isolated from employers and from factory inspectors because they worked in their own homes. The 'out-work' system which operated in Christchurch was one whereby employers gave permission and paid for work that was done at night or outside the factory working hours. Acceptance of women in factories was not, at first, widespread and many women who had been brought up with notions of gentility felt that wage-labour was shameful and they preferred to work in the privacy of their homes. William Denne Mears told the Commission that he employed the most respectable class of girl and that there were some who took work home. "I asked them why ... they said they had either mothers or sisters who could do the work there." (20) Many employers felt that outwork was a blessing that the firm could bestow on unfortunate women suffering economic hardship. Charles Partridge Hulbert felt it was a hardship for work not to be taken home and cited as his example a family of invalids, whose chances of work were now denied to them. (21)

20. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 41.

21. ibid.

Many employers no doubt shared these views. Increasingly however, attitudes were changing. Evidence given by employers and employees to the Commission indicated this shift in opinion, as there was general condemnation of the long hours that many women outworkers were forced to work. Parker, putting the position of the TLC on the matter, condemned the fact that "when work is taken home, girls work up to two o'clock in the morning." (22)

The centre of the outwork controversy was the Kaiapoi Woollen Manufacturing Company which employed the largest number of women and girls in Canterbury. The establishment of the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union in 1884 was welcomed by most of the factory operatives, especially at the Kaiapoi Mills, as owners were often reluctant to enter into negotiations over wages, hours and conditions. The amount of work that was carried on outside the factory is difficult to estimate, but Baxter, a member of the executive of the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union, reinforced Parker's point that girls worked for excessively long periods. He stated that at the Kaiapoi factory, "A great many girls took work home in order to make enough to keep them decently and work until 10, 11, 12 or 1 o'clock." (23)

22. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 39.

23. ibid, p 50.

Women engaged in the manufacturing trade offered supporting testimony. Miss A.Z., a vest hand working at the Kaiapoi factory said that she "... used to take work home and work until 10 o'clock three nights of the week." (24) She firmly stated that she did not want to be allowed to take work home. This view was shared by Misses B.C., B.D. and B.E. all of whom told the Commission that they did not want to be allowed to take work home. (25) Hours spent over work taken home by women who had already spent a day in the factory convinced many that outwork was detrimental to their quality of life and physical well-being.

The Sweating Commission uncovered other grievances around which the trade union problem was developing. One particular irritation was the system of fines which was allegedly instituted by the management of Whitcombe and Tombs in order to maintain discipline. John Pearson Cooper, a printer employed at Whitcombe and Tombs, reported that boys, girls and men were all fined for trifling offences Pearson stated to the Commission,

"A man was fined one shilling for a fingermark on a book and a girl was fined sixpence for putting two covers on a pamphlet." (26)

The evidence of Masters A.U., A.V. and A.W. also mentioned the system whereby they were fined sixpence for mistakes

24. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 51.

25. ibid, p 52.

26. ibid, p 43.

that they made while working. Edward McLeary stated that "... fines and penalties for defective work are unjust and I never knew of them in any other office."

(27)

The evidence given by his employees on the system of fines and other abuses of labour in his workshop prompted George Whitcombe to make a written statement to the Commission. Whitcombe considered that "... carelessness among work people could only be met by fines." (28) Such an unyielding position served to heighten tension in a factory in which long hours were worked by a considerable number of youths.

The investigations of the Sweating Commission can be seen to have covered many aspects of industrial work and in many cases extended beyond the scope of sweated labour to the more general aspects of the relationship between employer and employee. Evidence presented did demonstrate in Christchurch the evidence of sweating as defined by Waddell, Fisher and Allan. Many witnesses spoke of long hours, low wages and abuses of the apprenticeship system and indicated that such conditions were common within Christchurch industry. The 'sweater' in Christchurch however, became evident as the employer who was ignorant of the work conditions of his employees and was irresponsible in safeguarding standards of conditions and wages.

27. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 45.

28. ibid, p 46.

Christchurch union officials were quick to use the sweating controversy and the Commission as a means of building further support for the trade union movement. This was in keeping with the trends throughout New Zealand and especially in Dunedin. The growth of trade unionism in Christchurch followed the national pattern. The traditional craft unions had existed since the 1860's, but increasingly those in the newly established industries came to organise themselves. These workers did not view employers as a class apart. Rather they endeavoured to promote co-operation and to point out existing shortcomings with the aim of improving working conditions and thereby furthering industrial harmony.

Union organisation in the 1860's and 1870's had largely been confined to an extension of craft unionism, small protective bodies which aimed to safeguard their existing position. There were however, some early trade unions in Christchurch that were established with the definite aim of industrial action in order to gain a specific objective. Such a union was the Lyttelton Cool Lumpers Union which a few months after its formation, struck because of wage reductions. (29) In October 1885, the Cool Lumpers decided to wind up the affairs of the union. (30) It later reformed, though in response to a specific industrial grievance.

29. LT, 15 Aug 1884.

30. ibid, 23 Oct 1885.

Union organisation of a sporadic nature such as this was common in the early 1880's when workers often saw the necessity for joint action in order to achieve a specific objective. Once its aim had been achieved the union frequently became loose and disorganised lacking the initial purpose which had helped weld employees as a cohesive group. Union organisation remained tentative throughout most of the 1880's with occasional conflict between employers and employees when there arose a glaring inequality in the industrial system. Unions sought to preserve a friendly alliance with employers whom they saw not as a separate class, but merely as functioning within a different sphere of the industrial system. This attitude was exemplified by the operative Bootmakers' Society. Differences arose between the employers and the men as to the proportion of boys to journeymen to be employed in the clicking department. Once the proportion was resolved the union lapsed into tacit acceptance of its position and endeavoured to maintain harmonious relations with employers.

By the late 1880's the nature and attitudes of the Christchurch trade unions had changed considerably. In part this reflected the changing nature of employment in the city as by this time a large proportion of the working population was engaged in some kind of industrial work. The New Zealand national increase in the number of factory hands amounted to 7 717, the largest numbers

being employed in the printing trade, sawmills and iron and brass foundries. (31)

These larger scale industries were organised on a factory basis and because of their size created a wider gulf between employer and employee. As the depression of the 1880's deepened, shareholders demanded that their investment returns be maintained. Consequently, companies sought increased production and for wage earners, this meant longer hours of employment.

Depression, worsening conditions of labour and a lower standard of living meant that for employees, union organisation was the only viable remedy to safeguard the rights of labour. Awareness was developing among those organised in traditional craft unions and those who were newly involved in the manufacturing industries that organisation of employees was necessary in order to defend their interests.

Thus in the late 1880's, unionism mushroomed and burst into almost every sphere of labour and industry in Canterbury. Some unions such as the Union of Carpenters and Joiners, organised for a specific purpose such as a wage increase. (32) Other labour groups accepted the

31. Report on Statistics of New Zealand 1889, pp 125-127, gives details of the number of hands employed in the major industries :

Sawmills	5 042
Printing Establishments	2 107
Iron & Brass Foundries	1 748
Boot Factories	1 654
Clothing Factories	1 269

32. LT, 1 Apr 1889.

principle of unity in order to present a common face to employers. The railway employees met in 1889, in order to establish a union because their leaders saw the advantage of a united front among employees. At the inaugural meeting Hoban presided and in his speech he "... pointed out that if the men wanted to be treated with justice they must be united, for it was of no use trying to fight single-handed." (33) By November 15, the Railway Employees Union had 800 members (34) The widespread formation of these new trade unions heightened the problem of recognition by employers of the role and potential power of the unions. In the late 1880's many conflicts were fought over the basic issue of recognition of the right of employees to organise. (35)

One of the most active of the new trade unions in pressing for the rights of labour was the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union which was established in 1889 to safeguard conditions, hours and wages within the tailoring industry. This area of the manufacturing trade had throughout the 1880's been afflicted with many of the characteristics of sweated labour. Cramped and unhealthy conditions combined with long hours were frequent and as the depression worsened, increasing numbers of women and children were employed for low wages.

33. LT, 4 Nov 1889.

34. ibid, 15 Nov 1889.

35. ibid, 13 Dec 1889, 6 Nov 1889, 26 Feb 1890, 12, 13 and 20 Mar 1890, 19, 20 and 22 May 1890.

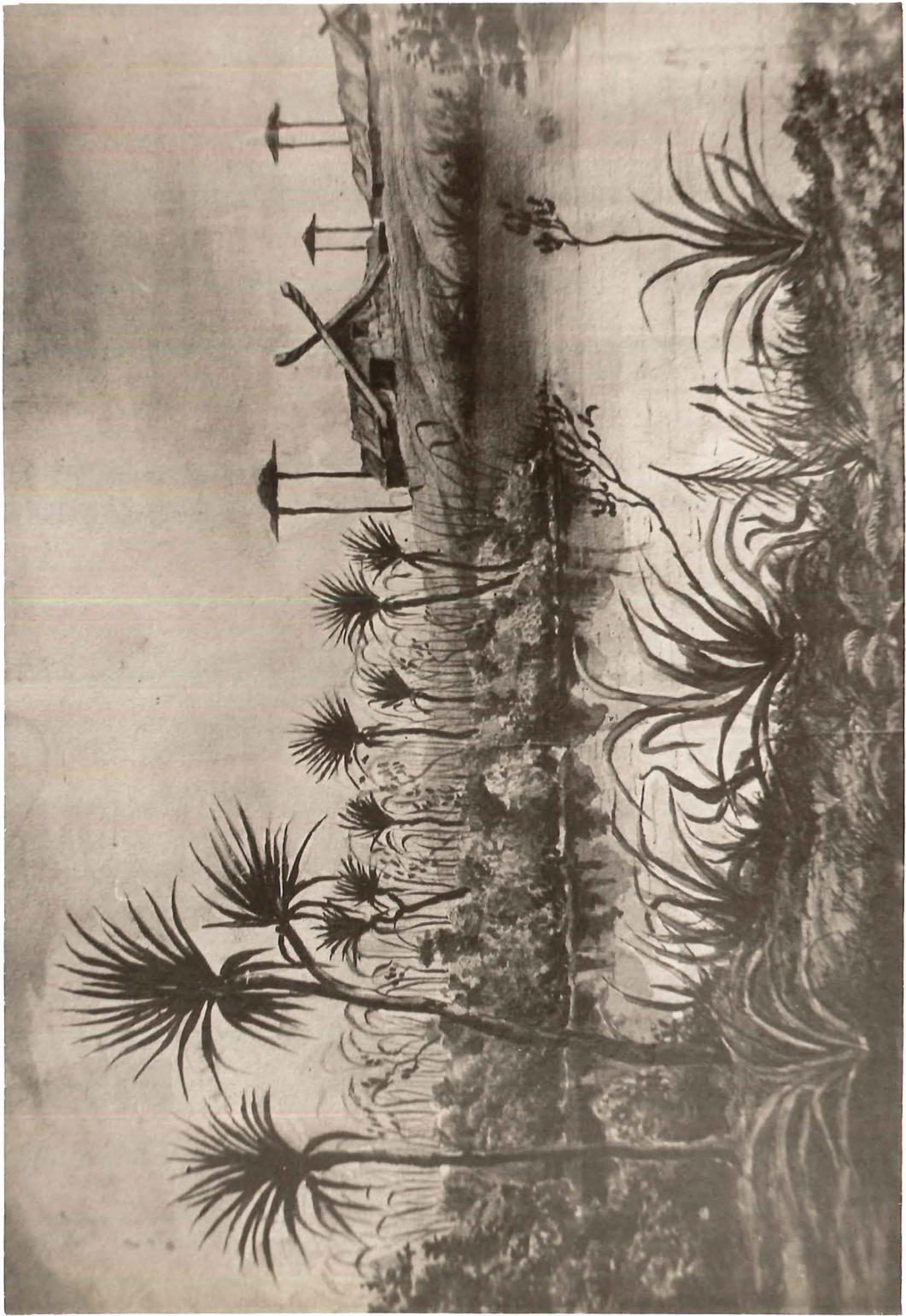


Figure 2a.

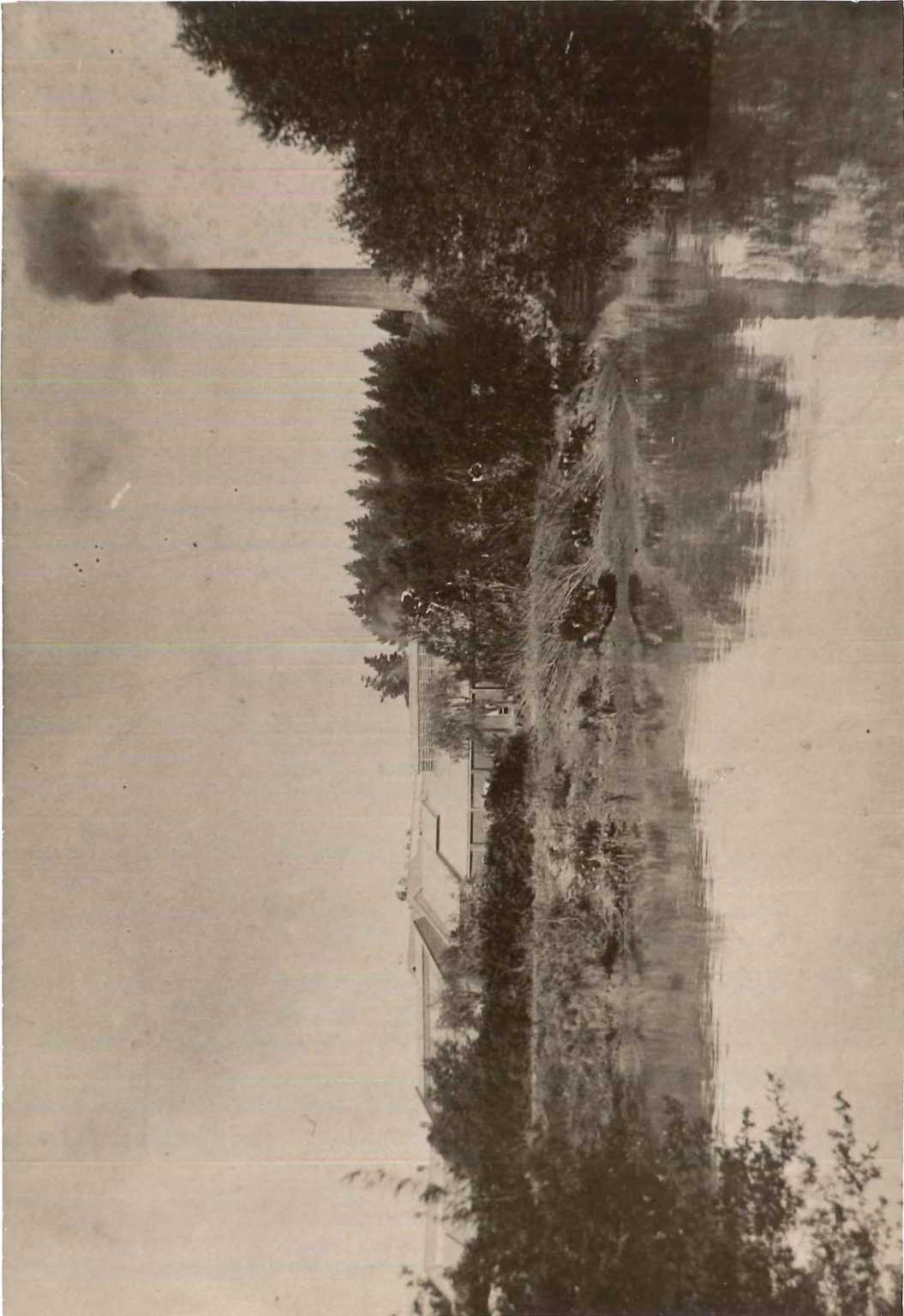


Figure 2b.

Under the leadership of F.S. Parker, the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union strove to improve conditions within the clothing industry. (36) The union sent copies of all its objectives to the major clothing firms in Christchurch including J. Ballantyne and Co., G.L. Beath and Co., W. Strange and Co. and the Kaiapoi Woollen Manufacturing Company. Favourable replies accepting the union's objectives were received from all except the Kaiapoi Company, whose board of directors felt that the union objectives did not apply to work done in the factory. However the objectives of the union were not seen by any other group to be extravagant in their scope and the union continued to maintain a policy of publicising its desire to avoid conflict and to promote harmony within the tailoring industry. At a public meeting of the union, Parker tried to allay employer fears by insisting that,

"... the union was not communistic or extravagant in its demands, but members had resolved to bind themselves together, to treat employers respectfully, to give full value for wages." (37)

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36. LT, 2 Oct 1889, objects of the union were defined to be -
1. To put down the sweating system.
 2. To regulate hours of labour.
 3. To secure uniform rate of wages.
 4. To regulate percentage of apprentices to the number of workers.
 5. To regulate a system of chart orders.
 6. To establish the union so that none but union hands shall be employed.
37. ibid, 19 Oct 1889.

Public response to the organisation of the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union was varied. An editorial in the Lyttelton Times congratulated the working men and women on the establishment in Christchurch of a Tailors Union, and felt that the support demonstrated at the public meeting showed that the public conscience was awakening in Christchurch. (38) The tailoring trade was regarded by many of the British immigrants as a traditional host of many of the evils of sweated labour that they had seen so close at hand in the old country. Parker was given much support when he stated at a public meeting,

"They must ensure just laws for their children who were to follow them and not allow the evils of the old country to be introduced in Australasia." (39)

However moderate the unions claims might now appear, employers at the time saw them as a challenge to their position. Most were reluctant to accept the notion of preference to unionists on the grounds that it interfered unduly with their rights as employers. The management of the Kaiapoi Woollen Mills stood adamant on the principle of "freedom of contract." Where it could, the company denied unionists work. In a case heard in the Magistrates Court on October 15, 1889, Lizzie Marden

38. LT, 19 Oct 1889.

39. ibid.

gave evidence, that after seven years she was dismissed from her job. Pascoe, the manager, asked her if she had joined the union. When she replied in the affirmative, he told her that she would get no more work until she altered her opinions. (40) The employer's stand on this issue was to provide the critical point of confrontation between unions and employers more generally in the months that followed.

Unionists faced similar problems in the printing industry. Low wages and abuses of the apprenticeship system provided a body of grievances which made workers receptive to the arguments of those among them who saw unionism as their soundest defense. The late 1880's saw the formation of two large trade unions in the printing sphere, the Typographical Association and the Bookbinders Society. Both unions came up against the opposition of Whitcombe and Tombs, the largest employer in the field. The principle of trade unionism was not accepted in any of the workshops owned by Whitcombe and he took steps to rid his factories of union members. In his evidence to the Sweating Commission, Frederick Charles Gerard stated that Whitcombe discharged all of his bookbinders and compositors because they refused to leave their respective unions. (41) Ironically, when Whitcombe discharged these men for their union involvement, he himself was a member of the Master Printers' Association.

40. LT, 16 Oct 1889.

41. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 42.

The Bookbinders' Society which was established in 1890 as a tightly knit craft union, also came up against the opposition of Whitcombe. James McIntosh told the Commission that on Thursday 27 February 1889, Whitcombe sent for his bookbinders and told them his directors had decided not to employ any union men. (42) The Bookbinders' Society was in fact a labour group with a small membership which concentrated on protecting the standards and privileges of their trade. The actions of Whitcombe demonstrated the fact that he did not distinguish between small and large scale demands made by the unionists in his employment. In closing his workshops to union employment he was asserting a common employer claim of freedom of contract.

In this struggle between union and employer the position of the foreman was a difficult one. In the early 1880's, the divisions between masters and employers were less distinct and as the workshops had been small, there seemed no necessity to create a position of authority that stood between the owners and the men. With the development of industry on a larger scale, the basic work group was enlarged and distinctions between labourers and those who held positions of authority became highlighted. An employee could hold the status

42. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 42.

of foreman in his workshop, but still belong in terms of aspirations, family background and education, to the same class as those men who worked under him.

The difficulty of resolving this question of status was highlighted when a foreman at Whitcombe and Tombs joined the union. The managers of Whitcombes felt that

"... the foreman could not hold the position he did with the company and be at the same time a member of the men's Society." (43)

This distinction highlighted the difficulty of those in positions of responsibility. They were appealed to by their employers for loyalty to the company and at the same time by their fellow employees for solidarity in demands for better wages and conditions. This conflict of loyalties was not to be resolved until the lines of worker solidarity were more clearly defined.

It seems clear that the unions formed in the late 1880's were essentially moderate in their demands and stressed co-operation rather than conflict. There was, nevertheless, an insistence that nothing short of recognition of unionism would suffice. Employers, for their part, were prepared to stand equally firmly on their right to employ whom they wished. Between the two banners - "preference for unionists" and "freedom of

43. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 46.

contract", there was no middle ground. Unionists were prepared, as in the case of the Kaiapoi Woollen Mills, to strike to achieve their aims. Employers were equally adamant in their refusal to grant the recognition sought. By 1890 the question was unresolved and Christchurch was aware that it was moving towards a labour-capital crisis. Economic recession and its concomitants, poverty, unemployment and deteriorating working conditions highlighted by the debates over the sweating issues, had created a more assertive union movement. Union leaders spoke of "co-operation" but also of "preference" and the latter was a condition employers were reluctant to concede. By early 1890 many Christchurch observers feared a labour-capital crisis.



Figure 3.



Figure 3.

Figure 4a.



G. H. Blackwell.
Managing Director.
1888.



T. R. Leithead.
Assistant Manager
1899.

CHAPTER 3

UNEMPLOYMENT IN CANTERBURY

1880-1893

The depression of the 1880's caused hardship and poverty among many sectors of Christchurch society, but the hardest hit were the working men whose livelihood was eroded through lack of work. The depression was in part caused by a world wide fall in prices, interest rates and profits, but it was intensified in New Zealand because of her dependence on returns from exports of wool and wheat. (1)

However, such an explanation of world wide economic trends did little to compensate for the immediate problem of unemployment. The problem was intensified in Canterbury and Otago by the large numbers of unskilled labourers who had been brought to New Zealand under the Vogel plan. For a time the economy had prospered. Factories were built, public works were instituted and the retail industry grew. The immigrants provided the labour to construct the roads and the bridges and were to provide the basis of an industrial workforce.

Vogel himself produced a handbook for intending immigrants, and in the section on Canterbury province he stated: "Canterbury offers to the industrious immigrant

1. Scotter, W.H. A History of Canterbury. Vol 3, p 59.

of the labouring class a certain prospect of employment, at good wages, for some time to come. (2) However, for many of the new immigrants, the promised opportunities for a better life were short-lived. The public works were badly organised and the towns suffered from an over-supply of carpenters and labourers. By 1883, employment in Christchurch for tradesmen, particularly carpenters, was scarce. (3)

The expectations of the British immigrants were not high but they hoped to maintain a reasonable standard of living and steady employment. They had left behind the known hardships of the mother country for the temptations of a land of opportunity. They found instead unemployment and poverty in the newly established towns of New Zealand.

As the depression worsened, those who were unemployed began to realise that their unemployment was not short-term. The promises of the immigration agents who had lured them to New Zealand and their own hopes had not been fulfilled. Government relief works seemed the only alternative to continued unemployment.

Many who suffered reductions in their standard of living began to turn to politics for solutions. "Unemployment and poverty were bringing thousands of settlers

2. Vogel, J. (ed) The Official Handbook of New Zealand. p 154.

3. LT, 14 Dec 1883.

to realise that something fundamental was wrong with their society; to feel robbed of the fulfilment of the comfortable dream that led them to the antipodes."

(4) The basic belief that most of the unemployed held in common was the increasingly valued principle of the right of all men to work. An awareness of their subordinate position in the economic system and a belief in the importance of government responsibility towards the unemployed as giving some coherence to the growing number of jobless.

The claim by unemployed leaders that all men had a right to work was taken up by the Lyttelton Times. The paper's editor, William Pember Reeves, stated in an editorial in 1883, "The unemployed do not occupy the position of paupers who are waiting for charity. They are entitled to get work that is comensurate with the general price of labour." (5)

In order to alleviate the more immediate evidence of poverty and destitution within the cities, soup kitchens were organised to provide a means of subsistence. Some of the jobless were critical of such expedients which merely solved the problem of the next meal. Large numbers, however, were unable to face lengthy periods of unemployment without resorting to charitable aid.

4. Sinclair, K. William Pember Reeves. p 70.

5. LT, 15 Dec 1883.

Many benevolent and charitable organisations were established in Christchurch during the 1880's to give aid to those whose conditions would otherwise have been destitute. In 1880 the Benevolent Institution was set up which included a soup kitchen and a centre for distributing food, fuel and clothing to urgent cases.

(6) However, some unemployed neglected the organisation and declared that "... a soup kitchen does not touch the heart of the evil, the want of employment." (7)

By 1892 the Benevolent Institution had been replaced by the Charitable Aid Board which became the main agent for the distribution of aid to the needy. However, although the Board was more efficient in dealing with needs of the poor, it too was shunned by some of the unemployed who were still determined to avoid the stigma of charitable aid. On being told by the mayor, W. Prudhoe, to apply to the Charitable Aid Board if in dire need, W. Powell, an unemployed labourer, complained that "... the men did not want to go to the Board if they could help it; what they wanted was honest work and pay for it." (8)

The attitude of the unemployed towards charitable aid was supported by Reeves in the Lyttelton Times. He

6. LT, 8 Jun 1880.

7. ibid, 14 Jun 1880.

8. ibid, 6 Aug 1892.

argued that the government should relieve unemployment by stepping up its public works programme. In his view, "The unemployed do not occupy the position of paupers who are waiting for charity." (9)

The unemployed were themselves quick to call upon the government to provide work. The role of the state in providing welfare for those who were unable to support themselves, was a notion hitherto untried in New Zealand. The hardships of the depression changed the attitudes of many towards the role of the government and emphasised the fact that the government was representative of the electorate and should therefore endeavour to secure the interests of all who constituted the electorate.

The economic situation fostered the growth of radical ideas among both the working class who were suffering the direct effects of economic hardship and those of the middle class whose philanthropic attitudes led them to believe that moves should be made by government agencies to safeguard the material position of those who were suffering economic hardship. Remedies to the economic problems were sought in a wide variety of theories and schemes. Works by Henry George (Poverty and Progress), John Stuart Mill and Edward Bellamy (Looking Backward) were widely read by those who could

9. LT, 15 Dec 1893.

afford books and were also widely distributed in pamphlet form. In Dunedin 5 000 copies of Looking Backward were sold in six months (10) and sales in Christchurch were equally feverish. The influence of new ideas caused many to examine more closely the political structure as it existed. Working men became aware of the power that they held in their vote and the need for a government that would be sympathetic to their interests and aligned to the party principle rather than to the problem at hand.

One immediate area upon which this growing unrest focused its attention was the availability of land. Many of the recent immigrants had come to New Zealand with the intention of gaining for themselves and their families some small portion of the vast tracts of land on which they hoped to settle. The arcadian dream was however, short-lived. They found instead that land, especially around the South Island cities of Christchurch and Dunedin, was tied up in the hands of large landowners. This was one of the first more readily visible inequalities which was attacked in the 1880's.

The establishment of the large estates had been accomplished at a time when large grazing areas were the only means whereby landowners could make a passable living. However, the falling returns for wool and the

10. Roth, H. Trade Unions in New Zealand. pp 10-11.

increased population which was largely concentrated in the towns meant that these large holdings were seen as the focal point of dissatisfaction.

Many of the unemployed saw settlement on the land as a solution to urban problems and as a social good in itself. Protest meetings at which the land monopolists were condemned were often held in the towns. In 1885 a deputation of unemployed to the mayor of Christchurch, C.P. Hulbert, stated, "That we consider the monopoly of the best land in the colony, being held in the large estates, is the sole cause of the present depression and scarcity of work." (11)

The views expressed by the unemployed on the availability of land were supported by the writings of J.S. Mill. The idea that was particularly appealing to the landless was the idea of the "unearned increment". Mill felt that every landowner earned an addition to his income in terms of the excess value that his products brought over the basic return that the poorest land would have provided. This additional return, Mill proposed to tax so that all could capitalise on the unearned increment of the landowner.

Ideas such as these were potent in the minds of the landless who were congregated in the cities and who found it difficult to obtain work. The pressure for

11. LT, 18 Mar 1885.

land for settlement became so great that it was taken up by the government, and in 1886 the village settlement scheme was introduced. In Canterbury, the scheme did little to satisfy the demand for land as there was little that was suitable for settlement, although the public works officer in Canterbury, J.E. March, strongly supported the scheme and did his best to find probable sites. In 1887 a block of 8 000 acres was set aside in Oxford to be settled by the unemployed. This land served a two-fold purpose, for before it could be made available for settlement it had to be cleared from scrub and this provided work for gangs of unemployed until the land could be settled. (12)

However, for many, the village settlement scheme did little to change their way of life or to provide work, nor did it satisfy their desire for land. The scheme itself was only an intermediary effort by the government to provide an alternative to work on the government relief schemes. Many of the settlements were in unsuitable areas and on ground that was unsatisfactory as a small holding. In reply to complaints voiced by the unemployed as to the unsatisfactory nature of these settlements, Sir Robert Stout stated, "... the Government did not intend to keep entirely the people on special settlements. A man there got a house and a farm, from 10 to 29 acres of land, sufficient to keep a cow and his family. This was intended only as a standby..." (13)

12. LT, 4 May 1887.

13. ibid, 8 Jan 1887.

The village settlement scheme provided only the essentials in terms of an acre to live on and failed to satisfy the widespread demands for land for settlement.

The land question was to play a significant role in the defeat of the Atkinson government in 1890. The victory of the Liberals however, did not immediately do much to ease the problems of the jobless who continued, even after 1890, to demand public assistance to help put them on the land. In Canterbury attention focused on the Cheviot estate. By the terms of the Land and Income Tax Act (1891) the Liberals assessed the value of all farming properties. In cases where the owners objected that the government valuation was too high, the government threatened to purchase the estates at their valuation. Cheviot was a case in point though it seems likely that the trustees manouvered the government into purchasing the estate. Christchurch unemployed, however, knew nothing of the backroom wrangles which preceded the purchase, nor did they care. They saw simply the prospect of a succession of Cheviots throughout the countryside.

The government purchase of the estate did provide work for many of the unemployed from Christchurch as roads were needed, bridges had to be built and gorse cut. "About 80 men are employed on the homestead road, whilst 22 men are engaged in the formation of the Hurunui bridge by way of the Waipara." (14) The land was eventually

14. LT, 19 Jul 1893.

cleared and divided up into sections. Fifty-four of these were established as lease in perpetuity sections and 56 were homestead allotments. (15) The allocation of the land was settled by ballot as there were double the number of applicants needed for the sections available. Among the successful applicants were 43 farmers, 13 ploughmen, 101 labourers and 62 women engaged in domestic duties. (16) The estate was therefore divided up into small settlements and the use of ballots in deciding the leasing of the land ensured that in the minds of the working men there was a fair chance for all to gain land on the estate. Cheviot was not, however, followed up by a succession of similar subdivisions. With the return of prosperity after 1896 the 'land question', at least as a solution to urban problems, became less pressing.

As important as land was in unemployed protest, it was not the only ingredient. The jobless came to see themselves as representing the most vulnerable section of society. Throughout the 1880's they continued to meet in the Square and developed their own leadership and attitudes. These meetings were largely informal and during the 1880's were attended by about 100 men. Prominent speakers at this time were J. Powell and Dr Bakewell. Newspaper reports cited both men as unemployed leaders.

15. LT, 15 Nov 1893.

16. ibid, 21 Nov 1893.

Powell was an unemployed labourer who had emigrated to New Zealand in the 1870's. His role in leading the unemployed largely involved leading deputations of unemployed to the mayor and drafting petitions and letters of protest to send to the appropriate authorities. One such example of Powell's activities was an attempt to organise a petition to the Governor asking him to send relief to the people of New Zealand. (17) Powell's role as a leader was one in which he emerged as an informal representative of the men who met regularly in the Square and he made no apparent attempt to radicalise or to organise more closely the activities of the unemployed. Bakewell, a Christchurch philanthropist, typifies the middle class men whose conscience was pricked by the obvious poverty and destitution evident in the 1880's. Bakewell attempted to organise some of the unemployed into a loose union and in 1883 the Working Men's Protection Society was formed, but little is known of its aims or objectives. (18) As the Society was led by Bakewell himself, it was likely that few of the working men were prepared to join the organisation which was established on their behalf.

The jobless were cautious of middle class activists such as Bakewell. They preferred to heed the advice of men from their own ranks though they were no doubt

17. LT, 13 Mar, 12 Jun, 7 Aug 1880.

18. ibid, 20 Dec 1883.

grateful for whatever assistance Bakewell and his kind afforded them. There was however, no clear strategy emerging from within the unemployed ranks. Meetings continued to be sporadic and organisation fragile. Speakers who addressed the meetings often differed in policy and advocated a variety of solutions to the problem of unemployment. Some proffered radical viewpoints and a few spoke, if in somewhat confused fashion, the language of class warfare. In 1886 a Mr Boardman urged the jobless to march through the main streets of the city, form a cordon around the government offices and refuse to leave until they were guaranteed employment.

(19) Such angry outbursts from soapbox orators brought applause but little else. The unemployed remained resentful but confined their protest to peaceful means.

The activities of the unemployed in Christchurch were in direct contrast to the protest that erupted in Auckland, where V.G. Garrard, an unemployed labourer, ^a militantly campaigned for government aid and recognition of the rights of the unemployed in a democratic society. The meetings of the unemployed which were held in Auckland were large vocal gatherings, which were resolved only by resolutions supported by those present for united action to secure their rights to a reasonable standard of living. (20)

19. LT, 20 Dec 1883.

20. ibid, 18 Aug 1886.

Those who attended the Auckland meetings seem to have been more vociferous than their Christchurch counterparts. A meeting in 1886 attended by 500 men threatened that if work was not forthcoming they would have to take "steps for ourselves which will cause trouble at large." (21) The emergence of Garrard as a radical leader of the unemployed in Auckland also highlights the difference in the intensity of the activities of the unemployed in the two cities. Garrard not only led deputations to government authorities, but was also notable as a public speaker. His colourful rhetoric gained him much support as a leader. He did not limit himself to comments on the state of the economy but provided a number of solutions which were both radical and often unrealistic. At one meeting Garrard told those present that the unemployed should

".... Get all the guns and ammunition they could out of the government, and then, if they could not get what they wanted, let them turn on those who refused them help. That was the way to do it. They wanted bread and they must have it." (22)

Such prospects were greeted with rowdy approval by those present at the meeting. While the proposals were not always carried out with alacrity, the sentiments that prompted them were widely shared by many of the unemployed in Auckland.

21. LT, 6 Aug 1886.

22. ibid, 24 Nov 1886.

The recognition of Garrard as a leader who emerged from among the men played an important part in mobilising solidarity among meetings which the unemployed attended. A report in the Lyttelton Times describes Garrard as a "well known labour agitator" and goes on to describe the speech that he made as "A fair sample of colonial and socialistic nonsense..." (23) The meetings of the unemployed in Auckland seem on the whole to have been more radical in the demands made and more aggressive in the solutions that were proposed by the men, perhaps an indication of the serious collapse of the Auckland economy, so ably set out by R.C.J. Stone in Makers of Fortune.

In contrast the mood of the men who attended the meetings in Christchurch was usually one of patient resignation. In an orderly manner they would listen to speeches, sign a petition or dispatch a deputation to the mayor. Action taken by the men was usually confined to appealing to the various sources of government authority to provide work.

Occasionally more novel proposals were put forward, frequently influenced by the current ideas of co-operative socialism. Henry Rogers, an unemployed carpenter, proposed a scheme for the formation of a co-operative manufacturing and distributing company for the unemployed

23. LT, 25 Nov 1880.

which would eliminate the need for dependence on the existing retail and manufacturing outlets. (24)

The regular meetings of the unemployed in Christchurch may not have put forward much by way of concrete proposals, but they did keep the question of unemployment to the fore. Public meetings drew large audiences from many sections of the community. Some of these meetings were organised by benevolent organisations, and sometimes unemployed workers came forward to testify as to their lack of opportunity. In this way the public became aware of the plight of such men as Mr Bridges. "He had been five months out of work and had been in the colony for 10 years. He was a plasterer and willing to work for low wages." (25) At the same meeting George Needham, a butcher, also publicly stated his position. Needham "... had been four months out of work and had had to pawn things to supply the wants of his family of five." (26)

The resolutions which were passed at the Christchurch meetings were largely inward looking in nature for they tended to concentrate on the self-evident problems of unemployment in the area and did not attempt to put the whole economic crisis in a wider perspective. This of course was in keeping with the largely parochial and

24. LT, 13 Jul 1891.

25. ibid, 13 Dec 1883.

26. ibid.

localised nature of politics in the 1880's. The meetings in Christchurch passed practical resolutions such as the one which stated, "That the mayor of Christchurch and members of the House of Representatives present at this meeting, with the delegates chosen by the working men, should wait upon the Minister of Public Works, to urge upon him the necessity of procuring works for the unemployed in Canterbury and its neighbourhood. (27) Resolutions such as these were part and parcel of the politics of localism. They also however, prepared the way for wider and more direct political involvement by wage-earners.

The local authorities in Canterbury were usually sympathetic in their dealings with the jobless and gave support to organisational moves of the men as well as giving assistance in bringing their plight to the attention of the government authorities. In 1891 the mayor of Christchurch, C.M. Gray, stated to the Lyttelton Times, "... he could testify from his own experience that there was a large number of men out of employment here. He was waited upon nearly every day by men asking for something to do." (28) For many of those who were out of work in Canterbury, the only alternative to long periods out of work was employment on one of the many relief work schemes that were instituted by the government. Larger relief schemes that operated in

27. LT, 15 Dec 1883.

28. ibid, 4 Apr 1891.

Canterbury centered around the Addington railway workshops, labouring work in parks and undeveloped areas and heavy work in such areas as Ashley Gorge, Little River, Kaituna Quarries and Weka Pass. For single men, government relief work usually involved a journey to an outlying country area such as work on the railway lines at Waddington or road work at the Waimakariri Gorge.

The outlying relief works were often situated at virtually inaccessible places where the labouring work was tough and arduous. Conditions at relief camps varied. Some had labourers huts for the workmen to live in, while at other sites, such as the Waimakariri river bank camp, the men were forced to live in tents until they could build their own huts.

Rations were usually supplied but were charged to the labourers account and then docked from his wages. These rations varied at each labour camp, but many complaints were received from the men concerning the high price of rations. At the Ashley river bank in 1884, rations for 8d a day were: 1 lb of meat, 1 lb of potatoes, 1 oz of tea, 1 lb of bread, 2 oz of sugar and $\frac{1}{4}$ oz of salt. A deputation of men from the camp was sent to the mayor of Christchurch, C.P. Hulbert, complaining of the high prices of these rations. One member of the deputation stated, "... he could get as good rations for 4d a day in town." (29)

29. LT, 10 Jul 1884.

As more men gained experience in relief work camps, dissatisfaction spread as to the rate of pay on the schemes. Much of the work was tough and arduous employment, such as stonebreaking at Addington for which the men received 2s 6d per square yard. (30) In 1884 many of the unemployed gathered in the Square to protest against the low rate of wages which they had been paid for some time. They petitioned the mayor asking for 6s a day in cases where they had to work out of town. (31) As many of the men still had to support wives and families in town and at the same time buy rations for themselves at the relief camp, the higher rate of wages was in fact necessary for the men to maintain even a frugal standard of living.

Dissatisfaction continued among the unemployed and those on relief work concerning the wage rate paid by the government. (32) However, by 1890, the situation was critical as many of the men had been sporadically unemployed for many years. At a meeting held in 1890 concerning the relief rates, it was stated that the rates paid at Weka Pass were insufficient for a man and his family to live on. (33) For most of the unemployed, despite their protests, relief work continued to be the only alternative to penury and dependence on charitable aid as a means of subsistence.

30. LT, 13 Sept 1883.

31. ibid, 12 Jul 1884.

32. ibid, 17 Nov 1885, 6 Mar 1886.

33. ibid 2 Jul 1890. Relief rates at Weka Pass were 5½d per hour or 3s 6d per day of eight hours with more for married men.

The problems of relief work were intensified by the fact that many of the unemployed were unsuitable for the heavy labouring work that was usually required of relief work sites. There were many older men among the jobless for whom work on heavy labouring sites was unsuitable. In 1892 Mr McKay of the Public Works Office found that in Christchurch "... there were men aged between 60 and 70 years for whom, under the existing circumstances, he cannot make any provision." (34) The elderly faced many difficulties at this time as many of them had been unable to make provision for a time when they could not support themselves and the scarcity of work meant that what was available was given to men and women who were younger and better able to do the work.

Even during the summer harvest season, when work was more freely available, many jobless were unable to find suitable work. Harvest work involved a specialised knowledge which many of the unemployed who had emigrated from the towns of England lacked. Many local farmers were reluctant to take on unemployed men because of their lack of experience. Mr Wyn-Williams "... was one who employed a good many men in harvest time, but would point out that most of the unemployed were men totally unfitted for harvest work. They could not bind ... it would be absolutely useless for the farmer to have such men." (35)

34. LT, 12 Aug 1892.

35. ibid, 17 Dec 1883.

Faced with repeated demands for more relief work and better organisation of the schemes that did exist, the public works authorities took a new orientation in the late 1880's. In 1887, a Labour Bureau noted the numerous calls for bushmen and roadmen in the North Island, and advocated the transfer of men who wanted work to areas where work was available. (36) An editorial in the Lyttelton Times acclaimed the setting up of the bureau which had "... substituted for the chaos of blind tramping the systematic introduction of the supply." (37) However the new policy of sending men to the North Island raised much opposition in Christchurch, as a large proportion of the men out of work were married and refused to work so far from their homes and families.

The 1880's were a period of unemployment and poverty for many of the labouring classes in New Zealand, and it was in the cities where this problem was centered. The jobless were, as always, a shifting group difficult for radicals to mobilise and divided in their own attitudes to the economic crisis which had engulfed the country. The lack of adequate state provision for long-term unemployment exacerbated the difficulties faced by the jobless and undoubtedly pushed many of them into direct political involvement. The depression of the 1880's and 1890's may not have produced two clearly

36. LT, 8 Jun 1891.

37. ibid, 6 Apr 1893.

defined classes as alleged by Sinclair (38) but it made wage-earners more keenly aware of their disadvantaged position. The recognition of this fact in the workplace and amongst the jobless was an important step towards the development of working class consciousness.

38. Sinclair, K. A History of New Zealand. pp 168-170.

CHAPTER 4
WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT
IN THE 1880'S

The development of the trade union movement in Canterbury in the 1880's and the formation of unions within the industrial sphere provided many women with their first opportunity to take part in an active political organisation. Although Christchurch had been established on the Wakefieldian pattern of settlement, with representatives from all sectors of society, there were in fact, few "ladies" accustomed to a life of leisured ease. The majority of women who emigrated to New Zealand were of working class background and had already experienced work in Britain as tailoresses, seamstresses and wives and mothers of young families. These women came to New Zealand prepared to work, whether in the newly developing industries or in breaking in the bush farms.

The Vogel immigration scheme of the 1870's had increased the number of women who had had experience of work in Britain. Their work experienced varied from cooks, nurses, laundresses and housekeepers to ladies' maids and domestic servants. The opportunities for women to work as domestic servants in New Zealand was limited because of the few who could afford to run their

households on the scale predominant in British society. However, the influx of immigrants who were prepared to work for low wage rates did cause the number of women employed in the domestic service to rise. The Census of 1881 gives the number of females engaged as domestic servants to be 11 975 and in 1886 this number had increased to 13 471. (1) Many of these women worked long hours for low wages and made no effort to organise to protect their interests until 1890. The lack of organisation and awareness of their position as servants can partly be explained by the nature of their employment. These women were accustomed to taking orders and subordinating themselves to the whims, demands and needs of their masters and mistresses. Any movement on their part to organise necessitated an awareness of their rights and privileges as members of the work force. Organisation of themselves as a group of workers and recognition of their rights made obvious a split allegiance between their employer and their traditional loyalties in that direction and their employees.

The expansion of industry in the early 1880's produced increased demand for an industrial work force. In the shoe-making and clothing industries, much of the work was considered to be suitable for women and thus the number of women employed in these areas rose. The

1. Census of New Zealand, 1881, p 249.

Census of 1881 shows 3 658 women employed as milliners or dress makers. By 1886 this had risen to 5 472 and in 1889 there were 6 602 females employed as milliners or dress makers in the work force. (2)

The only legislation which existed to cope with the increasing numbers engaged in the manufacturing industry was the 1873 Employment of Females Act. This Act limited the hours of work for females to an eight hour day and also laid down regulations concerning sanitation and conditions of work. However, although the Act provided for inspectors to make sure the regulations were carried out, inspection was in fact, lax, and evasions of the law were frequent. John Kennedy, an inspector of factories, noted in his evidence to the Sweating Commission that workers in private houses were the most difficult to look after. (3) An editorial in the Lyttelton Times also expressed the view that the Employment of Females Act was not well enforced. The paper discussed the dismissal of a case in the Magistrates Court at which information was laid against one of the partners of J. Ballantyne and Co. Ltd, for employing 40 work girls outside regular working hours. (4) Employers found it an easy matter to continue to encourage their female employees to work long hours as many faced economic hardship at home.

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2. Census of New Zealand, 1881, p 253.
 3. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 35.
 4. LT, 11 Jan 1888.

As existing legislation was ineffective and did not extend to both sexes involved in industry, many employers ignored the few guidelines set for regulating hours and conditions of employment. The abundance of cheap labour also tended to diminish the responsibility of employers who found that employees were sometimes outbidding each other in their readiness to offer cheap labour. In many of the developing industries, women were used as a cheap labour force in order to raise the level of production without increasing the cost of wage-labour. Unions which were being organised primarily for male employees, only gradually became aware of the plight of their female counterparts. In 1885 a Trades and Labour Congress was held in Dunedin at which the general position of labour throughout the country was considered. In his presidential speech, C.J. Thorn strongly emphasized the benefits of organising women workers,

"I think that if we could get the female employees to become organised that would be one of the first steps so far as we are concerned to assist our local industries." (5)

A public statement claiming the advantages of organisation of women into trade unions had never previously been published and illustrates the developing awareness of the importance of women workers in the

manufacturing industry. Salmond comments that any previous ideas of organisation of women would have been "... quickly dismissed on the grounds that women workers would be bad unionists and any attempt at organisation would be useless." (6) The belief that women would make "bad unionists" seems to have been prevalent among male workers in the 1870's and 1880's. It seemed to stem from a presumption that women lacked any political consciousness and were unable to take a responsible attitude towards combination and unity for political purpose.

At the 1885 Trades and Labour Congress, Hogg presented a paper on female labour. He felt that women should form into unions,

"so that they could become a power for good in the colony and assist in future legislation for the advancement of their own and their children's welfare." (7)

Although the organisation of women into trade unions was being encouraged, it seems to have been combined with a concern for women as mothers of future New Zealanders. Thorn valued the contribution that women could make in safeguarding New Zealand's moral code. Women were seen to have a moderating influence which

6. Salmond, J. Labour's Pioneering Days, p 50.

7. *ibid.*



Figure 4b.

could mitigate the associated evils of industrial production thereby safeguarding the "moral" standards of the country.

However, as the problem of sweated labour became more apparent in the later 1880's, the public was aghast at the conditions under which many women and girls were working. The initial outcry against the victimisation of women in industry was raised by the Reverend R. Waddell, a Dunedin philanthropist, in his sermon "The Sin of Cheapness." Waddell revealed details of the clothing industry in Dunedin where many women were forced to labour excessively long hours in order to make enough to live on.

The evils of sweated labour were aspects of England that most of the immigrants had hoped to escape. The new colony was seen as a land of opportunity but during the depression of the 1880's it was becoming a land of depressed conditions and an uneven standard of living. The revelation of sweated conditions aroused an emotional reaction among many members of the middle class, for protection of the weaker sex was a notion dear to the heart of many Englishmen.

The reaction among women workers themselves was realisation of the need to combine in order to safeguard their rights. In Christchurch moves to organise women into unions were led by the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union. This was the first union in New Zealand

to organise tailoresses who were hard hit by falling prices in the clothing industry. The Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union began its drive for increased membership in 1889 and women attended meetings despite employers threats to lower wages. (8)

The movement for inclusion of women among the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union was only partly motivated by a concern for the interests of the women themselves. The depression conditions had heightened competition for labour to the extent that many factories replaced men with the cheaper labour of women workers. In order to consolidate against all efforts of employers to cut costs, the unionists sought to include all employees within their sphere of influence.

Once they had included women under the union banner, leaders sought to preserve the standards of employment that the Factory Act entitled women workers to. The terms of employment of women became one of the most important issues in dealing with employers as in the case of the Typographical Association and Whitcombe and Tombs. The Association expressed concern to the management of Whitcombe and Tombs concerning the unsuitability of the heavy work of compositing for women. In response Whitcombe made a statement to the Sweating Commission in which he said that as the company was losing money it was

8. Salmond, J. Labour's Pioneering Days. p 64.

decided to introduce female labour as women were more suited to the job as they were, "... more intelligent and easier to teach." (9) It is interesting to note that Whitcombe's praise of the qualities of women compositors does not lead him to reward them with high wages, but rather to pay them less than the men who were previously doing the job.

For many women, involvement in union affairs was accompanied by greater participation in political and semi-political pressure groups. Middle class women had since the early 1880's, been heavily involved in temperance organisations, and others were involved in groups that sought to alleviate the conditions of the less fortunate members of colonial society. The Young Womens Institute was an early women's organisation which sought to "... enable respectable domestic servants who were out of employment to live comfortably at small cost until they obtained other situations." (10)

A similar attitude towards women of lesser social standing was adopted by the Ladies' Committee of the Canterbury Female Refuge which endeavoured to help young women.

"A house is provided for the destitute and friendless and by its shelter, the fallen, in many cases are saved from falling lower." (11)

9. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 46.

10. LT, 2 Feb 1883.

11. ibid, 12 Feb 1885.

These benevolent associations in Canterbury sought to moderate the harsh differences which had emerged between different socio-economic groups in Canterbury.

In 1885 a change of emphasis developed with the formation of a branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement in Canterbury. The union was modelled on the American Women's Temperance Union and was divided into departments, each of which was organised by a superintendent. The Canterbury department included hygiene, social purity, prison gate mission, scientific temperance instruction in schools and franchise. (12)

One of the most politically active departments of the union was the Franchise department which was led by Kate Sheppard, a humanitarian and moderate temperance advocate. The commonly held view concerning women's franchise was that women's vote held the potential moral power to raise the tone of the country. At a WCTU meeting in 1885, Alfred Saunders delivered an address entitled "Should Women Vote." During his address, he stated,

"Women, it is hoped, would be less accessible to doubtful election-eering proceedings than men." (13)

The development of political awareness among women and their realisation of the power of the vote ensured that they took the privilege, when it was acceded them, with the full importance it deserved.

12. LT, 9 Jan 1890.

13. ibid, 4 Sept 1885.

The franchise department of the WCTU led activities concerned with gaining the vote for women and towards the end of the 1880's the campaign became more intense. However, many women supported the principle of womens franchise because they felt the importance of their role as a moderating influence. Many of the women who were involved in the WCTU in Canterbury were the more educated middle class members of society who had time to devote to activities other than making a living. Being largely unaware of the need for greater political awareness, these women emphasized the moral influence their vote would have. Their influence was so strong that this attitude remained and was imbedded in the attitude of many politicians to the role of women in politics. At a public meeting in 1891, Doctor Macbean Steward stated,

"The late strike which had inflicted so much injury on New Zealand, was the result of one man one vote, but if women had had a voice, the strike would never have occurred."
(14)

The movement that was led by middle class women for female franchise and the growth of union involvement by working class women remained two separate developments throughout the 1880's. However, in moving towards the awareness of the potential power of their vote, it was

14. LT, 6 Mar 1881.

working women who raised the demand for a reasonable standard of living and the rights of those who worked for wages. An editorial in the Lyttelton Times touched on the difference in status, income and background between those working for women's franchise and those who were developing political awareness through their trade union involvement. The editorial stated,

"Give our girls data and teach them to argue logically. Tell them their less fortunate sisters are sweating over buttonholes; show them living facts that make dying girls and then work their minds up from facts to theories." (15)

The franchise movement lacked an awareness of the industrial reality under which many women worked and it was not until the 1890's that both middle and working class women were able to combine to protect, not only the moral tone of the country, but also the conditions of those who were involved in the industrial sphere.

The advocates of female franchise on the basis of its moral value to the country reflected, to a certain extent, the prevalent belief that certain basic differences existed between the sexes. Frequent reference, throughout the franchise campaign, was made to the physical weakness that women suffered. A petition for women's franchise held one clause which read,

"That the physical weaknesses of women disposed them to exercise habitual caution and to feel a deep interest in the constant preservation of peace, law and order..." (16)

15. LT, 5 Aug 1893.

16. LT, 29 Sept 1890.

The consideration that these petitioners for women's franchise gave to the so-called inherent weaknesses of women was considerably different to the attitude shown by many of the manufacturers who sought to employ women, often for long hours, at a cheap wage rate. In her evidence to the Sweating Commission, Miss A.P. an assistant at a drapery establishment, complained of having to stand all day. She reported that at times half a day passed without serving a customer and she had to stitch on tickets while continuing to stand. (17)

Similar disregard of the "inherent weaknesses" of women was shown in evidence of other women employees to the Sweating Commission. Miss A.Q. also had to stand all day and told the Commission,

"We do not speak to our employers about the long standing. The employers, being married men, ought to know that it is very weakening for women to stand so much." (18)

Many women worked long hours, disregarding their health and family life in order to make a little extra money. Mathew Alexander Baxter, a presser, told the Sweating Commission,

"A great many girls took home work to make enough to keep them decently, and worked at it till 10, 11, 12 or 1 o'clock and they were then allowed to do so by the company." (19)

17. AJHR, Vol 3, H-5, 1890, p 36.

18. ibid, p 37.

19. ibid, p 50.

There existed therefore, a gap between the traditionally accepted idea of a women's position in society as one in which she was sheltered and care for, and the actual life of thousands of working women whose lives were those of ceaseless toil. It was only a strong constitution, and a determination to survive, that enabled most women to continue working as wage labourers. Franchise was granted to New Zealand women in 1893, but many women workers were unaware and unprepared to exercise their new-found right. It was not until the 1900's that women were fully aware of the potential of their voting power, and were prepared to involve themselves in the political sphere.

The 1880's were a period of growth and development of political consciousness among women. Many took up industrial employment and joined trade unions while others joined such organisations as the Ladies Institute or the WCTU and involved themselves in activities they hoped would remedy the sufferings of the less fortunate in society. The hardships of the depression, and the discrimination in terms of hours and rates of wages that many women suffered, brought them to realise the value of union organisation in order to bargain with employers.

The successful organisation of women in the Christchurch Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union and in the subsequent Dunedin Tailoresses Union, was an important

step in the recognition of the role of women in industry. The union proved to male unionists and employers alike that women were capable of becoming active unionists who understood the importance of working to safeguard the rights of labour in industry.

However, although increasing numbers of women were involved in employment outside the home, the public acceptance of women's increased independence and responsibility was still minimal. Women were slow to initiate and lead politically orientated organisations, and it was not until the late 1890's with the establishment of the National Council for Women and the formation of women's political associations that a favourable public image of women outside the home was accepted. Twenty years later, J.T. Paul, a labour leader, was able to state to an appreciative audience,

"The woman who is following an occupation with unsuitable surroundings or inadequate pay is in partial bondage and to escape that bondage she may unwillingly enter a more permanent and irksome one in the shape of marriage." (2)

In the 1880's the pressures of unsatisfactory working conditions were being experienced by many women but it was not until the 1900's that they were fully aware of the pressures of marriage and family life and were able to choose more freely the direction of their lives.

20. Paul, J.T. Women in Civic and Political Life. p 15.

CHAPTER 5

1980 - THE MOVE TO POLITICAL
REPRESENTATION: THE ELECTION
AND THE STRIKE

The depression of the 1880's and 1890's heightened the awareness of many workers who were employed in the developing industries, to their vulnerable position in the economic system and the necessity of employee solidarity in order to achieve reasonable wages, hours and conditions of work. However, the development of industry within the country had had the effect of creating within New Zealand society, a distinct group of industrial workers who were noticeable as a group in society not only by their place of work, but also by their residential and educational status. While the development of industry had provided increased opportunities for unskilled workers to become involved in industry, it also created a class of workers who were important in the work force only by virtue of their wage labour. These industrial workers joined the newly established trade unions in growing numbers for they were becoming aware of their vulnerability in the economic structure and their dependence on their employers' terms of wages, hours and conditions under which they worked.

Thus the new unions formed in the 1880's had a large number of members who looked to the organisation of

the trade union to safeguard their position within their particular factory or workshop. A number of unions were organised to safeguard the employees rights in a particular issue. Small localised strikes were frequently organised throughout the 1880's and dealt mainly with issues concerning individual factories and workshops. Many unions had success in achieving their demands while others came to satisfactory agreements after negotiations with employers and factory owners. Most of the union demands were moderate in nature and were supported by other branches of the craft or trade. However, the predominant attitude of unionists and employers alike towards unionism, was an ameliorative view which envisaged unionists and employers working together in harmonious co-operation. At a public meeting of the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union a member of the public stated,

"In union was safety and strength
and by this union, founded on
justice and fairness, the ends
of employers, employees and in
the long run of the public, would
be served. (1)

The successes of many of these unions in their early confrontations between employers and employees generated much enthusiasm among the workers in many branches of industry. Workers on the factory floor

1. LT, 1 Oct 1889.

began to see the importance of grouping together in order to achieve a solution to their grievances. An enthusiasm became apparent among the workers which led to greater acceptance and widespread solidarity. From April 1889 until September 1890, 11 new unions were formed while the membership of existing unions increased dramatically. (2)

This period of intense activity among trade unionists was concentrated in Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin which were the areas of most intensely developing industrialisation. The concentration of union activities in the area of negotiations for reasonable hours, wages and conditions led to greater popular appeal for unionism among working men. However, the most important organisation of consolidation of working men which was formed during the 1880's was the Trades and Labour Council which was first formed in Christchurch in 1886 and which had grown substantially in strength by 1890.

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2. Trade unions formed in 1889-1890 by notice of report of first meeting in LT: Journeymen Bakers' Union 29 Apr 1889, Iron Workers' Union 3 Aug 1889, Cabmen's Union 28 Jun 1889, Christchurch Union of Operative Plasterers 12 Jul 1890, Bricklayers' Union 18 Jul 1890, Iron and Brassfounders' Union 18 Jul 1890, Fishermen's Union 4 Aug 1890, Christchurch Suburban Carriers' Union 1 Aug 1890, Cooks' and Waiters' Union 16 Aug 1890, Domestic Servants' Union 4 Sept 1890.

The Trades and Labour Council first met in Christchurch in 1886, when at a meeting of trade unionists, it was decided to form a co-operative union of working men. (3) However, following the initial meeting, no mention is to be found of subsequent meetings. The reason for the initial failure of the TLC may be found in the developing truck unions which were as yet uninterested in the appeal of wider union consolidation which was offered by the proposed TLC.

A subsequent attempt to form a Council was later made in 1889 when trade societies around Christchurch again met in order to try and form a cohesive organisation. At this meeting representatives from most of the major unions in Canterbury were present including representatives from the Wharf Labourers and Federated Seamen's Union, the Bootmakers' Union, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the Canterbury Typographical Association and the Railways Employees' Society. (4)

The initial meeting of the TLC seems to have been organised around a specific grievance, this being the reluctance of the Kaiapoi Mills to comply with the log of the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union. The resolution which was passed unanimously at the first TLC

3. LT, 27 Nov 1886.

4. ibid, 1 Nov 1889.

meeting concerning the Kaiapoi mills serves to illustrate the new attitude the unionists now held towards cohesive action. The delegates pledged themselves

"... to use every legitimate means to persuade the members of their respective unions to withdraw their support from the Kaiapoi clothing factory." (5)

By December 1889 the TLC had become more firmly established and was recognised as an important representative of the working people. The Council adopted the rules of the Wellington TLC and also opened a bank account reserved for Council funds. By December 1889, eight societies were affiliated to the Council representing approximately 1 000 members. (6) From this point onwards, the Council took up the role of arbitrator in conflicts concerning member organisations and employers. Most of the meetings of the TLC were organised around a specific grievance which was brought before the Council by a member union and representatives of the Council were delegated to enter into negotiations with the employer concerned.

The TLC also played an important role in forming the attitudes of the emerging trade unions. Once a co-ordinating body was set up which seemed to initiate better relations with employers, the unions which formed the Council were more prepared to state their grievances

5. LT, 1 Nov 1889.

6. ibid, 21 Dec 1889.

to their employers. Most of the early dealings between the Council and employers were peaceable and friendly compromises which were generally agreed upon. However, in all these dealings the Council had a strong hand to play as it represented the working power of 1 000 men. The trade unions which were affiliated to the Council were willing to stand firm in their belief in the rights of labour to reasonable hours, wages and conditions of work.

Almost as soon as the Council had been formed it met to discuss issues brought before it by member unions. The first major dispute that the Council handled was one brought before the participating unions by the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union. In January 1890, a meeting of the TLC was requested by that union, to consider the refusal of Parker and Tribe, a clothing firm in Christchurch, to adopt the log of the Christchurch union. The Council unanimously passed a motion which consented to the withdrawal of the hands in the employment of the firm. (7) Members of the Council also demonstrated their solidarity by supporting the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union, by asking their respective union members not to patronise Parker and Tribe until the dispute was satisfactorily settled.(8)

7. LT, 21 Jan 1890.

8. ibid.

In order to act more efficiently in the interests of its member unions, the TLC attempted to lay down a list of the functions of the Council. These functions viewed the TLC as an organisation for promoting the interests of labour in Canterbury; to act as a body for settling disputes between employers and unionists as well as trying to secure the best possible returns in terms of hours, wages and conditions for those involved in a particular trade union. The TLC was also prepared to become involved in the political sphere as it aimed to discuss and support and/or oppose parliamentary bills concerning the state of labour in New Zealand. (9)

9. LT, 27 Jan 1890. The full text of the functions of the TLC reads as follows:

1. To act as a Board of Conciliation and Arbitration for the settling of any difference occurring between societies or labour unions represented on the Council and the settling of any dispute between employers and employees which may be submitted to it for consideration.
2. To endeavour by a discreet and steadfast policy to secure the best possible advantage for all classes of labour, the interests of which the Council is designed to watch.
3. To discuss, decide and put into force any scheme which may be brought forward for the better guidance of trade unionism.
4. To use its influence in the support of, or in opposition to, any bills affecting labour which may be brought before the Parliament of New Zealand.
5. In the event of any trouble occurring the Council shall advise each society or labour union affiliated, to support, by every means in its power, only those employers who study the interests of their employees.

In accordance with the active political and industrial policy of the TLC, most of the new unions in Canterbury joined the Council with the aim of supporting the union of all labour in the province. The membership of the Council rose rapidly and by January 1890, a total of 1 110 working men and women in Canterbury were affiliated members. (10) In order to be able to act in a more efficient and organised manner, the TLC also appointed officers from among their ranks to deal with the administrative side of the Council's affairs. The first president of the Council was F.S. Parker, who had also been involved in the formation of the Tailors, Tailoresses and Pressers Union. The vice-presidents were J. MacIntosh and J.E. Jenkinson with F. Bidmeade appointed to the position of secretary. (11)

10. The actual societies affiliated to the Council and a detailed breakdown of their members run as follows:

Operative Bootmakers' Union - 180
 Carpenters' & Joiners' Amalgamated Society - 36
 Canterbury Typographical Association - 106
 Canterbury Bookbinders' and Paper Rulers' Union - 10
 Amalgamated Society of Tailors, Tailoresses
 and Pressers - 600
 Lyttelton Shipwrights' Union - 24
 Kaiapoi Trade & Labour Union - 150
 United Society of Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders
 - 40
 Oxford Labour Union - 70
 Trade & Agricultural Labourers' Union of Belfast - 35
 - LT, 27 Jan 1890.

11. *ibid*, 15 Feb 1890.

These men who held positions of responsibility within the TLC had been involved in the trade union movement from the early 1880's when unions were beginning to organise. They therefore brought to these positions, an understanding of the nature of the new unions and the reasons for their formation. Parker in particular, had experienced the difficulties unionists faced in gaining recognition from employers. These men were also aware of the long-term needs of the labour movement and realised that the needs of the developing trade unionists would transcend their more immediate needs of reasonable wages and conditions and would take on a more political orientation. Parker and Bidmeade were both conscientious in the manner in which they carried out their duties as appointed representatives of the Council and they were often delegated to approach employers who were involved in disputes with TLC members. (12)

The Christchurch TLC did not rely entirely on its own resources in settling the many disputes that arose. As the Council was founded on the idea that co-operation encouraged satisfactory settlement of disputes, most of the inter-provincial matters were handled co-operatively by communication between the Councils established in different areas. The solidarity that was

12. LT, 15 Feb 1890.

emerging among trade unionists was also important in influencing a change in the attitudes of employees towards society as a whole, for unionists began to see themselves as active participants in the economic structure. Many of the trade union leaders in Christchurch placed increasing importance on the role of education in directing employees to an awareness of their rights as members of the labour force.

One way in which the Canterbury TLC sought to extend the interests of trade unionism was by a series of public meetings at which individual speakers were invited to address the meeting on subjects related to trade unionism. The first record of one of these meetings was one which was held on 11 April 1890 which was addressed by John Lomas, president of the Amalgamated Miners' Association. At the meeting, Lomas, a Denniston coalminer and methodist lay-preacher, spoke of the desirability of bringing all different trade unions under one head and he advocated arbitration in order to settle disputes. He put forward the view currently held by most trade unionists, that working men and women had the right to combine in order to achieve reasonable terms of labour from their employers. He stated that,

"If employers had the right to put their capital together to form companies, working men had the same right with reference to forming unions." (13)

The same meeting was also addressed by John Millar, the secretary of the Dunedin Seamen's Union. Millar supported the idea put forward by Lomas that all unions should be federated under one head and he also advocated that unionists should take a more political stance and stand for parliament. (14)

The beginning of the moves for the representation of working men by their own class had begun. Unionists who supported the idea of combination for greater strength now moved to a more direct form of demands for working men. The move for representation in parliament brought a change in the attitude of many unionists for they had begun to realise that it was the political arena in which the decisions and legislation which affected the interests of every working man and woman were decided.

The unionists still viewed the role of trade unionism as an ameliorative one in which employers and unionists could continue to co-operate together within the existing industrial framework for the mutual benefit of both groups. However, with the development of the principles of unionism, most trade union leaders saw scope for the education of working men so that they could participate more fully in the politics of their society.

14. LT, 1 Apr 1890.

At a public meeting organised by the TLC, William Pember Reeves, the first Minister of Labour in 1892, told an audience of working men,

"We want a more refined, more educated and more humane class of labourers in place of the half barbarous labourers of the past and the half educated labourers of the present." (15)

The political orientation of the labour movement emerged slowly from a realisation among members of trade unions that there was no other way to establish a greater control over the type of labour legislation which was passed in New Zealand. However, the move towards political involvement by members of the labour movement was not the result of a sudden change, but a gradual re-orientation of their motives and goals.

Since the early 1880's there had existed in Canterbury a large number of political groups, many of whom were short-lived, but whose ideas served for a time as a political forum. One of the earliest political groups to exist in Canterbury was the St Albans and Stanmore Political Association which was established in 1884. The group met once a month in order to hear a paper presented by a guest speaker on some aspect of general interest concerning the future of New Zealand. At a meeting held on 16 October 1884, the Association

15. LT, 1 Apr 1890.

was addressed by Mr Prowse who presented a paper on "Patriotism and Defense." (16)

It can be seen from topics such as "Patriotism and Defense", that the political issues in question were general in nature and tended to appeal to those with established interests in New Zealand, who felt that the foreign policy of New Zealand was of general concern to her development as a self-sufficient state. At no time did the St Albans and Stanmore Political Association concentrate any of its energies in areas concerning the more immediate affairs of the development of the internal politics and economy of the country. The Association did not act as a catalyst in promoting political awareness, but rather concentrated its energies on areas which had a more widespread and at the same time, less direct appeal.

An organisation which was established at the same time as the St Albans and Stanmore Political Association was the New Zealand Protection Association, which although soundly based on middle class support, was more directly concerned with the existing issues in Canterbury and in finding a solution for them. In March 1885, the New Zealand Protection Association held a public meeting at which those present discussed the issue "What shall we do with our boys?" (17) The problem of the "boys",

16. LT, 1 Oct 1884.

17. ibid, 18 Mar 1885.

was in plain terms, the problem of "... furnishing suitable employment for the thousands of boys now growing up." (18) However, although the Protection Association was concerned with an issue which more immediately affected the existing social situation in Canterbury, its approach was benevolent for it saw the solution as being concerned with establishing some means of settling what middle class society saw as a social problem.

Many of the political organisations that were established during the early 1880's were organised by the more wealthy sectors of Christchurch society and were formed for the purpose of fostering political discussion concerning certain aspects of New Zealand's foreign policy. Those who were members of these organisations were more concerned with aspects of issues such as Federation and their relationship to New Zealand, rather than with the more immediate problems that New Zealand was facing in her economic crisis during the 1880's.

Those who were most directly affected by the troubled economy of the 1880's were members of the working class in New Zealand, many of whom were unable to find work for long periods of time. The failing economy

18. LT, 18 Mar 1885.

hit out at those who were most powerless to safeguard their position. Others who were in regular work during this period were also conscious of their vulnerable position and many felt that their terms of employment should be safeguarded in some way in order to preserve the rights that they had as wage labourers. Trade unions were formed in many of the factories and workshops whose workers felt that combination as a group was necessary in order to safeguard their position. However, as the depression of the 1880's deepened, it became clear to the leaders of the newly established labour movement that political involvement was necessary in order to gain for working men and women, a fair share of government legislation.

As it became clear to members of the labour movement that political involvement was necessary for most of those trying to remedy the situation of those working in industry, political groups were formed in order to organise these sentiments into an active political programme. In Canterbury the move towards political orientation was spearheaded by an organisation which was called the Peoples' Political Association, which outlined for itself, a clear programme of political intentions. The organisation was first established in August 1890, when about eight individuals met in order to consolidate a group to work for direct representation of the working man in parliament. At the inaugural meeting, a Mr Gibbs

was voted to the Chair and in his opening speech, he stated that,

"... there were many important questions at present bearing on the interests of the working class and steps should be taken for direct representation in parliament." (19)

The meeting also put forward a platform which included the aims of the Association and details of its political programme. (20) At a subsequent meeting, the platform was further revised so that the objectives of the Association were clearly laid down. (21)

19. LT, 25 Aug 1890.

20. *ibid.* The proposed programme of the Peoples' Political Association:

1. Progressive Land and Income Tax.
2. No sale of Crown lands.
3. General resolutions relating to land.
4. A referendum when the two houses disagreed on important measures.
5. Eight hours to be a legal days work.
6. Tax on absentee landlords.
7. Uniform school books for the colony published by the government.

21. *ibid.* The revised platform read as follows:

1. Immediate stoppage of the sale of Crown lands.
2. Cancellation of existing provisions for conversion of perpetual lease holdings into freehold.
3. Legislation giving the state power to compulsorily re-possess freeholds at a fair valuation for settlement and sub-division.
4. Seamens' representation.
5. Legislation for an eight hour day.
6. Social tax on absentee landlords.
7. Uniform school books for the colony published by the government.
8. Radical reform in the management of the railways of the colony.
9. Securing the rights of labour.
10. To put progressive taxation on land held for speculation purposes.

The Association laid open its membership to all who were willing to pledge themselves to the platform.

Although the Peoples' Political Association established a political platform, it undertook very few actual activities, and its main aim continued to be the establishment of small political groups which concentrated mainly on discussion and on motivating more labour supporters to consider the coming election and vote for representation by politicians who would consider the interests of labouring men and women in Canterbury. The 1890 election can be seen as a focal point for the Association, for it gave the group impetus and purpose in orientating its political platform. It was also the first time in Canterbury, that labour groups had united together in order to come to some understanding of the proposed election policy of candidates in order to gain better representation of their interests in parliament.

The Peoples' Political Association was one of the first groups in Canterbury which had direct political appeal for working people, and which endeavoured to establish, for its members, an environment in which they could come to an understanding of parliamentary candidates' policies and intentions. Associations sprung up all around Christchurch with most of them being based in suburban areas where there was a nucleus of labour support. In September 1890, an Association was formed in Linwood under the leadership of

J. Anderson (22). Other areas to form Peoples' Political Associations were Addington (23) and Kaiapoi. (24)

Although the Peoples' Political Association was one of the most influential groups that fostered working class political awareness during the 1880's, it was not the only group to do so. In 1885, the Lyttelton Times reported the establishment of the Sydenham and Addington Working Mens' Parliamentary Debating Society which was formed with the object of

"... fostering among the working classes of the Addington and Sydenham districts a closer and more familiar knowledge of the subjects connected with parliament and municipal Council which may be considered to affect their welfare." (25)

However, although the society was formed in order to foster greater knowledge among working men as to the workings of parliament and the local Council, the society itself charged a fee of 2s 6d for membership which limited the numbers who were prepared to join.

In 1886, another organisation seeking the support of the labouring classes was established in Christchurch. The organisation was called the Labour League, and its

22. LT, 26 Sept 1890.

23. ibid.

24. ibid, 13 Oct 1890.

25. ibid, 26 Jan 1885.

aims were publicised as the

"1. Moral, social and political advancement of the members, all classes of labour being included; the establishment of a labour bureau, whereof reliable information relative to all parts of the colony may be obtained; the securing of special representation in parliament and restriction of immigration under existing circumstances of scarcity of employment." (26)

The aims of the Labour League were largely orientated towards offering solutions to the depression. The problem of immigration in times of depression was one that came to the fore in the 1880's and many who faced long periods without employment were actively against any open immigration. The idea of a labour bureau which was also proposed by the Labour League was a practical and effective method of distributing labour throughout the colony in order to maintain reasonable levels of employment throughout the colony. The idea of the Labour League was in fact, brought to fruition in 1890 when a labour bureau was set up in Christchurch for the purpose of providing information for all parts of the colony regarding the employment situation.

It can be seen that the 1880's provided a period of questioning for many people who had not previously been aware of the political climate. The environment

26. LT, 9 Sept 1886.

of the depression provided for many, an opportunity for questioning the existing state of government and forced many to attempt to seek solutions in alternative power ideologies. Many conflicting ideas were put forward as to the reasons for the depression and as many conflicting solutions were offered for the country's economic difficulties. The problems that many workers faced in finding wages, or indeed employment to keep their family from destitution meant that they were more concerned with the state of the economy and were becoming more aware of the effect of various economic policies.

The growth of trade unionism was a side effect of this awareness for workers became concerned to join trade unions in order to protect their rights and to feel the benefits of consolidation. However, the development of the depression during the 1880's made many employees feel the worst effects of the economy and led them to more militant action. Although they had initially come together in the interests of co-operation between employers and employees, the labour groups now felt that a more antagonistic attitude was necessary in order to maintain their position within the economic structure. The move towards political orientation came slowly for most members of the labour movement, but it was a concerted move born of the need of those employed in the failing factories and workshops for an avenue for the expression of their discontent. In

Christchurch, the TLC initiated moves for political representation by organising a number of its members into a parliamentary committee. (27) The committee at first concerned itself mainly with investigating the proposed parliamentary additions to existing laws, thereby acting as an overseer to the interests of labour in Canterbury. The parliamentary committee also advised the establishment of a Labour journal in each centre in order to ensure that all members of participating unions were aware of the activities of the consolidated organisations acting on their behalf. (28)

The regional organisation of the trade union movement towards more efficient political representation was, during the early 1880's, matched by union organisation on a large scale, inter-cooperative level initiated by the Maritime Council. The nucleus of the Council was organised in Wellington in order to co-ordinate the growing forces of the maritime unions and to consolidate movements made by these unions towards direct bargaining with employers. The first half-yearly conference of the newly formed Council was held in May 1880 and was attended by representatives from the Wharf Labourers Union, the Dunedin Seamens' Union, the West Coast Miners' Union and the Miners' Association. At

27. LT, 16 Jun 1890.

28. ibid, 7 Jul 1890.

the same meeting, applications for affiliation were received from the Federated Wharf Carters' Union, the Storemens' Union, the Mercantile Marine Officers' Association and the Cooks and Stewards Union.

Before the Conference concluded, the Council organised a deputation to go to the Premier for discussions over the grievances of the Seamen and Miners, the Eight Hours bill and the alleged "truck" system on the midland railway. The Council received much publicity as reports of this meeting were widely circulated and as a result the Council was immediately seen as an organisation that was representing the interests of working men and women. However, the public awareness of the activities of the Maritime Council also alerted groups of employers throughout the country who began to meet together and in some areas formed employers associations in order to safeguard their position against what they saw as the encroachment of trade unionism.

In Canterbury, an Employers Association was organised by the leading manufacturers. Both employers and unionists were now aware that the whole situation in the industrial sphere was changing from a loosely organised inter-cooperation between employers and unionists towards organised combination on both sides so that each group could achieve its demands by negotiations with the other.

The Canterbury TLC had by this time, consolidated

its organisation so that it had become a group which could extend its horizons further than disputes in the Canterbury region. As a TLC had also been set up in Wellington, inter-Council co-operation began to develop which was demonstrated by unions working together and sharing experience. In April 1890, Mr Allan, a representative from the Wellington TLC, visited Christchurch in order to attend a local TLC meeting, and also to investigate conditions of work in the Canterbury region. (29)

The establishment of the Maritime Council provided further opportunities for inter-union co-operation over a wider area. Many of the established unions had been organised in order to safeguard the interests of workers in a particular trade or industry and little attention was placed on inter-cooperation with workers in different areas. The establishment of Trades and Labour Councils and the subsequent formation of the Maritime Council provided more scope for inter-cooperation based on a greater understanding of the needs of a wide range of industrial workers. The TLC in Canterbury decided that in order to facilitate greater inter-union it would affiliate with the Wellington based Maritime Council in order to further extend the influence of the Council in areas concerning labour

29. LT, 14 Apr 1890.

legislation. In May 1890, the TLC in Canterbury applied to the Maritime Council for affiliation as a full member. (30) This move by the TLC was of great importance for unionists in Canterbury as it meant that the TLC was now linked to a national consolidation of working men and that the solidarity they professed would now be extended to unionists in all major transport unions.

The Canterbury TLC had hitherto been involved in industrial disputes at only regional level in which all parties were familiar with the grievances of each group and at which bargaining took place on an amicable level. The leaders of the TLC and the unions involved however, all professed to be prepared to take militant industrial action in order to achieve an equitable solution to any industrial conflict that could not be resolved by collective bargaining.

The first strike that was to have an effect on the militant attitudes of the TLC was the conflict between the Typographical Association and the Christchurch firm of Whitcombe and Tombs. In March 1890, the Typographical Association requested that the firm of Whitcombe and Tombs in Christchurch submit to three union demands, these being -

1. Recognition of the Union.
2. Adoption of the Union scale of wages.
3. To cease employing girls as compositors.

30. LT, 12 May 1890.

All these conditions were refused by Mr Whitcombe who was acting as a representative of the employers interests. The Typographical Association then called out its members and efforts were made with the support of the Canterbury TLC, to boycott all goods which were produced by the company.

Howefer, after prolonged negotiations with the company, the Typographical Association received little satisfaction in reply to its demands and the Association then decided to take the matter to the Maritime Council, in order to reach a settlement. The executive of the Typographical Association put to the Council the details of the conflict between the two parties, which the Council then forwarded to the firm of Whitcombe and Tombs. (31) In reply, the firm acknowledged some of the complaints of the unionists but still refused to come to conciliation. (32)

The conflict continued to be drawn out as the firm was unwilling to come to a settlement and the issue was such that it aroused public attention, and a meeting was held to consider the problem. A public meeting of about 3 000 turned out to support the case of the Typographical Association. This first large scale meeting of labour supporters to be held in Christchurch was charied by Parker, and was loud in its indignation

31. LT, 15 Jul 1890.

32. ibid, 16 Jul 1890.

concerning the lack of power that the labour organisations held when endeavouring to establish reasonable terms of employment. (33) It unanimously passed two resolutions which indicated the strength of public support for the Typographical Association.

The first motion of the meeting was moved by the Chairman, Frank Parker, who proposed,

"That this meeting recognises the present struggle as evidence of the apparent combination of capital to crush the labour organisations of this colony and urges that no compromise be accepted which fails to acknowledge the equal rights of the two interests." (34)

The fact that this conflict was considered by the labour interests in terms of a consolidation of labour against capital implied that the labour groups were now aware of the power of consolidated capital. The large attendance at the public meeting concerning the Typographical Association illustrated the concern that the labour groups now felt in industrial groups and their awareness of the necessity to present a united labour front to employers.

The meeting also unanimously passed a second motion which was moved by P. Brown, President of the

33. LT, 8 Aug 1890.

34. ibid.

Federated Wharf Labourers Union of New Zealand. Brown moved,

"That this meeting expresses its indignation at the unworthy tactics adopted by Messrs Whitcombe and Tombs in dealing with labour interests; and pledges itself to resist sweating in whatever form it may be practised, whether by the firm in question or others." (35)

However, Whitcombe and Tombs continued to hold out against a settlement as attempts by the union to organise public boycotts of goods produced by the company gradually faded from the arena of public attention. The rousing support that the Typographical Association received at the public meeting failed to carry through as the conflict became prolonged and public attention was drawn elsewhere.

The Whitcombe and Tombs dispute was also important for the developing labour movement because it was the first case in which labour solidarity was called upon to demonstrate its strength against the united pressure of the employers. It was also the first instance in which the labour organisations which had so recently been set up in order to foster cohesiveness of action on behalf of the trade unions, were called into action. The Maritime Council which was involved in the dispute at the request of the Typographical Association, demonstrated an unwillingness to involve all the unions

under its sphere of influence in active protest. The Council initially gave public support to the union in face of repeated refusals by Whitcombe to accept the union's terms. However, as the strike continued to be drawn out the Council was not prepared to organise an "all out" strike in support of the Typographical Association.

The issue therefore raised the problem of the practicability of and extent of a general strike, by all union members of the Maritime Council. In the issue that the Typographical Association faced, the Maritime Council failed to co-ordinate all unions in support of the Association. The preparedness of the railway commissioners for a strike by the railway workers deterred the Council from calling an open strike as it was aware that the railway men would refuse thereby breaking any union solidarity that existed.

Thus, the first large scale confrontation between employers and unionists was avoided largely because the labour organisations were unprepared for united confrontation with employers, and were unprepared to strike without the certainty of solidarity from all participating unionists.

At the same time as the Maritime Council took over the problems of the Typographical Association, the TLC in Canterbury continued to diversify its interests and to apply its power to many areas in which it

considered inequalities of labour existed. The Council took steps to institute a "fair traders" list which published the names of those organisation which agreed with the policies of the Council and which supported the employment of union members. An editorial in the Lyttelton Times praised the action of the Council in setting up a fair traders list. Reeves, the editor of the paper, felt that

"The action of the Council in compiling such a list is a distinct progressive step towards advocating their expressed policy of supporting only those traders who fall into line with the labour organisations." (36)

The Council's earlier plans of setting up a newspaper which would reflect the views of the labour groups in Christchurch was also brought to fruition in 1890 when the Council was approached by a group of labour supporters who had set up a newspaper which they called the "Trades and Labour Chronicle." The Management of the Chronicle, Messrs A. Sellars and Co., approached the Council for official recognition of the newspaper as the agency of the labour movement in Canterbury. In July 1890, the Council unanimously passed the motion which stated "That the Trades and Labour chronicle be the official newspaper of this Council provided it is carried on in the interests of labour organisations." (37)

36. LT, 18 Jul 1890.

37. ibid, 21 Jul 1890.

The diversification of activities that the TLC encouraged, were in many respects submerged, towards the end of 1890, by the activities of working men during the election of 1890. As the election neared, activity became feverish as labour groups endeavoured to consolidate their interests around a cohesive line of action. Impetus to the election activities was given by publicly naming the candidates that they would support in the forthcoming election. These men were W.B. Perceval, W.P. Reeves, R.M. Taylor and W.W. Tanner.

The public nomination of candidates helped create a feeling of solidarity among unionists. Moreover, the close links between the unionists and their candidates introduced a new element into politics. Previously, parliamentary candidates regarded themselves as independent community representatives. The embryonic labour organisation introduced the concept of party, however prematurely, into politics. It also signalled the projection of class from the industrial sphere into the political one.

The TLC also published a political manifesto which urged all affiliated groups to endeavour to take an active part in the election. An extract from the manifesto read,

"Wake up, working men, and by united effort free yourselves from the monster, and then crush it out of existence. So long as the conservative rule New Zealand, so long will the working men be sat upon." (38)

The rousing rhetoric of such a statement helped awaken public awareness and interest in the election.

As the election date neared, more support was openly given for the idea of working men's representation. At union meetings the merits of the respective candidates were openly discussed. Union executives issued public statements lending support to a particular candidate. In October, at a meeting of the Amalgamated Labour Union, the members decided to be guided in political matters by the TLC and to support Tanner's candidature for the Heathcote electorate. (39) Other unions such as the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants issued public statements endorsing a particular candidate or candidates.

Expressions of solidarity were necessary to boost the confidence of candidates whose political experience was, at best, limited to trade union meetings. They benefited also from the support of experienced politicians. Labour was too weak to influence politics without aligning themselves with current representatives, and Reeves was indeed the powerful hand behind the co-ordination of a genuine Lib-Lab campaign in Christchurch.

Perhaps the critical factor in the moulding of the Lib-Lab campaign was the disastrous defeat inflicted upon unionists in the Maritime Strike. Industrial defeat hastened Labour's entry into politics. The Maritime Strike had not ended in Christchurch with a

39. LT, 20 Oct 1890.

beaten trade union movement that was unable to demonstrate any cohesiveness. The strike did, however, change the orientation of the whole movement so that unionists desperately needed political means of achieving the industrial reforms so urgently required.

The enthusiasm that many workers demonstrated for representatives was heightened by the popular rhetoric which characterised much of the electioneering. W.P. Reeves in a Lyttelton Times editorial, urged electors to

"Vote therefore for men who have something better to offer than a policy of political rest and who ask for your support on higher grounds than the possession of wealth or the plentiful supply of cheap courtesy and cheap beer." (40)

The election resulted in a victory for the Liberal alliance. Reeves, Taylor and Perceval were elected as representatives for Christchurch Central while Tanner was successful in the Heathcote electorate. For the first time unionists had elected men who were directly concerned with the representation of the workers and who had themselves had some experience of association with working class interests.

The election of 1890 in Christchurch was a triumph of the consolidation of working class interest in the

political sphere. The unionists had been defeated by the alliance of employers during the Maritime Strike, but the lessons of experience were well learnt. Working class interest in the 1890 election forced the candidates to align themselves with their political policies and support was openly given by unionists to the candidates whom they thought represented the interests of the working class. The Lib-Lab alliance was successful in the election of 1890 but the events of the following year were to test the strength of the tenuous relationship.

CHAPTER 6

LABOUR AND POLITICS 1890-1893

Labour's entry into politics in 1890 was in many respects, decisive in projecting Ballance into power. Urban electors rushed to the polling booths in December 1890. Labour's success had, however, to be translated into influences within the new government. For the most part, the reforms initiated by the Liberals satisfied Labour's requirements. Indeed, in the period 1890 to 1893 Labour aspirations became almost inseparable from those of the Liberals. In short, Labour became submerged in the developing Liberal consensus. The labour identity which developed during 1890 was also fragmented by the emergence of the liquor question, and the movement for women's suffrage. Yet for all the fragmentation and alienation, the class divisions which emerged in 1890 remained just beneath the surface.

The heightened political interest of 1890 could not, however, be long sustained. Labour's political organisation was too weak, its political candidates held differing views on many policies. Moreover, there was the ever present problem of survival in the continuing depression to face. Nonetheless, Liberal supporters with whom Labour was aligned sought to establish Liberal Associations throughout Canterbury. The Lyttelton Times was in full support of this proposal and in an editorial

cautioned the Liberals against resting on their existing successes. The editorial also suggested that Liberal Associations which had been established prior to the election should be enlarged as local electoral support organisations. (1)

The Liberal Associations which were established in Canterbury during the early 1890's were of crucial importance in keeping the issues in parliament before the people and also of maintaining a nucleus of Liberal support. The Associations were also directly supported by the local members of parliament themselves, who regularly attended the meetings and who were frequently called upon to address groups on a variety of topics that were currently the subject of parliamentary debate. At an address to the Halswell Liberal Association, Tanner stated,

"The aims of the Association was by its meetings and lectures to educate the people to a better knowledge of the politics of the country." (2)

Tanner clearly did not view the Associations as having a modern day political role of initiating legislative ideas and selecting parliamentary candidates, but rather he sought to make the electors aware of the legislation that was being enacted on their behalf.

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1. LT, 24 Dec 1890.
 2. ibid, 7 Jan 1893.

The Liberal Associations were not the only organisations that were established in order to maintain Liberal support and to keep electors aware of current issues. In January 1891, a meeting was held in order to organise a Radical Association whose aim it was to consolidate Liberal support. The platform of the Association included the desire to provide facilities for discussion and lectures; to foster an interest in all public and local government bodies and to assist electors to fulfill their duty as members of the New Zealand democracy. (3)

The activities of both the Liberal and the Radical Associations were, in the main, limited to formalised meetings which featured speakers on varying subjects. In March 1891, the Radical Association was addressed by the Reverend J. O'Bryen-Hoare on the subject of "Land Nationalisation". (4) Discussions such as these broadened the interests of those who attended the meetings and the reports of the gatherings, which were usually published in the Lyttelton Times, kept alive awareness of the public to issues which were prominent at the time.

Much of the activity following the election was based on the demand for land. It was discussed at union meetings, at meetings of Liberal supporters and at

3. LT, 2 Jan 1891.

4. ibid, 6 Mar 1891.

meetings that were especially organised to gain support for land settlement proposals. (5) The position of the Liberals soon became clear. Ballance was in favour of the idea of village settlements and sought to promote these in country areas throughout New Zealand. In a speech to the Liberal Association in Christchurch, Ballance expressed his views,

"My own idea is this; that people should have an opportunity of obtaining a small piece of land, which was able to put a house upon it, and had the opportunity of locating his family there, and could go round the district in search of work." (6)

The difficulty in Canterbury was that there was very little land that was not suitable for the establishment of village settlements. Few of the landless were prepared to move to the North Island in order to find land on which to settle.

The Liberal Minister for Lands was John McKenzie, a tough Scot. It was he who had to give substance to Liberal election promises to burst up the big estates. Ultimately, he came up with a combination of tenures. Firstly, there was the sale of limited areas of land for cash, secondly the sale of land by deferred payment, and finally, the most popular method of perpetual lease. This method of settlement was strongly favoured by McKenzie himself and came to be highly sought after by many of the landless in all areas.

6. LT, 19 Mar 1891.

McKenzie was tireless in his attempts to try and ensure that more land was available in small sections at prices within the reach of the ordinary settler. To an audience of Liberal supporters in Palmerston North, McKenzie said,

"If the present government is able to inaugurate a policy which will secure the distribution of unsold Crown lands amongst the people and prevent the further aggregation of large estates, it will leave an ineffacable mark on the history of the colony." (7)

The moves to satisfy the demand for land were an issue around which the Liberals pinpointed much of their legislation in 1891 and 1892 as it was necessary for them to retain public support by appeasing this demand for land for settlement.

The establishment of the Liberal government in power and the consolidation of its position by legislation which was concerned with meeting the demands of the working men caused a backlash from the established interests in Christchurch who were concerned with protecting their own rights. The election of the Liberals had for the first time in New Zealand politics, caused a polarisation of political views as the government was now divided on points of principle rather than on issues of regional origin. The support of the working man and woman for the Liberal government helped mobilise the

7. LT, 6 Jun 1891.

Conservative forces which began to organise on their own behalf in order to ensure their own solidarity of interests.

This movement of conservative reaction was led in Canterbury by the Employer's Association which was established during the Maritime Strike. Following the settlement of the strike, the Association continued to meet in order, it claimed, to improve relations with employees. In May 1891, G. Booth, the Association's Chairman, was moved to assert "... that he thought that a better feeling was growing among employers and the men." (8)

Although the Association sought to continue to preserve friendly relations with their employees, it did not hesitate to speak out on labour issues when it felt that the interests of employers were being threatened. The Association established within itself, a parliamentary Committee in order to consider any issues which would sharply affect the concerns of its members. In June 1891 the Committee responded to factory legislation before parliament. It said that the legislation would "... prove vexatious and harassing, and would restrict and cripple manufacturing trades so seriously as to contract the operations of those employing labour." (9)

8. LT, 1 May 1891.

9. ibid, 11 Jun 1891.

The Association did, however, make attempts to work in harmony with the existing labour groups in Canterbury in order to establish a working relationship. The continuity of the meetings of employers meant that they were anxious to preserve their 'rights and privileges'. Their spokesmen advocated co-operation between Labour and Capital so as to achieve a smooth working of the industrial system. The Chairman of the Association stated at a meeting,

"The time seemed to have arrived when advances must be made by the employers, if it was hoped to supersede the wasteful and barbarous warfare of the strike and the lockout." (10)

Precisely what Booth meant by 'advances' is not clear. Some unionists may well have read into his statement the implication that progress might be at their expense.

The boot trade which had throughout the 1880's proved to be a constant source of industrial irritation, provided the first testing point for unionists and their employers. In July 1891, a strike broke out in Auckland where relations between bootmakers and their employers had long been most strained. Christchurch labour was quick to reassure employers that they had no intention of striking. The Canterbury TLC called for a meeting with the Employers' Association in order to resolve any

10. LT, 2 Nov 1891.

difficulty that the Auckland strike might make to the boot trade in Christchurch. (11) Both parties were now clearly aware of the potential disruption that a strike could cause. The manufacturers' profits would suffer and the livelihood of the workers would be endangered. Both parties were now clearly aware of the necessity for organisation in order to clarify the demands and put forward the interests of those whom they represented.

The organisation of employers in Canterbury took on a more complex perspective in 1891, when the labour bills which were put forward by the Liberal government aroused considerable debate. The bills which most concerned the Employers' Association were the Shop Hours bill and the Land and Income Tax bill, both of which represented legislation with a view to re-aligning, however mildly, the distribution of land and wealth within the country. The parliamentary section of the Employers' Association investigated the supposed effects of bills such as these and prepared recommendations for parliament setting out their view of the proposed new legislation.

The increased involvement of employers as an organised pressure group put unionists very much on the defensive. Partly as a consequence of this, relations

11. LT, 18 Jul 1891.

between the two groups in Christchurch at least, improved. Increased communication between them smoothed the way for the peaceful settlement of many disputes. Booth, the Association's Chairman, played a crucial role in the development of closer and more amicable relations between organised labour and their employers. His skill was not sufficient however, to prevent divisions arising within the ranks of the employers. Some employers came to resent the growing "political" nature of the Association's activities. A meeting of the executive in February 1882 decided not to incorporate any political objectives in the aims of the Association. They supported instead, a resolution which stated,

"... the Association was not in any sense a political Association, but was formed with a view to the adjustment of differences between the employers and the employed." (12)

This renunciation of overt political involvement may have been prompted by a desire to avoid political division within the Association's ranks.

One aspect of Liberal legislation which greatly affected the future of the trade union movement and the harmonious conduct of industrial relations was the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act which was passed in 1892. The Act was largely the result of the

12. LT, 29 Feb 1892.

work of Reeves who sought to establish, on equitable lines, a more just method of settlement of labour disputes.

There was however, much hostility among employers over the proposals to institute an Act which would regulate the settlement of disputes by outside arbitration. The Employers' Association in Canterbury spoke out concerning the proposed legislation,

"... this Association protests against compulsory arbitration, though in favour of arbitration as long as it is optional." (13)

Despite open opposition from employers and conservative sectors, the trade unionists who had been elected to parliament were concerned to establish a recognised method for the settlement of industrial disputes. They had been active in their own trade unions during the depression and they were concerned about the effect of employer consolidation on industrial relations. As the defeat of unionism in the Maritime Strike had precipitated action towards political representation for working men, unionists were now also prepared to look to the state to regulate industrial relations. Tanner, the member of parliament for Heathcote, and member of the Bookbinders' Union, told a meeting of unionists,

13. LT, 9 Jul 1893.

"... in future strikes would be avoided, and that increased political power possessed by the people would give them the power they needed to redress their wrongs." (14)

The arbitration bill as proposed by Reeves, was aimed at facilitating the settlement of industrial disputes. (15) The bill was intended to facilitate the settlement of disputes throughout the country by means of a number of Boards of Conciliation. If the dispute was not satisfactorily settled by the Board, either party could appeal to an arbitration court. The passage of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act in 1894 was welcomed by trade unionists and urban employers for their part, were too weak to prevent the passage of the bill.

While there was no chance of an employers' front being established in the 1890's, between rural and urban property there were signs of such a development. Country interests showed themselves to be rather less worried about political involvement than their urban counterparts. In 1892 they established the New Zealand Farmers and Country Settlers' League in order to

"... watch the interests of the country districts in whatever way, either politically or otherwise, they may be threatened." (16)

14. LT, 12 Apr 1892.

15. Sinclair. William Pember Reeves. p 206.

16. LT, 25 May 1892.

The League attracted a nucleus of about 100 members and from its inaugural meeting, issued a statement that the League was to be apolitical in all its activities. However, the platform of the League which was presented at the second meeting, was in many respects, a statement of the concern of the landed interests in Canterbury and a political movement on their behalf to try and motivate concern among those in similar situations. (17) The platform as circulated at the meeting, was not only political in orientation, but was also based entirely on opposition to the policies that were being implemented by the Liberal government. The Lyttelton Times reacted to the publicly expressed views of the League in an editorial which stated,

"... our conservative friends would display more wisdom if they assisted in shaping the details instead of fretting themselves into a fury over the great social and political movements which they are too selfish and too prejudiced to comprehend." (18)

17. LT, 4 Jul 1892. The platform of the New Zealand Farmers and Country Settlers League :

1. That this League will oppose all class legislation as violation of the rights of all citizens.
2. Oppose all attempts to place heavier state burdens upon the owners of land than on the owners of other kinds of property.
3. That this League views with just alarm, the provisions of the "Land and Income Tax Act", which taxes the farmers and country settlers more heavily than town dwellers and money lenders with equal means to pay taxes.

18. *ibid*, 15 Jul 1892.

The paper also pointed out the contradiction between the stated intentions of the League to avoid political involvement and its platform which was based on conservative reactions to the Liberal legislation concerning land. (19)

The League continued to meet throughout 1892 in order to make public its concerns regarding the land policies that were being established. Its membership remained small and efforts to establish the League in small towns in Canterbury were fruitless as lack of interest in the League's policies were noticeable among small farmers who were won over by Liberal promises to burst up the big estates. It was the small farmer in temporary difficulties who stood to benefit most from the Liberal land legislation and they were not willing to support their more wealthy rural neighbours.

The attempts of such ultra conservative groups as the New Zealand Farmers' and Country Settlers' League to oppose the Liberal legislation had the effect of tying Labour parliamentary members even more securely to the Lib-Lab alliance. They saw themselves as part of a democratic movement which reactionary interests were attempting to obstruct. Accordingly, in parliament,

19. LT, 15 Jul 1892.

they supported all Liberal legislation and took their lead from William Pember Reeves. While establishing themselves in parliament, Christchurch Labour members also continued to participate in union affairs. Some held office in unions while others attended union meetings which they felt concerned them. In 1892, for example, Sandford, the M.P. for Christchurch, was a member of the Typographical Association and was also their Trades and Labour Council delegate. (20)

The involvement of these parliamentarians at this trade level meant that they remained in touch with those they represented in parliament. They were thus open and accessible to representations made on behalf of labour groups in Canterbury. The aim of unionists in moving to the ballot-box to seek redress for their rights or members of the work force, had been fulfilled to some extent. They now had representatives in parliament who were aware of their position and whose similar background of experience led them to endeavour to ensure that their aims were achieved. The support of the Liberal Associations ensured a steady flow of information between the two sides and provided a background of support for the Liberals who were at times, uncertain of the public support of their policies. In reporting a meeting of the Phillipstown and Sydenham Liberal Association, the Lyttelton Times read,

20. LT, 19 Jan 1892.

"... the strongly worded resolutions of confidence in the government, which were passed with enthusiasm at both meetings, prove that the Ministry has not in any degree estranged the sympathy of its supporters." (21)

The strengthening of the Lib-Lab alliance which occurred throughout 1891 and 1892 was almost shattered by personal animosities within the Liberal field. Ballance's death produced a brief power struggle from which R.J. Seddon, the rough West Coaster, emerged as party leader. Many Liberals, including Reeves and the Canterbury labour leaders, would have preferred Stout. The latter, however, was not in the House and before a convenient by-election could be arranged, Seddon was firmly established. Stout, a somewhat vindictive and ambitious man, set about for a means of toppling Seddon. His chosen weapon was the temperance issue. The liquor question was to complicate politics in 1893 with electors costing their votes "wet or dry".

Christchurch became the most active prohibitionist centre and the liquor question provided much trouble for Reeves who had made a pledge to his electors in 1890 not to support any alterations in the licencing laws. With Stout leading the prohibitionists in parliament, the issue divided the Labour members and caused the electors

21. LT, 14 Jun 1892.

to become more confused over the policies of the Lib-Lab alliance.

A further complication was the question of women's franchise. Votes for women had become an important part of the policy of Sir John Hall who was concerned the women's vote would be a constructive one as well as providing a power for moral good within the country. Support for women's franchise was strong in Canterbury where activities were led by Kate Sheppard, a prominent member of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement (WCTU). "A Congregationalist, a temperance advocate of moderate views, and a progressive thinker on humanitarian issues." (22) Mrs Sheppard organised a number of franchise branches within the WCTU and ensured that each of them had a leader in order to motivate the women towards greater political interest.

Many of the newly elected Liberals were also in favour of women's franchise although it did not become a major political issue. Votes for women did not arouse political polarity within parliament which may have been due to the fact that the Liberals were still finding their way towards the establishment of a programme that would ensure that they fairly represented the views of the working men on whom their electoral support was based.

22. Grimshaw. Women's Suffrage in New Zealand. p 37.

The grounds for support of the principle of women's franchise was based on moral rather than political ideals of equality, for at the local level much support was gained from the members of the prohibition movement who sought to ensure that their view would be more likely to gain support by the votes of women. Public support was also given to the supposed moral power that women voters would exercise. Saunders, the M.P. for Selwyn, told a women's franchise meeting in Rangiora,

"Women's suffrage would do much towards the banishment of all that was mean and dishonourable in election times..." (23)

However, the real importance and potential power of women's franchise was touched on in an editorial in the Lyttelton Times which read,

"Give our girls data and teach them to argue logically. Tell them their less fortunate sisters are sweating over buttonholes; show them living facts make dying girls and then work their minds up from facts to theories." (24)

Much of the support for the franchise movement originated among middle class women who were theoretically in favour of the franchise but who were unaware of the reality of life for their "sisters" among the industrial workers.

23. LT, 7 Nov 1892.

24. ibid, 9 Aug 1893.

The passing of the bill that gave votes to women moved almost quietly through the final stages in the Upper House and was received with widespread acclaim as a progressive move that would enable women to take their rightful share of involvement in political life. Almost immediately, the Liberal Associations in Canterbury formed branches to organise women electors and to make provision for women to register as voters in the forthcoming election. The Lyttelton Times, which had been an ardent advocate of votes for women, published a poem in honour of the new legislation, which contained the following lines,

"The Legislative Councillors were scattered
in dismay,
When, after many a battle stout, the Bill
had won the day;
Six sessions had debated it, the seventh
saw it passed -
Six times the hands had thrown it out -
now it was law at last.
There was doubt and dread in Christchurch
as the news came flashing through,
The husbands lowered their clubs - they
knew not what to do." (25)

Women electors flocked to enrol in large numbers but the election of 1893 proved to be complex in the issues it raised and the divisions it created. Although the Liberals had survived a term of office, they were still unco-ordinated as a disciplined parliamentary

25. LT, 13 Sept 1893.

party and the prohibition issue served only to divide them further. The issues of land and labour still remained - the labour movement was as yet unsatisfied with the Liberal legislation and in the country areas, the graduated land tax and the breaking of the large estates made electors wary of the Lib-Lab alliance.

By 1893 then, the Christchurch labour movement was more rather than less divided. The heightened awareness of 1890 had disintegrated. Union organisation had not recovered fully from the defeat of the Maritime Strike and union leaders placed their faith in Reeves and the Liberals and supported the notion of conciliation and arbitration. Politically, most unionists remained loyal to the Liberals but the liquor question cut across class and party interests. Labour politicians had been submerged in the Liberal consensus. The scars of recent conflict were, however, still evident. Employers' organisations, both rural and urban, had been called into existence. Unions were about to receive legal recognition but only the future would show whether or not the Liberals' attempt to straddle the diverging sectional interests could be long sustained.

CONCLUSION

The 1880's were a period of development and change for the labour movement in New Zealand. The impact of the depression of the 1880's and the early 1890's did not fall evenly throughout the country. It may well be that Auckland, which developed manufacturing so rapidly in the late 1870's and 1880's, suffered most. The southern cities, Dunedin and Christchurch, nonetheless witnessed severe contraction of employment opportunities. The "working paradise" had clearly failed.

The depression was to have lasting effects on the nature of the emerging trade union movement. In Christchurch, as in the other main centres, the manufacturing industries reacted to lessened demand by cutting costs. Wages were the obvious target but attempts to effect economics also brought about a deterioration in working conditions. The main manufacturing companies in Canterbury were the Kaiapoi Woollen Manufacturing Company and the clothing workshops of J. Ballantyne and Co. and W. Strange and Co.. Only recently established industries, they had been built up, like much of the colonial clothing industry, with female and child labour.

The depression led to particularly harsh conditions and the public of Canterbury were shocked by reports of sweated labour in many of the newly established factories

and workshops. Exposed by the Reverend R. Waddell, in his sermon in 1888 entitled "The sin of Cheapness", the conditions in many Dunedin factories were such that men, women and children were forced to labour long hours in order to make enough money to live on. The investigations of the Sweating Commission in 1890, further revealed the extent of the problem and evidence given by employees in Christchurch factories showed that the problems of long hours and low wages were widespread.

The depression conditions provided an environment for the acceptance of new ideas and political theories among those who were at the mercy of employer cut-backs. The general socialist publications of Henry George and Edward Bellamy were widely circulated and their theories made sense to working class men and women who were suffering the direct effects of the depression. Bellamy's novel, Looking Backward, concerning an idealist socialist society, was particularly popular as it provided an alternative to the dreary existence that many of the working class suffered through unemployment or sweated factory conditions.

The depression conditions also affected the development of trade unionism. Trade unions had taken root only slowly in the cities, although their growth had intensified in the late 1880's. In Christchurch, as elsewhere, the established trade unions consisted of small enclaves of skilled craftsmen bound together to reserve skills and regulate apprenticeships so as to

maintain a reasonable flow of work and to defend their interests. The membership of the unions was low and did not include all the men working in the trade. The depression did, however, produce an attempt to extend union cover as a means of preserving wage rates. Craftsmen who found their jobs in jeopardy became enthusiastic to join a union. Organisation was thus seen as a primarily defensive step.

As well as existing trade unions consolidating, new unions were formed. The craft unions of tailors and tailoresses, carpenters and joiners, butchers, bootmakers and bookbinders, were extended as these unions enlarged their membership and took in more of those working in the trade. Trade unionism was also extended to unskilled members of the work force. Organisations were formed among the coalminers, seamen and watersiders, and these unions became militant as they sought to preserve a reasonable standard of living among their members.

The newly organised unionists were co-ordinated from 1889 onwards by the establishment of a Trades and Labour Council which met regularly to consider the grievances of member unions. The executives of the Council often took steps to present the grievances of the unionists to the employers concerned. They sought compromise rather than conflict. The success of the TLC in settling disputes between trade unionists and

employers achieved greater enthusiasm among unionists and an awareness of the power of the combination of labour interests.

However, the unions were not always successful in gaining employer recognition of their grievances. One unsuccessful resolution of union demands was demonstrated in the issue in which the printing firm of Whitcombe and Tombs failed to accept union labour within its workshop. The principle of "union labour", was one which the developing trade unions strongly adhered to as they were becoming aware of the importance of union solidarity in order to achieve their demands. In the dispute with Whitcombe and Tombs, the members of the Bookbinders' Union and the Typographical Association went on strike to support their principle of union labour. However, the management of the firm refused to capitulate and the issue was unresolved.

Almost before the conclusion of the dispute with Whitcombe and Tombs, trade unions throughout New Zealand were caught up in a dispute which originated among the maritime unions in Australia. At first confident of their newly found strength, unions throughout New Zealand joined the strike after non-union labour was employed to unload New Zealand ships at Sydney. The effects of the Maritime Strike were widespread and extended to the miners, seamen and wharf labourers' unions in both Australia and New Zealand.

In Christchurch, the strike saw the emergence of a deeper division between capital and labour as employers hurried to organise in order to protect their own interests. Led by the TLC, the unionists in Canterbury determined to stand firm as free labourers were employed on the Lyttelton wharves and many young farmers were enrolled as special constables in order to preserve the peace. However, despite repeated attempts at conciliation, the strike failed and non-union labour provided an alternative to disruption by strikers.

The 1890 election closely followed the conclusion of the Maritime Strike and saw the emergence of working class awareness of the need to vote their own representatives to parliament. In Christchurch, the TLC initiated a political campaign aimed at electing men who had had experience of the trade union movement and who were aware of the needs of the working class. The imminence of the election meant that the working class did not have time to form their own party and they therefore aligned themselves to the candidates they felt could best represent their interests.

Led by the executives of their trade unions, the working class threw themselves wholeheartedly into the election campaign. Unions themselves sponsored political meetings at which they publicly supported a particular candidate or candidates whom they felt could best represent them and their interests. The move towards

political involvement by members of the trade union movement was, to a large extent, moulded by their defeat in the Maritime Strike and their dis-advantaged position during the depression of the 1880's and 1890's.

The Liberal victory was therefore welcomed by Labour supporters in 1890. However, the heightened political awareness of the 1890 election was not sustained. Unemployment was unabated until 1896 and while most workers continued to support the Lib-Lab alliance they had more pressing needs to face, namely survival. The urban enthusiasm of 1890 was not repeated in 1893. Partly this reflected the intrusion of the temperance question and to a lesser extent, the issue of women's suffrage.

The trade unions continued the fight for existence in the years 1891-1894. Many unions were still affected by the Maritime Strike and concentrated on building up membership which was increasingly difficult under the continuing depression conditions. Unionists welcomed the advent of the Factory Act and the Land and Income Tax Act but it was not until the passing of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act that a positive environment for trade union consolidation emerged.

The labour members of parliament who had been elected in the excitement of 1890 found themselves in a strange environment, and took some time to gain familiarity with the procedure of parliament. In gaining

expertise, these men clung closely to the leadership of Reeves who himself faced difficulties in maintaining electoral support. The prohibition issue divided electors in Sydenham, the Christchurch suburb that was the basis of Reeves' support. Their allegiance to Reeves' labour legislation was obscured by the more immediate issue of "wet or dry". The newly elected parliamentary representatives soon found that they had to maintain the allegiance of both urban and rural interests in order to retain their position.

Although the elections of 1890 and 1893 saw the return of working men to parliament, the events of the years between the elections demonstrated little change. For the working class, the harsh realities of depression life continued. Although hard hit by the effects of the Maritime Strike, the trade unions continued to try and safeguard conditions of labour against conditions of long hours and low wages that the depression encouraged. Many union leaders became disillusioned with the continuing depression conditions and sought more traditional means of remedying the problems of the workers.

Typical of this disillusionment was John Lomas, secretary of the Maritime Council in 1891 and president of the Denniston Miners' Union. Lomas took an active part in the union negotiations during the Maritime Strike. Disillusioned with the defeat of the unions and the

the prolonged conditions of depression, in 1894 Lomas took charge of the Christchurch Labour Bureau in order to attempt to transfer men to the North Island where more work was available. For men such as Lomas, the 1880's had seen much change within the labour movement, but the conditions and terms of employment had, for the most part, remained unchanged. It was not until the economic recovery in the mid 1890's, that life took a turn for the better.

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