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AGRARIAN BUSINESSMEN ORGANISE

A comparative study of the origins and early phases of development of the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales and the New Zealand Farmers' Union, ca 1880–1929.

THOMAS W.H. BROOKING

A dissertation submitted for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

December, 1977.
Photographs 1 and 2: The two Scotsmen who founded the NZFU and the NFU.
Left Sir James Wilson
Right Colin Campbell
This dissertation is a comparative study of the origins and early phase of development of the National Farmers' Union of England and the New Zealand Farmers' Union between approximately 1880 and 1929. It attempts to assess the development of those two farmers' political organisations by comparing and contrasting them one against the other. Previous assessments of both farmers' unions have been somewhat modified by placing them in this broader perspective.

The dissertation first outlines the socio-economic and political situation from which the two unions emerged and generally highlights the considerable economic and political advantages which New Zealand farmers held over their English counterparts. It also attempts to isolate various factors which help to explain the very different level of organisational success achieved by the two unions. The second section concentrates on the English side of the study by examining general farmers' organisations which preceded the NFU and then moving on to trace the origins of the NFU in Lincolnshire and its subsequent development at the national and county levels. The first part of this section makes clear the fact that the NFU was a new type of agricultural organisation which challenged the traditions laid down by its predecessors. The second part in examining the development of the NFU at the national, county and local levels, highlights its considerable organisational achievement. The third section begins by examining the general farmers' organisations which preceded the NZFU and reveals that there were more direct links between these institutions and the NZFU than there were between the NFU and its predecessors. It then proceeds to relate the story of the NZFU at the national, provincial and local levels and highlights the discrepancies in the performance of the two unions, especially at the intermediate level. Section four tries to draw the threads together by making some direct comparisons which highlight
the fact that the NFU was a far more representative, cohesive and effective organisation. Some reasons are also postulated as to why the NFU was generally more successful and these suggestions are developed further in the conclusion.

The dissertation is shaped by two major arguments.

1. That both farmers' unions were essentially similar organisational responses from the two farming communities to the profound socio-economic and related political changes which swept across the English speaking world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Both unions were part of the more sophisticated, post-populist agrarian response to change.

2. That Hofstadter is correct in asserting that farmers became more adept at evolving effective political organisations once their numerical significance and economic importance declined. English farmers evolved a more effective pressure group than their New Zealand counterparts because they had to. The demands made by the more mature and complex socio-economic and political situation of England forced English farmers to develop a sophisticated pressure group in the interests of economic survival. Finally, the majority of them also tended to think and act as agrarian businessmen rather than yeomen farmers and entrepreneurial primitives. They were better able to face up to the reality of twentieth century society by countering the influence of urban sectional groups through the mechanism of a sophisticated pressure group organised at the national level.
One way of increasing our understanding of New Zealand's past is to compare the experiences of a particular segment of our society with the experiences of the equivalent group within another society. This thesis follows such a comparative approach by examining the early development of the two organisations which represented the interests of the farming communities of a parent society (England) and one of its offshoot societies (New Zealand). In concentrating on the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales and the New Zealand Farmers' Union it describes activities which involved something like a half of English working farmers and a fifth of New Zealand's working farmers, over a period of around thirty years. If the thesis has achieved nothing else it has shown that the importance of the NZFU has been considerably exaggerated within our historical orthodoxy. R.J. Bremer's thesis on the NZFU during the 1920s (see Introduction) has already suggested that the significance of the NZFU has been seriously overestimated for that period, but this thesis shows that the NZFU was neither particularly important nor effective from establishment until 1929. By placing the NZFU in a much broader perspective I have been able to show that it existed as a virtually unnecessary political appendage until the 1930s, despite such apparent triumphs as the freehold agitation. Farmers made such a critical contribution to the economy and held so much political influence in consequence that they had little need of a formal extra-parliamentary pressure group. Many of the leading politicians were themselves farmers who enacted policies in response to the consensus of opinion of the broader farming community, as much as in answer to specific demands of the NZFU. It was often a moot point as to whether or not the Government, the NZFU, or the larger farming community, first decided on such courses of action as the establishment of producer controlled marketing boards. When the NZFU is compared with such an effective pressure group
as the NFU it becomes clear that official propaganda efforts of the NZFU have played a considerable role in shaping our assessment of its true place within our historical development. At the other end of the scale the thesis suggests that the NFU evolved into an effective, sophisticated and cohesive pressure group many years earlier than is generally realised.

Even though I have examined the experiences of two specific organisations I make no apology for the fact that I have tried to relate their development to earlier agricultural organisations and that I have attempted to view them in totality. I believe that history involves a dialogue between past and present, process and personality. History is not shaped simply by sudden spectacular changes, nor by the relentless progress of blind forces. Certainly both the NZFU and the NFU held definite links with earlier agricultural organisations. Their evolution makes little sense without some knowledge of their predecessors. Furthermore, both unions were established in response to a combination of economic, social and political factors. Their subsequent development was also shaped by all three factors. Concentration solely on the economic or political aspects of their activities would distort our understanding of the reasons for their establishment and provide only part of the story of their later development. Admittedly economic considerations probably provided the major motivation behind their formation, while their major field of action was political (especially compared with such organisations as co-operatives), and they did not contain anywhere near the social emphasis of an organisation such as the Grange. But social aspirations and political fears played a part in their formation. The leaders of both unions soon found that it was quite impossible to limit their activities to purely economic or political concerns.

Furthermore, I soon discovered that I would first have to sketch in the broad outlines of the emergence of each union and their early phase of development as no general account existed. Now at least there is a
reasonably well rounded account which future researchers can examine in more detail.

The first three chapters on economic, social and political background, have been included because it seemed to me critically important that the two organisations should be set in some kind of wider context. Institutional histories often fall down because they describe the historical development of their chosen subject as if it existed within a vacuum. The development of either organisation makes little sense without some knowledge of the changes occurring within each country at the general level. More particularly we need to know how those broader changes affected the rural sector. These chapters are inevitably something of a synthesis of other people's work, but such a synthesis was long overdue.

There are three major reasons why I had to travel to England to carry out research on this subject. First, the early period of the NFU's development has been largely ignored by English historians, even though the NFU's career in the period since World War II has been examined in considerable detail by political scientists. English farmers in general have received scant attention from historians, especially over the period with which the thesis concerns itself, probably because the apparently more colourful histories of the great landowners and the herculean struggle of the agricultural labourers have caught their imagination. Farmers have also remained a rather anonymous group, seldom inclined to leave behind large collections of personal papers like the landowners, while they have not evolved attractive myths regarding the deeds of their early union leaders like the labourers. If this surprisingly large gap was to be filled I had to consult primary sources. Such sources were only available in England.

Second, by travelling to England I was able to experience the "feel" of the English countryside, to see at first hand the environment in which
English farmers operate. Documents read in libraries can only tell us so much about the past. Field work is an activity which should be engaged in by historians as well as by geographers and natural scientists.

Third, I was determined to look at the development of the two unions from the intermediate and local levels, (that is the county and provincial as well as local branches) and so avoid the failure of many organisational histories which examine their subjects solely in terms of the national perspective. I suspected that the degree of activism displayed at the lower levels of an organisation would have a direct bearing on their performance within the national sphere. My suspicion was later confirmed by further research. It was essential that I had access to local records and my location in Kent enabled me to research material which was not even held in the magnificent London libraries. After all, although the NFU carried out the greater part of its political and administrative activities in London, nearly all its members lived and worked in rural areas.

I have tried to employ both a telescope and a microscope in this study. The 12,000 miles between England and New Zealand enabled me to examine the NZFU more critically and assess its performance relative to that of similar organisations. At the same time I was able to investigate the NFU's activities at the grass-roots level. On returning to New Zealand I simply reversed the process. My assessment of the NZFU was changed quite dramatically as a result. At the same time I also learned that the NFU held some important situational advantages in addition to more immediately obvious disadvantages.

The time limit of 1929 has been imposed because the depression of the 1930s created a new set of problems with which each union had to cope and ushered in a new era in their development. Initially 1914 and 1918 appeared to provide logical finishing dates, but on further consideration they proved unsatisfactory. The NFU only came into national prominence during the First World War and went on to experience some dramatic changes of fortune during the 1920s which considerably shaped its later development.
Even the NZFU underwent some important changes of emphasis when the full force of twentieth century reality was unleashed on the New Zealand countryside in the 1920s. Shifts in policy were instituted within both unions which pointed the way to more dramatic changes during the 1940s. Furthermore, both organisations had to be examined over a relatively long period of time if any meaningful assessment of their effectiveness was to be reached, but progression into the 1930s would have proved too unwieldy for a comparative study. All finishing dates are somewhat arbitrary and I feel this is no more so than any other.

The most I claim is that I have laid down some generalisations for other students of the comparative history of the farming sectors of Britain and its new world off-shoot societies to confirm, and more likely amend, refute and expand upon.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In travelling somewhere around 30,000 miles to collect material for this thesis I have incurred so many debts that if I were to list them individually there would be no space left for the remainder of the thesis. I should first like to thank those institutions and organisations who have assisted me in my work, both in New Zealand and England.

New Zealand

Early Settlers' Museum, Dunedin.
Hocken Library, Dunedin.
Otago A and P Society, Dunedin.
Public Library, Dunedin.
University of Otago Library, Dunedin.
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
Federated Farmers, Wellington.
General Assembly Library, Wellington.
National Archives, Wellington.
University of Canterbury Library, Christchurch.
Massey University Library.
Invercargill Public Library.

England

Canterbury Public Library, Kent.
Maidstone Public Library, Kent.
University of Kent Library.

British Museum main reading room, London and newspaper section at Colindale.
Cambridge University Library.

I would especially like to thank the staff of the NFU for their considerable co-operation whether at London headquarters in Knightsbridge, Maidstone branch headquarters, or again at the Lincolnshire headquarters, Woodhall Spa. All the officials with whom I dealt, whether librarians, public relations officers, county or branch secretaries, were always helpful.
Many individuals assisted in various ways in England, but I would particularly like to thank the following. Sean Glynn, John Whyman and Mike Winstanley of the Department of Economic and Social History at the University of Kent, who taught me much about Australian, Kentish and oral history. Richard Palmer provided badly needed diversions in the microfilm room with his aged Italian scripts, while Carol Phillips typed thesis reports, provided emergency accommodation and Dorset style hospitality. Mr Fred Talbot and W.T. Ninn, two delightful old Kentish rural gentlemen, produced much useful information on the rank and file member's experience of the NFU in its early years, as well as tall tales regarding the exploits of Kent's cricketing greats. John G. Main's generous financial assistance and the New Zealand University Grants Committee made possibly my various expeditions. Most of all I would like to thank Professor G.E. Mingay, Professor of Agrarian History at the University of Kent, for guiding me through the maze like complexity of English agricultural history, for enabling me to attend the Agrarian Historian's Conference and for providing introductions to allow me to use various libraries. To all those others who provided hospitality I would also like to say thank you.

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Jocelyn Le Petit has completed the daunting task of typing out over 400 pages of my idiosyncratic writing without losing her cheerful demeanour. Her constant good humour has helped me greatly in battling through the last tedious phases of thesis production. Special thanks are due to her and to my co-supervisor, Dr Erik Olsson, who has been a constant source of ideas, always available for consultation. My greatest thanks go, however, to my supervisor, Professor Angus Ross and to Trish Brookings. Professor Ross has been a constant guide, helping me to avoid the pitfalls of the never-ending thesis without unnecessary interference. He has read long-hand drafts with speed and care and has suffered the indignities of spidery writing, wayward spelling, misplaced apostrophes and split infinitives, with stoical forebearance. His comments have always been helpful and I am extremely grateful for his assistance and support, personal as well as academic. Finally, I am deeply grateful to Trish Brookings, not only for proof-reading, but for total support despite the infliction upon her of a low standard of living, chronic absentmindedness and long absences whilst I have been engaged on thesis work. I must also thank my own family and hers for financial support and patient acceptance of an apparently mythical submission date. My thanks also go to Rachel Brookings for being a good sleeper.
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2. "Larkrise to Waitahuna." Some Comparisons Of English And New Zealand Rural Society In The Period 1870-1930

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<th>New Zealand</th>
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<tr>
<td>NAU</td>
<td>A and P</td>
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<td>National Agricultural Union</td>
<td>Agricultural and Pastoral</td>
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<td>NFU</td>
<td>FUA</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Farmers Union of England and Wales</td>
<td>Farmers' Union Advocate</td>
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<tr>
<td>RASE</td>
<td>SOF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royal Agricultural Society of England and Wales</td>
<td>Sheepowners' Federation</td>
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## 2. General

M.P. Member of Parliament

## 3. Footnotes

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACCM</td>
<td>Annual Colonial Conference Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADM</td>
<td>Annual Dominion Conference Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPP</td>
<td>British Parliamentary Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cd.</td>
<td>Command Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEM</td>
<td>Dominion Executive Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA</td>
<td>Farmers' Advocate</td>
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<td>FF</td>
<td>Farming First</td>
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<td>FW</td>
<td>Farmers' Weekly</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUA</td>
<td>Farmers' Union Advocate</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZFA</td>
<td>New Zealand Farmers' Advocate</td>
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<td>NZPD</td>
<td>New Zealand Parliamentary Debates</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODT</td>
<td>Otago Daily Times</td>
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<td>OM</td>
<td>Otago Witness</td>
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<td>TT</td>
<td>Tuapeka Times</td>
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis elaborates two major hypotheses. First, it was not coincidental that two remarkably similar Farmers' Unions emerged at about the same time in very different contexts. Both the National Farmers' Union of England and Wales and the New Zealand Farmers' Union grew out of the second major phase of farmers' adjustment to the changes taking place around them which occurred throughout the English speaking world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These two organisations represented a more mature and sophisticated organisational response to the massive socio-economic and political changes of the late nineteenth century than the earlier Populist movement. Second, this thesis supports Hofstadter's dictum that "the farmers, who were quite impotent as a special interest group when they were numerous, competing, and unorganised, grew stronger as they grew relatively fewer, became more concerted, more tenaciously organized and self-centred". Hofstadter was referring to North American farmers when he made this comment but it is equally applicable to both English and New Zealand farmers. English farmers stood at a considerable political disadvantage in relation to their New Zealand counterparts and played a far less important role within the overall economy. Yet the NFU in the period up to 1929 was a far more effective, cohesive and representative organisation than the NZFU. It also did not become entangled in an unofficial party alliance. Similarly, the NZFU made little organisational progress until the late 1920s when a long period of prosperity came to an end and the declining political influence of farmers forced its leaders to belatedly overhaul its organisational machinery and administrative procedures. Also from that time onwards the NZFU achieved true political independence.

Both the NFU and the NZFU were similar to North American and Australian Farmers' Unions formed around the turn of the century. Like their new world counterparts they were established as pressure groups designed to lobby both legislature and administration in defence of their entrenched interests. They represented the carefully calculated answers of businessmen rather than the more spontaneous and irrational response of the Populist movement, whose solution to overcoming feelings of insecurity was to attempt to recreate a lost ideal age through the mechanism of a separate agrarian third party. Proof of the greater political maturation of the Farmers' Unions is provided by the fact that most of these pressure groups have proved flexible enough to survive the considerable difficulties of the twentieth century whereas most of the agrarian parties, with the notable exception of the Australian Country Party, have disappeared. The Farmers' Unions concerned themselves with the "hard" economic and political side of farmers' affairs rather than the "soft" semi-mythological side.

2. Farmers' Unions were established in the five major Australian states between 1890 and 1914, while several provincial unions had been established in Canada by 1920. The United States Farmers' Union was founded in 1902 the NZFU in 1901, the NFU in 1908 and the Scottish NFU in 1913.

appealed to by the Populists. The farmers who set up their own unions shared a feeling of alienation from the other sectors of the economic chain with the Populists. They too distrusted the banks, the middlemen, the transport companies and the factory workers. But the means of challenging the influence of these other sectional groups was quite different. The Farmers' Unions represented an acceptance of change, albeit a sometimes reluctant acceptance, and a rational endeavour to make the most of existing realities, realities which were being increasingly influenced by other sectional organisations. In short the Farmers' Unions were symbolic of the farmers' "coming of age". As the opening and concluding chapters will demonstrate one of the major factors behind the greater success of the NFU was the fact that more English farmers had come of age. More English farmers acted as professional entrepreneurs, as men in need of a sophisticated sectional organisation typical of modern businessmen. Many New Zealand farmers were still behaving as simple producers of food, as entrepreneurial primitives unaware of the need for a nationally organised pressure group. This difference in attitude was largely the result of a much less well developed sense of sectional consciousness and occupational loyalty in New Zealand.

3. New Zealand and England, unlike North America and Australia, largely missed out on any earlier Populist experience. Chapter Nine suggests that New Zealand went closer to producing a Populist movement than is generally realised, but the English countryside remained virtually unruffled by farmer militancy. Militant farmers' movements were confined to Wales, Scotland and Ireland. See J.P.D. Dunbabin, Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain, (London 1974). New Zealand and England missed out on the Populist movement essentially because they lacked the vast monocultural concentrations of grain and cotton growing which characterised the agriculture of North America and Australia. This lack of a Populist tradition adds an additional justification for carrying out a comparative study of the NFU and the NZFU.

The NFU and the NZFU shared an enemy in addition to the rings and trusts; militant trade unionism and socialism. Unlike the Populists the Farmers' Unions made little attempt to forge alliances with militant labour. Their leaders firmly believed that combination must be met by combination and also remained suspicious of other urban sectional groupings such as employers' associations. The initiators of both the NFU and the NZFU seemed well aware that society was dividing itself into competing sectional groups represented by sophisticated bodies organised on a national basis.

Despite criticism of both the trade unions and the employers' associations the Farmers' Unions borrowed directly from both types of organisation. The Farmers' Unions were in many ways a combination of trade union and employers' association. Farmers had never been innovators in the area of political organisation largely because their relatively isolated and widely diffused geographical situation made the establishment of a union type of organisation extremely difficult. They felt little compunction in following the examples of their urban contemporaries. From the trade unions they borrowed the collectivist approach to political action, the hierarchical organisation, the centralised operations, and set up mutual insurance companies. But the Farmers' Unions decided against adopting the more extreme weapons of the strike and compulsion in the matter of electoral behaviour. From the example of the employers' associations the Farmers' Unions engaged the services of legal advisers and turned to other professionals for advice on such specialised matters as taxation or wage rates. The NFU learnt more from the numerous businessmen's and professional organisations which existed in England, but both it and the NZFU were products of the industrial and urban revolutions rather than of the agrarian revolution.

Even though each union emerged as part of a wider response of farmers
to change they were indigenous institutions which were not related in any official capacity and did not influence each other’s development in any direct fashion. In many ways their interests were opposed as the NZFU wanted free access to the English market and the NFU favoured some degree of protection. The priorities and policies of each union also differed. Although both unions gave top priority to realising security of tenure the NFU wanted reform of the Tripartite system whereas the NZFU completely rejected that tenurial system. Each union was organised on similar lines, functioned in a similar fashion and shared general objectives, but this did not mean that they did not evolve different specific policies.

The motivation behind the formation of each union was primarily economic. As both sets of farmers were linked into the international economy they were subjected to similar economic pressures and were forced to organise for the defence of their economic interests. But each Union represented an attempt to influence economic policy through political means. They did not attempt to influence economic processes directly until the 1920s when the NZFU initiated marketing reform. Although the NFU promoted co-operative enterprises neither union attempted to solve the farmers' problems through their own economic initiatives. The actions

5. Sean Glynn, *Urbanisation in Australian History*, (Melbourne 1970), p 51 argues that in many ways Australian farmers were more closely tied to the London market than Yorkshire farmers. Certainly, developments in Tooley Street or Smithfield, were more important to Australian farmers than to their Yorkshire counterparts. The comment could be applied with equal validity to New Zealand. D.B. Waterson's study of a Waikato farming estate makes it abundantly clear that reductions in British butter quotas, resulting from Britain's alliance with the E.E.C., have posed a far more radical threat to the dairy farmers' way of life than any internal developments within New Zealand. See D.B. Waterson, "The Matamata Estate, 1904-1959: Land Transfers and Sub-division in the Waikato", *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol 3 No 1 (Apr 1969), pp 32-50. With the development of the dairy and frozen meat industries in the late nineteenth century New Zealand became dependent upon British markets. See C.G.F. Simkin, *The Instability Of A Dependent Economy. Economic Fluctuations In New Zealand 1840-1914*, (London 1961).
of both unions were also not solely determined by economic considerations. Members of each union shared a loose set of beliefs, too loose to be labelled an ideology, which helped to shape their attitudes. Often their world view provided a justification for action which disguised more hard-headed motivation, but both unions genuinely felt that they were defending a way of life as well as economic interests.

The background chapters aim to demonstrate the relative economic and political strength of the New Zealand farmer in relation to the weak position of his English counterpart. If the voice of the English farmer was to be heard at all it had to be a united voice so amplified by effective organisation that it could not go unnoticed at either Westminster or Whitehall. Most of the successes of the NZFU in contrast were related to the greater economic importance and political influence of the New Zealand farmer rather than to the organisation itself. The NZFU never approximated the organisational effectiveness of the NFU. Meaningful progress towards emulating the example of the NFU only really came after the NZFU was transformed into Federated Farmers in 1944. This gap in the effectiveness of the two organisations was largely consequent upon the considerable advantages the New Zealand farmer held over his English counterpart. He had no need of a sectional organisation until the late 1920s as previously there was almost unimpeded access to the corridors of political power. The weaknesses of the NZFU were exacerbated by such obvious but critically important factors as a less well developed
communications system, the difficult geography of New Zealand, the continuing importance of localism within the political sphere and a lack of experience in administrative matters at both the local and national level relative to the English tenant farmers. The NZFU only began to increase its organisational effectiveness from the late 1920s onwards as farmers declined in numerical and political strength relative to the urban population, and as transport facilities were slowly improved and organisational experience accumulated. Necessity proved the mother of invention in the case of both the NFU and the NZFU.

This comparative study has also highlighted the fact that the NFU was more effective prior to 1930 than post-war political scientists imagined it to be, while the NZFU was not nearly as influential as it has generally been portrayed. R.J. Bremer's excellent masters' thesis demonstrated that the NZFU was not particularly effective during the 1920s, but this qualification should be applied to the history of the NZFU for the entire period from establishment to the depression.

6. Cook Strait in particular posed a great problem in evolving an organisation which could be effectively administered from Wellington simply because South Island delegates experienced difficulty in regularly attending Colonial and Dominion executive meetings. It was generally far easier, after all, for a farmer in the most remote corner of England to travel to London than it was for a South Islander to travel to Wellington. Yet New Zealand was only a small geographical unit compared with even individual Australian states. The excuse of difficult terrain and New Zealand's elongated nature should not be carried too far.

7. Several political scientists writing during the 1950s argued that the NFU did not develop into a really effective organisation until the late 1940s but this thesis qualifies this view. See P. Self and H.J. Storing, The State and the Farmer, (London 1962), pp 46-54; S.E. Finer, Anonymous Empire A Study of The Lobby in Great Britain, (2nd ed. London 1969), pp 38-42; and J.D. Stewart, British Pressure Groups Their Role in Relation to the House of Commons, (Oxford 1958), pp 14-18 and 113-120.

The thesis is divided into four major sections. The first attempts to set the two organisations in economic, social and political perspective and makes some tentative suggestions as to why New Zealand evolved a different farming system and social structure within its rural sector. Above all else these three background chapters demonstrate that New Zealand farmers held greater economic importance, social standing and political influence than their English counterparts. It also helps to explain the circumstances which prompted the evolution of different policy objectives.

The second section concentrates on the English side of the study. Chapter Four examines the relationship between the NFU and the major agricultural organisations which predated it. Essentially this chapter shows that the NFU was a new type of organisation and that deferential attitudes had finally given way to defensive action. Chapter Five traces the evolution of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union into the NFU and is shaped by the argument that Lincoln was the county most likely to have produced such an organisation. Chapter Six relates the story of the NFU at the national level, a story which stresses the remarkable success of the organisation in the face of frequent economic adversity and Governmental indifference. Chapter Seven focuses on the fortunes of the NFU at the county and local levels by examining the development of the Kent County branch, a large market-town branch and a small village branch. The major impression which emerges from this examination is that the NFU could attribute much of its success to the activism of its county units.

Section three involves the New Zealand half of the comparisons. Chapter Eight examines the relationship between the NZFU and the A and P Societies and the local Farmers' Clubs. It reveals that few links existed between these organisations and the NZFU, but shows that they had more
in common with the NZFU than their English counterparts had with the NFU.

Chapter Nine looks more closely at several earlier attempts to form some type of farmers' political organisation, including the New Zealand Farmers' League of 1886-1887, the New Zealand Farmers' Union of 1890 and several attempts to establish similar organisations during the 1890s. While important differences existed between these organisations and the NZFU as established in 1902 they nevertheless anticipated some of its activities and policy objectives. Unlike the NFU the NZFU grew out of rather than against the traditions established by earlier farmers' political organisations. Chapter Ten tells the story of the NZFU at the national level. Relative to the NFU it is a story of only limited success. Several qualifications are also made of generally accepted assumptions concerning the NZFU. Overall it is a rather dismal tale which suggests that the importance of the NZFU has been exaggerated in most general accounts of our history. Chapter Eleven completes this section by examining the development of the NZFU at the provincial and local levels. It reveals that until the late 1920s the record of the Otago provincial executive and its local branches was even less impressive than that of the NZFU at the national level. Apathy and inaction were the features which predominated in the proceedings of the provincial executive and most of the local branches. The efforts of the Otago branch simply did not approximate the activism of the Kent branch. It was significant that the NZFU's national fortunes only improved once some degree of vitality began to infuse the local branches and spurred the provincial executives to a greater degree of action.

Section four compares the origins, structure, membership, functions and world view of the two unions. These direct comparisons emphasise that the NFU was a far more disciplined, sophisticated, cohesive, effective and representative organisation. There is a brief discussion on whether or not the two unions were really pressure groups or some other form
of organisation and the thesis concludes by postulating some reasons as to why the NFU was the more effective of the two Farmers' Unions under study.
Over the period 1900 to 1929 New Zealand farmers enjoyed the satisfaction of knowing that the nation's economic strength lay in their hands. English farmers in contrast knew that they were relatively weak in economic terms and had to accept that secondary industry was more important to the nation than agriculture. While English farmers struggled to recover from the traumatic disruption of traditional arable farming experienced during the 1870s and 1880s, New Zealand farmers experienced an unprecedented era of prosperity. The late 1890s to 1921 were the golden years of New Zealand farming. This prosperity was largely the result of the twin development of the dairying and frozen meat industries at a time of rising world prices. The growth of dairying and fat lamb farming is writ large in the New Zealand legend and ensured that farming, as opposed to pastoralism, was the dominant factor in the economy by 1914. Wool production remained important but lost its earlier dominance, while the claims of manufacturing were pushed into the background. Agriculture was ascendant by 1914. The title Farmers' Union in short reflected profound

1. This does not mean that New Zealand farmers were individually more prosperous than English farmers. Only numerous sample studies of capital inputs measured against returns could provide the answer to that problem. But as a group, New Zealand farmers were far more important in terms of the national economy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wool</th>
<th>Frozen Meat</th>
<th>Agricultural Produce</th>
<th>Dairy</th>
<th>Gold</th>
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<td>1896</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
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<td>15.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
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<td>11.6</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>27.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

changes in the economy as intensive farming on a small to middling sized scale became viable and replaced intensive pastoralism as the major form of land use.

In 1900 the primary industries were responsible for 71% of the total value of overall production and that figure had risen to 73% by 1910. Even as late as 1929 primary production still made up 68% of the value of total output, with agricultural and pastoral products alone constituting 64.8% of the total. The accompanying table shows what a critical role dairy products and frozen meat played in enabling intensive farming to replace pastoralism and goldmining as the country's major sources of wealth.

Not only was agriculture far more dominant within the context of the overall New Zealand economy, but investment shifted heavily into the diversification of agriculture during the nineteenth century. The State, as well as private investors, played a major role in capital formation and much of its effort was also directed towards agriculture.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>N.Z.</th>
<th>America</th>
<th>Australia</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>11.60</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>29.88</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>8.84</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All this was in direct contrast to England, where although agriculture was not actually in as drastic a state of collapse as critics such as Rider Haggard imagined, it had nevertheless declined dramatically in importance during the later half of the nineteenth century. According to Ojala's much disputed but nevertheless sound estimates, the gross output of English agriculture measured in the prices of 1911-1913 was £153,000,000. It fell to a minimum of £143,000,000 between 1894 and 1903 and averaged £147,000,000 for the years 1911-1913. To put it another way the contribution of agriculture to the national consumption income (that is national income minus net savings) fell from 17.4% in 1867 to 6.7% in 1914. Also net investment of fixed capital in agriculture was negative from 1880 to 1914. The decline of agriculture was reflected in more startling fashion by the departure of some 300,000 agricultural labourers from the countryside between 1870 and 1900 when the numbers employed in industrial and manufacturing occupations continued to rise. But as table 1:2 reveals English agriculture experienced something of a revival after 1900 for the agricultural labour force began once again to increase in absolute terms. By 1931, even though it only represented some 6% of the work force, it approximated the size of the agricultural labour force as

5. Haggard feared that rural depopulation and the decline of agriculture meant "nothing less than the progressive deterioration of the race" and went on to add that it "may in the end mean the ruin of the race." H. Rider Haggard, Rural England Being An Account Of Agricultural And Social Researches Carried Out in the Years 1901 and 1902, (2nd ed. London 1906), p 540.


7. In Britain those employed in industrial occupations stabilised at about half of the total work force in the last third of the nineteenth century, while those engaged in manufacturing steadied at around a third of the labour force. ibid. pp 74-75 and 143-144.
it existed during the mid-nineteenth century. It is interesting to note that the numbers of tenant farmers remained constant between 1870 and 1900, while they even increased a little after 1900. The victims of the adjustments made by English agriculture were labourers rather than farmers.

NFU leaders were quite correct in pointing out that agriculture was still the biggest single employer in Britain in the 1920s. But this claim could not disguise the fact that it was only one of several such industries and had taken second place to both heavy secondary industries and tertiary services as is typically the case in a mature economy.

In direct contrast agriculture in New Zealand became a larger employer with the development of the dairying and frozen meat industries and increased from 1890 to the 1920s. It was only during the 1920s that it began to lose ground to the secondary and tertiary industries. It is also interesting to note that agriculture was not as major an employer as in either Australia or the U.S.A. This was largely because of the dominance of the family unit of labour and the lack of large areas of labour intensive types of plantation or arable farming. New Zealand also seems to have had surprisingly high employment in the non-productive tertiary sector. Unlike those two countries the expansion of agriculture did not

8. By 1931 the agricultural labour force was made up of 1,170,000 persons as against 1,200,000 persons in 1851 and 1,150,000 in 1861. Most of the post 1900 increase occurred amongst farmers and relatives assisting them, while labourers showed a slight recovery. Census for England and Wales, 1931, Occupation Tables, pp 114-115 and R. Lawton, "Rural Depopulation in Nineteenth Century England," in R. Dennis Mills (Ed.), English Rural Communities: The Impact of a Specialised Economy, (London 1973), p 214.


10. These figures on Australia and America were taken from Commonwealth of Australia Census, 1911 Part XII, pp 1310 and 1324, and The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present, (Connecticut 1967), p 72. The New Zealand figures were taken from NZ Census for 1871, 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1926.
release capital for the diversification of the economy and agriculture was not seriously challenged by manufacturing within the export sector. So agriculture remained far more important within the New Zealand economy than in other new world economies such as Australia or the U.S.A., even though it was not as big an employer as in those countries.

The NZFU emerged at a time of prosperity, when New Zealand farmers were assuming a growing economic importance, and the NFU was also established during an economic upswing. The correlation between the two unions and periods of upswing fits in with most generally accepted accounts of conditions which favour the emergence of collectivist organisations such as trade unions. Good times, following on from earlier periods of recession or depression, especially favour the emergence of trade unions. Downturn, followed by upswing, provides the correct balance of accumulated grievances which spur men to action and the confidence and financial ability which enable them to give concrete institutional expression to their intentions. Both New Zealand and English farmers had experienced genuine

11. Manufacturing in the period under study never rose above 5.4% of export earnings. The numbers of persons employed in manufacturing rose from 8.29% of the work force in 1911 to 15.5% in 1926, but those engaged in secondary industries changed little from 24.09% in 1911 to 24.23% in 1926. M.F. Lloyd-Pritchard, An Economic History of New Zealand to 1939, (Auckland 1970), pp 189, 193, 204, 272, 290 and 322. This failure to diversify and the consequent growing dependence on the three major export staples became the theme for a sermon by Dr W.B. Sutch that New Zealand should strive to achieve greater economic independence through the development of import substitution industries such as manufacturing. e.g. W.B. Sutch, Colony or Nation? Economic Crises in New Zealand from the 1860s to the 1960s, (Sydney 1966). Few thought diversification was necessary until the depression of the 1930s and even the Labour Government of 1935 to 1949 only marginally reduced our dependence on agricultural exports.

hardships during the 1880s,\textsuperscript{13} but they could do little about organising to express their grievances until some degree of recovery was underway. The

13. John H. Angus, "City And Country Change And Continuity Electoral politics and society in Otago 1877-1893," Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1976, pp 84-93, demonstrates that some Otago farmers suffered real hardships during the 1880s. I.W. Horsfield, "The Struggle For Economic Viability A Study in the development of the New Zealand economy in the nineteenth century," Unpublished MA Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1960, makes it clear that the low wool prices of the 1880s placed severe strains on farmers as the dairying and frozen meat industries were not yet sufficiently developed to provide alternative sources of revenue. As in England more recent research is suggesting that the impact of the depression of the 1880s was uneven affecting different areas and different groups of people in different ways. But there can be no doubt as to its severity in some instances. I would like to thank Mr Brendon Thompson of the Economic History Department, Victoria University, for this progress report.

A consensus seems to be developing amongst English economic historians that the trauma experienced by English agriculture as a result of the influx of cheap new world wheat and the wet summer of 1879 induced a necessary adjustment, which although painful, helped English farming to survive and prosper in the the twentieth century. The severity of the so-called depression varied according to the specialisations of particular regions. Generally the essentially arable farming areas of the East and South were worse hit than the stock raising areas of the West and North. The shift away from arable farming to a greater emphasis on livestock production enabled many farmers to recoup their losses. The most important articles on this question are undoubtedly those of E.L. Jones, "The Changing Basis Of Agricultural Prosperity, 1853-1873," Agricultural History Review, Vol 10(1962), pp 102-119 and T.W. Fletcher, "The Great Depression of English Agriculture, 1873-96," Economic History Review, 2nd series Vol 13 (1961), pp 417-32. P.J. Perry, British Farming in the Great Depression 1870-1914 An Historical Geography, (Newton Abbot 1974), provides a balanced summary of the revision of the myth of the Great Depression in British agriculture. Studies at the local level are generally confirming Fletcher's findings. e.g. Richard Grover, "The Chambers' Family Farms A Study in Kentish Agriculture, 1870-1944," Unpublished Long Essay, University of Kent, 1970, suggests that Kentish farmers suffered greater hardships in the inter-war period than during the 1880s.
eight years between the establishment of the two unions was probably an indication of the fact that returns increased for New Zealand farmers from the mid 1890s, whereas their English counterparts had to wait until the early 1900s before there was any meaningful upturn in their fortunes.  

The pattern of economic development after the establishment of the two unions was fairly similar, partly because New Zealand farmers' dependence on the English market usually meant they suffered as much as their English counterparts if the London market experienced a downturn in prices. Between 1909 and 1914 both sets of farmers experienced an improvement in their fortunes, an improvement which was more spectacular in New Zealand apart from a recession in 1907. During the First World War both English and New Zealand farmers profited handsomely from boom conditions induced by the artificially high prices. The boom continued until 1921 when it came to an abrupt halt. From that time onwards English farmers


16. See Dennis J. George, "The Depression of 1921-22 In New Zealand," Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 1969, pp 3-5 and 12-20 Lloyd-Pritchard, *Op cit*, p 245. Similarly the NFU witnesses to the Royal Commission Agriculture, James Donaldson, E.M. Nunnelley and F.W. Padwick, all agreed that English farmers had profited considerably from the high prices of war-time. "Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture," *Minutes of Evidence; BPP 1919 Cd.319 VIII Part 3*, pp 480-498; *Cd.345 VIII Part 4*, pp 682-697; and BPP 1920 Cd.665 IX Part 5, pp 54-60 and 94-100. Tables prepared by James Wylie on a wider sample of smaller and less prosperous farms confirmed the impression that a general increase in profits had occurred. Part 3, Appendix IV, pp 682-697. It was little wonder that both Unions spent considerable time during the War in countering accusations that farmers were profit-seeking.
experienced considerable difficulties as the English economy slid steadily into deeper depression. The accompanying table on farmer bankruptcies, shows that both sets of farmers faced very real problems during the 1920s. Yet New Zealand farmers experienced something of a recovery during the mid 1920s. It could not, however, detract from the profound shock produced by the advent of depression after farmers had experienced almost uninterrupted prosperity for a generation. The recovery itself did not last long and after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 New Zealand farmers were forced to cope with the considerable difficulties of a new long depression. The study ends with the onset of this depression because it created a whole new set of problems with which farmers had to cope. The two farmers' unions which had grown up partly in response to the adjustments forced on farmers by the Great Depression of the 1880s were now faced by another severe depression. It was to tax their resourcefulness to the full and forced the adoption of new sets of priorities.


19. In England the NFU was forced to reluctantly co-operate with the Government in working State assisted Marketing Control Boards, while the NZFU was compelled to take a hard look at the entire structure of the New Zealand farming industry. Up to 1935 concessions, especially in terms of mortgage relief, were provided by the Coalition Government, but after that date the NZFU had to adjust to working with the new Labour Government and its policy of price fixing. Farmers had lost their special place in the political sphere and had to evolve a more effective pressure group as a result.
Dependence on the English market produced by the development of the dairying and frozen meat industries helped explain two of the major differences in the attitude of the two unions; that is the NZFU's advocacy of marketing reform and call for State assistance in contrast to the NFU's indifference towards marketing reform and distrust of State intervention. New Zealand's vulnerability to adverse price movements on the London market was further increased by the lack of any significant manufacturing sector or of a large home market, to cushion the effect of falling prices. It was not surprising, therefore, that when such a fall occurred in 1921 that farmers turned to the State for help and looked to improvements in marketing methods as providing a possible solution to their difficulties. The State was, after all, the only organisation with sufficient capital and managerial resources to be of any real assistance to farmers in times of crisis. Although the NZFU had severely criticised State interference in the matter of land tenure and economic management prior to 1921, they had at the same time tolerated a degree of bureaucratic interference from the Department of Agriculture which would have incensed English farmers. Most New Zealand farmers realised that even though grading and pest control regulations enforced by the State were annoying, improvements in quality control and increases in productivity would provide direct benefits in the form of larger cheques for their butter, meat or wool. New Zealand farmers also applauded the large amount of State investment in the agricultural section as it once again assisted them directly by providing roads and

20. More recent research in England is suggesting that the recovery of English agriculture was also related to a dramatic growth in the dairying industry in response to rising living standards. Whole milk production rather than butter helped many English farmers to recoup their earlier losses. The continuing growth of the conurbations also encouraged further diversification, especially market gardening and poultry farming. See David Taylor, "The English Dairy Industry: the Need for a Reassessment," Agricultural History Review, Vol 22 Part 2, (1974), pp 153-159.
raising land values. English farmers would probably have been alarmed if
the State had played such an active role within their industry. At most
they wanted a limited form of subsidies, guaranteed prices and State
guarantees of security of tenure. Marketing also affected them much less
directly and the benefits which would result from marketing reform appeared
to be marginal. Predictably most NFU members generally opposed the idea
of State assisted marketing boards until the 1930s, whereas the NZFU urged
their establishment from 1921. When guaranteed prices were withdrawn
after a notice of only a few months in 1921 long standing suspicions of the
State were even more deeply entrenched and the NFU withdrew from any form
of partnership with the State until the late 1930s.

One important factor which off-set the much stronger economic position
of the New Zealand farmers and gave the NFU a critical advantage over the
NZFU was the much higher level of infrastructure development. When the
NZFU was established in 1901 there were over 2,000 miles of railway tracks, but neither main trunk line had been completed. Complaints about the
appalling state of many roads in rural areas were legend, while parts of the
country were still impregnable. Many roads drawn in on maps were little more than mud tracks, especially in the North Island. A large part of public expenditure was inevitably directed towards the creation of
infrastructure. Roads and bridges issues continued to dominate both local
and national politics.


22. In 1900 £417,000, or 42%, of the total public works grant was devoted to
railway construction and maintenance and £285,000, or 28.7%, to roads.
ibid., p 214.
England in contrast contained a more than adequate roading system and a highly developed railway network. By 1900 there was 15,195 miles of railway line reaching into most parts of the country. A far more regular and comprehensive service was provided than even that of today. Expansion of branch lines to small towns and villages was still continuing. Lines were not generally phased out until much later when the competition provided by motor transport made the more marginal lines uneconomic.  

This difference was exacerbated by the more difficult topography of New Zealand, its greater land area and the turbulent waters of Cook Strait. The rapid adoption of such advances in communications technology as the telephone and the motor car partly eased communications problems in New Zealand. But cars could not navigate muddy tracks and telephones could not compensate for a regular railway service and properly formed roads.

Both unions faced a similar problem in that regional farming specialisations continued to mitigate against the successful evolution of a general farmers' organisation. Even though such variations declined in importance over the period under study the differing and sometimes conflicting interests of each specialist group continued to pose many problems for each union.


24. New Zealanders, like their American and Canadian contemporaries, purchased motor cars more readily than the British. By 1930, approximately one New Zealander in eight owned a motor vehicle as against one Briton in twenty-nine. Taken from Ashworth, Op cit, p 339, and Lloyd-Pritchard, Op cit, p 369. This discrepancy provides an interesting comment on the public transport systems of the two countries during the 1920s as well as on the levels of income.

25. e.g. When the Dominion Secretary of the NZFU toured North Auckland as late as 1929 he complained of the appalling state of the roads. Many roads drawn on maps were in fact barely formed mud tracks. FF, 10 Nov 1929 pp 5-6. His complaints confirm tales of the difficulties of travelling from Auckland to Whangeraie related to me by both my father and grandfather.
English farming was generally more sharply divided into specialist sub-divisions than New Zealand farming, even though by 1914 there was a larger mixed cropping and stock raising component than ever before. The problems confronting the arable farmers of East Anglia and the dairy farmers of the South-Western counties were still quite different. The growth of new specialist branches of farming around the conurbations, such as poultry raising and market gardening, further complicated the totality of English farming despite the general trend towards a more mixed type of operation. The complexity of English agriculture, which has always perplexed any student attempting to formulate meaningful generalisations concerning that agriculture, made the NFU's achievement of developing a successful general farmers' organisation all the more considerable. A greater degree of specialisation also provides another factor which explains why the NFU was formed later than the NZFU.

Specialist divisions within New Zealand, especially those of a regional nature, were, however, more fully developed by 1900 than is generally realised. The major division existed between the North Island and the South Island. Dairying was far more important in the North Island, while the question of improvements was of much greater concern to North Island farmers as they generally had to carve their farms out of the bush. Mixed cropping and sheep grazing operations were far more important on the open tussock lands of the South Island. But there were also divisions within each island. The lowland areas of the North Island were generally given over to dairying, while hillier inland areas concentrated more on sheep raising. The southern part of the North Island also tended to be nearer the South Island model as cropping was far more important in this area. Canterbury and Otago produced a type of mixed crop and sheep farming which was nearer the English model than any other region of New Zealand. The most distinctive specialist crop of Canterbury was wheat, while Otago farmers concentrated more on oats. Dairying was reasonably important
on the Taieri plains and also assumed a growing importance on the Southland plains. Root crops constituted a much more significant component of the farming rotation in Southland than anywhere else. The dry hills of Marlborough favoured the continuance of extensive sheep runs, while Nelson saw the beginning of specialisation in market gardening and orcharding, a development which was also occurring around the environs of the four main centres.

This limited degree of specialist sub-groupings posed real problems for the NZFU. Although dairy farmers initially supported the NZFU much of that support was lost during the 1920s when a separate Dairy Farmers' Union broke away. It did not amalgamate with the NZFU until 1929. Few specialist wool producers joined the NZFU either. Most of the big pastoralists remained outside the NZFU and joined the Sheep Owners' Federation instead, or sometimes decided to support only their local A and P Association. As the final chapter will reveal the NZFU's leadership was not dominated by either an oligarchy of big farmers as L.J. Wild suggested, nor was it ever captured by small dairy farmers. It was rather controlled by middling sized sheep and mixed farmers, or in other words, "meat men." Generally the organisation seemed incapable of catering for the different needs of dairy, meat, wool and fruit and vegetable producers. The implementation of what political scientists call an integrative function, or the successful representation of a broad range of specialist interests by a single organisation, should have been easier in New Zealand than in England. Yet the NZFU, unlike the NFU, failed to evolve into a general farmers' organisation despite its claim to represent all branches of New Zealand farming.


This failure was partly accounted for by the fact that even in the 1920s New Zealand farmers ranged from virtual pioneers to long established settlers who had farmed their land for two or even three generations. Most English farmers in contrast were well established, many tenants coming from families who had farmed for centuries. The differences between new and older settled areas in New Zealand were inter-regional as well as regional, even though South Island farming was generally more well established. Even within Otago the problems faced by soldier settlers on the Clifton estate in the 1920s were little different from those encountered by Taieri farmers in the 1850s. Such a considerable range in the levels of farming development made it difficult for one organisation to represent effectively the interests of both established and new farmers. It was almost inevitable that the NZFU would represent the interests of the established farmers rather than of men starting out simply because new farmers were too busy developing their properties to play an active role within the NZFU. In fact this was what generally happened. Like Ned Livingstone, Maurice Shadbolt's larger than life pioneer farmer, the majority of New Zealand farmers did not join the NZFU because they were "too bloody tired to care." 28

Probably the most important single factor in explaining the different situations of the two farming communities was simply the fact that the tripartite system was not reduplicated in New Zealand. As the accompanying table reveals the private landlord/tenant farmer system of land tenure dominated in England whereas New Zealand adopted the freehold tenure typical of other new world countries.

28. Maurice Shadbolt, Strangers and Journeys, (London 1972), p 150
### Table 1:4

**Tenants Compared with Owner Occupiers**

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<th>1880</th>
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<td>America</td>
<td>22.55</td>
<td>74.25</td>
<td>37.96</td>
<td>60.89</td>
<td>40.90</td>
<td>58.06</td>
<td>47.78</td>
<td>51.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remainder-Managers</td>
<td>Whites &amp; Blacks</td>
<td>Whites only</td>
<td>Whites only</td>
<td>Whites only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>71.43</td>
<td>31.66</td>
<td>68.36</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>35.75</td>
<td>64.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>32.54</td>
<td>67.46</td>
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</table>

### Table 1:5

**1905 Royal Commission on Land Tenure in N.Z.**

Breakdown of Crown Leasehold Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Holdings</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Area %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation with Right of Purchase</td>
<td>(4,151)</td>
<td>19.68</td>
<td>7.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lease in perpetuity</td>
<td>(7,279)</td>
<td>34.50</td>
<td>10.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small grazing runs</td>
<td>(719)</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>8.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral Runs</td>
<td>(863)</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>67.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred Payment</td>
<td>(312)</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetual Lease</td>
<td>(690)</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - Special Settlements Village</td>
<td>(7,132)</td>
<td>33.30</td>
<td>5.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homestead Mining etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 1:6

**1911 Yearbook Breakdown of N.Z. Leasehold by Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private and Public Bodies</td>
<td>16.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>9.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown</td>
<td>74.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In England most of the agricultural land was owned by a few large landholders, who leased out their estates to tenants to farm in smaller sized lots. The tenants in turn were dependent upon the landlord for their major supply of capital and generally relied upon the assistance of hired labourers to work their farms. The labourers were generally landless and made up the great bulk of the rural population. In short economic relationships within rural England assumed a classical pyramidal structure.

In direct contrast New Zealand followed the predominant new world model of predominantly freehold ownership. A clear majority of the occupiers of agricultural land in New Zealand were freeholders from around 70% of the total number in 1882 to 63% in 1910 and 64.5% in 1926. If farmers held the leasehold they were tenants of the State rather than tenants of private landlords or public bodies, a tenurial arrangement condemned by English landlords and tenants alike. Even in terms of area only 17% of leasehold land was let by private landlords or public bodies in 1911.

29. In 1873 4,217 persons, each possessing over 1,000 acre holdings, owned 18,546,000 acres of England and Wales, or about half of the total area of the country. Furthermore, 400 peers alone owned 5,729,000 acres, meaning that the average size of their estates was 14,322.5 acres. In the United Kingdom as a whole there were 901 landlords in 1879 who owned estates of over 10,000 acres each. Forty-four of these men owned estates of over 100,000 acres each. Ashworth, Op cit, p 49. These figures were taken from J. Bateman, The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland, (4th ed. London 1883).


32. ibid. 1926, pp 381 and 393.

33. ibid. 1911, p 526.
In England the great majority of farmers were private tenants, approximately 85% in the late nineteenth century and 80% at the outbreak of World War I. 

Immediately after World War I the predominance of tenants declined somewhat as many large estates were sold up, particularly in response to greatly increased death duties and higher taxation. Many tenants were forced to buy up or quit. The end result was that by 1926 tenants made up only 65% of the total number of English farmers. But after that date the move towards a greater degree of owner-occupancy slowed considerably. The freeholder remained in the minority. Although a series of Agricultural Holdings Acts partly stimulated such sales by increasing compensation for disturbance and deciding some landlords to sell out in the process, this increased compensation won the full advantages of ownership for tenants without the attendant responsibilities. The Act of 1920, a consolidating Act of 1923 and a further Act of 1948, were passed largely in response to demands made by the NFU. Their passing ensured that the NFU was successful in realising its primary objective of security of tenure. That success was revealed by the fact that 61% of English farmers were still tenants in 1951, although there has been an increase in owner-occupancy since that date.


Comparisons with the United States of America and Victoria reinforce the view that New Zealand belonged to the new world in terms of tenure. In the U.S.A. approximately 61% of white farmers were full owner-occupiers in 1900. As the twentieth century progressed tenancy increased. By 1930 only 51% of white farmers were full owner-occupiers. Growing indebtedness and the difficulty of securing credit at reasonable rates of interest forced many owners to become tenants.

The freehold tenure was even more predominant in Victoria than either New Zealand or America, with 67.5% of the holdings being held by outright owners in 1907. Only 3% of the holdings were held under pure leasehold tenures with the remaining 29.5% belonging to part owner-occupiers.

Two qualifications need to be made, however, to the predominance of owner-occupancy in New Zealand. First, in terms of area the leasehold was greater because of the few very large pastoral runs which were largely composed of poor quality upland tussock country. In 1905, for example, there were 863 such runs which represented only 4.09% of the total number of leasehold holdings but comprised 67.10% of the leasehold area. Second, some farmers expressed satisfaction with the crown tenures. These tenures offered security and low rentals. They freed capital from mortgage.

39. The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present, Table K 8-52.

40. Victoria Yearbook, 1907-1908, p 615.


repayments for improvements and removed the threat of eviction. 

Furthermore, only some 559 out of a total of around 10,000 lease-in-perpetuity tenants, or about 6%, bothered to take up the option of the freehold when it was offered to them by William Massey's Reform Government in 1913.

The major factor which caused a minority of crown tenants to call for the introduction of the freehold option was not a burning desire for the freehold. It was rather a fear of either revaluation or land nationalisation as demanded by the Trades and Labour councils and radical politicians such as Tommy Taylor or George Fowlds. In general the main demand for the freehold option emanated from freeholders within the NZFU rather than from crown tenants themselves.

Still despite the relative importance of State leaseholds within New Zealand, both as a stepping stone to owner-occupancy and as an end in itself, the continuing predominance of the freehold placed New Zealand much nearer the new world model of land ownership.

43. ibid. C4-B, shows that nearly a third of farmer witnesses favoured the leasehold. In Canterbury nearly a half were in favour of the leasehold. pp 17-18.

44. A to J, 1914, C-1, p 111. The figure would be 780 or about 8% if conversions to deferred payment are included.

45. This fear was expressed over and over again by both official NZFU witnesses and those crown tenants who were critical of State tenures. They claimed that the Government might one day break the contract entered into with crown tenants and so destroy the security of all tenures other than the freehold. For a fuller discussion of this point and the Commission's findings in general see R.L. Bailey, "Agrarian Aspirations and Demands as Illustrated by the 1905 Royal Commission on Land Tenure," Unpublished MA Thesis, Massey University, 1972.

46. This conclusion is based on an exhaustive investigation of all the NZFU witnesses, both official and unofficial, who gave evidence to the Commission. The findings of this investigation are elaborated in chapters ten, eleven and twelve.

47. Condliffe was quite correct in asserting that the freehold was triumphant by the turn of the century despite the outcry raised by the NZFU over granting the freehold option to crown tenants. Condliffe, Op. cit., pp 254-256.
New Zealand farmers who were tenants were quite distinct from their English counterparts, the great majority of whom were tenants-at-will rather than leaseholders. Critical economic differences ensued as a result of the rejection of the tripartite model in New Zealand. The most important of these differences was the development of contrasting sources of credit and a much greater incidence of land speculation amongst New Zealand farmers.

As in North America the majority of New Zealand farmers, other than a few homesteaders, had to have some capital to acquire land even if they were able to take advantage of the various leaseholds or easy deferred payment systems which had been offered since the days of the provincial system. Once on the land repayment of mortgage money and interest on loans made the question of credit a critical one for New Zealand farmers. The establishment of the Advances to Settlers' Office in 1894 temporarily quenched the farmers' thirst for credit, but by 1905 many complaints were made that such loans were insufficient and difficult to obtain. Some

48. Ashworth, Op cit, p 51. Unlike New Zealand leaseholders most English tenants did not sign a lease with the State or landlord for a specified period of time, but rather occupied a farm on the understanding that their landlord could remove them if their farming proved unsatisfactory or if the landlord decided to sell up.

49. One John Nicholson, a North Auckland farmer, had been helped onto his land by a Homestead tenure, or a free gift of land. He recommended that the system be more broadly introduced in poor areas of country such as North Auckland. A to J, 1905, C-4, p 798. His case was rather exceptional as little land was opened up for settlement free of rent, and what few holdings were thrown open on the Homestead system tended to be too small to be of any great use. There were 1,248 homestead holdings in 1905. ibid. pp 1566-1567. John Johnson, also from North Auckland, claimed the Homestead system had only worked because of timber on the land. ibid. pp 818-819.

50. Waterson, Op cit, p 39, convincingly demonstrates that even on a 1-i-p estate each of the successful applicants held some existing capital. Furthermore, those men with insufficient capital resources were soon forced off their land.

51. M.R. Stenson, "Origins of the Government Advances to Settlers Act, 1894," Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 1962, makes it clear that the Office was not as generous as the Liberal Government hoped posterity would believe it to be.
witnesses to the Land Commission also claimed that private lending agencies, whether banks, mortgage companies or stock and station agencies, offered equally attractive terms. By the early twentieth century many farmers wanted to cash in on rising land values and became agitated if they could not raise the necessary finance. Costs of equipment, stock and labour were also beginning to rise and some had immediate need for easier credit. Increasingly farmers were being forced to turn back to private lending agencies, who acted as the major source of credit for most freeholders. In a sense the banker and the stock agent performed a similar role to the English landlord. It was not surprising, therefore, that the bank or the stock and station agency was a frequent target for abuse, largely because they played such a crucial role within the farming industry. Criticism became more vehement as economic conditions deteriorated. New Zealand farmers tended to develop an anti-banking/financial institution mentality during the 1880s which was remarkably similar to that of their North American counterparts. Right from its inception the NZFU demanded the provision of cheaper and more readily available credit, but that demand did not become strident until private sources of credit tightened up after the depression of 1921. As the 1920s progressed and marketing reforms were initiated the major catchcry of the NZFU became the introduction of co-operative agricultural banking.

The NFU said little about the question of introducing additional sources of credit until the 1920s. Landlords seemed to supply most tenants with sufficient capital for adequate improvements, while they generally held rents at an uneconomic level. On the other hand the general trend whereby landlords were increasingly investing in more lucrative areas such as railway promotion, industrial engineering or London property development,

52. e.g. The same John Nicholson made such a claim, A to J, 1905, C-4, p 758, or Michael O'Connor of Te Tua in Southland, p 33.
deeply concerned the NFU's leaders. One of the major reasons behind the formation of the NFU was the desire to correct the outflow of capital from agriculture. Somehow they hoped to direct investment from Vickers back to their farms. Then the boom conditions of war-time diverted attention away from this issue. Credit became a major issue once again when the war ended as a growing number of farmers were forced to buy up their farms. From that time on the NFU urged improvements on both intermediate and long term credit facilities as the problem became more like that confronting New Zealand farmers. The Baldwin administration made some legislative response to pacify these demands, but English farmers, like their New Zealand counterparts, remained dissatisfied with Government attempts to remedy this grievance.

Closely tied to the whole question of credit was the incidence of land speculation. From the turn of the century more and more New Zealand farmers began to play the land market, attempting to buy cheap and sell dear and so cash in on rising export prices. With the boom prices of wartime this trend became chronic. A contemporary economist, Professor H. Belshaw, estimated that half of the total agricultural land area of New Zealand changed hands between 1915 and 1925. Research carried out since Belshaw's estimates tends to suggest that his figures were probably a little conservative. While professional speculators and big farmers were undoubtedly prominent in such activities, many small farmers also participated, often in an effort to place their sons on farms of their own. The NZFU played its part by urging the introduction of the freehold


55. Belshaw's findings were reinforced by his later work carried out with D.O. Williams, summarised in the following tables taken from Belshaw Stephens and Williams, Op cit, pp 186, 189 and 191. Waterson, Op cit, pp 42-43, found that the pattern of high turnover of holdings was even more fully developed in the Matamata district than in the country as a whole. Dennis George, Op cit, pp 12-19, confirms these earlier findings.
option to enable more of its members to take advantage of the buoyant land market. Even though the leasehold provided a safety net to some farmers during the 1890s and helped them onto the first rung of the agricultural ladder, it was transformed into an imposed ceiling on individual advancement once export prices rose in the early 1900s. In short the NZFU wanted to convert public assets to private advantage. Waterson's study confirms that the introduction of the freehold option did stimulate speculation in the Waikato. Generally speculation was most pronounced in dairying areas such as the Waikato or Taranaki where land values were rising most rapidly, but it was typical of most areas of New Zealand.

With the fall in export prices in 1921, however, the land boom came to a rather abrupt halt. A burden of widely inflated land values and massive debts was bequeathed to the next generation of farmers. Many small dairy men came to curse the speculations of their predecessors, while the hapless returned soldier settlers struggled desperately to survive. Attention turned to calling for the extension of moratoriums to enable farmers to meet their unrealistic mortgage commitments. It was scarcely surprising that credit became such a major issue after 1921 as many farmers required larger and cheaper loans to cope with the after effects of the earlier untrammelled playing of the land market. Land gambling continued but at a much more moderate rate.

All this was very different from England. The winning of greater compensation for disturbance, while not excluding gambling in farm land, generally seemed to hold prices at a reasonable level and checked speculation. The NFU's primary objective, like that of the NZFU, was security of tenure. Like the NZFU the NFU leaders feared the notion of land nationalisation and were determined to resist the introduction of any

such scheme. But the means of realising security of tenure were diametrical-
cally opposed. There was little point in owning the freehold when the tenant
was allowed complete control over his farming operations and the landlord
was compelled by law to provide generous compensation for disturbance or
damage caused by game hunting. More important still the tenant's capital
was freed from mortgage commitments and could be almost exclusively devoted
to developing his farm to its fullest potential. The massive condemnation
of the tripartite system made by both the NZFU and numerous commentators
on rural matters who wrote in either agricultural periodicals or the
national press, clearly misjudged the position of the English tenant
farmer, even before 1920. After that time criticisms of the English
landlord/tenant system became increasingly inaccurate. A powerful
mythology seemed to develop in New Zealand that tenancy-at-will was entirely
bad from the farmers' point of view and that English farming was inefficient
because of the tenurial system under which it operated. In fact the
tripartite system had been largely responsible for the many advances which
English farming made over the agriculture of continental Europe. English
farming was also far more efficient than New Zealand farmers generally
realised, especially as it lacked such advantages as virgin soil fertility,
or large areas of underdeveloped land.

57. Few farmer witnesses who gave evidence to the 1905 Land Commission,
even if they did not belong to the NZFU, had anything good to say
about the landlord/tenant system as it existed in England.
At first glance the big pastoralists of New Zealand would appear to be equivalent to the English "gentry" in terms of their economic function. Certainly the big pastoralists were as wealthy as many members of the "gentry". They also made a similar contribution to the development of New Zealand agriculture in terms of large scale capital inputs and through the introduction of more scientific farming techniques and the use of the latest machinery, as did "High Farmers" to English agriculture. But the comparison is a misleading one, simply because few of the big pastoralists let their farms out to tenants or provided their tenants with capital. They seldom directed farmers' cropping rotations. Such regulation was left largely to the State. Most big pastoralists in fact worked their own properties or hired managers. A more meaningful comparison in the economic sense would be with the sheep squatters of Australia or the cattle barons of North America.


59. The genealogist, J.B. Burke, suggested as late as 1861 that the minimum income qualification for baronets should be £500 per annum and £2,000 for peers. F.M.L. Thompson, Op. cit., p 62. Eldred-Grigg has shown that the Ashburton pastoralists generally exceeded the minimum income of peers. The famous Longbeach estate of John Grigg, for example, made a profit of £7,500 in 1893 despite very low wheat and wool prices. Op. cit., p 192. Even smaller local estates managed to earn over £1,500 annual returns after all expenses had been met. The Ashburton "gentry" also invested in urban property development, shipping, mining, timber milling and the freezing industry, pp 198-212.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Transfers</th>
<th>Area Transferred as Percentage of Area Occupied</th>
<th>Index of Export Prices</th>
<th>Index of Prices (4)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thousand Acres</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>1909-13=100</td>
<td>1909-13=100</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912-14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,206</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>109</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914-15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,130</td>
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<td>124</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915-16</td>
<td>5,312</td>
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<td>3,515</td>
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<td>1917-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918-19</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7,409</td>
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<td>6,974</td>
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<td>1931-32</td>
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<td>89</td>
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<tr>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>4,322</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One surviving myth of the Liberal achievement that must be challenged, however, is that the breaking up of the large estates brought about the demise of the big pastoralist. In fact they survived as a powerful economic group right up to the depression of the 1930s, even if the families comprising that group changed somewhat, and they probably are still a very important group today. While their earlier economic dominance disappeared after the 1890s they still continued to exercise an economic influence out of all proportion to their numbers. This was basically because their sheep power was not reduced to any great extent. In 1920, for example, 2.92% of New Zealand’s total sheep owners, that is those persons with flocks of over 5,000 sheep, owned about 30% of the entire national flock. Furthermore, the 164 persons owning flocks of over 10,000 sheep, or a mere 0.68% of the total flock owners, owned 2,824,753 sheep or 11.81% of New Zealand’s total flock. Even these figures understate the true position as several of the big pastoralists owned up to four flocks of over 10,000 sheep. The number of holdings over 10,000 acres also increased in absolute terms after 1890, even if these big blocks constituted a smaller proportion of the total agricultural land area. Some hill country blocks continued to be viable.

61. Calculated from the "Annual Sheep Returns," A to J, 1920, H-23. The number of flocks in 1891 of over 10,000 sheep made up 3.29% of the total and those over 5,000 5.63%. The flocks between 1,000 and 5,000 rose from 13.3% of the total in 1891 to 23.89% in 1920, while flocks of under 1,000 declined from 81.15% to 73.19%. A to J, 1891, H-15A. The changes induced by Liberal land legislation clearly were not profound. Broader economic trends appeared to be more important in explaining the move towards medium sized flocks. While the very big owners were reduced in number they clearly had not disappeared.

62. There were 337 holdings over 10,000 acres in 1892, 490 in 1911 and 529 in 1926. In 1892 they made up 0.77% of the total number of holdings and 44.56% of the area. By 1911 they represented 0.66% of the number of holdings and 39.78% of the area. Those percentages declined further to reach 0.62% and 32.86% by 1926. N.Z. Yearbook, 1892, p 94; 1911, pp 525-526; 1926, pp 380-81. Despite this decline, very big holdings were clearly still important in 1926.
### COMPARISON OF AVERAGE SIZE OF AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS

#### IN ACRES

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1930</th>
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<td>England</td>
<td>By holdings</td>
<td>By holdings</td>
<td>By holdings</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mingay</td>
<td>By farms</td>
<td>Mingay</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>131</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>America</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>374</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Victoria</td>
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#### Categories of farm size in 1900

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<tr>
<th>By Percentage</th>
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<th>51-100</th>
<th>101-320</th>
<th>321-1,000</th>
<th>1,000+</th>
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<td>57.28</td>
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<td>America</td>
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<td>45.98</td>
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<td>23.52</td>
<td>13.13</td>
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<td>37.30</td>
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<td>8.60</td>
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#### MINGAY'S ESTIMATES FOR ENGLISH FARMS

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<th>Rather than Holdings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>101-300a</td>
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<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
only if they were worked as large units. The big pastoralists then remained as an important economic group 63 within the farming community, even if they were only one of several such groups. In 1910 they established their own national pressure group, the Sheep Owners' Federation, and proceeded to evolve policies frequently hostile to those of the NZFU. Their considerable economic power was to pose real problems for the NZFU who discovered that numerical superiority was of little use in countering the influence of the SOF.

Even though the tripartite system was not reduplicated in New Zealand, there was not a great discrepancy in the size of farm units. The accompanying table makes it clear that despite the discrepancy in average size, the majority of holdings were medium sized and typical of farmers rather than peasants. Small holdings of under fifty acres were more important in England, but the breakdown of holdings into different size categories reveals that they were also important in New Zealand. The qualification should be added, however, that the importance of small holdings in both instances was exaggerated by the existence of multiple holdings. Professor G.E. Mingay's estimate of the size of farms proper as opposed to total holdings 64 probably states the position more accurately. His corrected figures suggest that medium sized units were nearly as significant in England as in New Zealand.

63. We do not know for certain whether or not the individual families who comprised this group changed dramatically, but judging from the names printed in the sheep returns many of the old families survived as big pastoralists. New blood also seems to have been infused into the group suggesting that it was open ended.

The table on farm size also suggests that hierarchies existed within both farming communities. While farm size alone cannot accurately indicate wealth or status, it does provide a rough guide to both factors. Small market gardens sometimes represented a more profitable type of venture than large sheep runs. Only measurements of capital inputs against returns on each individual farm will answer the question of how size related to economic standing. But large holdings were generally richer in terms of assets. Furthermore, this size hierarchy made it clear that neither group of farmers was by any means homogeneous. Differences in size constituted horizontal divisions complementing the vertical divisions of specialisation and locality. Such an additional form of division made the task of a general farmers' organisation even more difficult. These size hierarchies also seemed to be cementing themselves from 1910 onwards, despite the efforts of both the British and New Zealand Liberal Governments, who only shared a name in common, to encourage small holdings.65

Two other obvious, but critical factors which helped explain the evolution of the different tenurial systems and styles of farming were

64. Bagwell and Mingay, Op cit, p 61.

65. J.D. Gould, "The Occupation of Farm Land in New Zealand, 1874-1911; A Preliminary Survey," Business Archives and History, Vol 5 No 2 (Aug 1965), pp 123-141, clearly demonstrates that aggregation was underway again by 1911.

66. For an account of how New Zealand farming differed from English and other new world types of farming see Hargreaves, Op cit; G.T. Alley and D.O.W. Hall, The Farmer in New Zealand, (Wellington 1941); B.L. Evans, A history of agricultural production and marketing in New Zealand, (Palmerston North 1969); and P.W. Smallfield, The Grasslands' Revolution in New Zealand, (Auckland 1970). The most illuminating contemporary accounts were provided in the NZ County Journal, published from 1877 to 1899; the NZ Farmer first published in 1885 and still surviving; and the NZ Journal of Agriculture, published since 1910. These three publications between them provide as nearly a comprehensive coverage of the development of New Zealand farming as the various British agricultural journals do for the evolution of British farming.
the simple determinants of geography and the fact that New Zealand farmers had started from scratch. While Turnerian style arguments in favour of geography as a major determinant of historical development have long been out of fashion, it cannot be denied that New Zealand's different climate and terrain made the exact reduplication of English farming methods impossible. Pastoral farming, for example, was only viable if it could be carried out on a massive scale 67 and the leasehold was the tenurial system which best answered its needs. Similarly dairying on a much more modest scale was far better suited to the heavily clad bush country of the North Island than the mixed grain growing and sheep raising operations of the east of England. Technological innovations, especially in the form of refrigeration and the centrifugal cream separator, accentuated differences induced by nature. Furthermore, the tripartite system had evolved over many centuries. Aspects of it could be traced back to at least the Norman conquest. It was quite simply impossible for this peculiarly English phenomena to be reduplicated anywhere else. New Zealand farming similarly evolved its own distinctive forms in response initially to its different climate and relief and later to the pull of market forces. Superficially, New Zealand agriculture was similar to that of England and other temperate countries, but in reality it was very different. English agriculture had also been shaped by the growth of a big population and the readily available pool of labour. New Zealand farmers in contrast came to rely on the British population to consume their produce and only had a small pool of labour on which to draw, despite Wakefield's efforts to attract large numbers of labourers to New Zealand. Without such a group of landless rural workers the tripartite system could not function.

67. Horsefield, Op cit, p 98 estimates that at least 4,000 sheep were necessary to make specialist wool production a viable proposition. This usually implied that a holding of over 4,000 acres was required to carry out such an operation.
Clearly, the different factors which explained the failure to reduplicate the tripartite system in New Zealand and the differences which emanated from the typically new world pattern of freehold ownership were not only economic but social and political as well.
CHAPTER TWO

"LARKRISE TO WAITAHUNA."

SOME COMPARISONS OF ENGLISH AND NEW ZEALAND
RURAL SOCIETY IN THE PERIOD 1870-1930.

"He was as far as possible removed by birth, education and worldly circumstances from the lambs of his flock. He spoke to them from a great height, physical, mental, and spiritual. 'To order myself lowly and reverently before my betters' was the clause he underlined in the Church Catechism, for had he not been divinely appointed pastor and master to those little rustics and was it not one of his chief duties to teach them to realise this?... God had placed them just where they were in the social order and given them their own special work to do, to envy others or to try to change their own lot in life was a sin of which he hoped they would never be guilty."


"He cares not how the world may move,
No doubts nor fears confound him"

Anon, "The Independent Farmer,"
Tuapeka Times, 19 Mar 1881.

"You're as free as the air in the mountains and monarch of all you survey."

C.E.M. Breen, "Don't Leave The Farm,"
N.Z. Farmer, Jul 1885, p 345.

"The man who walks behind the plough
Is his own master, whate'er befall
And king or beggar he feeds us all."

"Husbandman," "The Farmer,"
N.Z. Farmer, Sep 1886 p 281

By the early twentieth century rural society in New Zealand had evolved a markedly different structure from that of its parent society. One belonged to the old world while the other was of the new. English rural society was stratified, ascriptive and deferential, whereas New Zealand rural society was relatively fluid, egalitarian and mobile. Status within it was dependent on money and achievement rather than birth.
The hierarchy of the tripartite system was not only economic, it was also social and political. Tenants acted deferentially towards their landlords, while traditional social obligations cemented the economic relationship. Some landlords even selected incoming tenants according to their political beliefs. The tenants in turn expected their labourers to act deferentially towards them and placed themselves at a considerable social distance. Labourers were expected to fulfill obligations in terms of work and service. Studies of turn of the century rural society in Wales and East Anglia, based on oral evidence, suggests that these quasi-manorial obligations were very binding. Assistance at harvest time assumed the nature of a ritual enactment and everyone related to everyone else in expected and clearly defined roles. Furthermore, the cohesiveness, the organic whole-ness of English rural society was reinforced by the activity of the Church of England. The clergy set out to ensure the continuing dominance of their peers within the landed gentry and upper echelons of the tenantry by preaching and working against any levelling tendencies. Divine sanction was imparted to the whole social structure, while their social gospel was one of maintaining the status quo.

New Zealand rural society in contrast was based on the family unit of labour, lacked the complex social obligations of England and stood much nearer to the American model of rural society. Hierarchies still existed but they were hierarchies of wealth rather than of obligation. Defercence often gave way to open defiance towards supposed social superiors. Furthermore, each member of rural society was allowed considerable freedom.

in the area of political action, especially after the introduction of universal manhood suffrage in 1889. If Churches exercised much influence over settlement they tended to be denominations with a more egalitarian polity than the Anglicans such as the Presbyterians in Otago or the Methodists in the Wairarapa-Bush area. Canterbury provided the major exception to this norm.

Two qualifications need to be made, however, in stressing this difference. First, structural relationships were complicated by the vertical divisions of farmers' different specialisations and localism. Second, the evolution of New Zealand rural society away from the structure of its parent society towards the American model, the process by which labourers became cockatoos and cockatoos became prosperous farmers, was neither continuous nor uniformly smooth. It was rather a series of protracted advances and sometimes of virtual retreats.

At certain points in time and in certain areas New Zealand society seemed to be becoming more rigid, more English. Keith Pickens, in a recent thesis, labels the two trends "Americanisation," that is the movement towards the more egalitarian and mobile American norm and "Anglicisation," that is the move towards the more stratified English norm. He points out that these two trends have co-existed from the very beginning of New Zealand history with one coming to dominance in certain periods only to be replaced by a movement in the other direction. Such a co-existence

4. By parent society I really mean British society, which in many ways was divided into separate English, Scots, Northern and Southern Irish entities.

has been made even more complex than perhaps Pickens suggests by the considerable regional and even inter-regional variations in the levels of farming development and social maturation. Furthermore, the term Anglicisation works well for the province of Canterbury which was settled on more consciously English lines than any other area of New Zealand, but the social development of other regions has also been considerably shaped by the influence of Scots and/or Irish immigrants. The social structure of nineteenth century Scotland and Ireland was in many ways more stratified and rigid than that of nineteenth century England, and lack of opportunity was a major factor in accounting for the massive out-migration experienced by both those countries. Consequently, Scots and Irish immigrants were generally more fiercely egalitarian than their English counterparts and set out to ensure that New Zealand followed the fluid social pattern typical of other new world countries.

Despite the variations in the progress of settlement and the efforts of the more militant Scots and Irish, New Zealand experienced a general trend towards a more rigid social situation after 1900. Hierarchies of wealth became more firmly established as land became less readily available. The greater equality of rural New Zealand remained relative for many small farmers and labourers still had to struggle to survive while bigger farmers prospered. Myth has undoubtedly exaggerated the egalitarian nature of New Zealand society in general and rural society in particular. Furthermore, it should be noted that although change within the tripartite system occurred at a slow rate it was not static. It weakened a little in the 1870s and 1880s as labourers left in large numbers but it experienced more

6. The NZ Census, 1901, p 124, showed that 516,106 persons, or 66.83%, of the population were native born, while 111,964, or 14.5%, were born in England, 47,858, or 6.20%, in Scotland and 43,542, or 5.64%, in Ireland.
dramatic changes after World War I when the binding nature of the social obligations in both rural and urban England were loosened, partly in response to the sale of many great estates. A shift in the balance of power occurred as landlords lost some of their earlier dominance and tenant farmers gained influence at their landlord's expense. Yet the tripartite system did not disappear. It has survived until the present day in heavily modified form, at least as an economic system. Clearly even though there was not a convergence of the trends shaping both societies there was some movement towards each other.

Rollo Arnold has already highlighted many of the differences between rural society in late nineteenth century England and New Zealand. His work has called into serious question Louis Hartz's hypothesis that the spin-off segment of the parent society was frozen in the new world environment. New Zealand was settled at a time when the tripartite system was at its zenith, yet the majority of its settlers did not share Wakefield's desire to replant that system in new soil. The assertion of difference

7. George Ewart Evans claims that the generation born between 1885 and 1895 was the last whose life-style was shaped by the old rural order. *The Pattern Under the Plough*, pp 18-19.


9. Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies*. *Studies in the History the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada and Australia*, (New York 1964). For a criticism of Hartz's theory as applied to Australia see *Australian Economic History Review*, Vol 13 No 2 (Sep 1973). If feudalism was successfully transplanted into Latin America it would seem likely that the tripartite system should have been established, at least in modified form in New Zealand. But this was not the case. On the other hand Arnold lends some qualified support to Hartz, because he argues that ex-English agricultural labourer immigrants carried with them a determination to make sure that such a social system would not be re-established in New Zealand. Hartz argues that the Chartist ideals carried by some British immigrants did influence later Australian developments, while Arnold contends that the "yeoman" ideals of his labourers overthrew the earlier dominance of a New Zealand style "gentry".
Fig 2: Diagram of N.Z. Rural Society pre 1900.
remains, however, something of an assumption. It should be made more rigorous by closely examining some of the differences in detail to see where New Zealand really stood in relation to the American and English models.

1 The Structure of English and New Zealand Rural Society

The structure of New Zealand rural society was much nearer the American model than the English. It did not assume a pyramidal shape with a large base of landless agricultural labourers as is shown in diagram one. Prior to 1900 rural New Zealand society was essentially a horizontal structure with a lack of clear definition between labourers and small farmers, small pastoralists and big farmers. Only the big pastoralists were placed at any social advantage and their economic superiority often remained precariously dependent upon high prices for wool and freedom from snow storms or drought. During the years from the late 1890s to the 1920s an important change occurred which converted the formerly loose horizontal structure into more of a classical vertical structure. The change came about primarily because of the continual period of prosperity described in chapter one and the associated land boom. Rising land values placed longer established farmers at a considerable advantage over men starting out. As land prices continued to rise it became more and more difficult for poorer men, whether town workers or agricultural labourers, to find their way onto the land. Even if they were assisted on to the land by the State their plight was often rendered little easier. Once export prices collapsed these men were placed in serious difficulties as the failure of the soldier settler schemes illustrated in dramatic fashion. As this change took place New Zealand rural society became more hierachical, more stratified and less mobile. Farmers also became a more distinct occupational group in relation to labourers or part-time farmers. The NZFU was an institutional expression of this important change which began around the turn of the century.
Fig 3: Diagram illustrating the structure of N.Z. rural society post 1900.
Around 1900 the shape of New Zealand rural society was something like that depicted in diagram three, although it was probably not as rigid, nor as vertically divided as the model suggests. Initially the rise in prices stimulated mobility, but by the end of the first decade it was beginning to solidify the new construction. The big pastoralists were still at the top of the new pyramid, although they tended to move a little to one side of the structure over the next twenty years. The pyramid then spread wider to include the big well established farmers of the longer settled areas. There was not a great deal of movement between these men and the big pastoralists. Then the pyramid gave way to a widespread bulge ranging from larger and longer established mixed farmers to smaller recently established dairy farmers. Farmers were the majority group within the New Zealand agricultural work force for as table 2:1 reveals, they made up 45% of that work force whereas labourers constituted only 33%. In contrast, English farmers represented about a quarter of the agricultural labour force whereas labourers made up nearly three quarters. One system was top heavy with farmers whereas the other had a broad base of labourers. The predominance of farmers within New Zealand was also greater than in the U.S.A. or Victoria, while the predominance of the family unit of labour in each of the new world countries was revealed by the large numbers of relatives assisting within the overall work force. Further proof was supplied by the first comprehensive set of figures on New Zealanders' income recorded in the 1926 census. It showed that only 39% of New Zealand farmers employed labour, whereas 61% worked on their own account. These figures provide an added reason as to why the NFU was able to recruit more members. There was simply a much larger proportion of English farmers able to leave the supervision of their farming operations to hired labourers.

The bulge of farmers was wider at the bottom than the top as small farmers soon came to outnumber the larger and longer established middling
### TABLE 2:1

**BREAKDOWN OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOUR FORCE**

Percentage of Farmers to Labourers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ENGLAND</th>
<th></th>
<th>N.Z.</th>
<th></th>
<th>AMERICA</th>
<th></th>
<th>AUSTRALIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>18.28</td>
<td>79.93</td>
<td>18.28</td>
<td>79.93</td>
<td>18.28</td>
<td>79.93</td>
<td>18.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>19.94</td>
<td>78.23</td>
<td>45.65</td>
<td>30.07</td>
<td>45.65</td>
<td>30.07</td>
<td>45.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>23.75</td>
<td>73.56</td>
<td>44.56</td>
<td>32.67</td>
<td>53.00</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>53.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>45.96</td>
<td>32.74</td>
<td>53.00</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>48.65*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930**</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>38.87</td>
<td>39.70</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes relatives assisting  
** Not including relatives assisting
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Farmers incl. Fruit growers</th>
<th>Dairy Farmers</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Relatives assisting</th>
<th>Runholders</th>
<th>Labourers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>41.17</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>16.48</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>36.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>42.93</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>21.51</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>30.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>36.68</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>19.25</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>32.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>35.40</td>
<td>13.17</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>11.63</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>35.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>33.40</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>39.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Farmers and Relatives Assisting</th>
<th>Dairy Farmers</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Relatives assisting</th>
<th>Runholders</th>
<th>Labourers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>44.86</td>
<td>7.95</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>39.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Farmers</th>
<th>Bailiffs Managers</th>
<th>Relatives Assisting</th>
<th>Labourers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>18.28</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>74.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>23.75</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>68.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>70.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>68.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
group. This development was spurred on by the spectacular growth in the number of dairy farmers which occurred between the 1890s and 1920s. In 1891 there were only 452 dairy farmers constituting about 2% of the total number of farmers. But by 1926 that figure had risen to 16,864 or about 27% of all farmers.

At the bottom end of the farmer group were the part-time farmers who engaged in other occupations such as contracting, labouring and road making. Share-milkers made up another important sub-group, often earning enough to become farmers themselves. Overall this group was particularly fluid. Many of its members eventually became farmers, but others were forced to live out their lives as labourers who worked a farmlet as an additional source of income. This group were particularly numerous in North Island bush farming districts from the 1870s until the end of the century, but from around that time they began to decline in numbers and importance. Once they declined hierarchies became more entrenched, but this group has never completely disappeared. Even today men with limited capital resources still find their way onto the land through starting out as part-time farmers.

Below the part-time farmers were a rather amorphous, indistinct and constantly changing group - the labourers. Distinctions between the more skilled labourers, the part-time farmers and even some of the smaller full-time farmers were blurred. No great social distance existed between them. But after the early 1900s it became more difficult for labourers to acquire land with the ease with which they often seemed to in the nineteenth century. The proportion of hired labourers also increased during the 1920s. Even though this development was exaggerated by the tendency


11. This was particularly true, until recently, of market gardeners who often worked as telephone operators or contractors to supplement their income.
TABLE 2:3
Income categories of the N.Z. agricultural workforce in 1926.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Total Farmers</th>
<th>% Ag Work Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over £364</td>
<td>16.98</td>
<td>8.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208 - 364</td>
<td>47.76</td>
<td>24.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155 - 208</td>
<td>10.06</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 - 155</td>
<td>20.91</td>
<td>9.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 55</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labourers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over £364</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208 - 364</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155 - 208</td>
<td>33.16</td>
<td>12.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 - 155</td>
<td>44.42</td>
<td>17.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 52</td>
<td>12.95</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of some farmers to declare family members as labourers to reduce their payments of income tax, it suggested that rural society was becoming more stratified and rigid. The labourers' lot was increasingly assuming a more permanent appearance, akin to that of the English agricultural labourer, whereas previously it was a stepping stone, a temporary phase, in the process whereby an immigrant became a farmer.

Even within the ranks of the labourers there were distinctions between skilled workers such as shearers or ploughmen and unskilled workers. At the very base of the whole structure was a pool of itinerant labourers, the swaggers of song and legend, who met the seasonal needs of both pastoral and agricultural farming. 12

Concrete proof of this hierarchy of New Zealand farmers is provided by the 1926 income tax figures summarised in tables 2:3 and 2:5. While these figures do not express a farmer's total wealth in terms of assets, they do tell us much about his annual income after tax and so provide us with a useful guideline as to the farmer's standard of living and general condition of prosperity.

At the top end of the scale were the big farmers, mostly sheep farmers who employed labour. Their average net income was over £364, a category which placed them on a par with lawyers, doctors, dentists and accountants. The relative exclusiveness of this group was revealed by the fact that they only made up about 6% of the total number of farmers. Other employing farmers came next in terms of average income, but the highest figure for this group was only £275. In order of ranking this group were cattle farmers, dairy farmers and mixed farmers, while agricultural and fruit farmers shared bottom place.

12. This section on the composition of the agricultural work force in New Zealand, the U.S.A., Australia, Victoria and England, and tables 2:1 and 2:2 have been based on the same sources as the section in Chapter One on tenure and occupational structure. See Chapter One, footnote ten. The Victorian figures were taken from Victorian Yearbook, 1907-8, p 618.
## Table 2:4

**Income Distribution of the N.Z. Agricultural Labour Force in 1926**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>After Tax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Male Mean</td>
<td>£205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Male Mean</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Male Mean</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### I. Employing Farmers

- **38.42% Total Farmers**
- **19.57% Agricultural Labour Force**
- **4.5% of this group were Female**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Employing Farmers</th>
<th>% Total Farmers</th>
<th>% Ag. Lab. Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over £364</td>
<td>28.18</td>
<td>11.39</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208-364</td>
<td>34.47</td>
<td>24.30</td>
<td>12.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 155</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 52</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### II. Farmers on Own Account

- **62.58% Total Farmers**
- **31.40% Agricultural Labour Force**
- **2.66% were Female**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Farmers on Own account</th>
<th>% Total Farmers</th>
<th>% Agric. Labour Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over £364</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208-364</td>
<td>36.46</td>
<td>23.46</td>
<td>11.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 155</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>17.10</td>
<td>8.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 52</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### III. Labourers

- **39.70% Total Agricultural Labour Force**
- **1.2% were Female**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Total Labs.</th>
<th>% Total Ag. Lab. For.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over £364</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208-364</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 155</td>
<td>57.37</td>
<td>22.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 52</td>
<td>12.95</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The gap between the employing farmers, from whom the NZFU drew the greater part of its membership, especially from the employing mixed farmers and employing dairy farmers, and self-employed farmers was considerable. The top average income of farmers on their own account was £205. The gap was probably wider than that figure suggested as such farmers had to pay family members in terms of food and clothing. Dairy farmers topped the average income of this group, while market gardeners took bottom place earning less than many skilled labourers. As a group market gardeners were clearly only part-time farmers during the 1920s. It was not surprising that most market gardeners tended to view their interests as separate from those of stock and grain farmers. The average for dairy farmers was also a little flattering as nearly a quarter of self-employed dairy farmers earned under £155, barely a subsistence wage even in 1926. Overall nearly a fifth of New Zealand farmers had incomes which barely distinguished them from hired labourers. They must have existed at a virtual subsistence level, getting by with the food they produced themselves. Many of this group were also undoubtedly part-time farmers. The development of a hierarchy had clearly not removed small struggling farmers from the New Zealand rural scene. Nor had the unprecedented prosperity which lasted for an entire generation percolated down to the lowest level of the farming community. Economic equality remained a myth within rural New Zealand despite constant reference to the widespread existence of social equality.

13. Average income hides the range of income of each category of farmer, but it does give an overall impression of how each group of farmer fared as a collective entity.

14. Certainly this group feature prominently in Somerset's Littledene, which was written in 1938. Probably their numbers increased during the depression of the 1930s, but he suggests that they were a group who had existed from the earliest period of settlement. H.C.D. Somerset, Littledene Patterns of Change, (Wellington 1974), pp 10-11.
### TABLE 2.5

RELATIVES ASSISTING
7.94% Total Agricultural Labour Force

No income 88.61

AVERAGE INCOME OF SPECIALIST FARMERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Employing Farmers</th>
<th>Employing % Farmers</th>
<th>% Total Farmers</th>
<th>% Total Ag. Lab. Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>Over 364</td>
<td>16.37</td>
<td>6.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>23.26</td>
<td>8.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>49.14</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit incl. Market Gardener</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Managers £205. 3.0% Total Farmers 38.24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. On Own Account</th>
<th>% on own account</th>
<th>% Total Farmers</th>
<th>% Total Ag. Lab. Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>29.32</td>
<td>18.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>50.11</td>
<td>31.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Gardener</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharemilker</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>59.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AVERAGE INCOME OF LABOURERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Total Labourer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dairy Factory Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Farm Labourer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrub Cutter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This underlayer of small and poor farmers largely remained beyond the reach of the NZFU. Their equivalent English group also eluded the more successful recruiting efforts of the NFU.

With the possible exception of some of the more struggling small farmers, labourers were generally far worse off than farmers. Around 70% of their number earned under £155 per year. Furthermore, their stated income approximated their total wealth whereas farmers had undisclosed investments tied up in their farms. Incomes ranged considerably from £165 for drovers to £95 for milkers. The bottom 13% of this group who earned under £52 probably approximated the casual itinerant labourers.

The growing gap between New Zealand farmers and labourers was also illustrated in other ways. In Canterbury during 1907 and 1908, for example, the North Canterbury branch of the NZFU crushed an emergent agricultural labourers' union with a ruthlessness befitting the most reactionary English landlord.15 While very substantial farmers played a leading role in this action some of the most prominent Farmers' Union leaders such as David Jones or J.A. Pannett were the sons of small farmers who had been agricultural labourers before emigrating from England.16 Once they found themselves on the other side in the bargaining situation, farmers who had formerly been labourers, or were the sons of ex-labourers, acted as if they had been employers for generations. Furthermore, the NZFU admitted labourers to membership, but few bothered to join.


The two other interesting features of the 1926 income figures were the fact that most relatives assisting received no taxable monetary income and the suggestion that many New Zealand farmers were losing income parity with urban groups. Nearly nine out of ten relatives assisting received no income whatsoever beyond their keep. This pattern was typical of new world farming in general.

The rural male mean income of £185 was below the national mean of £205 and well below the urban male mean of £225. Even amongst the farmers something like 35% earned under the national norm. 17 A growing awareness of this disparity helped persuade some small farmers to join the NZFU in the hope that the organisation could help to close the widening gap. English farmers were also aware of the increasing income disparity of the urban and rural sectors. 18 But unlike their New Zealand counterparts tenant farmers could not make that disparity appear meaningless by selling their properties at a considerable profit.

It must also be made clear that the big pastoralists were not an equivalent group to the English "gentry" in the social as well as in the economic sense. Despite their considerable efforts to ape the lifestyle of the English gentry the big pastoralists dominance existed largely in the economic and political spheres and was not reinforced by social obligation, traditions of deference and the activities of the Church of England. The pastoralists may have thought of themselves as gentry, but the other groups within New Zealand rural society did not share that conception, except in the negative sense. Rhetorical utterances referred to the "squatorcracy" and the "gentry", but the implication was clearly

17. This whole section on income has been based on N.Z. Census, 1926, Vol XI.

that the big pastoralists were putting on airs and graces. There was little of the forelock tugging type of deference which provided the social cement of rural England. Pickens thesis also shows that few members of the so-called Canterbury "gentry" came from the ranks of the English gentry. Furthermore, there was insufficient time in which to weave a network of binding social relationships, while the economic changes outlined in chapter one undid any attempt to establish a permanent and relatively static order. The New Zealand "gentry" were not a permanent social elite like the English landowners who maintained a position of social dominance for centuries and still managed to survive into the twentieth century. A more accurate comparison would once again be with the sheep squatters of Australia and the cattle barons of North America.

On the other hand the social influence of the big pastoralists did not disappear in the 1890s, especially not at the local and regional levels. Even if they psychologically threw in the towel as Eldred-Grigg suggests, a network of select schools and intermarriage, in addition to the continuing economic importance of pastoral farming, ensured their survival. Their survival had important social ramifications in that it provided goals to which more prosperous farmers could aspire. The existence of such goals helped to stimulate the process whereby farmers began to sort themselves out into distinct groupings of large, middling and small farmers who became increasingly distanced in both economic and social terms from the labourers. By 1926 a formerly diffuse occupational group had evolved into a more distinctive sectional group with its own internal hierarchies.

19. Pickens, Op. cit., pp 152-153. Only 17% of the Canterbury Provincial Councillors investigated by Pickens were the sons of English gentlemen or baronets. The remainder were sons of professional men, military or naval officers, clergymen and farmers.
Somerset's generalisation that New Zealand farmers (as distinct from the big pastoralists) ranged from equivalents of substantial English tenant farmers to near peasants, with the majority being spread between those two poles, is strongly supported by the evidence contained in the 1926 income figures.

In talking of internal hierarchies within New Zealand it must be stressed that English farmers were not a homogeneous group as some accounts of the tripartite system tend to imply. As noted in Chapter One, English farmers were divided vertically by regional specialisations and horizontally by the size and success of farming operations. Incomes ranged from a level approximating the lower ends of the gentry to a situation where the only difference between a farmer and a labourer was the capital tied up in the farm. The great majority existed somewhere between these two extremes with small subsistence types of farmers much less common in England than in Scotland, Ireland or Wales. It is interesting to note that the NFU fared much better in England than in Wales where small owner-occupiers who depended on the family unit of labour were much more common. The range in income was reflected in the pronounced difference in lifestyle between the various groups of farmers. Big farmers in England had status, a good education, and a country house. They were usually a cut above the middling farmer socially. The substantial carriage riding tenantry of Lincolnshire had

22. Thomas Williams, who gave evidence to the 1917 Royal Commission on Agriculture as the official representative of the Welsh branch of the NFU, pointed out that 70% of Welsh farms were under fifty acres in area and 87% were under 100 acres. Furthermore, most of these small farms were operated by owner-occupiers who did not hire labour. Minutes of Evidence; BPP 1919 Cd.445-VIII Part 4, pp 702-705.
23. Flora Thompson bracketed the local big tenant farmers with the landowning squire. Both men existed at a removed and higher social plane.
little in common with the small stock farmers of Devon. Differences between them were not simply those of dialect. Men whose lifestyle was little different from that of the gentry obviously could not mingle easily with men who were much less well educated and who held more in common with the agricultural labourers. Yet the NFU succeeded in getting at least the big and middling sized farmers to work together and recruited a surprisingly large number of smaller farmers as well.

2. Social Mobility in Rural England and Rural New Zealand

The establishment of a hierarchy of income by 1926 and the widening gap between farmer and labourer within New Zealand rural society suggests that upward economic and social mobility was not as great as our egalitarian myths imply. Certainly the rate of mobility fluctuated with changes in the state of the export market and according to the progress of land settlement. Boom periods following on from recessions stimulated increased mobility in the short-term, but that trend was usually reversed if prosperity lasted for a substantial period. When the trade cycle followed its inevitable down-turn mobility decreased even further and a feeling developed that changes were needed to re-establish the fluidity of earlier years. Such a desire for change was reflected in the policies of both the Liberal Government of 1890 and the Labour Government of 1935. Despite the fact that the level of mobility was closely tied to the state of the economy social mobility was far greater than in England. Although there has been little research on this subject the major avenue of mobility was undoubtedly emigration either to the city or the new world. It is interesting to note that in the 1870s tenant farmers tended to go to North America and
agricultural labourers to Australasia. The importance of the agricultural labourers who made their way to New Zealand seemed to be borne out by the general hostility of the New Zealand rural community to the tripartite system. English agricultural labourers had little chance of either acquiring land or improving their lot and so they departed to try and start again free of the fetters of rural England. The transformation from labourer to farmer in England was almost impossible to realise, but in New Zealand it was relatively common.

24. In the period 1876–1880, 14,588, or 66.34%, of English farmer emigrants left for the U.S.A., 1,579, or 7.18%, for Canada and 4,526, or 20.58%, for Australasia. After that date tenant farmer emigrants dropped to a trickle. In contrast 18,729, or 86.62%, of the labourer emigrants sailed for Australasia, while 1,375, or 6.36%, of the labourers migrated to the U.S.A. and 1,451, or 6.71%, to Canada. B. Thomas, Migration and Economic Growth, (Cambridge 1973), p 61. I would like to thank Rollo Arnold for drawing my attention to these figures. These figures must be treated with caution, however, as the 1870s were years of unusually high out-migration of labourers. We need breakdowns of immigrants over a much longer period before any definite conclusions can be reached about the members of rural English society who departed for New Zealand. The sons of Scots and Irish tenant farmers, for example, such as Sir John McKenzie or some of the men mentioned in the samples taken from the Cyclopaedia and the Tuaapeka Times, would be hard to detect in the figures collated by Thomas. Also the capital required to uproot a family and pay a passage would tend to rule out labourers amongst the many immigrants who were not assisted by the New Zealand Government. Furthermore, the rapidity with which many immigrants found their way onto farms suggests that they arrived in New Zealand with some capital. Robin Marks' biographies on thirty goldminers makes it clear that the miners were artisans rather than unskilled labourers. Robin Marks, "The Lawrence Athenaeum And Miners Institute A Fragment of goldfields history," Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Otago, 1973, pp 314–339. Similarly immigrants who moved into the farming sector were probably men of small means rather than bereft labourers from the bottom end of the tripartite system.

Before any rigorous analysis of the whole question of social mobility within rural New Zealand can be carried out, both of immigrants and native born, many sample studies like that of Arnold will have to be initiated for the different English counties and areas of Scotland and Ireland from which the immigrants departed. Such studies will have to establish first what the occupation and social position of immigrants was on departure and second what became of them after arrival in New Zealand.

Crude mobility rates can be established by checking marriage certificates against death certificates. Keith Pickens has carried out this exercise for the province of Canterbury between 1850 and 1880 and has detected a decline in mobility during the 1870s. Probably if he had taken the investigation further he would have discovered that the cycle repeated itself with mobility increasing again in the 1890s only to decrease slowly from the turn of the century until the 1930s. Furthermore, he almost certainly would have encountered a complicating factor in that increasing stratification in Canterbury stimulated an out-migration which helped accentuate mobility rates in such pioneer North Island farming districts as Wairarapa-Bush.

Once the crude rates have been established they must be rendered more precise by an investigation of deed registers, rating books, wills, Lands and Survey Department records, Annual Sheep Returns, and oral sources to find out just what kind of farmer a labourer became. It would be interesting, for example, to discover whether or not the pattern of the Matamata Estate Settlement was reduplicated elsewhere. Then we would have more idea of whether or not men with very limited capital resources were able to find their way on to the land at all. Having established the numbers of such men who were successful in acquiring farms we need to carry the investigation further to discover whether or not this group became successful farmers.

Clearly much counting lies ahead if we are satisfactorily to resolve the debate concerning social mobility, of whether or not there was much movement between the apparently high floor and low ceiling of New Zealand society, both rural and urban.27

In the interim the more accessible sources suggest that mobility within rural New Zealand was considerable, at least until the 1920s. A small biased sample taken from the Cyclopaedia and a random sample taken from newspaper obituaries confirm this impression.

The Cyclopaedia is a heavily weighted source as it records the successes only of those men with both the cash and pretensions to find their way into a subscribed publication. Even so the information on twenty-five prominent members of A and P Societies in Otago reveals a considerable degree of mobility. Eighteen, or 72%, of the group who emigrated from Scotland or Ireland began work in New Zealand as miners (3), shepherds (3), agricultural labourers (5), contractors (3), carriers (1), blacksmiths (1) or storekeepers (2). Four, or 16%, held down more than one job before becoming farmers. Furthermore, these men seemed to share more humble social origins than the prominent A and P members who came from the commercial and professional communities. The other interesting feature concerning this group is that eight of the ten fathers whose occupations were mentioned were described as farmers. Undoubtedly some of the Cyclopaedia case histories were not entirely accurate, especially as men aspiring to respectability would not want to reveal to the world a social background which was exceedingly modest. On the other hand in such a small society such persons would generally be so well known that they could not afford to falsify the information in a grossly inaccurate fashion.

The forty-six obituaries contained in the Tuapeka Times over the ten year period 1904-1914 also reflect a considerable degree of mobility. Only one individual actually suffered any reversal of fortune, while a further four showed little change. The remainder managed to better themselves by taking up more permanent and respectable occupations. Everyone of the fifteen agricultural labourers moved on to take up some more lucrative occupation with twelve of them becoming farmers. All but four of the twenty-five men who came to the district as gold-miners moved on to other occupations, twelve of them eventually becoming farmers.

But we still need to be cautious in assuming that social mobility was considerable as the examination of the income structure of the agricultural labour force has already revealed. Furthermore, studies of social mobility in other new world societies suggest that increasing social maturation led to a decline in mobility. R. Duncan's study of Londoners who emigrated to New South Wales, for example, shows that this group experienced little or no change in terms of occupation or social position. Elvin Hatch's study of a Californian rural community indicates that the considerable initial social mobility which existed around 1900 gave way to increasing social stratification as farmers became more established. Greater rigidity was induced by the depression of the 1920s. The pattern sketched by Hatch almost certainly unfolded in New Zealand over the same period, especially in the South Island.

The NZFU itself was a partial reflection of increasing maturation and consequent stratification as some farmers had developed their holdings to a point where they considered they had a vested interest worth defending.

While New Zealand rural society was considerably more mobile and fluid than


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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>39.80</td>
<td>59.61</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>42.46</td>
<td>56.72</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>64.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>45.32</td>
<td>54.19</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>50.13</td>
<td>49.37</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>51.03</td>
<td>48.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>55.95</td>
<td>43.62</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>61.99</td>
<td>38.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>58.39</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
British rural society the difference was a relative one which has been exaggerated by myth and associated nationalist sentiments.

3. The Effect of Urbanisation and Suburbanisation

Table 2:6 makes it clear that New Zealand became a relatively urbanised society with surprising rapidity. As a result New Zealand rural society was considerably influenced by the development of New Zealand society as a whole. There was little time available in which to assume the distinctive character of English rural society. Centuries of development virtually separate from the towns enabled rural England to evolve social structures quite distinct from those of urban England. Even when rural England was subjected to the changes of the industrial and urban revolutions it still managed to retain many of its quasi-manorial hierarchies and social relationships. Prior to World War One rural and urban England remained quite distinct worlds despite growing economic interdependence and the increasing influence of the cities over the countryside.

By 1911 a small majority of New Zealand's European population lived in towns, while Heenan's work shows that by 1900 the population of the South Island exhibited the three major characteristics of an urbanised society - declining fertility, balancing sex ratios and an ageing population.

The initial rate of urbanisation was more rapid than in the U.S.A. but not as great as in Australia. New Zealand had become urban in a mere seventy years as against hundreds of years for post-Norman Britain.


32. Sean Glynn, Urbanisation in Australia. The growth of the metropolitan centres in Australia was stimulated by the geography of the country and the development of its extensive pastoral industry. Settlement was confined to the coastal areas by the large desert interior and the mountain wall which stood between the coast and the desert.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State or Country</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>% of State or Country Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N.S.W.</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>35.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>42.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>24.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>45.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>20.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>19.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
<td>4 main Centres</td>
<td>35.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.Z.</td>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.Z. 1926</td>
<td>4 main Centres</td>
<td>37.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most distinctive outcome of urbanisation in New Zealand was its dispersed character. The overwhelming metropolitan dominance of most Australian states was not reduplicated, nor was the contrast between giant city and hamlet. Around 37% of the population lived in four main centres by 1926, meaning that the equivalent proportion of one Australian metropolis was spread over four moderately sized cities. Most New Zealanders in fact lived in suburbs or small towns rather than high density areas typical of big cities or remote farmsteads. The dispersed yet urban nature of New Zealand's population has led Rollo Arnold to argue that New Zealand society was essentially a village society, whereas Miles Fairburn prefers to describe it as suburban. Certainly suburban attitudes and institutions spread with considerable rapidity. Within a few years of establishment such an isolated town as Lawrence has its Athenæum, Woodville its psychology society and Chakune its elegant tennis club. The rapid spread of such institutions militated against the possible development of any Turnerian type of decivilising process encouraging co-operation rather than the

33. Rollo Arnold, "The Village And The Globe: Aspects of the Social Origins of Schooling in Victorian New Zealand," Paper presented to the annual conference of the Australia and New Zealand History of Education Society, Wellington 24 Aug 1975. Arnold points out that many immigrants came from villages or small towns rather than from cities or remote country areas and tried to re-create the secure and insular social organisation they knew and liked. Yet despite persistent parochialism - these village people were in many ways more closely linked into the global village through the agency of their newspapers than their jet age descendants.


35. Robin Marks, Op cit. Lawrence was an Otago goldmining town established during the 1860s.

36. Schaffer, Op cit, p 36 Woodville was a Government assisted agricultural settlement established during the late 1870s and early 1880s.

37. P.J. Gibbons, "The making of the central section (Marton-Te Awamutu) of the North Island main trunk railway and the consequent progress of settlement along its littoral to 1920," PhD in progress, University of Waikato. Ohakune was a railway construction town established between 1906 and 1920.
rampant individualism of the American frontier. If settlers in a particular district were not united together by ties of kinship they tended to work closely with their neighbours. Dairy factories run on a co-operative basis were a logical outcome of the type of interaction which occurred in every-day farming. The limited area of land available for settlement ensured that the frontier never existed for any length of time in any one place.38

As suburban institutions spread rapidly leisure activities in both rural and urban New Zealand developed along similar lines. Differences were generally confined to the work-a-day world. Leisure activities in rural England in contrast remained rather different from those of the cities, especially amongst the classes who could engage in such pastimes as shooting and fox-hunting.

The relationship between small towns and the agricultural community within New Zealand urgently requires far more consideration. Certainly the smaller country towns were an integral part of the rural sector rather than the urban. The important market and service functions of English country towns were reduplicated, while New Zealand country towns also acted as a link between the local and international economies. They also provided a bridge between the little and large society and the rural and urban life-style. It was a diffusion point for urban attitudes, institutions and technology. We need to know much more about how capital was supplied to farmers by small town entrepreneurs and how far the sons of these men provided a recruitment source for future farmers. The small town was also a meeting place for both farmer and agricultural labourer and as such


39. Geographers have been rather more active in studying small towns than historians. But their investigations have of course been confined to the period after World War II.
answered crucial economic, social and political needs. Somerset clearly showed this in Littledene. Similar patterns were reproduced in Waitahuna, Lawrence and probably many other small towns. Yet despite this everyday interdependence in terms of supplying credit, materials and distribution services, strong town versus country antagonisms persisted throughout the period under study. Such hostility resulted largely from parochialism accentuated by the apparent tendency of Governments to squander money on the towns, while neglecting to provide more remote areas with such basic services as reading. The qualification should be added that town versus country rivalry was exaggerated by rhetoric and was directed more at the distant main centres and the representatives of business organisations based in those centres, rather than at the local townspeople themselves. Increasingly, however, farmers were coming to view themselves as a distinctive occupational group whose interests were separate from everyone else despite the economic interdependence of their everyday activities. The NZFU was a product of a growing sectional awareness amongst the farming community, but its limited success suggests that many farmers still did not consider themselves to be as distinctive an occupational grouping as did their English counterparts. New Zealand was probably an insufficiently mature society to produce distinctive occupational groups with clearly separated interests until at least the 1930s. But from around 1900 the longer established segment amongst the farmers began to behave as a distinct sectional group typical of more mature social situations.

Most New Zealanders were members of relatively small, distinct and interdependent communities rather than socially isolated country bumpkins or alienated city dwellers. Rural society in New Zealand was really nearer the model of more mature areas of North American agricultural

settlements than England on the one hand or frontier America and most states of Australia or the other. English farmers would never have attended the local Working Man's Club with the avidity of Littledene farmers and mixed happily with labourers and tradesmen. New hierarchies were being established but they were not based around inherited situations in a prescribed social order.

4. The Role of Women

Many New Zealand historians have glibly acknowledged the important role played by women within rural society, but they have made no concerted attempt either to define that role or to study it in detail. English historians, apart from the group involved in oral history projects, have also largely ignored rural women. Such critical questions as to whether farmers' wives, especially those better educated than their husbands, shaped their children's attitudes and provided a hidden momentum to rural out-migration remain unanswered in New Zealand. What little information we have regarding English rural women has largely been provided in such accounts as Flora Thompson's and in the popular radio serial the "Archers."

The greater equality of New Zealand women in general was reflected in the greater level of female participation within the general farmers' organisations, whether A and P Societies or the NZFU. The NZFU even

41. English historians, like their New Zealand counterparts, have largely left the study of rural sociology to geographers and sociologists who are mainly interested in the post World War II period. e.g. W.M. Williams, "The Social Study of Family Farming," in Mills (Ed.), Op cit, pp 116-133.

42. Myth has admitted inflated the degree of equality achieved by New Zealand women. Nevertheless, the fact that they won a right to vote as well as to a university education, and were entitled to hold property a generation before their English counterparts, strongly suggests that New Zealand women won concrete victories in their quest for equality rather more rapidly. The small size of New Zealand's population and the fluid nature of its social structures encouraged women to play a more active role in running the country's affairs.
established its own Women's Division in the 1920s, something the NFU did not do until the late 1940s. But such concessions to women's rights must not be exaggerated. The Grange movement in the U.S.A., for example, allowed women to enter into full membership which entitled them to vote on policy decisions from its inception in the 1860s. In contrast "The Women's Division" did not participate in the political sphere of the NZFU's activities and largely confined its interests to the domestic sphere.

Generally the expected role of women in rural New Zealand was tailored to meet the needs of a farming industry based on the family unit of labour. The major requirements of country women were community building via child bearing and participation in voluntary organisations related to the raising of children, and the provision of hospitality to neighbours and food for the workforce. Farmers' wives and daughters also helped a great deal in performing the daily round of farming chores, especially on dairy farms.

From the earliest days of settlement the predominant stereotype of the ideal rural women was that of the hard working mother and farmers'

43. The qualification should be added that the Women's Division was established partly to cater for a growing demand from country women for instruction in homestead science and also to provide them with an opportunity to meet with other women, a demand reflected in the establishment of several similar organisations during the 1920s such as the Country Women's Institute. NZFU leaders were more interested in attracting farmers into membership than in women's rights. If anything they hoped that the Division would encourage women to remain in the home rather than liberating them to join the workforce.

44. Labour journals frequently accused dairy farmers' of subjecting their wives and children to "slavery", but that criticism was also echoed by less prejudiced commentators. W. Wright, for example, employed the same emotionally charged terms when speaking to the North Island Dairy Association conference in 1901. OW, 7 Aug 1901 p 9.
helpmate. There were few references to the ideal held by more substantial tenant farmers that a wife should act as a graceful companion to the gentleman farmer. Except amongst the "gentry" enclave few idealisations were made like those of Dr Lydgate in George Eliot's Middlemarch who believed that women should be graceful adornments beautifying the home, rather like an exquisite porcelain vase sitting atop an elegant grand piano. Such refinement was virtually impossible in the face of the down to earth demands made on most farmers' wives. Even Lady Barker, whose accounts of life in the early sheep stations have romanticised the frequently harsh reality of life for the wives of the early settlers, had to periodically roll up her sleeves and lift up her skirts to help with the farm work. Patricia Grimshaw's book on the women's suffrage movement in New Zealand reveals that politicians such as Dr James Wallis who supported that cause, tended to place women on a higher moral plane even though they considered them to be intellectually inferior. But Wallis was largely dealing with women who were associated either with the big pastoralists or the wealthy urban

45. Charles Hursthouse wrote in his New Zealand, The Britain of the South: With A Chapter On The Native War, And Our Future Native Policy, (2nd ed. London 1861), p 406, that every "lady makes herself useful as well as ornamental, and thus lives the longer and blooms the more." His views were echoed by a lady settler from Auckland, who commented that all colonial women had to "work" and had little time for idleness, pp 131-137. The attitudes expressed in Hursthouse's book seem to have been widespread and in no way exaggerated. See Judith Elphick, "What's Wrong with Emma? The Feminist Debate in Colonial Auckland," New Zealand Journal of History, Vol 9 No 2 (Oct 1975), and Sheila E. Natusch, On the edge of the bush, (Invercargill 1976).

46. Lady Barker, Station Amusements in New Zealand, (London 1873) and Station Life in New Zealand, (London 1870).

47. Patricia A. Grimshaw, Women's Suffrage in New Zealand, (Hamilton 1975), p 16.
mercantile group. Such a typically Victorian attitude did not diffuse widely throughout the countryside, although it was sometimes expressed in rather quaint fashion. Early reports of A and P shows, for example, commented that the attendance of the "fairer sex" "graced" the showgrounds.

The ideal "pioneer" female stereotype seemed to predominate throughout the nineteenth century. Generally it accurately mirrored the everyday reality confronting the wives and daughters of struggling farmers, although the ideal tended to neglect the harsher aspects of their life such as the difficulties created by excessive child bearing. In many senses the real yeo-person of pioneer New Zealand was the farmer's wife. The ideal was vividly depicted in a piece of doggerel entitled "The Farmer's Wife" published in the New Zealand Farmer in 1885. Even though this particular poem provides one of the best examples of the overtly sentimental representation of the ideal farmer's wife it was by no means untypical.

48. This is not to say that the genteel and domestic ideals were mutually exclusive. On the contrary they co-existed and expressed a widely held male view of women's preferred role. But the genteel ideal was less dominant because it was generally less relevant. It only began to come into its own once farmers were well established. It was dependant in short, upon each farmer's individual circumstances. Overall it was probably more important in Canterbury than anywhere else and generally assumed greater significance in the more socially mature South Island. In many dairying districts, however, it never had much impact, as the very nature of dairy farming made the application of such an ideal virtually impossible. Even the most delicately shaped and soft hands were soon mis-shapen by the rigorous round of daily chores required to operate a dairy farm.

49. e.g. OW, 12 Jan 1867 p 7.
The author nevertheless remained anonymous.

The farmer came in from the field one day,
His languid step and his weary way,
His bended brow and sinewy hand,
All showing his work for the good of the land;
   For he sows,
   And he hoes,
   And he mows,
   All for the good of the land.

By the kitchen fire stood his patient wife,
Light of his home and joy of his life,
With face all aglow and busy hand,
Preparing the meal for her husband's band;
   For she must boil
   And she must broil,
   And she must toil,
   All for the sake of the home.

Sun shines bright when the farmer goes out,
Birds sing sweet songs, lambs frisk about,
The brook babbles softly in the glen,
While he works bravely for the good of the men,
   For he sows,
   And he hoes,
   And he mows,
   All for the good of the land.

How briskly the wife steps about within --
The dishes to wash and the milk to skim.
The fire goes out and the flies buzz about --
For the dear ones at home her heart is kept stout;
   There are pies to make,
   There is bread to bake,
   And steps to take,
   All for the sake of the home.

When the day is o'er and the evening has come,
The creatures are fed and the milking is done,
He takes his rest 'neath the old shade tree,
From the labour of the land his thoughts are free;
   Though he sows,
   And he hoes,
   And he mows,
   He rests from the work of the land.

But the faithful wife, from sun to sun
Takes the burden up that's never done;
There is no rest, there is no pay,
For the household good she must work away;
   For to mend the frock,
   And to knit the sock,
   And the cradle to rock,
   All for the good of the home.
When autumn is here with chilling blast,
The farmer gathers his crop last,
His barns are full, his fields are bare,
For the good of the land he ne'er hath care,
While it blows,
And it snows,
Till the winter goes,
He rests from the work of the land.

But the willing wife, till life's closing day,
Is the children's and the husband's stay,
From day to day she hath done her best,
Until death alone can give her rest,
For after the test
Comes the rest,
With the blest.
In the farmer's heavenly home.

Perhaps the author of another poem entitled "Poor Tired Mother" was even more perceptive when the subject of the poem made the comment

"But before I go to join the blest
Please God let me lie in my grave and rest."

The close correlation between stereotype and reality is borne out by the 1926 census figures on women in the agricultural labour force. Only about 3.45% of the persons actively engaged in the agricultural industry were females when women made up about 18% of the urban work force. Females represented only about 3% of the farmers, 4% of the relatives assisting and 1.2% of the hired labourers. Furthermore, according to the 1928 Yearbook there were over 30,000 females who helped with farm work, even though they received no monetary compensation for their assistance. Work on both the farm and in the kitchen was clearly considered by most of the farmers who filled in the census forms to be only worthy of inclusion under the category of relatives assisting. Throughout the period under

50. NZ Farmer, Jan 1885 p 22. A similar attitude to the role of the farmers' wives was expressed in the letters of many male immigrants examined by Charlotte Erickson, Invisible Immigrants: The adaptation of English and Scottish immigrants in 19th century America, (London 1972), pp 56-57.

51. Ibid. Apr 1885 p 153.

52. Facts on the urban work force were supplied by Philida Bunkle to the 1977 New Zealand History Conference.

53. NZ Yearbook, 1928, pp 442-443.
study, women remained a hidden group within the agricultural labour force. Husbands generally considered that wives belonged to the ambiguous occupation category of housewife, while fathers tended to place daughters within the category of dependent children, whether they worked on the farm or not.

In many ways there was little difference between the life-style of the wives of struggling New Zealand farmers and that of Flora's mother as described in Larkrise to Candleford. But Laura's father was a skilled tradesman better paid than most of the local labourers, just as most farmers' wives in New Zealand had more readily available food with which to feed their families and larger incomes to pay their bills than the wives of English agricultural labourers. Jack Dowie's work on income rates in New Zealand during the 1870s shows that they were much higher than for comparative groups in England. 54 Similarly even unskilled agricultural labourers in New Zealand were earning an average income of 60/- a week in 1926 when their English counterparts were fighting to prevent their wages being lowered below 30/- a week. Furthermore, as more New Zealand farmers became prosperous there was a shift towards the genteel ideal of womanhood more typical of substantial English tenant farmers. This change in attitude was reflected in the call of the NZFU for increased immigration of domestic servants as well as agricultural labourers. The domestic technology of the city also spread with reasonable rapidity. There was probably little difference in the use of domestic appliances and the overall level of material comforts in either rural or urban homes by the end of the 1930s.

54. J.A. Dowie, "A Century-Old Estimate Of The National Income of New Zealand," Business Archives and History, Vol 6 No 2 (Aug 1966), pp 117-131. Rollo Arnold has also discovered a series of letters in Oxfordshire written by New Zealand immigrants to their relations and friends back in England. These men were all agricultural labourers before leaving England and the letters make it clear that their lot was far better in New Zealand, even for the relative few who failed to improve their station in the new country. A New Educational History for New Zealand, pp 14-15.
Photographs 3 and 4: The Gentry

The Clergy
The Domestic "pioneer" ideal nevertheless survived the experience of two World Wars as well as the depression and is still with us. It continues to prosper because the nature of the farmers' work demands the presence of a full-time cook, help-mate and entertainer. The light and large sponge remains a measure of the farmers' wife's accomplishment.

5. Social Uniform

English farmers tended to wear a more distinctive social uniform than their New Zealand counterparts. Substantial tenant farmers presented an appearance little different from that of the gentry. Red hunting jackets, tweed suits, top hats and frock coats made their superior social station instantly recognisable, especially when compared with the poorly clad labourers. Even when they were working many tenants dressed themselves in a manner quite distinct from their labourers. Their immaculate riding boots were contrasted with the stout working boots of the ploughman or ditcher.

Today English farmers can still be seen driving tractors in jacket and tie. The New Zealand farmer at work was, and still is, hard to tell apart from his men with his heavy overalls or bush singlet. Distinctions were more apparent in the world of leisure, but even then they were not particularly great. Lip service was paid to the egalitarian myth in the matter of dress. Delegates to NZFU conferences were well dressed and projected an image of comfortable respectability. But there was nothing ostentatious about their appearance, especially when compared with the rather foppish appearance of some members of the "gentry" enclave. Labourers were not immediately identifiable by their appearance even if their clothes were not quite as well cut nor of the same quality of cloth as those of the farmer. The difference was, however, one of a few shillings or perhaps pounds which they paid for their suits rather than a whole conception of personal appearance which was literally worlds apart.
Photographs 5 and 6: The Tenantry

The Labourers
6. World View

Farmers throughout the English speaking world in the late nineteenth century held a similar world view. Both British and new world farmers equated the economic primacy of agriculture with social and even moral superiority. The urban lifestyle was viewed as totally inferior by farmers everywhere. Whether they farmed in Lincolnshire, Alberta, California, Victoria or Tuspeka, farmers tended to picture the city as an unmitigated evil, full of vice and disease, parasitically sapping the countryside of its virile manhood and robbing the honest farmer of his hard earned livelihood. Agriculture, in contrast, was pictured as not only the economic but the social base of the nation, the tree trunk or the heart, giving life to the remainder of the community, while cleansing a society tainted by the insidious urban influence. The men who produced the life-giving food, especially the farmers, were seen as the noblest and most honest members of society, increasingly conspired against by all other sectional groupings and appreciated by none.

The sheer irrationality of such a view was borne out by the fact that the massive expansion of agricultural production in the nineteenth century would not have been possible without the technological advances of the industrial revolution and the massive expansion in demand caused by the growth of cities. Yet farmers nearly always failed to realise such facts. Their way of looking at the world was essentially an intuitive one, coming more from the heart than the head. It was shaped by the frequently isolated nature of the farmers' work and consequently it was too diffuse and incoherent to constitute an ideology or to be traced to a particular


56. Graham The Australian Country Parties, p 39, gives a full account of the world view shared by Australian farmers, which is similar to one described here and was expressed many times over by New Zealand farmers.
A classic statement of the farmers' world view.
philosopher. Elements of classical notions of Arcadia were muddled up with some of Jefferson's ideals and folk wisdom. Men who seldom spoke to anyone other than their dogs or horses were unable to articulate their views on paper and few bothered to write them down. The essentially emotional nature of farmers' shared attitudes was reflected in the opposition of both the NZFU and the NFU to any attempt to impose factory-type regulation of hours and conditions on New Zealand and British farmers. Nature was regarded as the primary regulator of the farmers' activities and additional regulations were viewed as artificial and unnecessary.

This emotional dimension to the farmers' thinking could not disguise the fact that both New Zealand and English farmers were first and foremost hard-headed businessmen. The world view was often employed as a justification for actions resulting from self-interested economic motivation, while it was sometimes used as a smoke screen to conceal motives which could appear sinister to the general public. But more often justification and motivation became so confused in the farmers' own mind that he began to believe that he was acting in a moralistic as well as a self-interested fashion. It is really arbitrary to separate out the hard and soft strands of the farmers' thinking for they were so intertwined that farmers' themselves could not distinguish them. An historian such as Hofstadter can detect and separate the two strands but he has the advantage of hindsight which was not available to farmers living during the years of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many farmers sincerely believed that their position was morally superior to that of anyone else and they joined farmers' organisations to defend a life-style which they preferred to any other as well as to protect their own vested interests. There was also a feeling amongst both sets of farmers that they had somehow lost a social standing they had held at an earlier time. In reality that may not have been the case, but many farmers believed it to be true. Both unions were partly
"Issachar is as a Strong Ass crouching down between two burdens"—Gen. XLIX. 14.

A favourite proverb of farmers. Source: Farming First, 10 Jul 1928.
inspired by a desire to bring about a restoration of the farmers' status which seemed to decline as other economic activities and the cities grew in importance and political power.

Farmers' actions then were shaped by something more than entrepreneurial drive. While he stood with his boots firmly rooted in the earth, one hand on his cheque book, one eye on the economic potential of a particular paddock and the other fixed on the weather, the farmer still found time to dream.

Despite the overall similarities in world view there were key differences: The ideal of independence played a much more important role in shaping the attitudes of New Zealand farmers, while their world view was cut across by a recurrent dislike of the "big man".

Even if in reality independent actions were not as important as more co-operative forms of behaviour in rural New Zealand and even if many members of the farming community accepted State assistance, independence remained an important ideal. Many immigrants had after all left Britain to escape from the fetters of a deferential society and start again on their own. They left an old world and a mass society with limited opportunities, to take advantage of the greater opportunities in the new world. The typically mid-Victorian notion of self-help was possibly even more strongly developed in the thinking of nineteenth century New Zealanders. As in North America many immigrants pursued the goal of independence on their heavily mortgaged freehold farms even at cost of economic viability. 57

57. Charlotte Erickson, Op cit, p 8. This book is of particular relevance to the New Zealand experience.
They wanted above all to be free of the interference of the local squire and vicar, laird and minister, or landlord and priest. They also wanted to directly control the political and economic development of the colony instead of accepting the fact that an entrenched oligarchy ruled the country on their behalf without consultation or awareness of the problems confronted by the majority of the population. If they accepted paternalistic gestures they emanated from the State rather than the landlord. Fiercely independent attitudes could have caused major difficulties for the NZFU. But its recruitment failures were due more to apathy and indifference than rampant individualism. Occasionally farmers justified their indifference by appealing to the sanctity of the independent ideal proclaiming that they would not entrust the defence of their interests to anyone other than themselves. But such arguments were little more than excuses.

Farmers did not join up because they felt there was little need for such an organisation, because they could not be bothered or because they were too busy with farm work. Such sentiments as "he's nature's nobleman in life - the independent farmer" or "You're as free as the air in the mountains" neatly encapsulated the ideal of independence. But such notions generally had little appeal to the great majority of English farmers who benefitted from their interdependent situation. All they ever wanted was reform of the tripartite system to increase the benefits it held out to them. They did not want its total demolition like the many men who came to New Zealand having had their personal improvement blocked within rural Britain. Once these same men began to achieve concrete advancement within New Zealand, however, they too began to want to limit the independence of other sectional groups who competed for a share in the benefits accruing from the colony's development. The NZFU opposed the growing power of the trade union movement because they saw it as a direct threat to their economic primacy, social advantage and political dominance.
New Zealand farmers also generally shared a dislike for the big man, whether owner of a large estate, manufacturer or business tycoon, especially when the trade cycle experienced a downturn. A belief in rough equality was common throughout the farming community, even if the reality was somewhat different. The NZFU, for example, was very sensitive about accusations that it represented land monopolists and was opposed to closer settlement. Many of its national executive members were big farmers but they agreed to the principle of limiting the size of holdings, although they were opposed to the arbitrary enforcement of any such regulations. Even an avowedly conservative organisation like the NZFU could not afford to fly in the face of the egalitarian myth shared by the great majority of New Zealanders.

When hostility towards the big man threatened to disrupt the farming community in the 1920s (whereas it had united farmers against the squatters in some areas during the 1880s), a certain degree of unity was maintained by refocussing that hostility on the activities of big city businessmen and overseas monopolies in the form of the meat trust. Few English tenant farmers in contrast were particularly concerned with big man/small man rivalries. The great majority of them after all already occupied a relatively high place on the social plane. They had little chance of overthrowing the power of the landlords and even less intention of doing anything of the kind. On the other hand English farmers were also concerned by the development of monopoly capitalism and frequently criticised such large-scale monopolies as the railway companies.

7. **Why were the two societies different?**

Each of the new world societies was shaped by the ideals carried by the immigrants who settled them and by the modification of those ideals to answer the needs of the new environment. The tension created between ideals
and the developing reality of a society provided the momentum which pushed the new construction farther away from the model of its parent society. This tension also ensured that each new world society was not identical to any other. Many ideals were carried to New Zealand by its British immigrants. Some of the more strongly held ones survived and exercised a profound influence on the country's development. Others, which did not suit the needs of the new country, such as those of Wakefield, were soon discarded. Rural New Zealand evolved its own distinctive social structures as a result of the modification of several ideals to answer the different needs of the new country. The settlers attempted to push the reality of the emerging nation's economic processes and social structures in the direction of the various ideals which they held to be paramount. But they soon learned to temper their aspirations and to pull down their ideals from their lofty esoteric plane when the complete realisation of the various goals desired by the settlers appeared to be all but impossible.

The relationship between ideal and reality was reciprocal. The social structure which emerged was in essence an unsatisfactory compromise between the limitations imposed by the new environment and the expectations of the settlers. Dissatisfaction with that compromise spurred the settlers and their descendants to push for further changes in an endeavour to make the compromise more satisfactory. Continual change resulted from continuing dissatisfaction. New Zealand society, like any other form of human organisation, exists as a dynamic rather than a static entity. Change was also stimulated by conflict between different ideals supported by

58. It is time the insights of Hartz and Turner were combined. New Zealand's development was shaped by settlers of British background attempting to realise their ideals, hopes and aspirations in a new environment and different economic situation. Neither explanation is adequate in itself. A synthesis is long overdue.
different groups. From this broader level of dissension evolved consensus. But consensus in turn bred dissatisfaction. Pressure for further change followed.

Such a complex process, often contradictory and confusing, cannot be adequately accounted for by a single factor hypothesis. New Zealand rural society, like New Zealand society in general, was shaped by the interaction of many forces and ideals, processes and personalities. Its evolution was made up of many strands only some of which have been isolated.

Rollo Arnold has argued that New Zealand rural society assumed a rough social and political equality because of the triumph of the "yeoman" ideal carried to New Zealand by agricultural labourers over the "gentry" conception implemented by the big pastoralists. Certainly the "yeoman" ideal of a nation of small independent farmers was reflected in the basic predominance of the freehold tenure. The development of this type of farming was only made possible of course by the technological innovation of refrigeration which opened up the London market and made small scale farming viable. Reality and ideal reinforced one another. The yeoman ideal was another expression of a broader belief in the virtues of independence. But farmers in areas other than the Wairarapa-Bush challenged the "gentry" ideal for different reasons. Chapter seven will show that Otago farmer militants were already yeomen. Also the "yeomen" ideal was too static. Independence involved much more than simply owning your farm. Once that objective had been achieved farmers desired to bring about further personal advancement. Even John McKenzie wanted to help men assisted on to the land by the Government to become highly productive and scientific farmers rather than self-sufficient yeomen. Arnold's explanation holds good for much of the North Island over a limited period of time. But overall it is time, place and group specific.
Oliver's suggestion that important changes were initiated around 1890 because New Zealanders were becoming increasingly alarmed that the evils of the old world were re-emerging in the new world context, which should have been free of such ills, contains useful insights. But it is too intellectual, too high minded to explain the attitude of struggling farmers. These men had visions, but they were vague and incoherent dreams blurred by fatigue, frustration and economic hardheadedness rather than clearly articulated and elegantly conceived notions of Arcadia, or Eden. Furthermore, the group most influenced by the quasi-millenarian desire to rebuild a better society were the educated urban middle classes, who dominated such movements as the prohibitionists.

Fairburn's hypothesis that New Zealand society evolved an essentially suburban character as a compromise between a rural myth and a growing urban reality is probably the most convincing explanation offered so far as to how New Zealand developed its distinctive social structures and attitudes. But Fairburn, like Arnold and Oliver, has isolated only one of the major strands which have shaped New Zealand society. Yet he claims that this single strand was more important than any other. In so doing he overlooks the fact that some areas of New Zealand did develop a more truly urban character, while some more remote country districts were essentially rural with a way of life quite different from that in either city suburbs or small towns. From the urban sector emerged New Zealand's major radical tradition, while the rural sector produced a predominantly conservative influence, interspersed with occasional outbursts of militancy.


60. A.R. Grigg, "Storming the Citadels of Liquordom," PhD in Progress, University of Otago.

Fairburn's hypothesis is also too contrived, too clever, too literary. Down to earth factors as well as the vision of a familial arcadia were responsible for the development of the suburbs. The predominance of wood as the major building material, sanitation needs, the level of building technology, the horsedrawn tram, the bicycle, the electric tram and later the motor car were also factors which cannot be ignored in explaining the predominance of the quarter acre section.

Two other major interrelated strands which help explain the growth of the suburbs and the general development of New Zealand society as a whole were the widespread incidence of land speculation and the desire for respectability. Both of these factors have been underestimated for too long by New Zealand historians. Every New Zealander who was able to engage in land speculation did so, whether he was a big farmer, a small farmer, a labourer with land, a wealthy businessman or a prospering artisan. Both rural and urban sectors were affected by widespread land speculation. Land was the most valuable commodity in the new country and most immigrants seemed to show a preference for playing the land market. Leaving Britain was after all a major gamble in itself. There was no guarantee that the immigrant would even reach New Zealand let alone prosper in that country. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that many immigrants were prepared to take considerable risks in playing the land market. Furthermore, many immigrants wanted to achieve respectability by improving their social status. Status was closely related to wealth in the more fluid context of New Zealand. As in New South Wales or Victoria one of the

62. A point stressed by Professor Peter O'Connor at the 1977 New Zealand Historian's Conference in a paper criticising Fairburn's views.

63. A point emphasised by Erickson.
easiest ways of realising that objective was to acquire a large sum of money through buying land cheap and selling dear. Land provided the easiest means of getting rich in a hurry. Moderate wealth could procure many of the trappings of respectability such as pianos, elegant homes and education which could only be acquired over several generations in Britain or bought at huge cost. Many New Zealanders, especially farmers, were in a sense respectable gamblers. Such concerns, of course, hardly affected many English tenant farmers who had inherited their respectability and had neither need nor desire to contemplate such gambles as emigration. They were a relatively satisfied group, whose ambitions had been realised to a limited extent. Those who left were dissatisfied, who felt that their ambitions were being frustrated and their opportunities restricted. They were prepared to take the gamble of starting again in the hope of improving their lot and acquiring a respectability which was denied them in Britain.

These four strands by no means exhaust the full range of interconnected ideas and circumstances which shaped New Zealand's development. There were many others. But they did represent four of the most important strands in the complex process whereby immigrants carried with them their hopes and aspirations to New Zealand and then set about realising them through adaptation to the environment of the new country and compromise with its economic development.

64. Brian Dickey, "'Colonial Bourgeois' - Marx in Australia?" Aspects of the Social History of New South Wales 1856-1900", Australian Economic History Review, Vol 14 No 1 (Mar 1974), pp 20-36. Also see Humphrey McQueen, The New Britanniia. An argument concerning the origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism, (Melbourne 1970), and Geoffrey Serle, The rush to be rich: a history of the colony of Victoria, 1833-1889, (Melbourne 1971). Angus also makes it clear that materialistic objectives were of primary importance in Otago during the 1880s and 1890s. A "get rich quick" attitude seemed to be widespread. Much the same was true of Auckland in the same period. See R.J.C. Stone, Makers of Fortune The Rise and Fall of a Colonial Business Community, (Auckland 1973).
Whatever caused the differences between British and New Zealand rural society, the differences themselves cannot be denied even if new hierarchies evolved to replace partially the hierarchies of the older deferential society. The farmers of Waitahuna, Littledene or Kerry Town looked to Britain as their source of spiritual strength, their means of identification. They hoped to re-establish the best aspects of Ullapool, Larkrise or Tipperary in the districts they had chosen to settle. They especially wanted to recreate the peacefulness and healthy environment of the British countryside which provided such a marked contrast to the insanitary conditions of the big cities of the "modern Babylon".\(^{65}\) Initial efforts to copy the structures of British rural society soon gave way to a restructuring of the world described by Flora Thompson and recounted in the oral histories. If a great many Britons wanted to make any meaningful progress in life they had to be prepared to move beyond local country towns such as Candleford, to the farthest corners of the earth, even to Waitahuna. Once safely arrived they clung to the continuity of their heritage, while enthusiastically building their future. They had their second chance and were determined to make the most of it. Now they could dream of the babbling brook or burn, the patch-work quilt of the English countryside or the soft light and mist covered hills of Scotland and Ireland. They could also dream of the sweet sound of willow sending a red ball scorching over the village green and even act out such activities. It was easier to dream on a stomach filled by the beer and beef of John Bull's olde Englande, than on the harsh diet of a hired labourer. Such luxuries had formerly existed in the farthest corners of their imagination or in tales of a dim and distant golden age. Furthermore, they could dream in a degree of comfort formerly

\(^{65}\) A phrase frequently employed by the Tuapeka Times to describe the conditions of England in the period 1881-1900.
unobtainable. More important such comforts were free of the interference and patronising concern of squire and vicar, laird and minister, or English landlord and priest.

"The thrifty, the industrious then could rise To share the fruits of their enterprise." 66
The "golden age" of New Zealand farming was also the high summer of the farmers' political influence, especially under the Reform administration between 1912 and 1921. The very considerable political strength of New Zealand farmers only began to wane in the later 1920s. Until that time the NZFU did not really have to function as an effective pressure group. The title of the Country Party's newspaper, Farming First, which was set up in 1926, neatly summed up the Government's priorities before that date. It was only from that time onwards that the political primacy of the farmer could no longer be automatically assumed. From that period it had to be fought for in concerted fashion.

English farmers in direct contrast found themselves in a position of considerable political weakness, especially in relation to the political nation as a whole. The industrial, commercial and urban sectors were increasingly dictating the course which politicians should follow. Even within the rural sphere farmers had long been subservient to the political direction of the landowners. Until 1908 they had largely accepted the indirect political representation of the country gentlemen M.P.s. Farmers could only begin to act in more independent fashion once the system of deferential politics began to crumble in the late nineteenth century. Some more politically aware farmers took advantage of the landlords' declining political influence and set up the NFU in 1908. Right from its establishment these men realised that they needed to develop a particularly well organised pressure group if they were to counter the lingering dominance of the landowners. Effectiveness was even more essential if the voice of farmers was to be heard at Westminster and Whitehall in
The face of the overwhelming numerical superiority of the other sections of the English political community.

The political dominance of the old "oligarchy" of big pastoralists and city merchants was largely brought to an end in New Zealand during the 1890s. From that point onwards farmers came to replace the oligarchy as the most important single occupational grouping within New Zealand politics. Their temporary success was ensured by the election of a large number of farmers to parliament between 1908 and 1922. According to L.C. Webb's survey of the occupation of New Zealand M.P.s 25% were farmers over the period 1893-1908. That level was significantly high but it rose to a record representation of 34.6% for the period 1908-1931. After that date farmer M.P.s fell slightly to 31.3% of the total for the period 1935-1949 and further declined to 29.8% for the period 1949-1960. This level of parliamentary representation for farmers far exceeded that of any other democracy. Herman Finer, for example, estimated in 1924 that the comparative figures for the United Kingdom were 4.2%, France 14.3%, Germany 11.9% and the U.S.A. 5.6%. Farmers probably only exerted a similar influence on their Governments in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Western Australia.


The political importance of the New Zealand farmer, especially in relation to the Liberal and Reform administrations, has been elaborated in several articles and theses.\(^4\) Even if some of this work has possibly exaggerated the farmers' real political importance, the farmers themselves believed that they were the most powerful group within New Zealand politics until the 1920s and assumed that economic primacy entitled them to preferential treatment from the Government of the day. Furthermore, the farmers' declining numbers in relation to the remainder of the community were offset by the country-quota, a special weighting of votes introduced in 1889 and not abolished until 1946, to ensure that the political influence of rural areas was not rendered feeble by the growth of the towns.\(^5\) New Zealand farmers also had much easier informal access to the centre of power as many personally knew the various farmer M.P.s, or at least met those M.P.s on such occasions as the annual showday.

The obvious and unquestionable prominence of farmers within the New Zealand political scene was in direct contrast to England. Usually even the most careful scrutiny of general books on modern English history fails to reveal the word 'farmers'. They receive virtually no mention before the


establishment of the NFU, while very few references are made to the NFU itself, at least for the period prior to World War II. Another way of illustrating the difference is that the growth of the NZFU can be plotted on the same graph as the growth of the New Zealand trade union movement, whereas such an exercise is not feasible in the English context. Furthermore, English tenant farmers were not represented directly at Westminster, while it would have been virtually impossible for a farmer to have become Prime Minister let alone a Minister of the Crown. This was equally true for both nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even the late nineteenth century parliamentary champion of the tenant farmer, C.S. Read, himself a tenant farmer, soon resigned in disgust at Disraeli's agricultural policies. When he later returned to parliament he was able to do little, for his actions were circumscribed by the powerful landowning interest within the Conservative party. The NFU set out to secure greater political independence for tenant farmers, and did take advantage of the general weakening of the landlord's position induced by the Agricultural Holdings Act of 1906 and the introduction of death duties. But even the NFU only managed to place four sponsored Unionist M.P.s within the House of Commons, while their own independent candidates were unsuccessful. The sponsored M.P.s had once been farmers, but they were also professional politicians whose first loyalty was to their party. It remained political representation at one remove.

The English farmer's plight was compounded by the general indifference of both major parties towards the farmers' problems. The Conservatives

7. F.M.L. Thompson, Op cit, p 291 claims that the landowners' power, even within the rural sphere, began to wane from the 1880s onwards.
8. NFU Record, Vol 1 No 3 (Dec 1922), p 62.
were the traditional party of the landowning interest but the rural sphere of their activities was completely dominated by the landowners, at least at the national level. Even though the Conservatives advocated protection they were not prepared to actually implement any large-scale protectionist policies when in power. It was not surprising that many farmers became disillusioned with the traditional agricultural party. The Liberals picked up on this backlash against the Conservatives at the 1880 election, but farmers were soon forced to realize that the Liberal party was also dominated by men who knew little of the farmers' problems. The leaders of both major parties, whether industrialists, businessmen, professionals, or landowners, were barely distinguishable. This sense of disillusionment and even hopelessness added an extra spur to those farmers who decided to form their own independent pressure group.

Within New Zealand the emerging Reform party was clearly dominated by farmers, while even the older Liberal party had considerable farmer support. Both Government and Opposition were forced to place farmers' needs high on their list of priorities. Even though they clashed over the matter of land tenure both parties were active in promoting land settlement and in carrying State aid to the farmer, whether in terms of money or expertise. Initially, the Labour Party largely ignored the farming sector, but even it was eventually forced to adopt policies capable of winning farmer support. The electoral triumph of 1935 was closely linked with the Labour party's success in overcoming the hostility of the farming community. The reasonably even spread of English farmers over the rural


electorates could in no way win them the same type of political recognition. After all there was little over 200,000 of them in a population of more than 30,000,000. In 1901 they only made up about 2% of the voting age population and that figure had fallen further to 0.95% by 1931.11

Despite the much greater political importance of the New Zealand farmer, both unions were responses to essentially similar political developments. The NFU represented the English farmers' somewhat belated follow-up to the establishment of the large "new unions" of the 1880s and several major employers' associations during the 1890s.12 Similarly, the NZFU emerged at a time of revival for the trade union movement and of a resurgence of employers' associations. In both instances farmers lagged behind their urban counterparts in setting up sectional pressure groups organised on a national rather than a regional or local level.13 Basically the primary objective of each union was to counter the influence of other sectional organisations. They were essentially defensive and negative in their functions rather than promotional and positive. Their objects and early statements of priorities made this quite clear.

The NFU's motto of "Defence-not-Defiance" was even considered by the NZFU14 well before the NFU was founded, but was rejected in favour of "Principles not Party." The original objects of both unions could also

11. Calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1901 and 1931. This decline was made to appear more dramatic by the introduction of universal female suffrage in 1928. The equivalent figures for New Zealand were 12% in 1901 and 7.8% in 1926.


have come from the same pen. The NZFU aimed to

"keep a vigilant watch over all measures brought before the
House of Representatives, and on the working of present laws,
to protest against any measure deemed injurious to farmers'
interests in Parliament." 15

The NFU set out

"To secure Parliamentary and other support of British agriculture,
and to protect and further the interests of British farmers
individually and collectively."16

Early recruitment efforts echoed this emphasis on the defensive role to
be assumed by each of the new unions. The NZFU urged that "Combination
Should Be Met by Combination,"17 while Colin Campbell, foundation president
of the NFU, wrote in the first NFU Yearbook that

"All other industries have been able to make remarkable progress
and bring about great reforms through their Trade Unions. Surely
Agriculture - the oldest and most essential of them all - must
derive the greatest advantage if all those engaged in it were
enabled to speak with a united voice........"18

M.M. Kirkbride, second colonial president of the NZFU, was even more
explicit in addressing the first colonial conference when he said

"For sometime it has been dawning on us that if we intended to
take that share of say in the administration of the affairs of
the colony which our importance and numbers warrant, we should
have to take a leaf out of the book which has made other sections
of the community such a power in the State."19

The means of achieving these stated objectives were also similar
in that each union intended to lobby both legislature and administration

15. ibid. p 36.
18. NFU Yearbook, 1910, p 5.
19. ACCM NZFU, 1902, p 1.
from a non-partisan position to "lift politics out of agriculture, and
uplift agriculture above politics,"\(^{20}\) and replace "the Kybo-lingo of the
politicians" with "farmers' politics."\(^{21}\) Further proof that each union
represented the concrete institutional expression of a growing sectional
consciousness within both farming communities was provided by the fact
that they were essentially "farmers' only" organisations. The NFU was
even more exclusive as it wanted to make it quite plain that farmers'
interests were quite distinct from either landlords or labourers. It
totally rejected any type of three tiered organisation. Labourers were
admitted to the NZFU, but otherwise it also departed from the permissive
membership criteria of the older agricultural organisations which allowed
interested members of the business community to have a say in running
their affairs. Farmers in both countries were making it quite clear that
their occupational interests were separate from any other section of the
work force.

It was much easier of course for the NFU to live up to its non-
partisan principles as English farmers were so disillusioned with both
major parties. The NZFU faced a far more difficult task in maintaining
political independence in that a new Opposition party was emerging which
was overwhelmingly dependent upon the support of businessmen and farmers
and which also shared many of the NZFU's major policy objectives. The
greater vigilance of the NFU's leaders in avoiding such explicitly party
orientated issues as fiscal policy extended their situational advantage and
ensured that the NFU was far more successful in realising its non-partisan
aims. Nevertheless, even though the NFU did not establish unofficial links
with the Conservative Party, its essentially defensive emphasis kept it

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\(^{20}\) NFU Yearbook, 1912, p 13.

\(^{21}\) ACCM NZFU, 1902, p 1.
as strictly within the conservative camp as the NZFU. Initially the NFU appeared to some observers to be a relatively radical organisation, but any suggestion of radicalism soon disappeared. Although both unions sometimes engaged in militant action their political colouration never changed much from a medium blue. They remained within the mainstream of conservative political development in each country, especially once it became clear that the NFU's challenge to the old deferential system of politics was part of a long overdue move towards modernising the Conservative party's approach to politics rather than a call for radical change equivalent to that emanating from the Labour Party.

The three other major political factors which influenced the behaviour of the two unions were the fact that agriculture became a full portfolio in New Zealand in 1892 whereas the agricultural sector did not receive full ministerial representation in England until 1919; the different role assumed by local government within the administrative systems of the two countries; and the lingering predominance of localism as the single most important determinant of New Zealand political development.

The appointment of a Minister of Agriculture and the establishment of a Department of Agriculture in 1892 provided New Zealand farmers with an alternative avenue through which they could influence Government policy. Consultation between Department and farmers' pressure group was considerable from the foundation of the NZFU in 1902. Something like the partnership developed between the State and NFU after World War II 22 existed between the Department and general farming community in New Zealand from the 1890s onwards. 23 All this was in contrast to England where farmers had to be


content with representation by an Undersecretary and a Board of Agriculture between 1889 and 1919.\footnote{A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, (London 1965), p 642. The change was actually made in August 1919.} If the Board of Agriculture had exerted a similar influence to the Board of Trade this need not have been a disadvantage. But in fact the Board of Agriculture wielded very limited power. Self and Storing's criticism that the NFU should have concentrated more on lobbying Whitehall rather than Westminster earlier than it did\footnote{Self and Storing, *Op cit*, p 46.} is, therefore, somewhat unfair. Cordial relations were in fact established with Whitehall from the NFU's inception and were cemented by the experiences of World War I. But the NFU's leaders saw quite correctly that they had more chance of winning reforms by lobbying Westminster wherein lay the power to make the changes demanded by the new pressure group. After all they were largely successful in securing their major objective of security of tenure by concentrating their efforts on the House of Commons. The NFU's leadership can be more severely criticised for failing to shift more attention towards Whitehall during the 1920s, but that shortcoming was closely related to the peculiar set of political circumstances which confronted English farming during the 1920s. Generally, in the period under study, it was much easier for New Zealand farmers to influence the sector of Government administration which affected agriculture.

This advantage in terms of an alternative avenue of influence was somewhat offset, however, by the much greater power vested in local government agencies within England. English farmers could secure very real advantages by exerting pressure on county hall, whereas New Zealand farmers had to work through their local M.P. rather than through their county council if they hoped to influence developments at the national level. There were only forty counties in England whereas there were
eighty-five counties in New Zealand in 1901 and by 1926 that figure had risen to 128.\textsuperscript{26} Furthermore, the English counties represented large numbers of people and did not delegate authority to as many subsidiary bodies as was the case in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{27} The county had also been an integral part of the administration of England's affairs since the time of William the Conqueror.\textsuperscript{28} Overall they complemented the role of central government and exerted very real influence over the lives of the people who lived within their confines, especially after the reforming legislation of 1888\textsuperscript{29} consolidated their powers.

The NFU took considerable advantage of the power exerted by the counties and won many concessions through applying pressure on county hall. Also it seemed able to throw up men of greater administrative ability than the NZFU. Quite why this was so is not entirely clear at first glance. After all many NZFU members had experience of committee work on such local bodies as school committees, road boards and county councils, as well as in other voluntary organisations such as various lodges and churches.\textsuperscript{30} The majority of English tenant farmers probably had little more experience of such administrative duties as they were not entitled to participate in local body affairs to any great extent until after 1888.\textsuperscript{31} Even then

\begin{itemize}
\item 29. \textit{ibid}. pp 45-46.
\item 30. See Chapters Eight and Twelve of this thesis.
\item 31. Orwin and Whetham, \textit{Op cit}, pp 293-299. County Councils were set up in 1888 and Rural District and Parish Councils in 1894. Farmers tended to be more active on these two latter bodies than the County Councils per se.
\end{itemize}
one of the major reasons for the formation of the NFU was the desire to increase farmers' influence at the county level, an objective which the NFU was singularly successful in realising. On the other hand there was a small group of big tenant farmers who had been active in local government, especially at the parish level, for many generations. These men were educated, like the landowning aristocracy, to govern. They expected to become the natural leaders of their communities. Some of this group were prominent members of the national executive and most of the farmers who founded the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union, from which the NFU grew, came from the bottom edges of the squirearchy. Furthermore, once English farmers found their way onto local government bodies they were soon forced to grapple with the complexities of a mass society. In learning to cope with the problems created by concentrations of large numbers of people they developed considerable administrative skills. The older society, with its much greater population and longer established and more complex political system seemed to provide its farmers' pressure group with a more able leadership than the new world society with its small population and relatively new and simple political system. England's vastly superior communications system further exaggerated the ability of NFU's leaders in coping with administrative problems on a large scale and at a complex level. In short some English farmers were much better prepared to run an organisation at a truly national level than their New Zealand counterparts. There was a vast difference between running a small farmers' club or even carrying out the duties of a county councillor and administering the affairs of an organisation which represented the interests of farmers throughout the whole of New Zealand.

The inadequate infrastructure described in Chapter One ensured that localism remained a critically important factor within New Zealand's political
development during the period under study. We have already noted in Chapter Two that the continuing need for improved roads and bridges retarded the evolution of sectional consciousness. Overall national politics tended to be dominated by local concerns despite a growing national awareness which developed from 1890 onwards as the colony painfully grew into something and somewhere called New Zealand. The growth of a large-scale centralised bureaucracy reinforced this tendency. This move towards nationhood had important institutional repercussions, with the NZFU itself representing the tendency of occupational groups to form their own special organisation administered on a national level. The NZFU also partially institutionalised the long established town versus country rivalry described in Chapter Two. But despite this centripetal trend, this move towards dominance from the centre rather than from the periphery, national politics continued to be dominated by the contradictory centrifugal forces of localism. Squabbles between the four main centres and more remote districts for improved transport facilities and the establishment of industries or State aided

32. The incredible debate over the establishment of a North Island Agricultural College in 1926 revealed that the kind of parochialism investigated by Angus was still very much alive at the end of the period with which my thesis concerns itself. See Brooking, Massey its early years A history of the development of Massey Agricultural College to 1963, (Palmerston North 1977), pp 39-42. Also the failure of the NZFU itself to gain a level of support equivalent to that of the NPU provides a further indication that local concerns influenced the political activity of farmers far more than any occupational awareness.


34. Some examples of similar organisations other than the Trade Unions were the Employers' Federation of New Zealand established in August 1902, Minute Book of the Otago Employers' Association 1890-1904, 28 Aug 1902. M.S 1041/1-3, Hocken Library, Dunedin; the New Zealand Manufacturers' Federation established in 1897, Encyclopedia of New Zealand, A.H. McLintock (Ed.), (Wellington 1969), Vol 2, p 405; the Political Reform Association (from which the Reform Party grew) established in 1905, Encyclopedia of N.Z., Vol 2, p 810; the N.Z. Rugby Football Union set up in 1893, Encyclopedia of N.Z., Vol 1, p 32; and professional bodies such as the N.Z. Society of Chartered Accountants established in 1908, NZ Statutes, 1908, No 211, pp 37-43.
institutions (such as agricultural colleges or hospitals) which would promote the development of a particular district, generally remained more important than national issues. The multiplicity of local government agencies only further entrenched the primacy of local aspirations within the political sphere.

On the other hand localism was by no means the sole factor influencing political developments. Town versus country rivalries, although exaggerated by rhetoric and ameliorated by economic interdependence, were nevertheless very real. William Massey managed to win much political capital through promising to defend country interests against the encroachment of the city. The polarising effect of this rivalry became clearly evident during the 1913 watersiders' strike, but after that date the antagonism became less important, even though it has never entirely disappeared. The failure of the Country Party to gain any widespread support during the 1920s demonstrated that the great majority of rural voters accepted that political reality decreed they would have to support parties based on rural-urban-coalitions. Neither the economic power of the countryside nor the voting power of the cities was sufficiently great to effectively dominate the political scene. After World War One the most important by-product of the town versus country rivalry was the growing success of a distinctly urban party. Yet even the Labour party was forced to make several concessions towards rural interests before it could ever hope to be elected into office. When it finally found its way onto the Government benches it was far less of a distinctly sectional and urban party. Farmers over the 1920s became increasingly suspicious of all major parties and a growing sense of sectional independence helped the recruitment efforts of the NZFU. But lingering parochialism, traditional loyalties to Reform and most important, plain indifference still dissuaded the majority of farmers from joining up with their own sectional pressure group.
The lingering importance of localism was quite different from England where farmers had to put aside their local rivalries if they were to have any chance of influencing Government policy. The English countryside had been subject to disruption by a chronic and endemic parochialism during the nineteenth century, but the combined impact of the industrial, urban, transport and social revolutions greatly reduced the importance of parochialism in all but the most remote areas. By the twentieth century sectional consciousness was becoming widespread. Although farmers were one of the last groups to become aware of their special interests as an occupational grouping their actions were considerably shaped by the growing tendency of English society to divide itself into competing sectional entities. In short the more mature socio-economic and political situation of England produced a more sophisticated and effective farmers' pressure group.
CHAPTER FOUR

"DEFERENCE TO DEFENCE"


English rural society during the nineteenth century was an essentially harmonious symphony in the best pastoral tradition. Its mood of tranquility was only occasionally disturbed by discords erupting from the base line. Then in the early twentieth century the symphony disintegrated into three separate concertos, each discordantly playing against the other in the atonal fashion typical of the new century. Landlords, tenants and labourers, who had formerly viewed their interests as interdependent came to set up their own separate political organisations.¹

The NFU, therefore, was established to counter not only the growing strength of the urban political interest and organised labour, but the traditional dominance of agrarian politics by the landowners. The great majority of agricultural organisations which preceded it were dominated by landlords, were more concerned with farming than farmers and upheld the tripartite conception of English rural society subservient to direction from the top. This conception was accepted without a concerted challenge from the tenants until at least 1879, although latent labourer dissatisfaction was revealed by the swing riots of the 1830s ² and the revolt of the field in the 1870s from which grew an agricultural labourers' union.³ The establishment of the Farmers' Alliance in 1879 faintly suggested that

1. The labourers broke away from the National Agricultural Union in 1901, while the NFU and the Central Landowners' Association were founded in 1908.


traditional relationships were weakening as did the failure of the National Agricultural Union to establish a united agricultural front during the 1850s. But it was not until the early twentieth century that tenant farmers finally resolved to control their own destiny by setting up protective associations, federations, and unions independent of interference from either landlord or labourer. From these local and regional organisational efforts grew the NFU, the first permanent pressure group to look after the tenant farmers specific sectional interests at the national level. Tenant farmers had finally come of age.

The first major agricultural organisation to be established in nineteenth century England was the Royal Agricultural Society of England, founded in 1838. It had a minimal influence on the NFU. Essentially the RASE was a rather exclusive club of landowners, many of them titled, the most successful of the big tenant farmers and enthusiastic amateurs such as the industrialist Sir Walter Gilbey or retired military personnel like Colonel Le Coteur, who shared an interest in promoting a more progressive and scientific approach to agriculture. Most tenant farmers and all agricultural labourers remained outside the organisation. In marked contrast the NFU confined its membership to working farmers, thereby excluding absentee landlords and part-time hobby farmers. Non-farmers were allowed to join, but only as honorary members who could not vote on policy matters.


Whereas the NFU was primarily a political organisation the motto of the RASE, "Practice with Science", revealed that it was essentially apolitical. Political matters were barred from discussion from its establishment and this limitation helps explain the setting up of the Central Chamber of Agriculture during the 1860s to deal specifically with political matters. Men as influential and well-to-do as those who made up the ranks of the RASE had little need of pressure groups or protective associations to defend their interests, at least until the late nineteenth century. It was impossible of course for the RASE to remain completely apolitical and discussion inevitably strayed into political areas. The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society included articles on such quasi-political matters as tenant-right, reduction of railway rates and rating. Speakers at show-day were also not above touching upon such explicitly political issues as protection. But discussions in the Journal were largely technical and were rarely acted upon. Action was confined to such strictly non-political matters as improving the standard of shire-horses, introducing best-farm competitions, promoting experiments and developing

8. A.H.H. Matthews, Fifty years of agricultural politics. Being The History Of The Central Chamber of Agriculture, 1865-1915, (London 1915), p 393, cites the RASE's reluctance to enter the political arena as one of the chief reasons behind the formation of the Chamber.

9. See F.M.L. Thompson, Op.cit, passim, especially pp 45-47, for a description of how the landowners were able to maintain their political ascendancy up to mid-century through the use of existing institutions such as the Church of England or the House of Lords and family connections, rather than through setting up new political organisations to open up alternative channels to the corridors of power.


facilities for agricultural education. Even the advocacy of agricultural education involved a minimum of political exertion. In comparison, the New Zealand A and P Associations, which incorporated aspects of the RASE, the Chamber of Agriculture and the local farmers' clubs, engaged in considerably more pressure group activity.

The main contribution which the RASE made to the NFU was handing on the conception of a centralised organisation, based in London, which co-ordinated the activities of affiliated provincial bodies such as the Bath and West Society. In practice the relationship between the RASE and its affiliated societies was rather loose and informal providing the NFU with an organisational precedent which could be readily improved upon. The appointment of committees to investigate specific problems was also a technique utilised by the NFU, although the Chamber of Agriculture developed the committee system much more fully than the NFU.

The difference between the RASE and the NFU then was essentially that of a promotional, voluntary and largely amateur organisation predominantly preoccupied with agricultural method and a defensive and increasingly professionalised pressure group concentrating on legislative change. This difference was quite radical because the NFU dared to challenge directly the deferential attitude which had cemented landlords' and tenants' interests throughout the nineteenth century, whereas the RASE fostered such attitudes.

The first major off-shoot organisation of the RASE was the Farmers' Club formed in 1841 or 1842, but once again it had little influence on the NFU. It was primarily rather like other London clubs in that it aimed to provide a comfortable resting and meeting place where farmers could

15. Matthews, _Op cit_, p 5, claims the club was founded in 1841, but an article in the Mark Lane Express, 23 Mar 1908 pp 333-343, argued that the club was established in December 1842.
discuss their mutual problems. Originally the Club also hoped to evolve into a central body representing the interests and co-ordinating the activities of the scattered local farmers' clubs, but that objective was never realised. The task of co-ordination on a national level was left to the Chamber of Agriculture and the NFU. Throughout its career the Farmers' Club was also essentially apolitical and in 1892 it amalgamated its political functions with the Chamber of Agriculture. Its small membership, which never exceeded 1,000, also identified it as being significantly different from the NFU.

The one thing it held in common with the NFU was the advocacy of compulsory measures to ensure that tenants were adequately compensated for unexhausted improvements. This attitude was backed up by action in 1875 when C.S. Read, the tenant farmers' parliamentary champion, led a Farmers' Club delegation to Disraeli to urge the introduction of legislation to make compensation compulsory. Such an emphasis on compulsion ran directly counter to the Chamber of Agriculture's advocacy of the need to continue voluntary agreements. Part of this difference in attitude seems to be explained by the membership of the Farmers' Club. Generally it seemed to be less dominated by landowners than either the RASE or the Chamber of Agriculture, while few titled persons or M.P.s were included in its ranks. But like the RASE the Farmers' Club had non-farmer members such as lawyers. This permissive membership criteria, along with its rather leisurely approach to solving agriculture's problems and predominant concern with farming techniques, marked the Farmers' Club as

16. ibid.


18. Lists of members were contained in the Journal Of The Farmers' Club, 1876 pp i-viii and 1886 pp 1-8.
belonging to an earlier era.

The first explicitly political organisation to break away from the RASE was the Chamber of Agriculture, founded in early February 1866 to deal specifically with a chronic outbreak of cattle disease. But despite its political orientation few continuities existed between the Chamber and the NFU. Like the RASE the Chamber's affairs were run primarily in the interests of landowners and it did not adequately represent the special interests of tenant farmers, despite the claims of the Chamber's official historian and secretary, A.H.H. Matthews, to the contrary. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the NFU was formed partly in opposition to the Chamber.

Even the most cursory examination of the composition of the Chamber's executives reveals just how far its policies were dictated by landowners. Around 60% of the Chamber's chairmen over the period 1865-1915 held titles, while over half were M.P.s. The names of titled persons and M.P.s were also prominent amongst the chairmen of committees. Nearly a quarter of committee chairmen held titles, while approximately a third were M.P.s. Eight of the forty-six committee chairmen were also lawyers and a further four were retired colonels. Clearly at the national executive level and, therefore, the policy formulating level, the Chamber of Agriculture was dominated by country gentlemen and other non-farmer members of the political establishment. It was more than coincidence that the organisation chose the title of Chamber of Agriculture rather than "Farmers' League."


20. ibid, pp 416-417.

21. ibid. p 393.
Self and Storing’s dismissal of the chamber as being essentially interested in matters affecting landlords is also borne out by the frequent expressions of disenchantment with the Chamber made by tenant farmers in the early twentieth century. There had been earlier suggestions of such disenchantment, most notably the formation of the Farmers’ Alliance in 1879, but it was not until the early 1900s that opposition was made explicit.

When Matthews was urging the defunct Essex Chamber of Agriculture to reform in 1905 a tenant farmer rose to his feet and claimed that the old Chamber was a load of "tommy rot." He went on to add that he had suffered from "landlordism" and would emigrate to Canada if he was unable to buy land within the county. Even Jesse Collings, the famous Conservative Party land reformer, criticised the Chambers and agricultural societies for being top heavy and unrepresentative of the "great mass of cultivators." Captain R. Ceci. Hedley of the Newcastle Farmers’ Club, one of the convenors of a meeting of tenant farmers to consider the formation of an Agricultural Federation of north-eastern counties, argued that the proposed Federation would "supplement" rather than supersede the Chamber of Agriculture, but added that "besides, many of the representatives of local chambers on the Central Chamber were not tenant farmers, nor had they any practical knowledge of the exigencies of the business."


23. e.g. Lincolnshire tenants were little impressed by the Chambers’ initial efforts to repeal the malt tax in the late 1860s and were even less keen for the changes in local taxation demanded by the Chamber as the existing county rate suited them perfectly well. Olney, Op cit, p 176.

24. J.R. Fisher argues that even the permissive Agricultural Holdings Act 1875 was won in the face of considerable landlord opposition from within the Chamber and parliament. J.R. Fisher, "The Farmers' Alliance: An Agricultural Protest Movement of the Late Nineteenth Century," to be published in the Agricultural History Review. Based on an unpublished PhD thesis from the University of Newcastle.

25. MLE, 23 Mar 1905 p 399.


27. Ibid. 11 Sep 1905 p 301.
W. Rowe speaking at a meeting of the Devon Farmers' Union in June 1908, made a similar criticism when he recounted that the Cornwall Chamber had collapsed because domination by landlords and agents scared the real agriculturists away. The composition of that Chamber's membership meant that clergymen, auctioneers, lawyers and others could always talk the farmers out. Colin Campbell, President of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union and soon to become foundation President of the NFU, remarked at the same meeting that while the Farmers' Union was not antagonistic to the Chamber, "the Union was a farmers' organisation pure and simple and the Chamber was not." Even some members of the Central Chamber itself seemed to acknowledge the lost allegiance of tenant farmers when they argued against the establishment of an agricultural party in 1908 because it was impossible for one organisation to represent the different and sometimes conflicting interests of landlord, tenant and labourer.

Samuel Beer, in his study of twentieth century British political parties and pressure groups, argues that the Chamber represented the first phase in the shift of the landed interest towards political activism, a move led by the landowners. The NFU represented the second phase with farmers taking the initiative. He compares the two organisations by equating the Chamber with a trade association such as the Chamber of Commerce and the NFU with a trade union. He is correct in making such a comparison, but

28. Ibid. 8 Jun 1908 p 684.
the difference between the two organisations was greater than that between a trade association and a trade union. His implication that the NFU grew out of the Chamber's experiences is also misleading. Certainly both organisations were responses to the declining power of country gentlemen M.P.s who represented the landed interest. Prior to 1860 the landed interest really had no need for a new organisation to maintain its political ascendancy. But the NFU grew in opposition to the Chamber as well as to the power of urban and industrial interests. It did not grow out of the Chamber but rather against it. It offered a direct challenge to the representativeness of the older association by setting up a new organisation to defend tenant farmers' interests, quite independent of the landowners or the wider political establishment. In Beer's own terminology the NFU was essentially a twentieth century pressure group and the Chamber a nineteenth century association.

The few similarities which existed between the two organisations were confined to the area of organisational structure and procedure. Delegates from county Chambers and local farmers' clubs such as the Canterbury Farmers' Club attended monthly meetings of the central Chamber in London, just as county branch delegates of the NFU attended monthly meetings of the central council. The central Chamber claimed affiliation with 103 farmers' clubs, agricultural associations and county chambers, a form of centre-periphery link-up and structural hierarchy much more fully developed by the NFU. County or sub-county chambers were roughly equivalent to county branches and farmers' clubs to local branches of the NFU. The NFU also utilised the deputation even more frequently than the Chamber, developed a similar system of committees to deal with specific

problems and like the Chamber negotiated with bipartisan parliamentary committees. But that was where similarities ended. Even in the organisational sense the NFU soon became much more sophisticated and cohesive than the Chamber.

The first explicitly tenant farmers' movement was the Farmers' Alliance which emerged in 1879, but there is some debate as to its significance. The general neglect of the Alliance by historians suggests that it was not particularly important, as does its early demise, for the movement had largely disappeared by 1884. Certainly Matthews dismissed it as a "sectional movement". But such a judgement is hardly convincing coming from an advocate of the Chamber when the Alliance directly challenged the Chamber's authority. More convincing is the recent research of J.R. Fisher which suggests that the alliance was tied to the achievement of a specific object, was something of a puppet of the Liberal party and was in essence a rather spontaneous and short-lived response to depression.

Once greater compulsory compensation for improvements was granted through the passing of a more coercive Agricultural Holdings Act in 1883 the movement rapidly disappeared. Furthermore, even this Act was ill-drafted and proved to be of little benefit to tenants. It was seldom invoked and did not provide any meaningful assistance until it was amended in 1906. Reduction of rents proved to be much more helpful in enabling tenants to adjust to the problems of depression. All the major leaders of the Alliance were Liberal M.P.s or well known Liberal sympathisers, while few Conservatives sat on the central committee. Furthermore, neither of the two most important leaders were farmers.

32. Matthews, Op cit, p 7. By "sectional" Matthews meant a minority splinter group rather than a large occupational group organised on a national basis for the protection and promotion of its own specialist interests.
James Howard, the foundation chairman, was a manufacturer of agricultural machinery and William Bear was a failed Essex farmer who had turned to agricultural journalism and subsequently became editor of the Mark Lane Express. Only two of the sixty-three candidates approved by the Alliance were Conservatives, while the two candidates who succeeded in being elected to parliament were, ironically enough, landlords. That irony was further compounded by the fact that the two tenant farmers returned in 1880 both belonged to the Chamber. By 1884 farmers generally rallied back to the Conservatives and the cry of protection, even in the south and east of England where the Alliance had secured its greatest support. With the end of this short-lived Liberal rural resurgence the Alliance rapidly disappeared. Final proof of the tenants' basic Conservatism was provided by their assertion that the Agricultural Holdings Act of 1883 represented an act of justice rather than a radical change. They did not want to scare away landlord capital and seemed to admonish themselves for their short-lived burst of militancy. In short the Alliance was a rather unimportant and short-lived response of desperation by tenant farmers to the traumas of 1879 which the Liberal party picked upon and blew out of all proportion. 33

On the other hand the only other modern historian to be concerned with the Alliance, J.R. McQuiston, feels that the emergence of the Alliance brought out into the open a struggle between the country gentlemen and the claims of modern agriculture and urban growth which "exposed a rusted bolt and catch that had formerly locked an interdependent social structure firmly." 34 He goes on to argue that the shift from traditional customs and personal arrangements to the arbitrary rule of law revealed that the tenants no longer felt bound by deference.


Tenants wanted a new and more clearly defined legal relationship which would ensure protection against unscrupulous landlords. McQuiston concludes that the militancy of the Alliance represented a radical change in the relationships within English rural society, while the outburst was an outward expression of the underlying tensions which pervaded the English countryside during the Victorian era. By 1883 he feels that the injunctions of State had superseded the paternalism of the squire as the traditional social structure of rural England crumbled before an ever developing technology and changing economy.

Both views are overstated. The rapid demise of the Alliance once it had achieved its immediate objective certainly suggests that it was something of a spontaneous response to depression rather than a concerted and widespread attempt by tenant farmers to assert their political independence. But the fact that the Alliance appeared at all revealed that deferential attitudes were weakening, albeit slowly. Even if the Liberals largely manufactured the movement, the fact that some tenants threw over their traditional landlord and Conservative allegiances for even a few years shows that there was some dissatisfaction with existing tenurial agreements. It was more than mere coincidence that the NFU's two major objectives were the same as those of the Alliance, namely the winning of more satisfactory compensation for disturbance and the achievement of direct parliamentary representation of tenant farmers. The rapid growth of the NFU, which recruited half of England's farmers into its ranks within twelve years of establishment, also suggests that these objectives contained a wide appeal. There were clearly no direct links between the Alliance and the NFU and a whole generation of farmers separated the two. One was essentially a short lived movement which never assumed any concrete institutional shape, while the other evolved into a permanent organisation. But there were nevertheless some
significant similarities in attitude with the Alliance heralding the beginning of the tenant farmers' shift from a position of deference to defence of his specialist interests.

We are still left with the question as to why a further generation of farmers had to move on before the NFU was established, especially as F.M.L. Thompson argues that the political ascendancy of the landowners had ended by 1880. The answer is probably that a combination of lingering deferential attitudes, forces of habit, the relatively successful adjustment to depression and the continuing appeal of protectionist policies delayed the shift in the tenant farmers' position. Furthermore, much of the impetus for changes in the tenant's role was lost when many of the least successful tenants emigrated either to the towns or the new world during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The power of the landlords also had to dwindle rather more before the tenants could make meaningful progress, while tenants had to wait for the return of some degree of prosperity before they could begin to challenge their landlord's authority. An earlier protest could well have driven even more capital out of the agricultural sector and decreased the likelihood of securing reduced rents. Tenants were also thrown into something of an uncomfortable alliance with their landlords as the Conservatives increasingly became the party of the agricultural and rural interest and the Liberals the party of the industrial and urban interest.

Further proof of the uncomfortable nature of that alliance was provided by the failure of the National Agricultural Union to win any widespread tenant support during the 1890s. The growing rift between landlord and tenant had really only been patched up during the 1880s and soon began to widen once again. Tenants slowly continued to change their attitudes rather than reverting completely to the old order of things. The NAU itself appealed to the older conception of the tripartite

system in an attempt to counter the growing influence of the urban and industrial political interest. Founded by Lord Winchelsea in 1892 it attempted to forge a united front of landlords, tenants and labourers to halt the intrusion of city and factory into the countryside. It proved to be an anachronistic conception, for rather than tightening the interdependent relationships of the three groups it seemed to heighten mutual distrust. Landlords remained wary of possibly unreasonable demands of tenants and the numerical strength of labourers, while tenants viewed the landlords with suspicion and feared that labourers would increase their costs by demanding higher wages. As a result both landlords and tenants tended to remain aloof from the organisation. Labourers who had much less to lose joined up willingly but later became dissatisfied with domination from the top. Dependence on the leadership of one man, an overtly paternalistic leadership at that, further reduced the NAU's prospects of success. When Lord Winchelsea died in 1898 its demise was rapid. The maintenance of strong ties with both the Unionist party and the Chamber of Agriculture further differentiated the NAU from the NFU and identified it as yet another landlord dominated organisation, essentially nineteenth century in its perception of the form which political action should assume.

Even before the establishment of the NAU was completed some serious divisions had been revealed. The NAU was founded after a conference held in December 1892 to consider possible solutions to the agricultural depression. This conference followed on from several similar provincial meetings where the chief speaker was also Henry Chaplin, Unionist member of the House of Commons. The Duke of Devonshire wrote to the NAU claiming that such an organisation was unnecessary. The Times, 13 Dec 1895, or R.R.B. Orlebar, a landowner in Wellingborough, wrote that he was afraid that labourers might outvote landlords on vital issues. ibid. 8 Jan 1894.

36. e.g. The Duke of Devonshire wrote to the NAU claiming that such an organisation was unnecessary. The Times, 13 Dec 1895, or R.R.B. Orlebar, a landowner in Wellingborough, wrote that he was afraid that labourers might outvote landlords on vital issues. ibid. 8 Jan 1894.

37. Winchelsea often criticised landowners for not joining the NAU in greater numbers. e.g. ibid. 14 Dec 1894.
Minister of Agriculture, but farmers had some say in calling the conference as the Lancashire Federation of Farmers' Associations asked for it as well. The connection with the Unionists was denied by the NAU's founders but Chaplin's presence and the decoration of the meeting places with Unionist flags and shields, 38 made a mockery of any claims of neutrality. This Unionist connection immediately posed problems for the NAU as it placed the organisation firmly in the protectionist camp. While protection appealed to many tenants it made the labourers automatically suspicious as they tended to favour free trade, the best means in their opinion of reducing the cost of daily necessities. 39 The NFU must have learnt something from the criticisms of the labour group for the NFU rigorously avoided taking any definite stand over the divisive matter of fiscal policy throughout its career. While Chaplin wooed others with his claim that tenurial arrangements did not require any improvement, cries of "Yes and No" and "uproar" greeted Chaplin's claim that security of tenure was unnecessary as landlord-tenant relationships were so harmonious. An additional comment that landlords were entitled to aim for as high a return on their investment as possible was accompanied by "cheers" and cries of "No No!!" 40 Despite these obvious differences of opinion which existed between the three groups Winchelsea went ahead and launched the NAU in April 1893, 41 but the organisation was already pitted with deep fissures.

Growth was spectacular in terms of gross membership with the NAU reaching a maximum of over 50,000 members in May 1895, spread over 450 local branches and forty district councils. Most of its members were

38. e.g. Conferences at Ely, ibid. 30 Jan 1892, Shrewsbury, ibid. 21 May 1892, and Leicester, ibid. 4 Apr 1892.

39. ibid. 8 and 9 Dec 1892.

40. ibid.

labourers and the NAU prided itself on having penetrated the villages where the Chamber had failed to reach. But such an achievement did not greatly impress tenants and their distrust was hardly ameliorated in 1894 when the NAU came to employ R.H. Rew as joint secretary of both the NAU and the Central Chamber.

Several major successes were claimed by 1896 including the winning of pledges from 230 M.P.s to support their programme, the setting up of the British Produce Supply Association in 1896 to co-ordinate the activities of the co-operative movement within Britain, the reduction of rail rates on the carriage of agricultural produce and the provision of rating relief via the Agricultural Rating Act. But these claims were as grandiose as Winchelsea's vision of a single united agricultural front. Very little legislation affecting agriculture in any way, let alone legislation directly benefitting agriculture, was passed after 1896 despite the securing of pledges of support. Tenant farmers in the early twentieth century were unanimous in complaining of parliamentary neglect. It was scarcely surprising that the NAU's popularity declined rapidly in the face of such failures. Then in 1898 Lord Winchelsea died and the organisation soon folded up despite the desperate efforts of the Irish peer, Viscount Templeton, to salvage something through forging a non-party alliance between

42. The Times, 25 May 1895.
44. The Times, 13 Dec 1895.
45. Ibid. 25 Mar 1896.
46. Ibid. 4 Dec 1896.
47. Even something as apparently non-controversial as the Pure Food Bill which the NAU supported with all its might, failed to find its way onto the Statute Book. Ibid. 8 Dec 1896, 9 Apr 1897, 2 Jul 1897 and 16 Feb 1899.
English and Irish M.P.s who represented agricultural constituencies. 48

His efforts failed and on 17 January 1901 the NAU was declared defunct and was replaced by the National Agricultural Organisation Society, a completely non-political body which was assigned the task of co-ordinating the activities of British co-operatives. 49

During its brief career the NAU, like the Chamber, developed some lobbying techniques and structural features which were adopted and extended by the NFU. In its efforts to win greater tenant farmer support the NAU also evolved several policy objectives which were taken up by the NFU. The technique of drawing up a parliamentary programme and then questioning candidates on the basis of that programme to secure pledges as a guideline to help members in deciding their voting preferences, was taken up in its entirety by the NFU. Furthermore, district councils set up in parliamentary divisions to supervise the activities of local branches located by polling booths, 50 roughly approximated the county and local branches of the NFU. But as was the case with the Chamber such centre-periphery link-ups were far looser and less formal than within the NFU. Voluntary association gave way to compulsory levies and the NFU did not have to meet in the house of its leader, a daunting prospect for tenants let alone the leaders of the labourers' unions. The provisions of greater tenurial security through amendments to the Agricultural Holdings Act, tithe redemption, reform of beer duties, the abolition of the preferential tariff on foreign produce carried by rail and the transference of the funding of the poor relief, education and road maintenance from local rates to the national exchequer, 52 were all policies taken up by the NFU.

48. ibid. 16 Feb 1899.
49. ibid. 17 Jan 1901.
50. ibid. 9 Dec 1892.
51. e.g. ibid. 2 Jul 1897.
52. ibid. 16 Oct 1896.
But despite such similarities as securing pledges of support from parliamentary candidates and some continuities of policy the essential difference between the NAU and the NFU was considerable. Perhaps it was best summed up by the NFU's foundation secretary, H.W. Palmer, when he wrote in the first Yearbook that the NFU did not intend to repeat the mistake of the NAU. He blamed the earlier organisation's failure on its attempt to represent too many interests, interests which often directly conflicted with one another. He conceded that the three major agricultural interests were interconnected but considered that it would be more satisfactory if landlords, tenants and labourers evolved their own separate organisations and met at round table conferences to consider problems which they shared in common. The NFU was not antagonistic to landlords or landowners, but the time had come for farmers to voice their own opinions "alone and unaided." 53

Before moving on to trace the development of predominantly tenant farmer organisations in the early twentieth century some mention must be made of the nineteenth century agricultural organisation to which the NFU owed its greatest debt; the local farmers' club. The local farmers' club held a much more direct link with the NFU than the RASE, Chamber of Agriculture, NAU or even Farmers' Alliance, as it clearly was the ancestor of the NFU's local branch. Much of the NFU's vitality and cohesion resulted from its ability to keep in constant touch with grass roots opinion through the branch and sub-branch, which very often grew out of the existing farmers' club. Some members were so proud of the strong and broad base of their organisational tree that they wanted branches renamed roots. Several of the clubs themselves continued on into the 1920s separate from the NFU while others amalgamated more speedily.

But most had handed over the control of their political activities by 1930. The NFU itself acknowledged its debt to the farmers' clubs during the 1920s by attempting to revive some of their earlier activities such as ploughing matches and annual shows. The key difference between the club and the branch lay in the fact that the NFU tightened and formalised the links between the local level and London headquarters, through imposing a levy on each branch and allocating one delegate per branch and one extra for every 250 members to attend meetings of the other new intermediary organisational unit, the County branch. In this way provision was made for the expression of local grievances, while sufficient control was imposed to prevent localist feeling producing a hopelessly divisive effect. For the first time a concerted attempt was made to channel centrifugal energies in a centripetal direction. Another major difference lay in the composition of farmers' club membership as they included landlords, agricultural middlemen such as estate agents, and professional men within their ranks.

It should be made clear that not all of the farmers' clubs were small or locally oriented. Some, such as the Newcastle Farmers' Club or the Milborne Saint Andrew's Farmers' Club in Dorset, had a more

56. Journal Of The Kent Farmers' Union, Vol XI No 4 (Dec 1912), p 190. The Ashford, Dartford, Rochester and Sittingbourne branches were particularly active in this direction.

57. NFU Yearbook, 1910, p 38.

58. The Newcastle Farmers' Club seemed to perform a similar function to the London based Farmers' Club for the North Eastern region. In the early twentieth century, however, it was one of the main organisations which convened the meeting to form a North Eastern Agricultural Federation in 1905. A.J. Woodcock, "All our yesterdays," The Northumberland Farmer, Vol 14 No 3 (Jan 1971), and MLA, 11 Sep 1905 p 301.

59. This club seems to have given something of a lead to the half dozen or so other farmers' clubs in Dorset. It served farmers' interests so satisfactorily that no branch of the NFU was formed until 1918, but the link-up with the NFU was led by the clubs themselves. Letter from the Dorset County Secretary for 1974, R.M. Mitchell.
metropolitan or regional flavour. But their influence on the structural make up of the NFU was not nearly as great as that of the smaller clubs. Others were essentially agricultural societies engaging in no political activity whatsoever, concentrating instead on organising ploughing matches and show days. Some, such as the Faversham Farmers' Club, were not even agricultural societies, but rather social institutions more concerned with drinking feats than farmer politics or progressive farming. Clubs related to such specific activities as sparrow or rat control also proliferated, and were reproduced in the New Zealand context. But farmers' clubs like those of Canterbury or Maidstone were far more than agricultural associations. They engaged in both political discussion and action through their affiliation with the Chamber of Agriculture, through the use of such techniques as petitioning and lobbying local M.P.s and through securing representation on such associated pressure groups as the "Hop Growers', Labourers', Pickers' and Allied Industries Defence League."

Much of the energies of the Canterbury Farmers' Club and East Kent Chamber of Agriculture were absorbed in raising funds for the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institute, a charity which assisted bereft farming families. Action over such explicitly local matters as improvements to


61. e.g. The Kentish Gazette and Canterbury Press, 16 Apr 1910, reported the annual dinner of the Eastry Rat and Sparrow Club.

62. ibid. passim 1908-1913. e.g. 22 Jan 1910.
the Canterbury cattle market constituted the other major part of its activities. But an extra spur was added to engaging in a wider sphere of political activity by the agitation for the fairer treatment of the hop industry, a matter of immediate relevance to many of its members. Two of the club's most prominent members, Colonel J.F. Honeyball and W.W. Berry, both of them successful hop growers, sat on the executive of the Hop Growers', Labourers', Pickers' and Allied Industries' Defence League, while resolutions were continually passed recommending the introduction of a Pure Beer Bill to prevent the use of artificial substitutes in beer and to implement the marking of foreign hops. These resolutions were followed up by being sent on to local M.P.s, the Board of Agriculture and the Central Chamber of Agriculture. Deputations to M.P.s and the Board were also arranged periodically and the club's banner was even carried at several major demonstrations in London during 1908 to highlight the problems of the hop industry. This concern with the hop industry was extended when a concerted effort was made to have hop and fruit pickers excluded from the provisions of the Act. Several other topics of wider political interest also concerned the club including the budget of 1910, more accurate agricultural returns, agricultural education, especially through raising funds for Wye College, and agricultural banks.

63. e.g. ibid. 23 Apr 1910.
64. e.g. Kentish Gazette and Canterbury Press, 28 May 1910.
65. ibid. 26 Dec 1908.
66. e.g. ibid. 3 Aug or 19 Oct 1912.
67. ibid. 28 May 1910.
68. ibid. 23 Jul 1910.
69. ibid. 15 Oct 1910.
70. ibid. 13 Aug 1910.
In spite of this impression of great activity the qualification should be added that the club's active membership was small. Even though it claimed a total membership of over 250 for the period 1908-1913, the reported average attendance was only about twenty-seven. Nevertheless, this committed minority were able to keep the club politically active until the late 1920s, despite competition from the Canterbury branch of the NFU which had been established as early as 1918. But after 1930 the club handed its political functions over to the NFU and concentrated on technical matters. 7

Despite the similarities in many of the club's concerns and lobbying techniques its membership marked it off as being different from the NFU. Included amongst its members were a hop factor, 72 several estate agents and valuers, 73 and several big landowners, 74 at least one of whom was a member of the landed gentry. 75 Most of these men were also active members of the Unionist party, 76 but two of its most active members,


72. H. Le May was a prominent member of both the Canterbury and Maidstone Farmers' Clubs and a well known Kentish hop factor (the man who carried out the middleman function for the hop industry). T. Babington Jones, Kent at the Opening of the Twentieth Century Contemporary Biographies. (Brighton 1904), p 342.

73. W.R. Elgar, an active member of the club, was an estate agent, valuer and surveyor. ibid. p 307. Frank Amos, secretary of the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institute, was also a real estate agent. ibid. p 301.

74. George Mount was a big landowner, successful hop grower and sometime Mayor of Canterbury, although he was something of a self-made man. Journal Of The Kent Farmers' Union, Vol XXI No 5 (May 1927), p 152.

75. Henry Western Plumptre, was the son of the High Sheriff of Kent County, was educated at Harrow and Oxford, and held the offices of Commissioner of Income Tax, Commissioner of Sewers and Justice of the Peace. Kent Historical, Biographical and Pictorial, (London 1907), p 183.

Arthur Amos and W.W. Berry, were prominent in the local Liberal movement. 77 Amos was a tenant farmer whose views often clashed with those of the majority. He praised Lloyd George's National Insurance scheme in the face of hostile criticism and ardently advocated an increase in compensation granted for disturbance. 78 Such an advocacy led to frequent clashes with landlords like George Mount and clearly revealed why tenant farmers needed an organisation of their own, free of the interference of landlords, estate agents or valuers.

The Maidstone Farmers' Club and East Kent Chamber of Agriculture seemed to exhibit an almost identical range of concerns as the Canterbury club and engaged in similar activities. 79 The composition of its membership was also similar. But there was a difference in that the Maidstone club surrendered its political functions to the Maidstone branch of the NFU as early as 1910. This transfer of functions seemed to assist the Maidstone branch into growing into one of the strongest Kentish branches, 80 whereas the continuance of the Canterbury Farmers' Club tended to retard the development of the local NFU branch for it acted as a virtual substitute institution. But this difference was undoubtedly exaggerated by the much larger number of farmers who resided in the Maidstone area relative to the Canterbury area.

77. Obituary of Arthur Amos in Journal Of The Kent Farmers' Union, Vol XXV No 5 (May 1929), p 164. Amos had been chairman of both the Canterbury club and the London Farmers' Club, so militant tenants did sometimes hold key posts within these organisations. Berry's name was put forward as a possible Liberal candidate for Faversham in 1911. Kentish Gazette and Canterbury Press, 11 Feb 1911.

78. Amos wanted full compensation for tenants, that is enough to start again, suggesting three years rent as a guideline, but Mount was opposed to paying any compensation at all. e.g. ibid. 27 May 1911.


80. Minute Book of the Maidstone Branch of the NFU, Jan 1914- Dec 1919, and NFU Yearbook, 1910, p 56.
The Farmers' Protection Associations, which were revived around the turn of the century, were closer to the NFU than any of the organisations discussed so far because they limited their membership to "farmers' only."

The legal service which they provided was also immediately taken up by the NFU as one of its most important activities.

An example of one of the more active Protection Associations was the Darlington Farmers' Protection Association, founded around 1900. Initially it was established to protect farmers who had sold barley only to have it thrown up by the buyers. But it soon expanded the range of its activities to petitioning the Board of Agriculture to relax restrictions placed on swine fever and sheep scab outbreaks, and organising legal services at reduced costs for members. By 1908 it reached its maximum size of about 1,000 financial members and by that time had handled legal disputes for one member in every six. In 1909 the Association claimed to have settled ninety-one cases of excess rail charges without litigation, while seven of the remaining nine cases were settled to the farmers' advantage in the county court. By this stage the Association claimed to be a tenant farmers' organisation defending tenants against the combined attacks of rail and trading companies. This emphasis on defence was reminiscent of the NFU and suggested that the Darlington Farmers' Protection Association was quite clearly different from the Chamber of Agriculture or the farmers' clubs. But its orientation was still basically local.

81. These associations were originally established during the 1840s in conjunction with the corn-law agitation to provide farmers with advice in the event of legal entanglements. But after the corn-laws were repealed they faded away and did not reappear until the late nineteenth century. Goddard, Op. cit.

82.MLE, 27 Jan 1908, p 77 18 Jan 1909, p 73, 5 Apr 1909 p 385 and 31 May 1909 p 651. The article on the Association published 27 Jan 1908 said that the organisation was founded in 1901, but its president claimed that it had been established "ten years ago" when his speech was reported on 31 May 1909 p 651.
Then in 1905 an attempt was made to broaden its geographical influence when the Darlington Association along with the Hexham Farmers' Protection Association, the Northumberland and Durham Dairy and Tenant Farmers' Association, the Newcastle Farmers' Club and the Stockton, Ripon and Cleveland Chambers of Agriculture, convened a meeting to form a North Eastern Agricultural Federation. The delegates agreed that the meeting was imperative because of Parliament's neglect of agriculture and expressed the desire for tenant farmers to secure direct parliamentary representation to bring to an end this unsatisfactory state of affairs. A parliamentary platform was drawn up as a basis for deciding on those candidates most worthy of electoral support, while a desire for greater representation of farmers' interests in local government was also expressed. It was made quite clear that farmers wanted to be directly represented at both the national and local level by men of "their own class". Such an emphasis was identical to that of both the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union and the NFU.

Each of the planks on the platform agreed to by the convention were later adopted by the NFU. These planks were the continuation of the Agricultural Rating Act until the rating system was completely overhauled; the abolition of preferential tariffs on the carriage of foreign produce by rail; the better regulation of motor traffic to increase public safety and reduce the dust nuisance; the transference of the cost of secondary education from local rates to the national exchequer; the passing of a butter adulteration bill, and finally making rail companies liable for fire damage caused

83. The Hexham Farmers' Protection Association and Northumberland and Durham Dairy and Tenant Farmers' Association, seem to have performed similar functions to the Darlington Association. The Northumberland and Durham Association pressed for legislation to keep out Canadian store cattle and to enforce carts to use lights for night travel, MLE, 15 May 1905 p 642, while both provided similar legal services.

84. Lincolnshire Chronicle, 8 Sep 1905, and MLE, 11 Sep 1905 p 297.

85. Lincolnshire Chronicle, 8 Sep 1905.
by sparks. As the legislature had scarcely touched upon any of these demands it was hardly surprising that there was considerable expression of anti-party feeling, much to the embarrassment of those local M.P.s in attendance. Radical views on the need to run parliament as a business answering clear-cut sectional needs were also bandied about. Farmers seemed to revel in this opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with the political establishment.

The first convention was actually held in 1905 and continued on as an annual event until 1918 when the North Eastern Agricultural Federation finally amalgamated with the newly established joint Northumberland and Durham branch of the NFU. Over 300 delegates attended the first convention, the great majority of them tenant farmers with a few notable exceptions such as Lord Barnard. Representatives came from as far away as Scotland, Wales and Leicester, but the convention decided to limit the activities of the Federation to the counties of Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire. The platform drawn up by the September meeting was adopted except for the resolution on secondary education, which was amended to the adaptation of both primary and secondary education in rural areas to meet more adequately the needs of agriculture. Further disillusionment was expressed with the existing party system and it was resolved to establish a fighting fund to put tenant farmers into parliament and so end the neglect of "country gentleman" members, a measure and intention adopted by the NFU in total. Emphasis was also placed on the need for greater representation of tenants' interests on County Councils, with it being pointed out that there was only one tenant farmer on the Durham County Council. Arrangements were made

86. All of these matters were taken up by the NFU. NFU Yearbook, 1910, pp 19-20. But the regulation of motor traffic, the butter adulteration bill and the fire damage compensation issue were not placed on their parliamentary programme.

87. A.J. Woodcock, "A History of the Northumberland Branch of the NFU," an unpublished paper by the secretary of that branch, held at their headquarters in Newcastle.
to question both parliamentary and local government candidates on the Federation's platform and their answers were to be published for the perusal of members. It was hoped that only those in favour of the Federation's views would be elected as a result of such procedures. 88

Clearly the North Eastern Agricultural Federation was a very similar organisation to the neighbouring Lincolnshire Farmers' Union. It seemed that the NFU could have easily grown under its auspices just as it did under the leadership of the Lincolnshire union. But a critical difference existed in that the convention limited itself to operating within its regional conception. It represented a larger area and a greater number of farmers than any organisation which preceded it, but it had no intention of embracing the whole of England within its ambit. It could easily have forged an alliance with the similar Midlands Agricultural Federation formed around the same time, and the Mark Lane Express urged it to do so. 89 Then there was the Lancashire Farmers' Association, 91 who even attended the first convention, and the Worcester Farmers' Association, 91 but the North Eastern Federation refused to amalgamate with any such bodies. Its leaders made it quite clear

88. MLE, 23 Oct 1905 p 487.
89. ibid. 25 Dec 1905 p 740. By 1908 this Association co-ordinated the activities of thirty-five branches and claimed a membership of 1,139. ibid. 17 Feb 1908 p 188. It also drew a parliamentary platform which was used as a guideline for questioning parliamentary candidates.
90. The Lancashire Farmers' Association claimed to be essentially a "farmers' only" organisation and pressed for compensation for animals slaughtered as suspected carriers of Tuberculosis. ibid. 6 Feb 1905 p 181.
91. The Worcester Farmers' Association resolved to ask parliamentary candidates a similar set of questions to those drawn up by the North Eastern Federation. ibid. 25 Dec 1905 p 740.
that "A national association would be a very cumbersome thing." In contrast the Lincolnshire union was much more eager to expand the geographical limits of its activities. The very strong regional ties and remoteness of the North-East mitigated against the development of the Federation into a national organisation, whereas Lincolnshire farmers were not bound by such strong loyalties and were not so remote from the remainder of England. Furthermore, like all the other agricultural organisations which predated the NFU, the Federation was run in a much more informal and casual fashion than the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union. An annual convention was scarcely regular enough to develop a permanent pressure group which was effectively functional all year round. There was no executive which met regularly to hear reports of branches nor a full time secretary to provide administrative continuity. Although the Federation was one of the first organisations to limit its membership to farmers, its loose structure reduced its effectiveness and indicated that it was less modern in its approach to political activity than the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union.

Finally, the claims of the Yorkshire Agricultural Union to be the direct ancestor of the NFU must be considered. A letter in the Yorkshire Post, published on 18 May 1908, criticised the opposition of some Yorkshire farmers to the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union. This opposition was attributed to the belief that Yorkshire had established the first farmers' union. Certainly the Yorkshire union had been established as

92. ibid. 23 Oct 1905 p 301. There was also some talk of amalgamation with the North West, but the idea was rejected as impractical.

93. Contained in the notebooks of E.W. Howard in the possession of Christopher Howard, Nocton Rise, Lincolnshire.
early as 1891 and had devised an insurance scheme for its members. A parliamentary committee had been established in 1900 to petition the Board of Agriculture and a legal protection service was introduced in 1908. By 1909 the Yorkshire union had attained a membership of 3,000 representing twenty-four branches, and claimed a range of services equal to that of the Lincolnshire union. But despite such achievements the Yorkshire claim was invalid because it was a union of agricultural clubs affiliated to the Chamber of Agriculture and included non-farmers within its ranks. Clearly its permissive membership criteria and association with the landlord dominated Chamber marked it off as a very different organisation from either the Lincolnshire union or even the Federation. Also it had no intention of extending its activities beyond Yorkshire.

The Lincolnshire Farmers' Union then was established at a time when tenant farmers throughout England, particularly in the north, were organising themselves for explicitly political action. Such activity differentiated these various Farmers' Protection Associations, Federations and Unions, from the other general agricultural organisations of the nineteenth century, for they flew directly in the face of tradition by challenging the right of the landowning country gentlemen to represent at one remove the interests of tenant farmers. The challenge originated at the local level and concentrated on the administration of county hall. But it was soon to be extended on to the national level and focused on the entrenched power of the landowners at Westminster. The shift from a position of deference to one of defence had begun. But it was left up to the Lincolnshire tenants to ensure that such a shift occurred at the national rather than the regional level and that the fight was carried beyond Darlington or Durham to London.

The NFU grew out of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union founded in September 1904. Within a little over four years that Lincolnshire union amalgamated with several other more recently established county unions to form the NFU of England and Wales in December 1908. The development of one of England's more effective pressure groups is directly traceable to these early stirrings in Lincolnshire.

The Lincolnshire Farmers' Union was a special kind of organisation similar to the Farmers' Protection Associations, but significantly different in that it engaged in a much wider range of activities than the provision of legal aid, held more regular meetings and made it clear from establishment that it hoped to develop someday into a national rather than a regional organisation. In many ways the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union was a scaled down model of the NFU with its active central executive maintaining constant grass-roots contact through the delegate system of branch representation. The appointment of a full-time secretary also marked it as a more professional and sophisticated organisation than the Farmers' Protection Associations or the North Eastern Agricultural Federation. This close structural and functional relationship between the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union and the NFU was due in large part to the binding element of personality. The foundation President and Secretary of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union, Colin Campbell and Harry Wilton Palmer, also held those two key executive posts in the earliest years of the NFU.

The Lincolnshire Farmers' Union then, like the NFU, was essentially a more modern type of organisation than other contemporary agricultural organisations. It was modern in the sense of being an explicitly sectional pressure group, a 'farmers' only' trade union, rather than an association of persons interested in agriculture or farmers concerned with specific short-term objectives. Furthermore, it will be argued that it probably was more
than mere coincidence that such an organisation first arose in Lincolnshire.

"The Lincolnshire Farmers' Union"

"The time has arrived for us farmers to join
In union, all as one man,
It's the only thing that we farmers can do,
To get something done if we can.
We've waited for years now to have something done,
To benefit those on the land;
Depression is great, and money is scarce,
You can see this on every hand.
The seasons are bad, I am bound to admit,
They could scarcely be very much worse.
And I've said all along if we join as one man,
We shall probably get something done,
We shall probably get something done."

Chorus:- "So come and join the Union,
It's bound to do some good,
For we want pure Beer my boys,
As well as pure Food.
We want not anti-foodstuffs,
We want the pure thing
So knock your heads together, my boys,
And join the Union,
The Farmers' Union." 1

So wrote the Lincolnshire Union's self-styled poet and county secretary from 1909 to 1919, Frank F. Hand, in a poem similar to those published in other trade union propaganda campaigns. The Lincolnshire Farmers' Union celebrated in this piece of doggerel was actually started on 31 August 1904. 2 Nine farmers sat down in a tent after the Blankney Hunt dog show at Harmston, a small village near Lincoln, and discussed their mutual problems in weather supposedly as gloomy as the agricultural situation. E.W. Howard then suggested that each of them put down a pound

2. The Farmer and Stockbreeder, 12 Jan 1931. The Lincolnshire Record, Vol 43 No:27 (May 1967), The Lincolnshire Section Of The NFU Record, Vol 12 No 143 (Feb 1936). All three accounts agree on the date and place. Harmston is about five miles south of Lincoln.
to form a Union to solve these apparently overwhelming problems. The others agreed and the following day Howard placed an advertisement in the local newspaper, the Lincolnshire Chronicle. The first meeting was held at a packed Albion Hotel on 2 September when the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union was officially established.3

The object of the new Union was

"to benefit agriculture, and to provide means by which the needs of the distressed industry may be effectually brought before the legislature, and pressed forward until grievances, long existant, are remedied." 4

Its promoters hoped to build a strong union "able to further their interests just as Unions in connection with the other great industries of the country do." In expressing this hope they acknowledged their debt to the trade union movement. They also made it clear that farmers must help themselves instead of merely grumbling as neither landlord nor labourer, Tory Government nor Liberal Opposition, was going to assist them unless they acted. Financing the new venture was not expected to cause any problems, for it was estimated that even if only five farmers joined in each parish and paid a one pound subscription their income would pass the £6,000 mark. Such confidence hints at why such a union arose in Lincolnshire; it contained a large number of farmers and many substantial farmers as well.

3. Lincolnshire Chronicle, 3 Sep 1904. This meeting may have drawn on the tradition of the "market ordinary", especially in the Lindsey district, where tenants meet in an hotel on market day to discuss their problems. Sometimes when members of the gentry were absent they planned independent political action at these meetings. Olney, Op cit, p 67. Probably though, as in rural New Zealand an hotel was the easiest place in which to hold such meetings, while the prospect of drink, food and convivial company held out an extra incentive to attend.

4. Ibid.
An organising committee was appointed with Howard as acting secretary. It immediately set about publicising the new union's creation and objectives through placing advertisements in the local press and undertaking stumping tours in trains and on horseback. Both advertisements and speeches laid stress on the fact that farmers had combined to protect their own interests as all other trades and professions were doing the same thing. The farmers' many grievances were blamed squarely on the lack of any such combination in the past.  

By mid-January 1905 the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union claimed to have attracted much attention to its activities and had made it quite clear that it was something more than a mere discussion group. Perhaps its most important single action was the drawing up of a programme as a basis for questioning parliamentary candidates to ensure that only those interested in justice for the agricultural industry would secure the farmers' vote. Howard even claimed that other counties were following the Lincolnshire Union's example in the matter of the parliamentary platform, although neither the North Eastern Agricultural Federation nor the various Chambers of Agriculture which drew up programmes later in the year acknowledged any such debt. Of even greater significance than the parliamentary platform was Howard's declaration that he hoped the Lincolnshire union would evolve into a national organisation.

The first Annual General Meeting was held on 27 January 1905 with the new union claiming a modest membership of ninety-one, forty-eight of whom had not paid their subscriptions. The most important point which emerged from the meeting was that the new union, although not antagonistic  

5. ibid. 17 Jan 1905.
to the Chamber of Agriculture, was a 'tenant farmers' only' organisation. It did not intend to reduplicate the mistake of Lord Winchelsea's National Agricultural Union of attempting to represent the interests of landlords, tenants and labourers simultaneously. The subscription was set at 4d per acre with a minimum of 1/- and a maximum of 10/-, thereby virtually excluding small holders who engaged in part-time farming. Colin Campbell was appointed Chairman and the meeting decided to appoint a full-time professional secretary.6

The decision to appoint a full-time secretary was partly the consequence of Howard's resignation on the grounds that he could not afford sufficient time off his farm to do justice to the job. Howard was by no means a small farmer as he ran a middling sized operation in the form of a 400 acre mixed arable and sheep farm, but he lacked farming sons to continue the work in his absence and the capital resources to maintain a large scale organisational effort while employing a manager.7 His resignation was significant and somewhat ominous for it highlighted a problem which has beset the NFU ever since, namely, that any farmer other than the most substantial and successful, particularly those without family support, have found difficulty in taking time off farm work to engage in union activities, especially when travel to London is involved. As a result of this problem bigger farmers with more spare time and older men with working age sons have tended to dominate the leadership, especially at the national level. This problem was to loom even larger in New Zealand where, as we have already seen, the majority of farmers relied heavily on their own labour and that of their families rather than on hired help.

6. ibid. 31 Jan 1905.

7. The Farmer and Stock-Breeder, 12 Jan 1931.
Howard did manage to continue his propaganda efforts, however, along with Campbell and other members of the executive, while the appointment of H.W. Palmer as full-time secretary in March 1905 greatly helped to increase the efficiency of the union's operations. By June the Lincolnshire union began to receive a wider recognition with one of its meetings being reported for the first time in the national agricultural weekly, the Mark Lane Express. At this meeting the new union provided concrete proof of its political activism by sending a resolution to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the President of the Board of Agriculture in support of the Government's decision to continue the Canadian cattle embargo. The Government was also thanked for continuing the Agricultural Rating Act. But the proviso was added that the Rating Act should be made permanent to bring justice to the farmers and prevent it from becoming little more than a dole to the landlords. Support was also given to the demand made by the Chamber of Agriculture that road construction costs should be paid out of the national exchequer rather than out of county rates. This resolution was sent to local M.P.s as well as to Westminster.

Colin Campbell provided something of an eccentric touch at this meeting when he suggested that motorists should be gaoled rather than

8. Lincolnshire Chronicle, 10 Mar 1905.

9. Mark Lane Express, 19 Jun 1905 p 802.

The Agricultural Rating Act was introduced in 1896 to afford agriculture rating relief through nominally derating agriculture by half. The measure was passed in response to the request of a Royal Commission but it was no more than a palliative and farmers were never satisfied with the rating system until 1928 when agriculture was completely derated under the Local Government Act. See Perry, Op cit, pp 60-61 and p 134, and Herman Finer, English Local Government, pp 407-414.
INCREASING LOCOMOBILITY OF THE PEDESTRIAN.

Bless you, we are an adaptable race. With a little more practice we shall soon be able to sidestep out of the way of the motor cars in their "Destroyers" with the agility of the grasshopper and the disembark skill of the fittest ape. After all, they don't wish to kill us, and we can't expect them to play "Bridge" all the time.

Mr Punch in the motor car.
fined for first offences. This was but one of many expressions of an irrational hatred of the motor-car which was to be carried into the early years of the NFU. The internal combustion engine stood as a symbol of a new age increasingly urbanised and industrial. Motor cars destroyed the tranquility of the countryside as they noisily intruded upon the peacefulness of a Sunday afternoon, terrifying stock and covering crops in dust. In a sense the motor car was the tank leading the urban invasion into the territory of the horse, free even of the restriction of rails. Despite their cumbersome appearance the victory of the clanking monsters was inevitable. Sensing defeat some farmers hoped to avoid a complete surrender by preserving part of the sanity, serenity and easy pace of life associated with the horse through shackling drivers of the machines with coercive regulations.

In July 1905 the Lincolnshire Union received further recognition when its activities were reported in generally favourable terms by the Chester Chronicle. The way was opened for a geographical expansion of its activities while recruitment increased within Lincolnshire.

What kind of men were the three leading organisational pioneers who set the new union on its feet? Howard, the least important of the three in the long-term, is the most accessible for he left behind notebooks but there is sufficient information available for some assessment of Campbell and Palmer.


11. This distaste for the motor car was shared by other farmers' organisations. Frequent complaints were made by both landlord and tenant members of the Canterbury Farmers' Club about the worrying affect that motorists headlights had on stock e.g. Kentish Gazette and Canterbury Press, 28 May 1910. The Chamber of Agriculture was also concerned about this problem. See Matthews, Op cit, p 387. The disruptive effect of the motor car was also the subject of much caustic comment by Punch as the accompanying cartoon reveals.

Edward Howard's notebooks tell us much about the man, but it also suggests that his contribution to the success of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union was not as great he hoped later generations would believe it to be. We learn from the newspaper clippings that Howard was a moralistic man actively involved in the temperance movement and Church of England affairs. The inclusion of a large number of clippings on the latest developments in farming methods also suggests that he was a progressive farmer. His interest in combined sectional action was reflected in his collection of reports on trade union meetings such as the Trade Union Congress of 1902. He claimed to have advocated the formation of some type of farmers' union for several years and had something in mind which was rather grander than a county union. As early as 1901 he urged the establishment of a "British" farmers' union to secure a living wage for British farmers and to shield them against the "deadly bullet" of foreign competition. This latter suggestion that he was a man of essentially Conservative political views, despite his obvious disillusionment with the policies of the Unionist Government, was born out by the fact that he was president of the Saxilby Conservative Association in 1909 and was a strong critic of the free trade philosophy and socialism; subjects on which he frequently wrote letters to the press. 12


Howard's public spirit and moral concern were somewhat complicated by his health fadism, a rather morbid obsession with death and an irrational hatred of the motor car which he shared with Campbell. After reading the notebooks the reader is left feeling rather cynical about the moralistic quotations pasted on the top corner of each page which range from Marcus Aurelius to Mark Twain, from Pliny to Puddenhead Wilson. Was Howard extremely well read or did he merely cull these extracts from popular periodicals to impress gullible researchers? It seems that Howard hoped future generations would view him as a man of vision although he genuinely believed that he was involved in something of special importance.
Howard's awareness of the growing trend of the establishment of centralised pressure groups to represent sectional interests clearly suggests that he was fully in tune with the direction of political developments in the early twentieth century. His contribution then was essentially one of general ideas as the restricted scale of his own farming operations severely limited that contribution. A strong vision and a sense of destiny far out weighed in importance the actual work he carried out on the Lincolnshire Union's behalf.

Colin Campbell was a far more significant figure than Howard for he supervised the transformation of the Lincolnshire union into a national organisation. Then, as a foundation president of the NFU, he shepherded the fledgling organisation through its crucial early years until his retirement in 1917. He was a much more substantial and successful tenant farmer than Howard who ran a mixed arable and pedigree sheep farm of around 600 acres on the border of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, part of which he came to own. His affluence was revealed by the fact that he was able to employ a gardener full-time and provide his labourers with ten "fine" cottages. His house was large and filled with "many valuable items of furniture", while cricket games were regularly held on his property which was situated in a well known hunting district. Furthermore, he paid his considerable travelling expenses out of his own pocket until 1909. He too was an apparently progressive farmer as he made extensive use of steam cultivators, erected a windmill to enable him to irrigate his farm and to carry out his own threshing and milling, and built modern piggeries, fowl pens and a grain elevator. More important, his benevolent treatment of his labourers ensured him a stable labour force and he had a reliable foreman, which enabled him to spend much of his time away from the farm. He was also a Justice of the Peace and an Alderman with considerable experience of local government activities and committee work.
As the Mark Lane Express reporter commented he was "a true replica of the honest John Bull," who stood as a natural leader amongst his fellow farmers and seemed to represent a typical type amongst the NFU leadership.13

Harry Wilton Palmer also made a considerable contribution as foundation secretary of both the Lincolnshire and National Farmers' Unions up to 1918. Palmer was educated at Cambridge University and held considerable experience in insurance work. He was manager of the Cambridge branch of the Mutual Fire Insurance Company of New York for two years before becoming an insurance agent for Lincoln. This background greatly assisted Palmer in drawing up the insurance scheme which the NFU later developed as a further inducement to join and as another arm in the protective umbrella which they attempted to place over the farmer. As well as being an able administrator Palmer was a capable public speaker who carried out a large amount of propaganda work for the union.14 Perhaps he was the most important individual figure for although secretaries generally do not display the colourful characteristics which catch the historian's eye, the success of voluntary organisations is largely dependent on their efficiency, especially in the early stages of development when the secretary represents the sole factor of administrative continuity.

Campbell and Palmer were also greatly assisted in their propaganda efforts by the Reverend 'Pat' (Thomas) Hamilton, an Anglican clergyman

13. This information on Campbell has been gleaned from MLE, 13 Jul 1908 p 53, and the NFU Yearbook, "Who's Who" compilation, 1924, p 103.
He ran a flock of 600 pedigree Lincoln longwool sheep, a herd of 150 cattle, used thirteen horses and bred several Berkshire pigs. His farm was roughly divided into 350 acres arable and 250 acres pasture, representing a typical mixture of corn and sheep farming in Lincolnshire. As his name suggests he was a Scotsman like Sir James Wilson of the NZFU and other NFU leaders, who emigrated and prospered in their adopted countries.

who became extremely popular within the organisation,\textsuperscript{15} adding an element of colour to the recruitment campaign and more importantly a degree of respectability. Critics of the NFU such as Lord Bledisloe, continued to attach such labels as "extreme" to the organisation as late as the 1920s,\textsuperscript{15} so approval from a representative of the established church provided a useful counter to such accusations, especially as Lincolnshire was a traditional stronghold of non-conformity.\textsuperscript{17}

Before moving on to trace the evolution of this county union into a national organisation some consideration must be given to the question:- why did a farmers' union as opposed to a farmers' protection association or an agricultural federation, first arise in Lincolnshire rather than in some other county?

The National Farmers' Union grew from stirrings in Lincolnshire rather than elsewhere for a number of reasons, probably the most important of which was the prosperity and independence of many Lincolnshire tenant-farmers relative to the rest of England. Relative prosperity enabled farmers to spend sufficient time away from their farm work to set up such an organisation, while relative independence meant that they could engage in such activities without fear of interference from their landlords. The emergence of such a union from amongst the ranks of these relatively affluent and politically independent farmers was made more likely by the prevailing condition of recession rather than depression,


\textsuperscript{16} The Times, 4 Nov 1920.

\textsuperscript{17} In 1851 of the rural counties only Bedfordshire and the East and North Ridings of Yorkshire had a higher percentage of Wesleyans than Lincolnshire. Olney, \textit{Op. cit.}, p 58.
by the tradition of a golden age in Lincolnshire agriculture and by the county's essentially rural nature. Finally, there was the unquantifiable element of personality. If the founders had not been men of organisational ability their efforts might not have successfully interacted with broader processes to have produced a farmers' union at that particular time and place. The tendering of these men ensured that the readily ignitable fuel of organisation at least assumed a warm and steady glow. The NFU could have grown out of some other county but as the Mark Lane Express observed what Lincolnshire did in relation to agricultural questions the rest of England did tomorrow.18

While economic historians have been intent on denying English farmers their depressions, no-one has attempted to rob Lincolnshire farmers of their considerable prosperity, particularly not in the early part of the nineteenth century in the Lindsey uplands, the area from which the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union drew the bulk of its initial support.19 Recent research carried out by J.A. Perkins confirms the view expressed by G.E. Collins in the official Victoria county history published in 1906, that there was a golden age in Lindsey upland farming during the early part of the nineteenth century.20 According to Perkins' estimates

18. MLE, 6 Jan 1908 p 9.
19. Seven of the ten Lincolnshire executive members whom the NFU Yearbook's editors considered important enough to include in their "Who's Who" came from around Lincoln on the border of the uplands. Only three came from the less prosperous lowlands area of the county. NFU Yearbook, 1924, pp 101-117 and 1925, pp 101-106.
the average profit on many Lindsey upland farms in the period 1813-1837 was £2 per acre. This return represented a considerable income as the average size farm was between 300 and 400 acres. Furthermore, very big farms were relatively common, with those of over 800 acres making up 15-20% of the total number of upland farms. The profits made on such farms were obviously proportionately large.\footnote{21} As the tables in Chapter Two revealed such farms were extremely big by English standards. Even under G.E. Mingay's corrected figures the Lindsey farms were not only well above average size but included a much larger proportion of big farms than the remainder of England.

Olney's work reinforced Perkin's picture of the considerable prosperity of Lindsey farmers. He cites figures which suggest that a tenant farming 1,030 acres in 1836 made a profit of £1,390 exclusive of housekeeping and of the interest of £6,000 invested in the farm. Such tenants were well dressed, attended the hunt, stood as social equals to the landlord and were often looked up to as the squire within their own parish.\footnote{22} Colin Campbell and other founders of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union seem to have followed in this tradition.

While the Lincolnshire tenants were certainly not as spectacularly prosperous by the turn of the twentieth century they were still probably better off than tenants in most other counties. Both the literary and

\footnote{21}{J.A. Perkins, "The Prosperity of Farming on the Lindsey Uplands, 1813-1837," \textit{Agricultural History Review}, Vol 24 Part II (1976), pp 126-143.}

\footnote{22}{Such incomes clearly placed these men on a level economic footing with the lower echelons of the gentry. See Chapter One, footnote 59.}
statistical evidence confirms such an impression suggesting that compared with many counties Lincolnshire was in a state of recession rather than depression.

Collins writing in 1906 claimed that reduced rents had enabled many tenants to live in comfort, although without the ostentatious trimmings of their forebears. He also pointed out that labourers were better paid than in many areas of England. Farmhouses remained the biggest and best in England, while both the traction engine and self-binding reaper were used to a considerable extent. Collins concluded that Lincolnshire was probably "the most important and richest agricultural county in England."25

Rider Haggard's report on rural England, made on the basis of a county by county tour of agricultural districts in 1901, provides a useful corrective to Collins' overtly optimistic and official view. His conclusions on the state of Lincolnshire's agricultural industry were rather gloomy. He claimed that the ruinous fall in wool prices had severely hit the Lincolnshire sheep industry. Prices for store cattle and beef had also fallen meaning that there was little compensation for the drastic fall in the production of Lincoln's other major staple produce, wheat. Even in his revised edition of the report published in 1906 he saw no reason to change his pessimistic opinions. But he did concede that potato growing for the urban market was expanding and prospering, while his description of Lincoln was very different from that of the East-Anglian counties with their deserted farms, ruined landlords and generally "disastrous" situation.24


The truth probably lay somewhere between the two accounts as Collins was obviously interested in looking for the best points, while Haggard was concerned with highlighting the critical condition of English agriculture. Certainly, the report of the 1906 Royal Commission on rural depopulation suggests that conditions were not as healthy as Collins implied but were not nearly as serious as Haggard argued. The report also implied that the worst of the depression was over and some degree of recovery was underway.

The commissioners concluded that although the number of agricultural labourers had fallen as elsewhere in England the number of farmers and farm bailiffs had actually increased considerably between 1891 and 1901, by 1,299 or 12.8% and 936 or 66% respectively. Market gardeners in the Holland area were also considered to be prospering. The increase in bailiffs and farmers indicated that landlord activity was increasing again in Lincolnshire even though the commissioners complained that a want of capital prevented farmers from paying high enough wages to keep men on the land. But they conceded that the increased use of the self-binding reaper was also a major cause of the decline in the number of labourers. Arable acreage had fallen slightly compared with other areas from 70.6% of the total area used for agricultural purposes in 1881 to 67.6% in 1891 and 67.1% in 1901. In contrast the arable area of Essex fell from 75.7% to 66.2% over the same period, while thirty-six of the forty-two counties included in the commissioners' returns (Yorkshire was divided into its three ridings) had witnessed greater reductions in their arable acreage. Sheep numbers had fallen from 1,300,000 to 1,100,000 over the same period, while cattle numbers remained relatively static. Clearly

25. The average increase in the number of bailiffs and foremen for England as a whole was 21%. Only the East Riding or Yorkshire experienced a greater increase.
the essentially mixed arable and sheep raising character of Lincolnshire's agriculture remained largely unchanged. Farm size also remained well above national average. Lincolnshire along with Norfolk and the East Riding of Yorkshire 26 shared the largest number of farms over 300 acres of any divisor drawn up by the report. Overall the commissioners' remarks were not particularly gloomy, especially when compared with their view that there was little hope for Suffolk or Essex. 27

The agricultural returns for 1904 suggested that matters had improved a little since the 1901 figures used by the commissioners. Prices for Lincoln wool rose from around 6½d per lb in 1902 to 7½d per pound in 1903, while wheat prices crept back up to 3s 3d per bushel in 1904. 28 The upward trend continued until 1907. 29 Fat sheep prices also rose over this period. 30 Sheep numbers remained relatively constant, while the arable area was reduced slightly to be compensated by a marginal increase in permanent pasture. 31 Lincolnshire's agriculture continued to maintain its stability and possibly benefitted from a marginal price increase for its major staples. At worst there was no decline and the situation was far more favourable than that reported by the Royal Commission on the Agricultural Depression in 1897. 32

26. These three counties constituted division 1B.


29. Perry, Op cit, pp 41 and 44.

30. Ibid.

31. "Statistical Tables 1908. Agricultural Statistics;" BPP 1909 Cd.4535 CII, Table 3, p 36 Lincolnshire's arable area fell slightly from 1,017,887 acres in 1901 to 1,007,517 acres in 1908, while the area under permanent pasture increased from 499,186 to 514,543 acres.

The fact that the evidence strongly suggests that by 1904 Lincolnshire's agricultural sector was slowly recovering from the effects of a severe depression is more than coincidental for both trade unions and farmers' unions have tended to be established in similar economic circumstances. Permanent pressure groups have generally been founded in times of prosperity. Both the New Zealand and American Farmers' Unions were established at the turn of the century when prosperity was returning after a period of severe depression. The formation of farmers' unions in Australia, however, revealed that the relationship between economic preconditions and organisational initiatives was rather more complex than in the New Zealand or American examples. The economic upswing hypothesis is therefore somewhat simplistic. Nevertheless, the existence of such conditions in Lincolnshire probably increased the chances of some type of farmers' union emerging from that county. Furthermore, the existence of a "golden age" in Lincolnshire farming, close enough in memory but distant enough in time, to acquire a nostalgic and idyllic quality, sharpened Lincolnshire farmers' feelings of resentment. In a sense the position of Lincolnshire farmers had declined farther than farmers in other counties despite the slight recovery which was underway in 1900. They had lost more in relative terms and still had more to lose both in terms of vested interests and status than farmers in other counties. Punch cartoons which played on the old stereotype of the prosperous and pompous gentry-aping-tenantry who never ceased complaining of their predicament, must have carried a double edged sting in Lincolnshire. The beginnings of recovery, however, were perhaps more significant because it meant that Lincolnshire farmers had the financial means to act against the forces causing such feelings of resentment.

33. See reference to H.B. Davis and Hobsbawm in Chapter One, footnote 12.
34. See reference to Benedict and Tonz in Introduction, footnote 2.
36. e.g. see Perry, Op cit, pp93 or 79.
Even more important than this relative affluence, which could be measured accurately only by several doctoral theses on comparative capital inputs and returns in the various counties, was the relative independence of Lincolnshire tenants. The qualification should be added that Lincolnshire tenants were by no means completely independent in either the management of their farms or their political behaviour. As the majority of them were tenants-at-will rather than leaseholders it was in their best interests to act deferentially towards their landlords for fear of eviction. Also, the famous Lincolnshire tenure, while providing tenants with more adequate compensation for improvements than customary arrangements in most counties, was by no means entirely satisfactory. 37 On the other hand a recent article by J.A. Perkins argues that tenancy-at-will provided Lincolnshire farmers with a much greater degree of flexibility than the leaseholders of Norfolk. Such flexibility enabled Lincolnshire tenants to take greater advantage of technological innovation and adjust to changing market conditions much more easily than their leasehold counterparts in other counties. 38 Furthermore, the depressed prices of the late 1870s and 1880s enabled many tenants to restrict their landlord's hold over them by negotiating reduced rents and having a greater say in setting terms for the incoming tenant. Olney concludes that by 1880, despite the continuance of deferential attitudes, the degree of separation between the politics of the landlord and his tenants was not great with agriculture assuming priority over their specialist interests. 39 Some Lincolnshire tenants


then were sufficiently independent to engage in political activity but
that independence was not yet considerable enough to keep them satisfied.
The gap between deference and defence was still wide enough to spur
them to action but narrow enough to be bridged by effective organisation.

While landowners dominated the political representation of
Lincolnshire at Westminster, tenant farmers were active within local
politics, probably more so than in any other county. Colin Campbell was
not atypical in being an alderman. There could be no complaint that
tenant farmers were scarcely represented on either county or even parish
councils as was the case in Durham county. Eight of the ten founders
of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union whose biographies are recorded in the
NFU Yearbook's "Who’s Who" in 1924 and 1925 were county councillors and,
therefore, members of either parish or rural district councils, while
seven were Justices of the Peace and three were aldermen. Even the
executive of the Yorkshire branch, who represented an even larger rural
county which contained many big farms had considerably less experience
in local government. Only one of the fifteen executive personnel
recorded in the same source was a county councillor, while three had
sat on parish or rural district councils and another was a Justice of the
Peace. No single county could even approximate the Lincolnshire
executive's experience in local government.

The traveller on first arriving in Lincolnshire will probably
sense something very different about this county with its scattered

40. William Hill complained of chronic underepresentation of tenant
farmers at this level at the first conference of the North-Eastern
Agricultural Federation. MLE, 23 Oct 1905 p 487.

41. NFU Yearbook, 1924, pp 101-117 and 1925, pp 101-106. The obituaries
of two other foundation members - L.J. Briggs and Fox - contained
in the MLE revealed that both men fitted the same pattern as other
Lincolnshire executive members. It is also interesting to note
that Fox was a member of the Farmers' Alliance of 1879 providing
one of the few direct links with that organisation. MLE, 24 Aug
1908 p 218 and 28 Sep 1908 p 349.
houses and endless rows of cultivated fields criss-crossed by drains stretching away to the uplands of the north. There is a feeling of remoteness, of the kind of isolation which according to Melvin Hammarberg spurred Mid-Western farmers to undertake collective political activity in late nineteenth century America. But on closer examination any attempt to explain the emergence of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union in terms of group action as a counter to the problems of isolation simply does not work. Far from stimulating its development remoteness was the factor which most inhibited the growth of the NFU. It was no coincidence that the five counties which were slowest to link up with the NFU - Cornwall, Durham, Northumberland, Westmoreland and Cumberland - were situated at the farthest corners of the land. Furthermore, by 1904 Lincolnshire was not especially remote. London was only a few hours away by train. Even though Grantham was the only centre on the main north route the railway system within Lincolnshire was still adequate. It was no accident that such early established and active branches as Market Rasen, Horncastle, Sleaford and Saxelby, were sited on the railway. Roading, if by no means exceptionally good, was still adequate. Distances between the major towns within Lincolnshire were also manageable.


Yet Lincolnshire was still sufficiently distant from London, with Lincoln being situated approximately 140 miles from the capital, to confirm fears that Westminster and Whitehall were not treating the relatively distant county as well as they should. Localism provided much of the momentum needed to get such an organisation off the ground as was the case in New Zealand, but an adequate communications system made it easier to channel such energies in a broader direction, first within the county and then outside it. Distances to such important, large and heavily industrialised cities as Nottingham, Sheffield, Hull, and Leicester were also not great. Such proximity meant that most Lincolnshire farmers were fully aware of the encroachment of the city and the very different lifestyle of the city dweller.

The characteristic which the sensitive traveller becomes aware of after moving further into Lincolnshire is the essentially rural nature of the county rather than remoteness. It was this essentially rural character which decided Olney to choose Lincolnshire for his study of nineteenth century rural politics and even by 1900 that rural character remained dominant. According to the census of 1901 there were no large cities in Lincolnshire with Grimsby (63,138) and Lincoln (48,748) being the only centres to exceed populations of 20,000. Overall 48% of the population were classified as rural against 23% for England as a whole. The percentage of the work force engaged in agriculture was not the

45. Nottingham is approximately thirty-four miles from Lincoln, Sheffield forty-two miles, Hull thirty-eight miles and Leicester fifty miles. *ibid.*

highest in England but only four counties surpassed Lincolnshire.\footnote{Based on the Census of England and Wales for 1901; BPP 1902 Cd.1304 CXIX, pp 693-880 and 1903 Cd.1523 LXXXIV, Table 10 and Table 35. About 17% of Lincolnshire's adult male population were engaged in agriculture as against 11% for England as a whole.}

Manufacturing activities did not intrude upon the landscape nearly as much as in many counties.

Cities proximate to the county could have seemed rather threatening in contrast to such a rural landscape. One way of maintaining the safety margin between those larger cities and the Lincolnshire farmers was to form a union to protect the interests of those farmers against the ever growing power of the urban political block. Finally, the chances of a farmers' union being formed in Lincolnshire were increased by the tradition of unionism amongst its rural labourers.\footnote{See R.C. Russell, The 'Revolt of the Field' in Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire County Committee of the National Union of Agricultural Workers, (1956).} Such a tradition of labourer activism provided local farmers with another spur to set up their own sectional organisation.

Lincolnshire then produced the right combination of affluent and independent farmers, appropriate economic pre-conditions, a dominantly rural character and men of considerable organisational ability to throw up the farmers' union from which the NFU evolved.

This evolution from county to national organisation took place in three major stages. The first was the establishment of a similar union in Cornwall in 1906.\footnote{Leslie Baden Powell's unpublished history of the NFU, p 58, held at the library of the NFU headquarters, Knightsbridge, London.} The second was utilising the holding of the Royal Show in Lincoln in 1907\footnote{The Lincolnshire Section Of The NFU Record, Vol 12 No 143 (Feb 1936), p 6.} to spread the gospel of unionism and
resulted in the establishment of a Devonshire Farmers' Union in May, 1908. 51 The third and most significant stage occurred in 1908 when the catalysts of the agricultural party scheme, continuing dissatisfaction with tenurial arrangements despite the passing of the Agricultural Holdings Act and most important: the meat warrentry issue, accelerated the emergence of the NFU.

The Cornwall Farmers' Union seems to have been set up on similar lines to the Lincolnshire union, largely because Colin Campbell played a major role in its formation. By the beginning of 1908 it claimed a membership of over 500 which had risen to over 1,000 by November. But even though its leaders talked of establishing identical unions in other counties the Cornwall union did not amalgamate with the NFU until after World War I.

The Lincolnshire leaders possibly sensed that the Cornish tradition of separatism might cause difficulties and set out to establish other allied farmers' union apart from that in far distant Cornwall. An exceptional opportunity to spread word of the new unionism was provided by the holding of the R.A.S.E. show in Lincoln. Full advantage was taken of that opportunity by setting up a special farmers' union tent on the showground and distributing leaflets. As a result of contacts made at the show Colin Campbell was not only invited to establish the Devonshire Farmers' Union but the Lincolnshire union was able to extend its propaganda efforts into neighbouring Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire.

51. The Devonshire Union was founded on 22 May 1908. By November it had recruited about 550 members. MLE, 9 Nov 1908 p 515.

52. ibid. 6 Apr 1908 p 397 and 23 Nov 1908 p 397.
By February 1908 the Lincolnshire union was claiming a membership of over 3,000 if the branches over its boundaries were included.\(^{53}\)

When the Agricultural Party scheme fell through in the next few months, the emergence of some alternative agricultural organisation became more likely, although such a party would not have excluded the development of a separate farmers' union as it would have included landlord and labourer representatives.\(^{54}\) By the end of June new branches had been established in Yorkshire, Nottingham, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Derbyshire.\(^{55}\) This gradual diffusion process was dramatically accelerated in early August when the National Federation of Meat Traders' Associations issued an ultimatum that farmers must pay a warranty or insurance charge after 2 November to cover the loss incurred through the slaughtering of animals suspected of carrying tuberculosis.\(^{56}\) England, unlike New Zealand, had no State subsidised compensation scheme to cover farmers against the slaughter of animals suspected of carrying diseases transferable to humans. It was not really surprising that farmers saw the ultimatum as an imposition, as yet another burden imposed by the middlemen, and that they determined to issue a vigorous protest against the idea of a warranty. Many farmers felt that the National Exchequer should pay at least half of the compensation for slaughtered animals, but while they were prepared to side with the butchers in lobbying for such payment they were not agreeable to paying out of their own pockets.

\(^{53}\) ibid. 3 Feb 1908 p 103. It is interesting to note that the NZFU was cited as an example of a successful farmers' union in propaganda efforts. ibid. 13 Jan 1908 p 27.

\(^{54}\) Such organisations as the Chamber of Agriculture and Agricultural societies, which were dominated by landlords were very interested in the idea of an agricultural party, but a faction within the Chamber of Agriculture quashed the scheme. See MLE, 6 Jan 1908 pp 8-9, and Matthews, Op cit, pp 340-348.

\(^{55}\) MLE, 29 Jun 1908 p 757.

\(^{56}\) ibid. 17 Aug 1908 pp 199-201.
Before the agitation got into full swing in September, a new branch was formed in Kent, once again with the assistance of Colin Campbell. Meetings were held all over England by the Chambers of Agriculture, farmers' associations and farmers' unions, to make it quite clear that the warranty would be resisted. It was an ideal situation in which to expand rapidly the activities of the Lincolnshire, Devon and Kent farmers' unions and other assorted branches, with the intention of forging them into a national federation.

Feelings ran particularly high in Shropshire where a "Shrewsbury and District Farmers' Trade Association" was formed which limited its membership to "farmers only." This association organised a large scale no-warranty organisation for early October. Delegates representing twenty-two counties attended and resolved not to give the warranty. Colin Campbell felt confident that this wave of protest augured well for the future of the farmers' union. He declared at the annual dinner of the Sleaford Branch of the Lincolnshire union that the farmers' union was on the "eve of very great possibilities" and added that such potential existed because "the two great parties of the State looked to them for guidance on agricultural matters more than they had ever looked to any other organisation in the history of their calling."

Filled with confidence Campbell proceeded to Wellington in Shropshire to found a Shropshire Farmers' Union on identical lines to the


58. MLE, 23 Sep 1908 p 343.

59. ibid. p 342.

60. ibid. 5 Oct 1908 p 391.

61. ibid. 26 Oct 1908 p 467.
Lincolnshire union. Campbell felt that the "movement was now on the flood" and proudly claimed that it already represented 4,500 farmers. His excitement increased when a telegram arrived to say that the butchers had relented. John Richards, president of the new Shropshire Farmers' Union, credited this success to the new farmers' organisation which had grown up throughout England, rather than to the Chamber of Agriculture.62

The passing of the Agricultural Holdings Act in early November also bolstered the Lincolnshire union's feelings of confidence and the union claimed responsibility for the passing of the measure. But there was still sufficient dissatisfaction with this Act to spur members on to extend their organisation in order to win further reforms.63 Later in November Colin Campbell told the Lincolnshire executive that the Shropshire Farmers' Union seemed so much in favour of a national union that he had agreed to hold a meeting during the Smithfield Club show week in London to consider the idea.64 New branches had also been established at Sheffield, and at Howden and Rotherham in Yorkshire, while nearly 1,000 members had already joined the Shropshire union.65 During the London show week a round table conference of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union, the Central Chamber of Agriculture, the Central Landowners' Association and the North Eastern Agricultural Federation, was to be held under the direction of Lord Onslow, President of the Board of Agriculture.66 Most farmers liable to be interested in the new venture would be in London as a result, a coincidence of which the Shropshire and Lincolnshire executives intended to take full advantage.

62. ibid. 9 Nov 1908 p 516.
63. ibid. 16 Nov 1908 p 568.
64. ibid. 23 Nov 1908 pp 596-597.
65. ibid.
66. ibid. 14 Dec 1908 p 661.
Representatives of the Lincolnshire, Welshpool, Cornwall, Devonshire, Kent, Shropshire, Northamptonshire, Hereford and Sheffield Farmers' Unions, and the Midlands Farmers' Association, met at the Agricultural Hall, Islington, on 10 December and made it clear that they wanted the immediate establishment of a national union. Campbell tested their enthusiasm by questioning whether the lack of funds would render such action premature, but the other delegates, with only one exception, urged that the union be formed straight away while the wave of feeling sparked by the meat warrantory issue was still running high. An organisational committee was then elected by the delegates with Campbell as chairman and John Richards of Shropshire as vice-chairman. 67 This committee resolved to form immediately a national farmers' union on a non-party basis which limited its membership to 'farmers' only.' The Mark Lane Express observed

"A union, with a membership of ten thousand bona fide farmers, would exercise great power in the land and we do not hesitate to say that in farmers' interests such a body, through the spokesmanship of one man, would exercise a far greater effect than any other agricultural organisation in existence. The future of a National Farmers' Union seems to be assured, but there yet remains a great deal of spade work to be done." 68

Deference had given way to organisation on a national basis for the defence of the tenant farmers' interests, although the founders of the NFU themselves probably had no idea of just how much spade work had to be done to set the farmers' new and independent pressure group on its feet.

67. The Times, 11 Dec 1908. The only dissident was Edwin Smithells of the Midlands Farmers' Association who seemed to think that the organisation he represented would be threatened by a NFU. He also considered a national body to be unnecessary.

68. MLE, 14 Dec 1908 p 679.
Fig 4: Graph comparing the growth of the NFU with the NZFU, 1902-1929.
CHAPTER SIX

"DEFENCE NOT DEFIANCE"

THE STORY OF THE NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION
OF ENGLAND AND WALES 1909-1929

I Growth

The NFU grew from an organisation representing under 10,000 farmers at its inception in December 1908 to reach a membership of over 100,000 in 1921. After 1927 its membership declined from a peak of about 120,000 to approximately 100,000 by 1930. Recovery began in 1935 when the 120,000 mark was reached once more. Then membership steadily increased until the NFU achieved a record high of over 200,000 in the immediate post-war period. Since that time membership has remained stable at around the 200,000 mark.¹

This pattern of sustained growth accelerated by periodic large scale spurts, as for example the dramatic leap in numbers which occurred between 1917 and 1920, was in sharp contrast with the NZFU. The initial response in New Zealand was much more enthusiastic but it soon gave way to a static situation. Sustained growth did not occur until the late 1930s. The difference was not only an absolute one for the NFU included a much higher proportion of farmers within its membership. While the foundation membership of the NZFU was around the 25,000 mark or about 40% of the total number of New Zealand farmers, it soon declined to a constant figure of approximately 10,000 or only 15% of farmers. Conversely the initial membership of the NFU represented only about 5% of the farmers of England and Wales. But by 1921 it had attracted nearly half of those farmers into its ranks. At its peak immediately after World War II over 85% of total

¹. Membership figures have been taken from NFU Yearbooks, 1910-1935, NFU Record 1922-1935, and Self and Storing. Op cit, pp 39-60.
farmers belonged to the organisation. Admittedly official NFU figures did flatter its proportional representation of farmers. The 1919 Yearbook, for example, claimed that 43% of all farmers listed in the trade directories belonged to the NFU. But if the figure is calculated on the basis of the 1911 Census returns it comes out at about 34%. Nevertheless, even when such discrepancies are taken into consideration, the membership level reached by 1927 represented nearly half of the total male and female farmers recorded in the 1931 census and over half of men farmers. Clearly by the 1920s the NFU was the major farmers’ organisation in England, having no comparatively sized rivals, while it became the largest single agricultural organisation after 1921.

The number of agricultural labourers who belonged to unions may have been as high as 290,000 in 1921 or about 60% of their total number. But their allegiance was shared by two major unions - the Agricultural Labourers’ and Rural Workers’ Union (ALU) which changed its name to the National Union of Agricultural Workers in 1920, and the agricultural section of the Workers’ Union. When wages fell after the repeal of guaranteed prices these labourers' unions suffered massive declines in membership, which were nearly as spectacular as their growth from 1917 to 1920. Recovery did not begin until the middle 1930s. The trade union movement in general also suffered dramatic reductions in membership as economic conditions worsened throughout the 1920s. Clearly the NFU differed from the trade

2. NFU Yearbook, 1919, p 77.


5. G.D.H. Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement, (2nd ed. London 1966), pp 483-484, and Henry Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism, (London 1966). Furthermore, the NFU was also larger than most single unions other than the giant unions such as those of miners or railway workers. The average Trade Union size even in the record year of 1920 was only a little over 6,000 (6,031). Calculated from Pelling, ibid. p 262.
Fig 6: Graph illustrating the growth of British Trade Union membership. Top line total membership. Bottom line TUC membership.

Source: G D H Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement, p483
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¹ Membership figures have been taken from NFU Yearbooks, 1910-1935, NFU Record 1922-1935, and Self and Storing, Op cit, pp 39-40.
Fig 5: Graph comparing the growth of the NFU and Agricultural Labourers Unions 1909-1929.
unions, both rural and urban, in that it was able to maintain and even marginally increase its membership during such difficult years. This achievement, especially in the atmosphere of disillusionment created by the abolition of guaranteed prices, was a compliment to the administrative skills of the NFU’s leadership and to the efficiency of its organisational machinery. On the other hand while the economic difficulties confronting farmers during the 1920s were considerable their plight was nowhere near as desperate as that of the agricultural labourers. Such simple matters as paying subscriptions did not pose the same problems, while farmers were employers with little fear of losing either their jobs or tenancies because of their NFU membership. The NFU’s combination of elements of both trade unions and employers’ associations enabled it to cope better with the problems of depression. Furthermore, the major concern of English farmers during the 1920s was to keep returns ahead of costs. One way of doing this was to remain loyal to their union which was lobbying for lowered costs and greater government protection. In this sense depression added an incentive to maintain membership, whereas it generally created a disincentive to trade union membership. Finally, the greater capital resources of farmers also enabled them to survive the rigours imposed by a reduced income more readily. Despite such advantages over other trade unions the considerable achievement of the NFU in consolidating its membership during the 1920s cannot be denied.

As the accompanying maps reveal the geographical spread of the NFU was as rapid as the growth of its membership. Within a year of its establishment the NFU had set up branches in eighteen English and four Welsh counties. A mere nine years later it included every county within the ambit of its operations. Apparently the spread of its influence was slower than that of the NZFU, which included every major province other than Westland under its control when it was first established. But such an impression is misleading for the NFU secured the support of several
Map 1: Counties of England and Wales. Key on facing page.
**KEY TO MAP OF COUNTIES**

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Maps 2 and 3: NFU County Branches, 1910 top.
1912 bottom
Maps 3 and 4: NFU County Branches in 1915 top
1918 bottom.
market town branches before establishing county branches. It built from a solid base of support, from the bottom up, whereas the NZFU tended to try and spread its influence from the major provincial centres. As a result provincial units were often created before there was a sufficiently broad base of support to justify their establishment.

Of the nine counties who failed to amalgamate with the NFU until 1918 two (Cumberland and Westmorland) were very remote with strong traditions of separatism. Three (Dorset, Staffordshire and Cheshire) preferred to maintain their allegiance with existing organisations. The other three - Northumberland, Durham and Cornwall - combined both sets of reasons. These three counties had always tended towards separatism and they clung to their existing organisations, the North Eastern Agricultural Federation, the Durham Dairy and Tenant Farmers' Association and the Cornwall Farmers' Union. When they finally threw in their lot with the NFU the old style regional farmers' organisations, solely concerned with peculiarly regional needs, came to the end of their usefulness. The new national conception had triumphed. The only county which stayed outside the NFU for no particular reason was Middlesex. Perhaps its essentially urban character meant that the NFU organisers paid it little attention.

By 1920 the NFU lived up to its name, it was undoubtedly the Farmers' Union of England and Wales.

II Major Phases of Development


During its early years the NFU concentrated on building up its membership and improving its organisational machinery. Its leaders did not make the same mistake as the NZFU in trying to do too much, too soon. They rather limited the scope of their activities to fit with the small

6. There were only 290 farmers in Middlesex in 1919. NFU Yearbook, 1919, p 77.
scale reality of the organisation and kept their aspirations modest. Seemingly they were very much aware of the cliché "walk before you run".

The Mark Lane Express was utilised as the official organ of the NFU and the union did not establish its own paper until 1922. Mutual insurance schemes were left up to the individual counties to devise for themselves until the early 1920s when a national scheme was implemented. No attempt was made to run parliamentary candidates until 1918 when the parliamentary fund had assumed reasonably large proportions. Members seemed to share their leaders' caution since initial contributions to this fund were extremely slight. The NFU had to prove its worth before they were prepared to lend it further financial support than the modest subscription of a half-penny per acre, limited to a maximum of three pounds. Yet the NFU managed to do enough both to maintain members' enthusiasm and to attract the interest of farmers outside the organisation.

In 1910 an attempt was made to introduce the NFU as the new non-party political voice of the farming community by issuing a thirteen point programme for presentation to parliamentary candidates. The answers given by candidates to these demands were supposed to act as a voting guideline to members, but the NFU from its inception was careful to maintain a voluntary approach in such matters and left the final decision to the discretion of individual members. This technique clearly was not new. But the emphasis on greater compensation for unreasonable disturbance marked an important departure from similar programmes got up by the NAU, the North Eastern Agricultural Federation and the Central Chamber of Agriculture. Most of the other demands had been included in these earlier parliamentary programmes, especially those relating to local taxation and rating reform. Like the Federation and the Chamber the NFU asked the Government to continue the relief provided by the Agricultural Rating Act of 1896 until the whole system of local taxation was overhauled. It also
urged the transfer of much of the education and road charges from local rates to the National Exchequer. The call for the abolition of preferential rail rates on foreign produce was reiterated, while the introduction of a Pure Beer Bill to prevent the sale of "artificial" beverages which were not manufactured from hops, was given stronger emphasis than before. Greater access to army meat contracts was requested and the remainder of the demands were concerned with technical matters. These planks clearly placed the NFU in the progressive farmers' camp. A demand was made that existing regulations for the slaughter of all foreign and colonial cattle at ports of entry be continued. The introduction of a uniform system of weights and measures was called for and the suggestion was made that farmers should be compelled to maintain their boundary fences in reasonable order. They also requested that the onus of proving damage be removed from occupiers under the law of trespass. The only eccentric demand was plank eight which incorporated a long held fad of E.W. Howard's, that a bill was needed to promote the production of motor spirit from potatoes, free of excise duty.\textsuperscript{7} Perhaps its framers envisaged rural England developing into a giant still.

Significantly, the potentially divisive question of tariff reform was omitted from the platform. When it was added to the platform in 1912, the NFU's leaders displayed considerable wisdom in stating that the NFU only desired that agriculture should receive the same benefits as other industries in the event of any change in fiscal policy.\textsuperscript{8} This attitude was maintained thereafter and served the dual purpose of not alienating members of differing political allegiances, while leaving

\textsuperscript{7} NFU Yearbook, 1910, pp 19-20.
\textsuperscript{8} ibid. 1912, p 50
the NFU free to take advantage of any change in fiscal policy. Such a non-partisan statement on an explicitly political matter marked the NFU off as a new type of agricultural organisation.

Sixty-eight of the successful candidates at the second of the 1910 elections pledged themselves to support the NFU platform including forty-nine Unionists, seventeen Liberals and two Labour M.P.s. But their pledges made little difference. At best a minimal increase occurred in discussion of agricultural matters inside the House of Commons. The President of the Board of Agriculture occasionally acknowledged the existence of the NFU, but party attitudes and parliamentary indifference continued to dominate agricultural policy.

The Parliamentary Committee of the NFU realised that these pledges meant little and tried to increase the NFU's parliamentary influence by requesting the Unionist and Liberal Whips each to run one agricultural member within their parties. They asked for this favour in 1910, 1912, 1913 and 1914, but nothing came of it except vague replies from the two chief whips. This indifference made the NFU more determined to run its own candidates once it could afford to do so. By way of a stop-gap they appointed a full-time parliamentary lobbyist, C. Weller Kent, in 1913. Kent was a lawyer and former parliamentary correspondent of the Times who had established contacts with many M.P.s and well understood the intricacies of parliamentary procedure. But despite his conscientious

11. MLE Supplement, 28 Feb 1910 pp 1-2. NFU A.G.M.
efforts he was unable to exert any great influence. One man could not change the course of legislation by himself. Still he did help the NFU parliamentary committee to increase their understanding of parliamentary process, while he also isolated those M.P.s most favourable disposed towards the NFU.

The executive reinforced these endeavours by sending petitions to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the President of the Board of Agriculture and every M.P. Colin Campbell and his executive realised that the NFU must win the ear of Whitehall as well as the attention of Westminster, if the organisation was to be effective as a pressure group. After all the manner in which legislation was administered was nearly as important as the legislation itself. This desire to win sympathy with the Board of Agriculture helps explain why the NFU staunchly supported the Board's policy of slaughtering imported livestock at ports of entry. On the other hand the NFU made it clear that it would not meekly submit to policies with which it disagreed as it opposed some coercive clauses within the foot and mouth regulations.

The NFU also sought the support of other pressure groups when they shared mutual objectives. The Meat Traders' Federation, for example, was asked to back the NFU's call for Government compensation for beasts which were slaughtered as suspected carriers of tuberculosis. A final parliamentary strategy prior to the war was the decision to work for the establishment of a bi-partisan agricultural committee in the House of Commons.

13. A demand that relief provided under the Agricultural Rating Act of 1896 should be doubled was sent to all these persons. ibid. 1911, p 2.
15. ibid. p 95.
16. ibid.
By 1914 the NFU seemed to have won a place in the political scene as one of the more authoritative spokesmen on the needs of agriculture. Certainly Lloyd George listened in February 1914 to an NFU deputation with considerable sympathy. The Chancellor of the Exchequer even promised action in the matter of compensation for unreasonable disturbance and stated that he would set the Board of Trade to work on ways and means of abolishing the preferential rail tariffs on foreign produce. While Lloyd George's promises were sometimes dubious he held so much influence within the Liberal party that the NFU chose wisely in singling him out for special attention. The lack of anti-government rhetoric accompanying such deputations further helped their cause. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Bonar Law, was also approached on the same problems and he too promised action. But the NFU made it clear that they were not simply an off-shoot of the Unionist party by severely criticising his proposals to exclude agriculture from any changes in fiscal policy.

These manoeuvres were paralleled by the establishment of cordial relations with the Boards of both Trade and Agriculture. Numerous deputations to both bodies on a wide range of issues were warmly received. This satisfactory working relationship was cemented further when the NFU firmly supported the call of Mr Runciman, President of the Board of Agriculture, for a round table conference on the problems of agriculture in 1913.

17. MLE Supplement, 9 Feb 1914 pp 1-6. This deputation concentrated on highlighting injustices occurring under the National Insurance Scheme and stressed the need to strengthen security of tenure.

18. ibid. p 7.

19. NFU Yearbook, 1912, p 11.

20. ibid. 1913, pp 56-57.
The NFU was also spreading its concerns wider than Westminster or Whitehall and the number of specialist sub-committees grew at pace. In 1910 there were four (Finance and Parliamentary, Disturbance, Local Taxation and Scales) and this had increased to seven by 1913 including an insurance committee introduced in 1912. The NFU seemed poised for an influential future on the national level, while the advent of war greatly increased its chances of improving its relationship with Government and upgrading its reputation in the eyes of farmers.

These actions at the national level were reinforced by more continuous activity in the counties. NFU candidates were elected onto county councils, especially in Lincolnshire and Devon, and set about making their presence felt particularly in the areas of rating reform and rural education. The legal services offered by the county branches helped many members win disputes with landlords and secured them concessions from railway companies. The insurance scheme started in Stratford-on-Avon in association with the Crown Assurance Company and underwritten by Lloyds in 1913, spread to a growing number of counties and offered members premium reductions of up to 20%. Some effort was made, often in association with the Agricultural Organisation Society, to improve livestock standards by seeking grants from the Liberal development fund to secure the appointment of specialist livestock instructors. County branches also helped to establish other institutions associated with progressive farming, particularly Milk Record Societies. An attempt was made to improve labour relations through the drawing up of hiring agreements and the establishment of a farm labourers' insurance society, while the central executive joined with the Central

21. ibid. p 141.
23. West Sussex branch report. ibid. p 129.
Landowner's Association in calling for rural regeneration via grants for improved cottage accommodation. On the other hand the NFU made clear its opposition to the action of those County Councils who were acquiring some excellent farm land under the provisions of the Small Holdings Act. All in all the NFU was as active at the county as at the national level, thus increasing the organisation's relevance to the everyday problems of English farmers.

While the county executives busied themselves organising such activities there was no let up in the propaganda campaign. At local, county, or national show days the NFU set up a recruitment tent to publicise its work and attract new members. When the tents were taken down, stumping tours were made into the more remote country areas surrounding the market towns. Existing farmers' clubs and dairy farmers' associations were slowly affiliated to the NFU. The NFU grew accordingly by a process of diffusion from market town to the more remote parts of their rural hinterlands. Then each cell-like unit was linked under the county organisation. But despite its steady growth and the undoubted industry of both its national and county executives, dissatisfaction with the NFU's organisational machinery began to emerge from 1913 onwards.

The call for a greater centralisation of the Union's activities came as much from the counties as from the central executive. Most counties seemed satisfied with the degree of autonomy granted them under the pyramidal constitutional structure of central executive, county executive and local branch. There seemed to be a general feeling that the NFU should establish its own permanent headquarters in London instead of wandering

27. ibid. 2 Mar 1914 p 8.
28. ibid. 1913 A.G.M. p 2, and 1914 A.G.M. pp4, 6 and 9
between the Mark Lane Express offices, the Holborn restaurant and the rooms of the RASE. The counties also desired the appointment of more full-time administrative staff to ensure that the NFU kept in continuous contact with the latest legislative developments, especially during the periods between Council meetings. Some counties also urged the appointment of one full-time secretary, as Palmer was still secretary of both the NFU and the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union. These delegates felt that the organisation would assume a more national character once it employed its very own secretary. This call for greater centralisation and professionalisation of the organisation from the counties was in direct contrast to the NZFU where the provinces were inclined to guard jealously their autonomy at the expense of greater national efficiency. The county executives were clearly more concerned with the national good of their organisation than their New Zealand counterparts. This concern revealed that they were prepared to sacrifice immediate local gains to win more meaningful long term advantages by hastening improvements at the national level. But such improvements had to wait until 1917 when a greatly increased membership provided the extra incentive and finance to carry through major organisational changes.

The NFU made an unspectacular but sound start. In the metaphor favoured by organisational historians it had become a "sturdy infant" by the outbreak of the First World War. Enthusiasm was maintained, while membership was increased. Its influence was extended onto both the county and national levels. The Times acknowledged its growing importance by regularly reporting its executive meetings from 1913 onwards. But the new organisation was still too small to have much impact. Membership had

29. ibid. South Herefordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Devon particularly wanted this change.
to be considerably increased and its organisational and lobbying machinery dramatically improved before it could evolve into the major farmers' "Trade Union"30 yielding similar influence to other trade unions and sectional organisations. The war presented its leaders a chance to hasten such a development. They fully grasped the opportunities presented them.

2. "Cautious Partnership and Reorganisation"

The First World War August 1914 - November 1918

The NFU's major problem during the First World War was to prove its patriotism in the face of constant charges of profiteering, while effectively defending farmers' sectional interests. Colin Campbell summed up this dilemma when he wrote in the 1915 Yearbook that the NFU must put its patriotic duties first by doing all it could to help in winning the war. But he added that it must also build up its parliamentary fund to ensure that farmers secured some parliamentary representation. He feared that unless this objective was realised farmers' needs would be lost sight of in the inevitably painful post-war adjustment process. He also stressed that the NFU had to institute a public relations campaign to counter accusations that farmers were profiteering.31

With the outbreak of war the NFU immediately offered its services to the nation, but the Liberal Government displayed little interest in their offer apart from commandeering hay and horses. Farmers had to wait until 1917 when submarine warfare produced a situation in which Britain had to increase its food production drastically if it was to be sure of victory, before a close working relationship was established. Then the Coalition Government entered into an extensive if cautious partnership with the farmers. It passed the Corn Production Act to guarantee grain prices to compensate

30. ibid. 1912, p 76.
farmers who either agreed voluntarily or were compelled to plough up permanent pasture. The NFU leaders seized on this opportunity to increase their influence, as did many Trade Union leaders,\(^{32}\) by endeavouring to fulfil their side of the partnership to the best of their ability, while completely overhauling the Union's organisational machinery. A massive propaganda campaign was launched to take full advantage of the boom conditions induced by war-time prices and it produced spectacular results.

Meantime a wary eye was kept on the post-war future, while the new partnership was treated with a realistic degree of caution. They hoped that the better treatment of the agricultural industry would be continued into peace-time, but they also prepared to fight to entrench their newly won advantages should their hopes rapidly dissolve into pre-war reality.

A limited degree of partnership was implemented in 1915 by the establishment of County War Agricultural Committees to provide some degree of co-ordination in efforts to increase production. NFU members played an active part in running these committees but the conflict between farmers' sectional interests and the overall national good soon became apparent. Constant criticisms were levelled at the Committees for unnecessarily harassing farmers, while supplying neither replacement labour nor more machinery.\(^{33}\) The labour shortage particularly agitated farmers for they found it increasingly difficult to step up production while their labour force was being whittled away by recruitment. A possible solution was to

\(^{32}\) Most Trade Union leaders tried to increase their influence by cooperating with the much increased State control of industry, at least until the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in October 1917. See Pelling, \textit{Op.cit.}, pp 154-156.

\(^{33}\) Herbert Padwick in particular became so incensed by what he considered to be useless interference that he visited the Secretary of the Board of Agriculture in person to see what could be done. \textit{NFU Yearbook}, 1915, p 83.
lower the school leaving age in rural districts. But this appeal by the NFU seriously threatened to disrupt the cordial relations which had been maintained with the National Union of Teachers since 1912. Furthermore, this call for a lower leaving age worsened the farmers' already tarnished image, while the farm labourers' unions opposed it. No real solution was found until July 1917 when the County War Agricultural Executive Committees were empowered to exempt skilled agricultural labourers from military service; a concession for which the NFU had fought hard and which definitely helped its recruitment campaign. The NFU could claim primary responsibility for securing this concession, even though economic necessity helped to hasten its introduction, for at one stage it seemed that the NFU was the only voice opposing the removal of all available men from the countryside.

Initially the commandeering of fodder in particular and the intrusions of officialdom in general, also irritated county branches of the NFU. Deputations and letters to both the War Office and Lord Selborne, President of the Board of Agriculture, complained of such problems as the army's paying prices below market value for hay or horses. But generally fairly cordial

34. 1915 A.G.M., MLE Supplement, 1 Mar 1915 pp 4-5.
35. ibid. 1917, p 13.
37. English farmers were not as used to visits by inspectors or even such other intrusions of bureaucracy as form filling as their New Zealand counterparts. They must have found the constant appearance of government officials on their farms rather unusual and annoying. Certainly they complained of form filling when horses or hay were commandeered.
38. Complaints came mainly from Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire, where both agricultural committees and county courts were allowing the army to commandeer fodder below market price. NFU Yearbook, 1915, pp 11-15.
39. ibid. pp 33, 57-59 and 91-95.
relationships were maintained with both the army and the Board of Agriculture after consultation sorted out these various irritations.  

Pre-war agitation over several issues was continued, including opposition to both the use of hop substitutes in beer and the importation of Canadian store cattle. Prosecutions made under the Milk and Dairies Act for selling milk deficient in butterfat and fatty solids increasingly angered members. The county legal committees were kept busy fighting such cases in between coping with more routine matters such as defending farmers against motorists making claims for damage inflicted on vehicles by wandering stock. The demand for an overhaul of local and national taxation was reiterated, while the call for greater security of tenure became more urgent as the sale of estates escalated.

The NFU tried to offset any impression of disloyalty that might be implied in these various criticisms and demands by agreeing to increase voluntarily the area under corn on the farms of its members. It also made a concerted effort to raise money for the patriotic fund, mainly through organising jumble sales. Over £84,000 was raised in this way during 1915. 

40. The commissary seemed to work to farmers' satisfaction in Wiltshire, East Sussex, Essex and Monmouthshire in particular. Relations were further improved when the War Office set up a special committee in August 1915 to deal with complaints of unfair prices at far less cost than via the County Courts.

41. NFU Yearbook, 1915, pp 81-83. On the other hand the NFU would not support the hop growers' protest over the new beer duty. MLE Supplement, 1 Mar 1915 p 2.

42. NFU Yearbook, 1915, pp 55-56.

43. ibid. pp 36-40.

44. ibid. pp 40-44.

45. ibid. pp 58-78.

46. ibid. pp 20-21.

47. ibid. p 115.
The NFU's consultative capacity in relation to the formulation of Government policy was enhanced when members were invited to sit on a departmental committee to consider soldier settlement schemes and to attend a conference called by Lord Selborne on ways of increasing food production. It also strengthened its position in the area of wage bargaining by joining the Central Association of Employers' Associations. The other major development in 1915 was the improvement and extension of the county insurance schemes. Lloyds even allowed the NFU access to 15% of the profits under their agreement with the Crown Assurance Company, even though the number of premiums would normally have been insufficient to earn such a share of profits.

Propaganda work still assumed considerable importance. Farmers were urged to join the "army" of the NFU which would fight the "battle" for them against the "enemies" of "Labour, of Socialism, and of many great manufacturing towns", who were supposedly "trying to place upon the farmer heavier burdens of taxes and local taxes." Despite the rousing quasi-military nature of this appeal and the overtly rhetorical declaration of sectional warfare which somewhat contradicted the NFU's patriotic aims, the response was lukewarm. The Hun remained a bigger threat than socialists or manufacturers. Nineteen fifteen faded into nineteen sixteen with little to choose between the two years.

49. ibid. p 85.
50. The Stratford-on-Avon branch claimed that they held policies to the value of £900,000 under their scheme. ibid. pp 22-26.
51. MLE Supplement, 1 Mar 1915 p 2.
52. ibid. pp 100-102.
Membership rose steadily and the union's financial resources strengthened in consequence, but little of note occurred until 1917. Colin Campbell even reluctantly remained as President because of the uncertainty of the war-time situation. But when the Government established a completely new set of statutory bodies in 1917, in a desperate attempt to increase production, activity increased dramatically.

The new War cabinet set up in December 1916 made a concerted attempt to convert Britain's previously rather haphazard war effort into a systematic mobilisation of all available resources. One of its first actions was to multiply Government controls, especially in the areas of shipping, the railways, mining and agriculture. In the case of agriculture a new wing of the Board of Agriculture, entitled the Department of Food Production, was created with powers to compel landlords to increase areas under cultivation, that is conversion of permanent pasture to arable production. It was also assigned the task of establishing minimum wages for agricultural labourers. A corresponding body, entitled the Ministry of Food, under direction of a food controller, Lord Rhondda, was also set up to provide consumer protection through fixing prices and rationing meat, butter and sugar. It hoped to prevent black marketing or the introduction of demoralising food queues.

NFU leaders realised that they must work closely with both bodies if they were to prevent the greatly increased degree of State compulsion from causing serious disruption within the industry. They also determined that farmers should benefit rather than suffer from such changes. In his speech at the 1917 A.G.M. Colin Campbell pledged the NFU's support in increasing food production. At the same time he expressed some misgivings regarding the new departments. He warned that unless guarantees were secured to

ensure that conversion back to cereal production was fully compensated, economic ruin could ensue. Also he added that farmers could not maintain, let alone increase, levels of production if more skilled labour was removed to the trenches. Women and boys, or school teachers on holiday were all very well but there were many tasks which they could not perform adequately. The A.G.M. backed up these remarks by asking that rapidly inflating costs of production be kept down by the Government and further that such costs be taken into consideration when fixing prices.

In an endeavour to demonstrate that such complaints were justifiable grievances rather than negative criticisms, the NFU set about working closely with both the Food Production Department and the Board of Agriculture. A functional relationship was soon established and surprisingly little friction resulted from the implementation of control measures which were potentially very abrasive. But from the beginning of 1917 the NFU stressed that farmers should be granted guaranteed prices if they were expected to pay a set minimum wage. Mr Prothero, (later Lord Ernle the noted agricultural historian), President of the Board of Agriculture, sympathised with the farmers' problems and both the Board and the Department of Food Production joined in the advocacy of guaranteed prices. The NFU's sense of importance grew when Agricultural Wages Boards were set up on the system of county committees which the NFU had devised for its own internal structure.

Then when the Corn Production Act was passed in September 1917 guaranteeing cereal prices, while fixing minimum wage rates, the NFU understandably felt a sense of triumph. Certainly this innovation improved their newly established partnership with the State and earlier misgivings were eased.

54. MLE Supplement, 26 Feb 1917 p 1.
55. NFU Yearbook, 1917, p 66.
Evidence of greater NFU confidence in this partnership was produced in setting up a new National Agricultural Council. This proposed body was intended to assume even greater control over the co-ordination of agricultural policy.

Relations with Lord Rhondda and the Ministry of Food were understandably more turbulent. Prices offered by the Ministry rarely satisfied farmers and the NFU regularly complained of their inadequacy. Milk and potato prices were subject to continual criticism, while the deadweight system of fixing meat prices was also roundly condemned. But despite such protests compromises were reached. Unlike some Unionist party advocates of protectionist policies the NFU's leaders refused to dictate terms to the Food Controller. They realised that food prices were a very sensitive area and they did not want to worsen public relations or give substance to charges of profiteering. Also they had no intention of allying themselves with a party orientated lobby. The validity of any charge of partisanship was rebutted by the issue of a shortened five point parliamentary programme which was so general that no political bias could be taken from it. This desire to improve their public image, to substantiate the claim that farmers were as patriotic as any other group of Englishmen and to maintain their non-party stance, explains why the NFU did not push home the advantages made possible by the war-time situation. Moderation prevailed over the more extreme lobby of sectional advantage, partly because the organisation's smallness would not allow it to undertake such actions. Furthermore, any attempt to place sectional interests over and above the national good would have done the NFU irreparable harm in the post-war situation.

56. ibid.
57. ibid.
58. ibid. pp 98-103.
The NFU remained active in areas outside the range of its new partnership, particularly over matters which would loom large in the post-war world. The parliamentary committee suggested that proportional representation might avert the possibility of complete urban domination of the electoral system threatened by the Representation of the People Bill. In July the NFU joined with the British Empire Producers' Organisations to promote understanding of Empire producers and prevent friction over competition for markets in the post-war world. The cry for greater security of tenure remained at the forefront of the NFU's policy statements. A deputation on this matter was appointed to meet Lord Selborne's committee which was investigating the general problems of agriculture. It stressed that farmers must receive adequate compensation for unreasonable disturbance if they were to be provided with the kind of security necessary to persuade them to redirect investment of capital and labour into conversion of pasture land. Opposition to the import of foreign hops was maintained, while the NFU requested that hop growers be allowed to reduce their hop acreages at their own discretion instead of being subjected to compulsory grubbing orders. The propaganda campaign was stepped up once again, this time with much more spectacular results.

59. ibid. pp 39-42.

60. ibid. pp 38-39. The NFU seemed far more interested in affiliating with Empire or international agricultural organisations than industrial trade unions. Pelling, Op. cit., p 148. It was less insular in this respect simply because the decisions of overseas farmers' organisations could affect British agriculture far more directly than activities of overseas trade unions could influence British industry.

61. ibid. pp 30-31, 36 and 104-105.


63. ibid. pp 17-18.
The Reconstruction scheme was hastened on to ensure that the NFU's organisational efficiency would be increased in the post-war world. It was introduced to the Council in August and four major changes were endorsed. They were the employment of a full-time secretary at a minimum salary of £500; the establishment of a permanent London headquarters; the replacement of the large and unwieldy central executive or Council by a small executive committee of not more than ten members; and the conversion of the existing executive committee into a "General Committee." The old council had been made up of delegates from each county and had grown to a considerable size as recruitment accelerated. It was to continue as the "General Committee", made up of delegates from each county, but it would only meet on a quarterly basis. The new "Executive Committee", in contrast, was to meet every month and was to be elected by ballot with positions reserved for each of the six new national sub-divisions. Change of the office of president on an annual basis was made compulsory, while counties were compelled to establish their own smaller executive committees, if they had not already done so, and were urged to employ paid secretaries. The county secretaries in turn, whether professional or amateur, were to meet in conference every year before the national A.G.M. A new central legal fund was to be established to cover the cost of expensive litigation and the old voluntary parliamentary fund was to be replaced by a compulsory annual levy of sixpence per head. The other changes were to be financed by increasing the capitation fee of county branches from one shilling to

64. ibid. pp 76-77, and MLE Supplement, 13 Aug 1917 pp 1-2.

65. Members' preference for a straight out vote from the counties was revealed by the fact that the six regional sub-divisions were dropped within two years. After 1920 the executive committee came to be made up of the chairmen of the specialist sub-committees, who were elected by a vote from all the county delegates within the General Committee.
four shillings per member. It was left up to the counties to devise the means of raising this extra money. The major motivation behind these organisational refinements was to enable the NFU to

"so enlarge its scope as to associate and unite all farmers of Great Britain, and so provide them with a means of expressing their collective opinion upon matters affecting the interests of Agriculture, and thus improving its condition, by affording to His Majesty's Government, the Board of Agriculture, the Local Authorities, and other organisations which have relation to agricultural affairs the advice and experience of farmers." 66

These various proposals were put into action in 1918 when the NFU moved into its new offices at 45 Bedford Square, London, with a new secretary, G.T. Apps, and a new president, E.M. Nunneley. With these organisational improvements a fait accompli the NFU hoped to turn to full advantage the fact that the war had made agriculture "more fully recognised than in the past." 67 A rather amateur and loose confederation of county unions was being rapidly transformed into a sophisticated, professionally organised and centrally administered pressure group. Under its new guise it had a much greater chance of realising its more wide ranging objectives than ever before.

Partnership with the State continued to prosper until the end of the war. The Government's greater recognition of the NFU as the foremost spokesman on agricultural matters was indicated by its decision to increase NFU representation on the National Agricultural Council from two to five. 68 Mr Prothero also tried his best to ease the recruitment of skilled labourers. But the demands of the Generals still overrode the powers of the County Agricultural Committees to prevent the loss of labourers. On the NFU side

67. ibid.
68. NFU Yearbook, 1918, p 86. At first the Council considered that the NFU was not important enough to warrant direct representation. But after a vigorous protest NFU delegates were added to the Council. The NFU made it clear that it would not tolerate the idea that landlords could adequately represent the interests of tenants. ibid., p 75.
of the partnership an attempt was made to influence post-war developments by submitting to parliament a scheme outlining possible lines for agricultural reconstruction. Some recognition of the NFU's recommendations was reflected in the report of Lord Selborne's reconstruction committee which echoed the NFU's demands for a guaranteed price policy to enable farmers to pay fair wages and fair rents. Furthermore, Lord Selborne also agreed with the NFU's request that maximum prices be abolished once the war was ended, supported their call for a reform of local taxation and tenurial arrangements and restated their insistence on the provision of cheaper credit and improved agricultural education facilities.

But while the Board of Agriculture policy closely approximated NFU opinion, relations with the Food Controller worsened. Feeling ran particularly high over the fixing of meat and milk prices. The NFU felt so dissatisfied with these arrangements that it determined to organise milk producers for the purposes of collective bargaining. Such disagreements damaged worsening public relations and the NFU felt compelled to issue a special statement in August 1918, to counter claims made by the press that farmers were engaging in unpatriotic profiteering. A special Cost Committee, appointed by the West Sussex branch, also reported on the incidence of inflation in farming costs to defend the farmers position.

69. ibid. p 81.
70. The Times, 19 Jun 1918.
71. ibid.
72. NFU Yearbook, 1918, pp 85-86.
73. ibid. pp 83-84. The major defence for the NFU came from The Times, 2 Feb 1918, and Lord Selborne. NFU Yearbook, 1918, pp 94-95.
74. ibid. 89-90.
Preparation for political action in peacetime was hurried on as the NFU watched the Representation of the People Bill and the Education Bill pass into law. The NFU was worried that their already slight parliamentary influence would be further diminished by electoral reform. They also feared that their labour supply would be reduced by the raised school leaving age and that enlarged education grants would result in an increase of rates. But they stifled their opposition for they realised that it could paint the NFU as an opponent of progress and further worsen relations with the towns. Opposition to Daylight Saving was modified for similar reasons. They concentrated their efforts instead on increasing membership and preparing for the post-war election.

An NFU Mutual Insurance Scheme, separate from and more comprehensive than the existing agreement with the Crown Assurance Company, was brought forward as an added incentive to join. It seemed to assist the very successful recruitment efforts. Affiliation with both the Scottish and Ulster Farmers' Unions was also considered to strengthen the influence of British farmers at Westminster. Meantime George W. Daw, an experienced Unionist party agent for Wandsworth and formerly Leicester, was appointed as the new NFU parliamentary agent in August 1918 to select suitable candidates. A new parliamentary programme was also drawn up restating earlier demands for greater security of tenure, local taxation reform, revision of rail rates and the improvement of labourers' cottages. The major addition was a request that the status of agriculture be raised to that of a key industry to enable it to pay adequate wages while adjusting to the new demands of the peace time situation. The earlier call for the

75. ibid. p 92.
76. ibid. pp 110-111.
77. The Times, 21 Aug 1918. C. Weller Kent had resigned the post in 1915.
provision of better facilities for agricultural education and research was also reiterated. By October seven men were chosen as independent agricultural candidates on the basis of that programme. In the case of the Cirencester electorate in Gloucestershire, the agricultural candidate, J.H. Alpass, an NFU member, even went to the trouble of securing the support of the local agricultural labourers' union and the Labour party. In addition to the seven independents five other NFU members stood as party candidates. The parliamentary fund was raised to over £3,400 and the NFU prepared for battle of a different kind once the armistice was signed on 11 November 1918.

"Triumph to Disillusionment"

December 1918-1922

The NFU worked hard to entrench its war-time advantage throughout 1919 and its efforts seemed to bear fruit in 1920, the high point in the history of the organisation until the late 1940s. Lloyd George's promises of the continuation of guaranteed prices and compensation for unreasonable disturbance were implemented under the Agriculture Act of 1920. After a period of intense negotiations these prices were even increased and the future assumed a faintly idyllic hue. Within a few months the NFU was brought back to the bleak prospects of economic reality with a jolt, when guaranteed prices were abolished in June 1921. A four year warning of any such change was supposed to have been given but the advent of depression and the alarming increase of unemployment led to the rapid demise of control in most industries.

79. The Times, 16 Oct 1918.
80. Ibid. 23 Feb 1918.
81. NFU Yearbook, 1918, pp 98-99 and 80. Two NFU members stood as Liberals, one for the Coalition, one for Labour and one as a joint Labour and Agricultural candidate.
Furthermore, agriculture was not considered of sufficiently critical importance by the politicians to be singled out for special treatment and was thrown back on its own resources. The ready availability of cheaper overseas food supplies worsened any prospect of special assistance for agriculture.\textsuperscript{82} The NFU's triumph was short lived. It had to turn its attention immediately to salvaging what it could from the wreckage of guaranteed prices. Then it began a long and bitter struggle for mere survival, disillusioned but not defeated. The 1920s were as bleak for English farmers as they were for most sectors of English society, despite the superficial appearance of gaiety. Flappers and jazz cast little cheer over the countryside.

None of the NFU's independent candidates was successful in the 1918 election although an NFU member who belonged to the Coalition ministry, Alfred Davies, was returned to parliament for Lincolnshire.\textsuperscript{83} The election was entered mainly to gain experience, hopefully as a dress rehearsal for future successes. Attention soon turned to establishing contact with the newly appointed House of Commons Agricultural Committee and with increasing NFU representation on the County Councils. The NFU also made it clear that they were willing to continue their partnership with the State provided guaranteed prices were maintained and preferably increased. NFU witnesses to the Royal Commission on Agriculture, originally set up as a committee of enquiry by Lord Selborne in 1915 and extended into a full Commission by the Ministry of Reconstruction in 1917, stressed that the NFU would really prefer a return to the open market so that farmers could attend to their business free of the fetters of State interference. But they made it very


\textsuperscript{83} NFU \textit{Yearbook}, 1918, p 99.
clear that they would accept continuance of control in the national interest provided guaranteed prices were maintained. Security of tenure was also made into another proviso of acceptance, especially as many farmers were deeply concerned at the trend whereby tenants were forced to buy up their land as a result of the continuing sale of estates. Much more detailed information was also supplied on the massive war-time increases in farmers' costs which made guaranteed prices so essential. The NFU continued to drive home its side of the bargain as it had during the war years.

Lloyd George was urged by the NFU in March 1919 to issue a statement on agricultural policy as soon as possible. The Prime Minister responded with promises of guaranteed prices and greater security of tenure included in his Caxton Hall Speech of 21 October. But a somewhat ominous note was added by the fact that the promises were made before the Royal Commission had issued its final report. This incongruity spurred the NFU to action in an endeavour to ensure that the Prime Minister's rather vague statements would be followed up by concrete actions. First, they persuaded him that the NFU should be consulted in the formulation of the Agriculture Bill which would give these promises legislative approval. Second, the NFU published a pamphlet entitled "The Food of the People" to make its


85. The Times, 27 Mar 1919.

86. ibid. 22 Oct 1919.
views clear to both M.P.s and the public. A detailed twenty-three point parliamentary programme was also issued immediately after the Caxton Hall speech.

The pamphlet made it clear that guaranteed prices, greater security of tenure and reduced taxes and rates were essential if agricultural production was to be maintained at high levels and heavy out-migration avoided. Imported food was cited as a potential cause of heavy rural unemployment, while the warning was issued that Britain would be placed in a vulnerable position if agriculture was neglected as it had been before the war. Furthermore, even the towns would suffer from reduced internal trade if agriculture declined. The appeal was carefully directed to the national interest.

The parliamentary programme placed greater emphasis on security of tenure than ever before. Eleven of the twenty-three planks were concerned with that issue. The State was also asked to guarantee a market for increased food production and a general demand was made for rural development via the provision of improved leisure facilities, small holdings for labourers and the encouragement of rural industries.

The NFU had made a direct bid for parliamentary assistance which appeared to win the sympathy of the Prime Minister and some sections of the press, although the general public still seemed hostile to farmers.


89. The *NFU Yearbook*, 1920, pp 258-261, published a set of favourable press responses to "The Food of the People." Papers in favour ranged from agricultural periodicals such as the MLE and *Farm Life*, through provincial dailies such as the *Yorkshire Post* and *Nottingham Guardian*, to such prestigious specialist periodicals as the *Economist*. But it was significant that no national dailies other than the *Times* were mentioned.
A further effort was made to increase the NFU's parliamentary influence by publishing a parliamentary bulletin to keep both M.P.s and the press informed of the latest NFU activities and opinions. Ties with the Ulster and Scottish Farmers' Unions were also formalised.

The NFU also continued to attempt to turn control to advantage by exerting pressure on Whitehall as well as on Westminster, especially as the Board of Agriculture had been converted into a full ministry and was provided with much greater powers than in the past. Relations with the new Minister of Agriculture, Lord Lee, were as cordial as with Mr Prothero. Constant consultation continued between the NFU and the Ministry. The Labour committee of the NFU also tried to work with the Agricultural Wages Boards in negotiating wage rates despite protests from some rank and file members that the minimum levels were unnecessarily high. This acknowledgement of the labourers' unions marked a considerable advance over the pre-war situation when they had been ignored by all but a few members of the NFU executive. Partnership was also improved by the appointment of six NFU delegates to the newly established Central Advisory Council. Then when Lloyd George called the National Industrial Conference in late February 1919, the NFU president, F.H. Padwick, was appointed as the representative of agriculture. This appointment enhanced the reputation of the NFU as the spokesman for agriculture as well as strengthening the sense of partnership.

90. NFU Yearbook, 1920, p 69.

91. ibid. 1919, p 17.

92. A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-1945, p 642. The change was made in August 1919.

93. NFU Yearbook, 1919, pp 68 and 71.

94. ibid. p 14.

95. ibid. p 68.
The three other major activities of the NFU in 1919 apart from refining its partnership with the State, were organising opposition to the reduction of hours worked by farm labourers, protesting unsatisfactory milk prices and establishing a development committee to complete the task of overhauling the NFU's organisational machinery. 96

The proposed introduction of a forty-eight hour week within the agricultural sector agitated the NFU far more than establishment of a minimum wage. In fact they agreed with the principle of a minimum wage provided it was economically viable. E.M. Nunneley neatly summed up the farmers' attitude to these questions when he gave his evidence to the Royal Commission on Agriculture. He pointed out that it would be impossible to apply strict time limits to the agricultural sector because of the pronounced seasonal nature of many farming activities. During the harvest it was imperative that a farmer and his men worked from sunrise to sunset. Then there was the question of preparing the horses, a task which made the implementation of an exact nine hour day impossible. 97 A compromise solution of a sixty hour week in summer and a forty hour week in winter was also rejected as unworkable. Farmers simply did not want the intrusion of the regularised hours of the factory system into their less formal and more flexible work patterns, which were already governed by the dictates of nature. Furthermore, additional artificial regulations imposed from outside seemed to threaten their way of life. Shortened hours could also seriously threaten the viability of marginal farmers. But reasonable as this opposition appeared to farmers it did little to remove the legacy of bitterness between farmer and labourer. It also did nothing to improve the image of the farmer held by many townspeople as an unscrupulous

96. ibid. pp 73-74.
profiteer who only begrudgingly increased his labourer's wages and refused to improve his working conditions. Farmers had much to learn about the public relations aspect of industrial relations. Luckily for the NFU the voice of moderation prevailed before relations with the labourers and the public were done irreparable harm. R.R. Robbins, chairman of the Labour Committee, insisted that opposition should be expressed through strictly constitutional avenues and the demand of some more militant members for a boycott of all Government agricultural committees was overruled. 98

Much of the trouble over milk prices was related to the rather sudden decontrol of milk production, when control was supposed to have continued until April 1921. Rapid decontrol produced an embarrassing surplus and forced the NFU milk committee to arrange numerous interviews with the Food Controller and the Consumer Council until satisfactory winter prices were obtained. But E.W. Langford, chairman of the milk committee, realised that this agreement was only a temporary expedient. He knew that milk producers would not be able to negotiate with the well organised milk retailers on terms of equality until they were organised on a comprehensive national basis. As a first step to achieving that objective he secured NFU representation on the Associated Milk Producers' Council in an attempt to use the council as a vehicle for arranging a broader base of organisation. 99

With a membership of 76,000 at the end of 1919, branches in every county and representatives on several important Government bodies, including the Royal Commission, the retiring president, F.H. Padwick, was justified in claiming that the "status" of the NFU had improved considerably within the space of a mere two years. His assertion that it was widely recognised

98. NFU Yearbook, 1919, p 67.
99. ibid. p 76.
As an important organisation was not an exaggerated indulgence in self-congratulation. Coupled with Lloyd George's promises and the Royal Commission's Interim Report in favour of guaranteed prices and greater security of tenure, such advances in national importance promised to make 1920 a good year. NFU members were not to be disappointed.

Much of the NFU's attention was inevitably focused on the fortunes of the Agriculture Bill in 1920, but it also continued to extend the range of its activities and to improve and professionalise its organisation.

A special NFU committee was set up in January to consider the provisions of the Bill. When the Bill was drafted copies were sent to all the county branches to gauge their opinion. Once the counties had replied the special committee prepared a report for submission to the central Council. After consideration by Council a memorandum was issued which was tabled when the Bill reached the committee stage. This memorandum which clearly represented the democratically collected opinion of the NFU at all its levels, made it clear that the organisation would prefer economic freedom to control. But it insisted that if the Government wished to increase cereal production and maintain control then guaranteed prices must be continued. Modified direction of cultivation by the Ministry of Agriculture was also accepted in return for guaranteed prices. General satisfaction was expressed with the second part of the Bill dealing with security rather than fixity of tenure. In short qualified support was given to the Bill.

100. *ibid.* p 68.

101. The NFU's position was made more difficult by the fact that no final Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture was issued. The NFU had to be content with the majority interim report which recommended the continuance of guaranteed prices and an increase of security of tenure. *Interim Report*, BPP 1919 VIII, pp 4-8.

It soon became clear that most controversy would centre around clause seven. This clause set down that a tenant should be paid one year's rent as compensation in the event of disturbance which was not the tenant's fault (such as a landlord's decision to sell up) and four year's rent for capricious eviction (such as the removal of a tenant because of his political beliefs). This clause was critical to the NFU's call for security of tenure and encapsulated the major objective which the organisation had striven to realise since its inception. Consequently, the NFU was determined that the clause should not be emasculated. It kept in constant touch with the leaders of the Parliamentary Agricultural Committee as well as with the House committee working on the Agricultural Bill to ensure that the clause was passed unaltered. The effectiveness of this constant lobbying was revealed in an article written in the 1920 Yearbook, by Colonel M.J. Wilson, one of the leaders of the Parliamentary Agricultural Committee, who candidly admitted that the Agricultural Bill would have been deadlocked without the constant support of the NFU.

Opposition to the critical clause seven was strong and emanated from two major sources, landlords and small owner-occupiers.

Landlord opposition was much more serious simply because they still wielded considerable political influence. Their major complaint seemed to be that they resented the law interfering in an area where landlord and tenant had formerly sorted out their differences on a personal basis. They implied that the intervention of statute law in their own domain was not quite cricket. Lord Bledisloe was the most vocal of the landlord critics. He wrote numerous letter to The Times making the exaggerated claim that the

103. The bill had in fact incorporated the exact recommendations of Lord Selborne's committee on the matter of compensation.
104. Ibid. p 173.
NFU leaders were extremists and that the organisation only represented tenant farmers' interests. Other substantial landowners, such as H. Trustram Eve, reinforced his criticisms by claiming that the NFU represented only a few "political farmers" who "invented" a demand for greater compensation; clearly a preposterous claim as the NFU membership neared the 100,000 mark. The usurpation of the landlord's traditional deferential superiority over his tenants obviously deeply annoyed some of the old-style gentry. If they considered the moderate men who led the NFU to be "extremists" they would have found no words in the dictionary to describe militant trade union leaders.

Bledisloe also made the more valid criticism that the proposed legislation would only decrease the value of land further thereby forcing more landlords to sell up and draining even more capital out of agriculture. But the NFU's members were realistic enough to know that such sales were going to continue no matter what happened. The inevitability of that development only made the winning of greater security of tenure more imperative, for tenant farmers were increasingly being forced to rely more on their own resources and less on their landlord's capital. The Times could clearly see the validity of the NFU's case and praised it for its moderation. But even The Times could not prevent the landowning interest attacking the Bill in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

105. The Times, 11 Jun, 17 Jun, 29 Jun, 4 Nov 1920. "Coventry" 1 Dec, and C.F. Ryder 12 Aug, also accused the NFU "extremists" of dragging the majority of English farmers and landowners into accepting changes they did not want.

106. Ibid. 15 Nov 1920.

107. Ibid. 5 Nov 1920. Sub-Editorial.
The NFU was so concerned at this opposition that they convened an emergency meeting with the Central Landowners' Association, the House of Commons Agricultural Committee and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen, a staunch supporter of the NFU position. By this prompt action a compromise was reached and the critical clause saved. The compromise involved the exclusion of compensation in the three cases - the death of a tenant; multiple farmers; when a notice to resume part of a holding was accepted as notice to quit the whole. This limitation was agreed to with great reluctance by a special meeting of the NFU when it became clear that it was the only way of saving the principle of security of tenure. 108

While clause seven survived the landlord's knife, clause fourteen on arbitration was drastically altered. The NFU wanted the Lord Chief Justice to work with the president of the NFU and the president of the Surveyors' Institute in appointing a panel of arbitrators. But by the time the Bill passed the House of Commons the appointment was left solely to the Lord Chief Justice, that is the county courts without the assistance of representatives appointed by both the landlord and tenant. 109 When the Bill entered the House of Lords a further attempt was made to reduce its usefulness by striking out the clause which enabled the Minister of Agriculture to control cultivation in association with the county agricultural committees. Both Lord Lee and the NFU protested but when it became clear that this issue could have prevented the Bill's passing, the NFU agreed to limit the Minister's powers. 110

109. Ibid. p 193.
110. The Times, 9, 16 and 20 Dec 1920.
There was an inevitability about the opposition of the landlords but the opposition of small holders surprised and concerned the NFU. It seemed to confirm W. Edward's opinion that small holders' interests were not served by the Bill. Several letters to The Times from small owners claimed that the NFU was made up entirely of tenant farmers, a claim which was by no means accurate as we shall see in the final chapter. They also accused the NFU of attempting to increase the already considerable burdens of owner-occupiers and of espousing anti-yeoman attitudes. But most of these accusations were based on a misunderstanding of the difference between reasonable disturbance and capricious eviction. Some small owners thought they had to pay four instead of one year's rent to tenants whose land they intended to buy. If they hoped to set up sons on adjacent pieces of land this would pose a major threat. Lord Bledisloe tried to turn these fears against the NFU by making misleading statements to the effect that small holders would have to pay four year's rent in compensation. But the anxiety fell away once the NFU countered with accurate statements published in leaflet form and supported by The Times.

111. Minutes of Evidence; BPP 1919 Cd.445 VIII Part 4, pp 702-705. Thomas Williams pointed out that the majority of Welsh farmers were small owner-occupiers. 70% of Welsh farmers ran units of under 50 acres, and had not benefitted from guaranteed prices. They disliked interference and mainly wanted security of tenure and easier credit to enable them to pay off their high mortgages or increased rents.

112. The Times, 15 Jun (James Barker), 27 Jul ("Small Landowner"), and 23 Aug (Gilbert McIlquham) 1920.

113. "Small Landowner" for example, wanted to buy up his three small farms and consolidate them into one unit. He thought that he would be liable for £3,600, that is four times the gross annual rental of the three properties. In fact he only owed £900.

When the Agriculture Act found its way onto the statute books on 23 December 1920 an immense feeling of relief swept over the NFU, although there was to be some delay before the introduction of its provisions.

While negotiations over the new Bill absorbed much of the central executive's energies, it still found time to improve the NFU's organisational machinery in general and its political apparatus in particular. The new constitution was fully implemented in 1920. It altered the composition of the Executive Committee from the regional representatives to the heads of the various sub-committees. The Executive Committee in turn was granted a less separate existence and it was forced to work more closely with the General Committee. The NFU was also incorporated as a Trade Union under the Trade Union Act of 1913. Now it was entitled to direct its funds towards financing the election of candidates for both parliamentary and local body office. The registration suggested that the NFU considered itself to have realised its earlier objective of developing into the farmers' trade union by 1920. A completely new set of rules were drawn up to clarify existing procedures, while a set of twelve specific objects replaced the simpler and more general objectives agreed upon in 1910. The most significant innovation amongst the objects was the claim that the NFU was entitled by right to advise the government on all questions affecting agriculture.\footnote{115}{ibid. pp 42-44.} Council meetings were to be held outside London for the first time. This precedent was set at Leeds\footnote{116}{ibid. p 65.} in an endeavour to provide the provinces with easier access to the Executive Committee. The increasing centralisation of the union's administration was also prevented from stifling the influence of grass roots opinion on the formulation of national policy by maintaining a considerable degree of...
county autonomy. County branches were still entitled to control completely the expenditure of their own funds and were granted the option of making no contribution to the parliamentary fund.\footnote{ibid. pp 44-47.} Professionalisation was continued by the appointment of a Statistical Officer to run a Costings Department\footnote{ibid. p 67.} and a firm of solicitors was employed to advise on legal matters.\footnote{ibid.} Finally these changes were completed by changing the basis of calculating subscriptions from acreage to rateable value to ensure that members' ability to pay was assessed accurately.\footnote{ibid. pp 110-111.}

Two major improvements were made to the NFU's machinery for lobbying parliament. The first was the appointment of a full-time parliamentary secretary, Captain Cleveland Fife, to ensure that consultation with the House of Commons was continuous and to ease the burdens of the general secretary. Captain Fife was directed to spend the whole of his time preparing memoranda, researching legislation and interviewing M.P.s.\footnote{ibid. pp 69-71.} The second was the establishment of ten parliamentary area committees to improve communications between the central parliamentary committee and the counties. These area committees were organised down to the branch level to ensure that the NFU was adequately represented on Rural District Councils and Boards of Guardians as well as on County Councils. Both area and local committees were allocated the task of selecting suitable candidates and supporting their election campaign.
More routine activities were also maintained throughout 1920 which were completely overshadowed by the Agriculture Bill agitation. The extension of the mutual insurance scheme, improvements in milk marketing and opposition to the importation to Canadian store cattle stood out as the highlights of these other activities. A decision to return all profits to policy holders under the new nation-wide insurance scheme promoted the scheme to the forefront of recruitment campaigns. After failing to utilise alternative channels to increase the effectiveness of milk marketing the milk committee determined to introduce its own alternative scheme through the auspices of the county branches. Opposition to the importation of Canadian store cattle was entirely consistent with earlier NFU policy, but unfortunately it incurred the wrath of the NFU's greatest supporter amongst the daily papers, The Times. Editorials condemned English farmers for opposing an Imperial agreement reached during the war. Although the NFU's stance was based on valid fears of the introduction of stock diseases, it marked the only major public relations failure in a year when the NFU's public standing was at an all-time high.

When both Lord Lee and Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen praised "a sectional organisation, devoted primarily to the interests of farmers" for thinking and acting "nationally" it brought an arduous year to a fitting close. Despite a few disappointing concessions the Agriculture Act realised in concrete legislative form the principle of security of tenure for which the NFU had fought since its inception. Farmers also seemed to be heading for a respite from their difficulties under the umbrella of guaranteed prices. All in all it had been a most successful year, but the new umbrella soon proved to be of little use against the hard driving rain of economic reality.

122. ibid. p 5.
123. ibid. pp 98-99.
124. The Times. 3 Apr 1920.
Almost as soon as the Agriculture Act was passed the NFU realised that the prices offered them were simply not adequate to meet the minimum rates set down by the Agricultural Wages Boards.\textsuperscript{126} Tying prices to cost movements at a minimum of sixty-eight shillings per quarter did not help to narrow the gap between rising costs and falling returns. The NFU protested to the Minister of Agriculture that the Government had broken its "Pledge" of ninety-five shillings per quarter.\textsuperscript{127} Lord Lee replied that the Government had never promised such a sum as it would involve subsidies, and subsidies had never been mentioned.\textsuperscript{128} But after a deputation to Lloyd George in early February the NFU won their case.\textsuperscript{129} On 17 February the new Minister of Agriculture, Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen, announced that farmers would be paid ninety-five shillings per quarter provided import prices approximated that level. Millers, who were still under control, were also instructed to make back payments to farmers, who had sold them sound milling wheat since 6 November 1920.\textsuperscript{130} Considerable wrangling with the Ministry of Food ensued as this Ministry wanted to keep prices down even if it meant prohibiting millers from buying English wheat.\textsuperscript{131} Then the Wheat Commission came to the aid of the NFU by compelling mills to use a minimum of 15\% of British wheat.\textsuperscript{132} Now the NFU felt satisfied with arrangements regarding guaranteed prices, but that satisfaction was to last for a mere three months.

\textsuperscript{126} The Times, 3 Feb 1921.
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{128} \textit{ibid.} 4 Feb 1921.
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{ibid.} 14 Feb 1921.
\textsuperscript{130} \textit{ibid.} 18 Feb 1921.
\textsuperscript{131} \textit{ibid.} 2 Mar 1921.
\textsuperscript{132} \textit{ibid.} 4 and 5 Mar 1921.
Mr Punch comments on the Repeal of Guaranteed Prices. Punch, 13 Jul 1921 p 33.
On 8 June 1921 part I of the Agriculture Act was repealed, which meant the abolition of guaranteed prices and the Wages Boards. The NFU protested indignantly, accusing the Government of a "breach of faith," especially as farmers had not been granted economic freedom when they asked for it and had been promised a four year warning of decontrol.¹³³ Now security of tenure seemed threatened as well. They also expressed concern over the fate of labourers as protection of their standard of living had been so hastily removed. They were shocked too that Lloyd George should have approved such a change when they had slowly come to trust him during their long acquaintance.

These criticisms were echoed in the House of Lords and by the Mark Lane Express. Even Lord Bledisloe who had earlier written to The Times claiming that decontrol would be a good thing, remarked during the House of Lords debate over this action that farmers could never again trust the promises of government.¹³⁴ The Mark Lane Express condemned the change as too sudden and unjust, but agreed with the more sanguine view of The Times that it might be a good thing from the long-term point of view.¹³⁵ NFU spokesmen were too shocked to find any comfort in such assessments, especially when they came from some of the severest critics of the Agriculture Bill. Protests poured in from the county branches. Some even went as far as comparing the Government's "breach of faith" with Germany's violation of Belgium in 1914, while others suggested that politicians could never be trusted in future and described the Coalition Government as a "set of rogues." The National Agricultural Labourers' Union echoed the NFU's criticisms for they realised full well that repeal meant reduced wages. It seemed as if the dark days of the 1880s were about to be ushered in again.

¹³³ ibid. 9 June 1921.
¹³⁴ ibid. 10 Jun 1921.
¹³⁵ MLE, 13 Jun 1921 p 765, and The Times, 10 Jan 1921.
4. "Withdrawal and Isolation."

1921 - 1930.

The repeal of part I of the Agriculture Act profoundly influenced the NFU. Its organisational behaviour reflected its members' disillusionment. Once it salvaged what it could in terms of compensation it steadily withdrew from any partnership with the State and carried out its activities from a position of political isolation. Organisational improvements continued, especially in the area of professionalisation, while the NFU concentrated its efforts on winning a few concessions from a series of unwilling Governments. Neither Conservative administrations led by Bonar Law (1922-1923), or Stanley Baldwin (1924-1929), nor the two Labour governments led by Ramsay MacDonald (1923-1924 and 1929-1931), were interested in grappling with the major problems of agriculture. The agricultural measures they introduced were condemned as "palliatives" and did not satisfy the NFU. Consequently, one year between 1922 and 1929 was little different from any other as the NFU concentrated on survival. Relations with the National Agricultural Labourers' Union were also embittered. In short this period represented an undistinguished block of years in the history of the NFU and in terms of achievement constituted its nadir. Feelings of hostility towards the State aroused by the repeal of guaranteed prices also imparted a negative attitude to the NFU in the matter of marketing reform. Many of its rank and file members, and more seriously some of its leaders, developed a strong prejudice against any form of State assistance, even in the area where it was most needed. Consequently, the NFU was rather slow in supporting progressive marketing reform, except in the area of milk marketing. The NFU must take much of the blame for delaying the introduction of such reforms until the 1930s. Fortunately, the more progressive leaders in this matter, particularly Harry German and E.W. Langford, managed to persuade the organisation to accept eventually
these reforms and prevented an even longer delay in their introduction. Once these reforms were instituted British farmers fared better and the NFU won a degree of State assistance in the form of subsidies in the late 1930s136 which neither the Conservative nor Labour governments of the 1920s were prepared to give.

On the credit side the maintenance of its large membership during such a difficult period and the improvement of its organisational machinery as well as the development of a more sophisticated approach to pressure group activity, prepared the NFU to take advantage of the slow economic improvement which occurred from 1935 onwards. When the economic and political difficulties facing English farmers during the 1920s are taken into consideration, difficulties accentuated by the removal of the new protection of State assistance and the old paternalism of the landlord, this maintenance of strength and activity assumes a very real significance. In many ways these difficulties were greater than in the 1880s or than in New Zealand during the 1920s. Any but the strongest and most determined organisation would have declined in similar circumstances. That the NFU did not decline says much for the administrative abilities of its leaders and the resilience and efficiency of its established procedures. On the other hand the very desperate nature of the NFU's situation helps explain why it fared as well as it did. The repeal of guaranteed prices caused the organisation to lose its innocence. After 1922 it was much more hard headed in its dealings with government and came to regard any single panacea, whether State assistance or co-operation, as unrealistic. From that moment on it came to rely more on its own resources. That tendency helps explain how survival was later turned to real advantage despite the negative suspicion of State assistance bred by the repeal.

Once the NFU recovered from the shock of the repeal and feelings of despondency worsened by deepening depression and freakish drought, they quickly realised that they must attempt to win what compensation they could, while securing full economic freedom as rapidly as possible. The compensation was agreed to within a fortnight. Arable farmers were to be paid £4 per acre for wheat and £3 per acre for oats, while a capital sum of £1,000,000 was set aside for agricultural education and research. Only the research sum was to serve any useful long-term purpose. The NFU followed the winning of this rather token compensation by demanding that the Government redeem its promise that economic freedom be reinstated if guaranteed prices were repealed. Their demand was backed up by a threat that NFU representatives would resign from the Agricultural Wages Boards if this change was not instituted. A more moderate stance was soon assumed, however, in response to considerable pressure from both the Government and the Central Landowners' Association. The Government proposed a compromise in the form of a system of voluntary conciliation committees which the NFU accepted with little enthusiasm. Their chagrin was magnified by the fact that the landlords were accusing the NFU of taking out their wrath on the agricultural labourers in unnecessarily vindictive fashion. In typically paternalistic manner some landlords counselled moderation in the NFU's efforts to reduce wages from the rate of forty-two shillings per week, set by the last order of the Wages Board, to thirty shillings per week; a proposal which understandably also

137. ibid. 23 June 1921.
138. ibid. 21 Jul 1921.
139. ibid. 11 Jul 1921.
140. ibid. 19 Jul, 25 and 30 Aug 1921.
incurred the wrath of the National Union of Agricultural Workers. The NFU reluctantly heeded this advice and tried to make the conciliation committees work. But as economic conditions worsened they turned their attention towards the 1922 election as a more hopeful means of improving their lot.

Lord Bledisloe's call for establishing a separate agrarian party was rejected as hopelessly naive. The proposed landlord leadership of the new party also held little appeal to tenant farmers. The NFU decided instead to continue to assert its independence by running its own candidates. Their efforts secured a greater success than ever before as four of the NFU sponsored candidates were elected, with at least three of these men coming from farming backgrounds. But this victory could not obscure the more ominous fact that none of the NFU's independent candidates, including the very able E.W. Landford, was elected. The long hoped for "brace" of M.P.s all belonged to the Unionist party. Farmers had still to be content with parliamentary representation at one remove rather than direct representation of the NFU's interests. Even so NFU leaders were hopeful that these men could make a very real contribution towards solving farmers' problems. P.J. Bradshaw, chairman of the NFU Parliamentary Committee, pointed out that there were now four M.P.s to lead the sixty-three other M.P.s who had pledged their support to the NFU programme. Numerically this group constituted the third largest party in the House.


of Commons, and could act as a virtual fourth party, distinct from Unionists, Labour or Liberals in questions affecting agriculture. In the light of his remarks the election success had understandably helped to restore some of the NFU's battered confidence, especially as independent agricultural labourers' union candidates had fared badly.

Raised expectations were soon dashed, however, as Bonar-Law's administration proved to be as unresponsive to the claims of agriculture as the Coalition. The new sponsored M.P.s made little impact despite their conscientious efforts on behalf of the NFU. Mr Bradshaw's vision of a fourth party soon proved to be illusory as party commitments continued to override any loyalty to agriculture. All Bonar Law's government did was to set up a tribunal of investigation into the problems of the agricultural industry. This action did not appease the NFU as they already knew what those problems were and wanted action not words.

Meanwhile labour relations in the arable counties reached a crisis point. Lock-outs occurred in Lincolnshire throughout 1922 and things came to a head in Norfolk in March 1923. A strike was called after local farmers had attempted to increase the working week from fifty to fifty-four hours, while trying to push wages under twenty-five shillings a week. Frequent reference by the Norfolk branch of the NFU to the possible introduction of a working wage of eighteen shillings per week further inflamed the situation. The National Agricultural Workers' Union understandably opposed these proposals which they feared would undo every advance they had made since the days of Joseph Arch. They suspected, along with Rider Haggard, that the NFU was trying to bluff the Government into introducing agricultural subsidies. But if it was bluff it proved a costly mistake as the Government

144. NFU Record, Vol I No 3 (Dec 1922), p 80.
145. ibid. Vol I No 4 (Jan 1923), p 91 and No 8 (May 1923), p 199.
remained indifferent and a bitter conflict ensued. The old labourers of Akenfield vividly remembered the resentment which swept across the East Anglian countryside. The NFU was accused of victimisation. Things became so heated that Henry Overman, Chairman of the Norfolk NFU, had to call in police protection for his "voluntary" workers, described as "blacklegs" by the labourers. Overall the NFU's intransigence seriously damaged their image.

Eventually Ramsay MacDonald was called in to arbitrate and counsel moderation and the farmers lost their case. Both Stanley Baldwin, the new leader of the Conservatives, and the Labour Opposition, promised to reintroduce the Agricultural Wages Boards to prevent a repeat of such an unpleasant and generally damaging dispute. Baldwin was voted out and it was left to MacDonald to re-establish the Wages Boards. It was probably the episode which the NFU would most like to forget.

But it must be made clear that the NFU were not merciless villains. Even the official historian of the National Union of Agricultural Workers concedes that the NFU was rather the hapless victim of economic circumstances. He agrees that the Baldwin Government was as guilty for its inaction. In many ways the NFU was a pawn in a political game manipulated by the real villain of the piece, the Government. Matters would have got more out of hand had a less moderate man than R.R. Robbins been in charge of the NFU Labour committee. Many rank and file members wanted to smash the National Union of Agricultural Workers. But Robbins refused to give in to the extremist lobby. Evidence presented to the Royal Commission on Agriculture also showed that there was some justification for the East Anglian farmers'

148. ibid., p 198.
actions. A rising labour bill accounted for about 20 to 25% of total costs in the 325 accounts examined by the costings department of the Board of Agriculture. When falling returns are placed against that cost the problem becomes clearer. Nevertheless even NFU national leadership must have felt that there was little justification for such unreasonable action as the strike episode was not mentioned in either the Report or the annual labour committee report for 1924. The only positive outcome of the affair was a hardening of the NFU's determination that government must do something positive to prevent a recurrence of similar incidents. Headquarters discipline over potentially dangerous actions by county branches was also increased. It was not coincidence that the NFU never again tried to reduce wages or lengthen hours by employing such high-handed methods.

The NFU gained very little from either the Baldwin or MacDonald Governments. Visits by deputation to both administrations stressed that agriculture must either have complete freedom or be granted protection if those Governments desired to increase cereal production for the social well being of the nation. The only mild success of these years was the establishment of an NFU milk producers' scheme, whereby producers were united through a system of county committees for purposes of collective bargaining. A joint committee was then formed with the milk wholesalers for purposes of negotiation. Increased prices resulted from these innovations in 1923 and the NFU set its sights on persuading every milk producer to join the scheme. The newly established Milk Publicity Council also promised to alleviate milk producers' difficulties by initiating an advertising campaign to stimulate increased competition and so ease the glut. The only other


innovation of note during these years was the establishment of a sugar beet committee to win support for the production of home grown sugar. It even succeeded in negotiating higher prices for beet growers.152

Partnership with the State was ended in 1924 when the central executive decided that independence was preferable to "irresponsible" state interference and "one-sided control".153 Representatives were withdrawn from the National Agricultural Council when that body claimed to be the sole spokesman for agriculture.154 The NFU particularly resented this challenge to its primacy within the rural political scene and testily proclaimed that it stood "alone as the representative organisation of farmers in England and Wales."155 This assertion of its authority produced results as the NFU remained as a permanent fixture whereas the council soon disappeared into oblivion. The council's rapid demise consequent on the NFU's withdrawal of support not only demonstrated the NFU's greatly increased influence but bore out the NFU's claim that the council had become an anachronism with the repeal of guaranteed prices.156

As the NFU sagely anticipated, no more government help was forthcoming from Labour than under the Conservatives. They fully realised that the subsidies or protection they wanted were desired by neither government nor public. Despite some expression of anti-socialist sentiment such as talk of "Soviets",157 overall their criticisms of MacDonald were no more severe than they had been of the ministries of Lloyd George or Bonar Law. Most of their energies were rather absorbed in opposing the Agricultural Wages Boards.

153. NFU Record, Vol II No 7 (Apr 1924), p 161.
154. NFU Yearbook, 1925, p 217.
155. NFU Record, Vol II No 5 (Feb 1924), p 11.
156. ibid. Vol II No 7 (Apr 1924), p 161.
The NFU managed to win some concessions in the administration of the new Boards even though they could not prevent their introduction. County boards were granted autonomy to make allowance for variations in local conditions, while the NFU was still empowered to appoint members as employers' representatives on the Boards. An attempt was also made to extend the milk scheme by setting up central distribution agencies for each county. Contract prices were stabilised and every milk producer was invited to join the scheme.

When the Conservatives were re-elected with a big majority in October 1924 the NFU was realistic enough not to expect any better treatment for agriculture. They made clear their resolve to adhere to their own terms by insisting that Baldwin issue a clear statement on agricultural policy as soon as possible. His election promise that "the great basic industry of agriculture should not be merely preserved, but restored to a more prosperous condition as an essentially balancing element in the economic and social life of the country." was treated as so much meaningless rhetoric. His promise of a three party conference to find a solution to the agricultural problem held out little hope as the NFU would only be satisfied by action. T.H. Ryland, president of the NFU, in speaking at the NFU annual dinner at the time of the election, whose speech was broadcast for the first time, made it clear that agriculture would continue to be run on economic lines. By that he meant farming for livelihood rather than attempting to achieve self-sufficiency in food supply, unless the State offered definite assistance to increase the arable acreage. Education, research and co-operation were all very well, but

158. ibid. Vol II No 12 (Sep 1924), p 285.
161. ibid. p 29.
162. ibid. pp 40-41.
agriculture desperately needed either hard financial support or complete economic freedom accompanied by relief from the burden of rates and taxes.

Baldwin went ahead regardless of the NFU's disassociation of itself from further inquiries and called the joint agricultural conference in early 1925. The NFU refused to attend. So began a stormy relationship with the Conservative Government. From this moment on the NFU gave top priority to a demand to include agriculture under the proposed Safeguarding of Industries Act. The Record reinforced this demand by claiming that several members of the Government had intimated that the Conservatives would definitely bring agriculture within the scope of this legislation.

Mr Amery, Secretary of State for the Dominions, had also promised to consider the needs of British agriculturalists in reaching Empire agreements, while he conceded that industrial prosperity was based on agricultural prosperity. His remarks were construed to mean that the new Government would come to the aid of agriculture, but any such promises were vehemently denied and relations worsened.

The new Government's proposed tithe legislation only aggravated the situation. Tithe obligations were increased and extended for another eighty-five years. In essence the farmers' contribution to this extra and pre-industrial form of indirect taxation was raised for the sole benefit of the clergy. Even the Central Landowners' Association agreed that the 1918 Tithe Act was less burdensome. The NFU rather wanted equitable redemption and a permanent settlement of the matter. In other words they wanted tithes reduced and eventually phased out. It was little wonder that they considered the bill to be a "grievous injustice." When the

164. ibid. Vol III No 6 (Mar 1925), p 125.
Tithe Act was passed later in the year the scene was set for the Tithe Wars of the 1930s. Although the NFU disapproved of the unconstitutional methods of more militant farmers as opponents of tithe they continued to protest this injustice. 166 Hostility towards the Government was expressed in the rejection of proposals for rating reform and the provision of cheap credit as "palliatives." 167 A white paper on agriculture presented in 1926 was similarly condemned as inadequate because it had been prepared in too great a hurry. 168 The continuation of the Wages Boards as set up by the MacDonald Government did not help matters either. Relations with the Government became so strained that the NFU was forced to undertake a press campaign to counter the hostile criticisms of many Conservative M.P.s who accused the NFU of acting in an ungrateful and vindictive fashion. The NFU replied that it was a non-party organisation and would continue to criticise any Government which did not make constructive efforts to assist agriculture. 169 They even ran their own candidate against the Minister of Agriculture in the Bury St. Edmunds by-election in early 1926 to register a protest at the Government's indifference. 170 Relations improved little in 1927 when the Empire Settlement Scheme was criticised for taking away Britain's most needed labourers to increase the competition facing British farmers. In the eyes of the NFU the bounties offered by Dominion governments presented an example which the British Government might usefully follow. 171

166. e.g. Ibid. Vol XI No 2 (Nov 1932), p 30 or Vol XI No 4 (Jan 1933), pp 78.
169. Ibid.
170. Ibid. Vol IV No 4 (Jan 1926), p 77.
Co-operatives and producer boards were also rejected as possible panaceas not requiring a large amount of State assistance. The NFU pointed out that both the Canadian wheat pool and the New Zealand Dairy Board had failed,\(^{172}\) while a report on co-operative societies had revealed that losses were unavoidable.\(^ {173}\) These were the arguments used to counter a growing body of opinion that the NFU should display a greater interest in marketing reform. The NFU countered such criticism by pointing to its efforts to improve the marketing of hops, beetroot and milk.\(^ {174}\) The year finished on another controversial note when Sir George Courthope's call for the protection of agriculture was rejected as a "sham" and Baldwin was accused once again of breaking his promise to include agriculture under the safeguarding of industries legislation.\(^ {175}\)

The Government was not the only target of the wrath of the NFU. The agricultural policies of both the Liberal and Labour parties were condemned outright as hopelessly unrealistic and reeking of the attendant evils of nationalisation and farming by regulation.\(^ {176}\) The NFU clearly had little faith in any political party.

The introduction of a new scheme of local taxation which completely de-rated agriculture\(^ {177}\) and the improvement of credit facilities under the Agricultural Credits Act improved relations somewhat. Some minor pieces

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172. NFU Record, Vol V No 8 (May 1927), p 175.
173. ibid. No 7 (Apr 1927), p 149.
175. ibid. Vol V No 1 (10 Jul 1927), p 221.
177. For a fuller account of changes in local government finance see Herman Finer, *Op cit*, pp 407-414. It is important to note that derating was introduced to relieve industry as a whole of excessive burdens rather than solely in response to NFU pressure.
of legislation such as the Fertiliser and Feeding Stuffs Act to protect farmers against fraud also raised the NFU's opinion of the Government. Nevertheless the NFU still criticised the Conservatives for failing to help agriculture in any really meaningful way. The return to the gold standard, taking advantage of the Argentinian meat war and continuation of the Wages Boards were all cited as policies detrimental to farmers' interests. The Road Transport Bill, which would enable the Railway Companies to extend their operations into road transport, was also condemned as yet another example of Government monopolies that forced up costs.

Alienation from the Conservative party coupled with the NFU's negative attitude towards marketing reform increasingly forced it on to the defensive. A growing number of influential periodicals including the Scottish Farmer, the Farmers' Club Journal, the Farmer and Stock Breeder, the Spectator and the Sunday Times, along with J.W. Robertson Scott in a series of B.B.C. talks, criticised the NFU for its apparent opposition to marketing reform. The NFU's stance on this matter became increasingly difficult to justify and its attitudes appeared to be unnecessarily unprogressive and negative. Opposition to the Ministry of Agriculture's proposal to introduce a scheme for the compulsory licensing and inspection of bulls forced the NFU into an even more isolated position.

181. ibid. Vol VI No 9 (Jun 1928), p 211.
182. ibid. Vol VI No 4 (Jan 1928), p 77.
The central executive in response to this prompting stepped up its contacts with the marketing branch of the Ministry of Agriculture. It also came to supervise the activities of a growing number of co-operative concerns. The NFU's apparently overt suspicion of the lack of sincerity in the Government proposals to assist agriculture also received some justification when it was proved right in refusing to attend a joint agricultural conference called by Baldwin. The only outcome of this conference was the decision to set up yet another committee of inquiry. 184

Then as the General Election came closer the NFU and Government seemed to reach an eleventh hour agreement. No independent NFU candidates were put up for the 1929 election and the idea of direct parliamentary representation was dropped to disappear entirely by the mid 1930s. 185 A fear of Labour's policy of placing land under public ownership decided the NFU that it should support the Conservatives more closely. In return contracts were granted to farmers to supply the armed forces with food, 186 a right the NFU had demanded since 1910. But the changed attitude of Government came too late to be of any real significance, for the triumphant Labour party inherited a policy of general indifference towards agriculture. Self and Storing's implication that the NFU moved closer to the Conservative camp during the 1920s clearly requires qualification. 187 That shift came from late 1928 onwards. NFU bias towards the Conservatives only became clear in the late 1930s. Overall the NFU remained true to its non-party principles throughout the 1920s, as it had done from its inception. It was far more successful than the NZFU in adhering to a position of neutrality.

183. ibid.
185. ibid. Vol VII No 5 (Feb 1929), pp 114-115. This decision was made at the 1929 A.G.M.
While the NFU was haggling with the Baldwin Government it somehow managed to extend the range of its activities and improve its organisational machinery, achieving a greater level of specialisation, sophistication and professionalisation in the process. Between 1924 and 1929 further separate committees were created to deal with the specialist problems of co-operatives, transport, market gardeners and orchardists, poultry farmers, marketing and wool. The statistics and legal departments were fully utilised and from 1922 onwards the Yearbooks contained very detailed reports on price movements and changes in wage rates, while the intricacies of taxation were explained in minute detail. Each piece of legislation affecting farmers was also fully explained and possible loopholes revealed. The thoroughness and detail of the research which provided such information contrasted with the rather haphazard methods of collecting information employed by the NZFU. No matter what negotiations the NFU was involved in it was as well equipped with facts as could be expected. It reached a level of preparedness which was not equalled in New Zealand until the establishment of Federated Farmers. Such thoroughness in the research underlying its wide range of activities helps explain why the NFU was able to achieve what it did when it operated in such an unfavourable context. It also explains why it proved more effective than the National Union of Agricultural Workers which simply could not afford to spend as much money on professional and sophisticated research. In this sense the NFU set an example to the trade union movement in general which increasingly turned its attention towards a more adequate researching of issues and professionalisation of administration once recovery began from the mid 1930s.

Despite these sophisticated back-up services, the Milk Marketing scheme proved to be only a partial success. A referendum held in 1928 failed to

188. NFU Yearbook, 1930, p 373.
THE UNFAIRY GODFATHER.

Dr. Addison. "I AM HERE TO PROTECT YOU."
British Farmer. "PROTECT ME FROM WHAT? FOREIGN COMPETITION!"
Dr. Addison. "NO! NO! FROM YOUR OWN INCOMPETENCE."
British Farmer. "THANK YOU VERY MUCH."

[Under Dr. Addison's Bill, home producers are to have their output controlled, but foreigners may continue to send their produce here in unrestricted quantities. Meanwhile, as The Punch points out, he has irritated the farmers "by unnecessary criticism of their technical ability." ]

Mr Punch on Dr Addison and Marketing Reform.
win the support of every producer for the NFU scheme and the principle of individual bargaining was maintained. Consequently, prices secured were not as high as the NFU had hoped and their efforts were partially wrecked by those farmers who feared they would lose sales altogether unless they agreed to the distributors' terms. The solution of the surplus milk problem had to wait until the establishment of a compulsory state marketing body in 1933, a move much assisted by Thomas Baxter and Harry German of the NFU, despite opposition from other members of the Council.

NFU fears of land nationalisation soon disappeared once the moderate nature of the new Government became apparent and a short lived hope developed that something constructive might be done for agriculture. But any such hopes were soon dashed by the stepping up of imports of German bounty fed wheat. The termination of the armed services contract and the high handed attitude of Dr Addison, the new Minister of Agriculture, because of the NFU's opposition to his marketing reforms, rapidly convinced the NFU that State assistance held out little hope. Meaningful recovery and restoration of a mutually advantageous partnership with the State had to wait until the introduction of subsidies in the late 1930s. Even more important the exigencies of the Second World War forced the State to come to the aid of agriculture and fostered the extension of partnership.

Despite the considerable difficulties of the 1920s the NFU can be judged a success in the organisational sense for the period 1909 to 1929 for two major reasons. First, it realised the principle of its main objective; security of tenure, while it secured most of the reality of that principle. Only the Agricultural Holdings Act of 1947 was required to confer on tenants the full advantage of ownership without the attendant responsibilities. Second, once the nineteenth century ideal of tenant

right was realised, the organisation quickly adjusted to the harsh reality of the twentieth century which confronted English farmers from 1921 onwards. Increasing centralisation and professionalisation of its activities converted the loose nineteenth century federation of county unions into a sophisticated and truly national pressure group, so typical of twentieth century industrial society. Also it was able to reorientate its policies to cater for the large increase in the number of owner-occupiers which occurred during the 1920s. The demand for improved and cheaper short-term and long-term credit was particularly relevant to owner-occupiers. These adjustments, coupled with the farmers' relatively greater monetary resources enabled the NFU to fare much better than the industrial trade unions during the difficult inter-war period. The shift from simple and largely ineffective lobbying of Westminster to a more intimate and regular partnership with Whitehall was encouraged during World War I, but hindered during the 1920s. Nevertheless, the sometimes painful adjustment, necessary to extend the NFU's economic orientation and to enable it to establish a truly reciprocal relationship with the State, was initiated during the 1920s. Generally the NFU also remained free of party entanglements. The way for future advances was prepared, while the NFU managed to maintain its democratic and voluntary character despite growing sophistication. Unlike the NZFU the intermediary units, the counties, were able to exercise a considerable degree of autonomy without undermining the effectiveness of the national organisation. Furthermore, as the following chapter will show, the counties managed to channel the energies of grass-roots activism and localism into building a cohesive and dynamic yet flexible organisation. There was still room of course for considerable improvements by 1929. Marketing reform had to be more widely accepted and the autonomy of the counties reduced a little more before the NFU was able to enter into a really successful partnership with the State. Self and Storing, S.E. Finer
and J.D. Stewart have shown how organisational improvements hastened by the demands of the Second World War facilitated the establishment of such a successful working partnership. Yet, when the considerable economic difficulties and political disadvantages confronting English farmers for the period 1909 and 1929 are coupled with the relative newness of the organisation, its achievements appear much more impressive. Relative to the NZFU it was far more successful in the organisational sense. It was united in both its aims and operations and decidedly more sophisticated. It also avoided the initial party entanglements of the NZFU. In comparison the NZFU was an ill organised federation of almost completely autonomous provincial units torn asunder by deeply entrenched parochial jealousies. It represented an insubstantial minority of New Zealand farmers and competed for the loyalties of farmers with several other farmers' organisations. It only approximated the level of effectiveness and sophistication attained by the NFU during the 1920s when it was transformed into Federated Farmers in 1944.

Once the deferential attitudes of English farmers gave way to a determination to defend their own sectional interests, they rapidly evolved an effective pressure group. The development of an organisation which wielded an influence out of all proportion to the English farmers' numerical, economic and political importance said much for the ability of the NFU's leaders, the determination and enthusiasm of the majority of its members, the flexibility of its structure and the sophistication of its lobbying techniques. Its influence was increased further during the late 1940s by establishing a working partnership with the State. But even by the 1920s the NFU lived up to its motto "Defence-not-Defiance". It had become one of the most successful pressure groups in England.


191. The major changes were a considerable increase in the professional staff employed at London headquarters such as agricultural economists, lawyers and journalists; continuous consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture especially over price fixing; and much greater use of the media to express and explain the NFU viewpoint to the public.
The agriculture of Kent is not particularly representative of English agriculture as a whole. It lacks the stockraising specialisation of many of the northern and western counties, such as Cheshire and Somerset, and the arable concentration of East Anglia. Fruit and hop growing in particular and market gardening to a lesser extent, assume a much greater significance in Kent than in most counties. Its agriculture can be accurately described as mixed and diverse. This very diversity enabled many Kentish farmers to cope with the problems of both the depressions of the 1880s and the inter-war period rather more successfully than their more specialist counterparts in other counties. Responses to national changes were, therefore, somewhat different from counties with less diversified agricultural sectors. The repeal of guaranteed prices in 1921, for example, had a much less traumatic effect on Kentish farming.

than it did on East Anglian agriculture. Nevertheless, the impact of the
repeal was still greater than might be supposed because a considerable area
of pasture was converted to arable production during the war years. But
in general decontrol of the hop industry caused much greater consternation
to Kent farmers whether they belonged to the NFU or remained outside the
organisation. Proximity to both London and the continent was another factor
which made Kent something of a distinctive county, although it was little
different from other South Eastern counties, such as Sussex or Surrey, whose
agriculture was mixed and whose overall character could be summed up as
residential rather than industrial. The lack of large estates resulting
from the adoption of the French custom of gavelkind, or equal division
of a holding amongst all the owners' sons, rather than primogeniture,
also marked Kent off as being distinctive. But not too much notice should

2. Between 1914-18 Kent's arable area rose from 294,000 acres to 434,000

3. In 1915 Kent still produced 75% of England's hops and 71% in 1925.
p 160 and Vol 86 (1925), p 180. Although the hop acreage had declined
from 21,355 acres or 3% of the cultivated area of Kent to 16,261
acres or 2.4%, hops remained an important component of Kentish
agriculture over the period under study.

4. The "Report On The Decline In The Agricultural Population Of Great
Britain, 1881-1906," placed Kent in Division IIA with Berkshire,
Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex, a grouping whose agricultural economics
were mixed and characterised by active hop, fruit and poultry sectors.

5. Although Kent's population was no longer predominantly rural (the 1911
census classified 30% of Kent's population as rural and 70% as urban),
there was a lack of large urban concentrations or of heavy industry.
The largest town was Chatham with a population of 42,250, while most of
Kent's people lived in small or medium sized towns like Canterbury
(24,626), Tunbridge Wells (35,897), or Margate (27,080). Dormitory
and resort towns had been growing since the middle of the nineteenth
century and Kent's population was increasingly becoming provincial and
suburban rather than truly urban or rural. Its predominantly suburban
and nature was also reflected in the stranglehold of the
Conservatives over the whole county. Everyone of its M.P.s belonged to
the Unionist party at the time of the NFU's formation, and Kentish
Liberal candidates were generally doomed to a long stay in the political
wilderness. The percentage of holdings under fifty acres in extent was
also slightly below the national average in 1901, (65.7% for Kent against
85.6% for England). Information on Kent population taken from *Census
of England and Wales, 1911, Vol I. Administrative Areas*; BPP 1912-13
Cd.6258 CXT, Table 10, pp 190-200; and "Report On The Decline In

Map 5: The major farming regions of Kent.
be taken of this factor as by 1900 small owner-occupiers were no more
important within Kent than in the rest of England. Tenancy-at-will was
the predominant form of land-holding and was only slightly below the
national norm. 7

Despite these various factors which at first glance appear to make
Kent into something of an atypical county within the agricultural sphere,
the Kent branch of the NFU is as valid as any other for a closer study
at the county level. The organisational functioning of each county was
theoretically identical. Furthermore, the range of variation within
Kentish agriculture between the hop, fruit and corn producing region of
the Weald, the stock raising and fruit growing downlands and the sheep-
grazing concentration on the marshlands, was representative of English
farming as a whole. Hop and fruit growers, sheep breeders, dairy farmers,
market gardeners, poultrymen, and mixed arable and stock farmers, all
belonged to the Kent branch. Kent was also one of the largest county
branches, in terms of both absolute numbers and the proportion of farmers
represented, further heightening the validity of singling it out for
special attention. 8 The atypical aspects of its agriculture are also
useful in that they provide an opportunity to pinpoint variants from
national norms. Finally, a largely complete set of records on the
activities of not only the county executive, but of a typically large
market town branch in Maidstone and of an average small rural branch
located in the village of Staplehurst, made possible an in depth investigation

7. Although there had once been a significant yeoman group within Kent
by 1898 75% of the agricultural land was held by tenants, despite a
slight increase in owner-occupancy arising out of depression. ibid.
Tenants also increased by about 300 between 1881 and 1901. "Report

8. In 1919 the Kent branch had 2,500 paid up members representing 73.5%
of the total number of Kentish farmers. This made Kent the ninth
largest branch in absolute terms with the tenth best representation
of local farmers. NFU Yearbook, 1919, p 77.
Fig 7: Graph of the growth of the Kent County Branch of the NFU 1908-1929.
of the NFU at each of its various levels. A study of every county would require several dissertations and as the writer was based in Kent with limited resources, both of finance and time, it was the logical choice. Even if glaring discrepancies did occur in relation to the experience of the organisation as a whole they could always be reported, but this does not seem to have been the case.

The major activities and emphasis of the Kent branch were variations on the themes played by the national Council rather than jarringly different melodies. Relations with the central executive were generally harmonious and discord was infrequent. Some Kent delegates such as Percy Manwaring even played a significant role in shaping national policy. Overall the level of agreement between county and national executive was far greater than that of the NZFU Dominion and provincial executives. If there was discord it tended to exist more between local branches and the county executive. Local Kentish problems, especially the difficulties confronting the hop industry, obviously assumed greater significance than at the national level. More routine activities which directly affected the everyday life of farmers, such as the provision of legal aid and negotiation for lower freight rates from the railway companies, were also drawn in stronger relief.

In the organisational sense the county branch was a smaller scale model of the national Council. Its executive was made up of delegates from the local branches, just as the Council comprised county representatives. Likewise sub-committees were appointed from 1918 onwards to deal with specific problems.

Even the growth pattern of the Kent branch was remarkably similar to that of the NFU as a whole, as can be seen in the accompanying graph. The only variation was a decline in the early 1920s when membership for the organisation as a whole reached a plateau. This temporary drop in membership seems to have been caused by a decline in and occasional
disappearance of some of the more isolated and less active branches. The large market town of Maidstone held constant, and this seems to have been true of other large branches such as Rochester or Ashford. This understandable response to depression caused the County branch major organisational problems, but from 1926 onwards it managed to stabilise its numbers. Complete recovery, however, did not occur until the return of better times in the mid 1930s.  

The phases of development of the Kent branch of the NFU were also similar to those of the organisation as a whole. An initial period of establishment, during which attention was focused on opposing the introduction of hop substitutes in beer manufacture and on amending the operations of the National Insurance Act, was followed by a major burst of activity during the First World War. Considerable efforts were made to raise funds for patriotic causes via innumerable jumble sales, while the Kent branch of the NFU played the leading local role in co-operating with the Board of Agriculture in converting pasture to arable production. Branch members also played the dominant role in the war-time agricultural committees. A chronic labour shortage was as much of a problem as anywhere else in England. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that a good deal of the Kent executive's energies were absorbed in efforts to acquire substitute labour and in keeping skilled labourers out of the trenches. As the war came to a close the executive determined to back up the efforts of the national Council to entrench war-time advantages through being active at the local level, especially through agitating for the continuance of hop control. An NFU candidate was considered for the 1918 election but was eventually withdrawn and attention was turned

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9. By 1935 the Kent branch had about 2,600 paid up members and that figure rose to 4,371 in 1946.
instead to increasing representation on the County Council. All this flurry of activity helped popularise the branch and it reached its peak membership prior to World War II in 1920.

The smooth progress of the branch was nearly as rudely interrupted as that of the NFU as a whole by the repeal of the guaranteed prices. Attention was increasingly turned to survival and labour relations, but the working of the conciliation committees assumed more importance than winning compensation for arable land. The question of decontrol of the hop industry also continued to be a matter of paramount importance and the branch scored a minor triumph in delaying decontrol until 1925. When decontrol came an attempt was made to encourage co-operative marketing with the establishment of English Hop Growers Limited, but this voluntary enterprise was not particularly successful and it collapsed in 1929. It was left to state assisted marketing schemes with powers of compulsion to rescue the hop industry during the 1930s.

Considerable efforts were also made during the 1920s to work the NFU milk scheme within Kent, but the apathy of individual producers frustrated its success. Apathy in general caused the county executive considerable anxiety throughout the 1920s and several smaller branches struggled to survive. Partly in an effort to off-set declining enthusiasm the county executive stepped up its contribution to a more progressive approach to farming by providing the East Malling Research Station with financial support. Fruit-shows were also instigated and lectures from officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and staff members of Wye Agricultural College, were organised for the benefit of NFU members. A greater social emphasis was also imparted during the 1920s to revive flagging rank and file interest. An annual dinner and dance was introduced along with occasional card evenings, while shows, ploughing matches and best-kept farm competitions were resurrected. Meetings were held with
"HOP substitutes."

Mr. Lloyd-George has recently had several questions to answer on the above abstruse subject. Are "Hop substitutes" like this?

Mr. Punch on Hop substitutes. *Punch*, 18 Nov 1908.
greater regularity in hotels in a desperate attempt to enliven proceedings. But even the pure beer made from the best hops in the "garden of England" failed to rouse the rank and file membership to bother with anything more than survival during the 1920s. On the other hand successes in county council elections, agitation over tithe and rating burdens and the generally energetic endeavours of the county executive ensured that ground was not lost. Coping with the difficulties of the hop industry then rather than corn production, provided the only significant variation on the patterns of growth, organisational procedures and phases of development of the NFU at the national level.

I. The Activities of the County Executive 1908-1929

The Kent Farmers' Union was formed sometime in the summer of 1908 shortly before the NFU was created out of the scattered county unions. Most of its energies were initially absorbed with propaganda efforts and in supporting local farmers' clubs and the East Kent Chamber of Agriculture, in their agitation for the introduction of a Pure Beer Bill to prohibit the use of hop substitutes in brewing. The need for amendments in the working of the National Insurance Act, especially in relation to casual hop and fruit pickers, was also taken up with these other local organisations.

10. The secretary of the Kent executive, Jim Hillier French, in writing up the history of the branch in 1922 claimed that the Kent Farmers' Union was established in May 1908, after the Langley and Otham fête. Journal of the Kent Farmers' Union, Vol XI No 4 (Apr 1922), p 128. But according to the Kent Messenger and Maidstone Telegraph, 1 Aug 1908, the Otham and Langley Rural Labourers' fête was not held until the end of July. The two co-founders of the Kent Farmers' Union, H.G. Chambers and W.S. Austin, were the chairman and vice-chairman of the fête committee, so the later date appears to be the more likely one. However, there is no argument over the fact that the Kent union, like the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union, was established at a meeting held in a local hotel.

11. NFU Yearbook, 1910, p 56 and 1912, p 94.
Maps 6 and 7: Kent County Branches NFU 1910 Top 1913 Bottom
Railway companies were frequently petitioned over the need to reduce fares for the transport of hop-pickers from London and to improve facilities for the carriage of fruit which was easily damaged. The provision of legal aid, particularly in such matters as compensation for disturbance, damage to fruit in transit and sheep worrying, took up the remainder of the executive's time in the pre-war period. This involvement with such legal matters further convinced the Kent County executive that the Agricultural Holdings Act of 1908 required further amendment and that preferential rail tariffs on foreign produce should be abolished. Policy objectives formulated by the national Council seemed to have considerable relevance at the county level and accurately reflected the views of many Kentish farmers.

During its early years the Kent county branch failed to extend its activities much beyond the Weald, although one of the earliest branches was established at Ashford to serve the sheep and dairying farmers of this downlands area. Some early branches were also established in the predominantly sheep raising area in the northern marshlands of the Isle of Sheppey at Eastchurch, and in the dairying and market gardening northwestern region at Rochester. Progress in the east of Kent and the Romney Marsh area was slower and branches were not established in either of these districts until 1918. As noted in Chapter Four the Canterbury Farmers' Club held the allegiance of local farmers more than the Maidstone Farmers' Club which was rapidly absorbed by the Maidstone branch of the NFU. Furthermore, even during the 1920s the Canterbury Farmers' Club

12. Ibid. 1912, pp 94-96.
13. Ibid. pp 93-94
Maps 8 and 9: Kent County Branches NFU 1916 Top
1920 Bottom
managed to run well attended monthly meetings when the Canterbury branch of the NFU struggled to organise regular meetings and seldom seemed able to induce a reasonable level of attendance. This variation in the level of support between the West and East of Kent may have resulted from the traditional distrust existing between the "Kentish men" and the "men of Kent", but its explanation is probably rather more mundane. Many more farmers lived on the Weald than in any other part of Kent and hence the concentration of branches in that area. Wealden farms were also generally larger and Wealden farmers more prosperous. They were able to afford time off farm work more easily.

Despite this mixed reception in the different parts of Kent, the Kent branch managed to attract every type of Kentish farmer into its ranks and eventually established eastern branches. Membership grew steadily and the executive's confidence grew in proportion. Greater co-operation with the State through participation in the war-time agricultural committees boosted their confidence even further and in December 1916 the branch launched the first newspaper published by the NFU, the Journal of the Kent Farmers' Union, in December 1916. This monthly publication was very similar in lay-out and content to the NFU Record as established in 1922, and clearly provided headquarters with a very useful precedent, especially when it proved to be financially viable. As was the case with the insurance scheme the national council waited until a regular newspaper was proven on the county level before implementing such a project at the national level.

15. Kentish Gazette and Canterbury Press, 1918-1929, and Garrad, Op. cit., pp 190-191. The Canterbury Farmers' Club membership of over 200 was also double that of the Canterbury branch of the NFU, although it must be remembered that the Club included persons other than farmers.
The confidence inspired by the launching of the *Journal* increased further still in 1917 as membership climbed to 1,500 and entitled the county to two Council delegates. Influence at headquarters was bolstered considerably as their representatives could now propose and second resolutions sent up by the Kent executive. The appointment of Kent's able secretary, Percy W. Cox, to the NFU's reconstruction committee, further cemented the branch's growing stature within the national council.

Most of the executive's time was taken up in 1917 with finding substitute labour and in seeking assistance to enable hop growers to adjust to the reduced and restricted requirements of the brewing industry. When Mr Prothero visited Maidstone in late February 1917 a very large deputation, organised by the county executive, waited on him to stress the need for more casual labour and to recommend that skilled labour be exempt from military service. Accusations of unpatriotic behaviour were vigorously denied, while the special problems of Kentish farmers were fully elaborated. Prothero listened with sympathy and did what he could, but the demands of the military still obviously held top priority. The deputation was also followed up by a request to the Kent County Council to assist in finding alternative labour. This combined pressure won some concessions although the slow turn of the war in the allies' favour was probably far more important in wresting such concessions from the reluctant authorities.

More agricultural labour was made available, especially in 1918 when access to both soldier and female labour was secured through the agency of the


17. *Ibid.*, pp 102-107. 2,200 farmers and friends were reported as present at the meeting. It was very much a show of force of a different kind.

war-time agricultural committees. Meetings were also arranged with Kent teachers' representatives to clarify the NFU's attitude towards boy labour and to reinforce further the efforts of the national executive at the county level.

Concern with the labour shortage was quickly switched to the hop industry in March 1917 when a production limit of ten million barrels of beer was announced. Initially this announcement threw the executive into a quandary as the demand for hops had already declined prior to World War I and the new restriction seemed catastrophic in its implications. But the executive quickly regained its composure and called a meeting to discuss the best means of reducing hop acreage. The meeting resolved to demand voluntary grubbing or non-cultivation in preference to compulsory grubbing. It also asked that all imports of foreign hops be prohibited for up to ten years to prevent ruinous gluts. This decision was followed up by a series of deputations, quickly arranged by the Hops, Fruit and Vegetable committee at London headquarters, to the Board of Agriculture. Each deputation urged the adoption of voluntary solutions and their efforts were backed up at the local level through support given to the Hop Growers' Association, whose executive included several prominent Kent NFU members such as

21. As noted earlier in the chapter the production of hops was falling off from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. The decline occurred mainly because of increased competition resulting from the import of foreign hops, the greater use of artificial substitutes by the breweries and a fall in demand which was related to a drop in the per capita consumption of ale as drinking fashions changed. Furthermore, hop growing was always a risky enterprise with its high overhead costs, its dependence on good weather for ripening and its susceptibility to disease and infestation with insect pests. Profitability was probably declining but Grover's study suggests that hops still earned substantial profits up to 1918. Op. cit., pp 1, 8 and 25-42. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that threatened reduction of hop acreage caused such alarm.
W.W. Berry, in offering concerted opposition to compulsory grubbing. Eventually the central Council agreed to give their full support to Kent's opposition to compulsory solutions, provided the call for a ten year import embargo was dropped. After an involved series of negotiations with both the Board of Trade and the brewers' representatives an agreement was reached by which hop control would be continued into the post-war situation and crop reduction would remain voluntary. The Board of Trade also made an advance loan available when trading banks threatened to refuse loans on the risky crop. Although it turned out to be a temporary arrangement, a palliative rather than a long term solution, it represented something of a minor success for the Kent executive as it provided the hopgrowers with badly needed time in which to adjust to dramatically altered circumstances.

But the Kent county branch was not exclusively concerned with labour shortages and the hop industry. At the 1917 A.G.M., for example, they echoed the protest of the national council at the offer of 55% over pre-war prices for commandeered wool to colonial farmers when English farmers were only offered a 35% increase. Early in 1918 the executive negotiated an increase in the price of hay from £7 to £8 per ton after a protracted wrangle with the Department of Food Production. But such actions made up only a minor part of the executive's activities as it increasingly turned its energies towards answering the Government's call

to increase the area under arable production. Speaking at the 1918 A.G.M. in January, Colonel Cornwallis, chairman of the Kentish War Agricultural Committee, congratulated the county executive in the considerable effort they had given him in this work. But still only 45,000 acres of the hoped for 65,000 acres for corn production had been found. Yet by the end of the war most of the land was obtained and as we have already observed the acreage under the plough was increased dramatically. Clearly, the Kent NFU had carried out its intermediary role between the agricultural war committees and the local farmers with considerable efficiency. Successful partnership between the Government and the NFU at the national level was duplicated at the county level. This increased degree of partnership caused such an increase in the executive's work load that Bernard Champion, "a large and successful farmer," was forced to resign from the County Chairmanship in late 1917, because he could not afford three days a week away from his farm which the office required. The war effort was clearly converting essentially amateur offices into virtually professional positions. This development was to pose problems to the branch for smaller farmers became wary of accepting higher office. But it also had some beneficial effects in that every member became aware that office holding involved considerable commitment. There was no room for the half-hearted amongst the county leadership.

As the war drew to a close the executive became acutely aware that concerted political action was required if war-time advantages were to be entrenched in peace-time. Alfred Dyson-Laurie, a well-to-do pig, horse and cattle breeder, active in local politics in the Sevenoaks area and a member of the Kent War Agricultural Committee, was selected as the

27. ibid.

branch's parliamentary candidate as early as July 1917. This proposal to run an independent candidate represented a concrete response to headquarters' call to found "a distinct party of some thirty members at Westminster." It seemed to have a wide degree of rank and file support judging by letters to the Journal. But despite the initial enthusiasm the scheme was dropped on further consideration. It soon became apparent that it was futile to run an independent candidate in such a staunchly Unionist area. Seemingly the Kent executive were more aware of the local political realities and the importance of the urban vote than the six county branches who ran independent candidates in 1918. A factor which contributed to this shift in policy was dissatisfaction expressed by some branches at not being consulted over the selection of Laurie. But more important was the branch's realisation that they could achieve more through utilising existing contacts with both main parties and by increasing their representation on the county council. With this realisation the notion of sponsoring a Unionist candidate as an NFU representative was also dropped.

Emphasis turned instead to questioning candidates on the basis of the NFU parliamentary programme and publishing the names of those pledged to support that programme. Greater use was made of a prominent local

29. ibid. Vol II No 2 (Aug 1917), pp 37-38. Laurie appeared to come from the lower ranks of the gentry as he was educated at Harrow, started his career in the City and had an uncle who was a general.

30. ibid.

31. ibid. e.g. Letters favourable to the scheme were received from A.J. Hickman and "Agrarian" in Vol I, No 2, (Jan 1917), pp 47-48 and W.H. Judge (an old and respected member) in Vol III No 2 (Feb 1918), pp 43-44.

Unionist, T.D. Harris, who sat on the Kent executive and also of two active Liberals who belonged to the branch, W.W. Berry and Arthur Amos. Then the greater viability of winning seats on the Kent County Council and the relative independence from party constraints which such a policy would produce, drew the executive further away from the notion of running an independent parliamentary candidate. After all lobbying from within the Unionist party was easier and less financially demanding than running a candidate against this powerful and wealthy organisation. Such tactics also involved less risk of alienating what little support the NFU had within the party.

The executive also prepared for the obviously critical post-war period in other ways, particularly through reorganising the administration of the County branch on the lines set down by the central Reconstruction Committee. The rather unwieldy executive of nearly 100 members was divided

33. Harris was an active member of the Unionist extra-parliamentary party at both the local and national levels, who tried hard to promote NFU policies within the party. In 1912, for example, he attended the annual party conference at Manchester where he stressed that agriculture should not be excluded from any benefits accruing from changes in fiscal policy. This advocacy required some courage as the viewpoint was not well received by the conference. As he was also a member of the Hop Growers' and Pickers' League, he also kept the problems of the hop industry before his party. M.L.E. Supplement, 4 Mar 1913, p 3. Harris was clearly the obvious choice as chairman of the County Parliamentary sub-committee, especially once he was elected to the County Council in 1921. Journal of the Kent Farmers' Union, Vol X No 6 (1921), p 176. Once he was appointed to the sub-committee chairmanship he put his contacts to good use by urging the triumphant Unionist conference of late 1922 to support agriculture. ibid. Vol XIII, No 1 (Jan 1923), p 26. He managed to place his loyalties to the NFU before those of his party and was an effective sectional advocate as such.

34. As noted in chapter four Berry and Amos were active in both local Liberal affairs and the Hop Growers' and Pickers' League. They did their best to place problems related to compensation for disturbance, as well as the difficulties confronting hop farmers, before the party. The Agricultural Holdings Act of 1923, in fact incorporated many of the recommendations which Amos had made within the Canterbury Farmers' Club for many years.
into more manageable sub-committees. Everyday problems were handed over
to the Finance and General Purposes committee, made up of the chairman of
the various sub-committees, which was empowered to make decisions without
broader consultation in matters of urgency. Quotas for branch representation
were also readjusted. Previously branches under fifty members had been
allocated two delegates on the county executive with only one further
delegate allotted for up to 399 members. After 1919 representation at the
county executive level was restricted to branches with over 100 members,
while one extra delegate was granted for every additional 220 members. The
serious under-representation of the larger branches and disproportionate
over-representation of the small branches was thereby corrected. The other
significant organisational change was the decision to hold every third
county executive meeting in Canterbury to make attendance easier for delegates
from the East of Kent. 35

It was hoped that these adjustments would more adequately answer the
administrative needs of a body whose spectacular growth had outstripped
the original organisational structure which was designed to cope with a
much more modest membership. Organisational refinement was also geared to
putting the County branch's much increased financial resources to more
effective use. Furthermore, the impending change of subscription assessment
from an acreage basis to rental value promised a further rise in funds,
which the branch could not afford to squander through ineffectual and
antiquated organisational procedures.

When these structural changes were completed priorities were extended
from delaying decontrol of the hop industry to postponing decontrol of the
fruit industry. Attention also shifted away from the general elections

35. Journal of the Kent Farmers' Union, Vol V No 2 (Feb 1919), p 34 and
Vol VII No 2 (Feb 1920), p 38.
of 1918 to the County Council elections of 1919. Successes were secured in both spheres. Decontrol of the fruit industry was suspended and eight of the nine NFU candidates were elected to the Kent County Council.\textsuperscript{36} Advantage was taken of these twin successes by stepping up recruitment and propaganda efforts. Special NFU tents were set up at showdays, ploughing matches and rural fêtes, while pamphlets were distributed throughout the county and speakers were sent into the countryside. Up to 1920 the results of such endeavours were spectacularly successful. Every farmer in some areas such as Hawkhurst parish belonged to the NFU by 1920, while 85% of farmers in the Tonbridge area were members.\textsuperscript{37} Overall nearly 82% of Kentish farmers belonged to the branch.

It was hardly surprising that a general feeling of well being and confidence permeated all levels of the branch. That feeling was enhanced when the hop controller, George Foster Clark, credited the Kent NFU at their first annual dinner with having made its influence felt over the hops issue. He added that the Minister of Agriculture would probably agree, albeit reluctantly, to continue hop control for another five years.\textsuperscript{38} There was even some talk of an "awakening" amongst the farming community.\textsuperscript{39} The Agriculture Act provided a rallying point for focusing this wave of

\textsuperscript{36} ibid. Vol V No 2 (Feb 1919), p 35.
\textsuperscript{37} ibid. Vol VIII No 5 (Nov 1920), p 117.
\textsuperscript{38} ibid. Vol VII No 2 (Feb 1920), p 41. The strong Kentish connection with the hops question was personalised by Foster Clark as he was Mayor of Maidstone.
\textsuperscript{39} ibid. Vol VIII No 6 (Dec 1920), pp 146-148. This was the title to an article by "Quill," a regular contributor to the Journal.
enthusiasm.

"Heed not talk by Bledisloes, 
Ernles, or even Lees
Tell them straight to go to
Where it doesn't freeze
Amend the 'Agriculture Bill'
Our freedom to restore",

wrote the defiant A.H.L. Bohrman of Winkhurst Green, Idle Hill, as the executive gave the measure their full support. The rank and file members had their chance to express their support at a mass meeting held in Maidstone in December 1920 and turned out in large numbers. This meeting made it quite clear that the Bill represented the views of the majority of Kentish farmers rather than the desires of a small militant minority as Lord Bledisloe and Lord Ernle claimed. Solidarity with the national Council was also signified by the attendance of the national secretary at the 1920 A.G.M. and the national president-elect nearly every year thereafter. Confidence also blossomed in the potentially difficult area of labour relations as the branch won most of the employers' seats on the Kent Agricultural Wages Board.

But by early 1921 these feelings of optimism were beginning to give way to a more cautious attitude. The County Chairman, Percy Manwaring, speaking at the January 1921 A.G.M., referred to "the rough roads of the future." He hoped that the NFU would act as a steam roller to smooth down

41. ibid. Vol VIII No 6 (Dec 1920), p 161. Kent was well within the consensual mainstream of the organisation over this matter as forty-three of the forty-eight county executives were in complete agreement with the Bill, while three were non-committal, one gave qualified support and only one opposed it. 460 local branches had also discussed the measure with 400 completely in favour, forty-three giving qualified support and only seventeen directly opposing the measure.
42. G.T. Apps, national secretary spoke to the 1920 A.G.M., and his replacement, A.D. Allen spoke to the January, 1921 A.G.M. J. Donaldson, national vice-chairman and president-elect, addressed the December 1921 A.G.M. and established a precedent followed by other presidents-elect.
43. ibid. Vol IX No 2 (Feb 1921), p 50.
those roads, but urged faster collection of subscriptions and increased recruitment of younger men to ensure that the steam roller worked at peak efficiency. 44

When repeal of the guaranteed prices did come it was not surprising that the county executive displayed a resigned and almost expectant attitude, despite editorial criticism of this action as "the Government's betrayal." 45 Instead of bewailing the farmers' plight the executive immediately set about securing the maximum compensation possible and determined to make the labour conciliation committees workable. The Cereals, Livestock and Wool Committee claimed that it had secured £20,000 in compensation for Kentish farmers, not all of them NFU members, by the end of the year. 46 Less satisfaction was expressed with the new labour conciliation committees. 47 Generally the executive seemed more concerned with the effect of the repeal on labour relations than on corn production. Undoubtedly, many Kentish farmers were only too glad to convert risky arable crops back to the pasture which had suited them better in the past.

Greater stress was also placed on the county branch's widening range of activities including the revival of shows and ploughing matches 48 and the initiation of a fruit show. The executive hoped that members would now place greater faith in the NFU than ever before and maintain their independence from either major party more resolutely. 49 But a return to full economic freedom posed real problems as both hop and fruit growers were staunchly opposed to decontrol. An extension of the milk scheme held

44. ibid. Vol IX No 2 (Feb 1921), pp 47-48.
45. ibid. Vol IX No 6 (Jun 1921), p 7.
47. Rochester, ibid. p 176.
48. The Ash and Thanet branches were particularly active in reviving shows which had largely disappeared from these farming districts. ibid. Vol X No 6 (Dec 1921), p 176.
out some sort of a solution for dairy farmers though, while increased representation on the County Council would benefit all members. It was hardly surprising that these two objectives rapidly assumed greater significance. Nor was it surprising that 1922 was a very busy year for the executive. Such routine matters as legal aid and negotiation of lowered rail rates by themselves took up much of its time. 30,000 letters, postcards, circulars and notices were sent out from the county office during the year, at a weekly average of 577 items, providing hard quantitative proof of the executive's growing work load. Three events which created most of that work were the General and County Council elections and the desperate fight to continue hop control.

As early as January the parliamentary committee began to convene conferences with parliamentary candidates to ascertain their attitudes towards the NFU programme. No attempt was made to run an independent candidate, although George Foster Clark stood as an independent without NFU sanction. Something of a minor success was secured when six of the successful candidates pledged their full support to the NFU, all of whom were members of the Parliamentary Agricultural Committee at Westminster. Five other successful candidates also gave their qualified support, and these men were also elected to the Parliamentary Agricultural Committee. The branch's official parliamentary contacts were obviously increased by securing these pledges. But once again much greater successes were secured in the County Council elections with all but one of the NFU's candidates being elected. NFU representation within local government remained far more considerable and direct than it was at the national level.

50. ibid. Vol XII No 6 (Dec 1922), p 190.
51. ibid. Vol XII No 5 (Nov 1922), p 149.
52. ibid. Vol XII No 6 (Dec 1922), p 185.
53. ibid. p 190.
E.I. Overy, chairman of the Hops sub-committee had a particularly worrying year as the hops glut worsened. In such an economic climate the brewers' demand for decontrol gathered strength. But the NFU still managed to persuade the Ministry of Agriculture to continue control, even though production was reduced to lower levels. The only other outstanding development of 1922 was the decision to establish a co-operative bacon factory at Lenham in association with the Surrey and Sussex county branches.

Once the excitement of the 1922 elections had passed and it became clear that the four M.P.s could effect little change, the remainder of the 1920s merged into one another much as they did at the national level. For the Kent County Executive the 1920s were years of stagnation and disappointment, but not of decline. The growing interest in scientific research was reflected in the considerable effort made to assist the East Malling Research Station. Successes were also secured in other areas. Sheep-dipping orders were regularised after considerable pressure had been applied on the County Council, thereby removing a long standing grievance. Foot and mouth control procedures were also amended and a livestock improvement scheme was introduced.

55. At least £15,000 was raised for the station by the Kent branch up to 1929, while the branch helped in securing a further £20,000 towards its operations from the £1,000,000 set aside for agricultural education and research when part I of the Agriculture Act was repealed in 1921. *Ibid.* Vol XIX No 1 (Jan 1926), p 24 and Vol XXV No 1 (Jan 1928), p 16.


57. An old Kentish farmer who joined the Kent branch during the 1920s, Mr Fred Talbot, told me that double dipping regulations irritated Kentish farmers because double dipping was unnecessary and had been abolished by most other counties. Interview with Mr Fred Talbot, 14 Nov 1974.

There was variance from the national patterns of development and policy however, especially in relation to the question of tithe. The Kent executive wanted tithe abolished rather than reduced, and this demand accurately reflected the attitude of the majority of Kentish farmers who were deeply angered over the tithes issue. The national Council's compromise was only accepted reluctantly. While labour difficulties existed, particularly in terms of labour shortages, there was nothing to equal the labour relations troubles of East Anglia. Labour relations were generally reasonably successful and much of the credit must go to the conciliatory attitude adopted by the county executive. An editorial in the Journal in 1920, for example, urged members not to take illegal action by refusing to pay higher wages. It went on to add that members must not become exploiting employers like the landlords of Ireland and Russia, for then all hope of improved labour relations would be destroyed. By and large members seemed to heed this advice and relations with the Kent agricultural labourers' union were reasonably harmonious in consequence. Meetings between representatives of the two bodies were regular and remained free of the vitriolic clashes of East Anglia, a difference explained mainly by higher wage rates, the large number of seasonal casual labourers and a slightly

59. ibid. Vol XV No 1 (Jan 1924), p 22.

60. It was hardly surprising in the light of such deeply felt resentment that some of the more militant actions associated with the tithes war of the 1930s were not absent in Kent, even though it was not the centre of militancy.

61. ibid. Vol VIII No 3 (Sep 1920), p 65.

62. Although the labour sub-committee worked for a reduction of wages after the repeal of guaranteed prices, it never reported any serious cases of discord during the 1920s. It also strenuously argued for an improvement in the conditions and wages of agricultural labourers. But its dominance of the Agriculture Wages Board probably also helps to explain the co-operative attitude of the local labourers' union.
smaller proportion of labourers than in the arable counties. Nevertheless, the maintenance of successful labour relations was a real achievement as Kent had a strong tradition of labour militancy, even if many of the militants emigrated in the 1870s.

The milk sub-committee worked hard under the guidance of its energetic chairman, R. Roy Wilthaw, to try and include every producer in the county under the NFU milk scheme. But such efforts were largely thwarted, as they were for the scheme as a whole, by the apathy of individual dairy farmers. Some compensation was received for the committee’s efforts, however, when herd testing was extended to a larger number of farms and improved contracts were negotiated with buyers. But overall the problem of surplus milk disposal and uneconomic prices was modified rather than resolved.

Once hop control was ended in 1925, despite numerous deputations by both the county and national Hops sub-committees to individual ministers as well as ministries, a voluntary hops control board was set up in the form of English Hop Growers Limited. Up to 85% of English growers supported the venture but its lack of compulsory powers led to its demise in 1928. Nevertheless, despite its rather rapid collapse the initiation of the scheme seemed to help in off-setting declining membership and dwindling interest. It was a positive response to a very difficult situation. The NFU had shown that it could take the initiative in dealing with the problems of

63. The 1911 census showed that about two thirds of the Kentish agricultural labour force were labourers, a slightly lower figure than for England as a whole (70%), or an arable county like Lincoln (71%). The difference was made up largely by small farmers such as market gardeners. Census of England and Wales 1911, Vol X Occupation Tables; BPP 1913 Cd.7019 LXXIX, Table 13, pp 199-202. The census figures do not reveal, however, the large number of casual seasonal labourers who worked in Kent. See J. Whyman, Op cit, pp 33-37. The minimum wage for a 50 hour week in Kent in 1925 was 32/6d when it was 29/- in Norfolk and Suffolk.

64. Reports of the milk sub-committee 1920-1929, contained in the Annual Reports of the Executive Committee recorded in the Journal; and NFU Yearbook, 1925, pp 177-178.
depression induced by excessive foreign competition and changes in demand. It also showed that English farmers were not entirely dependent upon Government assistance.

Overall attendance seemed to recover slowly and the branch became more vigorous. The establishment of a small holdings and poultry sub-committee in 1926 seemed to help in recruiting some small farmers into its ranks and certainly extended the usefulness of the branch. Insurance was also taken up with more enthusiasm in the late 1920s. The offer of reduced premiums probably helped to revive interest and certainly assisted the propaganda efforts of the Organisation sub-committee. In 1928 a Marketing sub-committee was established to assist in the setting up of marketing schemes, partially to compensate for the collapse of English Hop Growers Limited. Sugar beet production was also encouraged by the reshaped Cereals, Sugar-Beet and Livestock sub-committee from 1925 onwards, while the expanding benevolent fund added another incentive to membership. It was frequently drawn upon to assist bereft farmers in coping with the problems of depressions. Nearly £180 was given as direct relief between 1926 and 1929, while the fund totalled £1,600.

The only other notable development of the 1920s and one which diverged from the policy of the central Council, was the support given to the introduction of the Ministry of Agriculture's marketing schemes for meat.

65. Vol XX No 6 (Dec 1926), p 194.
66. Fred Talbot agreed that the offer of cheaper premiums helped persuade him to join the branch.
67. Journal of the Kent Farmers' Union, Vol XXIV No 6 (Dec 1928), p 211.
68. ibid. Vol XVIII No 6 (Dec 1925), p 190.
and eggs in 1929. Kent was clearly more progressive than headquarters in its attitude towards state aided marketing reform, which included the powers of compulsion so necessary for the successful pooling of commodities.

The Kent branch, like the NFU as a whole, had to wait until the late 1920s before membership began to show any significant increase. Really rapid growth came only at the end of World War II when membership passed the 4,000 mark. For the Kent branch then the 1920s were years of desperately hard work simply to hold their own against the associated problems of depression and political disillusionment.

The same dissatisfaction with the various governments of the 1920s was expressed by the Kent executive and the Journal, as it was by the central Council and the Record. The chairman for 1929, Peter Scott, neatly summed up the branch’s political attitude when he said the three main problems confronting the branch were the Government, labour and the weather. Some of the more severe criticisms of the Baldwin administration placed men like T.D. Harris in an awkward position, but they held to these criticisms. Clearly the Tithe Act of 1925 deeply angered Kentish farmers, but even more positive measures such as the Credits Act were seen as meagre compensation for the Government’s failure to come to grips with the real needs of the agricultural industry. The dissatisfaction of the branch as a whole, as well as of its leaders, was revealed at the 1928 A.G.M. Mr Prettyman, a Liberal politician, dared to support the NFU’s criticisms of the Baldwin administration, and even in the Conservative stronghold of Kent he was given a rousing reception. Governmental indifference seemed to persuade Kentish members to support the general policy of placing loyalties to farming before party.

70. ibid. pp192 and 195.
Furthermore, the general shift of the NFU away from overtly political concerns towards a more directly economic orientation was shared by the Kent executive. In some ways the branch's emphasis on marketing reform helped pilot the shift in the organisation's major priorities. Even if this contribution was not great - the advocacy of such reform at least helped the more progressive members of the central council in persuading their more conservative brethren to change their attitudes. As the county chairman-elect for 1925, E.I. Overy, said to the Maidstone branch in 1924 the local branch of the NFU was "an organisation of which any body of businessmen might be proud." 73

As headquarters turned its attention away from Westminster towards Whitehall, from direct parliamentary lobbying to telephoning the Minister, so the Kent executive increasingly focused its attention on County Hall, Maidstone, and local offices of the Ministry of Agriculture rather than local M.P.s. When the degree of representation which the branch achieved on the County Council is multiplied forty times, 74 the success of the NFU in such a politically and economically disadvantageous situation becomes more understandable, especially when those forty counties seemed able to work together in a generally cohesive fashion and by and large willingly supported the actions of headquarters. Such institutional channels of influence as the Parish Councils, Boards of Guardians, Rural District Councils, as well as the County Councils themselves, had been

73. Minute Book of the Maidstone Branch of the NFU, 1 Jul 1922 - 5 Feb 1925, 27 Nov 1924.

74. There was nothing exceptional about the Kent branch's successes in the county councils elections. Seventy-five of the 241 leading executive members whose biographies were recorded in the NFU "Who's Who" for 1924 and 1925, or 32%, had sat on County Councils. 175 or nearly 60% had some local government experience on Boards of Guardians, Parish Councils, Rural District Councils and Urban Councils. A further 120 or nearly half were members of the County Agricultural Committees. Eight out of the nine Lincolnshire executive members recorded had County Council experience, four of the six Sussex members, two out of four Cambridgeshire members, and two out of three Herefordshire members. The comparative figures for Kent were two out of four.
dominated by the landed gentry up to 1908, despite the local government reforms of 1838. But the NFU extended the farmers' slender representation on such bodies and ended the landowners' monopoly of office. Kent was no exception to that development and joined with other counties in opening up alternative avenues to the corridors of power to win concessions at the local level. Such successes certainly helped to reinforce the actions of the central Council, while increasing the local relevance of concessions won at the national level.

In short the success of the county branches greatly enhanced the likelihood of success at the national level. The effectiveness of the county branches contrasted markedly with the relatively ineffective and often conflicting efforts of the provincial branches of the NZFU. Kent was not atypically successful as twelve other counties represented a greater proportion of local farmers. Nor was it able to wield an influence seriously out of proportion to its size as eleven other branches had larger representation on the central Council. There were also thirty-nine other counties to prevent Kent, or any other single county, from exercising undue control over policy.

The story of the Kent County Executive up to 1929 was not significantly different in terms of success or lack of success. It rather revealed that the units of which the NFU were built were strong yet flexible, allowing continuous two-way communication between national and local levels. Policy decisions percolated down from the top while grass roots opinions diffused upwards. The County Executive ensured that a degree of local relevance was imparted to decisions made at headquarters. At the same time it presented grass roots opinions in articulated and researched form for consideration by the central Council. General NFU policy held a considerable relevance to both national and local needs as a result. Herein lay much of the explanation for the greater success of the NFU than the NZFU in translating the consensual general views of farmers into meaningful action, while
catering to their more immediate specialist and local requirements. The county was the critical linchpin of the entire organisation and Kent was only one of forty such linchpins.

II A Large Market-Town Branch - Maidstone

The Maidstone branch was the first established in Kent. Its first chairman, W.S. Austen, was also foundation County Chairman and it developed a proud tradition of activism. As it met in the same buildings as the County Executive, it was in close touch with the latest organisational developments, while its situation in the county town provided it with easy access to the operations of local government. Maidstone was also the centre of a particularly wealthy farming district, a factor which made the establishment of a large branch rather easier. Subscriptions were generally paid up quickly and Maidstone grew rapidly to become one of the largest Kentish branches. It displayed a growth pattern similar to that of the NFU in general, although it fared slightly better during the 1920s. Meetings were usually well attended and there was a large core of active members. Numbers were somewhat inflated by the presence of honorary members who made up around 20% of the total membership. But despite this exaggeration the minute books of the branch give an impression of industry and activism which was in direct contrast to the indolence and apathy which seemed to beset some smaller branches. Enthusiasm wavered only a little during the late 1920s.

The concerns and emphases of the branch largely reflected those of the County Executive, although as it was situated in the heart of the

75. Ashford, Rochester and Dartford vied with Maidstone for the title of the biggest branch, but Maidstone generally won out in terms of paid up subscriptions.

76. e.g. in 1928 79 of the 379 members were honorary. Minute Book of the Maidstone Branch 12 Feb 1925 - 2 May 1929, 29 Nov 1928, p 38.
hop and fruit growing area of Kent, the problems of those two industries initially assumed greater importance. But after World War I the milk scheme, control of stock disease, representation on the County Council Education Committee and social activities assumed greater importance.

During the war the Maidstone branch was primarily concerned with fundraising, utilising female voluntary labour to the full, securing promises from Government to prevent the compulsory grubbing up of hops and lobbying for the continuance of hop control into peace time. In 1916, for example, £400 was raised from jumble sales and donations for the Red Cross Fund. The following year the branch worked closely with Miss Bradley, Agricultural Organisation Officer for Kent, in placing women on the land. The efforts of these women as labourers were deeply appreciated and the branch executive decided to recognise their contribution by allowing women to join the branch's activities. In 1919 women were admitted to membership and an unsuccessful attempt was made to form a women's branch along the lines of the Women's Division of the NZFU. Kentish farmers' wives and daughters seemed generally disinterested and the scheme did not re-emerge until after World War II. It was hoped that the extension of the franchise to women over thirty could be turned to advantage by forming such a branch, but apathy had the final say.

While the branch took an uncommon interest in the welfare of rural ladies it also organised deputations over the question of hop control to the Board of Agriculture. Furthermore, its eight delegates on the Kent executive ensured that the plight of hop farmers was constantly kept before the County Executive, while the branch's president, Percy Manwaring as chairman of the Central Hops, Fruit and Vegetables Committee, kept the issue very much alive at the national level.

77. ibid. 1 Jan 1914 - 11 Dec 1919, 17 Feb 1916, p 37.

78. ibid. 11 Dec 1919, p 160.

79. ibid. 2 Jan, p 111.
From the end of the war onwards the Maidstone branch took on more of a social character, engaged in charity work and extended many of the functions of the old farmers' club. Speaking at the Tunbridge Wells Farmers' Club jubilee in November 1920, the County Secretary, Jim Hillier French, said the farmers' club was for "pleasure" and the NFU for "business". But the Maidstone executive fully realised that they must make the proceedings of the branch pleasurable as well as productive of tangible benefits, if widespread interest was to be maintained.

Whist drives and dances were introduced, while annual dinners were held during most years of the 1920s. Speakers were arranged for regular meetings. They ranged from members of staff at Wye College and officials of the Ministry of Agriculture to branch members who were particularly successful in their chosen farming specialisation. They discussed essentially technical matters such as the control of brown rot or the application of artificial manures, and these immediately relevant discussions evoked considerable interest. Sometimes the details of recent legislation were also explained by a speaker with specialist legal knowledge, such as Percy W. Cox, an earlier County Secretary. Involvement in charitable activities was extended from contributing to the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institute inherited from the Maidstone Farmers' Club, to raising funds for the Kent branch's benevolent fund and the West Kent hospital appeal. Clearly the branch was developed into something more than a purely political organisation. This expansion of activities probably explains why the branch was able to grow when the NFU as a whole reached a plateau, and some smaller branches suffered serious declines in membership. The inclusion of several non-farmer members and the

adoption of the old farmers' club functions also helps to explain the Maidstone branch's ability to draw farmers' club members into the NFU rapidly and easily. It managed to combine successfully business and pleasure. The Canterbury branch in direct contrast was unable to adopt many of the functions of the local farmers' club and its development was retarded in consequence.

The Maidstone branch placed itself slightly closer to the Unionist party than the Kent executive. The local Unionist M.P., Commander Bellairs, was an honorary member, while there was considerable criticism of the Labour party's intention to step up meddlesome bureaucratic interference. 81 Arthur Griffith Boscawen, the Coalition Minister of Agriculture, and a Conservative, was also an honorary member of the branch. Hostility towards organised labour seemed to be greater as in 1922 the branch demanded that the minimum weekly wage should be set at thirty shillings. 82 On the other hand some criticisms were directed at the Baldwin government in the late 1920s, especially in relation to tithe legislation. Links with the Unionist party also became less important as executive members won seats on both the County and Town Councils. 83 Farming was placed before party but not as convincingly as at either the county or national levels.

Here was a real source of the NFU's strength, an active and enthusiastic branch in a major market town, immediately adjacent to the centre of local government, able to mobilise the energies and tap the considerable financial resources of the surrounding countryside. It was not atypical of market

81. Minute Book of the Maidstone branch of the NFU, Jan 1920 – 29 Jun 1922, 9 Dec 1920, p 70.
82. Ibid. 1 Jul 1922 – 5 Feb 1925, 1 Jul 1922.
83. Percy Manwaring was an Alderman and both Bernard and Philip Champion sat on the County Council.
Like them it acted as virile growth point from which the NFU diffused its influence into remoter areas. Such branches made up the components which ensured that the organisational linchpin operated effectively. Some Kentish market town branches such as Canterbury were not as active nor as successful, but a county required only two or three branches like Maidstone to ensure that it was reasonably effective. Ashford and Rochester were as active as Maidstone, whilst Tonbridge, Dartford, Sittingbourne and Sevenoaks were not far behind. Kent's success as a county branch was, therefore, assured.

III. The Local Level - A Village Branch Serving a Rural Area - Staplehurst

The NFU seems to have been much less successful in more isolated rural areas than at the county and market-town level. Like the NZFU it was a delegate organisation in many ways with a few active members representing the interests of a rather inert rank and file. Most of the work was carried out by a small group of enthusiasts as is usually the case with voluntary organisations. Admittedly a hard core of enthusiasts also ensured the success of the Maidstone branch but they were proportionately much larger than at Staplehurst. Meetings were held at irregular intervals and were generally poorly attended. As was the case in Otago the local farmers' clubs seemed able to hold the interests of their

84. The range of activities engaged in by the Maidstone branch and the degree of its activism seems to have been little different to that of other large market or county town branches such as Newcastle-on-Tyne in Northumberland, Dorchester in Dorset, Lincoln in Lincolnshire, Newark in Nottinghamshire or Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk. A.J. Woodcocks, "All our yesterdays," Op cit. Letter from the Dorset County Secretary for 1974 R.M. Mitchell. Minute Book of the Lincoln branch of the NFU, Dec 1923 to Jan 1927 and NFU Yearbook, 1912, p 102 and 1913, p 155.

85. Some local branches were far more active than Staplehurst, however, as the Minute Book of the Eagle sub-branch of the NFU Lincolnshire, 1922-1930 reveals. This branch had a membership of over 100 and held regular meetings.
members much more successfully than the Farmers' Union. Two old small farmers who were interviewed by the writer both admitted that the NFU operated at the periphery of their daily lives. The marketing boards of the 1930s and the agricultural committees of World War II were credited with producing more tangible benefits in the form of improved distribution facilities and direct assistance in the performance of everyday tasks. More importantly these two bodies were credited with increasing farmers' incomes. 86

Nevertheless, the Staplehurst branch was by no means inactive thanks to the efforts of its few enthusiastic members. As was the case at the national and county level the NFU rank and file seemed able to elect a talented set of leaders. "Rank and Filer" writing to the Journal in 1921 commented that the Kent branch had a fine head and an indifferent tail. 87 The comment was equally applicable to the Staplehurst branch.

This branch was one of the first to be established in Kent and it got off to a solid start. Undoubtedly, the holding of meetings in local hotels ensured some degree of initial support. Within a year of establishment a more concerted effort was made to maintain interest by organising speakers on such technical subjects as the correct use of artificial manures. 88 Some advantage was also taken of the county branch's legal aid facilities. Claims for damage from railway companies or compensation from landlords were regularly sent up to the County Secretary. The County

86. Interview with Mr Fred Talbot, Op cit, who joined the Rochester branch in the 1920s, and W.T. Ninn, interviewed 17 Jul 1975, who joined the Staplehurst branch in 1917.


88. Minute Book of the Staplehurst branch of the NFU 1910-1919, 1 May 1911.
Fig 9: Graph of the growth of the Staplehurst branch of the NFU, 1910-1929.
Secretary himself, as well as secretaries of major market town branches, in turn paid periodic visits to keep local members in touch with the activities of the NFU at its higher levels. This type of regular and personal contact with officials from higher up the organisational hierarchy did not occur with the same regularity in New Zealand. It provides another explanation as to why the NFU was able to develop into a more unified organisation.

With the advent of war most of the branch's efforts were given over to fund raising for the Agricultural Relief of Allies Fund and to coping with the labour shortage. Meetings were arranged with the West Kent Women's Agricultural Committee to organise the employment of female voluntary labour and at first the women adequately compensated for the loss of male labourers. But when recruitment increased the branch registered a strong protest. Action over this matter seemed to help the branch in greatly increasing its membership. The same dramatic leap in numbers occurred between 1917 and 1920 as at the various other levels.

Labour shortages continued to dominate the activities of the branch throughout the remainder of the war, while the county executive's decision to protest the compulsory grubbing of hops was strongly endorsed. Then when the call to plough up grass land came, the branch gave the measure its full approval.

When peace did return the County Secretary made several visits to the branch to explain the constitutional changes made by the reconstruction committee and prevented a good deal of confusion in the process. Payment of the minimum wage and shortened hours became matters of growing concern.

89. One jumble sale held in conjunction with the Cranborne branch raised £375-5s-6d. ibid. 28 Apr 1916.
90. ibid. 19 Jan 1917.
91. ibid. 30 Nov and 7 Dec 1917.
92. ibid.
93. ibid. 8 Jan and 17 Jan 1919.
Visits to Wye College were arranged, talks from visiting lecturers were continued and the initiation of a co-operative enterprise for fruit marketing was considered. Members also rallied enthusiastically to support the Agriculture Bill, but a series of setbacks was to rudely interrupt the smooth progress of the branch.

The first real blow came in 1920 when the country Milk sub-committee's efforts were "squashed" in the Staplehurst area. A more pessimistic tone also seemed to creep into the branch's proceedings. Peter Scott, branch delegate on the County Executive, made it clear that Lloyd George's promise of high wheat prices was a "Pledge and not a guarantee" and could easily be broken as a result. Once again it seemed that Kentish farmers were expecting guaranteed prices to be repealed at any moment and when repeal came the branch protested but displayed little surprise. Despite the introduction of an annual dinner and the rotation of meetings around various village hotels membership fell away and from 1923 onwards a sharp decline set in. Things got so bad that the Staplehurst branch was amalgamated with the small and flagging Marden branch in 1926. Hotels held no special attraction for the considerable number of non-conformist farmers in the Staplehurst area, while continuing lectures and constant reports on the work of the County Executive did little to halt the decline.

94. ibid. 28 Mar and 30 May 1919.
95. ibid. 26 Mar and 23 Apr 1920.
96. ibid. 17 Dec 1920.
97. ibid. 21 Jan 1921.
98. ibid. 23 Sep 1923.
99. Minute Book of the Marden and Staplehurst Branches of the NFU, Jan 1926-1938, 26 Jan 1926.
100. Mr Ninn informed the writer that holding meetings in hotels held little incentive for him and other local Methodist and Baptist farmers to attend. W.H. Judge, one of the leading executive members of the Ashford branch, was also a prominent non-conformist. Journal of the Kent Farmers' Union, Vol XVI No 4 (Oct 1924), p 124.
The only events which helped off-set the general feeling of despondency were the maintenance of reasonably harmonious relationships with local agricultural labourers, and the elevation of branch member Peter Scott to County Chairman in 1928.

Throughout the 1920s the Staplehurst executive made it clear that their men must be paid a living wage and that members must oppose the efforts of other farmers to push wages below legal limits. Such protestations must have been heeded as the Staplehurst area remained free of strikes or other major difficulties throughout the 1920s. On the other hand the executive were also fully aware that some smaller farmers were scarcely better off than their labourers and simply could not afford to pay higher wages. They characterised this group as those who had to wear corduroy at the annual dinners, in contrast with the more prosperous farmers who wore dinner suits. It was felt that the men who could afford dinner suits should carry the less well-to-do by paying higher wages. But despite such good intentions some smaller farmers remained outside the branch.

Peter Scott, as his name implied, was a Scotsman who like J.M. Robertson, another Kent County Chairman, or Colin Campbell himself, had emigrated to England and succeeded where many local farmers had failed. His local influence increased considerably in 1919 when he was elected onto the County Council, where along with other NFU representatives, he worked hard to reduce rates and the incidence of tithe. His election to the highest post on the County Executive revealed that the NFU was very much a democratic organisation which made it possible for branch leaders

101. e.g. Minute Book of the Staplehurst branch of the NFU, Jan 1920–Oct 1922, 21 Oct 1921 and 18 Nov 1921.

from the more remote rural areas, as well as from the larger market town branches, to participate in leadership at higher levels. This was a particular strength which the NZFU also shared.

The continuing efforts of the Staplehurst branch’s enthusiastic executive ensured that it survived the upheavals of the 1920s and finally began to increase its membership again in the late 1930s. Regular consultation with both county and national levels was also maintained. In 1925, for example, the branch replied to a questionnaire sent down from headquarters by resolving that credit schemes be extended, that agricultural lands be freed from rates and that preferential railway rates be granted for English agricultural produce and manures. All three demands were taken up by the central Council, so local members clearly agreed with national policies in these matters. Overall the local executive did enough to ensure that the branch not only survived but maintained some degree of activism.

The maintenance of even this limited degree of activism at the local level was critical for the success of the NFU because if the base level went into prolonged decline the whole structure would soon crumble. Even though future advances were in part dependent upon reviving interest at the local rather than the county or national level, the efforts of enthusiasts within local branch executives ensured that decline was arrested before it reached crisis proportions. The majority of rank and file members were undoubtedly more interested in ale than extra work, in meeting at hotels for convivial company rather than suffering the tedium of sitting on committees. But a sufficient number were prepared to undertake the time-consuming duties involved in executive appointments, to concentrate on the problems confronting hop producers rather than obstacles to the consumption of ale. These activist farmers guaranteed the NFU its success.

103. Minute Book of the Marden and Staplehurst branches of the NFU, Jan 1926-1938 passim.

104. ibid. Nov 1922-Jan 1926, 1 May 1925.
Clearly the NFU held a considerable advantage over the NZFU in that its intermediate units were more energetic and effective. The difference at the local branch level does not seem to have been so considerable by the 1920s although the NFU established a relatively greater number of industrious branches in larger market towns, an achievement made easier by the fact that there were many more towns of Maidstone's type in England than in New Zealand. Furthermore, it was much more important that the intermediate level of the organisation should be industrious and effective for it carried out the critical two-way function of passing instructions issued by the national Council farther down the organisational hierarchy, while articulating local grievances in such a way that they would not go unnoticed at the national level. The overall unity and effectiveness of either organisation was as much dependent upon the endeavours of the intermediate executives as on the national co-ordinating body. There were thirty-nine other county executives like that of Kent within the NFU which seemed capable of looking after local needs while giving the national good top priority. But there were perhaps only two comparable provincial executives within the NZFU - Manawatu and Southland.
CHAPTER EIGHT

"FROM PLOUGHING MATCH COMMITTEE TO PRESSURE GROUP WITH PROFIT."

THE AGRICULTURAL AND PASTORAL SOCIETIES AND FARMERS’ CLUBS

The A and P Societies were essentially concerned with the methodology of farming like the RASE on which they consciously modelled themselves.\(^1\) Their loose decentralised structure and cosmopolitan membership, which included considerable representation of the commercial sector, also marked them off as essentially different from the NZFU. One organisation was largely concerned with hastening on the primary phase of settlement by promoting agricultural development, whilst the other answered the needs of the secondary phase of settlement by creating machinery to defend and capitalise on earlier developments. Yet despite such critical differences by the end of the nineteenth century the A and P Societies had come to engage in far more pressure group activity than the English Provincial Agricultural Societies and were in many ways a combination of those provincial organisations, the county based Chambers of Agriculture and the local farmers' clubs, in terms of the functions which they performed. The model of the Chamber of Agriculture was considered to be worthy of

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1. e.g. Early attempts to found an Otago A and P Society in 1851, A.H. McLintock, The History of Otago, The Origins and Growth of a Wakefield Class Settlement, (Dunedin 1949) p 328, and again in 1860, O.W., 18 Aug 1860 p 5 and ibid. 14 Oct 1865 p 14, all made frequent reference to the excellent examples set by the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland and the RASE. The peripatetic or rotating show was considered to be particularly worthy of emulation. The editor of the Bruce Herald recommended that the activities of both these societies could be borrowed directly by the newly formed Tokomairiro Farmers’ Club. Bruce Herald, 13 Dec 1866. Furthermore, as John Hall pointed out in introducing the Agricultural and Pastoral Societies Bill of 1877, the objects of these societies were the same as those of the RASE. NZPD, 26 (1877), pp 139–40. On checking with Watson, Op. cit., pp 18–19 it appears that the first eight of the objects were identical with those of the RASE.
emulation from as early as 1868 and was recommended as an ideal type of organisation by which the agricultural industry could safeguard its peculiar sectional interests. But no Chambers were ever established. It was left instead to the local farmers' clubs, which were basically smaller and more rural A and P Societies, to initiate action on a broader front which spilled over into the political sphere. Consequently, these clubs will be examined in both this chapter for providing the initial drive towards wider political action, and in the next chapter for their role in setting up the Farmers' Union of 1890. This gradual evolution of some degree of pressure group action by a general farmers' organisation provided a precedent on which the NZFU was able to build and produced a more direct link between the NZFU and the A and P Societies than between the NFU and its various predecessors. Rather than being formed to oppose the A and P Societies the NZFU was established to extend those activities which encroached upon the political sphere and to move beyond the limits imposed by the A and P Societies' ban on political discussion. Within thirty years of their establishment the A and P Societies had evolved a somewhat different nature from the British organisations on which they modelled themselves, but that progress was not great enough in terms of political activism to prevent the development of a body such as the NZFU.

Even though the A and Ps were primarily concerned with arranging show days, ploughing matches and best-kept farm competitions they

2. The notion of establishing a Chamber of Agriculture along the lines of the English Chamber to be run on parallel lines with the Chamber of Commerce, was first proposed in Otago in 1868 at a conference called by the Provincial Council to discuss problems facing local agriculture. OW, Apr 1868 p 14 and 11 Apr 1868 p 9.

3. Many A and P Societies and Farmers' Clubs grew out of committees which organised ploughing matches e.g. The Blueskin A and P Association and the Tokomairiro Farmers' Club grew from ploughing match committees. OW, 20 Jul 1867 p 4, and Bruce Herald, 4 Aug 1864.
Map showing location of Otago/Southland A and P Societies referred to in this chapter.
Some of the A and P Associations and Farmers' Clubs Formed in Otago/Southland 1860-1914:

Taieri Agricultural Society 1860.

Northern Otago A and P Association 1863 (Oamaru).

Waikouaiti and Shag Valley A and P Association 1865.

Tokomairiro Farmers' Club 1866. (Milton).

Southland A and P Association 1866 (Invercargill).

Clutha A and P Association 1867. (Balclutha).

Blueskin A and P Association 1869.

Western Districts Farmers' Club 1873 (Riverton).

Winton A and P Association 1874.

Mataura A and P Association 1875.

Otago A and P Society 1876.

Tapanui Farmers' Club 1879.

Waitahuna Farmers' Club 1881.

Gore A and P Association 1882.

Palmerston and Waihemo A and P Association 1883

Tuapeka A and P Association 1893 (Lawrence).

Otago Central Farmers' Club 1890 to 1892 and

Vincent County Farmers' Club 1892 to 1893 (Omakau).

Changed to the Central Otago A and P Association 1893.

Upper Clutha A and P Society 1895 (Cromwell).

Strath-Taieri A and P Association 1901 (Middlemarch).

Lake County A and P Association 1904 (Lake Hayes).
provided an important precedent to the NZFU by proving that a general farmers' organisation, as well as a more specialist type of organisation could work within the New Zealand context. As their title implied their membership included both agriculturalist (generally smaller farmers engaged in intensive mixed stock raising and crop and fruit production, and from 1885 onwards dairy farmers) and pastoralists (generally bigger farmers engaged in extensive growing operations and occasionally beef production). Such a combination was significantly different from Australia where the two groups remained bitter enemies until 1910 when the Farmers' and Settlers' Association was formally linked with the Graziers' Associations. As the title of the Farmers' Clubs suggested their appeal was also to all farmers in general. New Zealand lacked the geographical extremes and vast monoculture concentrations which produced such divisions within Australia and to a lesser extent within Canada and the U.S.A. Even though horizontal divisions were important in New Zealand and there was a surprisingly wide degree of regional variation in farming specialisations, farmers did not generally separate themselves into distinctive specialist groups. Both the A and Ps and the Farmers' Clubs predated such specialist organisations as the Sheepbreeders' Association or the New Zealand South Island Dairy Association. New Zealand farmers seemed prepared to throw in their lot together and favoured such general organisations from early on. In fact the A and Ps were rather more successful than the


5. The Sheepbreeders' Association was formed in 1894, New Zealand Romney Marsh Sheepbreeders Association, History of the New Zealand Romney Marsh Sheep, (Fielding 1921), p 6; and the New Zealand Dairy Association (which was actually the South Island Association, the North Island Association going under the title of the National Dairy Association) in 1892. New Zealand Country Journal, 1892, pp 542-544.
NZFU in appealing to the broadest spectrum of the farming community as
the pastoralist generally tended to stay outside the ranks of the NZFU
through either remaining in the A and P Societies or joining the Sheep
Owners' Federation. The SOF itself grew from several provincial associations
formed during the 1890s into a Dominion organisation established in 1910.6
The various attempts to form a more militant type of farmers' club and a
broader based farmers' union around 1890 were different again in that they
consciously lined themselves up against the pastoralists. So the A and Ps,
rather than the farmers' union of 1890, hanged on the concept that the
interests of the agricultural industry would be best served by one general
organisation representing all categories of farmer, rather than specialist
organisations representing the particular interests of sub-group whether
sheep, wheat, dairy, large and long established or small and struggling
farmers. The NZFU adopted this concept of a general organisation favouring
no particular group, even if in practice it remained rather hostile to the
pastoralists and tended to favour the longer established medium sized
sheep and mixed farmer and the more prosperous dairy farmer.

There were few continuities in terms of structure between the A and P
Societies and the NZFU. The A and Ps were typical of the voluntary and
amateur associations formed during the primary phase of settlement in that
they were loosely organised and generally autonomous bodies concentrating
on matters of immediate local importance. Broader structural links were
practically non-existent. In 1879 an attempt was made to co-ordinate the
activities of the South Island associations by forming a Royal Agricultural
Society to arrange peripatetic shows. This scheme aimed to increase the
educational effectiveness of the A and Ps by broadening their almost
exclusively local orientation, but it was defeated by a combination of apathy

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6. The New Zealand Sheepowners' and Farmers' Federation Minute Book 1910-
and the onset of depression. No further advances were made in terms of co-ordinating the A and Ps activities until 1892 when the first colonial agricultural conference was held in Wellington. In some ways this meeting was a predecessor of the NZFU's colonial conference for it was the first time that farmers from all over the colony had met together. But it was little more than a forum for discussion and no machinery was established to maintain administrative continuity until the next conference in 1894.

No further conference was held until 1898 after which time the conference became a regular biennial event. But it was not until 1913 that a permanent executive, the Council of Agriculture, was formed to follow-up conference resolutions, a significantly long time after the establishment of the NZFU. Conferences were held on an annual basis from that date. In this instance the A and Ps borrowed from the NZFU rather than the NZFU developing earlier precedents handed on by the A and Ps. A Royal Agricultural Society was finally established in 1924 to organise a national peripatetic show and a national conference was arranged from 1926 onwards. But even then only about half the associations bothered to affiliate themselves formally to the new national body. Many associations preferred to maintain their local autonomy and freedom from control and policy directives, especially in the South Island.

8. ibid. 1892, pp 294-392.
9. ibid. 1894, pp 313-328.
Even at the provincial level there was little co-ordination of activities. The Otago A and P Society was established with the intention of acting as a co-ordinating parent body for the various country societies and representatives from those local societies were appointed to its executive. But in practice the Otago Society was never anything more than the Dunedin A and P Society. Most of its attempts either to direct the activities of other Otago societies or to arrange one big strong show for the whole province and do away with local shows, were fiercely resisted. Each local society quite rightly saw that their own show, small as it may have been, played an important role within the local community. Educational efforts had to be directed at the man on the land rather than to townspeople and had to be easily accessible if they were to be successful. The very strong Canterbury A and P Society was more successful in co-ordinating activities on a provincial level than any other metropolitan or provincial society, yet even its executive was never able to usurp the power of strong local societies like those of Timaru, Ashburton or Rangiora. Local societies and shows continued to proliferate into the twentieth century as was the case in Otago and rapidly followed the extension of settlement.

In terms of structure then the A and Ps were loosely organised and generally autonomous local associations free of broader regional or national structural ties. Such autonomy suited well the organisation of showdays and ploughing matches, but it was later to hinder the A and P's effectiveness as a pressure group. The attitude favouring considerable local autonomy was also passed onto the NZFU and came to reduce the effectiveness of its primary pressure group function. In this sense the A and Ps made little positive contribution to the NZFU in terms of organisational machinery and handed on an organisational attitude which was negative in its effect.

There was also little similarity in terms of membership between the two organisations. The metropolitan societies in particular had a significant number of members from the commercial community within their ranks, whose presence imparted some degree of urban orientation to their activities. Even the rural societies, whose membership was primarily composed of farmers, included non-farmers such as stock agents. Big pastoralists, as well as leading merchants and successful businessmen, also belonged to the A and P Societies even though they generally refrained from joining the NZFU.

Twenty-five of a total of fifty-two, or 48%, of the leading executive members of the Otago and Southland metropolitan societies whose biographies have been traced in the *Cyclopedia* were not farmers. This group in fact reads like a "Who's Who" of the nineteenth century Dunedin business community even allowing for the tendency of the *Cyclopedia* to inflate their importance. The largest group (ten or 19.23%) were engaged in services which supplied the community in general and farmers in particular with credit, which meant that they were accountants, bank managers and managers of the New Zealand and Australian Land Company and the National Mortgage and Agency Company. Stock and station agents and auctioneers (three or 5.77%), and general merchants (three), constituted the second largest group. The remainder included implement manufacturers (two), general carriers and contractors (two), a newspaper editor, a journalist, a company director, a professional secretary and a doctor. Nearly half the group (twelve) had some experience in local government, while three had been M.P.s. At least nine of the group were prominent in other voluntary organisations such as the Masonic Order, the Jockey Club and the
Presbyterian church. Nine were also company directors, usually of several companies. Clearly this group approximated the local interlocking directorate which dominated the economic, social and political spheres of life in nineteenth century Dunedin and Invercargill. Many of them were also middlemen, the group so despised by the Farmers' League of 1886, the Farmers' Union of 1890 and to a lesser extent the NZFU itself. The inclusion of this group within the A and Ps represented an important difference between this earlier organisation and the NZFU. It also made the A and Ps more truly agricultural because they included representatives of the credit, distribution and processing sides of the industry within their membership. They were, therefore, far less sectional in their objectives, actions and attitudes than the NZFU. This group also approximated the enthusiastic amateurs from the ranks of the professional and business communities who held real economic ties with the land and were so active within the RASE. Their presence was important for they assisted greatly in funding


16. Matthew W. Holmes, for example, came to New Zealand a wealthy man as a result of his mercantile activities during the Victorian gold-rush. He immediately invested in land both in Dunedin and rural areas and became manager of the N.Z. and Australian Land Company in 1862. After a successful career as a company director, Provincial Councillor, and promoter of the freezing industry, he retired to the Rock Castle estate in Southland of 36,302 acres, while continuing to run another estate near Oamaru of 756 acres. He also had owned a 23,294 acre property in Wallace County. On this Southland estate he concentrated on introducing pedigree horses, sheep and cattle into New Zealand. Obituary, OW, 2 Oct 1901, contained in the Journal of the Otago A and P Society and A Return of Freeholders 1882, H 72. In 1882 Holmes owned a total of 60,985 acres worth £126,779.
facilities such as showgrounds and display halls, which involved large capital outlay \(^{17}\) and were necessary for the efficient operation of an A and P Society. In fact they gave the A and Ps a financial strength which the NZFU so often lacked, but that strength was given at the expense of the farmers' freedom to speak and act as they wished.

The country societies were generally made up of farmers and were more concerned with the day to day problems of rural life such as pest control rather than with building elaborate buildings. But they too were by no means free of non-farmer members and big man dominance. Provincial Councillors, generally affluent men in the days before politicians were paid a salary, played a prominent role in establishing both the Taieri Agricultural Society and the Tokomairiro Farmers' Club. \(^{18}\) Perhaps the most extreme example of big man dominance and middleman assistance was provided by the Central Otago A and P Association whose foundation president, William Laidlaw, owned the Matakanui station, and whose foundation secretary, J.L. Flint, was manager of the Ophir branch of the Bank of New South Wales. \(^{19}\) Secretaries were often school teachers, store keepers and occasionally magistrates, \(^{20}\) and such people were often employed

17. The first hall built by the Otago A and P Society, for example, which was completed in 1897, cost £10,000. *Journal of the Otago A and P Society*, 1897, p 49. Another hall was built in 1911 which pushed the Society's budget up to £20,742 in 1912. *ibid*. 1912, pp 4-5. Special companies had to be formed to finance the erection of these buildings.


by the NZFU itself, despite its "farmers' only" restriction. The twenty-seven farmers who have been traced from the *Cyclopedia* seemed, furthermore, to have had considerable experience in administering the affairs of local government as was the case with the executive group in the metropolitan societies.

The farmers traced in the *Cyclopedia* generally seemed to be representative of bigger and longer established farmers, while big pastoralists were not as prominent as they were in the Canterbury and Hawkes Bay societies. Twelve of these twenty-seven farmer executive members were pedigree breeders. Breeders held real dominance in some societies in particular. In the North Otago A and P Association, for example, eleven well known breeders sat on the executive when the total membership was about seventy. Such dominance was hardly surprising for shows provided these men with an ideal vehicle for exhibiting their stock. Furthermore, it required a considerable amount of capital to set up a stud farm and the greater personal wealth of these farmers was reflected in their ability to take time off farm work to exhibit at several shows as well as in funding the transport of their stock to those shows. On the other hand exhibiting stock was a useful form of advertising and represented a wise investment of time and expenditure. Nevertheless a reasonable degree of prosperity was required before farmers could become pedigree breeders who regularly exhibited at shows. The holding of pedigree certificates also seemed to imply a certain degree of social superiority. Some breeders certainly acted as if they were more important members of the community than owners of mere grade stock. This was particularly true of pedigree sheep farmers who generally engaged in a much larger scale of operations than beef cattle or dairy cattle breeders. Once fat lamb raising came into its own in the 1890s stud sheep breeders soon began to ape the life style of the big old style pastoralists and

began to ally themselves with that group, a move calculated to heighten
their social distinctiveness. These men were conspicuous within the
Otago A and P Societies, especially in the more established farming
districts such as the Taieri.\(^{22}\)

This impression of dominance by a group of well established farmers,
particularly breeders, rather than smaller men or the big pastoralists, is
confirmed by the fact that the farm size of the eighteen farms recorded
in the \textit{Cyclopedia} was above the average for Otago.\(^{23}\) Twelve worked
holdings of over 500 acres and only one ran a farm of under 300 acres.
In other words none of these units was small while their value was
increased by the fact that most were mixed stock and crop raising operations.
Only four ran over 2,000 sheep in 1890 suggesting that specialist wool
growers were not particularly well represented. Perhaps even more
significant than the size of executive members' farms was the fact that
all but two had some experience in local government administration or in
the running of other voluntary organisations. Eighteen had experience on
road boards or county councils, while at least six had sat on the
Provincial Council and at least three had been M.P.s at some time. Clearly,
these men had developed their farms to the point where they could afford
to take some time off farm work and were sufficiently prosperous to employ
labour to enable them to engage in these non-farm activities. They
approximated the leadership of the general farming community per se and
represented much the same group from which the NZFU drew its executive
members at least in areas where dairying was not concentrated; established
reasonably prosperous farmers conducting a fairly large scale operation
yet clearly distinct from the big pastoralists.

22. Eleven of the twenty executive members of the Taieri A and P Society
executive traced in the \textit{Cyclopedia} were breeders of pedigree stock.
All but four of these men also became members of the NZFU but it is
interesting to note that allegiance to the NZFU had waned by 1910.

23. According to the \textit{N.Z. Yearbook}, 1893, p 121, the average farm size for
Otago was 203 acres.
Big pastoralists or the so-called "gentry" group seemed to play a rather more significant role in the Canterbury, Hawkes Bay and Manawatu Societies. Henry Overton, John Grigg, John Deans, and Sir John Hall of the Canterbury Association, all came from the group labelled "gentry" and "High Farmers" by Eldred-Grigg. These men were not only big landowners but ran large numbers of sheep. Grigg, for example, owned 15,832 acres in 1882 and ran 34,400 sheep in 1893 when Sir John Hall ran 32,647 sheep on his 28,479 acres. The Hawkes Bay Association was similarly dominated by such big pastoralists as Captain Russell, Donald McLean and J.D. Ormond with Russell running 18,516 sheep in 1898 and Ormond 49,275 on three properties. These men receive frequent mention in M.D.N. Campbell's study of Hawkes Bay landed society and belonged to what Campbell labels the "gentry group." Leaders of the Manawatu and West Coast A and P Association with the exception of Sir James Wilson, generally ran a less grandiose scale of operations, but were nevertheless substantial farmers. J.O. Batchelor and A. McHardy owned the grand old houses which were taken over by Massey Agricultural College and have been dubbed "champagne people" in a romanticised local history.

It was scarcely surprising that such men should have had a real interest in promoting the work of the A and P Societies for they had both sufficient spare time to read up on advances in agricultural methodology and the necessary capital resources to apply such technological innovations profitably. Similarly, they supported the coercive regulations of the

26a. ibid. 1898, H-23, pp 35, 38 and 40.
Department of Agriculture because it was to their own advantage to have pests, whether rabbits or noxious weeds, brought under stricter control. They were truly a group who closely approximated the "high farmers" of England even if they were not exactly gentry, and as such made a real contribution to the development of New Zealand's agricultural industry in terms of capital inputs and provision of expertise. But they were a group who by and large remained outside the NZFU. This exclusiveness was an interesting reflection on the growing importance of the small farmers and declining importance of the pastoralist which had occurred by 1900; a change which forced each group to indentify its interests as separate from the other and led them to form organisations of their own.

Not all of the provincial and metropolitan societies were dominated by big men, however, especially not in areas such as Auckland where there was a lack of big pastoralists. There, smaller and medium sized farmers, such as William Massey himself, were active at the executive level. The metropolitan and local societies also worked more harmoniously together than in other areas suggesting that big men and middleman dominance was less pronounced.

The other major feature of the A and P membership was its smallness, a difficulty partly off-set by the wide ranging managerial, administrative and political experience of its executive core. Rank and file members


30. Massey owned a home farm of 220 acres and a swamp property of 450 acres, which hardly placed him in the category of a struggling small farmer when a living could be made from dairy farms of around 100 acres. But in a comparision with the Griggs, Hall's or Russell's, his scale of operations was indeed modest. *Cyclopedia of N.Z.*, Vol 2 (Auckland), p 662.

30a. Regular conferences were organised by the Auckland Society during the 1890s which were enthusiastically attended by the local societies. *e.g. N.Z. Farmer*, Aug 1893 p 292.
generally displayed disinterest in anything other than showday and
secretaries constantly bemoaned poor attendance at meetings. Unpaid
subscriptions were a common problem and annual reports frequently urged
the need to increase membership. Rank and file apathy in the A and Ps
was a problem which was handed on to the NZFU and pointed to the difficulty
of convincing a large proportion of the farming community of the virtues
of organisation. Even the successful Canterbury Association had a
membership of a little over 300 in the 1890s when there were around 8,000
farmers in the province. The Otago Society over the same period probably
never had many more than 200 members when there were around 5,000 farmers in the province. On the more local level the Waitahuna Farmers' Club, widely acknowledged as one of the most successful clubs in the South Island, never had many more than sixty members even though there were 246 sheep owners alone in Tuapeka County and forty-nine in the immediate vicinity of Waitahuna. Furthermore, all of these figures included a proportion of non-farmer members, so even at best the A and Ps never would have achieved a membership of 8,000 farmers whose allegiance the NZFU was able to claim at its very lowest ebb.

Restrictions on political action were very rapidly challenged at the local level and from this initial challenge arose the gradual development of some degree of pressure group activity by the A and Ps at the colonial level. Initially some local associations applied pressure on local government agencies through the use of such relatively simple and unsophisticated techniques as sending letters of protest and petitions to road boards, county councils and, after 1876, local M.P.s. As early

31. The N.Z. Yearbook, 1893, p 121, showed that there were 8,245 holdings in Canterbury, a number of which correlated closely with the 8,919 farmers recorded in the NZFU survey of its membership in 1926. Minutes of the NZFU Dominion Executive, 1921-1928, 3 Aug 1926.

32. There were 9,542 holdings recorded for Otago and Southland in the same year and 10,799 farmers in the 1926 return. The equivalent figure for Otago proper, which was first included in the 1906 Yearbook, was 8,684 holdings. According to the 1926 NZFU return there were 5,938 farmers in Otago.
as 1864 the Tokomairiro Ploughing Match Committee and the Taieri Agricultural Society instigated action to prevent the spread of stock disease by calling public meetings to petition the Provincial Secretary to introduce tougher quarantine regulations. The Western Districts Farmers' Club followed a similar pattern of action in 1873 when it petitioned the Provincial Secretary to introduce legislation to empower municipal bodies and road boards to levy an annual tax for rabbit destruction. This concern with pest control continued into the 1880s. In 1881 the Taieri Agricultural Society wrote to Donald Reid, their local M.P., asking him to persuade the Taieri Road Board and County Council to supply the society with poisoned grain at subsidised rates to control the small bird nuisance. Experiments with poisoned grain were started immediately and this initiative seemed to impress the County Council for grain was soon supplied at reduced rates. The Clutha A and P Association, and the Tokomairiro and Waitahuna Farmers' Clubs, undertook a similar course of action soon afterwards and were also successful in securing poisoned grain at reduced rates.

The first attempt at organising action over a wider geographical area occurred in 1883 when the Tokomairiro Farmers' Club succeeded in winning the support of other A and Ps and Farmers' clubs in urging the New Zealand Refrigerating Company to erect their works at Burnside rather than Sawyers Bay. More provincially orientated action followed in 1884 when local

33. Bruce Herald, 1 Sep 1864.
34. GW, 20 Sep 1873 p 6.
36. TT, 31 Oct 1883.
societies and clubs called meetings throughout Otago to protest the decision of grain merchants to force farmers to either supply their own grain sacks or pay extra for bags. A conference was arranged to represent the counties of Tuapeka, Clutha, Bruce and Taieri, and delegates met buyers' representatives to put the farmers' case. 37 But in this instance farmers were far less successful than in the freezing works agitation and the movement soon collapsed as individual societies failed to agree on any common course of action. As a result the "bags-in" question remained a major issue within the Otago farming community until the establishment of the NZFU, for farmers failed to win a return to the old system whereby bags were provided free of charge.

The metropolitan societies seemed largely uninterested in any provincial level pressure group activity until the late 1880s and were quite unmoved by the "bags-in" agitation, an issue which posed delicate problems for bodies which included both farmers and grain merchants within their ranks. From the late 1880s, however, both the Otago and Canterbury Societies became increasingly vocal over the questions of quarantine stations and railway management. 38 Some success was achieved in the matter of quarantine facilities when they were upgraded at both Lyttleton and Port Chalmers in the early 1890s. 39 But rail freights remained a perennial

37. ibid. 27 Feb 1884. The editor estimated that payment for bags would add an extra twopence to eightpence per bushel to the farmers' costs.

38. The Otago Society protested in 1889 when Lyttleton was made the only port of entry for North Island stock. Journal of the Otago A and P Society, 1896, p 20, and requested that quarantine facilities be established at Port Chalmers in 1891. ibid. 1891, p 27. In 1892 the Society voted in favour of the continuance of the Commissioner system of railway management in preference to State control. ibid. 1892, p 30. In 1889 the Canterbury A and P Association requested the Government to place the same quarantine restrictions on Australian cattle as those placed on English cattle and the request was complied with. N.Z. Country Journal, 1889, p 261.

39. It was reported at the first Colonial conference in 1892 that the Lyttleton quarantine grounds had been upgraded, but further improvements were requested both there and at Port Chalmers. N.Z. Country Journal, 1892, p 327.
issue of complaint even though reductions were made on the carriage of stock to shows and free carriage of lime was introduced under the Liberal administration. These two metropolitan societies also persuaded their local M.P.s and such influential personalities as Sir John Hall and the Minister of Agriculture himself, both active A and P members, to increase the powers of the Metropolitan societies to lease and purchase grounds and to lend money. In 1893 the Canterbury Association even gained the right to sell its old ground by lottery despite bitter opposition to gambling within parliament.

The shift of pressure group activity on to the colonial level was initiated by the Canterbury Association when it called and arranged the first colonial conference in 1892. But this development was also assisted by the activities of the new Minister of Lands and Agriculture, John McKenzie. Soon after his appointment to the portfolio McKenzie sent out a circular to all A and Ps and Farmers' Clubs asking for them to provide directives for the formulation of agricultural policy. This action began a consultative relationship between the societies and the Government which was continued and expanded by the NZFU. Furthermore, some of these recommendations, such as the establishment of a Department of Agriculture or the introduction of legislation to prevent manure adulteration, were acted upon and these apparent successes encouraged the A and Ps to continue to articulate farmer opinion at the colonial level.

40. NZPD, 80 (1893), pp 557-562.
Henry Overton, chairman of the 1892 colonial conference, made the A and P's attitude towards pressure group activity quite clear when he said:

"While altogether excluding politics, our hands will in no way be tied in making demands upon the Government of the day for the general and better development of the agricultural and pastoral interests of the colony." 42

By politics he meant party politics rather than politics per se, a definition which enabled the A and P to become active in non-controversial political areas. The conference acted out the intention stated by its chairman in demanding the establishment of a Department of Agriculture. This demand was reinforced by several prominent members of the Opposition including James Wilson, W.C. Buchanan and Thomas MacKenzie. The conference's demand then provided McKenzie with additional support for a measure he hoped to introduce. Even though other factors were involved the expression of such an opinion from a meeting supposedly representative of producers from all over New Zealand, helped to hasten the establishment of the Department. This acceleration of an administrative development was probably the A and P's most significant success at the colonial level. This achievement was of even greater usefulness to the New Zealand farming community than that Chamber of Agriculture's efforts to set up the Board of Agriculture in 1889 was to English farmers, because the Department was headed by a Minister rather than a president of a board and had direct representation within cabinet. Furthermore, the consultative relationship established in 1891 was made official when from 1892 onwards all bills relating to agricultural matters were sent out to the A and P societies for consideration and comment. McKenzie had clearly come to look to the Associations as a barometer of farmer and rural investor opinion and many of his bills reflected views expressed by the A and Ps.

42. N.Z. Country Journal, 1892, p 296.

43. McKenzie originally hoped to set up the department at a later date, but brought forward its establishment. For a fuller account of the Department's creation see Brooking, "Sir John McKenzie", pp 51-67.
His interest was revealed at the 1894 colonial conference when he sent the Department's undersecretary, J.D. Ritchie, to attend and offered to pay delegates' expenses provided they abstained from political discussion. The conference refused to accept any such interference and went on to state its demands while funding its expenses. Some of these demands were incorporated in legislation. The right of inspectors to enter milking sheds and the compulsory introduction of aerated coolers, for example, were included in the 1894 Dairy Industry Bill. Such changes also tended to reflect the views of McKenzie and Ritchie as well as divisional heads and the instructors and inspectors, but the A and Ps were clearly having some influence on legislation and as such were acting as a pressure group. It is difficult, if not impossible, to discern where the initial impetus for these changes came from, but the A and Ps made up an important part of the dialogue between the Department, at all levels from the Minister to the inspector, and the man on the land. Generally the A and Ps reinforced the Department's desire to introduce more coercive regulations and even occasionally wanted to go further. But their opposition to such actions could be effective. The Noxious Weeds Bill, for example, to which conferences were strenuously opposed, was introduced as early as 1892, but was not passed into law until 1900. Even though such emotive issues as land tenure were barred from discussion concern over day to day problems such as pest control forced the A and Ps to engage in political lobbying.

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44. See C.J. Rowe, "The Growth of Agricultural Administration, 1880-1900. The Dairy Industry as a Test Case," Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Massey University, 1973. Rowe argues that the field executive corps, that is the instructors and inspectors, were the men most responsible for these changes.

45. e.g. The Otago A and P Society favoured the restriction of killing to public abattoirs from as early as 1892, but the idea was not incorporated in legislation until 1898 and did not become law until 1900. Colonial conferences continually asked that stock inspectors should be veterinarians but the Department claimed that the appointment of such men would be prohibitively expensive.
largely through the vehicle of the Department of Agriculture, but also through lobbying parliament and M.P.s directly as was the case with each conference.

After 1900, however, the pressure group activities of the A and Ps declined with most of that type of activity being handed over to the NZFU. Amalgamation with the NZFU was even considered but rejected on the grounds that the A and Ps were essentially apolitical and included a large number of non-farmers within their ranks. Pressure group activity did not cease completely, however, as the A and Ps stepped up their demand for improvements in agricultural education and continued to ask for improvements in pest control measures. The expenditure of public money involved in any improvement in agricultural education ensured that the A and Ps would have to continue to engage in a certain degree of lobbying as such demands inevitably aroused opposition from other sectional groups and local interests. Sir James Wilson's hope that the motto of the new agricultural college he wanted set-up would be "Agriculture, but no politics" was soon shown to be naive and the A and Ps continued to reinforce the NZFU activities in this area.

Essentially this limited pressure group activity was a secondary function aimed at reinforcing the A and Ps endeavours to improve farming techniques and agricultural education, rather than an expression of the primary intention of protecting farmers' sectional interests. There was no attempt to question parliamentary candidates on the basis of a political platform as was the case with the Farmers' League of 1886 to 1887, the


47. See Brooking, Massey Its Early Years, pp 13-52 passim.


Farmers' Union of 1890 and the NZFU. One organisation was assisting the development of an industry while the other was intent on protecting the interests of one group of men within that industry.

The worldview articulated by members of the A and P societies was in many ways similar to that expressed by members of the NZFU. After all, most of these men were members of the rural sector, or at least held close ties with agriculture, and it was not surprising that they all equated economic primacy with social and moral superiority. Speakers at dinners, writers in the N.Z. Country Journal, local newspapers commenting on the affairs of their own A and P society, and members themselves, all referred to agriculture in terms of the backbone or the ground-rock of the nation. William Jenner of Lawrence, an agricultural journalist of some repute, for example, wrote to the Tuapeka Times in 1881 that the rising generation should be properly trained for work in agriculture because

"There is no occupation more noble - no profession in which more wisdom and intelligence can be displayed - no engagement in which more pleasure and profit combined with health, can be secured, than in the pursuit of agriculture." 50

"Ovis," another regular contributor to the N.Z. Country Journal, expressed similar sentiments in his remarks on the 1892 agricultural conference when he commented that "Agriculture is the granite of the social and industrial systems, it is the bedrock lasting and durable." 51 Perhaps the most deft summation of this viewpoint was provided by A.C. Begg when speaking at the A.G.M. of the Otago A and P Society in 1896. He paraphrased

50. T.T., 2 Mar 1881.

Swift to prove that farmers were more useful to the State than politicians:

"Whoever would make two ears of corn or two blades of grass grow where only one grew before would deserve better of mankind and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together."  

Similarities also existed in that both organisations tended to view the body politic in terms of groups rather than classes and were also aware of and interested in developments in overseas agricultural institutions. Secretaries, as well as newspapers, constantly lamented the farmers' inability to combine as a "class", when other "classes" such as miners, businessmen, artisans and labourers were forming organisations to protect their distinct occupational interests. The NZFU directly followed up this appeal and framed its propaganda efforts in similar terms.

Publications such as the N.Z. Country Journal or the N.Z. Farmer also kept their readers fully aware of both general and organisational developments within the agricultural sphere in Britain, Australia, North America and Europe, and to a lesser extent in Argentina and South Africa. Many precedents were set out for New Zealand farmers to build upon, but models of more politically orientated organisations such as the Victorian Farmers' Union or the Grange, were left to the 1890 Farmers' Union and the NZFU to emulate.

Yet despite these general similarities within the world view espoused by the two organisations there existed some important differences which tended to reinforce the different composition of their membership.


53. The Secretary of the Waitahuna Farmers' Club, James Moggath, urged farmers to combine and at least join the local club, throughout the 1890s. In 1893, for example, he said, "The consolidation of their interests is as much a necessity as in trades and professions that have banded themselves into unions for the purpose of watching over protecting their local interests." TT, 30 Aug 1893.
As Begg's comment had suggested the A and P's essential concern was with productivity rather than parliament. He confirmed this impression when he commented the following year that the theoretical politician was an even greater pest than the Hessian fly. As there was a much larger component of big pastoralists within their ranks the A and P's were also more tolerant of big men than the NZFU which at least paid lip service to the desirability of closer settlement and favoured the development of smaller scale intensive farming. But the most important difference lay in the NZFU's espousal of the view that farmers' occupational interests were quite separate from those of any other sectional group. Increasingly throughout the late nineteenth century farmers came to feel that they were being alienated from the other members of the economic chain in which they operated. The NZFU provided an institutional expression of this sense of isolation from the providers of credit, the distributors of their produce, the transporters of their produce and the processors of their produce. The establishment of the NZFU implied that some farmers felt that mortgage companies, stock and station agencies, the railways and manufacturers could no longer be trusted. A trade union was designed to defend its members against the selfish designs of all other occupational groups, whereas the A and P's viewed society in more interdependent terms.

Speakers at A and P meetings could eulogise the virtues of country living but they could hardly condemn the activities of "rings" or "parasitic" middlemen, when some of their members belonged to those very rings. Expressions of anti-urban feelings were also obviously more difficult from within the metropolitan societies and hostile anti-urban sentiments remained the preserve of the more militant farmers' clubs.

The Farmers Union of 1890 and later the NZFU. Finally, the A and Ps emphasis on self-help as promoted by show-day, ploughing matches and competitions, also ran somewhat counter to the NZFU's call for collectivist action, although the A and Ps did support the establishment of co-operatives.

The A and P societies then were essentially concerned with promoting a more scientific approach to agricultural production, thereby increasing output and profits. They attempted to accelerate changes in farming methodology and hoped to stimulate an increase in the application of technological innovations to the industry rather than organising for the defence of farmers' economic interests through political action. Promotion of efficiency and improvements in quality were far more important to the A and Ps than protection of farmers' vested interests. The farmers' primacy was assumed and did not have to be fought for in the political arena. In this sense the A and Ps were closer to the English provincial agricultural societies than the Chamber of Agriculture, while their considerable local autonomy distinguished them from a more truly national organisation such as the RASE. Yet the need to remove such obstacles to increased productivity as pests and inadequately trained farmers, forced the A and Ps to engage in some pressure group activity placing them somewhat nearer the model of the Chamber of Agriculture after 1890. At local level there was little difference between the English and New Zealand farmers' club, but the NZFU was unable to utilise their experience as well as the NFU. In terms of the development of the NZFU, the contribution of the A and Ps was slight apart from the initiation of meetings of farmers at the national level and the beginnings of some pressure group activity from within the agricultural sector. But that contribution was probably greater than that of the RASE or the provincial agricultural societies was to the NFU, and rather than being formed in opposition to such bodies as the A and Ps, the NZFU hoped to extend their
usefulness by moving beyond the limitations which they had imposed on political activity.

The A and Ps answered the needs of the primary phase of settlement by promoting the progress of agriculture in typically nineteenth century fashion; through applying technological advances via individual enterprise. The NZFU in contrast was concerned with entrenching the advantages which emanated from this initial phase of settlement through a typically twentieth century response; the establishment of a sectional pressure group to protect farmers' former gains from erosion in the face of increased group competition for a share of the national cake. Both organisations aimed at achieving the same ends - greater prosperity for the farmer and the community in general - but the means of realising that objective were very different, while the NZFU was more concerned with the prosperity of the farmer in particular. Perhaps that essential difference was best summed up in a piece of doggerel entitled "Our Home," which was written by Zara, a frequent contributor to the N.Z. Country Journal.

"Our politicians seeking sweet repose,
May turn delighted to our Yearly Show
And see whence true prosperity may flow.

Here varied fruits of garden, field and grove,
Of flocks and herds, and noble steeds, the prime,
Transport our hearts with thankfulness and love,
To the creator of this matchless clime!
And next, to those brave men from o'er the foam
Who made New Zealand fit to be our Home." 55

CHAPTER NINE

"QUASI-POPULISTS TO FARMER TRADE UNIONISTS."


Most accounts of the emergence of the NZFU tend to describe its foundation organiser, A.G.C. Glass, as a kind of genie, rubbing a newly discovered organisational lamp. He simply toured New Zealand and the NZFU materialised as if by magic. This view, stressing the apparently sudden emergence of the NZFU, has resulted from a failure to look at organisational developments within the farming community before 1899. While Glass may have been something of a genie, the lamp of a general farmers' political organisation was never completely buried. The NZFU was not an entirely new conception completely severed from earlier developments. It was rather the outcome of the admittedly slow growth of sectional awareness amongst the farming community which became increasingly explicit after 1880. This growing sectional consciousness received institutional expression in the New Zealand Farmers' League of 1886-1887, the Otago based New Zealand Farmers' Union of 1890 and several attempts during the 1890s to set up an Otago and Southland Farmers' Union. There were also a few smaller scale attempts to establish farmers' political organisations in other areas of New Zealand, particularly in Taranaki and

1. e.g. Neither Keith Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, (London 1959), nor W.H. Oliver, The Story of New Zealand, (London 1960), mention any organisational developments within the farming sector prior to 1899. Oliver makes no reference to the origins of the NZFU, while Sinclair ibid. p 200, remarks "An opportunity to make themselves heard more clearly came in 1899 when some well-to-do farmers formed a Farmers' Union." R.J. Duncan, "The New Zealand Farmers' Union as a Political Pressure Group,1901-1912," Unpublished MA Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1965, pp 1-12, dismisses the likelihood of there being any connection between these earlier groups and the NZFU. Cleveland, "An Early New Zealand Farmers' Pressure Group," writes off the Farmers' Union of 1890 as unimportant.
Canterbury. The adoption of such titles as Farmers' Leagues and Farmers' Unions strongly suggests that some sense of sectional consciousness existed inside the farming community, at least within Otago. Further proof of some sectional awareness is also contained in the title "Farmers'" Club, and in the name of the first national agricultural journal, the New Zealand Farmer, which began publication in 1885. The general press itself, whether metropolitan or small town, also referred to "farmers" as "a class", rather than talking of "agriculturalists" or "pastoralists" from at least the 1880s onwards. W.H. Oliver's comment, made in his 1972 Macmillan Brown Lectures, that the 1890 union represented an early phase in the process which underlies the otherwise sudden emergence of the NZFU around 1900, comes closer to placing these earlier organisations in their true perspective than any other assessment of their significance.

It must be stressed, however, that sectional consciousness was not particularly strongly developed amongst any New Zealand occupational group prior to 1900. The considerable fluidity of the job situation, which so perplexed census enumerators, militated against the tendency of New Zealanders identifying themselves in terms of their occupations. Localism.

2. Miles Fairburn's comment at the 1977 New Zealand Historians Conference that there was no such thing as a farmer until the 1920s, only settlers, is clearly preposterous. He is right, however, in stressing that sectional consciousness, especially as expressed in pressure groups organised on a national level, was not particularly well developed until the 1920s or even the 1930s.


4. Keith Pickens, for example, found frequent complaints from enumerators in trying to categorise persons according to occupation, especially when they held several jobs simultaneously. Pickens, Op. cit., p 112. Groups such as the part-time farmers and road building contractors mentioned in Chapter I must have caused the tidy-minded enumerators severe headaches.
remained a far more important determinant of political behaviour, especially in rural areas. The gradual evolution rather than the sudden emergence of sectional consciousness and consequently of sectional organisations, helps explain why a nationally organised general farmers' union did not appear earlier than 1900, especially when the predecessors of the NZFU revealed some degree of organisational progression. Furthermore, as political organisation within rural areas was made more difficult by the widely dispersed population, it tended to arise in response to developments within the urban sector. The Farmers' Union of 1890 illustrated this tendency as it was set up to counter the influence of the new urban trade unions and employers' associations. Once those trade unions declined employers' associations also tended to become less active and farmers felt less need for their own sectional organisation. The establishment of a national farmers' union was delayed in consequence. Up to 1891 farmers were more concerned with urban sectional organisations in general than trade unions in particular. Once trade unions began to revive in the late 1890s, however, farmers were not slow in countering their activity by setting up a farmers' sectional organisation administered on a national basis. It seemed as if the pattern of organisational development within the farming sector followed Newton's immutable law that for every (urban) action there was an equal and opposite (rural) reaction. Town versus country rivalries were institutionalised, at least to a certain extent, within the trade unions, the employers' associations and the NZFU and its predecessors.

5. See Chapter Two, p 62 and Chapter Three, p 95.

6. See Roth, Trade Unions, p 168. The number of registered trade unions fell away from 200 at the end of 1890 to 70 in 1894 and then more than doubled from 85 in 1896 to 175 in 1900. The Otago Employers' Association continued to operate throughout the 1890s, but does not seem to have been particularly active.
The major emphasis and general character of various organisations which predated the NZFU closely reflected the underlying economic and social changes out-lined in Chapter One. The fact that farmer activism was first confined to localised pockets, such as Waitahuna, was made inevitable by the poorly developed state of communications, the recent establishment of most farms and the increasing struggle for viability. Few farmers were yet in a position to play an active part in activities away from their farms. They became active in Otago before other areas simply because the province was longer settled, while the tussock lands of the district required much less slog to convert them into workable farms than the bush country of the North Island. As depression worsened rising interest rates and growing indebtedness drove many farmers to the edge of bankruptcy. A movement of sheer desperation emerged in response, the Farmers' League of 1886-1887. This short-lived and largely spontaneous reaction to depression went closer to producing a populist movement in New Zealand than has probably ever been realised. But its single-minded concern with land reform, its radical overtones and a short-lived upturn of the economy, combined with considerable communications difficulties to deprive the League of any widespread popularity. It disappeared as suddenly as it had appeared. The rumblings of trade union militancy in the towns in 1889 and 1890 gave the few farmer activists a chance to spread the gospel of combination and they accepted it willingly. In many ways this union with its regional base and broader set of concerns was much nearer the model of the NZFU, than the League or the activist farmers' clubs. It definitely was a far more mature organisational response than the League, even sharing a certain degree of conservative caution with the NZFU. Also it prepared a programme which was presented to parliamentary candidates to discover which politicians would support the union's policies. But in other ways it was critically different.
In 1890 the leasehold with its low interest rates and cheap sources of credit offered a security which farmers badly needed. Although the leasehold did not set many Otago farmers on their feet, Advances to Settlers and benevolent State paternalism helped many back on the road to recovery. By 1900 State intervention, as symbolised by the leasehold, had assumed a different guise. Now it appeared to be an unnecessary ceiling imposed to prevent the farmer climbing further up the agricultural ladder, even if it had once helped farmers onto the ladder and acted as a safety-net. The demands of the 1890 union and the NZFU were clearly very different. Organisationally the 1890 union was also much less sophisticated than the NZFU. Overall it was much more loosely structured and amateurly administered. It even lacked a professional secretary. This shortcoming weighed heavily against it ever developing into a regional union like the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union, with the potential to broaden its geographical base of support.

After 1890, with the decline of the trade unions and the gradual upturn of prices the Otago Farmers' Union rapidly disappeared. Several attempts to re-establish it on either a county or a provincial basis met with widespread indifference and failed. Yet increased prosperity and the recovery of the trade union movement made the emergence of a nationally organised farmers' union more likely. The initiative to take advantage of conditions more favourable to a union type of development came from the north, from the new group of dairy farmers created by the technological innovation of refrigeration and expanded by consistently high prices. This new group also had a cause lacking amongst South Island farmers, the freehold. Rising prices meant rising land values. These new North Island farmers intended to cash in on the enhanced values created by their hard work in carving productive farms out of the bush by winning the right to convert leasehold properties to freehold tenure. Then they were free to collect whatever profits they could by selling their farms at improved
values. These men provided the energy to overcome the inertia of farmer apathy, but the importance of their role needs some qualification.

Glass soon found that the movement proved almost as popular with South Island farmers. It struck a responsive chord amongst those farmers who had been politically active since the 1880s. The NZFU brought to culmination a much longer term development, which only required an energetic outside influence to revive the feeling held since 1880 that farmers needed some kind of political organisation. The factor holding all the earlier organisational efforts together was personality. The men who founded the Waitahuna Farmers' Club, were the same men who set in motion the movement to establish the Farmers' Union of 1890. They tried again in 1893 and 1899, only to fail each time. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that this small group of organisationally minded farmers dominated the foundation executives of local branches of the NZFU, much as some members of farmers' clubs in England became active members of local NFU branches. The existence of this group of men and a belief in the virtues of combination within Otago from the 1880s helps explain why mixed arable and sheep farmers came to play such an important role within the running of the NZFU. Dairy farmers were not nearly as dominant within the NZFU as is generally supposed, especially not at the national leadership level. It was after all easier for sheep men to take time off farm work. Furthermore, this group of medium sized farmers, is distinct from the big pastoralists, had long desired a farmers' union. They had to wait; however, upon the initiative and energy of the more prosperous and longer established dairy farmers to spur their apathetic and more individualistically minded mixed farming brethren into greater action. Once the organisational initiative was taken some sheep and arable men gladly joined the new movement.
The fact that these earlier attempts at organisation occurred at all suggests that some farmers wanted a union type of organisation from the 1880s onwards. Without such a desire the colony-wide NZFU would not have spread as rapidly, nor grown as quickly as it did, once conditions became more favourable to the development of a permanent farmers' trade union. The Farmers' Union of 1890, and to a lesser extent earlier organisational efforts, did indeed represent the early stages of the process which led up to the emergence of the NZFU.

The Waitahuna Farmers' Club 1881-1889

The Waitahuna Farmers' Club was in many ways a country A and P Association with its show and ploughing match. But its initiation of action over the "bags-in" issue of 1884 and its efforts at pest control distinguished it as the most active farmers' club in Otago. Later it came to express views which took it beyond the limited scope of the essentially promotional A and P Societies. By the late 1880s it moved into the area of explicitly political action for defensive purposes.

Right from its establishment the club's executive committee made it clear that they would not limit themselves to the promotion of a show. Within a month of its formation the club telegraphed the M.P. for Tuapeka, J.C. Brown, urging him to introduce a clause into the Crops Protection Bill empowering Road Boards and County Councils to adopt stringent measures to control the small bird pest. Less than two months after this an attempt to limit the club's activities to pest control was rejected when the executive petitioned the Railway Traffic Superintendent to appoint a porter to the Waitahuna railway station.

7. _TT_, 7 Sep 1881.
8. _ibid._ 2 Nov 1881.
On the other hand the initial objectives of the Waitahuna club were not nearly as grand as those of the rival Tuapeka County Farmers' Club. Its promoters envisaged this tiny local institution evolving into an organisation along the lines of the American Grange combining political, social and co-operative activities.\(^9\) The Waitahuna club's initial moderation and concentration on matters of immediate local relevance helps explain why it survived when the other never really got started.

Up to 1884 the Waitahuna Farmers' Club did not engage in any activity which distinguished it from other farmers' clubs. But in that year it initiated province-wide action over the "bags-in" issue and corresponded with the Manning River Farmers' Association of New South Wales over this question, which was also confronting Australian farmers. The attempt to broaden the base of such an agitation onto a provincial level marked a new departure. Furthermore, long after other A and P societies and farmers' clubs had lost interest in the matter the Waitahuna club kept demanding that grain dealers and stock agents pay farmers for their sacks.\(^10\) This "battle of the bags" was conducted with a militant rhetoric. Constant reference was made to the Dunedin merchant "ring" and club members made it clear they did not wish to be reduced to the level of "serfdom" by "middlemen". A distinctly sectional viewpoint was clearly being asserted in explicit fashion. Such open hostility also questioned the comfortable co-operation which existed between the business and farming communities within the Dunedin A and P Society.

\(^9\) ibid. 26 Jan 1881. This club disappeared within six months, bearing out Donald Reid's prophecy that its aims were too wide for it to succeed. ibid. 5 Mar 1881.

\(^10\) ibid. 26 Apr, 3 Sep 1884 and 1 Apr 1885.
After 1884 the club slowly widened its concerns to include fixing the rate for threshing charges and setting up vigilance committees against rabbits, rather than outlaws as in the American west. Concern with New Zealand's nearest equivalent to cattle rustling, sheep stealing, also increased. Even though some of the reported thefts were not on the massive scale of the semi-mythical exploits of John McKenzie and his dog, the disappearance of eighty sheep out of a total flock of 180 represented a very real loss. "A Lamb" and "Bah Bah" were sceptical of such losses and blamed them on the poor arithmetical skills of their owners. Nevertheless these thefts, imagined or otherwise, led the club to form another vigilante committee and to petition the Minister of Lands to tighten branding and ear marking regulations. The club's efforts at pest control were also assuming something of a political dimension as they called a rabbit conference and criticised both squatters and crown estates for their laxity in not controlling the pest. Some members even felt that runs were synonymous with rabbit warrens. The club also supported the Taieri Agricultural Society in their attempt to renew the "bags-in" agitation. By 1887 Waitahuna had earned a reputation as the home of one of the most active farmers' clubs in Otago.

11. ibid. 2 Jul 1884.
12. ibid. 5 Sep 1888.
13. ibid. 8 Sep and 10 Oct 1888.
14. ibid. 8 May 1886.
15. ibid. 20 Oct 1886.
16. ibid. Both the Bruce Herald and Taieri Advocate commented on how active the Waitahuna club was in comparison with their local A and P societies. Bruce Herald, 3 Sep 1886, and Taieri Advocate, 7 Sep 1887.
The membership of the club provides few clues as to why it was more active and more concerned with the advocacy of distinctive farmers' interests than probably any other farmers' organisation in Otago during the 1880s. Small and middling, cattle and sheep, mixed cropping and specialist stock farmers belonged to the club. The emphasis on control of the small bird pest clearly reflected the importance of arable farming within the area. The size of members' holdings ranged from 104 to over 4,000 acres. A slight majority of those whose names were recorded in reports printed in the Tuapeka Times were freeholders, whose properties ranged from £150 to £6,921 in value. Small farmers predominated with eleven of the fifteen freeholders traced owning farms of over 500 acres, everyone of those eleven properties being valued at under £1,000. But big farmers were not excluded. William Livingston and John Sutherland, for example, owned large properties and held important executive positions. They did this despite the efforts of John Cowen to bar from membership farmers with holdings over 1,000 acres. Still, even these more substantial men were farmers rather than runholders. No big pastoralist belonged to the club. By and large the club, whose membership fluctuated between forty and seventy, was also a "farmers' only organisation." Some members had local government experience

17. William Livingston, (sometimes spelt with an e in newspaper reports), owned 2,415 acres of freehold land valued at £6,921 and leased a 2,859 acre grazing run on which he ran 3,800 sheep in 1890. Livingston was also an ex-goldminer who came to Otago through Victoria. *Cyclopaedia*, Vol 4, p 677. John Sutherland, in association with his brother, owned a 1,943 acre freehold property valued at £3,465 on which he ran 2,900 sheep in 1890.

18. *T T.*, 1 Oct 1890. This notion was treated with disdain by other members. As the president Robert Craig pointed out, many of the club's most useful members, (by which he meant Livingston and Sutherland in particular), owned over 1,000 acres.

19. The only non-farmers traced were two shop keepers and a butcher. Even the butcher, like many other counterparts in small towns, owned a small farm. *The New Zealand Post Office Directory*, (Wise and Company's), 1885-1886.
on school committees, road boards or the Tuapeka County Council, but the percentage was not untypical of other A and P Societies or Farmers' Clubs. The only really distinctive feature was that at least five members, like William Livingston, were ex-gold-miners. Possibly such men had experience of some union activity, but they never mentioned it. The predominantly Celtic background of most members revealed in their obituaries, was not significant enough to differentiate this area from the rest of Otago. Nevertheless, the Kirk rather than the Chapel stood at the background of this pocket of activism and militancy. A strong Presbyterian lobby within the club prevented a liquor booth from being set up on the show-ground and succeeded in having showday dances stopped during the 1890s. A shared gold mining experience seems, therefore, to have been the only characteristic which distinguished this club from other Otago farmers' clubs. This goldfields background was also common to the Tuapeka West Farmers' Union which helped the Waitahuna club in setting up an Otago Farmers' Union in 1889.

Before the Waitahuna Farmers' Club initiated general political action on a broader geographical front, however, an attempt was made by the New Zealand Farmers' League in 1886 to recruit Otago farmers into a specialist farmers' organisation for the South Island.

20. This information on freehold land, property valuation, size of sheep flocks and local government experience has been extrapolated from the following sources. A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand 1882. Stones and Wise's Directories. Annual Sheep Returns under various H classifications, also occasionally found in the New Zealand Gazette, e.g. for 1890. The Cyclopedia of New Zealand, Vol 4, Otago and Southland. Information contained in the Tuapeka Times, especially obituaries for the ten years 1901 to 1911.

21. This figure have been calculated from these obituaries and a few other scattered references contained in other years of the Tuapeka Times. Like Livingston and many others included in the obituaries, some members came to Otago via the Victorian goldfields.

21. e.g. TT, 30 Aug 1893 or 1 Sep 1897.
The New Zealand Farmers' League 1886-1887

The New Zealand Farmers' League was founded in March 1886 by J.L. Leesmith for the specific purpose of organising freehold farmers to prevent runholders surrendering their leases en masse. Leesmith feared that any large-scale surrender of leases would place an overwhelming tax burden on the already sorely troubled small freehold farmers. For this reason he recommended that farmers should give qualified support to Sir George Grey's Lands for Settlements Bill, which aimed to break up the big estates for closer settlement through compulsory repurchase by the State and the imposition of a land tax. But while Leesmith favoured a land tax he was more concerned with the plight of freehold farmers already on the land than with the settlers of the future. His solution to the problems of impending bankruptcy and inadequate provision of credit was to set up a system of Equity Courts as Gladstone had done in Ireland and Scotland. Such courts would consider the cases of farmers who had become

23. ODT, 11 Mar 1886.
Taieri Advocate, 13 Mar 1886.
Bruce Herald, 23 Mar 1886.
Palmerston and Waikouaiti Times, 26 and 29 Mar 1886.

24. Ibid.
North Otago Times, 1 Apr and 9 Apr 1886.
Grey's Bill was similar in many ways to John McKenzie's Land for Settlements Act of 1894. But it was made unworkable by Grey's usual touch of eccentricity; in this case the floating of bonds in London to raise the capital for repurchase. He also thought in terms of perpetual lease rather than lease-in-perpetuity and proposed a repayment interest rate of 8%, the same rate as that charged by banks and finance companies, rather than the 4% rate which McKenzie introduced in his Land Act of 1892. Grey's Bill also failed because it was modelled on legislation introduced in Cape Colony and Prussia, whereas McKenzie tailored his legislation to answer New Zealand needs much more closely. Furthermore, Grey's bill did not even have the full confidence of the Stout-Vogel Ministry. NZPD, 54 (1886) pp 372-3. It is scarcely surprising that this bill failed to produce any real legislative impact, or that it has largely been overlooked by New Zealand historians.
bankrupt through no fault of their own. Once the bona fide nature of the case was established the Courts would arrange for the farmer to buy back his property at the low interest rate of 4%. If the land companies refused to do this then the State would repurchase the property and allow the farmer to pay the interest by way of rent. Leesmith made it clear that State intervention and legislative action were the only solutions to the problem.

At each of his foundation meetings a resolution was passed protesting against the introduction of any "partial" legislation in the interest of any one "class", which simply meant that the Government should not accept the surrender of crown leaseholds. A call was also made for the State to readjust rents, interests and other "burthens", especially taxes, on a fair and equitable basis.

This emphasis on large-scale State intervention was radical in comparison with such other contemporary solutions to depression as retrenchment. Leesmith was clearly much more aware of agrarian militancy in Scotland and Ireland and the response of the Liberal Government to that militancy than American agrarian movements. Unlike the 1890 Farmers' Union he made no direct reference to either the Grange or the populists.

Leesmith's arguments were laced with a hostile rhetoric which placed the blame for the freeholder's plight squarely on the sinister alliance of runholders, mortgage companies, banks and other financial institutions such as stock and station agencies. Phrases such as "victimisation by rings" and the "sword of eviction" abounded in his speeches. Once he compared the land companies with the landlords of England and concluded that even English landlords were more flexible as they as least lowered their rents.25 At Berwick he went as far as saying that "The banks and great companies had the farmers under the thumb as firmly as the Czar of Russia had his subjects enthralled."26

25. Bruce Herald, 7 May 1886.

The means of achieving the ends of preventing a mass surrender of
leases and of inducing State intervention to even up the relationship of
mortgagee and mortgagor, was the formation of farmers' leagues to provide
a vehicle from which political pressure could be applied. Each county
was to have a central council with branches in smaller towns. These county
branches were assigned the task of questioning parliamentary candidates on
the critical issue of run surrender. Then the local branches were expected
to recommend that members vote only for those candidates who pledged
themselves to fight for the attainment of the League's objectives in Parliament.
This procedure was never actually implemented by the League but it anticipated
the action of both the Farmers' Union of 1890 and the NZFU in this matter.
Leesmith hoped that the county leagues would co-ordinate their activities
throughout the South Island and eventually throughout the entire colony.
This was a rather vague conception of a federated farmers' political
organisation, but it was nevertheless the first articulation of the notion
that farmers needed a political organisation separate from existing
associations and that the new organisation should represent the interests
of all farmers rather than just the immediate locality.

The failure of the League to gain any wide popularity becomes more
understandable when the character of its founder is subjected to closer
examination. Leesmith was not a farmer but rather something of an adventurer
who had engaged in several speculative enterprises. 27 He deserted the

27. In 1881 Leesmith took up a quarter share in a 25,000 acre run in the
Hollyford Valley. He and his unnamed partners hoped to develop the
holding by providing accommodation for tourists travelling to Milford
Sound and by importing English agricultural labourers to develop farms
on the lowlands area. Hopelessly inadequate communications soon led
him to surrender the run even more rapidly than the League. It was
hardly surprising in the light of this background that "A Sheep-
farmer" of South Canterbury should write to the ODT questioning
Leesmith's credentials for leading such a movement. ODT, 31 Mar
and 1 Apr 1886.
League for the Argentine meat trade in August 1887 just as rapidly as he left behind his earlier enterprises. 28 It came as no surprise, therefore, that his claim that the Farmers' League had established branches from Riverton to Cheviot 29 was as extravagant as his rhetoric. Within Otago there were only two active branches at Palmerston and Waikouaiti. Branches were also nominally established at Outram, Milton and Berwick, but none of them progressed beyond the organising committee stage. 30 There was supposedly a headquarters set up in Dunedin 31, but it received scant attention from the ODT. Once when a farmer wrote to the Taieri Advocate requesting further information on the League he received no reply. 32 In Oamaru the Farmers' League soon developed into a straight out Land League, which became a firm advocate of land nationalisation and included many non-farmers within its ranks. 33

28. Leesmith left New Zealand to try and establish a stock exporting business to Argentina and took several breeders with him in July 1887. OW, 29 Jul 1887 p 7.

29. Bruce Herald, 30 Apr 1886.

30. Neither the Taieri Agricultural Society nor the Tokomairiro Farmers' Club made any reference to the local branches of the League.

31. The office of the League was apparently located in Princes Street. Members were cordially invited to use it to write letters and transact business when in Dunedin. Palmerston and Waikouaiti Times, 11 Jun 1886.

32. Taieri Advocate, 14 Jul 1886.

33. North Otago Times, 1 and 24 Jun 1886.
### Area of Otago Counties Under Crops and Grass in 1886. Expressed in Acres and as a Percentage of the Total Area of Otago planted in Wheat, Oats, Crops and Grass.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Cultivated Area</th>
<th>Wheat</th>
<th>Oats</th>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Grass</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waitaki</td>
<td>367,713</td>
<td>23,960</td>
<td>26,474</td>
<td>77,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34.97%</td>
<td>50.02%</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
<td>27.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waikato</td>
<td>55,712</td>
<td>2,547</td>
<td>5,950</td>
<td>12,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.30%</td>
<td>5.42%</td>
<td>4.27%</td>
<td>4.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waikouaiti</td>
<td>59,840</td>
<td>1,159</td>
<td>3,270</td>
<td>5,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.69%</td>
<td>2.47%</td>
<td>2.36%</td>
<td>1.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taieri</td>
<td>98,535</td>
<td>3,696</td>
<td>14,012</td>
<td>27,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.37%</td>
<td>7.87%</td>
<td>10.07%</td>
<td>9.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>121,151</td>
<td>4,426</td>
<td>19,227</td>
<td>35,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.52%</td>
<td>9.43%</td>
<td>13.84%</td>
<td>12.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clutha</td>
<td>166,286</td>
<td>1,574</td>
<td>35,337</td>
<td>56,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.82%</td>
<td>3.35%</td>
<td>25.42%</td>
<td>19.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuapeka</td>
<td>90,127</td>
<td>4,378</td>
<td>17,534</td>
<td>35,557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.57%</td>
<td>9.33%</td>
<td>12.62%</td>
<td>12.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maniototo</td>
<td>28,967</td>
<td>1,443</td>
<td>5,752</td>
<td>15,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.75%</td>
<td>3.07%</td>
<td>4.14%</td>
<td>5.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>20,100</td>
<td>1,846</td>
<td>5,926</td>
<td>9,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.92%</td>
<td>3.93%</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
<td>3.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>24,555</td>
<td>1,934</td>
<td>4,840</td>
<td>9,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.33%</td>
<td>4.12%</td>
<td>3.48%</td>
<td>3.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peninsula</td>
<td>18,522</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>1,319</td>
<td>17,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.49%</td>
<td>0.46%</td>
<td>2.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,051,508</td>
<td>46,963</td>
<td>139,019</td>
<td>286,498</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The accompanying tables suggest several reasons as to why the League's policies won more support in the Waihemo district than in other areas. The most obvious impression is that Waihemo county was much less developed in the agricultural sense than any of the other major farming counties (that is Waitaki, Waikouaiti, Taieri, Bruce, Clutha and Tuapeka, rather than the essentially pastoral areas of Maniototo, Vincent and Lake counties). Its underdeveloped character tended to reflect its more recent date of settlement. Low yields indicated that farms had not been established for long and that soil fertility was not particularly high. Its farming economy was less diversified as a result of more recent establishment. Even in Waikouaiti there was a substantial dairying sector which Waihemo lacked. Recent establishment and an ensuing lack of diversification probably meant that local farmers were harder hit than most of their Otago brethren. Also, settlement during and after the 1870s almost inevitably involved purchasing properties at inflated values. The fact that the majority of Waihemo properties were freehold intensified the seriousness of excessive mortgage commitments induced by over-valuation. Most Waihemo farmers were not protected by the greater flexibility of leasehold tenures like farmers in the central counties where pastoral runs predominated. Unfortunately there is no information on the size of holdings but it seems likely that Waihemo farms were relatively small. Even if this was not true the difficulties of local farmers were exaggerated by isolation from significant urban markets and by the dry climate. Finally, as there were several large estates in the area, Waihemo farmers were inclined to cast an envious eye on the large holdings of the "squatocracy". In relation to the local runholder their
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of Sheep Owners</th>
<th>Sheep</th>
<th>Flocks Over 10,000</th>
<th>No of Cattle</th>
<th>No of Horses</th>
<th>No of Pigs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waitaki</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>689,082</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15,585</td>
<td>5,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.34%</td>
<td>17.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waihemo</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>131,675</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4,322</td>
<td>1,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.53%</td>
<td>4.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waikouaiti</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>96,948</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10,455</td>
<td>1,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10.96%</td>
<td>5.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taieri</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>248,034</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17,816</td>
<td>5,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18.68%</td>
<td>16.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>150,887</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8,961</td>
<td>3,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.40%</td>
<td>10.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clutha</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>257,889</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8,091</td>
<td>3,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.48%</td>
<td>10.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuapeka</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>327,988</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8,894</td>
<td>3,629</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.33%</td>
<td>11.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maniototo</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>367,804</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5,219</td>
<td>2,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.47%</td>
<td>6.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>414,444</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5,844</td>
<td>2,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.23%</td>
<td>7.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>142,149</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4,326</td>
<td>2,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.54%</td>
<td>6.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peninsula</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5,753</td>
<td>781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.03%</td>
<td>2.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>95,357</td>
<td>32,964</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
predicament seemed to be even more desperate.  

The membership of both the Palmerston and Waikouaiti League tends to confirm these impressions. A clear majority were small freeholders. Thirty-one of the forty-nine members traced, or 63%, were freeholders in 1882, while only four operated farms of over 1,000 acres. To put it another way twenty-seven, or 90%, of the freeholders owned farms of under 1,000 acres and twenty-three, or 75%, owned farms of under 500 acres. Some of these small farms had reasonably high valuations, however, as eighteen were worth over £1,000 and nine were worth more than £2,000. This suggests that some members had mortgage commitments which placed their financial resources under considerable strain. Probably they had bought their properties at inflated costs during the 1870s and were caught in a cost-price squeeze induced by inflated land values and falling prices. Only thirteen members, or 25%, owned any sheep at all and two at the most could have achieved viability as specialist sheep farmers. The implication is that they were struggling to achieve viability solely as producers of high risk cereal

34. These tables were taken from NZ Statistics, 1866, pp268, 270, 274 and 277, and A to J. 1886, H-8. It is also interesting to note that they reveal the very mixed nature of Otago farming and show the importance of oats within the Otago rural economy. When it is remembered that there was a lucrative trade with Australia in oats the 1890 Farmers' Union advocacy of Australian Federation becomes very understandable. This factor also explains the concern with small bird control. For further information on the agriculture of Waihemo also see C.W.S. Moore, Northern Approaches A History of Waitati, Waikouaiti, Palmerston, Dunback, Moeraki, Hampden and surrounding districts, (Dunedin 1958), pp 74-99. McLintock, Op cit, p 755, points out that intensive farming fared better in Taieri, Bruce, Clutha and Taupeka counties than in the drier area of North Otago. The salvation of North Otago farming was fat-lambing which really only became viable during the 1890s. Angus, Op cit, p 465, shows that the blocking of settlement by the large estates became an issue at the 1887 election throughout North Otago.

35. A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand, 1882.

36. Horsfield claims that prior to the 1890s a specialist sheep farmer required a flock of at least 2,000 to achieve viability. Horsfield, Op cit, p 242.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Freehold</th>
<th>Leasehold</th>
<th>Part Freehold and Leasehold</th>
<th>Total Holding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waitaki</td>
<td>416 (54.95%)</td>
<td>254 (33.55%)</td>
<td>87 (11.50%)</td>
<td>757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waihemo</td>
<td>153 (64.56%)</td>
<td>46 (19.41%)</td>
<td>38 (16.03%)</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waitouaiti</td>
<td>325 (58.77%)</td>
<td>129 (23.33%)</td>
<td>99 (17.90%)</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taieri</td>
<td>528 (60.83%)</td>
<td>246 (28.34%)</td>
<td>94 (10.83%)</td>
<td>868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce</td>
<td>389 (70.34%)</td>
<td>102 (18.44%)</td>
<td>62 (11.22%)</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clutha</td>
<td>373 (82.34%)</td>
<td>45 (9.93%)</td>
<td>35 (7.73%)</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuapeka</td>
<td>342 (72.61%)</td>
<td>81 (17.20%)</td>
<td>48 (10.19%)</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maniototo</td>
<td>82 (33.74%)</td>
<td>132 (54.32%)</td>
<td>29 (11.94%)</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>103 (36.78%)</td>
<td>148 (52.86%)</td>
<td>29 (10.36%)</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>124 (52.76%)</td>
<td>87 (37.02%)</td>
<td>24 (10.22%)</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peninsula</td>
<td>144 (42.73%)</td>
<td>136 (40.36%)</td>
<td>57 (16.91%)</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otago Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.43%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
crops or as dairy farmers before the dairy industry was really a paying proposition. The League's promotion of a local dairy factory confirms the impression that some of its members were struggling dairy farmers trying to discover a more satisfactory market for their produce. Overall then, despite the inclusion of two occupiers of small grazing runs and a few middling sized farmers, the League was made up of small freeholders struggling to maintain viability.

But a political tradition rather than these socio-economic factors was probably the most important single reason for the success of the League in this area. After all the situation of Waihemo farmers was not greatly different from those in other more remote areas such as Tuapeka. Palmerston, whose League was far more active than that of Waikouaiti, was a pocket of a radical variety of Croyite Liberalism. Alex Gilmore, president of the Palmerston League, was also one of the leaders of this local radical group.

When this tradition is added to the prevailing socio-economic conditions of the district and a strong dislike of the abuses of landlordism carried from Scotland, the emergence of New Zealand's most famous land reformer from Waihemo county as well as the popularity of the League's radical policies in the area becomes quite understandable.

37. The factory was established in December 1888 at Waikouaiti. Moore, _op. cit_, p 70.
38. e.g. See Angus, _op. cit_, p 410. John McKenzie suggested compulsory State repurchase and land nationalisation as possible solutions for the land problem in his 1884 election speeches.
39. It probably was no coincidence that John McKenzie chaired the first meeting of the Palmerston League and promptly replied to the League's questions throughout its short life. He must have realised that their proceedings revealed deeply felt small farmer grievances as some of the League's demands were incorporated in his legislation. Compulsory repurchase by the State and the provision of a leasehold with a low rate of interest in particular gave the League's proposals concrete expression.
Both the Palmerston and Waikouaiti leagues held regular discussions on a wide range of topics, although the Palmerston branch organised fortnightly rather than monthly meetings. Membership was also limited to "farmers' only," establishing a precedent taken up by the Farmers' Union of 1890 and the NZPU. This restriction distinguished the League from the A and P Societies and Farmers' Clubs. Subjects considered by League meetings ranged from purely local matters such as the need for greater autonomy of local government agencies to colony-wide issues such as the land laws of New Zealand, land and income tax and reduction in civil service expenditure.

Usually one member presented a paper on a particular subject on which others commented. There was general unanimity over such issues as the need to prevent runholders surrendering their leases, the introduction of a land tax opposed to a property tax and reduction of civil service expenditure. Members agreed that civil service costs should be reduced by a quarter and wanted Rabbit Inspectors replaced by local elective committees who would charge farmers the cost of clearing the pests instead of subjecting them to deeply resented fines. Alex Gilmore in particular favoured the land tax and won the support of most members in this advocacy. "Jacobus", in a somewhat sardonic letter reporting his impressions of one of the League's meetings, quipped that the president gave a lecture on the text "The land ought to be taxed" from the gospel according to Adam Smith.

40. A saddler, a butcher and a contractor actually belonged to the Palmerston League, but all three men did operate small farms on a part-time basis. Taken from The NZ Post Office Directory (Wise's and Co), 1885-1886.

The only really divisive issue was the great colony-wide question of the hour, fiscal-policy. A majority of members wanted the tariff abolished, but James Service led a small group who believed that local industries must be developed to prevent New Zealand growing into a giant sheep run for the sole benefit of foreign manufacturers.\(^4^2\) Such a division did not occur within either the Farmers' Union of 1890 or the NZFU which were both free-trade, almost to a man. The existence of an attitude favouring limited protection within the farming community also helps to explain why those small farmers who came to vote Liberal in the 1890s were able to accept the tariff.

A strong streak of localism cut across the League's profession of concern for wider issues. Their emphasis on greater autonomy for local government suggested that they aimed to turn central assistance to local advantage. There was also an implication that while the State was expected to put the farmer back on his feet it should in no way stifle individual initiative. It is not hard to see how the New Zealand farmers' ambivalent attitude towards State assistance first developed. Nor is it difficult to understand how supporters of an essentially radical movement could later turn round to support a conservative organisation once their personal recovery was underway. Turning back to the State for help in the event of another severe depression also becomes a more consistent and logical form of political behaviour.

By 1888 the League had completely disappeared, but before Leesmith left for the Argentine its Dunedin executive made a final desperate attempt to influence the impending election of 1887. Brandishing the motto "Unity is Strength" the executive urged farmers to take the opportunity of placing a Government in power which would tend to the farmers' immediate needs. As farmers held the balance of power between the two main parties they could decidedly influence the election by voting only for those candidates

\(^4^2\) ibid. 13 Aug 1886.
who pledged themselves to support the League's five point programme which succinctly summed up its major beliefs. If this opportunity was lost, ruin was imminent. The Government would fall for ever under the hands of the "moneyocracy". An appeal was also made to enlist the sympathy of town dwellers to their cause so they too could overthrow "that blighting monied monopoly." 43

The first plank on the platform clearly reflected the small freehold farmer domination of the movement. It advocated advances from the State to freeholders personally working farms not exceeding 500 acres in extent. The second plank was a corollary to the first, namely that State banks of issue should be established. The third platform called for the replacement of the property tax by a land and income tax, a demand which the 1890 Farmers' Union refused to accept and which distinguished the League as a more radical organisation. The fourth plank restated the Palmerston League's demand for decentralisation of government, while the final plank was guaranteed the support of every farmer as it called for the reduction of rail freights on farm produce. 44

The issuing of the platform produced little impact and it does not seem to have been presented to candidates. Predictably the only other organisation which gave any serious consideration to the platform was the Waitahuna Farmers' Club. The first plank was adopted, but most speakers felt that the 500 acre limit was too restrictive. Even John Cowen, generally the club's small farmer advocate, opposed State regulation of this sort. The second and third planks were only agreed to after a long discussion and a proviso was added that incomes under £150 per annum and land valued at under £500 should be exempt from income and land taxes. 45 The fourth and

43. Taieri Advocate, 23 Jul 1887.
44. ibid.
45. The Liberals imposed similar exemptions when they introduced these taxes.
fifth plank was readily accepted. The idea of abolishing the Rabbit Department was expressed with as much enthusiasm as at Palmerston, even though it was not actually stated on the platform. Clearly the League's platform, for all its apparent radicalism, was largely acceptable to a respectable farmers' club which was activist and occasionally militant but never markedly radical. The League's ideas were capable of winning the sympathy of other Otago farmers, but a chronic lack of any concrete organisational machinery severely limited its potential for securing wider support.

The Oamaru Farmers' Club also discussed the League's platform and suggested that the area limit for loans should be extended to 1,000 acres as most members conceded that they operated farms of between 500 and 1,000 acres. But members were so interested in the rest of the platform that they left in a hurry to catch the train home. They never resumed the discussion.

Obviously the achievements of the League were of little significance. But it was important for what it proposed for three main reasons.

First, it represented one of the earliest attempts from within the farming community to articulate a vehemently sectional viewpoint. Farmers were pictured as a group whose interests were distinct from the remainder of the community, both rural and urban. Runholders and stock agents were isolated as the real enemy within the rural sector and banks and financial companies within the urban sphere. The idea of farmers as a separate group was made quite explicit.

46. TT, 31 Aug 1887.

47. Farmers' organisations at Fortrose, Wyndham and Nightcaps also discussed politics and issued platforms in 1887. Angus, Op cit, p 470.


49. Angus claims, however, that the activities of farmers' organisations like the League may have led to a slight increase in votes motivated by sectional rather than localist concerns. Op cit, p 479.
Second, the League represented quite a different model of small farmer militancy than that described by Rollo Arnold for the Wairarapa area. The Palmerston farmers were already yeoman. What they wanted was fairer treatment from the State, particularly in the form of cheap credit. They also had a vision of rough social and political equality and particularly resented the "gentry" group, but not because they were being kept off the land. Their background was Scots and Presbyterian, rather than English and Methodist, a background which produced an equally violent distaste for the abuses of landlordism. Yet the Kirk was not as important as the local tradition of radicalism in persuading these farmers to join up with the League. Clearly Arnold has described and accounted for one regional variant of rural radicalism.

Third, the League was similar in many ways to American populist movements, or at least to the Australian variant of populism. It was essentially a product of depression. It explained that depression in terms of a conspiracy of big urban financiers, a theory reminiscent of criticisms of the Eastern capitalists made by mid-western farmers. Its rhetoric was also charged with similar anti-middleman, anti-big man attitudes. A single panacea to depression, land reform rather than bi-metallism, was also propagated by the League. It even made an unsuccessful appeal to the workmen of the towns to ally with farmers in opposing the unproductive parasitic classes much as did the populists. The key issue of credit also tended to dominate the League's proceedings. Finally, the League disappeared as suddenly as it emerged. Even so some links were maintained with later variants of rural militancy such as Douglas Credit, which were also induced by depression and focussed on the issue of credit. Why the League failed to develop into a large scale populist movement is of course another question outside the scope of this thesis, but the varied impact of the depression of the 1880s in different regions, the rapid upturn of the economy in the early
1890s with the expansion of the dairying and frozen meat industries, the basic conservatism of New Zealand farmers, poorly developed communications and the lack of obvious symbols of the financial conspiracy such as powerful railway companies, were all factors which mitigated against the creation of a populist movement of any real significance. Nevertheless, the policies and intentions of the League revealed that there was at least a quasi-populist strain within the New Zealand farming community, even though the League's members were largely unaware of developments in rural America.

Otago farmers resumed their normal state of political quiescence after the 1887 election. Even the Tuapeka Time's jibe that New Zealand farmers left control of political activity in the hands of the "parasites and plotters of the towns" seemed to produce little effect. It was left to a revival of the grain bags issue to bring farmers' resentment into the open once more.

The Waitahuna Farmers' Club yet again initiated the call for united action on the issue and this time found a more sympathetic audience. At one of the public meetings on "grain bags" organised by the Waitahuna Club the Tuapeka West Farmers' Union was formed in March 1889. It was this new organisation which first introduced the idea of holding a conference of delegates from farmers' organisations in Dunedin.

Led by John Cormack, a sheep farmer who proudly acknowledged his mining background, the Tuapeka West Farmers' Union stated that it had been

50. _TT_, 18 Jul 1888.
51. ibid. 6 Mar 1889.
52. ibid. 14 Aug 1889.
53. _TT_, 20 May 1891. T.E. Williams in farewelling Cormack said he had known him from mining days at the Blue Spur, where he had been a prominent member of the mining community. Williams had also come from a mining background in Cornwall to gold-mining in Otago before he became a farmer. ibid.
"The purpose of watching over the interests of farmers socially, commercially, and politically, and eventually amalgamating with other farmers' societies in order the more effectually to secure a just representation of our rights."  

Membership was limited to farmers and its chief objectives were reduction in rail charges, limiting the powers of rabbit inspectors, securing an upper hand over the grain merchants and the establishment of a co-operative society. As John Cormack put it:—

"The motto of the farmers should be 'live and let live,' while, at the same time, decidedly objecting to die through sheer hard work that others may live and revel in luxury."  

While the new union intended to engage in traditional farmers' club activities such as shows, ploughing matches and pest control, it did try to give its proceedings a greater political orientation as its name implied. Committee members toured Tuapeka county urging local farmers to combine. Only then could farmers remove the abuses they suffered through the powerful lever of unionism as applied by other sectional groups. The towns with their trade councils and professional organisations were pointed to as examples of the advantages of combination.  

The Waitahuna Farmers' Club soon began to work in concert with the Tuapeka West Union. By June the two organisations joined together to form the Tuapeka County Farmers' Union. This amalgamated body added two more planks to the existing platform of the Tuapeka West Union: the exemption of agricultural machinery from the property tax and opposition to any form of increased taxation. The M.P. for Tuapeka, J.C. Brown, gave the union his full support in an attempt to broaden his electoral popularity, but some members disassociated themselves from any alliance with Brown as he was not a farmer. Worse still he was a protectionist.  

54. ibid. 6 Mar 1889.  
55. ibid. 16 Mar 1889.  
56. ibid. 4 May 1889.  
57. ibid. 15 Jun 1889.
While the Tuapeka movement was gathering momentum such influential rural periodicals as the *New Zealand Farmer* urged farmers to form Chambers of Agriculture to counter the influence of the urban trade unions. Within Otago the Tapanui Farmers' Union and Taieri farmers were attempting to organise a boycott against the Dunedin grain merchants. Frequent reference was also made by local newspapers to the successes achieved by Victorian farmers through combination. The climate was clearly favourable to the calling of a conference of farmer delegates to establish some type of broader based political organisation.

When the conference was held in early December 1889, it seemed to attract widespread support. Twenty-five delegates attended representing fifteen farmers' organisations, which were spread over an area extending from the Waitaki in the north to Mataura in Southland. According to the adulatory *North Otago Times* they included all the "noteworthy" clubs in Otago. On the other hand, the representative appearance of the gathering was exaggerated by the presence of four clubs from the Tuapeka area. The three Otago politicians who most consistently advocated the rural point of view in general and farmers' interests in particular, Thomas MacKenzie (Clutha), John McKenzie (Waihemo), and H.S. Valentine (Waikaia), were all in attendance and lent their support to the movement.

60. e.g. *Tapanui Courier*, 20 Mar 1889.
A check on the freeholders amongst the delegates suggests that this organisation included more middling sized farmers amongst its ranks than the New Zealand Farmers' League. It must be remembered, however, that bigger and longer established farmers would tend to be chosen as candidates for the simple reason that they could afford time away from farm work. Twelve of the twenty-seven freehold delegates who attended the conference in either 1889 or 1890, or 41%, owned properties of over 500 acres, while seven, or 26%, owned properties of over 1,000 acres. Two delegates owned freehold properties of over 2,000 acres placing them in the larger farmer category, but as in the case of the Farmers' League, even allowing for additional leasehold property, these men were quite distinct from the big pastoralist group. As twenty-seven of the total thirty-nine delegates, or 67%, already owned land, they were obviously motivated by factors other than the simple desire to become yeomen. There was a suggestion that these men felt frustrated because they could not expand their existing properties. The delegates also reflected the essentially mixed nature of Otago farming as only six could have been specialist sheep farmers even though twenty-four, or 61%, owned some sheep. The majority of the delegates then were small to middling sized freeholders who, like their more struggling counterparts in the Farmers' League, wanted to secure a better treatment for the New Zealand farmers from both the legislature and the business community.

63. A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand, 1882.

64. NZ Gazette, 1890, Vol II, pp 1297-1314.
The platform which they drew up reflected this desire. There was little concern with land settlement of the future. It concentrated far more on the removal of existing grievances. The platform of the Tuapeka West Farmers' Union was adopted along with some additions. These included the promotion of co-operative societies throughout Otago, the advocacy of intercolonial free trade and the reintroduction of the nominated system of immigration, to make up the shortage of agricultural labourers and domestic servants. Opposition was also expressed to meat buyers who monopolised cool chambers in ships, as well as to the Government for selling land to co-operative land companies. Government assistance was called for in setting up dairy factories and distilleries. Finally, the platform was completed by a suggestion that rates should be eased by introducing a special levy similar to the property tax to cover the cost of charitable aid. This was a much more moderate platform than that of the Farmers' League and one which was more closely related to the day to day problems of farmers.

More important than the rather hastily conceived platform was the decision to establish an organisation called "The Farmers' Union of New Zealand," headed by a Federal Council of five persons, to bring about amalgamation between all the existing farmers' clubs. Members also agreed that the Union should endeavour to win proper political representation of the farmers' interests by block-voting only for those candidates who pledged

65. The plank of the Tuapeka West Union which has not been mentioned previously was opposition to the subsidising of the San Francisco Mail Service. As the mail boat carried Australian wheat from Sydney and sold it in New Zealand at prices which undercut local produce, grain farmers did not see why the service should receive a Government subsidy.

themselves to support the Union's platform. Some delegates wanted the selection of farmer candidates, but the majority felt such a move would be premature. 67 Robert Craig of the Waitahuna Farmers' Club made clear his debt to the trade unions when he moved that the Federal Council be set up on similar lines to the Trades and Labour Councils. Its main function was, therefore, to deal with formal matters and to call meetings when necessary although there was of course no intention of organising strikes. The Conference itself was to act as the Union's A.G.M. 68 It was fitting that Craig, an advocate of such an organisation since the early 1880s, was duly elected to the council.

Further reinforcement for the establishment of such an organisation was provided when the union's president, G.M. Bell of Gore, read a communication from J.F.M. Fraser, a Dunedin lawyer, who had been corresponding with the Dakota Farmers' Alliance. This American organisation with its membership of 20,000, its co-operative and its fire and rail insurance company, was held up as an example worthy of emulation. Victorian farmers' organisations were also cited again as providing another example of the advantages of combination. 69 John McKenzie and Thomas Mackenzie, who at this stage sat on different sides of the House, introduced a mild degree of dissension when they argued over whether there were twelve farmers' representatives or thirty agricultural members in parliament, 70 but they agreed that "There were great evils and many disadvantages arising in consequence of the farmers of the colony not being properly represented in the House." 71

67. ibid.
68. TT, 7 Dec 1889.
69. OW, 5 Dec 1889 p 26.
70. There was an important difference in the perception of farmers' sectional interests as opposed to broader rural interests contained in this debate. John McKenzie clearly differentiated farmers M.P.s from the runholder or "gentry" M.P.s.
71. TT, 4 Dec 1889.
The North Otago Times gloated that a "rarity" had been created, an association working for the good of the community in marked contrast to the "selfish and short-sighted associations got up in the larger towns."\(^72\) Apparently widespread support accompanied the launching of the Otago Farmers' Union on its short-lived career, under the title of the New Zealand Farmers' Union.

**The New Zealand Farmers' Union of 1889 to 1891**

Filled with enthusiasm the executive of the new Union determined that the organisation which had elected them to positions of responsibility would be much more active than the Farmers' League. On the second morning of the foundation conference they displayed their resoluteness by waiting on the Colonial Secretary, Captain Russell, to make sure that the Government was fully aware of the new Union's demands. They carried this sense of purpose into 1890 as all the council members attended each of their quarterly meetings. Rules were drawn up at the February meeting using the Dakota Alliance as a guideline and the Union's objects were finalised. They were

"to unite the farmers of New Zealand for their own protection against injurious legislation, the combination of capital and the tyranny of monopoly; to support the election of candidates for seats in Parliament who are thoroughly in sympathy with the farmers' interests; and to keep members of Parliament posted in matters for the advancement of the legitimate interests of the bona fide producer."\(^73\)

Essentially these objects were not greatly different from those drawn up by the NZFU in 1902 even though they were not as comprehensive and were expressed in more militant fashion. The NZFU also placed more emphasis on land settlement, but the key emphasis of both organisations was to keep


73. *TT*, 8 Feb 1890.

74. *ibid.*, 8 Mar 1890.
the direction of legislation in the farmers' favour through direct lobbying backed up by block voting for those candidates pledged to support their platforms.

Four major possibilities of expanding the geographical range of the Union's activities presented themselves in 1890, even though nothing came of any one of them. The first occurred in the early part of 1890 when a call came from Omata in Taranaki to form a New Zealand Farmers' League. As its name implied this organisation appeared to have been similar to the Otago Farmers' League of 1886 to 1887. Its major objects were the attainment of a "sound and radical land policy, and the education of the electorate to ensure they selected the best candidate for their constituency." The promoter of this League, R.J. Bakewell, hoped that it would be established on a New Zealand wide basis by the time of the elections. Then farmers could change from the least organised "section of society" into the dominant political "class", a change which their numbers and economic importance warranted. But the impact of this League must have been slight as even the Taranaki Herald failed to provide any coverage of its activities.

It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the League's appeal caused little more than a ripple in Otago.

Two other chances of establishing links with North Island farmers' organisations occurred in 1890, one in March and the other in September. The Whangarei Farmers' Club urged farmers throughout the colony to combine in the early part of the year, but failed to follow up their suggestion with any positive action. Then in August a Farmers' Defence Association

75. OW, 9 Jan 1890 p 9, and NZ Farmer, Feb 1890 p 46.
76. Unfortunately this is the only surviving New Plymouth paper for 1890.
77. NZ Farmer, Mar 1890 p 110.
was formed in Papatoetoe, at that stage a farming district outside Auckland rather than a suburb. But this organisation had been formed for the sole purpose of preventing local farriers from raising their charges. Such an emphasis offered little hope for any broader type of alliance and the Association soon disappeared once it realised its immediate objective.

The other alliance considered by the executive was rather more interesting. It emerged from a proposal made by the Warepa Farmers' Club that the Farmers' Union should amalgamate with the Otago gold-miners. This idea was greeted with enthusiasm by the union executive and supported by other clubs and local newspapers. Much stress was placed on the fact that farmers and miners produced nearly all the country's real wealth. They alone were the primary producers, the real workers who suffered at the hands of the parasitic manufacturers, middlemen and factory workers. Together they could break the political "monopoly" of the "city constituencies." Furthermore, as the Waitahuna Farmers' Club pointed out, the traditional rivalries between farmers and miners need not stand in the way of such an alliance as many local farmers had once been gold-miners. But despite the enthusiasm nothing came of the idea. Neither group was able to formulate a workable means of co-operation.

Nevertheless, the fact that the executive even considered such an alliance suggested that the Farmers' Union was not as conservative as some of its other policies suggested. This impression of relative militancy, of

78. e.g. The Taranaki A and P Society decided against forming such an association in New Plymouth because local farriers had always been fair in their charges.

79. ibid. Sep 1890 p 350, and OW, 6 Nov 1890 p 7.

80. TT, 16 Aug 1890.

81. ibid.

82. ibid. 6 Sep 1890.
a vague concern for some degree of social justice and equality, was reinforced by the Union's refusal to join up with the Oamaru based "Farmers' and Employers' Club." This organisation had been set up in 1890 to forge an alliance between town employers and farmers throughout New Zealand, to counter the influence of the Trade Union movement and to prevent the spread of that movement into the countryside. 83 Basically the Farmers' Union leaders refused to join because they did not oppose the right of any workmen, in which category they included themselves, to form associations for their mutual protection, provided such associations did not attempt to dictate terms to the rest of the community. 84 Even though some of the Farmers' Union members were employers they did not relish the thought of working with the very manufacturers and middlemen whom they despised. Furthermore, they did not fear a rural labourers' union as they felt their men were so highly paid by world standards that such a union would have little reason to agitate. 85 Militant action by the shearers' union caused more concern, but it could always be countered by employing readily available substitute labour. 86 They were generally more worried that the trade unions were being manipulated by the manufacturers in supporting the tariff. There was even some sympathy displayed by the Tuapeka branches towards the unions involved in the maritime strike of 1890.

83. ibid. 30 Aug 1890, NZ Farmer, Sep 1890 pp 347-348, and North Otago Times, 2 Oct 1890.
84. An editorial in the NZ Farmer, Sep 1890 pp 347-348, employed a similar argument and counselled moderation in dealing with the trade unions.
85. John Grigg, president of the Canterbury A and P Association, gave similar reasons in refusing to affiliate with the Oamaru Club. NZ Farmer, Oct 1890 p 400.
86. OM, 27 Nov 1890 p 7.
The most consistently radical member of the Waitahuna Farmers' Club, John Cowen, convened a meeting in association with local miners which pledged support to the Maritime Council. Cowen passed this resolution on behalf of both the farmers and miners of the Waitahuna district and condemned the Union Company as "the greatest monopoly in the Southern Hemisphere." Three other members of the club also supported this resolution. Yet none of these men was officially censured by either the club or the Union. There was clearly room for trade unions within the world view held by some members of the 1890 Farmers' Union. Manufacturers and middlemen were greater villains in their eyes.

Not too much notice should be taken of such sympathetic attitudes, however, as the Farmers' Union Executive condemned the strikers as early as August 1890. "Farmer" was probably right when he wrote to the Tuapeka Times that Cowen's resolution was not representative of farmers in general. Such Clubs as the Tapanui Farmers' Club bore out his judgement by echoing the condemnation of the Union executive. The 1890 conference of the Union actually made little reference to the strike, but the majority of delegates probably agreed with John McKenzie's criticisms of the strikers. Once good behaviour by the trade unions gave way to militancy the tolerance of many farmers was soon revealed to be rather shallow.

87. TT, 20 Sep 1890.
88. Mataura Ensign, 31 Aug 1890.
89. TT, 24 Sep 1890.
90. Tapanui Courier, 15 Oct 1890.
The attitudes of some Tuapeka farmers constituted a radical strain within the generally more conservative views of the 1890 Farmers' Union as a whole. But compared with the NZFU the attitudes of the 1890 Union were directed against urban sectional movements in general rather than against trade unions in particular.

The likelihood of forging an alliance with either local gold-miners or farmers in other regions was made remote by internal organisational problems which beset the union throughout 1890. Its executive could do no more than contemplate wider schemes as the affairs of their own union absorbed all their energies. Complaints were soon received from the clubs that the executive was not pushing on with propaganda work at sufficient pace and that its communications were too infrequent. The executive in turn complained that the clubs were slow in replying to queries and did not lobby local M.P.s. Money to finance the executive's endeavours was also not forthcoming. Despite such difficulties the executive managed to arrange the second annual conference in late October 1890. Delegates attended, confident that they could achieve something positive.

The 1890 conference was permeated with a feeling of optimism that it could influence the outcome of the 1890 elections. This time clubs had been able to consider policy matters before sending their delegates. But there

91. In other words Angus's claim, Op.cit., p 151, that the 1890 Union was uniformly hostile towards trade unions requires some minor qualification. The lingering quasi-populist attitudes of some members and deep seated hostility towards the towns ensured that they remained more suspicious of middlemen and pernicious urban influence than trade unions as such.

92. e.g. The Waitahuna Farmers' Club condemned the apathy of the executive. TT, 3 May 1890.

93. ibid. 17 May 1890. The executive was forced to drop the thirty shillings levy per club and replace it with a one shilling levy per head in an endeavour to secure more funds and to attract smaller clubs into the Union.
were some ominous signs as well. Thirteen rather than fifteen clubs were represented as neither the Tokomairiro Farmers' Club nor the Taiieri Agricultural Society had bothered to send delegates.94

The platform drawn up by this conference made some interesting additions and amendments to the 1889 platform and emphasised once again the generally moderate nature of the Union's policies. The most significant change was the transformation of the demand that the duty on agricultural and mining implements be abolished into a call for the complete removal of the tariff, except for revenue purposes. Now the Union had placed itself squarely in the free trade camp, a position taken up by the NZPU twelve years later.

A new request was made that the State should retain control of the railways. Members of the Otago union were apparently as suspicious of private railroad companies as the American populists. An attempt to extend the demand for inter-colonial free trade into support for full inter-colonial federation was eventually withdrawn after heated discussion. A slight majority supported John McKenzie's criticism that such a scheme was premature despite the eloquent advocacy of Thomas Mackenzie. But the strength of the grain farmers' lobby within the Union was quite apparent. The other major additions were a recommendation in favour of the continuation of the property tax, despite the criticisms of John McKenzie and some delegates, and the decision to oppose all candidates favouring public borrowing.95

This advocacy of free trade, the property tax and retrenchment placed the Union's policies rather closer to those of Harry Atkinson's ministerial party than John Ballance's opposition grouping. On the other hand some rural "Liberals"96 such as John McKenzie also generally favoured retrenchment.

94. O.W., 23 Oct 1890 p 18.

95. Ibid. A side-light of interest regarding the 1890 conference was the election of J.D. Ritchie, soon to be the first under-secretary of the Department of Agriculture, onto the Union's executive.

96. Angus, Op cit, pp 548-50 and 560-61, points out that there were no clear-cut Liberal/Conservative divisions in country Otago during the 1890 election.
and free trade at this stage. Furthermore, the property tax resolution was toned down from an outright demand to a recommendation to placate the land-taxers within the Union. But once the property tax resolution was passed more radical proposals such as provision by the State of cheap loans to freehold farmers and the introduction of an absentee tax were withdrawn. Essentially the platform was conservative. Nevertheless, as it was still tinged with such quasi-populist notions as opposition to private ownership of railways and overt hostility towards middlemen, its policies were not as conservative as those adopted by the NZFU in 1902. The other notable feature of the conference was the emergence of a potentially divisive rift between the militants and the moderates within the Union.

Despite differences of opinion most delegates left the conference convinced that the Union could influence the election. Local newspapers reinforced their optimism. But there was a wide gap between passing resolutions and implementing them in a meaningful way. The Tuapeka Times claim that "a new and vital force had arisen in politics" remained a hopelessly naive assessment.

Most of the farmers' clubs seemed as uninterested in screening candidates as had the Farmers' League. The one exception was Tuapeka where the Union's branches were particularly active in questioning candidates. As a result of these questions the Tuapeka branches recommended members to vote for H.S. Valentine rather than J.C. Brown, essentially because Brown still supported the tariff whereas Valentine agreed with every plank on their platform. Furthermore, Valentine was even more vehement in his criticisms of the Rabbit Act than the Union. Tuapeka union members must

97. TT, 29 Oct 1890. The Mataura Ensign and the Western Star (Riverton) also applauded the Farmers' Union policies. Angus, 9p cit, p 546.
98. TT, 22 Nov 1890. e.g. The Tuapeka West Farmers' Union representative refused to give Brown a vote of confidence 26 Nov 1890, whereas Valentine was praised by the Union's president, John Cormack, and given a vote of confidence.
have felt a twinge of triumph when Brown was voted out even though several other factors were involved. Apart from Tuapeka the Union's impact on the election was infinitesimal.

After the election was over general apathy came to dominate the Union's affairs. By the middle of 1891 the most active branches, the Tuapeka West Farmers' Union, the Waitahuna Farmers' Club and the Warepa Farmers' Club, were lamenting the indifference of the executive which seemed to have lost its raison d'être. As the third A.G.M. came closer the Waitahuna club's delegates complained bitterly of the insufficient notice given and the lack of even an order paper, a balance sheet or a report. These delegates were so disgusted that they even considered severing their connections with the Union.

Despite their disillusionment the third A.G.M. was held, but this time there were only eleven clubs represented. The President's report got the conference off to a bad start as he delivered a partisan attack on the Government's land policy. The secretary then complained of the limited time available to the executive to manage the union's affairs. He urged the appointment of a full-time secretary, highlighting one of the major reasons behind the executive's difficulties.

Some interesting changes were made to the platform. Advocacy of the property tax was dropped because of its irrelevancy, while some opposition was expressed to dummyism and some support given to cutting up runs.


100. A candidate by the name of Fraser stood for the Mataura electorate largely or the basis of the Farmers' Union platform after the President of the Farmers' Union, G.M. Bell, declined to stand. Fraser also had notions of uniting workers with struggling settlers. Angus, Op. cit., p 546. He concludes, however, that voting on sectional lines by farmers represented only a marginal trend and the politics of localism remained predominant in country Otago. p 560.

101. TT, 4 Nov 1891.
Members had clearly decided that it would be more beneficial to give qualified support to the Government's land policies than to be branded as a reactionary opposition grouping. Two changes in the electoral system were also recommended. A concession was made to the women's movement by suggesting that the vote should be given to women who owned property. The Union also wanted electoral boundaries determined on the basis of "community of interest". These farmers were clearly aware that their numbers were too small for them to achieve dominance under the existing electoral system, especially as growth of the urban sector was coming to equal that of rural areas. They also declared in favour of plural votes for those persons who paid a pound in rates. They at least wanted the country quota extended and their dominance of local government elections maintained even if they were not serious in their advocacy of proportional representation. Such advocacy highlighted a concern within the farming community which was taken up once again by the NZFU. The only other notable policy development was the restatement of support for inter-colonial federation. 102

Despite such bold policy statements the Union was in deep trouble. Even the enthusiasts of the Waitahuna Farmers' Club held out little hope for its future. By the middle of 1892 they severed their connection with the Union in protest at the executive's inaction. 103 It came as little surprise that the fourth A.G.M. was so poorly attended that it had to be "adjourned." 104 The brief career of this regional union had come to an end.

102. ibid. 2 Dec 1891.
103. ibid. 31 Aug 1892.
104. ibid. 23 Nov 1892.
It failed essentially because it was unable to evolve an organisational apparatus capable of maintaining constant dialogue between grass roots opinion and headquarters. It possessed too loose a structure and too amateur an administration to forge the autonomous local organisations into a cohesive whole. Also the notion of a distinctly sectional farmers' political organisation seemed to be well in advance of the more parochial attitudes held by the majority of Otago farmers in 1890. As the Tuapeka Times remarked it was "premature." It represented a rather limited advance in terms of organisational development over the Farmers' League.

Its policies were clearly far more moderate than those of the League, but it was still less conservative than the NZFU in that it aimed to bring about a greater number of changes and was less concerned with entrenching advantages. In a sense it was promotional in comparison with the essentially defensive NZFU, reflecting the different economic situation of 1890 and 1900. Farmers had far more to lose by 1900.

The Farmers' Union of 1889 to 1891, like the Farmers' League of 1886-1887, was not particularly important in itself, but it did nevertheless represent the first concerted attempt by farmers to set up a political organisation for both the promotion and defence of their general sectional interests. Unlike the League it tried to act as general pressure group standing guard over a wide range of issues rather than as a movement attempting to win specific reforms.

Once the Liberal Government proved itself to be far from revolutionary and the trade unions declined in importance farmers rapidly lost interest in the notion of establishing their own sectional pressure group. A Farmers' and Country Settlers' League was started in Canterbury in 1892, but it was of no real consequence. Essentially it was promoted by the local "gentry"

105. Ibid. 3 Dec 1892.
in an attempt to offset the influence of the trade unions. It soon disappeared once the big pastoralists who dominated the executive failed to display any sensitivity towards the aspirations of smaller farmers. Its only notable contribution to the development of farmers' organisations was that it produced a farmers' leader who assumed an important role within the executive of the early NZFU, G.W. Leadley.\footnote{Eldred-Grigg, \textit{Op. cit}, p 391.}

An attempt was made to set up a Southland Farmers' Union in 1893,\footnote{\textit{TT}, 11 Jan 1893.} but it produced no tangible results. Once again it was left to the Waitahuna activists to promote a broader level of combination. This time they decided to limit their activities to the counties of Tuapeka, Clutha, Bruce and Taieri, with the intention of gradually establishing branches throughout the "Middle Island." Farmers' clubs in those counties responded favourably to the idea. In October the South Otago Farmers' Union was proposed, employing the 1890 Union as a model.\footnote{\textit{ibid.}, 4 Oct 1893.} The objects and aims were nearly identical. The only innovation was the introduction of a two shillings subscription for farmers' club members and four shillings for farmers not already belonging to clubs, in addition to a two guinea levy on each club. This Union was founded at the end of November in Milton where a conference was held on the same lines as those of 1889 and 1890. But the new Union was doomed before it started. So few delegates attended that it had to be "adjourned" and those who attended agreed that there was little chance of persuading other farmers to join.\footnote{\textit{ibid.}, 2 Dec 1893.} Once the 1893 election had passed all hope was lost.\footnote{\textit{ibid.}, 9 Dec 1893.}
Further efforts were made by the Waitahuna club in 1894 and 1895 to revive the four counties union but to no avail. 111

From 1896 to 1899 the Waitahuna club continued to urge the formation of a farmers' union, this time not only a county or regional union but "one general union" for the whole of New Zealand, structured on a federal basis. 112 In 1899 they won some support when the Tuapeka West Farmers' Union, the Gore Farmers' Club and the newly formed Tuapeka Agricultural Society, joined forces with them in calling yet another conference in Dunedin. Once again very few delegates attended. The conference went ahead regardless and founded the Otago and Southland Farmers' Union in the hope of forming an organisational nucleus to secure more support. But the initial intention of incorporating Canterbury within the range of its activities had to be dropped. The platform drawn up was much the same as that of the 1890 Union. Its major planks advocated Australian Federation, greater local autonomy in rabbit control and payment for bags by grain merchants. A temporary committee was appointed to keep the tiny organisation alive. 113

Somehow this committee managed to arrange another conference for 1900. But even though the meeting was arranged to coincide with the Dunedin winter show and despite the ample publicity provided by the Otago Witness, only the same five clubs were represented. It was, as "Agricola" quipped, "The Farmers' Non-Union." Its only significance was the determination expressed by the majority of delegates to develop a non-party political organisation rather than another agricultural society. 114 Nothing more was heard of the second reincarnation of the 1890 Farmers' Union.

111. ibid. 29 Aug 1894 and 28 Aug 1895.
112. ibid. 2 Sep 1896.
113. ibid. 6 Dec 1899 and OW, 30 Nov 1899 p 8.
114. OW, 31 May 1900 p 8 and 14 Jun 1900 p 6.
Meanwhile important developments had been taking place elsewhere. In late 1897 the Taranaki Farmers' Club had called for a meeting of farmers' club delegates in Wellington to discuss the formation of a "central" and "common" organisation. It was proposed that this organisation should be represented by clubs in each main centre and branches in the provincial towns. Its promoters intended that it would "protect and forward" farmers' best interests by keeping a watch on legislation, providing advice on market trends and establishing co-operative societies. Although nothing came of this scheme it did reveal a desire on the part of some North Island farmers for at least a North Island wide farmers' political organisation.\textsuperscript{115}

J.P.D. Morgan also tried to establish a "Farmers' Trust" in the Waikato area in 1899. He hoped that this trust would eventually incorporate both a political union and a giant co-operative society encompassing the whole of New Zealand.\textsuperscript{116}

Much more important than these organisational suggestions was the decision of A.G.C. Glass, a bush farmer from Broadwood near Kaitaia, to persuade other farmers in his area to form a Farmers' Union in September 1899. From the outset he made it clear that he intended to establish a pressure group to watch over legislation affecting farmers' welfare rather than a co-operative society or yet another agricultural association.\textsuperscript{117}

The popularity of this concept and the consequent rapid spread of the movement throughout the North Island has been well documented, as has Richard Seddon's reaction to it.\textsuperscript{118} All we need note is that by the middle

\textsuperscript{115} NZ Farmer, Dec 1897 p 517.

\textsuperscript{116} OW, 21 Dec 1899 p 6.

\textsuperscript{117} NZ Farmer, Oct 1899 p 408.

\textsuperscript{118} See R.J. Duncan, \textit{Op cit}, pp 1-14, and Les Cleveland, \textit{Op cit}, pp 49-67. Seddon became so alarmed that he set up a rival Producers' Union. But this movement stimulated rather than slowed the growth of the NZFU. Government attacks on the new organisation as a reincarnation of the opposition's old extra-parliamentary wing - the National Association - (e.g. A.W. Hogg (Masterton), NZPD, 116 (1901), p 78) further assisted its progress. By October 1901 Seddon conceded defeat and the Producers' Union amalgamated with the NZFU. OW, 2 Oct 1901 pp 16-17.
of 1901 branches had been established throughout the North Island, a membership of over 8,000 recruited and several provincial conferences had been held to formulate policy. These conferences emphasised the need to oppose both the legislative influence of the trade unions and the protective tariff and they urged that land settlement should be accelerated by the introduction of the freehold option on leasehold tenures. The spread of the movement throughout the South Island has, however, been rather more neglected.

"Agricola" of the Otago Witness first commented on the growth of the North Island Farmers' Union in June 1900, noting sagely that it would probably never spread across Cook Strait. Otago and Southland farmers bore out his pessimism by taking little notice of the movement until the middle of 1901. Most of their energies seemed to be directed towards the advocacy of trapping rabbits instead of poisoning them in the face of strenuous opposition from the rest of the country.

Once the Union's organisers arrived in Canterbury in July 1901 to take up their recruitment campaign in the South Island, Otago farmers became more interested. Initially both newspapers and farmers regarded the Union with suspicion, essentially because they viewed it as a movement which had arisen in response to the needs of North Island farming and had,

119. OW, 14 Jun 1900 p 6.

120. A lucrative trade in tinned and frozen rabbits had grown up in Otago in the late 1890s. In 1900 the export of skins earned £41,688 and frozen rabbit £154,075. OW, 26 Jun 1901 p 6, and 4 Sep 1901 p 7. But this activity angered farmers in other parts of the country. At the A and P Conference in 1900, for example, the ten Otago/Southland delegates were ignored by the other thirty delegates when they asked for concessions in poisoning regulations to allow them to carry out trapping operations. Ibid. 19 Jul 1900 p 6. North Island farmers also wrote letters to the OW criticising the attitude of Otago farmers in this matter. E.g. "North Islander" Ibid. 22 May 1901 p 8.
therefore, little relevance to South Island farming. Some pro-Government farmers also feared that it was sponsored by the Opposition party. Glass himself complained of some initial South Island opposition, while settlers on the Cheviot estate criticised the NZFU for interfering with the Government's lands for settlement policy. But once these suspicions were removed by Glass and his assistant, Oscar Fisher, Otago and Southland farmers responded enthusiastically and branches were established with considerable rapidity.

In Tuapeka, for example, branches were established at Lawrence and Waitahuna in early September. The same men who had been active in the local farmers' club and earlier attempts to form a Union once again dominated the foundation executives. Eight of the ten committee members of the Waitahuna branch of the NZFU had played a prominent part in these earlier organisational efforts and six of the ten man Lawrence branch executive. Alex Fraser, president of the Lawrence branch, had also stood as an independent Liberal.

121. The ardently pro-Liberal Southland News, 17 Aug 1901, was worried that the promoters of the union had "ulterior motives." They also considered that the different types of farming in the two islands made one New Zealand Union impossible. The Union's organisers only partially succeeded in allaying these fears. An editorial in the TT, 3 Aug 1901, first warned of the danger of bringing farmers into contact with their "natural enemy", the middlemen and large-scale urban employers such as manufacturers. They also felt that the new union was too blatantly opposed to the Seddon administration. By the time local branches were established, however, the paper gave them enthusiastic support provided they shunned party politics.

122. TT, 28 Aug 1901.

candidate at the 1899 election providing some support for Glass's claim that pro-Liberal farmers had joined the new organisation. The kind of organisation long dreamed of by a handful of Tuapeka activists was at last becoming a reality.

Once the initial momentum was provided to overcome the inertia of apathy organisational progress accelerated. By the time of the first provincial conference in early October 1901 twenty-four branches had been established in Otago. This foundation provincial conference immediately set to work to prepare policy statements for the first colonial conference to be held the following year.

By the end of 1901 the NZFU was firmly established at the local, provincial and colonial levels. Earlier quasi-populist stirring within the farming community had finally evolved into a far more organisationally mature farmers' trade union attracting much wider support than any of its predecessors. But much work was still required from the central executive if the new organisation was to avoid the fate of the earlier farmers' political organisations.

The various attempts to establish some type of farmers' pressure group between 1886 and 1900 were primitive, localised and confined to a few farmers. They belonged to the nineteenth century rather than the twentieth with their loose and informal organisational structure. Nevertheless, continuities did exist between these organisations and the NZFU as set up in 1901. Just as longer term economic, social and political processes explained the emergence of the NZFU around 1900, so too did the previous efforts of a few organisationally minded individuals to set up some kind of farmers' political union. These men and the short-lived organisations they brought into being provided the bridge between past and present. The NZFU in many

124. TT, 21 Oct 1899.
125. NW, 18 Sep 1901 p 17.
ways grew out of their experiences whereas the NFU evolved in opposition to the traditions set down by earlier agricultural organisations. Some important differences were soon to emerge, however, between the NZFU and its predecessors. The most significant of these was its ability to become a permanent fixture on the political landscape of the new century.
CHAPTER TEN

"PRINCIPLES NOT PARTY."

THE STORY OF THE NEW ZEALAND FARMERS' UNION
AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL 1902-1929.

I Growth

Unlike the NFU the NZFU was unable to sustain its early burst of enthusiasm. Within two years of its establishment national membership fell from a figure of around 20,000 to about 9,400. There was no major recovery until 1929 when an intensive recruiting campaign revived flagging interest and nearly doubled the membership to approximately 17,000.

It should be made clear that the dramatic drop in membership from 1903 to 1904 was considerably exaggerated by the comparison, between statements of nominal and actual paid up membership. In fact the NZFU was rarely sure of its real membership because of variations in subscription rates within the provinces. But it appears that membership changed little from 1904 up to 1929. Earlier claims of 25,000 members were clearly wildly inflated estimates put out by the organisation's promoters to secure immediate and widespread recognition for their new union. The real test of allegiance was the payment of subscriptions and attendance at meetings. When that test came many promises of monetary support disappeared along with the men who made them. Apathy of rank and file members and the general indifference of the wider farming community were problems which continued to plague the NZFU until it was transformed into Federated Farmers in 1944. Neither colonial nor provincial organisers were able to solve either of these two related problems; problems which were made more insoluble by the nature of New Zealand's geography and relatively poorly developed communications. Endless recruitment campaigns in trains, in cars and on horse back produced little impact. Even J.T. Prain, the singing secretary
of the Otago provincial branch, was unable to arouse any real enthusiasm amongst local farmers, except for his singing. Local branches appeared, disappeared and sometimes reappeared with amazing rapidity. Membership at both the provincial and local levels fluctuated considerably as a result, but without dramatic increases or decreases. This tendency explains the wave-like nature of the graph illustrating the growth of the NZFU.

The more rapid geographical spread of the NZFU was revealed by the attendance at the first Colonial conference in 1902 of delegates from eleven provinces representing every major farming district in New Zealand. Only Westland and the Marlborough Sounds had not established branches. By 1913 even those remote areas had secured direct delegate representation.

During the 1920s the number of provincial units was increased to twenty-two with full provincial status being granted to such areas as Poverty Bay, Manawatu, Wairarapa and North Otago. This change was implemented to make representation more direct and administration less unwieldy. It was also aimed at providing an outlet for the expression of growing regional sentiments. Theoretically the greater number of intermediate units should have more accurately approximated the communities of interest of twentieth century New Zealand than the outmoded and essentially nineteenth century conception of the province. But in fact the increase of provincial units stimulated rather than diffused factionalism within the organisation. Overall the larger number of units detracted from the cohesiveness of the NZFU whereas the presence of forty counties within the NFU tended to mitigate against the development of disruptive internal divisions.

1. e.g., TT, 14 Feb 1906. After trying to persuade farmers on the Greenfield estate to establish a branch of the NZFU Prain sang "The Standard on the Braes O'Mar".
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROVINCE</th>
<th>TOTAL FARMERS WITH 20 ACRES OR OVER</th>
<th>FINANCIAL MEMBERS OF F.U.</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF FINANCIAL MEMBERS TO TOTAL FARMERS.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>20,144</td>
<td>2,026</td>
<td>2293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Bay</td>
<td>2,154</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkes Bay</td>
<td>3,057</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Hawkes Bay</td>
<td>1,342</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manawatu</td>
<td>8,485</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanganui</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>670</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wairarapa</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>670</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.Taranaki</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.Taranaki</td>
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<td>406</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Nelson</td>
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<td>136</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>S.Canterbury</td>
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<tr>
<td>N.Otago</td>
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<td>1,14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otago</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>895</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southland</td>
<td>4,854</td>
<td>1,051</td>
<td>1,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.Z. TOTAL</td>
<td>64,743</td>
<td>8,834</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The divisive effect of parochialism was made worse by the inevitably disproportionate influence of the Auckland provincial branch. As nearly a third of New Zealand's farmers lived in that one province it was scarcely surprising that one quarter of the NZFU's membership belonged to the Auckland branch. The accompanying tables reveal that even the higher proportion of farmers within the ranks of the Hawkes Bay, Taranaki, Otago and Southland branches could not off-set this imbalance. Auckland members understandably felt that they were under-represented at the national level, while the other provinces remained wary of dominance from Auckland. The likelihood of the union splitting into pro and anti-Auckland camps was very real and this happened to a certain extent during the 1920s. In many ways there were in fact two New Zealand Farmers' Unions. Earlier studies have too often assumed that the policies of the NZFU and the Auckland branch were synonymous because of this numerical predominance. Assessment of the NZFU's significance from an Auckland perspective has tended to distort our understanding of the NZFU as a whole. The importance of dairy farmers within the organisation and the advocacy of more militant policies have been exaggerated as a result of this failure to differentiate between the national and the provincial organisation. Meat men were in fact the most predominant group amongst the NZFU's national leaders, while moderation was more typical of its policies than militancy.

The problem of one giant intermediary unit never in fact troubled the NFU as even the two biggest counties, Yorkshire and Lancashire, contained only 20% of England's farmers and 11% of the NFU's total membership.

The problem of the Auckland giant was exacerbated by traditional north versus south rivalries and the fact that Wellington held nothing like the pull of London over the remainder of the country. But even allowing for such difficulties the NZFU never approximated the cohesiveness of the NFU. In comparison it remained a primitive and fragmented organisation
crippled by internal divisions. The establishment of a breakaway Dairy Farmers' Union of some 5,000 members in the 1920s and the continued separate existence of the Sheep Owners' Federation made it clear that the NZFU was still only a farmers' union. It had to wait until its transformation into Federated Farmers before it could claim to be the national farmers' union of New Zealand.

As the NZFU succeeded in quashing nascent agricultural labourers' unions in Otago and Canterbury during 1908 and 1909 no comparison can be made between the fortunes of the NZFU and a New Zealand equivalent of the English National Union of Agricultural Workers. But the growth of the NZFU can be compared with the trade union movement in general.

As first the NZFU equalled and possibly even exceeded the total New Zealand trade union membership. Such numerical parity was referred to frequently by the NZFU's promoters as evidence of their organisation's ability to counter the influence of the growing trade union movement. But the NZFU soon fell behind and then remained static, while the trade unions continued to increase steadily. There was no dramatic increase in trade union membership during World War I as in England, but rather a growth spurt immediately after the war which the NZFU was unable to follow. A strengthening of the farmers' sectional pressure group had to wait until a greater number of New Zealand farmers realised that their earlier numerical significance and political importance was declining. Such a realisation did not occur on any widespread scale until the late 1920s.

By July 1902 when the NZFU held its first colonial conference the organisation was loosely established on a colony-wide basis. Yet it was still not a strictly colonial organisation as its affairs were managed by the Wellington provincial executive based in Palmerston North. The NZFU had to wait until 1905 before a permanent headquarters was established in Wellington and a part-time secretary was engaged. This essential change created a few problems, for it involved an increase in the subscription from five shillings per member to ten shillings, an increase resisted by some provinces who feared it would frighten away prospective recruits. With this critical change the NZFU became the first New Zealand farmers' organisation to have its affairs administered from the capital.

Despite this important organisational advance the problem of regular consultation with South Island provincial executives was not satisfactorily resolved. The idea of holding alternate colonial executive meetings in Wellington and Christchurch was toyed with during the first few conferences but was only tried once. Perhaps the NZFU lost a real chance to overcome this difficulty in rejecting this proposal for the problem continued to hinder the organisation's progress throughout its history. G.W. Leadley


5. A meeting of the colonial executive was held in Christchurch on 8 Nov 1904. Minutes of the Colonial Executive of the NZFU, Vol I 1904-1909.
of Canterbury, the union's vice-president, had to act as South Island consultant until 1910 when other South Island representatives were added to the Dominion executive.

Despite such initial organisational difficulties the 1902 conference managed to lay down the basic objects, platform and structure of the NZFU which remained basically unchanged until the 1930s.

The essentially defensive emphasis of the initial objects of the NZFU was similar to that of the NFU. The NZFU aimed to

"Keep a vigilant watch over all measures brought before the House of Representatives, and on the working of present laws, to protect against any measure deemed injurious to the farmers' interests in Parliament".

The intended means of achieving these objectives was block voting only for those candidates who agreed to the platform of the union. The other objects were more positive and less defensive in tone. They aimed to promote settlers' interests through co-operation, the opening up and settlement of Crown and native lands, the improvement of communications and the cheapening of freights and farm requirements.

A seven point platform reinforced these objects. Almost immediately most emphasis was placed on the second and third planks; the offering of a choice of tenure in new settlement areas and the granting of the freehold option to all crown tenants. The remaining five planks mixed essentially localist aspirations with more nationally orientated objectives. They consisted of the following demands: that public works grants be spent immediately they were sanctioned by parliament; that native lands which benefited from local government expenditure be rated the same as European land; that there should be no protective tariff; that the Fair Rents Bill be opposed as interfering with existing contracts (by which the NZFU meant

6. ADCM, 1910, p 3.
7. ACCM, 1902, p 36.
crown leaseholds); and finally that ratepayers only be empowered to vote in local body elections. 8

Membership qualifications differed slightly from the NFU in that all owners of rural land and agricultural labourers were admitted to membership, along with practising farmers. Other persons interested in agriculture were entitled to become honorary members as was the case with the NFU. 9 This permissive membership criterion reflected the different structure of rural society in the two countries. Farmers were not viewed as a separate group from both landlords and labourers as in England.

The basic structure of the NZFU laid down by the first conference was pyramidal like that of the NFU. At its base was the sub-branch requiring a minimum membership of ten. It was in turn responsible to the branch. A branch needed a minimum of twenty-five members if it was to be accorded full branch status. Such status entitled a branch to send one delegate to the annual Provincial conference and one extra delegate for every 100 members, but there was a limit of three delegates per branch. The Provincial executives in turn were entitled to send one delegate to the Colonial conference if their membership was under 1,000 and up to four delegates for every additional 1,000 members. Each delegate was entitled to vote, with the Colonial President holding the power of the casting vote. Presidents of the provincial branches were also automatically made ex-officio members of the Colonial executive body which was called the Colonial Council. 10

8. ibid. p 37.
9. ibid.
One significant omission from the structure laid down in these guidelines was a statement on the number of meetings to be held during the year. All that was required was an A.G.M. Often at the local level that constituted the sum of branch activity. Chairmen at all levels were also empowered with full control of business between meetings. The logical consequence of such a rule was that local branches were literally run by one man. In fact this is what happened in many cases.

Amalgamation with other bodies was left wide open as the constitution provided that any "kindred" society could join forces with the NZFU, provided the provincial executive agreed and the joining society paid the requisite levy. The way was thereby left open for the absorption of such bodies as the farmers' clubs, but the matter of the levy and strong loyalties to local institutions was to hinder the process.

Rule fourteen was to pose problems for the NZFU as it allowed "the consideration of any question affecting the farming or pastoral interests" but added rather ambiguously that branches should "as far as possible avoid the discussions of purely partisan questions." This statement hardly constituted an adequate definition of where political discussion should end and party orientated debate begin. The whole question remained unresolved and proved to be a source of endless argument at all levels of the organisation. The granting of discretion in this sensitive area seemed to work for the NFU but it was a cause of divisiveness within the NZFU.

The other major feature of the constitution was the considerable degree of provincial autonomy imparted by the provision that provincial executives could set their own rates of subscriptions. 11

The NZFU as established in 1902 was not nearly as centralised as the NFU, while the provinces retained even more autonomy than the counties. But

11. This section on the constitution of the NZFU has been based on ACCM, 1902, pp 36-40.
compared with any earlier New Zealand farmers' organisation its structure was far more sophisticated and its aims considerably more comprehensive. For the first time one organisation was attempting to represent the interests of all farmers throughout the entire country.

Despite the rather loose structure of the new union and its far from continuous administrative procedures it secured some early successes with remarkable rapidity.

The most notable early success was the election of the colonial president for 1902, Mathew Middlewood Kirkbridge, to the House of Representatives at the 1902 elections as Opposition member for Manakau. With Kirkbridge's election the NZFU secured a one remove representation within parliament almost immediately, whereas the NFU had to wait fourteen years for equivalent representation at Westminster. Kirkbridge's most significant achievement on behalf of the NZFU was in persuading parliament to sanction the establishment of a Farmers' Mutual Fire Insurance Association to be administered by the NZFU. He managed to pass the measure despite some opposition from Seddon who was setting up the State Fire Insurance Company at the same time.

The NZFU also established contact with the highest levels of political representation much more rapidly than the NFU, partly because that level was much more readily accessible in New Zealand. Deputations to the Prime Minister after each colonial conference made both Seddon and Ward fully aware of the NZFU's opinions on matters which directly affected farmers. This type of negotiation was further backed up by the appointment of a committee in 1904 to watch developments in parliament. Then in 1906 Edward Newman, Opposition M.P. for Manawatu, agreed to act as parliamentary

12. NZ Statutes, 1903, No 86, pp 323-332.
watchdog. Such an arrangement constituted a far more direct link with parliament than the appointment of a parliamentary lobbyist by the NFU. Sir James Wilson, who was colonial president of the NZFU from 1903 until 1920, was also appointed to the newly established Agricultural Implement Manufacture, Importation and Sale Board in 1906. This appointment was considered by the NZFU to represent official Government recognition of the emergence of a new spokesman for the farming community.

By 1906 it had become patently clear that the objective most desired by the NZFU was the introduction of the freehold option. Up to 1913 the freehold option was the charter of the NZFU just as tenant right was the charter of the NFU.

The degree of exaggeration involved in the NZFU's advocacy of the freehold, already demonstrated in Chapter One, was further borne out by the fact that 57% of NZFU witnesses had no experience of crown leasehold tenures. Most of them were like the four members of the Lawrence branch who were forced to admit that they knew very little about l-i-p. But it would be a major mistake to dismiss the freehold agitation as a storm in a teacup even though the freehold was clearly entrenched as the major form of tenure by 1900.

The call for the freehold was very important both to the NZFU and to New Zealand's broader political development simply because of its strong emotional appeal. It became a rallying cry for New Zealand farmers during a period when there was lack of major issues or controversies. Such mundane matters as pest control or rating may have had more immediate

15. ibid. p 13.
16. A to J, 1905, C-4A, pp 291-302. Furthermore, 61% ofNZFU members who gave evidence to the Commission on their own behalf were freeholders. About 34% of the eighty-three official witnesses and 26% of the twenty-three unofficial witnesses had had experience with the l-i-p tenure. But only 17% of the official witnesses and 13% of the unofficial group were still l-i-p tenants in 1905.
impact on farmers' everyday lives, but they did not stir up strong feelings in the same manner as the freehold agitation. It was not surprising, therefore, that the freehold issue provided an ideological foundation around which a political opposition was able to develop as the champion of individualism against the apparent tendency of the Liberals to build a collectivist state. When that Opposition party finally adopted the name of Reform it stood not only for the reform of an unwieldy and corrupt bureaucracy, or simply the reform of land tenure, but the reform of a total economic, social and political system. Like the NZFU itself the emergence of such a party reflected the overall economic, social and political turn-around which occurred in New Zealand about 1900.

Those farmers within the NZFU who so vociferously advocated the advantages of the freehold were calling for the dismantling of state machinery which had put some of them on their feet. Both longer established farmers and men who had once sided with the Liberals in overthrowing the big pastoralists, now wanted to turn public assets to private advantage. 17

This group, who expressed their attitudes through the vehicle of the NZFU, determined to maintain their newly achieved prosperity and enhanced social status through two major courses of action.

First, through attaining the right of all farmers to profit from a life-time's toil by either selling their freehold properties at greatly increased prices or handing them on to their children at enhanced value.

P.F. Hockley, advisory committee member and later Reform M.P. for Rotorua, summed up this desire neatly at the 1911 Dominion conference when he said

17. 31% of the official NZFU witness and 52% of other NZFU members who gave evidence had farmed for over twenty years. 18% had farmed for under ten years suggesting that they might have received some State assistance, while 43% acknowledged some degree of State support.
that any man who took up a 1-i-p section

"and put the best twenty years of his life on it ....at the end he would feel that every penny of the increased value belonged to him." 18

Perhaps John McQueen, president of the Southland branch, was even more perceptive when he claimed that "More money was made by selling farms than by farming." 19

Second, the men who founded the NZFU were determined to resist the attempts of organised labour to challenge their vested interests. The Fair Rent Bill with its threat of periodic revaluation and increased rents spurred the NZFU to action more than any intrinsic dislike of the leasehold. Once the possibility of periodic revaluation was removed by Massey's amending legislation the freehold agitation rapidly fell away.

The major policy objective of the NZFU was attained in about the same time as that of the NFU. After criticising the 1905 Land Commission as simply a time-wasting device to pacify farmers as well as both the freehold and leasehold wings of Seddon's own party, the NZFU unleashed a major campaign against Robert McNab's Land Bill in 1906. Opposition was focussed on the introduction of a sixty-six year lease with revaluation because it was feared that revaluation would be applied to all crown tenures. Tenants could then be penalised for making improvements by raised rents and reduced security of tenure. James Wilson consulted with the Advisory Committee and provincial and local branch executives to see if they shared such apprehensions and on the basis of their replies prepared a pamphlet which was sent all over New Zealand. 20 At the same time NZFU speakers were selected

18. ADCM, 1911, p 6.
20. The Land Bill. How It Affects The Farmer, The Merchant, The Manufacturer, And The Industrial Worker, (Palmerston North 1907). These views were reiterated at the 1906 Colonial conference ACCM, 1906, pp 5-6.
to travel throughout New Zealand and reinforce Wilson's criticisms of the Land Bill.\textsuperscript{21} Like Wilson these men also criticised McNab's attempt to control speculation by limiting all crown holdings to a valuation of £15,000. Such an imposed limit was condemned as an unnecessary reduction of the small farmers' security which would only make loans more difficult to secure. It was also feared that it would force up interest rates. The provision that a holder of one of these sixty-six year leases could obtain the freehold by paying up 90% of the capital value failed to satisfy NZFU demands for it did not allow an adequate return for improvements.

This campaign was successful as the Land Bill was withdrawn and replaced by the Land Act Amendment Bill. This new measure substituted a thirty-three year lease with right of renewal at original valuation.\textsuperscript{22} Feelings of triumph at winning this concession escalated further when McNab lost his seat in 1908 to a freehold Opposition candidate. The only aspect of the campaign which caused the NZFU concern was the accusation that it was a "big man's" organisation dominated by land monopolists.\textsuperscript{23} Press statements were issued to counter this charge and a resolution was passed that the NZFU favoured closer settlement and limitation of area, but desired that limits should be devised on a more equitable basis.\textsuperscript{24}

But the modification of the Land Bill still constituted an incomplete victory. The NZFU would not be satisfied until the freehold option was introduced and the possibility of land nationalisation was removed once and for all. So began the second phase of the freehold agitation.

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\textsuperscript{21} e.g. James Boddie of Taranaki spoke to the Lawrence branch of the NZFU on the Land Bill. TT, 30 Mar 1907. \\
\textsuperscript{22} ACCM, 1907, p 3. \\
\textsuperscript{23} ibid. p 5. \\
\textsuperscript{24} ibid. 
\end{flushright}
Each annual deputation to the Premier repeated the demand for the freehold option and the Farmers' Union Advocate constantly echoed that demand. Opposition M.P.s also pledged themselves to the freehold cause. This continual pressure both from outside parliament and within forced further concessions from the Ward Government such as the Land Settlement Finance Act of 1909, which enabled settlers to purchase land by forming land settlement associations and raising loans through the issue of Government guaranteed debentures. The agitation gained further momentum in 1912 when the freeholder, Thomas Mackenzie, was elected leader of the Liberal party and subsequently became Prime Minister. With the election of Massey the NZFU's objectives were quickly realised.

Once the freehold option was introduced a certain feeling of anti-climax permeated the NZFU's activities and its leaders were forced to look elsewhere to discover issues which would maintain rank and file interest. They were rather fortunate in that the increasing militancy of labour provided them with just such an issue. When that militancy erupted in the watersiders' strike of late 1913 it neatly helped to fill the vacuum left by Massey's land reforms.

The most important organisational effect of the freehold agitation was that it drew the NZFU into an unofficial alliance with the parliamentary Opposition. As both pressure group and party expressed and echoed the same set of aspirations and grievances the official neutrality of the NZFU became rather meaningless.


From its establishment the NZFU formally adhered to its motto of "Principles not Party." It steadfastly resisted the efforts of Auckland delegates to transform pressure group into country party from as early as 1907. A call from Southland and Taranaki at the first Colonial conference to set up the same machinery as that of the Labour Party to compel all members to vote only for candidates approved by the NZFU was also quashed. The NZFU's leaders would have nothing to do with rule by caucus. Auckland's other perennial and somewhat eccentric request was the establishment of an elective executive on the Swiss model, but it too was generally treated with disdain. Despite this official advocacy of non party policies the support of the freehold increasingly came to place the NZFU on one side of the political fence. The issue was so divisive that it was almost the same as the NFU supporting either free trade or protectionist policies.

After 1910 the unofficial alliance became stronger and more obvious when the formerly disorganised opposition, bereft of a major policy alternative, evolved into the Reform Party and adopted the freehold along with the NZFU's other major planks of free trade and freedom of contract. This development did not prevent farmers with Liberal sympathies from remaining members of the NZFU since some leading Liberal politicians, such as Thomas Mackenzie, were ardent freeholders. Relations with the Ward administration were also surprisingly harmonious. But the continuing refusal

27. ACCM, 1907, p 10. The North Canterbury branch also toyed with the idea of forming a farmers' party in 1911. David Jones, a later Reform M.P., was a leading advocate of the scheme, but nothing came of it. NZ Farmer, 1911, p 342.


29. The Auckland executive even put out a pamphlet on this topic in 1915. Major Lusk, Proposals for An Elective Executive, (Pukekohe 1915).
of the Liberal Government to grant the freehold option made it increasingly
difficult to be an active member of the NZFU and a Liberal supporter.
Furthermore, the shared stance against socialism and the associated
suspicion of the left-wing of the Liberal party, pushed Reform and the
NZFU even closer together.

Once the NZFU came to depend on a change of Government to secure its
primary objective its official neutrality was highly questionable.
Margaret Brand's comment on the relationship between the NZFU and the
parliamentary opposition, made as long ago as 1949, cannot really be
improved upon except that her use of Conservative with a capital C is
somewhat dubious.

"The Farmers' Union both reflected the policy of the Conservative
Party, and as in the manner of land tenure, influenced it. Though
the Union disclaimed political allegiance, by 1908 it was clear
that the Farmers' Union and the Conservative party were working
for similar ends. The influx into the Conservative Parliamentary
Party in that year of a number of small North Island farmers and
Union supporters cemented the unofficial link between them." 30

Closely allied to the demand for the freehold were the related topics
of reform of the valuation system, the opening of Maori land for closer
settlement and the easing of rating taxation burdens. These subjects
along with the freehold issue tended to dominate conference discussions
in the years prior to 1912.

The whole question of fairer land valuation was so complex that
conference delegates themselves failed to come up with any concrete
suggestions until the 1920s. Everyone was agreed that valuation on
unimproved value was impossible to calculate. But they were only able
to suggest that some more equitable system should be introduced. Valuation

MA Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1949, p 188. Her viewpoint
is far more tenable than R.J. Duncan's claim that the NZFU remained
true to its non-party principles, especially when its experience
is compared with that of the NFU.
on annual value, that is 5% of the capital value, was often suggested but never followed up. 31 Somehow the NZFU wanted valuations which would produce maximum prices if they sold up and provide, therefore, fair compensation for improvements. At the same time they did not want valuations to inflate considerably the worth of their properties and thereby force up interest rates on their mortgages. James Wilson expressed a commonly held fear at the 1912 conference when he warned that values based on capitalisation of utmost value could be dangerous should prices for agricultural produce fall suddenly. 32 Conference delegates also wanted a reform of the Assessment Courts to give farmers greater opportunity to dispute existing valuations. They felt that the appointment of at least one valuer with local knowledge would provide the best solution to producing more accurate valuations.

While both Seddon and Ward lent a sympathetic ear to NZFU deputations over the problem of valuation 33 really meaningful action was left to the Reform Government. Reform passed a Valuation of Land Amendment Act in 1912 which classed specially rated local public works such as roads as improvements and exempted all plantations from taxation. 34 Even this Act only partially satisfied the NZFU, however, as it did not place local men on the Assessment Courts and made little contribution to solving the problem of inaccurate valuation.

31. The best conference deputations could do was to recommend valuation on a capitalisation basis, but they were unable to suggest anything more precise. e.g. ADCM, 1908, p 12.

32. ADCM, 1912, p 5.

33. e.g. In 1905 the Valuer General sent out a memo to all provincial secretaries explaining the Valuation system on request of Wilson. ACCM, 1905, p 2.

34. NZ Statutes, 1912, No 15, pp 42-43.
The NZFU's general desire to speed up settlement to answer an apparently insatiable land hunger was best illustrated by its clamour to open up Maori land for closer settlement. Such a desire was obviously of much greater relevance to North Island farmers and most of the push for increased Maori land sales came from North Island delegates. South Island delegates tended to be rather indifferent. G.W. Leadley, of the Canterbury executive, neatly summed up their attitude to the Maori land question when he countered the trend of a debate by suggesting that such a drastic change as individualisation of tenure was unnecessary. He was objective enough to observe that the Government had gone a long way towards solving the native land question from the settlers' point of view. 35 He correctly implied that the demands of North Island delegates represented a thinly disguised attempt to alienate Maori land on a grand scale.

The King Country, inland Taranaki and parts of the East Coast particularly excited the envy of North Island delegates. Auckland, Taranaki and Poverty Bay delegates were inevitably the most ardent in calling for individualisation of tenure. Wellington delegates were not far behind for they had set their sights on Maori land on the edges of existing settlements, especially near Wanganui and the northern borders of the Manawatu plains. Alienation of this land was justified by talk of the problem of the "horrible" Maori land "monopoly" 36 and the associated evils of "Maori landlordism." 37 The Farmers' Advocate, always more

35. ADCM, 1908, p 5. The validity of Leadley's claim is verified by the fact that 3,000,000 acres of Maori land were alienated by the Liberal administration as against another 3,000,000 acres between 1911 and 1921 and a further 500,000 acres from 1921 to 1929. Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, p 190.

36. William Matheson, sometime colonial treasurer of the NZFU, of Eketahuna. ADCM, 1909, p 7.

extreme in its pronouncements than the NZFU itself, went as far as saying that New Zealand must prevent the development of

"a Maori aristocracy for whom white slaves must work with no hope of ever obtaining a title to the land they till." 38

Maori lands infested with odious weeds were frequently contrasted with the neatly fenced and highly productive land of the European settlers. Concern for the plight of the Maori never went further than the suggestion that a trust should be established from the sale of Maori lands to help them adjust to European ways. 39 But generally it was agreed that the best solution was to force the Maoris to come to grips with the twentieth century world by making them sell up or by converting them into farmers. James Wilson, speaking at the 1908 conference, neatly encapsulated the NZFU's whole attitude on the native land question when he said

"The Maori judging from his history and habits has been purely Socialistic, and no matter how much we admire the race, their development has been at a standstill. Under their regime they often had scarcely enough food to live on, and had to turn to the food provided by nature, viz, from root, whilst under our system of Government we exported £20,000,000 worth of produce last year.... The natives should be got out of their Socialistic notions, and become individualists." 40

Clearly this attitude was complex and ambiguous. It was not simply an expression of rapacious land hunger or of explicit racism. It was rather made up of several strands. Notions of racial superiority mingled with a belief in the virtues of self-help, a desire for closer settlement with the increase of opportunities for the small man. A belief in the freehold as the basic unit of a totally superior social system also tied in with the paternalistic concern to help the Maori leave behind his


39. e.g. ACCM, 1905, p 8. This idea was put forward by W. Lissant Clayton of Poverty Bay. Wilson thought the proposal sound, but warned that a dole should not be dished out to the natives as it would only encourage idleness.

40. ADCM, 1908, p 7.
alien and inferior way of life. As in the case of the freehold advocacy
economic self-interest was the basic motivation behind the call for the
opening up of Maori land. But justification and motivation became so
corfor II in the minds of NZFU spokesmen that their attitude towards the
native lands question assumed a complex character which both disguised and
extended simple economic considerations. In the process the views of
North Island delegates came to appear rational and laudable and in no way
sinister, at least not to themselves, nor to their contemporaries.

Although the NZFU was successful in winning some minor concessions
in Maori land policy they failed to secure individualisation of tenure.
This failure was blamed squarely on Sir James Carroll, Minister for Native
Affairs. At the 1909 conference Wilson complained that Carroll's
"being in office had enormously retarded the settlement of the
native land question because he took a native view of the whole
thing."

The conference went on to pass a remit protesting
"in the strongest possible manner against a Ministerial position
being allotted to a member of the House who is not responsible to
a European constituency." 42

Once Carroll was ousted from office in 1912 the NZFU hoped for further
advances.

Like the NFU and farmers everywhere the NZFU considered that New
Zealand farmers paid an unfair portion of taxes and rates. Every conference
voiced its concern at the burden of both local and national taxation, but
such complaints failed to win any major concessions. Some minor victories

41. e.g. The "Maori Land Laws Amendment Act," NZ Statutes, No 92,
pp 343-352 and the "Maori Land Settlement Amendment Act," NZ Statutes,
1906, No 62, pp 208-209.

42. ADGM, 1909, pp 7 and 10. The motion was introduced by Captain Bell
of Auckland. Only David Jones (Canterbury), John McQueen (Southland)
and W.J. Birch (Marion) spoke against it.
were won, however, including the abolition of the anachronistic sheep tax in 1908 and the extension of the land tax exemption from £5,000 valuation to £10,000 valuation in 1914. Income tax posed little problem until the 1920s when it was introduced on a wider basis and farmers became concerned that they would have to pay double taxation. "Thirds," or the one third of rent due from crown tenants to cover the cost of road, also exercised the NZFU in its early years, but the extension of such a levy to cash purchasers on recommendation of the 1905 Land Commission seemed to satisfy delegates. The percentage of country rates paid towards hospital and charitable aid was considered to be excessive and, like the NFU, the NZFU felt that the national exchequer should make a greater contribution in funding those services. The question of the mortgage tax also worried the NZFU and the opinion was frequently expressed that land should be taxed on the same basis as all other forms of capital investment, that is a small percentage of the capital value rather than unimproved value. Each year Wilson expressed the concern that taxes and rates based on unimproved value were discouraging increases in productivity through penalising improvements. At the back of such an argument was the belief that any increase in value should accrue to the individual farmer rather than to the community as a whole. All increases in value were credited solely to the sweat of the farmers' brow and he should, therefore, be entitled to his just reward.

There was no room for the views of Henry George within the NZFU.

43. ibid. 1908, p 2. This tax was originally introduced to cover the cost of eradicating sheep scab, but as that disease had disappeared by 1900 the Department of Agriculture was forced to agree that the tax was unnecessary.

44. ibid. 1914, p 4.
This attitude explains why the NZFU opposed the Trade Union demand that the parliamentary franchise be extended to local body elections. The NZFU was quite adamant that property holders only should have control over local body expenditure to prevent both extravagance and the implementation of policies hostile to their entrenched interests. This demand, included in the original platform, was yet another expression of opposition to the theories of the land nationalisers.

The essentially economic motivation behind the demand for the freehold option, the clamour for the opening of native lands and the call for reduced rates and taxes, was given an intellectual articulation in the NZFU's increasing opposition to socialism. This opposition has been highlighted in the general histories and the various theses relating to the NZFU and its importance can only be restated. But a qualification can be added because the attack on socialism was more concerned with the conflict of competing sectional interests and a redefinition of older town versus country rivalries than with the clash of clear cut opposing ideologies. Farmers' attitudes were shaped more by a confused and somewhat incoherent world view rather than a definite anti-socialist ideology. The relatively coherent nature of socialist thought and its institutional expression in such bodies as the Federation of Labour made it into an easy target for attack. The city interest and the middleman were much less precise concepts which could not readily be converted into clearly identifiable scapegoats. Older town versus country rivalries had been revamped and brought up to date.

Initially most of the opposition to socialism came from the Farmers' Advocate rather than the NZFU itself. Early editorials bristled with militant rhetoric condemning the "Factory-Hand Trust", the "shirkers", the
"wealth robbers," for encouraging "organised idleness." Extreme labour was condemned as representing "one class, and that the laziest, most useless and most injurious." Prior to 1908 NZFU conferences were far more moderate and did not echo such sentiments. Legitimate trade unionism was supported with the NZFU acknowledging that it too was a sort of trade union. Criticisms were confined to the unsatisfactory working of the I C and A Act, especially the lack of representation of farmers' interests in industrial disputes, while the introduction of compulsory unionism was also opposed. Wilson even advised against the NZFU entering into a formal alliance with the Employers' Federation as the NZFU was supposed to represent the interests of labourers. The NZFU followed his advice until 1913 when the Defence Committee of the Wellington executive joined forces with the local Employers' Association.

On the other hand as early as 1906 conference delegates seemed to be assuming a tougher stance against organised labour. A suggestion of a change in attitude was contained in a remit sent up by the Otago and Southland branches that Edward Tregear, Secretary of the Labour Department, should be removed from office because of his public statements in support

45. F.A., 29 Aug 1903.
46. ibid. 20 Feb 1904.
47. ibid. 5 Sep 1903.
48. e.g. ACCM, 1902, pp 8-9.
49. e.g. ibid. 1905, p 10.
of socialist ideals. Other delegates saw the dangers of such a demand and threw the remit out, but opposition to Tregear escalated nevertheless as both his co-operative schemes for public works and his efforts to improve shearer's accommodation proved very unpopular with NZFU members. The NZFU's support of free trade was also invoked as a basis for criticising the selfishness of the manufacturing interest.

The major shift in attitude occurred in 1908 after the Canterbury branch had quashed the emergence of a farm labourers' union. Once the principles of trade unionism were carried into the rural sector the NZFU displayed a fierce determination to oppose the formalisation of relations between a farmer and his men. Their opposition was based primarily on the assumption that the establishment of a farm workers' union would force up costs. Also New Zealand farmers, like their English counterparts, disliked the increasing intrusion into their everyday activities of regulations evolved within the factory system. Speaking at the 1908 conference James Wilson summed up the new hard line when he said

"The Union of farmers is more than ever desirable since the Socialists have captured the Trades and Labour Councils, whether they have captured the working classes, I doubt..... it is our duty to combat the attack by every means in our power."

51. ACCM, 1906, p 10.


54. The Blackball strike and the formation of the Miners' Federation outside the provisions of the I C and A Act may also have influenced the NZFU's change of policy, but there were no specific references to these events.

55. ADCM, 1908, p 4.
From that conference onwards the rhetoric of open sectional warfare intensified as the NZFU became increasingly hostile towards militant labour. Several attempts to establish another farm workers' union, especially in Marlborough, were effectively quashed, while every election of a farmer M.P. was hailed as a triumph over the socialist camp. Attempts by the Department of Labour to improve workmen's accommodation were criticised as fiercely by the NZFU as they were by the SOF, even though some NZFU members had once been labourers themselves. A belief in the sanctity of freedom of contract seemed to exclude the need for protection against unscrupulous employers. The repeal of the I C and A Act was demanded and it was suggested that it should be replaced by the Canadian system of voluntary conciliation, which meant free bargaining.\footnote{ibid.} As G.W. Leadley remarked "People should be able to work out their own destiny in their own way."\footnote{ibid. p 8} The NZFU's constant advocacy of increased immigration of farm workers and domestic servants added another aggravating factor in its relations with organised labour.\footnote{The NZFU was the major supporter of the Sedgewick scheme between 1909 and 1913 whereby boys were brought out from Britain to be taught farming skills. But they did not succeed in persuading the Government to dramatically increase immigration of agricultural labourers until the 1920s when they were brought out under the Empire Settlement's Scheme which so deeply annoyed the NFU.}

Apart from condemning the existing industrial relations system the NZFU expressed alarm over what appeared to them to be the increasing influence of extreme socialists over the policies of the Liberal government. The land nationalisers, especially George Fowlds (M.P. for Grey Lynn), commonly known as "the new evangel," T.E. Taylor (Christchurch North), George Laurenson (Lyttleton) and J.G. Findlay (Legislative Council), were singled out for special
criticism. The newly established Federation of Labour was also made the
target of a vitriolic attack. The term "Red Feds" was bandied about, while
syndicalism was pictured as the deadliest sin of all. G.M. Butterworth
even wrote a series of articles in the FUA arguing that the theories of
Marx were humane and progressive in comparison with the distorted
syndicalist notions of Proudhon. \textsuperscript{59} Talk of the dangers of "I.W.W.ism"
increased. The NZFU was alarmed by the Waihi strike of 1912, and the
"evil tyranny" exercised by the FOL was roundly condemned. \textsuperscript{60} The likeli-
hood of a major showdown increased as the NZFU made it very clear that it
was only too willing to teach militant labour a lesson it would never
forget.

The NZFU's chance came at the end of 1913 after a further round of
industrial disputes had agitated its members. In December 1912 the Timaru
branch of the NZFU broke a local watersiders' strike through supplying
voluntary labour \textsuperscript{61} and North Island branches ended a slaughterman's
dispute in February 1913, once again through the engagement of "blacklegs". \textsuperscript{62}
The advent of a nation-wide watersiders' strike in October 1913 gave the
NZFU its opportunity for large scale retaliation against the FOL. Along
with the Employers' Federation it engaged in all out sectional warfare.
As the FUA had predicted one big strike initiated a "battle" against the
"reign of terror". \textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{59} FUA, 16 and 26 Mar, 22 Jun 1912.
\textsuperscript{60} ibid. 19 Oct 1912.
\textsuperscript{61} ibid. 14 Dec 1912.
\textsuperscript{62} ibid. 22 Feb 1913.
\textsuperscript{63} ibid. 3 May 1913.
There was no consensus here. The NZFU talked and acted in military fashion as a "Farmers' Army" was organised and housed in barracks. Colonel Newall was appointed to lead the specials and he congratulated them on being "born soldiers." It was almost a dress rehearsal for a different kind of war. Both the specials and other farmers loading the ships were determined to show the wharf labourers who was really running the country. At the same time they enjoyed a holiday away from the drudgery of everyday farming chores. An almost festive air permeated their ranks. It was hardly surprising that Labour critics should accuse the specials of indulging in an excessive consumption of liquor. Naturally such accusations were denied.

The pre-requisite of a horse and the time involved away from farm work generally meant that bigger farmers and their sons dominated the ranks of Massey's "cossacks." But dairy farmers also turned up at Wellington and Auckland to help load the ships. Wilson claimed that dairy farmers constituted the majority of Wairarapa specials. His claim seemed to be justified by the fact that the great majority of telegrams to Massey pledging support in terms of manpower came from the dairying areas of the Waikato, the Bay of Plenty, Taranaki and Manawatu. The wives of these men were pictured as heroines for running the farms in their husbands' absence. Support from the dairy farmers was very understandable for as the Dairy section of the FUA pointed out the perishable nature of butter and cheese made it likely to lose its entire monetary value in the event of long strikes. Within a week 1,000 mounted men had offered their services in

64. ibid. 15 Nov 1913.
66. ibid.
67. FUA, 15 Nov 1913.
Wellington and 1,100 in Auckland. A further 300 men were prepared to load the ships in Auckland and 600 reservists were camped in the Domain. 68

Meantime the defence committees of the Auckland and Wellington branches had joined forces with the local Employers' Associations in urging the Government to adopt a hard line against the strikers. The Government's response was immediate. Specials were sworn in and the number of policemen around the wharf area was increased. A close liaison was established between the part-time and the professional police force. That alliance was brought into the open when the Commissioner of Police defended the specials for making an apparently unnecessary charge on an unarmed crowd of women and children at Post Office square in Wellington. 69 Such an official defence of dubious actions helps to justify Oliver's claim that the strikers perceived a "hostile conspiracy of employers, farmers and the government." 70 The much abused IC and A Act was next turned to the advantage of the employers when it was used to set up a new union and deregister the old. This ploy brought the FOL to its knees. Yet again the IC and A Act proved to be labour's "leg-iron."

As early as 22 November it became clear that the farmers were going to win. Some concern was expressed at the possible re-emergence of "I.W.W.ism" when the FOL appealed to the Australian unions for help, but such fears were groundless as no aid was forthcoming. By 13 December victory was assured as all ports were open. The effectiveness of

68. P.M. File 9/13, 8 Nov 1913.

69. The Commissioner's report is contained in P.M. File 9/13, 12 Nov 1913. It was prepared to answer charges laid by Paddy Webb (Labour M.P. for Grey) NZPD, (167 1913, p 267) and Joseph Ward, NZPD, (166 1913, p 441).

70. Oliver, The Story of New Zealand, p 166.
the strikers' action was reduced even further by the passing of the "Labour Disputes Investigation Bill" on 27 December. This piece of legislation, which received the full backing of the NZFU, enforced secret ballots before strikes could be called to ensure that moderate workers would check the influence of the extremists.

The NZFU had won a major victory and feelings of triumph escalated further when the Marlborough branch successfully quashed a last desperate effort to establish a Farm and Station Employees' Industrial Union of Workers. But a qualification should be added for ardent sectional warfare only really occurred in Wellington and Auckland. NZFU members helped to clear other ports such as Gisborne, New Plymouth, Lyttleton, Timaru, Port Chalmers and the Bluff, but the response was rather lukewarm. The Wellington Defence Committee of the NZFU even candidly admitted that the response of South Island executives was not all it could have been. In Dunedin the strike stirred some farmers to action but they tended to come from areas immediately adjacent to town and their numbers were not great. The response in some provincial centres was even milder with employers and employees mingling happily at their annual dance in Wanganui. In a small inland town such as Lawrence the pro-Liberal Tuapeka Times condemned Massey's actions, while the County Council supported the Government. But the local farmers' union remained silent. Even something as major as

71. FUA, 4 Jul 1914.

72. Minute Book of the NZ Sheepowners and Farmers' Federation 1910-1932, 23 July 1914. The Wellington Defence Committee attended A.G.M.s of the SOP.


74. Oliver, Towards a New History, p 9.

75. TT, 8, 15, 22 and 29 Nov 1913.
the strike failed to stir members from their apathy. The impact of the
strike probably did not spread far into other rural areas, especially in
the South Island where farmers were less concerned with the fate of dairy
exports.

In comparison with the NZFU the NFU was generally far more moderate
in its dealings with organised labour. Its leaders acted as men confident
in their role as employers, who acknowledged the right of their men to
organise and willingly negotiated with their unions. This difference in
the approach to labour relations reflected the relative power of farmers
in relation to organised labour in each country. It also had something to
do with the fact that English farmers were more dependent on hired labour and
that an agricultural labourers' union predated the NFU. Because the NFU
was forced by this combination of factors to adopt a more conciliatory
attitude towards organised labour, its labour relations record was generally
more successful than that of the NZFU, with the notable exception of the
East Anglian lock-out of 1924. The NZFU in contrast wielded the greater
power of New Zealand farmers to unfair advantage by refusing to allow their
men to form unions of any description. According to the NZFU relations
between a farmer and his employees were best worked out on a personal
basis, an assumption based on the dubious premise that all farmers were
good employers and that most labourers need not worry about unions as some
day they too would become farmers. The second part of this view flew
directly in the face of reality, for as we have seen in Chapter One the
decreasing availability of land and rapidly rising prices of farms made
it increasingly difficult for agricultural labourers to become farmers
after 1900.
The overtly sectional nature of the NZFU's activities was off-set to a certain degree by the espousal of super-patriotic attitudes. Patriotic sentiments expressed by the NZFU were possibly even nosier and more jingoistic than those of pre World War I New Zealand as a whole. The NZFU's patriotism was not evolved in a deliberate manner, nor was it contrived to win advantages, but it certainly assisted the NZFU's progress as an appeal to the broadest focus of loyalty - the Empire - countered accusations that the organisation cared only for the interests of farmers. Furthermore, the patriotic views of the NZFU provided the public with a marked contrast when compared with the anti-Imperialist sentiments of the more ardent and vocal socialists. It placed them on the side of right in the war of words with the radical left. The freehold agitation also tied in neatly with the NZFU's patriotic attitudes. The rugged individualist farmer was often pictured as ready to fight for his land, his family and his country, unlike the cowardly and landless city-bred trade unionist bent solely on destruction.

The NZFU staunchly advocated the introduction of compulsory military training from the 1908 conference onwards. It even established rifle clubs in 1907 to stimulate interest in the acquisition of military skills. General A.J. Godley attended conferences from 1911 and indulged in mutual

76. For a contemporary description of just how ardent patriots Edwardian New Zealanders were see E.F. Knight, With the Royal Tour (London 1902). For a more recent investigation see Roger Openshaw, "The Patriot band; the school cadets from their evolution to the Great War," Unpublished MA Thesis, Massey University, 1973.

77. ADCM, 1908, p 11.

78. ibid. 1907, p 7.

79. ibid. 1911, p 8.
congratulations with delegates. Joseph Ward, so often criticised for his land policies, was applauded to the echo for his donation of a dreadnought. When compulsory military training was introduced in 1909 conference members became almost hysterical in heaping praise on the innovation they had long demanded. The need for preparedness against foreign aggressors, whether European or Asian, was constantly reiterated, while the conscientious objector was viewed as a monstrous product of city living. The only note of discord with the military authorities occurred over the timing of territorial camps which often clashed with busy periods in the farmers' calendar, but consultation with General Godley soon solved that problem.

The patriotism of NZFU members was undoubtedly as sincere as that of other New Zealanders. Their tremendous response to the war effort bore testimony to that sincerity. Farmers seemed well prepared psychologically for international as well as sectional warfare. But their patriotism was nevertheless a real asset as it made clear the NZFU's position within the mainstream of New Zealander's allegiances and helped to camouflage the overtly sectional concerns of the organisation.

Groups whose activities place them on the right of the political spectrum, whose aims can be labelled conservative, are too often considered to be reactionary or anti-progressive. This was not true of the NZFU due more than anything else to the leadership of James Wilson, a man who would have been ranked as one of the highest of high farmers in Britain and who passionately believed in a more scientific approach to agricultural production. Many rank and file members undoubtedly did not share Wilson's enlightened views, but Wilson and the other executive members who actually

80. ibid. 1909, p 10.
81. ibid. 1910, p 10.
82. Germany and Japan were singled out as the major threats to peace. ibid.
formulated policy ensured that the NZFU instituted a concerted attack upon inefficiency within the agricultural industry. This willingness to accept the need for innovation in farming methods and technology ensured that the NZFU did not become the hide-bound organisation which Country Party propagandists later painted it to be.

The attack itself was three pronged concentrating on marketing reform, the promotion of co-operative societies, and encouragement of a more scientific approach to farming through the twin vehicles of agricultural education and regulation by the Department of Agriculture.

At its first colonial conference the NZFU displayed its concern with the difficulties of marketing export produce by arranging a lengthy consultation with freezing companies on that very subject. A suggestion was made by the NZFU that an improved system of grading be introduced to improve the quality and saleability of frozen meat. It was also stressed that new markets should be investigated, especially in South Africa and the West of England.\(^8\) Clearly the NZFU was concerned with improving marketing methods from its inception. The establishment of the marketing boards in the 1920s should be seen, therefore, as the outcome of a long term trend rather than simply the product of exceptional post-war circumstances.

Little more happened in this area until 1911 when W.D. Lynsar of Gisborne reported on his trip to investigate the distribution of New Zealand produce on the English market. Lynsar undertook the journey partly in response to a desire expressed by each conference that they wanted unloading facilities in London improved. On his recommendation a New Zealand Producers' Association was founded to finance a special agent in London who would supervise the distribution of New Zealand produce.\(^9\)

\(^{8}\) ACCM, 1902, pp 25–33.

\(^{9}\) Thomas MacKenzie, when he was High Commissioner both before 1908 and after 1912, also made sure that the New Zealand Embassy staff assisted in this work.
This new Association was also assigned the task of seeking out more markets. Its activities were to be funded by a special levy on stock. In this sense it represented the first step in establishing of the Government assisted marketing boards, even though it was operated on a voluntary basis by private enterprise. Although the scheme was run on an independent basis its close association with the NZFU was symbolised by the appointment of the NZFU's secretary, E.C. Jack, as temporary secretary of the Producers' Association. 85

As the first decade of the new century passed by, the NZFU also became increasingly alarmed at the operations of the "meat trust" and began to call the Government's attention to the threat involved. 86 Yet again the anti-trust flurry of the early 1920s was the outcome of longer term development rather than a sudden impulsive reaction.

Farmers' co-operative ventures were more actively encouraged by the NZFU than by the NFU. The Wellington provincial executive set up the Wellington Farmers' Distribution Company in 1901; 87 the Waikato branch established the Farmers' Co-operative Auctioneering Company Limited in Hamilton in 1906; 88 the Auckland branch initiated the Auckland Industrial Association in 1910; 89 and the Taranaki executive engineered the Hawera based Farmers' Co-operative Organisation Society in 1914. 90 Each of these general co-operatives was run independently of the NZFU along similar lines to the older New Zealand Farmers' Co-operative Association, based in Christchurch and founded in 1881, and the Timaru based Canterbury Farmers' Association, 85, ADCM, 1911, pp 4-7.

86. e.g. ibid. p 12 or 1914, p 10.
87. ibid. 1912, p 4.
88. FUA, 6 Dec 1919 p 13.
89. ADCM, 1912, p 10.
90. FUA, 6 Dec 1919 p 13.
Co-operative Association Limited, founded in 1880. The co-operatives were viewed by the NZFU leaders as a means of increasing the organisation's usefulness and they hoped that they offered an extra incentive to join. Overall the promotion of co-operatives represented one of the more positive contributions of the NZFU.

In the eyes of James Wilson agricultural education was the best means of bringing about a general improvement in farming methods. From as early as 1903 the NZFU urged the Government to establish a proper scientific research centre for the dairy industry, along the lines of the D.R.I. as it was set up in 1926, and a university level agricultural college. They also asked that veterinarians be trained in New Zealand. Each of these demands was too far in advance of Government thinking to produce any tangible results, but Wilson did manage to persuade George Hogben, Inspector-General of Schools, to introduce some elementary agricultural instruction into primary schools. Itinerant instructors were also appointed to run special classes for farmers. Wilson was also determined that even though farmers were the "direct descendants of Doubting Thomas" they should remove their doubts regarding the concrete advantages of scientific farming by visiting state experimental farms such as Momokaki (near Waverly) or Weraroa (near Levin). Another progressive view expressed by both Wilson and the NZFU as a whole was the call made at each conference for reafforestation.

91. e.g. ACCM, 1903, p 1 and 1904, p 2.
92. e.g. ibid. 1904, p 6, 1906, p 4 and ADCM, 1910, p 3.
93. ACCM, 1904, p 6 and 8.
94. For a fuller account of the NZFU's role in bringing about improvements in Agricultural Education see Brooking, Massey its early years, pp 13-27.
95. ADCM, 1910, p 5.
96. e.g. ibid. p 2 or 1911, p 11.
Wilson's annual addresses were so thoroughly researched and eloquently presented that when they are placed together they make essential reading for any serious study of the history of New Zealand farming. The poor attendance of farmers at the classes run by the itinerant instructors clearly indicated that Wilson's attitudes were well in advance of most NZFU members and farmers in general. But his influence nevertheless made the NZFU far more receptive to new ideas than it otherwise would have been.

The other major means of raising the efficiency of both production and marketing methods was regulation by the Department of Agriculture. Wilson and other executive members seemed to regard such activity as a necessary corollary to agricultural education. More rigorous grading of export produce, improved pest control and stricter hygiene standards could only raise the quality of exports and thereby increase returns to both the nation as a whole and to individual farmers. Rather than shunning further consultation with the Department of Agriculture the NZFU maintained and possibly even expanded the existing degree of consultation between the Department and the A and P Societies. Conferences generally demanded the introduction of more coercive regulations instead of criticising the Department for unnecessary bureaucratic interference. The only notable exception to this tendency was the hostile reception given to McNab's dairy regulations in 1908.

97. In an earlier research exercise I suggested that the Liberals lost the support of farmers not only because of their attitudes to the freehold question and the bogey of socialism, but because they were further alienated by the bureaucratic zeal of Ritchie and his inspectors. See Brooking, "Sir John McKenzie," pp 69-70. But this was certainly not true of the 15% of New Zealand farmers who belonged to the NZFU. They were among the Department's most ardent supporters.
Ministers, the undersecretary and divisional heads, all attended conferences and spoke to delegates in an informal and friendly manner. Generally, their suggestions, such as the need to inoculate against blackleg and mastitis, were received with enthusiasm by delegates. Departmental representatives in turn usually found themselves listening to demands for a more rigorous enforcement of pest control measures and praise for the Department's work. When the Journal of Agriculture was first published in 1910 it was greeted with acclamation. J.D. Ritchie was a far from unpopular undersecretary. He was frequently praised for his efforts and the conference regretted his transfer to the Lands and Survey Department in 1909, although they conceded that he was an able man for the job. J.A. Gilruth, Chief Government Veterinarian during the early years of the NZFU's existence, was particularly popular for supporting the NZFU against the Government in their call for the erection of bone-manure sterilising plants in New Zealand. When he left to take up an appointment at the University of Melbourne the Government was condemned for allowing such a talented man to leave its service. Ministers themselves were also made welcome. Thomas MacKenzie was a particular favourite. After he was ousted from the premiership the NZFU recommended his re-appointment to the post of High Commissioner for London. William Massey was warmly congratulated when MacKenzie's appointment was confirmed. Even Robert McNab was considered to be a useful Minister of

98. ADCM, 1904, pp 17-19.
100. ibid. 1909, p 4.
102. FUA, 13 Jul 1912, p 5.
103. ADCM, 1912, p 10
Agriculture, irspite of his land policies. 104

Clearly, the consensus between farmers and Government established during the 1890s over the need to increase both the quantity and quality of agricultural production through increased assistance from and regulation by the Department of Agriculture, was continued and developed by the NZFU. The State, as represented by the Department of Agriculture, continued to be seen as a willing servant rather than an interfering master.

The remainder of the mass of remits sent up to the conferences were largely concerned with protesting at the injustices of the Liberal spoils system and excessive rail rates.

One of the original objects of the NZFU concerned the winning of a guarantee that public works grants should be spent immediately instead of being delayed or even withdrawn if a particular electorate misbehaved itself politically. Although delegates were unable to produce any concrete proposals on this problem they made it clear that they wanted to improve communications and the quality of life for back-block settlers, no matter what Government was in power. The other topics discussed were related to such essentially technical matters as manure analysis, sheep dipping, meteorology or through-booking.

The NZFU never displayed any obvious sectarian allegiance. An early remit to state the NZFU's religious attitude was ruled out of order and the only concession to religious sentiment was the passing of a resolution in 1906 stating that the Union's success was dependent upon God. 105 Such an official statement of belief further helped the NZFU in their verbal battle with the suspiciously agnostic socialists, while avoiding the potentially divisive issue of denominational rivalry. 106

104. ACCM, 1906, p 4.
105. ibid. 1902, p 21.
106. ibid. 1906, p 10.
Conferences were not entirely devoid of lighter moments. In 1910 Wilson complained of the dreadful "nasal twang" being developed by New Zealand children as a result of unhealthy tonsils and adenoids. His rather pompous and quaint observation provides the social historian with an invaluable scrap of information. On another occasion a protest was made at the breeding of specially "inferior" horses to be ridden by an even more objectionable breed of "weedy" jockeys. It is also interesting to note that there was none of the irrational opposition towards the motor car which permeated the thinking of NFU leaders prior to World War One.

Finally, the conferences up to 1914 were by no means entirely parochial or insular in their outlook. The progress of farmers' organisations in other countries, especially the Grange in the U.S.A., the Farmers' and Settlers' Association in New South Wales and the Victorian Farmers' Union, was regularly reported. The establishment of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union was also acknowledged, providing one of many illustrations of Wilson's considerable awareness of overseas developments. Telegrams of support were even exchanged with the New South Wales and Victorian organisations in 1908 suggesting that a latent notion of a possible Australasian farmer brotherhood existed within the minds of some of the NZFU leaders. But generally the NZFU was less interested in establishing links with international farmers' organisations than the NFU.
Perhaps the NZFU was lucky that war broke out in August 1914 for the achievement of its major objective and the crushing victory over militant labour had robbed it of much of its raison d'etre.

2 "Prosperity and the Commandeer" World War One.

The phrase "patriotism with profit" could probably never be more accurately attributed to any group than New Zealand farmers during the First World War. Guaranteed prices induced by the commandeering stimulated an already buoyant land market. Most farmers were assured considerable profits. Boom conditions became so pronounced that the NZFU, like the NFU, was forced to expend much of its energy in countering accusations that farmers were profiteering at the expense of other sections of the community. It was a great relief to the NZFU when the Board of Trade officially cleared farmers of such charges in 1917. From that point on the organisation was able to redirect its energies away from a public relations programme to more critical areas of concern.  

The long established concern with the problems of marketing and shipping came to dominate proceedings as the NZFU's leaders realised that they must help New Zealand farmers prepare for the inevitably painful adjustments of the post-war world. The Russian Revolution revived the fear of socialism, while the meat trust came to assume a new significance with the advent of submarine war. There was an expectation that another form of battle seemed likely with monsters on both the capitalist and labour sides of the coin.

The NZFU's initial contributions to the war effort were to organise the supply of horses, fodder and money for the Expeditionary Force through the offices of its provincial secretaries. The response to this appeal was overwhelming and farmers clearly revealed the intensity of their loyalty

111. FUA, 15 Sep 1917.
in concrete fashion. Once it had made this direct contribution the NZFU threw its support behind Massey's efforts to secure a meat commandeer. It also urged farmers to increase production to help Britain win the war by enabling it to starve out the enemy.

Once the meat commandeer was introduced in March 1915 a feeling of security permeated the organisation. It now felt free to air earlier grievances once again. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the new valuation system and the NZFU made it clear that it was not particularly happy with the performance of the Reform Government. The Government's intention of transforming the Legislative Council into an elective body particularly aroused the ire of the NZFU's leaders. Such a change was seen as a direct threat to the country quota. There was also some suspicion that the town sector of the party machine had manipulated the country M.P.s to its own advantage. This was the first time that the NZFU expressed any concern at the alliance of urban businessmen and farmers which constituted the power base of the Reform Party.

As 1915 progressed the NZFU made clear its opposition to any unnecessary interference with the laws of supply and demand by condemning

112. ibid. 15, 22 and 29 Aug 1914.

113. Wilson was to reiterate this theme at each of the war-time conferences, referring to the productive capacity of the Empire as the "silver-bullet" which would win the war. e.g. ADM, 1913, p 3.

114. The requisitioning of frozen meat by the Department of Imperial Government Supplies began in March 1915. Cheese and wool were commandeered in 1916 and butter in 1917.

115. ADM, 1915, pp 5-6; and FUA, 24 Apr 1915.


117. FUA, 24 Oct and 7 Nov 1914.
the introduction of either price fixing or an export tax. The sectional colouring of such opposition was counterbalanced by its patriotic call for the establishment of a national Government. Predictably it also supported the introduction of conscription. Qualified support was given to the setting up of a Board of Trade, but it soon gave way to the criticism that the Board was concentrating on controlling the cost of living instead of assisting New Zealanders to increase productivity.

A rather limited partnership was established with the State, but it was not nearly as direct or formal as the relationship established between the NFU and the British Government during the First World War. Nor was it as close as the relationship which developed between the NZFU and the New Zealand Government during the early 1920s. In fact the NZFU felt that its interests were inadequately represented at the highest level during the War and passed resolutions to that effect at the 1915 and 1916 conferences. Massey's reply that he personally represented farmers' interests did not satisfy the NZFU. Their concern was not ameliorated until Thomas Moss of the Wellington executive was appointed to the National Efficiency Board in 1917. With his appointment the NZFU secured representation on one of the most important planning agencies in the land.

118. ibid. 3 Apr and 10 Apr 1915.
119. ADCM, 1915, p 16.
120. FUA, 18 Sep 1915.
121. ADCM, 1915, p 16.
122. ibid. p 11 and 1916, p 16.
123. Moss provides a good example of how men's attitudes change in relation to their economic situation. As a young man he was president of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners. Yet he later became one of the most active members of the Wellington Defence Committee of the NZFU which played such an active part in organising the specials during the 1913 strike. By 1913 he had become a successful farmer. FUA, 10 Feb and 3 Mar 1917.
124. ibid. This Board was set up for the twin purpose of increasing productivity and reorganising industry for the post-war situation. See Burdon, Op. cit, p 12.
Two problems shared with the NFU were the need to off-set the chronic shortage of labour and to increase the area under arable production.

The NZFU achieved only moderate successes in coping with the labour shortage. Several attempts were made to organise boy and female labour to help with the harvest but none was particularly successful. Once conscription was introduced in 1916 the problem worsened. The NZFU asked that skilled members of the agricultural labour force be retained on the land. Some concessions were granted by the Appeals Board, but despite the claims of militant labour that the farmers received privileged treatment the NZFU did not retain nearly as many men as it would have liked. Only the predominance of the family unit of labour prevented the labour shortage from becoming as acute a problem as in England.

The NZFU failed almost completely in its endeavours to assist the Government in boosting arable production. The Government's refusal to adopt powers of compulsion doomed the scheme to failure. Arable acreage actually fell rather than increased.\(^{125}\) Canterbury cereal farmers were never really satisfied with the guaranteed prices offered them.\(^{126}\) Labour shortages hit them harder than any other group of New Zealand farmers and indifferent weather exacerbated their difficulties. Often the lure of higher prices for meat and wool proved too much for arable farmers. Wilson's claim that these men patriotically undertook increased risks to answer the needs of the Empire cannot, therefore, be taken very seriously.\(^{127}\)

\(^{125}\) The area of New Zealand planted in wheat fell from 400,000 acres in 1914 to 280,000 acres in 1918, while the yield fell by 1,500,000 bushels. Lloyd Pritchard, \textit{Op. cit.}, p 240.

\(^{126}\) Wilson complained that New Zealand wheat farmers were only receiving 5s. 10d per bushel when English farmers were paid 8s. ADCM, 1917, p 3. At best prices only rose to 6s. 4d. per bushel. \textit{Ibid.} 1918, p 4.

\(^{127}\) \textit{Ibid.} 1917, p 3.
By 1916 the issue of taxation once again began to agitate the NZFU. The introduction of a tax on butter-fat and an embargo imposed on the export of hides particularly angered its members. The proposal of an export tax also caused the NZFU to express its first major criticism of the banks. Henry Beauchamp, General Manager of the Bank of New Zealand, was officially censured for advocating a direct export tax at the 1916 Dominion conference.128

Despite the War the demand for closer settlement continued unabated. The 1915, 1916 and 1917 Dominion conferences all requested that national endowment lands be thrown open on the optional freehold tenure.129 The majority of delegates appeared to be personally benefitting from the fluid land market for they opposed a remit put before the 1916 Conference that the process of land aggregation should be more strictly controlled. Most speakers on the topic felt that aggregation could not be halted as it was the outcome of natural economic law.130 Returned Soldier Settlement schemes obviously held a real interest for members and they were predictably given warm support. But the organisation's leaders did warn that such schemes must be confined to workable and accessible land if they were to be successful.131

The NZFU's concern with militant labour tended to dissipate as long as the FOL remained weak, despite the efforts of the FUA to make its readers aware of the bogey of socialism.132 Such quiescence was to be rudely

128. ibid. 1916, p 10.
130. ibid. 1916, p 6.
131. ibid. 1916, pp 78, and FUA, 8 Jan 1916.
132. The miners' strike of early 1917 was condemned in vitriolic fashion FUA, 17 Feb 1917.
shattered by the Russian Revolution, but before news of those dramatic events filtered through to New Zealand the escalation of submarine warfare forced the NZFU to concentrate its efforts on overcoming the problems created by the shipping shortage. Its attention was increasingly turned towards another bogey, that of the "Meat Trusts."

The 1917 conference seriously considered establishing a producer controlled shipping line to overcome the problems of an inadequate number of ships and excessive freight charges. A promise was also secured from the Prime Minister that he would attempt to improve existing arrangements with the Shipping Controllers' Department in England to ensure that excessive profiteering did not occur at the English end. There was much apprehension that the "Meat Trusts" and "Shipping Combines" were exerting an undue influence on the entire operation. Concrete evidence of the fact that Massey and the NZFU were thinking along similar lines in this matter was provided by the prompt establishment of a Parliamentary Committee to investigate the operations of the meat trusts in New Zealand. The NZFU's fears were reinforced when the committee reported that the trusts were active in New Zealand, especially Vesteyes and Armour and Company. Several lines of action were proposed to control the trusts. First, it was suggested that the real names of freezing company owners should be made available to the public. Then the Committee recommended the appointment of a representative, free of any company connection, to oversee the distribution of New Zealand meat within England, on much the same lines as the scheme instituted by the Producers' Association in 1911. The Imperial Government was also requested to buy up all stocks of New Zealand meat to prevent possible exploitation of the large amount of meat held in storage. Finally, the committee suggested that a joint commission of

133. ADMC, 1917, pp 14-17.
producer and freezing company representatives should travel to England to investigate at first hand the operation of the meat distribution system. 134

These recommendations received a strong endorsement from the 1918 conference. Support was also given to Massey's proposal that the commandeers should be continued for one year after the cessation of hostilities to overcome the problem of insufficient shipping space. 135 There was some opposition to this idea from W.D. Lyne in particular, but it only represented a minority viewpoint. Lyne succeeded, however, in persuading the conference to send a telegram of protest in reply to a letter from the New Zealand Overseas' Shipowners' Committee disclaiming the charge that shipping freights and profits had risen exorbitantly. The telegram articulated a deeply felt grievance amongst delegates for it was despatched contrary to the advice of Wilson. 136

The 1918 conference made further preparations for the return of peace by agreeing to support E.K. Newman's Flockhouse scheme 137 and through negotiating details of the phasing out of the wool and dairy produce commandeers with the Hon. D.H. Guthrie (Minister of Lands and Imperial Supplies). Guthrie gave delegates a sympathetic hearing as he had formerly been a member of the NZPU. It was agreed to continue the wool commandeers at prices 55% above the pre-war level. 138 Once these arrangements were secured the NZPU felt confident that New Zealand farmers could cope with the difficulties of post-war marketing, while they considered that adequate

135. ADCM, 1918, pp 11-12.
136. ibid. p 20.
137. This scheme set out to employ excess wool profits in establishing a fund to train the sons of English merchant seamen killed in service as agricultural labourers and farmers in New Zealand. ibid. p 10.
138. ibid. pp 15-16.
safeguards had been created to ensure that the profits of the war-time boom would not disappear overnight. The NZFU also attempted to entrench war-time advantages by other means.

The Government was requested to prolong the moratorium on the Mortgage Extension Act for five years after the War to cushion the effects of inflated land prices and to help Returned Servicemen meet their mortgage commitments. The request was partially acceded to as the moratorium was extended for two years. The NZFU felt satisfied that the extension was sufficient to cope with the dangers of inflated land values, but by way of insurance it also asked that the mortgages of Returned Servicemen be exempt from the land tax. The need for improvements in agricultural education and research facilities was given more emphasis than ever before.

When the war ground to a halt a few months after the 1918 conference the NZFU's leaders looked to the future confident that they had made provision for most exigencies. They thought, with some justification, that they had done all they could for New Zealand farmers through their negotiations with a sympathetic Government. But their failure to make a concerted attempt to overhaul the NZFU's organisational machinery, in a similar manner to the reforms introduced by the NFU in 1917, meant that the New Zealand farmers' pressure group was generally ill prepared to cope with the massive and often unseen changes soon to be unleashed upon the world.

The development of the NZFU between the end of the First World War and the advent of the depression in 1929 fell neatly into two distinct periods. The first involved the establishment of a partnership of necessity

139. ibid. p 15.
140. ibid. p 14.
141. ibid. pp 15 and 17.
with the Government in an endeavour to enable farmers to cope with the associated problems of the shipping shortage and the return to the open market. When these difficulties were exacerbated by the depression of 1921 a Meat Marketing Board was established to initiate badly needed marketing reform. It was soon followed by a Dairy Marketing Board. A sympathetic Government and NZFU tended to reinforce one another’s actions. While the NZFU remained critical of militant labour, the predominant mentality shaping their actions was one of opposition to the trusts. This period came to an end with the death of Massey and the appointment of Gordon Coates as the new Prime Minister.

From 1925 to 1929 the NZFU came to express significant differences of opinion with Government policy for the first time since 1918. The partnership of necessity was rapidly dissolved as the NZFU became disillusioned with the Reform Party and came to adopt a more independent stance. With independence came the stirrings of organisational maturity. Meaningful organisational reforms were implemented for the first time and these innovations help explain the membership increase of the late 1920s. Credit came to replace marketing reform as the key policy issue of the NZFU and the bogey of the trusts was largely replaced by an anti-banking mentality. During this period the NZFU also refused to ally itself with the Country Party despite the efforts of the powerful Auckland lobby. This decision further hastened on organisational maturity by leaving the NZFU free of restrictive party entanglements, although initially it weakened the effectiveness of the organisation as two virtually separate unions emerged. This division between the Auckland branch and the remainder of the NZFU was not really healed until the depression produced a new unifying force on the political scene - the Labour Government. After 1925 the NZFU was gradually forced to rely more on its organisational effectiveness and less on the strength of the farmer lobby within the
Reform Party. Necessity hastened on its evolution into a more sophisticated and modern pressure group. It could no longer afford to remain a loosely organised club dependent upon the influence of the farmer M.P.s for its success.

3 Mr Massey, the Meat Trust and Marketing Reform.

By the time the NZFU held its first post-war conference in its new headquarters, the Farmers' Institute, delegates were acutely aware of the difficulties created by the shipping shortage. Furthermore, they were also alarmed by the related problem of the large meat surplus held in storage which could cause a massive glut and a dramatic fall in prices unless it was controlled with some care. The best temporary expedient in dealing with these problems seemed to be to support Massey's call for the continuation of the commandeering for another year instead of three months. Support for Massey's proposals was agreed to by the narrow margin of sixteen to thirteen after a strong South Island lobby had advocated a return to the open market.142

A longer term solution for coping with these problems was to establish a Producer Controlled Shipping Line. This scheme gained greater popularity at the 1919 conference than it had in 1918 and in 1920 a special Producers' Committee was appointed to investigate the viability of such a project.143

With the advent of depression in 1921 the idea won even broader recognition and the NZFU's new president, William J. Polson, became its staunchest advocate. He even vehemently denied the charge that a similar scheme had failed to work in Australia. Such criticisms were attributed to the shipping combine who, according to Polson, had deliberately maligned the

142. ADCM, 1919, p 13.
143. ibid. 1920, p 16 and 1921, pp 26-27.
Australian Commonwealth Line because they feared a loss of business. 144

Polson then entered into secret negotiations with the Government over the feasibility of the scheme and persuaded Massey to appoint a select committee to investigate the matter. 145 But after 1922 the idea gradually faded into obscurity for with the temporary return of prosperity producers felt they no longer needed their own shipping line. More important the Government soon became fully aware of the huge capital commitment which the implementation of such a scheme would involve. Large scale expenditure of this sort ran contrary to its retrenchment policies. Marketing reform offered a more practical and cheaper alternative solution to easing the farmers' difficulties, from both the Government's and producer's point of view.

Before the NZFU elaborated any concrete proposals on marketing reform they concentrated on urging the Government to combat the influence of the meat trusts. Their anti-trust sentiments were also directed at the SOF. At the 1919 conference delegates enthusiastically supported the decision to send a committee of inquiry to England to investigate the distribution of New Zealand produce and warmly congratulated the Government on their efforts to control the operations of the Trust. 146 They also supported Lynsar's call to oppose the transfer of the Hawkes Bay and Gisborne freezing companies from Nelson Brothers to Vestey Brothers. 147 The 1919

144. ibid. The 1921 Conference made it clear that it supported a producer controlled rather than state owned line. ibid. p 16.

145. Polson gave evidence to this committee in 1924. NZFU, DEM, Vol II 1921-1928, 29 Oct 1924.

146. ADCM, 1919, pp 8, 14 and 18.

147. ibid. p 19. Lynsar's protest was largely explained by the fact that he was intimately connected with the Poverty Bay Farmers' Meat Company which became insolvent in 1923. See Oliver, Challenge and Response A Study of the Development of the East Coast Region, (Gisborne 1971), pp 195-198.
conference then reiterated its earlier demand that the names of overseas companies active within the New Zealand freezing industry be made available to the public. 148 Lynsar restated his criticisms of the SOF for supporting the continuance of the commandeering. He pointed to the prominence of SOF members on the Boards of Directors of Freezing Companies as proof of their attempt to place their vested interests before the national good. 149

By the time of the 1920 conference suspicion of the trusts was almost hysterical. It had quickly displaced a short-lived revival of opposition to militant labour 150 as the major concern of the organisation. The particular issue which brought the question of the trusts into prominence was a request made by the SOF that the Government grant a meat export licence to the American controlled Armour Company. George Sheat summed up the general mood of the conference when he equated Armour with the Meat Trust and claimed that the SOF supported Armour because it represented the "squabocracy." He went on to add that the NZFU opposed the granting of a licence because it represented the very different group of "small sheep owners." 151 A certain degree of validity was imparted to Sheat's remarks by the fact that the four conference members who supported the issuing of a licence - Wilson, Polson, C.W. Leadley and W.A. Banks - were either big or at least substantial sheep farmers. 152 G.L. Marshall of

148. ADCM, 1919, p 19.
149. Ibid. p 13.
150. Throughout 1919 the FUA had condemned organised labour as a form of monopoly as dangerous as the trusts, e.g. 25 Jan and 1 Nov 1919. There also seemed to be a general feeling of delight when Labour suffered reversals at the the 1919 elections. ADCM, 1920, p 4, and FUA, 27 Dec 1919.
Marton, who was also a member of the SOF, went on to point out that there was no support for the licence within the North Island branches of the SOF. Most of the support came in fact from the Marlborough, Canterbury and Otago branches,\(^{153}\) or in other words, from the big pastoralists.

Wilson and Polson hoped at this stage to use the Armour Company as an avenue of entry into the lucrative American market, but despite their considerable influence within the organisation they were unable to prevent the 1920 conference from urging Massey to refuse the licence. The conference then went on to ask the Government to stop the operations of Vestey Brothers in the Auckland and Poverty Bay areas.\(^{154}\) The Government responded by appointing NZFU members onto a sub-committee of the Board of Agriculture set up to investigate in depth the operations of the Meat Trust.

With the dramatic fall in export prices which occurred in 1921 the sinister threat of the Meat Trust developed itself into a giant ogre. By the time of the 1921 conference hysteria seemed to affect every delegate other than the president for 1920-21, G.W. Leadley, and a few other South Islanders.\(^{155}\) It was an ideal situation for Lynsar to give vent to his most extreme anti-trust sentiments and yet win the support of the conference despite the obvious absurdity of some of his statements. The simplistic

\(^{153}\) H.J. Stace of Marlborough and J.A. MacPherson of Otago were also members of the SOF. Both of them supported the SOF position. The only really concerted opposition to the licence from within the SOF came from Marshall and the Wellington Defence Committee of the NZFU, who were affiliated to the SOF. Hawkes Bay and Poverty Bay remained silent over the issue and there were no branches in the Auckland province. *"The New Zealand Sheepowners' and Farmers' Federation Minute Book, 1910-1932,*" 1921 A.G.M., p 152.

\(^{154}\) ADCM, 1920, pp 8-9.

\(^{155}\) W.W. Mulholland and W.A. Banks of Canterbury, Stace of Marlborough and MacPherson of Otago supported Leadley's contention that it was unfair to single out Vestey's and Armour for special criticism. Marshall was the only North Islander to concur with this viewpoint. This difference of opinion was partly explained by the fact that many bigger South Island farmers operated in the open market whereas North Islanders tended to sell direct to their local freezing works.
suggestion that the trusts had engineered the slump was accepted almost without question. Even the level-headed Poision blamed the trusts for wrecking havoc in the English market. 156

Attention was focused once again on opposing the Armour export licence. But Lumsar managed to take advantage of the powerful anti-trust sentiment by persuading the conference to ask the Government to prohibit Armour and Vestey's from operating in New Zealand. Even his statement that "some farmers were the most miserable individuals on the face of the earth" for not attempting to limit the power of the trusts, 157 went unchallenged. Leadley protested that he had regularly dealt with Armour and received fair treatment. But even Polson refused to accept his testimony. 158 It came as no surprise that Leadley only held the presidency for one year. His very rationality made him insensitive to an overwhelmingly powerful groundswell of opinion from within the organisation. Polson in contrast was able to perceive the strength of opposition to the trusts. His changed stance on the issue revealed a flexibility which helps explain why he held the office of President for a long term. 159

Yet somehow out of the inflated rhetoric and rampant emotionalism of the anti-trust lobby emerged a concrete and moderate solution to the problem of distributing New Zealand's meat exports in a more efficient manner. The idea of a producer controlled and State assisted marketing board was actually first proposed by J.G. Anderson of Pelorus, but his proposals articulated a conception shared by many delegates. Anderson went on to suggest

156. ADCM, 1921, p 19.
158. ibid. p 19.
that the scheme should operate for meat, butter and wool and be financed by a levy on export produce. Any surplus could go towards the establishment of a State controlled shipping line. Some delegates were bothered by the notion of State assistance, while others doubted that a comprehensive scheme was plausible. But the response to the idea of a producer controlled marketing board, especially for meat, was enthusiastic.\textsuperscript{160} In short the Meat Board was the outcome of an organisational consensus rather than the result of initiatives taken by a small "radical" group.\textsuperscript{161}

Once delegates had agreed to support the scheme a special committee was appointed to ensure the Meat Marketing Board became a reality. Success appeared likely when Sir Francis Henry Dillon Bell told the annual conference deputation that the Government favoured the implementation of such a scheme. The major obstacle once again seemed to be the SDF who were opposed to any form of marketing control.

Immediately the conference ended Polson undertook a tour of the South Island to whip up enthusiasm for the meat marketing board scheme. He seemed to secure a considerable degree of support but Massey's commitment to the scheme was far more important. A Bill to set up the Board was introduced into Parliament in December. A meat pool conference followed in January 1922 at which the NZFU representatives made it clear that they favoured the compulsory pooling of meat.\textsuperscript{162} This attitude caused some contention but the Bill nevertheless passed into law in February 1922.

\textsuperscript{160} ibid. p 16.

\textsuperscript{161} B.D. Graham, "The Country Party Idea in New Zealand Politics," in Robert Chapman and Keith Sinclair (Eds), Studies of a Small Democracy, (Auckland 1963), p 181, credits the formation of the marketing boards to the influence of the Auckland radicals. Such a claim is inaccurate and misleading.

\textsuperscript{162} NZFU DFM, 1921-1928, 10 Jan 1922.
Once the Board was established anti-trust sentiments seemed to moderate. The executive felt confident that New Zealand farmers were now adequately protected against the trusts. The 1922 conference bore out this new found confidence by withdrawing their opposition to the granting of an export licence to the Armour Company. This decision was also motivated by a desire to conciliate the SOF and win their support for the Board.163

David Jones, Chairman of the new Meat Board and an active NZFU member and Reform M.P., attended the 1922 conference to sound out the opinions of delegates on the operation of the new marketing machinery. Generally he received the endorsement he desired. Nearly every delegate spoke in glowing terms of the work of the Board. The principle of compulsion was also confirmed by a unanimous vote.164 The warmth of the reception given to the advent of the Meat Board decided the Dominion Executive that they should go on to promote the formation of a Dairy Board which would exercise similar powers of compulsory pooling. The wheel had turned full circle.165 One of the most ardent champions of the laissez-faire economic system had become the leading advocate of State assisted marketing reform. The only consistency in the NZFU's position was the determination to defend the farmers' interests at all costs.

163. The NZFU's hand was also forced by a petition got up by the SOF which supposedly represented the opinions of farmers who owned over 8,000,000 sheep, or more than a third of the New Zealand flock. These men requested that Armour be granted an export licence. P.S. O'Connor, Mr Massey And The American Meat Trust, Massey Memorial Lecture, (Palmerston North 1972), pp 14-15.

164. ADCM, 1922, pp 8-9.

165. e.g. In 1920 the NZFU had urged a return to the open market for butter producers whose exports were still controlled by the commandeering. ibid. 1920, p 10 and 13.
The idea of a Dairy Board proved to be less popular and more contentious than the Meat Board. Although the 1922 conference voted in favour of the establishment of such a board and restated its belief in the principle of compulsion, Taranaki dairy farmers, both within and outside the NZFU, opposed the scheme. Many of their factories were run on proprietary lines and were faring perfectly well in the open market. Most of the support for the scheme came in fact from dairy farmers who were members of co-operative companies. It was no coincidence that the Dairy Farmers' Union, which was formed in 1920 and claimed a membership of 5,000 by 1923, supported the idea of a dairy board and drew its greatest strength from the predominantly co-operative areas of the Waikato and the Manawatu. The older Dairy Associations also supported the pooling scheme and they too were strongest in the same two regions. On the other hand many dairy farmers did not feel strongly about the issue as only 45% of those enrolled, or 25,000 out of a possible 56,000, bothered to vote over the question of export control when the proposal was put before them in October 1923.167

This mixture of limited hostility from certain specific groups and a broader indifference persuaded Massey to proceed with caution. He did not set up the Dairy Board until late 1923 and even then he compromised further by limiting the powers of the Board to the allocation of shipping space and the provision of storage and marine insurance. The NZFU was incensed but much lobbying was required before absolute control was

166. Advance, 1 Sep 1923 p 6. Advance was the official organ of the DFU. This was the first number and it only survived until 1925. Also see R.M. Burdon, Op cit, p 44, and H.G. Philpott, A History Of The New Zealand Dairy Industry, (Wellington 1937), pp 54 and 269, on the differences between the Taranaki and Waikato companies.

167. Advance, 1 Nov 1923 p 5. 22,232 of those who voted, or about two-thirds, were in favour and 9,255 were against. NZFU DEM, 1921-1928, 31 Jan 1924.
introduced in September 1926. When Coates took that significant step it soon rebounded to his discredit as his Government lacked the commitment to ensure that the scheme succeeded. As we will see later in the chapter, the failure of the Government to effectively implement dairy control came to play a major part in worsening relations between the NZFU and the Reform Party.

When J.G. Anderson introduced the idea of a marketing board in 1921 he had hoped that its activities would be extended to the direction of wool marketing as well as the pooling of meat and dairy produce. But his advocacy of a wool board at every conference during the 1920s failed to win any widespread support. He could not even persuade NZFU delegates to back such a scheme. Bigger sheep farmers within the organisation, such as G.L. Marshall, tended to block any such proposals by arguing that as wool was not a perishable product it did not need to be pooled for effective marketing. Anderson did receive some limited support from the small sheep men who attended the conference, but they were unable to override the opposition of the bigger sheep farmers. Even when he finally persuaded the entire organisation to support the introduction of a wool board in 1929 there remained the staunch opposition of the SOF. The considerable sheep power of the big pastoralists elaborated in Chapter One made it imperative that the NZFU win their support if a wool marketing scheme was to have any chance of success. Even though the SOF cannot have had a membership of over 1,000 its members owned nearly a half of the total New Zealand flock. Their general preference for the continuance of

169. NZFA, 4 Aug 1923 pp 4 and 14.
171. The SOF Minute Book contained no reference to membership as subscriptions were calculated according to the size of flocks. But it cannot have been great as according to the 1926 Census there were 6,563 specialist sheep farmers, while the 1920 Annual Sheep Returns showed that there were only 164 owners of over 10,000 sheep and 536 owners of over 5,000 sheep.
booms and slumps condemned to failure the attempts of smaller farmers to introduce some degree of equalisation and stabilisation. Large scale capital resources enabled them to cash in on the bonanza years and then ride things out until the ensuing slump gave way to another dramatic rise in prices. Their continuing dominance of the local wool market posed a real problem to a general farmers' organisation for the group had to be brought under some degree of disciplinary control if meaningful compromises were ever to be reached over the question of wool marketing. Even today this problem remains partially unresolved and Anderson's scheme has never been fully implemented.

A combination of the emotional appeal of combating the meat trusts and a longer established desire to improve marketing methods had induced the NZFU to undertake effective action. The emotional appeal of anti-middleman sentiments was not so strongly developed within the English farming community and this helps explain why the generally more progressive NFU lagged behind the NZFU in this matter. A sympathetic Government also provided New Zealand farmers with a real incentive for supporting marketing reform. They knew that their ideas had every chance of implementation whereas the NFU anticipated yet another indifferent rebuff from the political establishment.

Although the related topics of controlling the activities of the meat trust and the introduction of marketing reform clearly dominated the proceedings of the NZFU in the period 1918 to 1925, it would be misleading to infer that the NZFU did not concern itself with other matters. The overlapping questions of Returned Soldier Settlements, speculation, valuation, taxation and Maori land continued to engage the attention of members. A possibility of establishing an alliance with other farmers' organisations was also considered, while most provinces refused to go along with Auckland's idea of establishing a separate Country Party. In addition the advocacy of improvements in agricultural education was maintained.
Once the troops returned home the NZFU stepped up its interest in the Returned Soldiers' Settlement Schemes. A deputation from the RSA attended the 1919 conference and applauded the NZFU's decision to set up advisory committees of experienced farmers to assist the soldier settlers. Once again the NZFU revealed a greater degree of realism in the matter than the Government for they stressed that the soldiers should be placed on reasonably developed holdings if they were to have any real prospect of success. They also urged the Government to mingle experienced farmers with inexperienced men on the settlements and hoped that land would be given free or at least made available at low cost with low rates of interest.

Consultation between the NZFU and the RSA continued into the 1920s and in 1922 the NZFU set up a small committee to investigate individual cases of hardship. The Government was also requested to make land quickly available for resettlement if men were forced off their farms. An elaborate defence was also made of the Government's contribution to the schemes which runs counter to the critical assessment of the returned soldier settlements, made by several historians, a judgement backed up by impressively strong evidence. Polson in contrast argued that the labour movement in New Zealand, especially through its mouthpiece, the Maoriland Worker, had considerably exaggerated the failure rate of the schemes. He considered that New Zealand had set a

173. ibid. 1922, p 6.
174. e.g. Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, p 237, Oliver, The Story of New Zealand, p 172; George, Op cit, pp 146-171. George's more detailed investigation convincingly demonstrates that the historical orthodoxy is correct in this instance.
shining example to the Labour administration of New South Wales whose
treatment of the returned men was a disgrace. He went on to claim that
there was a higher rate of forfeiture amongst crown tenants in 1908, 1910
and 1912 than in 1921.\textsuperscript{175} His figures are questionable because the
returned soldiers who suffered most were those with heavy mortgages, in
other words freeholders. Some delegates also felt that Polson's views
were hopelessly optimistic.\textsuperscript{176} But perhaps he added a necessary qualification
to our assessment of the settlements as most judgements on it have been
made by historians working from the perspective of the Labour Party.
Polson's rather tenuous defence is probably more useful, however, in
revealing that the NZFU was still extremely loyal to the Reform Party in 1922.
Even though he did not have the advantage of George's hindsight, a man
of his ability must have been aware that the scheme was badly administered
and that failures were occurring from North Auckland to Otago.\textsuperscript{177}

Polson's defence of the Government was also partially a cover up
for the NZFU who could have done much more for the returned settlers than
they did. Lingering laissez-faire attitudes and individual self-interest
in combination prevented the NZFU from providing really meaningful help.
The organisation's attitude to land speculation largely explained why their
assistance was limited despite the intense patriotism of individual members.

\textsuperscript{175} According to Polson's figures there were 302 forfeitures or 1.5%
of the total crown tenants in 1908, 346 or 1.6\% in 1910, 290 or
1.2\% in 1912 and 307 or 1.07\% in 1921. An official inquiry in
1923 showed Polson to be incorrect. A to J, 1923, C-9A.

\textsuperscript{176} e.g. R.D. Duxfield of Horotia, an Auckland delegate. The majority
of delegates, however, supported Polson's conclusions.

\textsuperscript{177} George has examined the files of fifteen Soldier Settler estates
ranging from the Clifton estate in Otago to the Streamlands estate
in North Auckland. The major problem common to the entire fifteen
was overvaluation. Second class land was also often advertised
as being of first class quality. He concludes that the soldier
settlement scheme cost New Zealand £8,000,000.
No-one, apart from the Taranaki and Southland delegates, was prepared to suggest ways of controlling speculation. In 1919 Taranaki delegates urged that some measures should be introduced to control "trafficking" in land, but they failed to win any support for such controls. 178 A year later Taranaki delegates introduced a concrete proposal on how speculation could be controlled. They wanted mortgages on a first property to be paid up before a farmer could buy another farm. Southland delegates also suggested that a tax should be introduced to take 50% of the profit on any property sold by an owner who had been in possession of it for under three years. 179 But once again the majority of delegates opposed any such interference with the so-called natural law of supply and demand. Polson summed up the opinion of most delegates on the whole question of speculation when he commented that it was better for a man to leave the land than to be propped up by artificial means. 180 This hard-headed and hard-hearted attitude reflected the dominance of the NZFL leadership by established farmers who had sufficient capital resources to turn the land boom to their personal advantage and then to ride out the ensuing slump. There was also a suggestion that many members realised that very small units were no longer viable and approved of moderate aggregation. Leadley probably summed up the position of many members when he admitted that he was buying up properties on which to settle his sons. 181 It was not surprising that the majority of members opposed any unnecessary interference with the mechanisms of the land market when those mechanisms had worked to their own advantage. Even the deserving returned soldier was expected to undertake the same risks as the established farmer in the hope that he too would prosper from the

178. ADCM, 1919, pp 5-6.
179. ibid. 1920, pp 6-7.
180. ibid. 1922, p 4.
181. ibid. 1919, p 7.
existing system. The only meaningful concessions made to the soldier settlers and to smaller struggling farmers in general was to lobby the Government to extend the moratorium in 1921 and again in 1924.

The NZFU's attitude to the question of valuation also revealed that members wanted a continuation of the unfettered free trade in real estate. They often expressed criticisms of the valuation system but never came up with concrete proposals on how it could be improved. The old cry of a greater say for a man with local knowledge within the Assessment Courts was revived but produced no tangible results. After 1922 a call also went out for more realistic and therefore lower valuations. But as the Valuer-General pointed out at the 1921 conference farmers could not automatically expect high valuations when they had a chance to sell and low valuations when they wanted to buy or had run into financial difficulties. He went on to add that farmers were often their own worst enemies in relation to receiving fair valuations as they sometimes refused valuers entry to their land. The problem of accurate land valuation remained unresolved as farmers differed over whether they wanted a completely open land market or some degree of control.

As in the matter of valuation the NZFU felt dissatisfied with the existing taxation system but were unable to produce any viable reforms. What agitated them most was what they considered to be the imposition of a double tax, by which they meant payment of both the income and the land

182. ibid. 1921, p 11.
183. ADCM, 1924, pp 54-55, and Farmers Weekly, 5 Sep 1924 p 3. Polson actually wanted an end to moratorium to bring land values down to a realistic level, but not until the Government had carried through its salvage operation. In short the moratorium extension was viewed by the NZFU as an expedient rather than as a long-term solution.
184. ADCM, 1921, p 6.
tax. Many delegates felt that as income tax had been introduced as a war-
time measure it should be removed. Massey confirmed this viewpoint when
he promised the 1922 conference that he would do his best to have the income
tax abolished. A minority of delegates actually favoured income tax, but most members opposed it largely because they abhorred book-keeping.

The organisation got its way when the war-time income tax was removed in
1923. The super-tax, which was also introduced as a war-time measure, provided another grievance, and the NZFU was again successful in protesting its continuance, for the super-tax was also abolished in 1923. The other major grievance in relation to taxation was that those members who had connections with dairy companies considered the incidence of company tax to be unfair. On the prompting of Captain Colbeck of Auckland the 1924 conference asked the Government to reduce the rate of the company tax.

While the NZFU frequently criticised the taxation system few speakers on the matter displayed any real knowledge of how the system functioned. PoIson frequently had to admonish delegates for their inaccurate criticisms which were too often based on ignorance. A frequent complaint was that there were no exemptions for family labour but PoIson was forced to point out that provisions for such labour already existed. He went on to admonish delegates for demanding the abolition of the mortgage tax as such a move would probably lead to an increase in the land tax and make credit dearer.

186. ibid. 1922, p 9.
187. The 1920 conference acknowledged that this dislike must be overcome by passing a resolution that elementary book-keeping should be taught in the Sixth Standard. ibid. 1920, p 14.
188. Goodliffe, Op cit, p 269.
189. ibid.
190. ADCM, 1924, pp 38-44.
191. ibid. 1920, p 8.
In sheer desperation he set up a Finance and Taxation Committee in 1922 to investigate the complex question of taxation in a more satisfactory manner and instituted discussions with such bodies as the Chambers of Commerce to increase the NZFU's understanding of the many facets of taxation. This unsophisticated approach to the issue of taxation which Polson attempted to overcome was in direct contrast to the NFU where each Yearbook made available to every member extremely detailed accounts of the latest developments in taxation practices.

The NZFU continued to press for easier access to Maori land throughout the 1920s and pointed to the needs of soldier settlers and the depression to reinforce their argument that more land needed to be brought into productive use. In 1925 they secured something of a minor victory when rating of Maori land was finally introduced. But the significance of this innovation was largely overlooked by the Union's leaders as their attitude was firmly focussed on the credit issue.

Prior to 1925 the energies of the Dominion executive were largely absorbed in helping to establish the marketing boards and in dealing with the numerous other issues which concerned the NZFU. It was little wonder that most of the meaningful organisational reforms were not implemented until after that date. But it did find time to bring about two major organisational improvements and to negotiate a third.

The most significant improvement was the appointment of a full time secretary in 1923, after E.C. Jack had served the union on a part-time basis for sixteen years. This critically important office had operated

192. ibid. 1922, p 5 and NZFU DEM, 1921-1928.

193. NZFU DEM, 1921-1928, 23 Apr 1925. Polson considered the innovation to be nothing more than a sop intended to placate the NZFU for Government inaction over the credit question.

194. ADCM, 1923; NZFA, 4 Aug 1923 p 14.
on a full-time basis even before the NFU was established on the national
level and by the 1920s the general secretary was assisted by several other
specialist secretaries. Specialist sub-committees, similar to those
employed by the NFU, were also established in 1922. But they did not
engage in anything like the same degree of activity as their NFU equivalents. 19
A real possibility of considerably expanding the NZFU's base of support
presented itself in 1921 when the SOF, the Agricultural Council, 196 and the
Dairy Farmers' Union met with the NZFU to consider the formation of a
general federation of farmers' organisations. Polson was a strong supporter
of the scheme, but the conflicting interests of each individual organisation
doomed the conception to failure. The SOF could not agree to any form of
marketing control and accused the NZFU of formulating policies which
reflected the undue influence of "meatmen." 197 The DFU agreed that
"meat men" exercised too much control over the NZFU and claimed that the
NZFU did not know the difference between amalgamation and federation. In
other words the DFU wanted to remain an autonomous body subservient to
a general council of the federation rather than to the Dominion executive
of the NZFU. 198 Two further meetings of the various organisations took
place in 1922 and 1923 but no progress was made. 199 The NZFU had to be
content with amalgamations secured with the New Zealand Poultry Growers'
Association in 1923 and the New Zealand Fruitgrowers' Association in 1923. 200
It remained one of several farmer's organisations.

195. Ibid. 1922, p 5 and NZFU DEM, 1921-1928, 24 Jul 1922.

196. This was the name given to the body which co-ordinated the activities
of the A and P Societies at the national level. See Chapter Eight
p 257.

197. Minute Book fo the NZ Sheepowners' and Farmers' Federation 1910-1932,
1910-1932, 1921 A.G.M.

198. Advance, 1 Sep 1923 p 4. The DFU also did not want a dictatorial
Dairy Board. Ibid. 1 Nov 1923 p 5.


200. ADCM, 1922, p 9, and NZFU DEM, 1921-1928, 2-3 May 1923.
A chance was also lost in 1924 to increase the usefulness of the four provincial mutual insurance companies, based in Otago, Taranaki, Southern Hawkes Bay and Manawatu, by federating them on a national basis. So little support was forthcoming for the scheme that its organisers failed to obtain 100 signed premium notes. Although the mutuals continued as reasonably successful insurance operations on the provincial level in terms of providing both fire and accident insurance, the NZFU was unable to emulate the NFU's establishment of a nation-wide insurance operation.

The immediate post-war success of Country Parties in Australia and Canada provided the Auckland branch with useful ammunition in their promotion of the idea that farmers should form their own separate party. But although these overseas successes won the Auckland lobby some support from Southland and Nelson the other provinces remained resolutely opposed to the idea. The great majority of delegates tended to feel that the creation of three or even four cornered electorate contests would only let Labour into power. Canterbury and Otago were even more hostile towards the idea as they intensely disliked the suggestion that they would be told how they should vote. Furthermore, Polson himself was strenuously opposed to the establishment of a Country Party to which the NZFU would be tied by constitutional links. The NZFU was lucky that he wanted to emulate the model of the American Federation of Farmers' Bureau which had

201. NZFU DEM, 1921-1928, 28 Jan 1925.
202. ADCM, 1919, p 12.
203. This viewpoint seemed to reflect Massey's actions at the 1922 election when he wrote several letters to the Auckland Farmers' Union to dissuade them from running Country Party candidates against Reform members. Letters in the Prime Ministers' File, 9/18, "Reform Party Correspondence," 1919-1922, National Archives. The Country Party agreed not to run candidates in return for a Government commitment to agricultural banks and the marketing boards. George, op cit, p 204.
204. ADCM, 1922, p 7. Otago delegates expressed the same view in 1924. ibid. 1924, p 52.
established a lobby in Congress made up of members of both major parties. His guidance ensured that the NZFU avoided what would have almost certainly been a disastrous political alliance.

The fierceness of the debates on this issue, however, forced the executive to make some compromises. A standing committee was set up in 1919 to consider means of examining election pledges and in 1920 it consulted with the provincial executives over the whole question of more effective political action. As a result of these deliberations, the NZFU was much more active in questioning candidates for the 1922 election than it had been in 1919. But it still failed to organise any significant degree of block voting. This increase in political activity satisfied the majority of delegates although it obviously did not answer the demands of the Country Party advocates. Overall Poison's decision to steer a middle course over the issue stopped the NZFU splitting into hostile pro and anti-Auckland camps.

The NZFU's championship of a more scientific approach to farming was continued under Poison's leadership. The demand for the establishment of a proper scientific agricultural college was reiterated and the NZFU also urged the Government to establish farm schools. It was felt that technical schools based in towns were of little use as they forced children to leave the countryside and then they became seduced by the comfort and glamour of city living. What was needed was practical instruction in rural areas.

205. Ibid. 1922, pp 7-8.

206. Ibid. 1919, p 12; 1920, p 14; 1922, p 12; 1923, NZFA, 4 Aug 1923 p 13. More candidates were questioned in 1922 than in 1919, partly because the NZFU had more time to prepare for the election. NZFA 4 Nov 1922 p 1.

Doping the Dairy Farmer

HOLLAND:—Open your mouth and shut your eyes, and see what my party will send you!

Holland peddles the uschold. Source:— FW, 19 Jul 1924.
which would instil a love of country life. The NZFU also became a staunch advocate of the introduction of compulsory herd testing.

Although the meat trusts attracted most of the NZFU’s criticisms between 1918 and 1925 a few jibes were directed at organised labour. Compulsory preference to unionists was roundly condemned and the Government was requested not to let the Arbitration Court interfere in the rural industries. Polson even argued for a reduction of wages to reduce costs and the Labour Party was pictured as a highly dangerous political organisation. Its "usehold" policies came in for some stinging criticisms. Relations with the trade unions worsened again.

"Coates, Credit and the Country Party" 1925 - 1929

Ready access to cheap credit had always been something desired by all New Zealand farmers and the NZFU shared that object. But the question of credit only became a key issue during the 1920s when many New Zealand farmers found themselves adversely affected by over inflated land values and falling prices. A possible solution to their difficulties appeared to be agricultural banks run on a co-operative basis by farmers. The idea of establishing such banks was actually introduced at the 1919 conference, but it did not move to the centre of the political stage until Gordon Coates became Prime Minister on 27 May 1925. From that point onwards Polson in

208. ADCM, 1923, - NZFA, 11 Aug 1923 p 12.
209. ibid. 1922, pp 3 and 6.
211. ADCM, 1923, - NZFA, 4 Aug 1923 p 12.
212. The usehold was often disparingly referred to as the "loosehold" or even worse thinly disguised land nationalisation. e.g. FW, 19 Jul 1924 p 3.
213. ADCM, 1919, p 16.
214. Burdon, Os cit, p 62.
Ensheebled Agriculture

DR BILL: He must be saved! Wool didn't help much, but alternate doses of Co-op. and Agri. Bank Tonic will just about pull him through—don't forget the Agri. Bank Tonic.

Mr Massey has his attention drawn to agricultural banking.
Source:- PW, 4 Oct 1924.
particular developed agricultural banks into a panacea for the farmer's ills. He saw such banks as a necessary complement to the useful work carried out by the marketing boards and many members within the NZFU shared his views. Despite the mild degree of financial unorthodoxy associated with the proposal to establish agricultural banks, the idea, like that of the marketing boards, was supported by an organisational consensus. The scheme was advocated by many delegates, not just the Auckland "radicals."  

Massey himself was subjected to some pressure over the question of credit and responded with legislation in 1922 to ameliorate NZFU demands. But his basic financial orthodoxy made him suspicious of the concept of lending agencies operating on the periphery of the existing banking system. Polson sensed Massey's reluctance and was prepared to criticise both the Prime Minister and his Government for diffidence in the matter of providing cheap and accessible credit. Massey was saved, however, from suffering any serious loss of political kudos over the matter by his astute decision to appoint a Commission of Inquiry which included Polson, to investigate the problem. Furthermore, Massey's manna with farmers enabled him to be forgiven for shortcomings in this area. It was a different matter for Coates, however, who did not inherit Massey's mantle as the farmers' champion and was subjected to the full force of the NZFU's anger over what its members considered to be an inexcusable lack of governmental action.

215. Graham is wrong again in implying that most of the NZFU's useful ideas originated in the Auckland branch and were its exclusive prerogative. "The Country Party in New Zealand," p 181. Taranaki more than any other province, introduced the idea of agricultural banks. Captain Colbeck of the Auckland branch and the Country Party even staunchly defended the trading banks in 1921. ADGM, 1921, p 11.

216. "The Rural Credit Associations Act," NZ Statutes, 1922, No 55, pp 377-380. This Act eased prerequisites for loans from the Advances to Settlers Office by introducing the principle of loans on chattels as well as on security of land.

217. "Report of the Royal Commission on Rural Credits," A to J, 1926, B-5, p 1. The other members of the Commission were Percy Harper Cox and Colonel James Jacob Essen. Essen was chairman.
The World (to young N.Z.): "Don't take those risks, young fellow. Come round by the safe track."

A panacea.

Source:— FE, 10 Aug 1926.
After Polson returned from the Rural Credit Commission’s world-wide tour of investigation which took in Latin America, North America, Europe and Britain, he was more convinced than ever that the best models to follow were those of the German Raiffisen system and the co-operative agricultural banks of Denmark. These banks could provide either short-term intermediate credit or long-term finance on security of land and chattels. They were run by farmers themselves on a co-operative basis. The only link which existed between them and the State was a guarantee of redemption and minimal supervision of the issuing of loans.  

When the Commission reported in 1926 it incorporated Polson’s preference for the Raiffisen system in its recommendations by suggesting that a Farm Loans Board, made up of farmer representatives, should be established under the auspices of the State Advances Office to control the flow of credit to co-operative associations. The Rural Advances Act of 1926 and the Rural Intermediate Credits Act of 1927 supposedly implemented the Commission’s recommendations, yet they were savagely attacked by the NZFU as hopelessly inadequate legislative responses. Such criticisms continued right up to 1929 when Coates had been ousted from office.

Coates himself was quite bewildered by NZFU claims that he had betrayed the farmers with his policies on credit. He could simply not understand why he was supposed to have sold out to sinister commercial interests. Massey had also been somewhat baffled by earlier NZFU criticisms of his credit policies as he felt with much justification that he had done more than enough to answer farmers’ needs. The confusion of these two politicians has also carried over to the historians who have

218. ibid. pp 32-42.


220. The NZFU accused Coates of inaction over the credit question, ADCM, 1928, p 18, while Polson accused the Government of bowing to pressure from foreign controlled banks. ibid. p 8.

221. FT went even further by describing Coates as a "bubble" wafted "this way and that" by the "vested interests." 10 Aug 1927 p 5.
Coates loses popularity.
Sources:—FP, 10 Nov 1927.
generally been puzzled by the NZFU's attitudes on credit. As contemporary economists such as Professors Belshaw and Condliffe pointed out farmers' problems were caused by too much rather than too little credit. Furthermore, abundant credit had been made available to farmers since the establishment of the Advances to Settlers' Office in 1894. Its work had been considerably extended by the State Advances Department and expanded even further by the 1922 and 1923 Acts. In addition to State credit agencies the private sector made available large amounts of credit, especially through the vehicle of stock and station agents. Even the 1925 Royal Commission on Rural Credits was forced to admit that there was more credit available at lower rates of interest in New Zealand than overseas.

Unrealistically high land values induced by excessive speculation in the land market seemed a far more obvious prime cause of farmers' difficulties than lack of credit. Why then did the NZFU attack the Reform Government's efforts to provide easily accessible and cheap credit with such vigour?

The most obvious answer is that NZFU members seemed to want farmers to control the distribution of credit in as direct a fashion as possible. They did not want intermediary bodies, whether State Departments or Stock and Station agencies, to interfere in the provision of credit. They wanted farmers to be the sole judge of who should or should not have a loan. The Select Committee set up to consider the report of the Credits Commission was condemned, for example, for arguing that a separate Farm Loans Board


224. Condliffe, Belshaw and Tocker all focused on artificially high land values as a major cause of the farmers' troubles. See George, Op cit, pp 12-19.
The Supercargo: "H'm! It doesn't seem to be rising! Perhaps there's too much ballast!"

The causes of the farmers' problems.
Source: FF, 10 Dec 1928.
was unnecessary as State Advances could readily control the flow of credit at little additional cost. 225 Poision was also angered by the rejection of warehouse bonds for security as it implied that farmers were not good judges of their security. 226 Again the Rural Intermediate Credits' Act of 1927 was criticised because stock and station agencies were required to guarantee 20% of a loan. 227 The NZFU in short wanted to usurp the functions of the intermediary credit agencies much as it sometimes wanted to cut out the middleman by selling direct or through the alternative outlet of marketing boards.

The other major reason for the NZFU's apparently inexplicable attitude towards the credit issue was that there was a strong quasi-populist and irrational element in their thinking. New Zealand farmers seemed to need a scapegoat to blame for their difficulties. The meat trust provided a simple explanation for their difficulties in the early 1920s and it was replaced in the mid 1920s by new villains - the banks and stock and station agencies. There never was any thought that some of the farmers' problems resulted from their propensity to gamble rather too much in the land market. When the Government refused to give farmers all the credit they wanted, 228 a normally moderate and in many ways a progressive man like Poision, was moved to remark that the profits of the BNZ should be investigated. 229

225. "Select Committee Report on Rural Credits," A to J, 1926, I-16. The criticism of this report was contained in NZFU DEM, 1921-1928, 3 Sep 1926.

226. ADCM, 1927, F-32A.

227. ibid.

228. Poision wanted a loan limit of £7,000 but the Rural Advances Act of 1926 placed the upper limit at £5,500.

229. ADCM, 1927, F-32A.
following year this champion of laissez-faire economics went on to suggest that the BNZ should be brought under stricter State control. His rationality seemed to desert him completely when he added that Stock and Station agencies forced farmers to buy cheap and sell dear.230 Once he began to talk of agricultural banks Polson, normally a hard-headed pragmatist, was transformed into a visionary.231 The pronouncements of the Auckland branch's newspaper, Farming First, on the credit issue were even more extreme, especially in their delineation of scapegoats. At the back of NZFU members' thinking lay the notion that the farmer was the most important member of society and was, therefore, entitled to special economic treatment which included a different set of rules for economic behaviour.

There did not seem to be the same quasi-populist strain within the English farming community even though credit became a critically important issue during the 1920s and English farmers were fully aware of the continental style agricultural banks.232 The NFU's attitudes towards credit and criticism of Government responses in providing improved credit facilities were far more logically consistent as a result.

The failure of the Coate's Government to successfully implement compulsory marketing of dairy produce during 1926 and 1927 only

230. ibid. 1928, pp 7-8.

231. Polson, hoped that agricultural banks, in association with the marketing boards, would develop New Zealand into a highly productive country able to compete in world markets with any nation. He hoped that the agricultural banks would also force out the monopolists and speculators and stop the drift to the towns. NZPA, 4 Aug 1923 p 14.

232. Some Liberal party candidates were particularly staunch advocates of the establishment of co-operative credit banks for agriculturists e.g. R.T. Lang, who stood as Liberal candidate for Saint Augustines and inevitably failed to win the seat, told the Canterbury Farmers' Club of the successes of such banks in Germany, Denmark and the U.S.A. Lord Carrington, the Asquithian Liberal's President of the Board of Agriculture, was also favourable to the idea. Kentish Gazette and Canterbury Press, 13 Aug 1910.

increased its unpopularity with the NZFU.\footnote{234} An inability to guarantee farmers that the machinery of the Arbitration Court would be kept out of the agricultural sector\footnote{235} only made matters worse for the Coates administration. As disillusionment with the Reform Party grew the NZFU determined that it should become independent of the major parties.\footnote{236} This change of attitude was confirmed in concrete fashion when the NZFU decided to run independent candidates at the 1928 election. The end of the old unofficial alliance between party and pressure-group was confirmed beyond doubt when Polson, one of the original founders of the Political Reform League from which the Reform Party grew,\footnote{237} was elected as an independent M.P. for Stratford. Poision's election to Parliament not only brought to an end an era in the history of the NZFU. It also secured it a direct level of parliamentary representation which always eluded the NZFU.

The growing rift with Reform and the sharing of similar attitudes over the question of credit provided the Auckland branch with an ideal

234. Coates was accused of having fallen into the hands of the commercial representatives on the Dairy Board by the NZFU. ADCM, 1927, C 30, and NZFU DEM, 1921–1928, 16 Oct 1928.

235. See Gaudin, Op cit, pp 107–115. The NZFU's main argument against the award system was that it did not make sufficient allowance for local variations in working conditions. ADCM, 1928, p 10.

236. The rift with the Coates Government is clearly revealed by comparing statements made at the 1926 and 1928 Conferences. In 1926 Polson said "nowhere else in the world were the problems of the farmers more generously dealt with by a parliament or a government than in New Zealand," ADCM, 1926, p 2. In almost direct contradiction the Political Committee, set up by the 1927 Conference, reported to the 1928 Conference that the performance of the Coates Government was so unsatisfactory from the point of view of the primary producer that the NZFU had no choice but to act independently of the Reform Party. ibid. 1928, pp 4–5. Only a year earlier Coates had said that Reform was a "farmers' party made up principally of farmers," and had not been challenged. ibid. 1927, A-1.

opportunity to win over the NZFU to the Country Party cause. But most provinces remained resolute in their determination to avoid entanglements with the Country Party. Polson in particular favoured adherence to a position of political independence. When he was in London with the Credits' Commission he had been deeply impressed by what he saw of the NFU's operations. Their non-party stance confirmed his opinion that the independent lobby technique utilised by the American Federation of Farmers' Bureau was the best example to follow. Polson made the correct choice as an alliance with the Country Party could have proved suicidal.

The Country Party fared disastrously at elections in 1922, 1925 and 1928, and was in many ways backward looking. Its leaders were hopelessly out of touch with the growing urban reality of New Zealand life. A Country Party could only have possibly achieved a majority by allying with an urban-based party. But unlike Australia none of the existing parties was prepared to enter into such an alliance. Furthermore, the Reform Party was already based on such an alliance, even though many of its urban businessmen supporters deserted to join the United Party in 1928.

Graham has completely distorted the issue by labelling the Country Party "radical" and the NZFU "rigid and conservative." In fact the NZFU was far more progressive in the organisational sense for it represented the independent type of sectional pressure group typical of a mature social and political situation. In contrast the Country Party was a populist type.

238. Other major policy objectives shared by the Country Party and the NZFU were opposition to trusts and increased freights, and advocacy of preferential railway tariffs.

239. ADCM, 1926, p 32.

240. Even Graham, Op cit, p 198, concedes "The Auckland Country Party was more a product of its leaders' illusions than of the economic and social realities of its time."
of response, naively trying to set up yet another separate party and to turn
the clock back to an earlier pre-industrialised and predominantly rural
New Zealand. By the late 1920s the NZFU had realised that it had to learn
to live with the modern world and to attempt to turn change to its own
advantage instead of resisting such changes. Graham reveals the confusion
in his own mind when he talks of "radicals" in one breath and proto-fascists
in another. 241 The NZFU was certainly more conservative in that it opposed
drastic forms of change but it was also more realistic in realising that
the clock could not be turned back. Like the Country Party leaders Poison
had a vision of his ideal New Zealand. But his notion was a land of highly
productive and scientifically operated farms of reasonable size backed by
a co-operative urban sector, rather than of a nation of small holders or
yeomen farmers. His individual circumstances inevitably made his vision
rather different. Graham has distorted the differences between the two
groups by summing up two complex sets of attitudes as "radical" and
"conservative." Militant and cautious probably describes the differences
more accurately.

Furthermore, Graham's Auckland perspective made him fail to see the
very real threat posed to the unity of the NZFU by the Auckland branch's

241. Graham, op cit, p 185. A more accurate way of describing the apparent
contradictions of radical and reactionary aspects of Country Party
attitudes is to refer to the image of the God Janus, with a face
looking both forwards and backwards, employed by some American
historians to explain how Populism was both revolutionary and
reactionary. The Populists were radical in that they wanted drastic
changes to the monetary system and aimed to carry out adjustments to the
existing social order, but they were reactionary in that they wanted
a return to a lost "golden age" with its pre-industrial social
structure and essentially agrarian value system. Such terms as
conservative or radical are inadequate in describing the complexity
of attitudes evolved by men struggling to adjust to the massive
socio-economic changes of the late nineteenth century in America and
the 1920s in New Zealand. See the symposium on Populism in Agricultural
pp 9-23; and Sheldon Hackney, Populism to Progressivism in Alabama

242. After 1922 the Auckland branch of the NZFU and the Country Party were
virtually synonymous. Auckland NZFU members generally held dual
membership with the Country Party and each organisation shared the same
policies.
N.Z. PROSPERITY LTD.
OR
"ALL WORKING HARD"

Coates (to John Bull): "Say, lend me a thou. — to pay those navvies, and I'll square it on the Custom-ary terms."

The folly of protection.
Source:— FF, 10 Nov 1927.
extreme advocacy of free trade. Auckland dairy farmers and Canterbury grain growers constantly quarrelled over the question of bounties throughout the 1920s. Feelings ran so high that the South Canterbury provincial union and perhaps the whole of the South Island threatened to break away from the NZFU if Auckland's policy of unfettered free trade had been adopted. Polson chose instead to agree to a policy of limited protection for the wheat industry and preserved the unity of the organisation as a result. In 1928 the NZFU lived up to its motto for the first time.

The NZFU's decision to achieve greater independence from the Reform Party and to avoid entanglements with the Country Party was backed up by several reforms of its organisational machinery to ensure that it could operate effectively as an independent body. Most of the significant improvements came after 1925 when Colonel James Pow, a former Secretary of the RSA, became Dominion secretary. Pow was the first administrator since McCurdy to exert a definite influence over the organisation's development, because he shared Polson's determination to weld the NZFU into a more tightly disciplined, sophisticated and consequently more effective organisation. His major contribution was the introduction of an order system in 1925 which enabled members to pay subscriptions through...
their dairy company accounts.\textsuperscript{247} Collection of subscriptions thereby became a much less haphazard process and paid up membership increased as a result. The availability of greater funds made it much easier to implement other reforms. A decision to drop the publication of the NZFU's own newspaper also removed an impossibly heavy drain on the NZFU's financial resources.\textsuperscript{248} He also organised conferences of provincial secretaries, rather like those run by the NFU,\textsuperscript{249} while paid organisers were used more effectively than ever before. They were sent all over New Zealand on recruitment tours and were also expected to collect subscriptions in arrears. Liaison within the organisation as a whole increased dramatically. Pow's other major innovations were the establishment of a Women's Division in 1925\textsuperscript{250} which helped to generate renewed interest in the NZFU, and affiliation with the DFU in 1929.\textsuperscript{251} This link-up broadened the NZFU's base of support. An element of professionalism was also introduced for the first time as experts such as Professor Murphy of Victoria University College were called in to advise on such specialist matters as taxation.\textsuperscript{252}

\textsuperscript{247} ibid. 1926, p 21. The Dominion Treasurer, R.S. Chadwick, claimed 1926 was the best financial year ever because of the order system.

\textsuperscript{248} The NZFU found itself free of debt for the first time when it ceased to publish a regular newspaper in 1926.

\textsuperscript{249} ADCM, 1926, E23.

\textsuperscript{250} Perhaps the introduction of a Women's Division was the most important organisational innovation introduced prior to 1929 because it added an extra incentive for farmers to join. If a farmers' wife belonged to the division her husband was more likely to join up the male section of the organisation. The Women's Division was also a more successful excursion into the social sphere than the NFU's attempt to hold card evenings and dances during the 1920s. Activism at the local level received its first real stimulus since the freehold agitation had died down.

\textsuperscript{251} ADCM, 1929, p 4.

\textsuperscript{252} ibid. 1928, p 26. Murphy presented the NZFU's case to the 1928 Industrial Conference.
But Pow did not succeed in bringing about the considerable degree of improvement he desired. An attempt to introduce a uniform subscription, based on property values, was defeated by the provinces despite the support of Polson and the provincial secretaries. Discipline over the provinces decreased rather than increased as a result of the introduction of more provincial units and headquarters remained powerless to restrain provincial autonomy. There was still room for considerable improvement in the NZFU's organisational machinery.

Between 1925 and 1929 the Dominion Executive involved itself with a miscellany of other issues besides criticising Coates, lobbying for the formation of agricultural banks and achieving a greater degree of political independence. The most important of these other matters were taxation, valuation, labour relations and agricultural education.

In 1927 the NZFU finally made up its mind over the taxation issue by deciding in favour of a comprehensive income tax to replace the old dual system of taxation. The earlier Sim's Taxation Commission's recommendation that pastoral leases should be taxed was also supported. Predictably the only opposition to the abolition of the land tax came from the Otago pastoralists. Company taxation was also altered to provide relief for the small shareholder and this innovation largely answered earlier NZFU criticisms of this form of taxation.

253. ibid. 1925, pp 29-32.
254. ibid. 1928, p 101.
of fairer valuation continued to vex delegates but they at least agreed that valuations should be brought into line with export prices and that a uniform system should be introduced for the whole of New Zealand. 258

Despite the furore in 1927 in relation to the Government's failure to keep the Arbitration Court out of the agricultural sector the NZFU's attitudes towards organised labour tended to moderate after 1925. Both Trade Unions and Labour Party were criticised by the NZFU 259 but they did not become a focus for its hostility once the threat of the trusts had been removed. Generally banks were considered to constitute a more serious menace. During the 1925 seaman's strike, for example, the NZFU maintained a low profile and did not reveal any intention of reduplicating the actions of 1913. 260 After the 1928 Industrial Conference of employers and trade union representatives the NZFU became more conciliatory. Polson even admitted that wages were not the major factor in forcing up costs and expressed interest in the setting up of Industrial Committees, made up of equal numbers of employers and labour representatives, to promote industrial harmony. 261 But Polson's magnanimity was closely tied up with the fact that farmers were in a much stronger position than rural labourers. The 1928 Industria. Conference had revealed the NZFU's lack of understanding

258. ADCM, 1929. FF, 10 Oct 1929 p 16 or ADCM, 1928, p 103.

259. The NZFU did not share the Country Party's attitude that Labour were being used as a "bogey" to draw attention away from the real villains - the "vested interests," e.g. FF, 10 Nov 1926 p 3, but surprisingly few references were made to Labour except by the Farmers' Weekly - which once pointed to the failure of the Labour administration in Queensland, 23 Aug 1924 p 3. Occasionally the FW also referred to Labour rule as likely to inflict the tyranny of Bolshevik Russia, 23 May 1925 p 19.

260. A joint meeting of the NZFU, Producer Boards and Chambers of Commerce decided to establish a special fund to counter strikes, but the project produced little result. NZFU DEM, 1921-1928, 24 Sep and 27 Dec 1925.

261. ADCM, 1929, p 6.
of the problems faced by both employers and workers in the non-agricultural sphere. There never was any suggestion that their new found generosity included the right of farm labourers to form their own union. The NZFU was more interested in replacing the Arbitration Court with an optional system of free bargaining than with protecting the rights of the rural workman.

The organisation's long standing support of agricultural education was focussed between 1925 and 1929 on lobbying for the establishment of a North Island Agricultural College. The NZFU's stance in this matter was creditworthy and constituted one of its more significant contributions to the nation's development. Consolidation of country schools was also supported and the NZFU urged that salaries of country teachers be raised and working conditions in rural schools be improved. The most consistent facet of the NZFU's activities between 1900 and 1929 was its relentless advocacy of the need for improvements in agricultural education and for a more progressive approach to farming in general. It was indeed lucky to have had leaders like Wilson and Polson to steer in this direction.

With the advent of depression in 1929 the Dominion executive was confronted by a new set of problems. The extreme difficulties forced on the need for further organisational improvements but delayed their

262. ibid

263. Brooking, Massey, pp 28-52. The NZFU supported Professor Peren's call for the amalgamation of the two chairs at Auckland and Wellington. NZFU DEM, 1921-1928, 28 Jan 1925, and ADCM, 1925, pp 54-56. A deputation followed to Coates in support of the College, NZFU DEM, 1921-1925, 10 Nov 1925, and the blocking tactics of the Canterbury interest group were condemned. ibid. 5 May 1926. The final passing of the New Zealand College Agriculture Act was greeted with enthusiasm by the 1926 Conference, ADCM, 1926, p 7.

264. ADCM, 1928, p 129, and NZFU DEM, 1921-1928, 1 Feb 1928.
introduction by depriving the NZFU of funds. Real advances had to wait
until the return of better times. The election of a Labour Government in
1935 also helped strengthen unity as it provided members with a common foe.
The gap between the effectiveness of the NZFU and the NFU only began to
be narrowed during the late 1930s and more especially during the Second
World War when the NZFU's leaders realised that they needed a broader
federation if one strong and efficient general farmers' organisation was
to be established. The fact that the NZFU survived through the rigours
of the depression to make this critical adjustment was due in large part
to the astute and strong leadership of Polson and the organisational
refinements introduced by Pow. But the efforts of these two men could not
conceal the fact that prior to 1929 the NZFU was, in comparison with
the NFU, a rather ineffective and unsophisticated organisation, often
rendered impotent by internal rivalries, which relied on the farmers'
economic strength and considerable political influence rather than its own
abilities.

Clearly the record of the NZFU at the national level was not nearly
as impressive as that of the NFU. In nearly every area the NFU was more
active and effective, whether in the labour relations field, in maintaining
its non-partisan stance or in operating a nation-wide insurance scheme.
The only major exception was the NZFU's role in promoting marketing reform.
Furthermore, the NFU's affairs were administered with a great deal more
skill and it was a much more united organisation which represented a far
greater proportion of farmers. It was more centralised in its operations
and made greater use of professional assistance. Overall, it was altogether
a more sophisticated, mature and effective a pressure group than the NZFU.
It superiority at the national level was due in large part to the greater
activism of the county executives in relation to the provincial executives
of the NZFU, and the much firmer direction of the affairs of the inter-
mediate units from the centre. Whereas the considerable autonomy of the
intermediate units seemed to generally assist the NFU's effectiveness at the national level, it only hindered the evolution of a disciplined and centralised farmers' pressure group in New Zealand.
"INDIFFERENCE AND INSURANCE."

THE STORY OF THE OTAGO PROVINCIAL BRANCH
OF THE NZFU 1902-1929

The strongest single impression which emerges from an examination of the activities of the Otago provincial branch of the NZFU over this period is one of a limited degree of action, especially when compared with the industrious Kent County branch of the NFU. Apathy was the biggest problem confronting both the provincial and local branch executives of the Otago NZFU. They always complained of a shortage of adequate finance and never succeeded in providing an effective counter to the indifference of local farmers, at least not until the late 1920s when something of a resurgence of interest seemed to occur. At the most the provincial executive met eight times a year in contrast to the regular monthly meetings of the Kent executive and it did not spawn several active sub-committees to deal with specific problems. The only real exception to the overall lack of significant achievement, was the establishment of a successful Mutual Fire Insurance Company which was able to extend its operations to dealing with accident insurance during the 1920s. This insurance scheme was probably the only area in which the Otago branch was more active and successful than its Kentish equivalent.

Policies seemed to differ very little from the national norm. At first the branch tended to rubber stamp decisions emanating from the North Island, especially in relation to the freehold and native land questions which held little relevance for most Otago farmers. This lack of immediate relevancy helped explain why the union made rather an unspectacular start in the province. But by the end of World War I decisions made at the Dominion level seemed to reflect more accurately the feelings of Otago farmers. They appeared to want the establishment
Fig 10: Graph of the membership of the Otago Provincial Branch of the NZFU, 1902-1929.
of marketing boards or agricultural banks as much as the Auckland branch. Constant negotiation with the Government over the difficulties confronting the wheat industry also broadened the appeal of the NZFU to Otago farmers, the great majority of whom engaged in mixed sheep and cropping operations.

The remaining concerns of the Otago branch were much more local in character. Such matters as improved loading and carrying facilities on Otago railways or reductions in commission levied by local stock agencies absorbed much of the provincial executive's energies. Directly local involvement seemed to hold as much appeal to Otago farmers as action over broader national issues. Activism increased once a wider range of local activities were taken up.

At the local branch level there was even less activity. Most meetings were poorly attended and were held on an irregular basis. Branches often disappeared soon after their establishment, although some began to re-appear again during the 1920s. The exceptions were generally those branches located in the bigger market towns such as Balclutha, Palmerston or Clinton, where larger numbers of farmers tended to gather to carry out their business. Less well populated centres such as Lawrence tended to face greater difficulties, while genuinely rural branches such as Greenfield found themselves engaged in an uphill struggle to survive. Generally there was not the same degree of healthy grass roots activism as in the NFU.

The actual growth of the provincial branch's membership is rather difficult to ascertain, for like the NZFU in general, the Otago branch was rarely sure of its actual paid up membership. The accompanying graph is, therefore, based on approximations. But it is quite clear that the total branch membership rarely exceeded 1,000, or about 16%, of the total number of Otago farmers prior to 1928. Between 1928 and 1929 a massive growth spurt occurred as one of the branch's many canvassing campaigns seemed to fire the imagination of Otago farmers for the first time. A membership level of 16% was little different from that of the NZFU as a
Map 11

Map showing location and length of duration of branches of the Otago NZFU, 1902-1929.
a whole, but it more often fell below that figure than rose above it. Interest soon flagged after a sound start and did not revive until the successes of 1913. With the advent of war membership fell away until the mid 1920s. The figures for the 1920s are, however, a little unflattering as a separate North Otago branch was formed in 1922 which claimed a membership of 220 by 1926.\(^1\)

Despite the relatively low level of membership the provincial executive co-ordinated the activities of as many as thirty-nine branches before 1929.\(^2\) The accompanying map shows that these branches spread nearly as wide as the boundaries of Otago farming, but the marginal character of some of them was revealed by the fact that ten branches were unable to pay their provincial levies in 1925. Furthermore, at least twenty-one branches did not operate on a permanent basis over the entire period. The proliferation of branches was in other words unrealistic. Pandering to localist sentiments doomed many to failure as several localities lacked sufficiently large populations to maintain a branch. The large size of the province and inadequate communications exacerbated the problem of establishing fully operational branches. Although the number of farmers in Otago was about the same as in Kent (between 5,000 and 6,000 over the period 1900-1930), the province itself was ten times larger in area. Even its cultivated area was double the total area of Kent.\(^3\) Much of the remaining uncultivated area was also made up of

1. Scott, Run, Estate and Farm, p 76.
2. OW, 9 Jun 1925 p 70.
3. The total land area of Otago in 1920 was 9,482,000 acres as against around 1,000,000 acres in Kent. The total cultivated area of Otago was 1,286,576 acres as against 743,922 acres for Kent. NZ Yearbook 1902, pp 637 and 640.
rugged mountainous terrain which made travel within Otago a more difficult undertaking than amongst the gently rolling hills of Kent. A road and rail network existed within Otago by the time the NZFU was established which was far superior to that of many North Island areas. But it did not of course approximate the excellent transport system of Kent. Real enthusiasm was needed if the associated problems of long distances and inadequate communications were to be overcome, but such enthusiasm was generally absent. Even the motor car took a considerable time to assist in alleviating these difficulties. Such obvious but very real problems helped to exaggerate the difference in the organisational success achieved by each of the intermediate units.

The Otago Provincial Executive.

The major phases of development of the Otago provincial branch were almost identical with those of the NZFU in general, while the emphasis of the national organisation was reproduced in greater or lesser degree. The only notable disagreement with the national executive occurred at the end of the First World War when Otago supported Lyser's call for an immediate return to the open market. Sometimes the Otago executive rubber stamped decisions made by the national executive and on other occasions they anticipated action at the national level. Occasionally they even helped to initiate national policy. But lack of discord could not conceal the generally uninspired and uninterested nature of the Otago performance.

4. In 1902 Otago had approximately 425 miles of railway line, 175 miles of main trunk and 250 miles of branch line. NZ Yearbook, 1902, p 645. Kent in comparison had over 250 miles of line to serve its much smaller area. Times Atlas.
Local matters tended to occupy the greater part of the provincial executive's attention from establishment. Much more time was spent in discussing the usefulness of small owls in controlling the small bird pest than in criticising the Government's land policy. But the question of land tenure nevertheless assumed the greatest importance of the various national issues acted upon by the executive. Considerable energy was expended in organising witnesses for the 1905 Land Commission and in opposing the 1907 Land Bill. Yet the response of the branches to these endeavours was at best lukewarm. Only £20 was contributed to the fighting fund established to contest the Land Bill and half that amount was donated by one branch. Such a minimal response was somewhat perplexing to the executive as the ratio of freeholders to leaseholders (61% to 39%) was about the same for New Zealand as a whole. There was even a significant proportion of 1-i-p tenants. Yet this group to whom the issue of the freehold option should have held the greatest appeal, seemed to be frightened away by the NZFU's land policies. Most of the leaseholders

5. APC, 1907. NZ Farmer, Jul 1907 p 587.

6. The NZ Yearbook, 1906, pp 362-363 and 727, shows that 5,224 or around 61% of Otago's landholdings were freehold. 1,367 or 15.74% of the total landholdings were held under 1-i-p. But these figures exaggerate the importance of the leasehold within Otago, as 16% of the leasehold properties were convertible to the freehold, while the holders of leases of pastoral runs and small grazing runs, which made up 5.7% of the total holdings, had no interest in the freehold. Furthermore, there was a considerable degree of dual ownership as around 6,000 farmers held 8,684 properties between them.

7. W.E.D.C. Hughes, the Tokorah delegate to the 1904 provincial conference and a member of the local Crown Tenant's Association, was instructed to vote against the demand for the freehold option. APC, 1904. OW, 25 May 1904 p 17. Hughes himself believed in the freehold option, but at a meeting of local 1-i-p tenants eighteen out of twenty voted against asking for the freehold option. Hughes acted on the instructions of that meeting. A to J, 1905, C4, pp 377-380. George Livingston, a member of the Otago Land Board and the holder of a 602-acre 1-i-p section on the Windey Park Estate, Ngapara, also claimed that the local crown tenants had issued no complaint concerning their leases, and had expressed no desire for the option of purchase. He blamed the entire agitation squarely on the NZFU, the newspapers and the moneylenders. Ibid, p 244. Livingston's remarks summed up the feelings of the majority of Otago and Canterbury crown tenant witnesses, but in the North Island most crown tenants who came forward clearly wanted the right of purchase. On the other hand nine of the twelve foundation members of the Greenfield branch of the NZFU were 1-i-p tenants. Lands and Surveys Departments Records, MS. A.P.W.L.
in fact seemed relatively content, especially in comparison with many North Island tenants. The question of renewing small grazing run leases agitated members far more than the freehold issue. 8

The native land issue was of even less relevance and scarcely received any mention. Valuation was, however, a very different matter. Most provincial conferences demanded increased representation of local interests on the Assessments Court. The 1910 conference even went as far as suggesting that capital value should replace unimproved value as the basis for assessing valuation and calculating land tax. 9 The amending legislation did not satisfy delegates either and they continued to complain about inaccurate valuation right up to 1929.

The province's critical attitude towards organised labour was reflected in the resolution sent up to the 1906 colonial conference requesting the removal of Tregear from office. It was also expressed in opposing the introduction of compulsory preference to unionists 10 and in condemning the co-operative system of public works. 11 A demand was also made for the establishment of third party representation for farmers on the Arbitration Court, 12 while the Canterbury executives stand against the still-born farm labourers' union was supported to a man. 13 Yet the 1913 conference

8. This issue was raised at the 1909 Conference APC, 1909. OW, 9 Jun 1909 p 9. At least six members, four of them prominent members of the provincial executive, held small grazing run leases in 1886. Stone's Dunedin and Invercargill Directory, 1886, pp 371-376. The agitation was successful as the leases were renewed in 1910.


10. e.g. APC, 1903 OW, 10 Jun 1903 p 27.

11. e.g. ibid. 1906. NZ Farmer, Jul 1906 p 569.

12. e.g. ibid. 1903. OW, 10 Jun 1903 p 27.

13. ibid. 1908. NZ Farmer, Jul 1908 p 584.
voted against amalgamation with the Dunedin Employers' Association on the advice of more moderate delegates. ¹⁴ Even though the response to breaking the strike was not particularly enthusiastic some members were still prepared to act as "specials" and the provincial executive seemed well pleased with their efforts. ¹⁵

The expression of patriotic attitudes at provincial conferences was no less fervent than at national conferences. After several rousing speeches in support of the introduction of compulsory military training, delegates to the 1909 conference tried to outdo the national organisation by urging that the gift of £2,000,000 to build a dreadnought should be paid in two years flat. ¹⁶ The chairman went on to remark that New Zealand was like an orchard without a fence around it. He predicted that it would be raided by Europeans or Asians rather than schoolboys. Delegates endorsed his rather pompous remarks in another round of ringing speeches which never contained the slightest trace of humour. Predictably the raising of the age limit for military training in the following year received an equally ecstatic reception. ¹⁷

Right from establishment the province urged that facilities be made available to train veterinarians in New Zealand, ¹⁸ while the work of the Department of Agriculture was usually praised. The coercive Stud Bill was supported ¹⁹ and the demand made that the Noxious Weeds Act should be more rather than less rigorously enforced. ²⁰ There was not, however, any concerted attempt to set up experimental plots or to encourage more

15. ibid. 1914. ŌW, 3 Jun 1914 p 18.
18. ibid. 1903. ŌW, 10 Jun 1903 p 28.
19. ibid. p 27.
20. ibid. 1906. NZ Farmer, Jul 1906 p 569.
scientific farming in any direct way. Provincial presidents frequently reiterated Wilson's advocacy of a more scientific approach to farming, but practical advances in this area did not occur until the 1920s. It seemed that Wilson's ideals ran well ahead of the reality of everyday farming within Otago.

Compared with the neighbouring Southland branch the Otago branch was relatively inactive prior to World War I. It was unable to organise popular Empire Day picnics and failed to duplicate the subscribed veterinary service initiated by Southland. The Otago executive also initially intended to set up a co-operative association, but its only success in this area was in pooling binder-twine orders. The only real success apart from the insurance scheme was the election of the provincial president, Robert Scott, as Opposition M.P. for Tuapeka in 1908. Yet even this apparent triumph was something of a mixed blessing because such a direct connection with the Opposition party probably frightened away some farmers. Otago was, after all, the home of the great Liberal land reformer John McKenzie.

By 1913 the insurance scheme was established on a firm footing. Over £175,000 worth of property was insured against fire and the Mutual's directors felt sufficiently confident to want to extend their operations to include accident insurance. The directors also experienced a sense of victory over the nepotism of the Liberal administration when the Reform Government stopped the Advances to Settlers Office from coercing farmers.

into insuring with the State Insurance Company. Regular complaints had been made up to that time that loans would not be advanced to Mutual members unless they transferred their policies to the State Insurance Company. Such blatant interference helps explain why the Liberals lost support in the rural sector. Whether or not the Mutual developed into an alternative source of short term credit was never made clear, but the success of the operation ensured that assets far outweighed liabilities.

The only other issue of national significance on which the Otago executive expressed a definite opinion was opposition to the concept of a separate farmers' party. The North Canterbury proposal of establishing a Farmers' Political Federation was roundly condemned as entering into affairs which should not concern the NZFU. Otago seemed more persistently hostile to the notion of greater political participation than any other branch and did not share Southland's interest in the need for more direct political activism. Members were quite adamant that voting was a matter to be left entirely to the discretion of the individual.

The feeling of euphoria associated with the quashing of the watersiders' strike and the introduction of the freehold option permeated the 1914 provincial conference. The appointment of A.S. Orbell, a prominent member of the Otago executive, to the newly established Board of Agriculture, heightened the branch's sense of achievement even though Orbell represented the A and Ps rather than the NZFU. A new found confidence was carried into the war years.

25. ibid. 1914. OW, 10 Jun 1914 p 20.
The initial response of the branch in providing supplies for the troops was as enthusiastic as any other province. Confidence was further bolstered by the appointment of the provincial president, James Begg, to the Government Food Committee.\textsuperscript{27} Then once the possibility of a rapid victory had evaporated the provincial executive settled down to following policy lines dictated by the Dominion executive. The commandeering was supported and war-time taxes such as the embargo on hides were opposed.\textsuperscript{28} Denials of profiteering were repeated, returned soldier settlement was endorsed and the notion of price fixing condemned.\textsuperscript{29} The only major divergence with national policy was the call for improvement of shipping facilities from as early as 1915 \textsuperscript{30} and support for Auckland's demand that an elective executive be given a trial run. There were also more trivial disagreements such as a request that Californian Thistle and Ragwort should be removed from the Noxious Weeds schedule.\textsuperscript{31}

By the end of the war the provincial executive was beginning to assume a more assertive attitude. It also seemed to anticipate actions which were later undertaken at the national level. At the 1918 conference the new provincial president, Alex Fraser, launched a cutting attack on both the National Coalition Government and the banks. He felt the

\textsuperscript{27} Begg was also president of the Otago SOF, so he represented wider interests than those of the NZFU. His prominence in both organisations was interesting for in most provinces SOF members remained outside the NZFU and seldom assumed important executive positions.


\textsuperscript{29} \textit{ibid.} 1916 and 1917. \textit{OW}, \textit{ibid.} and 6 Jun 1917 p 17.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{ibid.} 1915.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{ibid.} 1916.
Government had done nothing for farmers other than raise additional taxes and that banks were making unfair profits. Co-operative banks based on the German model were the only viable alternative. Clearly some provincial leaders, other than those of Taranaki and Auckland, were thinking along similar lines to Polson.

Fraser's provocative opening address was followed by an inflamed attack on the commandeer arrangements delivered by John Clarke of Clinton. Clarke claimed that New Zealand farmers would be securing twice as much for wool on the open market and went on to give further vent to his disillusionment by demanding that an Elective Executive should be introduced. His advocacy of an immediate return to the open market and of a major constitutional innovation ran ahead of the feelings of most delegates in 1918, yet within the space of a year they had come around to sharing Clarke's point of view.

The injection of some life in the usually dry and tedious debates of the provincial conferences was closely related to the emergence of a younger group of men amongst the provincial leaders. Some of the new wave were the sons of men such as Robert Craig or John Christie who had tried to establish a Farmers' Union as long ago as 1890. Others were relative newcomers. Together they infused an urgency in the provincial executive's proceedings which had formerly been absent. These younger men were, after all, far more directly threatened by the impending changes of the post-war world. They knew that they would have to fight hard if they were to maintain their war-time advantages.


33. Clarke claimed that New Zealand farmers were only 1s.6d. per lb for their wool when its value in the open market was 3s. ibid.
Despite some divergence of opinion expressed by the 1918 conference there was much reinforcement for the policies adopted by the organisation at the national level. Hearty endorsement was given to the call for the Government to investigate the operations of the Meat Trust. The setting up of a single control body for the export and distribution of meat in England was also recommended. Auckland radicals clearly were not the only group who formulated this idea. The call for the establishment of a producer controlled shipping line, first suggested at the 1917 provincial conference, was reiterated. A similar warning to that issued by the Dominion executive in regard to settling soldiers on overpriced land was also issued. Finally, provincial delegates asked that the conditions of country school teachers should be improved. There was clearly a considerable degree of agreement with the Dominion executive, whether the provincial conference was initiating actions at the national level or approving decisions emanating from Wellington.

The 1919 provincial conference exhibited two major areas of disagreement with national policy. Considerable support was given to Lynsar’s call to end the commandeering as soon as possible and the introduction of an elective executive was again suggested as a means of dramatically improving New Zealand’s political system. This latter remit expressed disillusionment with both the Reform and Liberal parties and distrust of the Labour Party. A further resolution was carried that parliamentary candidates should be compelled to take the oath of allegiance a month before the elections to ensure that no Bolsheviks could enter the House. Otherwise the policies of the Dominion Executive were given enthusiastic endorsement. Condemnation of the meat trusts was echoed and the shipping line scheme was given unquestioning support. Soldier settlement schemes were praised as worthwhile but delegates displayed foresight in recommending

34. ibid.
that such men should be properly trained in the art of farming before being allowed to take up their land. Something of a gesture was even made towards putting the national good of the organisation first when a remit was withdrawn which called for a more adequate price for oats. Delegates realised that this matter did not affect many farmers outside Otago and Southland.35

Over the period 1920-1925 the Otago executive stood solidly behind the Dominion executive in the implementation of all its more controversial policies. Each of the control boards and the principle of compulsory marketing were staunchly supported. A producer controlled shipping line was probably given even more support by the Otago branch than by the national organisation. Criticism of the major trading banks was unrelenting and there was unanimous support for the principle of co-operative banking.36

The only note of discord in the area of banking reform occurred when James Begg warned that Polson's proposed banking bill offered credit on dubious forms of security.37 A hard line against organised labour was maintained, especially in protesting the inclusion of rural industries under the I C and A Act. Voluntary labour was also organised during a butchers' strike in 1923. The other major concern of the Otago branch over this period was the fixing of wheat prices. The provincial executive negotiated with both the Canterbury executive and the Wheat Trade Commission in calculating price levels.


37. OW, 5 Jun 1923 p 15. Begg's views on finance were more orthodox than those of most members as he supported the ultra orthodox New Zealand Legion during the 1930s, which was led by his brother. See M.C. Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest In The Great Depression," Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 1969.
The provision of support to the marketing boards imposed heavier workloads on the provincial executive than it had ever experienced before, but some time was still found to institute a few organisational improvements. J.C. Brown, ex-secretary of the Lawrence branch, was employed to recruit new members and he succeeded in establishing a few new branches. Balclutha and Tapanui were granted sub-provincial status in 1923 and a separate North Otago province was set up in 1922. None of these innovations had much impact on total membership but they assisted in helping the provincial executive cope with its greatly increased workload. More significant, however, was the appointment of full-time secretaries for both the provincial branch and the Mutual in 1924. The activity of the Mutual had increased so markedly since it had undertaken accident insurance in 1919 that it was decided to operate it as a completely separate entity with its own secretary. This change was assisted by the purchase of a suite of offices in Stuart Street, Dunedin, so that the branch and Mutual could have a permanent adjoining headquarters but separate rooms. Access to local political agencies was also made easier, while the branch could remain in constant contact with the local business community. The acquisition of a permanent home represented a very useful advance.

From 1925 to 1929 the Otago executive continued to support national policy. The emergence of an able leader in the person of Fred Waite, Reform M.P. for Clutha and a progressive farmer, ensured that the Otago branch remained a staunch advocate of marketing reform. Agricultural banking received constant endorsement, while the branch remained resolutely opposed to forging any type of alliance with the Country Party. Experimental farms were established with the aid of the Department of Agriculture and

38. APC, 1919. ibid.

39. Waite was one of the few South Island Reform M.P.s to support the establishment of a North Island agricultural college in 1926. See Brooking, Massey, p 41.
the establishment of a North Island agricultural college was supported, provided Lincoln was updated. Many hours were taken up in negotiations to ensure that the sliding scale for wheat and flour prices was maintained despite the opposition of Auckland poultrymen. The call from the Dominion executive for an improvement in labour relations was endorsed at the 1929 provincial conference when it was suggested that round table conferences of employers and trade union representatives should be held on a more regular basis. Finally, when the NZFU failed in its endeavour to persuade the Government to establish a wool board Otago responded by appointing E.J. Taylor, a well known local authority on wool classing, as a full-time consultant in the culling of flocks and the selection of rams.

This type of direct and relevant assistance seemed to help in bolstering the branch's membership. The Otago branch seemed to be engaging in activities of immediate and everyday relevance for the first time. Concrete examples of its usefulness were provided by the establishment of an Otago branch of the NZFU sponsored Co-operative society, Producers' Limited, in 1929 and through the pooling of binder-twine and manure orders. The other factor which stimulated an increase of membership was the introduction of social activities at the local branch level.

During his recruitment campaigns from 1927 to 1929 the Dominion organiser, W.R. Harris, organised card evenings, picnics and dances. Even before Harris persuaded local branches to introduce some social activities the provincial executive had arranged winter lectures on both technical subjects and home science in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture.

40. APC, 1925. _OW, 9 Jun 1925 p 70.

41. ibid. 1929. _OW, 11 Jun 1929 p 12.

42. ibid.
and the University of Otago. Some executive members sensed that the popularity of the organisation would be increased if it was made more attractive to rural women. This was why they ran home economics courses in conjunction with the Home Science school in 1926. They also hoped that such courses would help to persuade country girls to stay on the farms instead of departing to the city to pursue such useless careers as the law or medicine. They had anticipated the extension of the Women's Division into the province by a year. The new movement proved reasonably popular and by 1929 it had established five branches within Otago and recruited 150 financial members. It definitely helped in persuading more farmers to join as an extra incentive was added to membership. Certainly the number of delegates who attended provincial conferences increased once Women's Division gatherings were initiated to coincide with provincial conferences.

From the end of the War until 1929 the Mutual continued to flourish. Business expanded dramatically once it decided to provide accident insurance. By 1925 it was strong enough to be able to set up subsidiary branches in Invercargill and Ashburton. In the twenty years since its inception premiums had been reduced from 13s per £100 to 5s per £100 despite the considerable inflation of the war years. The total value of property insured in 1925 amounted to £750,000. The Mutual Fire and Accident Insurance Association was clearly the only real success of the Otago branch. It easily overshadowed any other of the branch's achievements.

The growing everyday relevance of the provincial branch's activities and its greater social emphasis seemed to assist in establishing it on a

43. APC, 1926. OW, 8 Jun 1926 p 23.
44. Ibid. 1924 and 1925. OW, 10 Jun 1924 p 13 and 9 Jun 1925 p 14.
really firm footing for the first time. By 1929 it seemed unlikely that it would have to go on suffering acute financial embarrassment. Yet just when the branch seemed to be making meaningful progress it was confronted by a new set of problems induced by the advent of depression. Further advances had to wait until the Second World War.

Generally, the Otago provincial branch of the NZFU was not nearly as effective an intermediary unit as the Kent branch of the NFU. It was also by no means the most active provincial unit within New Zealand. Yet the NZFU should have fared well in Otago as conditions were relatively favourable to the development of farmer unionism. The majority of Otago farmers were reasonably well established and could, therefore, afford time away from farm work to attend meetings. As few of them were dairy farmers they also should have been relatively free to undertake absences from their farms. They should also have developed properties worth defending. Furthermore, communications were far superior than in other areas of New Zealand such as North Auckland, even though they were not as highly developed as in Kent. There was no concerted opposition from individually minded farmers but rather plain indifference. Apathy continued to dictate proceedings until the late 1920s. Probably the NZFU fared badly in Otago because of the irrelevance of earlier NZFU policies to Otago farmers. Up to 1921 North Island and South Island farming had developed along very different lines. In terms of their agriculture they might as well have

45. e.g. In 1926 the branch's endeavour to meet the new Dominion levy of 10s instead of 7s. 6d. per member put it into debt.

46. The 1926 Dominion Treasurer's report showed that Otago was the fourth largest branch out of eleven in absolute terms and also ranked fourth in terms of the proportion of local farmers which it represented. ADCM, 1926, pp 22-30.
been two different countries. But after the recession of 1921 the great majority of New Zealand farmers were forced to act more as a single entity. Many came to agree that whatever their differences they all needed improved marketing facilities and access to cheaper credit. As was the case at the national level, necessity, in the form of the profound economic, social and political changes of the 1920s forced the Otago branch to improve its organisational machinery and persuaded more local farmers to join.

The Local Branch Level. The Lawrence Branch 1902–1929.

Lawrence was reasonably typical of the smaller Otago branches which managed to survive throughout the entire period under study. It stood somewhere between the larger and more active market town branches such as Maniototo or Balclutha, and smaller branches such as Waitahuna which disappeared soon after establishment. It certainly was not nearly as activist as the Staplehurst branch in Kent, nor were the larger successful branches in anyway comparable with Maidstone. Lawrence also did not seem to be nearly as active as other small town branches within New Zealand such as Kaitaia. Overall its rather dismal performance helped explain

47. This impression comes out of the 1905 Land Commission where the attitudes of North Island and South Island farmers often seemed to be worlds apart. Cleveland is correct in stressing that the problems of bush farming caused North Island farmers to oppose the idea of unearned increment much more vehemently than the tussock farmers of the South Island. Cleveland, Op cit, p 70.

48. The Maniototo branch based in Ranfurly and Balclutha managed to recruit memberships of around a 100 each. OW, 3 Jun 1903 p 19 and 17 Mar 1911 p 8. The Milton branch set up its own small co-operative during the 1920s. TT, 20 Oct 1923.

49. The Waitahuna branch of the NZFU had folded up by 1905 but the Waitahuna Farmers' Club continued to prosper and maintained a higher level of membership than the Lawrence Farmers' Union. The appeal of well established local institution outstripped that of the new sectional organisation.

50. The Kaitaia branch established a co-operative dairy factory, an agricultural club and funded a doctor within the first five years of its establishment. A to J, 1905, C-4, pp 715-717.
Fig 11: Graph of the membership of the Lawrence branch of the NZFU, 1902-1929.
why the Otago provincial branch was generally rather ineffective and only ever represented an unsubstantial minority of Otago farmers prior to 1929.

The Lawrence branch was only kept alive by the enthusiasm of its foundation president, Alex Fraser, and one or two others who had been prominent in establishing the Farmers' Union of 1890. Had it not been for their efforts it would have suffered the same fate as the Taieri branch which failed despite the existence of conditions favourable to its success. The visit of the 1905 Land Commission and the 1907 Land Bill campaign aroused some interest but generally members were more concerned with such essentially local matters as refunds for grain sacks, reduction of stock agents' commissions or small bird control, than broader issues. In short there was little difference in the activities carried out by the local NZFU branch and earlier farmers' clubs.

After 1908 interest in the branch flagged dramatically. Associations with the political opposition did not help matters either as the Tuapeka Times condemned the NZFU as a puppet of the Reform Party. Meetings virtually ceased and even the 1913 strike caused scarcely a ripple of interest.

51. At least seven of the foundation members had been active in the 1890 Union including Fraser. All sat on the Lawrence Farmers' Union executive.

52. Taieri was a wealthy, well established farming district with a good communications network. There was also a large dairying component in the area which should have made the policies of the NZFU more attractive to Taieri farmers than to any other group of their Otago counterparts. Yet farmers in the area acted as if they had no need of a pressure group to defend their interests. The Taieri branch struggled to survive from its establishment and folded up in 1909. Minute Book of the Taieri Farmers' Union, 1901-1909, Hocken Library, Dunedin. The branch was not revived until the 1920s when it was incorporated as part of the new Dunedin branch.

53. Attendance at James Boddie's address on the Land Bill was described as "fair". TT, 30 Mar 1907.

54. This comment was made after Fraser had stated that William Massey was an active member of the NZFU. TT, 18 Sep 1912. At least six members of the defunct Waitahuna branch of the NZFU joined the Waitahuna Political Reform League in 1907. ibid. 7 Sep 1907.
The initial wave of patriotic fervour was picked up on by the branch as it organised the collection of funds, horses and feed. But even the flame of patriotism failed to kindle sustained growth. Only the potential difficulties of the post-war situation resurrected the branch's fortunes. Local farmers began to use the branch as a vehicle for criticising the commandeering and condemning the meat trusts. Enthusiastic support was given to both the meat and dairy boards and members advocated that compulsory control should be introduced. Agricultural banking also received warm support.

These issues clearly held much more interest for local farmers than anything previously as the branch was able to run as many as ten meetings a year by 1923, instead of barely managing to hold the AGM. The branch's popularity was further increased by action over matters of immediate local relevance. The exclusion of Ragwort and Californian thistle from the noxious weeds schedule proved extremely popular and the branch cashed in on that popularity by claiming primary responsibility for the change. Some members took advantage of the Department of Agriculture's offer to set up experimental farms by making land available for such purposes. Departmental officials were invited to address meetings on specialist

55. ibid. 10 Sep 1919.

56. ibid. 26 Sep 1923. The support of the marketing boards was partly explained by the connection of some members with the co-operatively run South Otago Freezing Company. A.C. Leary, president of the branch in the early 1920s, was a director of the company and several members were shareholders. ibid. 26 Oct 1929.

57. Polson spoke to the branch on this subject in 1924 and his policies were endorsed. ibid. 17 May 1924.

58. ibid. 24 Oct 1923.
topics. Binder twine orders were also successfully pooled. Social activities were stepped up. Card evenings, often held in association with other voluntary organisations such as the RSA, proved particularly popular. This newfound popularity was turned to further advantage by initiating action over such locally contentious issues as extension of the rural telephone service. Securing the services of Mr E. Taylor to assist with sheep culling and sire selection and the establishment of an NZFU sponsored Fertiliser Company ensured the branch's survival during the depression.

Even though the enthusiasm of the 1920s dwindled somewhat after 1929 the branch was still healthy enough to hold monthly meetings in 1933. The establishment of a branch of the Women's Division in the same year helped ensure further successes.

By 1929 the Lawrence branch had come to equal if not to surpass the level of activism achieved by the Staplehurst branch of the NFU. But many improvements had to be made to the mechanism which linked the local branch to the intermediary unit and the province to national headquarters, before the new found localist energies could be effectively channelled into building a more united and cohesive farmers' pressure group. Until these modifications in structure, attitude and process were carried out the NZFU could not hope to approximate the organisational effectiveness of the NFU.

59. ibid. 11 Aug 1923. Such an address was given on experimental farms, ibid. 23 Apr 1924, and members visited the Moa Flat Seed Farm, 1 Dec 1923.
60. ibid. 7 Feb 1923.
61. e.g. ibid. 26 Jun 1929.
62. ibid. 23 Apr 1924.
63. ibid. 25 Sep 1925. Leary was also chairman of this company.
64. ibid. 12 Apr 1933. An innovation was introduced in this year which more closely approximated the NFU's advisory services on taxation and finance than anything previously. An NZFU sponsored Farm Accountancy Association of New Zealand offered professional advice to farmers on how to cope with their financial difficulties.
65. ibid. 1 Apr 1933.
Generally the Otago Provincial Branch of the NZFU was not nearly as active nor as effective as the Kent County Branch of the NFU. The provincial executive met at less frequent intervals and engaged in a much narrower range of activities. It exerted much less influence on local government activity within the area it represented, and sometimes seemed to operate completely oblivious of the existence of Dominion headquarters. During the 1920s the gap between the activism of the two executives was narrowed somewhat, and participation at local branch level increased considerably. But such improvements by no means made up the deficiencies in the level of performance. With the exception of the insurance scheme the overwhelming impression left to posterity was one of indifference, especially in contrast to the industry and enthusiasm of the Kent branch.
CHAPTER TWELVE

COMPARISONS

The gap in performance and organisational efficiency between the NFU and the NZFU prior to 1930 becomes even more obvious when the origins, structure, membership and functions of the two organisations are compared directly. Such direct comparisons also suggest some of the reasons for the NFU's greater effectiveness. But the key to understanding the different level of success achieved by the two unions is contained in the attitudes held by each set of farmers. More important still was the interaction of those attitudes with the farmers' economic role and political situation in each country.

The origins of the two unions were clearly similar. Both were established by politically conscious farmers to counter the influence of other sectional organisations. Their basic objectives were essentially the same even though variations in specific policies soon evolved as a result of the different circumstances in which each group of farmers operated. Both were responses to the same forces of change and both concentrated on defending farmers' vested interests. But a critical difference existed in that the NZFU was the logical outcome of earlier organisational developments, whereas the NFU was established in opposition to the entrenched power of the landowners at the national level. The NFU was, to a lesser extent, also set up to counter the influence of agricultural labourers who were already organised at the national level, even though their influence was not nearly as great as that of the landowners. This determination to reduce the traditional dominance of the landowners and to prevent the labourers from forcing up wages to uneconomic levels provided the NFU's founders with an extra incentive to construct a really effective pressure group. New Zealand farmers lacked such an additional incentive as no
equivalent group to the landowners existed by 1900, while rural labourers
had not evolved a union of their own. Links with earlier farmers'
organisations were not necessarily particularly direct but the NZFU founders
had no intention of offering a radical challenge to the established social
and political order. Even though the NFU's initially radical overtones
soon disappeared it nevertheless expressed dissatisfaction with existing
socio-economic and political arrangements. It grew against rather than out
of tradition.

The pyramidal structure of each union was practically identical. A
national executive body directed the operations of the organisational
hierarchy, while an intermediary agency attempted to apply national policy
decisions at the local level. Yet this administrative system seemed to
work more effectively in the English context. There were three major
reasons for the discrepancy in the operation of an organisational construction
set-up on virtually identical lines.

First, the NFU centralised its operations to a much greater extent
and employed far more professional assistance. The administration of its
affairs was far more continuous and streamlined as a result. Its chief
executive body, the central executive, met far more regularly than the
Dominion executive of the NZFU and specialist sub-committees met even more
frequently. Much greater discipline was exercised over the NFU's affairs
as a result. County and local branches had little option but to support
decisions reached on the basis of national consensus, whereas the provincial
branches acted more or less as they liked in New Zealand. On the other
hand county branches were by no means deprived of their autonomy. The
NFU seemed able to maintain flexibility, while slowly centralising and
professionalising its operations.

Second, the specialist sub-committees which were based at NFU head-
quarters, provided each specialist group of English farmers with a forum
where they could discuss their specific problems. Once the sub-committees
reached a decision they could present their case to their general organisation, which usually viewed their problems with sympathy. By introducing these sub-committees the NFU was able to carry out its disjunctive (representation of many separate interests) and integrative (representative of general interests) functions without serious contradiction. It succeeded as both a general farmers' organisation and as a defender of the interests of the various farming sub-groups. When Federated Farmers was set up in 1944 it adopted a similar system by creating a series of sub-councils responsible to a head council to represent the specialist sectors within the wider ambit of the organisation. Had the NZFU adopted a similar system it probably could have persuaded the SOF to join forces and would have avoided the embarrassment of a separate Dairy Farmers' Union breaking away in 1920. It also probably could have avoided much of the bitter in-fighting between Canterbury cereal growers and Auckland dairy farmers over the question of a wheat bounty. Some sub-committees were set up in the 1920s, but they met infrequently and did not carry out the same type of operation as those of the NFU.

Third, the county operated as a more effective intermediary unit. Localist energies were channelled by the county executives into building a vital and united organisation. There was little of the dissipating parochial in-fighting which occurred between the provincial branches of the NZFU. The county held a strong traditional appeal to farmers and maintained their allegiance, whereas the NZFU's concession to a shift in loyalties from the older provinces to regions, through the introduction of sub-provinces, only exacerbated an already chronic factionalism. As there were forty county units within the NFU the chances of domination by a single administrative unit were slight, especially as English farmers were spread relatively evenly over those counties. New Zealand farmers were spread much less evenly and an imbalance which resulted from the fact
that a quarter of New Zealand's farmers lived in Auckland province, created serious difficulties for the NZFU. The introduction of sub-provinces did not help in overcoming the problem of the NZFU dividing into pro and anti-Auckland camps. During the 1920s the NZFU came to function as two virtually separate organisations and the problem was not really overcome until the creation of Federated Farmers. Furthermore, the differing needs of North and South Island farming were also not adequately represented by the NZFU. The essential difference definitely existed at the intermediate level, for the degree of activism at the local branch level was not particularly great in either of the NFU or NZFU local branches chosen for closer examination. But even the slightest degree of activism was used much more efficiently by the county executives, which undertook far greater work loads than the provincial executives. Furthermore, the efforts of the county executives were also reinforced by the actions of large market town branches, which were far more numerous and industrious than their New Zealand counterparts. In total the greater reliance on the forty intermediate executives rather than one national executive also made the NFU a more democratic organisation.

One minor structural difference which also aided the NFU was its implementation of a graduated subscription scale. In 1919 subscription assessment was shifted from a per acre basis to the more meaningful measure of rental value. This change attracted many more small farmers into the ranks of the NFU and strengthened its financial resources. More money became available for further organisational improvements such as the utilisation of greater professional assistance. The NZFU in contrast adhered to a fixed rate of subscription, frightened away small farmers and continued to suffer acute financial embarrassment throughout the entire period under study.

All these various administrative advantages held by the NFU resulted from a major overhaul of its organisational machinery begun in 1917. The
NZFU made no equivalent attempt to update its procedures even when its administration had been proven to be outmoded and ineffective. Some improvements were introduced during the 1920s at Polson's instigation, but they came too late and were implemented on too small a scale to be of any real benefit.

The various reasons for the NFU's more effective administration of its affairs were also exaggerated by the different geography of the two countries, the vastly superior communications system within Britain, the greater pool of administrative experience which existed amongst the NFU's leadership, the lingering importance of localism within New Zealand and the different structure of local government within the two countries. Such obvious factors were important and made it imperative that the NFU's leaders should develop a tightly disciplined organisation. But they were not equal to that considerable challenge. Cleveland is right in suggesting that the NZFU secured some successes in overcoming the considerable communications difficulties which confronted it. But such successes as the establishment of a newspaper were only relative and were not as great as A.J. McCurdy hoped posterity would believe them to be. There was room for many more improvements, but they were not implemented prior to 1929.

A closer examination of the composition of the membership of each union provides further illustration of just how much more successful the NFU was in winning widespread support within the farming community. We have already seen that the NFU's membership was proportionately greater and that it was more vital. It was also more representative of the various

1. Cleveland, 'An Early Pressure Group," pp 67-69. Cleveland's conclusions seem to have been too heavily influenced by the McCurdy papers on which he based this article. McCurdy's successes also probably appeared greater when viewed from Wellington rather than from the provincial reality of the organisation. McCurdy deserves praise for his efforts but he did not go far enough in centralising the NZFU's operations and his endeavours never received any meaningful follow up until the late 1920s.
categories of farmers in terms of specialisation, tenurial group and size of operation, especially at the national executive level.

Each type of English farming was represented at the national executive of the NFU. The essentially mixed nature of English farming was reflected by the fact that 74% of the 241 men whose short biographers were published in the 1924 and 1925 Yearbooks "Who's Who" compilation were mixed farmers. The general trend away from arable to stock farming was also mirrored in that 54% of the most prominent executive members were mixed farmers who engaged in some stock raising activity, while a further 12% were specialist stock farmers. In contrast specialist arable farmers made up only 9% of the sample. The major deficiency was in specialist dairy farmers who constituted only 4% of the sample, even though they were an increasingly important group within the agricultural industry. Still they were represented at the top level of the organisation and furthermore 30% of the sample engaged in some degree of dairying. Specialist market gardeners were also represented, although not in proportion to their numerical importance. Even when the number of mixed farmers who engaged in some degree of market gardening and fruit or hop production is added together the figure only rises to 15%. Perhaps stock and arable farmers were slightly over-represented, but their predominance was typical of English farming in general during the 1920s.

At the broader level there was little correlation between predominantly arable or stock raising counties and membership percentages. A comparison between membership figures recorded in the 1918 Yearbook and the agricultural returns for the same year suggests that the NFU fared slightly better in stock raising and mixed farming counties. But the difference between these counties and specialist arable areas was not great. One of the four counties which represented over 80% of local farmers was predominantly
arable (Herefordshire), one predominantly stock (Gloucestershire), and two were mixed. Surrey revealed a fairly even balance in its farming operations, while Leicestershire-Rutland tended towards stock production. At the other end of the scale two of the four counties with the lowest membership percentages were predominantly arable (Norfolk and Suffolk), and was predominantly stock raising, (Northumberland), and the other was mainly concerned with mixed farming, although it tended towards stock production (Staffordshire). Other factors were, however, more important in explaining membership levels, especially remoteness, and to a lesser extent depression. The five counties which were slowest to affiliate with the NFU - Cornwall, Cumberland, Durham, Northumberland and Westmorland - were all situated at the farthest corners of England. Norfolk and Suffolk also had not recovered from the difficulties of the late nineteenth century as successfully as most English counties. In other words no great importance can be attached to the fact that stock raising counties held a slight advantage in membership figures. After all more counties were concerned with stock raising than arable farming by 1918. Thirteen of the forty-two counties tabulated in the agricultural returns for 1918 were predominantly concerned with stock raising, while another thirteen mixed counties tended towards animal production. In other words the NFU's membership at the broadest level was representative of the changing emphasis in English farming.

Within the local Kentish context membership also seemed to be representative of the essentially diverse nature of Kentish farming. Large hop growers joined along with successful sheep breeders, while arable farmers, smaller hop growers and sheep men, dairy farmers and fruit farmers,

2. By predominantly arable I mean counties whose arable acreage was more than double that of permanent pasture. This measure was reversed to ascertain which counties specialised in stock raising.
were also members. Three of the four prominent Kent executive members who were recorded in the "Who's Who" listing were engaged in mixed arable, stock and fruit growing operations, while the fourth was a pedigree Romney breeder. All seven of the members of the Maidstone and Staplehurst branches on whom such information was available 3 engaged in various types of mixed farming, with a significant hop and fruit component which was so typical of the Wealden area. Six of the eight men whose obituaries in the Journal of the Kent Farmers' Union referred to the precise nature of their farming operations were engaged in mixed farming with a significant hop and fruit growing sector. The remaining two were a sheep specialist and a dairy farmer. In other words the typical patterns of Kentish farming were reflected in the County branch's membership. The success of farming operations rather than the particular specialisation of farmers seemed to exert a much greater influence on whether or not Kentish farmers joined their local branch of the NFU.

The greater representativeness of the NFU in terms of specialisation becomes more apparent when compared with the composition of the national executive level of the NZFU. Although most types of New Zealand farmers were represented amongst the 283 men who held positions on the national executive between 1902 and 1929, there was a significantly disproportionate number of sheep farmers who engaged in an essentially mixed farming operation. Nearly two-thirds of the national executive members owned sheep when only about a third of all New Zealand farmers were recorded as possessing sheep in the "Annual Sheep Returns". Furthermore, about 57% of the national executive members owned over 1,000 sheep suggesting that sheep raising constituted the major part of their farming operation. This figure diverges widely from the 11% of specialist sheep farmers recorded in the 1926 census income returns. On the other hand there were few specialist wool

3. Taken from the seven surviving membership slips of members who joined before 1936 held at the Maidstone branch headquarters.
producers as the average flock size for the NZFU national executive over the entire period \(^4\) was 2,412, against 16,000 for the seventeen man foundation SOF executive in 1910. Only 13\% of the NZFU executive owned over 5,000 sheep, when 95\% of the SOF executive ran flocks of over 5,000 sheep. A similar pattern was reproduced in the case of the Otago provincial executive. \(^5\) In other words there seemed to be much justification for the criticism made by both the SOF and the DFU that the NZFU was predominantly a "meat man's" organisation. The fact that separate organisations were established to defend the special interests of wool growers and dairy farmers provides strong proof in itself that the NZFU did not adequately represent their interests. These figures on the predominance of smaller sheep farmers or in other words fat-lamb farmers, helps explain some of the reason for this dissatisfaction. The NZFU's national executive was clearly not as representative of the various sub-groups within the farming industry as the NFU was.

At the broader level no one group was quite as obviously dominant as were the meat men within the national executive. The predominant farming specialisation of each province tended to be reflected in the composition of the provincial executive. Thus dairy farmers tended to be most numerous in the Auckland and Taranaki executives, fat-lamb farmers in the Wellington and Manawatu executives, store-sheep farmers in the Poverty Bay and Hawkes Bay executives, mixed dairy, sheep and fruit farmers in Nelson, pastoralists in Marlborough and mixed arable and sheep farmers in Canterbury and Otago.

4. These figures have been calculated from the "Annual Sheep Returns" for the year in which men joined the national executive. The most significant variation from the national average occurred amongst the group who owned between 1,001 and 5,000 sheep. About 44\% of the NZFU executive members who owned sheep fell into this category when the national average for 1920 was only 24\%. Owners of over 5,000 sheep were also much more fully represented than their numerical importance at the national level warranted. In 1920 only 3\% of New Zealand sheep-owners were included in this category but 13\% of the 184 sheep-owners within the NZFU executive ran flocks of over 5,000 sheep.

5. Around 69\%, or 98 of the 142 men who served on the Otago provincial executive between 1902 and 1929, owned some sheep. Approximately 7\% of these men owned flocks of over 5,000 sheep, while 43\% ran flocks in the 1,001-5,000 category. The average flock size was 1,962.
The essentially mixed dairying, sheep and root-crop combination of Southland farming was evident in its executives which generally lacked big pastoralists or even substantial sheep farmers. Membership percentages did not differ greatly from province to province and as was the case in England showed little correlation with farming specialisations. The four provinces which represented the highest proportion of local farmers all engaged in different specialisations. Southland (22%) was noted for mixed root-crop stock operations with a bias towards dairying. Taranaki (21%) was essentially a dairying area. Hawkes Bay (20%) farmers concentrated on sheep farming, while most Otago (19%) farmers engaged in variations of mixed arable and sheep raising operations. At the bottom end of the scale there was a similar lack of a definite pattern. Farmers in Poverty Bay (11%), Auckland (10%), the West Coast of the South Island (8%) and Nelson (5%), concentrated on different types of farming. The failure of the Nelson branch suggested that market gardeners were even more reluctant to join a general farmers' organisation than in England.

The dominance of meat men at the national level then seems to have resulted from the fact that mixed farmers who also raised sheep were the most common type of farmer in fifteen out of the twenty provincial units. Dairy farmers could not be so well represented at the national level because they were largely concentrated within two provinces. Furthermore, as the 1926 income figures revealed, about half of New Zealand's farmers were included under the category of mixed, whereas only about a quarter were specialist dairy farmers. Dairy farmers had little chance of dominating the national level of leadership in the manner implied by Cleveland. Such a possibility was made even less likely by the fact that it was harder for dairy farmers to take time off farm work to engage in NZFU activity. In fact this difficulty combined with the numerical inferiority of dairy farmers to ensure that they were not dominant at the highest levels of the
organisation. It was not surprising that such a substantial minority, whose representation was arbitrarily reduced by their concentration in a limited geographical area, should become dissatisfied with the representation of their specialist interests by a general farmers' organisation. With a membership of around 5,000 the DFU represented nearly a third of all dairy farmers when the NZFU held the allegiance of only 4% of all New Zealand farmers.

A breakdown of the NZFU witnesses who gave evidence to the 1905 Land Commission according to farming specialisation, also suggests that the composition of the NZFU's membership did not differ greatly from the general composition of farmers for the country as a whole, although mixed sheep farmers were slightly over-represented. Forty-seven of the eighty-two official witnesses, or about 57%, engaged in mixed sheep and arable operations. Seventeen, or 21%, were mixed farmers with a greater emphasis on dairying. Only ten, or 12%, were primarily engaged in sheep grazing. Not one of the witnesses was a market gardener and there was only one specialist arable farmers and one specialist beef producer. The pattern amongst the twenty-three unofficial witnesses was not greatly different, although mixed sheep farmers were less predominant (39%) and truly mixed farmers more important (21%). Specialist sheep farmers were slightly more prominent (17%) and specialist dairy farmers about the same (21%). Once again the predominance of the mixed sheep farmers at the executive level becomes apparent as most of the official witnesses belonged to the executives of their local branches.

Clearly at the national executive level the NZFU was not as representative of New Zealand farmers as the NFU was representative of English farmers. At the lower levels of membership the predominance of one particular group was not so apparent, but this meant little as the "meat men" held

a monopoly on the positions of power, at the level where national policy was formulated. It was not surprising, therefore, that the NZFU's policies failed to satisfy either dairy farming or wool growing minorities, especially once the freehold option demanded by many dairy farmers was realised. It seems highly unlikely that around a half of the NZFU's members were dairy farmers as Polson once claimed. Even if this was the case it resulted from the fact that a large number of farmers lived within the Auckland province and the majority of them were dairy farmers. More important dominance at the rank and file level meant very little.

The NFU certainly represented a greater proportion of the minority tenurial grouping. Nearly 33% of the men recorded in the "Who's Who" were straight-out owner-occupiers, while a further 17% both owned and rented land. These figures did not differ greatly from the national average for the 1920s of 64% tenants and 36% owner-occupiers, even if part owner-occupiers are added to the tenants. In other words the NFU was not the "tenants' only" organisation as critics such as Lord Bledisloe accused it of being. Little information on tenure is contained in the fifty-one membership slips which have survived for the Maidstone branch. But what evidence survives for the Marden and Staplehurst branches suggests that both tenants and owner-occupiers joined the NFU even though tenants were far more numerous in that part of Kent.

Only about a quarter of the official NZFU witnesses could be included under the category of permanent crown tenants. Furthermore, only about 17%

7. When the total membership of the Auckland and Taranaki branches for 1926 is added together it comes to 3,192 out of a total membership of 8,834.

8. The Times, 1 Jun or 29 Jun 1920.
were still l-i-p tenants in 1905 when the NZFU was claiming to champion their particular interests. Most witnesses had to concede that few crown tenants were members of their branch. The evidence on this matter referred to in Chapter Eleven made it clear that crown tenants remained outside the Otago branch of the NZFU. There were exceptions as nine of the twelve foundations members of the Greenfield branch were l-i-p tenants. But even this branch folded up within the space of two years. More crown tenants joined up with the NZFU in the North Island, as many more Northern tenants seemed to desire the freehold. Yet even in the North Island, the NZFU was essentially a "freeholders' only" organisation whose policies held out little appeal to tenants satisfied with the leasehold. Overall it was much more of a "freeholders' only" organisation than the NFU was a "tenants' only" organisation. The tenurial bias within the NZFU's membership helps explain why it made far less effort than the NFU to cater for the special needs of the minority tenurial group.

Both farmers' unions were relatively unsuccessful in attracting smaller farmers into membership, although the NZFU made even slower progress in persuading such farmers to join. Men engaged in a relatively large scale of farming operation tended to dominate the national executives of both unions, while smaller farmers were inclined to refrain from membership at the local level.

9. This figure was greater than for New Zealand as a whole for only about 12% of holdings were held under the l-i-p tenure. See Table 1:4 and 1:5.

Nearly 58% of the men included in the NFU "Who's Who" biographies operated farms of over 300 acres in extent, while 39% ran properties of over 500 acres. These men were big farmers by English standards, even according to Mingay's adjusted figures referred to in Chapter Two. At the other end of the scale only 4% of the sample worked holdings of under 100 acres. There seemed to be much justification for Lord Selborne's claim made at the 1918 A.G.M. that NFU members were men of "greater capital, of greater education, of greater experience and of greater strength" than the 80% of English farmers who ran holdings of under 200 acres, and were under-capitalised, inadequately educated and struggled to survive. The predominance of substantial farmers at the national executive level also helped explain why latent small farmer frustrations erupted in the form of a break-away Welsh Farmers' Union set up in 1955. Furthermore, even during the period of very high membership immediately after World War II, a study carried out by J.B. Butler in the Lancashire area revealed that only 38% of local full-time small farmers belonged to the NFU.

On the other hand the NFU's dramatic expansion of membership immediately after the First World War clearly indicated that it had succeeded in attracting some smaller farmers into its ranks even if the national executive level was dominated by men who directed a much more substantial size of operation. Certainly the forty-seven acreages recorded by the Maidstone branch between 1918 and 1919 and the subscription lists of the Marden branch, for 1921 and 1926 suggest that smaller farmers did join in Kent.

11. NFU Yearbook, 1918, p 95.
13. ibid. p 40.
Although substantial farmers such as Percy Manwaring or Owen English dominated the executive level of the Maidstone branch, twenty-eight of the forty-seven men who joined up between 1918 and 1919 ran farms of under 100 acres. Similarly, thirty of the forty-two subscribing members of the Marden branch in 1921 conducted their operations on properties of under £100 annual rental value. In other words they belonged to the bottom three rungs of the subscription scale which consisted of thirteen gradations rising to a maximum of £10 for valuations of over £1,000 per annum. It was likely that these thirty men ran properties of under 100 acres. Small holdings in this part of Kent could, however, prove highly profitable because of the success of the hop and fruit growing in the area. Many of these smaller men were probably better off than their much more substantial counterparts in other counties. Nevertheless, men engaged in a relatively humble scale of operations joined the NFU in the Wealden area of Kent. Five of the six surviving membership slips for the Staplehurst branch for the period prior to 1930 show that these men, all of whom were active at the local branch executive level, managed farms of over 300 acres. This might have explained why the Staplehurst branch failed to persuade some local small farmers to join when other branches in Kent claimed almost 100% membership.

14. Manwaring operated a farm of 395 acres, 291 acres of which he owned. He engaged in hops, fruit and sheep farming and was an Alderman and Justice of the Peace. NFU Yearbook, 1924, p 109.

15. English ran a 487 acre mixed hop, fruit, sheep, arable, cattle and pig farm in 1918. Membership slip held at Maidstone headquarters.


17. Subscription List for the Marden Branch of the NFU for 1921. Held at Maidstone headquarters.

18. e.g. Paddock Wood. The Journal of the Kent Farmers' Union, Vol XIV No 6 (Dec 1923), p 190.
Unfortunately, it is much more difficult to ascertain the size of farms run by national executive members of the NZFU. Yet, it is quite clear that a substantial proportion were well established farmers rather than struggling pioneers. After all such men were better able to take time off farm work than those attempting to carve a farm out of heavy bush country. Thirty-seven of the 131 men who served on the executive before 1915, or 28%, were recorded as owning land in the 1882 freeholders' list. Furthermore, twenty-eight of the thirty-seven, or three-quarters, owned farms of over 320 acres. This placed them in the top quarter in terms of size of holdings as only 23% of total holdings were over 320 acres in 1882. On the other hand few really big landowners belonged to the NZFU. At the most nine big landowning pastoralists, that is those owning over 5,000 acres and running over 10,000 sheep, sat on the national executive over the entire period 1902-1929. In other words they made up under 3% of the total number of executive personnel. The overall impression of the NZFU's total level of membership in terms of size then is that substantial and well established farmers tended to dominate rather than big pastoralists or struggling pioneers. The NZFU was only a small farmers' organisation in the relative sense that its ranks were made up of men who had challenged the economic and political ascendency of the big pastoralists prior to 1890. They were intensive rather than extensive farmers operating a relatively modest size of holding. But they were generally not pioneers starting from scratch who attempted to scrape a living from fifty acres of rough bush country.

This predominance of well established farmers running units in the medium sized category, seemed to be duplicated amongst both the Otago provincial executive and the Land Commission witnesses.

Twenty-eight of the eighty-eight men who served on the Otago provincial executive up to 1915, or 31%, owned land in 1882. Slightly over half of
these men owned more than 320 acres, while no-one owned less than 100 acres. Nearly 70% of the official NZFU witnesses to the 1905 Land Commission ran holdings of over 320 acres in extent when only 20% of total holdings exceeded that figure. The average size of their holdings of 910 acres was also considerably in excess of the national average of 365 acres. Furthermore, twenty-six, or 31%, owned farms of over 1,000 acres, although only two farmed properties of more than 2,000 acres in extent. Perhaps even more significant was the fact that nearly a third of the eighty-three witnesses had farmed for over twenty-five years, while only 18% had less than ten years farming experience. At least twelve, or 14%, also had experience with older tenures such as deferred payment, perpetual lease, or small grazing run. Only three, however, had experience of pastoral leases. The pattern for the twenty-three unofficial witnesses was not greatly different. Nineteen, or 83%, ran farms of over 320 acres, four, or 17%, farmed holdings of over 1,000 acres, while no-one ran a farm of over 5,000 acres. Only one witness farmed a property of under 100 acres. Just over half (52%) of these men had farmed for more than twenty-five years, while only 17% had less than ten years farming experience. Three, or 13%, had experience of deferred payment, while only one held a pastoral lease.

Substantial and well established farmers were possibly not quite so important at the local level, although men who were still creating farms and operated small units seemed reluctant to join. The membership of the Lawrence branch appeared to represent a fairly typical cross section of Tuapeka farmers. Five of the forty-five men who joined the branch before 1915, or 11%, owned land in 1882. Significantly, all five were prominent on the executive. Three owned farms of over 320 acres. Four executive members gave evidence to the 1905 Land Commission, but Alex Fraser was the only one who owned land in 1882. He had carried out a modest increase in his holding from 119 acres to 200 acres. The other three more recently
established farmers - James Robertson, Robert Cowie and John Bulfin - all owned considerably larger properties (of 970, 560 and 800 acres respectively), while Cowie and Bulfin also leased land for runs. These younger men possibly inherited farms which were established by their fathers, although these surnames were not recorded in the 1882 list. Even if they had started from scratch they had certainly fared better than Fraser in the ensuing twenty years and were probably typical of the men who joined the NZFU in that they were successful farmers who had developed an enterprise involving a considerable amount of capital and which was worth defending. All four were also mixed sheep and arable farmers like the great majority of their contemporaries in the Lawrence district. Thirty-nine of the fifty-two members of the Lawrence branch, or 75%, whose names were recorded in the Tuapeka Times, also owned some sheep. But only one owned over 5,000 sheep and fifteen (29%) more than 1,000 sheep. One other interesting feature of the Lawrence branch was the fact that seven of the foundation members, or a third of those whose names have been recorded as joining in 1902, were able to freehold land under the deferred payment system sometime between 1882 and 1902. Three other members who joined by 1914 had already done the same. Although some of these holdings were relatively small the freeholding of them represented the conversion of public assets to private advantage on a miniature scale.

The suggestion that these men had prospered through the acquisition of real estate is reinforced by an examination of the records in the Land Deeds office in Dunedin regarding the foundation members of both the Lawrence

and Waitahuna branches. Five of the twenty-one foundation members of the Lawrence branch had freeholded their land between 1882 and 1902 by means other than deferred payment, while two additional members purchased land within the next ten years. None of these holdings was excessively large but it was quite clear that these men were engaging in a modest form of land-gambling. Two bought and sold land during the twenty year period and one of these men along with another owned small town property. The tendency of New Zealand farmers to invest in urban real estate to gain additional security is clearly not a particularly new practice. Foundation members of the Waitahuna branch were even more active in playing the land market. Nine of the twelve original names recorded by the Tuapeka Times appear on the Land Deed's records as freeholding land between 182 and 1902. Five of these men bought and sold land, three of them to members of their own families. Four of them owned some small town land, three purchasing sections in Havelock and one buying a property in Lawrence. Once again this activity occurred on a modest scale and was closely related to the handing on of farms to children or in-laws. But these men clearly benefitted from turning the land market to their individual advantage and did not want unnecessary restrictions to be placed on such activities.

In other areas similar types of farmers joined the NZFU, but small farmers in more remote districts seemed reluctant to join right throughout the period under study. A recruiting tour of North Auckland carried out by the Dominion secretary as late as 1929, at a time when the organisation

21. The largest area of land bought under freehold was 866 acres by Hugh Cameron.

22. Only six of the fourteen members of both branches who bought land on straight out free-hold purchased holdings of over 100 acres. Only three purchased holdings of over 300 acres. None of the urban properties was over one acre in extent.
was experiencing a notable increase in membership, turned out to be an
exercise in despair. The secretary complained bitterly that all he encountered
was apathy, ignorance and even occasional hostility. This experience was
quite different from that of the American Farmers' Union, where small and
poorer farmers constituted the bulk of the membership and were the driving
force within the movement. Clearly the much greater importance of the
family unit of labour within New Zealand relative to England does not explain
this difference. Attitudes were probably as important as socio-economic
factors.

Generally, both the NFU and the NZFU seemed unable to win the support
of many small farmers, although the NZFU's shortcoming in this area was even
greater. Its leaders also made far less effort in tackling this problem
until the late 1920s and did not bother with such devices as special
poultry farming and small holders committees to win the interest of small
farmers. The NFU's leaders all along seemed far more aware of this problem
and did not accept low membership levels as willingly as the NZFU. They
realised all along that they must attract as many farmers as possible into
their ranks if they were to be successful.

The other feature of membership on which some evidence is available
is the degree of local government experience held by executive members.
Once again the NFU leadership seemed to have the edge on their NZFU
counterparts, although some NZFU leaders had experience in running local
body agencies and voluntary organisations. About half of the men included
in the NFU's "Who's Who" listing were members of the county agricultural
committees both during and after World War One, while 29% had been County
Councillors at sometime. Around 28% were Justices of the Peace, 24% had
sat on Rural District Councils and 14% were members of either Boards of

23. FF, 10 Nov 1929 pp 5-6. Polson made a similar complaint in the
President's column in the NZFA when he claimed that it was hard
to raise quorums to elect provincial delegates in well populated
farming areas. NZFA, 7 Jun 1924 p 3.
Guardians or Parish Councils. Some 4% were Governors of either research stations or agricultural colleges. A further 2% belonged to breeders' societies and 3% were members of the RASE. Finally 11% were caught up with entrepreneurial activities such as directing co-operatives or agricultural companies. Several of the Kent executive members were also Freemasons. In combination their backgrounds represented an impressive pool of administrative experience. Furthermore, the administrative resources of the NFU's leaders was continually expanded by active participation on County Councils and related local government agencies.

Although no equivalent set of records exists for the NZFU the biographies of national executive members contained in the *Cyclopedia* suggests that these men also had some considerable experience in local government activities. At least twenty-four of the fifty-five men, or 46%, referred to in the *Cyclopedia*, had been members of Road Boards during their farming careers. A further fourteen, or 25.5%, had sat on County Councils, while twenty-two, or 40%, had been active on school committees. Eight, or 14.5%, were Justices of the Peace, and six had been elected to Harbour Boards. Furthermore, Thirteen, or 24%, had helped direct the operations of co-operatives or agricultural companies, while twenty-two, or 40%, were also members of their local A and P Societies and eleven, or 20%, were in

24. There was a definite connection between the Agricola Lodge of Freemasons and the Kent branch of the NFU. The obituaries of three members of the Maidstone branch - Philip Champion, Fred Selby Barning and Guy Skinner - recorded that these men were all active in the Maidstone lodge. *Journal of the Kent Farmers' Union*, Vol XII No 2 (Aug 1922), p 44; Vol XV No 5 (May 1924), p 162; and Vol XXIV No 4 (Oct 1928), p 44.
active in other voluntary associations such as the Freemasons, Druids or Oddfellows. These figures were somewhat different from those of the

25. These biographies also reinforce the various impressions regarding the type of farmers who were most numerous at the national executive level. The fact that nearly a fifth of all those who served on the national executive between 1902 and 1929, and nearly a third of those who participated in the work of the Colonial and Dominion executives prior to 1915, have their names mentioned in the Cyclopaedia suggests that a similar type of farmer to those in the A and Fs joined the NZFU. Generally they were well established with at least twenty-one or, 38%, of the total fifty-five having farmed for over twenty-five years and seventeen, or 31%, inheriting developed properties. Seventeen of the thirty-three farms referred to were over 1,000 acres in extent and twenty-seven, or 82%, were over 320 acres. There were none under 100 acres. The ages of these men at the date their names appeared on national executive lists also suggest that they were well established and well-to-do farmers. Half of the forty-six whose age was recorded were over fifty, thirty-five or 76%, over forty and only two, or 4%, under thirty. Furthermore, twenty-one, or 46%, were born in New Zealand suggesting that these men came from the second generation of immigrants. Fifteen of the twenty biographies which mentioned farming specialisation described the operations of their subjects farms in terms of mixed-sheep farming. The broader national pattern was also reproduced in that only two of these men were dairy farmers and only two were sheep specialists. The remaining farmer concentrated on beef production. Ten of the total group were pedigree breeders, while three of the ten whose sheep numbers were mentioned ran flocks of over 10,000 and four ran flocks of over 5,000. Twenty-nine of the thirty-seven whose tenures were referred to, or 78%, were freeholders. Thirteen of the total group had once managed sheep stations. While substantial and well established farmers predominated a few more humble men were also represented along with some big pastoralists. Four of the total group had some labouring experience, three as contractors and one as a shepherd. A further two had once been small store-keepers and one was a blacksmith who operated his farm on a part-time basis. At the other end of the scale were nine of the big pastoralists referred to earlier in the chapter - A.H. Russell of Hawkes Bay, W.J. Birch and G.L. Marshall of Marton, James Wilson of Bulls, H.D. Vasavour of Marlborough, J. Studholme and J.C.N. Grigg of the "Coldstream" and "Longbeach" estates in Canterbury, A.S. Orbell of Waitouaiti and James Begg of Clinton. But the list did not read like the national executive of the SOF which was a virtual "Who's Who" of the "gentry" enclave. The other interesting feature of the total group of fifty-five was that five were not farmers. Three of these men were lawyers and two were merchants. All of them held the position of treasurer and belonged to the Commercial elite who were so prominent in the A and Fs.

In summary the Cyclopaedia biographies reinforce the general impression that the NZFU's national leadership was dominated by substantial well established freeholding mixed farmers who could afford the time to engage in public life. They seemed to share similar aspirations and values to the members of the urban middle-class whose biographies were also recorded in the Cyclopaedia. While this sample clearly over-emphasised the importance of farmers engaged in a large scale of farming operations it makes quite clear the importance of well established men within the leadership of the NZFU in addition to men well on the make.
official NZFU witnesses to the 1905 Land Commission as only 8% had been members of county councils, while a mere 2% were members of Road Boards. But the pattern of the national executive seemed rather similar to that recorded for the twenty-two members of the Taieri branch of the NZFU whose biographies were recorded in the *Cyclopedia*. Seven of this group, or 32%, had some experience of local government activities. Two had been members of Road Boards, and five had served on the Taieri County Council. Furthermore, two sat on Licensing Committees and four on school committees. Twelve were also members of the Taieri A and P Society, while three were Freemasons and two were Oddfellows.

Clearly the NZFU leadership had also gained considerable administrative experience in running local body affairs and other voluntary organisations, even though members of provincial executives were not as active at the County Council level as their NFU counterparts in Lincolnshire or Kent. This factor was another expression of the fact that the NZFU leadership was dominated by longer established and more well-to-do farmers. But although this background in local government assisted them in administering the affairs of their own pressure group it did not provide as useful a training as participation in English County Councils or war-time agricultural committees. Road Boards or school committees in New Zealand dealt with the affairs of relatively small numbers of people at rather simple levels. 26 English county councils administered the activities of much larger numbers of people at a much higher level of complexity. Experience on the war-time agricultural committees also made their NFU members acutely aware of the importance of co-ordinating activity at the county level to assist in

26. An editorial in the *Tuapeka Times* on the death of John McKenzie pointed out that the dead politician had found that work on school committees and Road Boards did not prepare him for the complex administrative tasks which confront a Minister of the Crown. He was forced to develop a new range of administrative skills to cope with the demands of his office. *TT*, 10 Aug 1901.
the attainment of national objectives. Such an experience helped to rid them of their own parochial attitudes, whereas activity on local government agencies in New Zealand probably only reinforced the parochialism of farmer members.

Little information is available on the political allegiance and religious affiliation of individual members, but it seems clear that the majority of members of both unions undoubtedly belonged to either the Conservative or Reform parties, while Church of England adherents were predominant within the NFU. Men with pronounced Liberal sympathies also exerted a greater influence on policy within the NFU. Three of the twelve presidents of the NFU between 1908 and 1929 were men who were active within the Liberal party. Their influence helped explain why the NFU was more successful in maintaining its non-partisan stance. None of the NZFU's presidents sided with the New Zealand Liberals and few national executive members had any connection with that party. Only three of the seventeen members of the national executive members who stood as parliamentary candidates at the 1908, 1911 and 1914 general elections were associated with the Liberal ticket. None of these men – A.L.D. Fraser of Napier, W.S.D. McDonald of the Bay of Plenty and C.J. Talbot of Temuka exercised any great influence at national conferences, even though McDonald and Talbot succeeded in becoming M.P.s and Fraser was an M.P. between 1899 and 1908. The remaining fourteen executive members stood as Reform or Independent Reform candidates. After 1919, something of a change occurred which reflected the growing political independence of the NZFU. Only five of the twenty-four national executive members who attempted to enter parliament between

27. E.M. Nunneley, E.W. Langford and Rowland R. Robbins were all active members of the Liberal party. Langford even stood as an NFU sponsored candidate on the Liberal ticket at the 1918 election. NFU Yearbook, 1917, p 85 and 1919, pp 3 and 5.
1919 and 1928 stood on the Reform ticket. Four aligned themselves with the Liberals, five threw in their lot with the Country Party and five ran their campaigns as Independents. According to Bremer the political allegiance of NZFU members who sat on local branch executives and stood for parliament was even more diverse. Thirteen of these men stood on the Reform ticket, eleven stood as Liberals, seven campaigned under the Country Party banner and five tied their fortunes to the Labour party. The same five national executive members stood as independents.28 But this apparently healthy move away from the unofficial alliance with Reform only exacerbated existing internal conflicts engendered by parochialism and the rivalry of the wool, meat and dairy factions. Divergence of political opinion which assisted the NFU in maintaining independence from political parties only hindered the effectiveness of the NZFU and undermined internal unity until the mid 1930s when opposition to the Labour Government began to reunite the various factions.

At the intermediate level the Kent branch exhibited greater divergence of political opinion than the Otago branch even though Kent was a traditional stronghold of the Conservative party. Men with direct Unionist party connections like T.D. Harris were undoubtedly far more numerous than men with Liberal sympathies, but Liberal party activists like Colonel Honeyball, W.W. Berry and Arthur Amos played an active part on the County executive. In contrast Alex Fraser was the only member of the Otago executive who held any direct connection with the New Zealand Liberals.29 On the other hand some members of the Lawrence and Waitahuna branches eulogised


29. Fraser stood as an independent Liberal at the 1899 election. See Chapter Nine  footnote 124.
John McKenzie's land legislation and were concerned by what they considered anti-Government bias in some of the NZFU's activities. The five members of the Lawrence branch who joined the local Reform League in 1907 were possibly more typical, but the majority of farmers were more likely politically active only on polling day. We have no way of knowing how individuals voted but tradition and apathy certainly influenced their voting behaviour more than active participation in a political party.

Neither organisation displayed any overt denominational bias. The majority of NFI members were undoubtedly adherents of the Church of England, although one of its presidents, Rowland R. Robbins, was a prominent member of the Baptist church, and some rank and file members of the Kent branch were non-conformists. The religious affiliations of the NZFU were probably even more complex as no one church held a monopoly over rural New Zealand. It seems highly unlikely that support of the Reform party and William Massey implied any tacit alliance with the Protestant Political Association. John O'Halloran, a prominent member of both the Colonial and Canterbury executive, was as his name implied a Roman Catholic. The few obituaries of Lawrence branch members contained in the Tuapeka Times revealed that these men shared a variety of beliefs. Several Irish names were also contained in the membership lists and obituaries of other local settlers made it clear that immigrants came from both Southern and North Ireland.

30. e.g. Report of the 1901 A.G.M. of the Waitahuna Farmers' Club. TT, 28 Aug 1901. James Fahey also severely criticised the anti-Government bias of the NZFU when speaking at a meeting held by the Tuapeka Agricultural Society to consider forming a branch of the NZFU. ibid. 17 Aug 1901.

31. ibid. 7 Sep 1907.

32. Cyclopaedia, Vol 3, p 492. Seven of the twelve national executive members whose church activities were recorded in the Cyclopaedia biographies were Anglicans. Two of the remaining five were Methodists, two were Presbyterians and one was a Roman Catholic.

33. Eleven of these men were born in Southern Ireland and five in Northern Ireland.
In summary the NFU's membership was more representative of English farmers than the NZFU, was representative of New Zealand farmers in terms of specialisation, tenurial group and size of operation. The executive level of both unions was dominated by more substantial farmers, but the NFU was able to attract a greater proportion of small farmers into membership. The NFU's leadership also had greater administrative experience in large-scale local government agencies which operated at a level of considerable complexity. The bigger tenant farmers, who had actively participated in the leadership of local rural communities for several generations, played a prominent part at the national level. Colin Campbell was typical of the leadership group. At the county and local level, however, less substantial tenants were also able to play an active part. Clearly the existing generalisations concerning the NZFU's membership must be considerably qualified. L.J. Wild's claim that an oligarchy of the old big farmer elite dominated the NZFU's leadership prior to World War I is not entirely correct. Certainly men like Wilson or W.J. Birch were big pastoralists, but they were not typical of the national executive membership. On the other hand Cleveland's suggestion that small dairy farmers ousted the older oligarchy is equally misleading. Men like G.W. Leadley, who had freehold 2,400 acres by 1905 farmed for twenty-eight years, ran a flock of sheep, and engaged in an essentially mixed farming operation, were far more typical of the NZFU leadership than James Wilson or small dairy farmer Country Party advocates such as Captain Frank Colbeck. Well established meat men, situated somewhere between the pioneer and the big pastoralist, were predominant. The same group also dominated the provincial

executives, while less substantial farmers participated in the union's affairs at the local level. Even so the NZFU had virtually no impact on the indifference of the great majority of small farmers until at least the late 1920s. As far as the majority of small farmers were concerned it may as well not have existed.

The precise function of each union is rather difficult to describe as they both combined aspects of pressure groups, interest groups and attitude groups. Bremer's conclusion that the NZFU was more of an "interest group" than a pressure group seems somewhat arbitrary as the difference between these two types of organisation is slight and varies according to the definitions evolved by individual political scientists.

38. During the late 1950s British political scientists engaged in a long-winded debate over the meaning of these terms. They reached no concrete conclusions but something of a consensus was achieved over the following definitions. "Pressure" groups apply pressure, usually independent of political parties, to win reforms desired by their members. e.g. the New Zealand Post-Primary Teachers' Association. "Interest" groups defend an economic stake in society. e.g. Trade Unions. "Attitude" groups are primarily motivated by ideological concerns: e.g. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Temperance movement, or the various environmental lobbies. These categories are tenuous as most organisations share all three characteristics. The two farmers' unions also tended to combine all three functions within the ambit of their activities; lobbying for change, defending economic interests and protecting a certain way of life. Where they differed from most attitude groups was in concerning themselves with a broad range of issues rather than concentrating on one specific cause. The distinction of the other two functions is clearly much less clear-cut as "interest groups" have to engage in "pressure group" activity, while most "pressure groups" obviously have definite concrete interests to defend. See Samuel H. Beer, Modern British Politics; Larry Eckstein, Pressure Group Politics: The Case of the British Medical Association, (London 1960); S.E. Finer, Anonymous Empire; Allan Potter, Organised Pressure Groups in British National Politics, (London 1961); and J.D. Stewart, British Pressure Groups.

39. Since that time political scientists have begun to disassociate themselves from such rather meaningless semantic entanglements. They have acknowledged that pressure group and interest group activities are so inter-connected that it is artificial to separate them. Instead they have concentrated more on categorising the different types of pressure group. See Keith Jackson, New Zealand Politics of Change, (Wellington 1973), pp 87-89 and 94-97.
Both farmers' unions were typical of the associational type of pressure groups which have evolved in industrialised societies. Both combined aspects of trade unions and employers' associations. Both possibly placed greater emphasis on defending the economic position of their members than on pressing Government for changes. But they also attempted to influence Government policy when it directly affected their members' economic interests through applying pressure on legislature and administration. Furthermore, the actions of both unions were reinforced by a belief that they were defending the intrinsic qualities of a particular way of life as well as more concrete economic interests. The difference between the NFU and the NZFU cannot, therefore, be simply summed up as that between an organisation which was primarily a pressure group and one which was essentially an interest group. It was rather the difference between an organisation which was effective in its role both as pressure and interest group and one which was not particularly effective in the performance of either role. The NFU represented a much greater proportion of the farming community, ran its affairs with much greater efficiency, channelled parochial energies in a centripetal direction and implemented its disjunctive and integrative functions without serious contradiction. The performance of both pressure and interest group functions was not accompanied by militant action and hostile rhetoric. The generally non-controversial nature of the NFU's activities suggested that it was operating with considerable efficiency because overt militancy usually implies that all other forms of lobbying have failed. Freedom from party entanglements also ensured that the NFU remained an alternative avenue of influence on agricultural policy and provided the organisation with considerable flexibility in negotiations with the Government of the day. Negotiations were also backed up by an adequate research service and could draw on professional advice. Admittedly, there was room for further improvements, especially in the attitude
towards State assistance before the NFU was able to evolve a continuous partnership with the State and ensure continuity of agricultural policy despite changes of Government. But compared with the NZFU the NFU performed its pressure and interest group functions with much greater professionalism and sophistication. It depended far less on personal and informal links between leading politicians and the organisation and rather relied on the effectiveness of its lobbying machinery and institutional resources. This approach was far less haphazard and not nearly as reliant on the continuing sympathy of farmers politicians whose influence was clearly in decline by the mid 1920s. The NFU was altogether a much more mature type of pressure group, far better equipped to cope with the growing complexity of twentieth century industrial society. W.H. Oliver's suggestion that pressure groups have played a more important role in shaping New Zealand's development than political parties is a useful one, especially in relation to the period since World War II. But prior to 1929 the NZFU did not exert any great influence on Government policy. The continuing economic importance of the farmer probably would have ensured that actions undertaken by the Government followed similar lines had the NZFU never existed. All that the NZFU did was to articulate the views of a minority segment of the farming community and to formalise the relationship between Government and the farmers. The possibility of evolving a continual partnership between the Government and the entire farming community through the medium of a truly representative pressure group was kept alive by the NZFU's leaders. But such a partnership did not become a reality until several years after the formation of Federated Farmers.

Perhaps the most important reason for the greater effectiveness of the NFU was the rather nebulous one of the prevailing sets of attitudes within the two farming communities. These attitudes were the product of the different socio-economic and political situation of the two groups of farmers. But they also interacted to influence farmers' actions with more hard-headed considerations. After all the decision to join an organisation like a farmers' union is influenced by a wide range of factors including such considerations as to whether or not membership could be beneficial and whether or not a farmers' pressure group was really necessary. More English farmers clearly thought membership was beneficial and that the NFU was necessary. The majority seemed to realise they had to unite by joining some type of formal organisation if they were to defend the economic advantages they held in a constantly changing world. Self-reliance no longer offered adequate protection of their interests. The majority of New Zealand farmers on the other hand obviously felt, and with some justification, that the NZFU was not really necessary. They seemed to fare quite well even though they remained outside the organisation. Government generally granted the concessions they desired without them having to undertake time-consuming duties on NZFU committees at risk of possible personal expense. In short, individualism was more entrenched in the New Zealand countryside.

Individualism exercised a greater hold over the New Zealand countryside for a variety of reasons. Both English and New Zealand farmers shared the belief that they were morally superior to any other group within society, but there was a much greater possibility of evolving an essentially rural society in New Zealand. The battle was lost in Britain and farmers were forced to accept the relentless advance of the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation. They turned rather reluctantly to examine the lobbying methods of their urban counterparts, in both
businessmen's organisations and trade unions. They borrowed and adopted the techniques employed by these other sectional organisations casting aside any hope of retaining a pre-industrial innocence in the face of overwhelming necessity. Arcadia could no longer be realised in the confines of the English countryside, but perhaps some of the intrinsic qualities of their way of life could be defended if they countered the influence of the various urban sectional organisations by employing similar tactics.

In contrast there was still the possibility within New Zealand that a society could be evolved in which essentially rural virtues of simplicity and honesty would predominate. There was less need to behave as a sophisticated businessman. The entrepreneurial drive was strong, but it was possible to make a comfortable living without joining an urban type of organisation to defend peculiarly rural interests. Individualism within rural New Zealand was a rather complex attitude closely tied to the desire for independence and considerable social isolation experienced by back block settlers, but not exactly the same as the individualism which Turner claimed was produced by the frontier experience. The frontier never lasted long enough in any one particular area to have any lasting effect and co-operation soon came to predominate in the performance of everyday tasks. A considerable awareness of developments in the outside world also mitigated against the evolution of extreme forms of individualism as did continuing economic dependence on the State. But the life of the small farmer dependent upon his family for labour, was often a lonely one. During the long hours of the working day many men probably had little

41. The very long hours worked by dairy farmers probably have not been exaggerated by mythology, especially not prior to the introduction of the milking machine. W. Wright in his scathing attack on the propensity of some dairy farmers to overwork their families, claimed that children of these farmers fell asleep during school hours. OW, 7 Aug 1901 p 9. Such accusations were common during the depression of the 1930s, but some men obviously worked themselves and their families ludicrously hard in time of prosperity. The working day of many New Zealand dairy farmers and English agricultural labourers was similar at around fourteen to sixteen hours. Such men had little time for leisure or even reading agricultural periodicals, let alone devoting time and energy to NZFU activities.
contact with other human beings and engaged in more frequent conversation with horse, dogs or cows. Such constant isolation bred suspicion of the outside world and encouraged greater self-reliance. These men had also immigrated so they could improve their economic lot in life without interference from anyone else, or were at least the sons of men who imparted such attitudes to their children. Some also had deliberately tried to escape the growing complexity of the modern world by engaging in essentially rural pursuits. Both the desire for economic independence and freedom from the complexities of the urban life-style made men suspicious of even farmers orientated organisations such as the NZFU. They simply wanted to be left alone. Some even expressed hostility at the mention of the word union as late as 1929. These small struggling farmers were also probably in a state of constant physical exhaustion and could not be bothered with any organisation which placed further demands on their time. Furthermore, many had little to defend as they were still trying to convert an unyielding piece of bush into a farm which returned a reasonable living. It was scarcely surprising that the NZFU's membership was dominated by well established farmers as they had developed properties worth defending and had some spare time available for other activities. The difference in attitude and representativeness of the NZFU and the NFU becomes even more understandable when it is

42. Many New Zealand immigrants probably shared the desire of the urban dwellers who moved to rural America to escape the complexities of city living. See Erikson, Op cit, pp 25-26. Certainly the NFU's newspapers expressed considerable dislike of the urban lifestyle. It was more than coincidence that the men whose biographies were recorded in the Cyclopedia either had no experience of urban living, or developed a dislike for town life. Fifty-one of the fifty-five men were brought up to farming, while the remaining four deserted urban occupations to go on the land.

43. This attitude was articulated by James Fahey when he opposed the formation of the Lawrence branch of the NZFU. What worried him most was that the NZFU advised members how to vote. He considered such a practice to be unacceptable in New Zealand because it was too close to the British system whereby the landlord told tenant farmers and labourers how they should vote. _TT_, 17 Aug 1901.
realised that the majority of English farmers ran well developed properties, had spare time available and were probably much better educated as a group. But the discrepancy between the proportion of smaller and poorer farmers represented by the NZFU and the American Farmers' Union is far more difficult to explain. The American farmers after all also had to cope with a harsh environment and were outwardly far more individualistic in terms of their attitude towards State assistance. Furthermore, they were dependent on family labour and had to cope with extremes of isolation and physical endurance. Clearly the difference existed in that the urban and industrial sectors posed a much greater threat to their economic future because those apparently hostile sections of society were far better organised than in New Zealand and operated on a much larger scale. American farmers in other words had to fight hard to preserve their standard of living and quality of life from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. They were prepared to copy from their urban contemporaries in an endeavour to increase their political effectiveness. New Zealand farmers did not find themselves in a similar situation until the late 1920s. Once they were forced to accept the fact that the urban reality of the post-industrial world had reached New Zealand, they began to question the prevailing individualistic ethos and paid more attention to the actions and techniques of urban pressure groups. When the majority rejected any possibility of realising Arcadia, their attitudes changed and they began to behave as sophisticated rural businessmen. Until that fundamental change of attitude came about, which represented the transition from well-to-do and efficient peasant to modern farmers, the NZFU could not hope to equal the effectiveness of the NFU.
CONCLUSION

The NFU and the NZFU represented similar institutional responses of farmers attempting to adjust to the four great interlocking forces of change which swept across the English speaking world in the late nineteenth century: industrialisation; urbanisation; the growth of centralised bureaucracy; and the division of society into competing sectional groups, each represented by organisations administered at the national level. Both unions belonged to the post-populist phase of farmers' political activism. They were more sophisticated and mature responses to change than the separate agrarian third parties. Both unions in consequence were formed for similar reasons and shared similar objectives. The major difference in terms of origins was simply that the NFU had to challenge the power of an entrenched elite within the rural sector, whereas economic change had enabled the farmer to assume pre-eminence within rural New Zealand. The subsequent development of each union was also similar in that they both realised their primary objective of winning greater security of tenure. But there the similarity ends and the stories diverge.

The NFU was more successful as a farmers' pressure group. Its record was far more impressive in nearly every sphere of its activities whether in labour relations or in running a nation-wide insurance scheme. The notable exception was marketing reform. Yet the NZFU's triumph in helping to establish producer controlled marketing boards was rather inflated by its own propaganda, as were its other major triumphs: the introduction of the freehold option, the breaking of the 1913 strike and the election to parliament of several NZFU members. The marketing boards represented a concrete response by Government to an economic crisis. They would probably have been formed even without the NZFU because many farmers were acutely aware that the marketing of export produce had to be streamlined. The
progressive attitude adopted by the NZFU over this matter cannot be denied, however. Its actions over the marketing boards represented its most positive contribution to New Zealand's development, along with its support of agricultural education and promotion of co-operative enterprises. The freehold agitation was rather different. By 1900 the freehold was clearly the predominant form of tenure and its supremacy would only have been challenged by the leasehold had New Zealand experienced a dramatic economic collapse and consequent social revolution. Continuing prosperity ensured that the sanctity of private property remained intact. Once introduced the freehold option had little impact and was only utilised by an insubstantial minority. Its achievement also removed much of the NZFU's raison d'être and reduced the organisation's appeal to North Island dairy farmers. On the other hand once the freehold option was won the NZFU was forced to evolve a wider range of concerns and to act more as a general pressure group. Similarly, the breaking of the waterside strike represented a hollow victory. The situation of the strikers was hopeless, especially as the majority of the political community was opposed to their action. Such extreme tactics on the part of the NZFU were unnecessary and possibly did irreparable harm to industrial relations. Finally, the election of NZFU members as M.P.s did not produce the great bounty of benefits which the organisation hoped it would. Once in parliament NZFU members found that party loyalties came first and that national interests had to take precedence over sectional preference. Neither Reform nor Liberal M.P.s who were NZFU members were able to introduce legislation on agricultural banking along the lines demanded by the NZFU. Like the NFU the NZFU was forced to realise that it was probably more effective to lobby from an independent extra-parliamentary position and to concentrate efforts on Government administration rather than on the legislature, instead of supporting sponsored M.P.s. Certainly both unions became much more effective and
influential when they instituted such a change. Partnership proved more beneficial than simply pressurising parliament.

The NFU was even more successful in terms of the administration of its affairs, its representativeness of the occupational group whose interests it defended and in the performance of its disjunctive and integrative functions. It was also better able to maintain independence from political parties over the entire period under study. These points need to be reiterated because outwardly the NFU could appear to have been less successful in that it did not win as many spectacular advantages as the NZFU. But the NZFU's apparent triumphs were due more to the strong economic position and considerable political influence held by New Zealand farmers than to the effectiveness of the pressure group itself. In contrast nearly every concession won by the NFU could be attributed to the resourcefulness of the organisation. English farmers found themselves in a position of relative economic weakness and prior to 1908 had little direct political influence. Much of the explanation for the NFU's greater success in the organisational sense lay in the activism of its intermediate units. Energy and influence at the county level provided the foundation of success at the national level. Such success was ensured by strong central direction and increasing use of professional back-up services. The NFU set an example to most British Trade Unions, as well as to the NZFU, in highlighting the advantages of centralising the operations of a pressure group and having research and advisory services readily accessible. English farmers responded to the efforts of the NFU's leaders in attempting to construct a really effective pressure group by joining up in much greater numbers than in New Zealand. By 1920 the NFU represented not only the numerical majority of English farmers but all of the various specialist groups. The NZFU was never able to make either claim. Factionalism, either in terms of localism or the rivalries of specialist groups, generally did not hinder the progress
of the NFU. Improvements were still required after 1929, but they were refinements of reforms introduced in 1917 rather than drastic changes. In contrast factionalism frequently rendered the NZFU impotent and occasionally threatened its very survival. T.E. Taylor's comment that the NZFU was "an institution which does a tremendous amount of talking with a small membership" was as apt as similar charges made against Taylor and the socialist and temperance movements with which he was associated. The gap in terms of organisational efficiency was not really closed until the NZFU was transformed into Federated Farmers. Since 1944 the adoption of a system similar to the NFU's use of sub-committees, whereby sub-sections are responsible to a national council, has enabled New Zealand farmers to evolve a pressure group much more comparable to the NFU. The proportion of New Zealand farmers' represented by Federated Farmers is about the same as the NFU (90%) and politically scientists refer to it as a "powerful" organisation. Perhaps if the NZFU had adopted a constitution like that of Federated Farmers when the opportunity presented itself in the early 1920s, it could have avoided the debilitating effect of constant internal divisions. Yet even since 1944 Federated Farmers has been adversely affected by constant conflict between wool, meat and dairy sections, while the formation of a Sheep and Cattlemen's Association in 1972 threatened to

1. NZ Farmer, May 1904 p 397.
2. I would like to thank the Secretary of the Otago section of Federated Farmers, Mr Martin Finlay, for this information.
3. e.g. Jackson, Op cit, p 85. Jackson points out that in 1972-73 Federated Farmers' was represented on some sixty-seven bodies, employed a full-time staff of eighteen, ran its own newspaper and was in daily contact with heads of government departments, divisional heads and the secretarial staff of ministers. This level of activity is a far cry from the periodic deputations arranged by the NZFU. But Jackson also suggests that the organisation is being hindered by internal divisions and has fallen into the trap of becoming so much a part of the Governmental process that it has lost contact with the bulk of its membership and reduced its independence. ibid. pp 96-97. The NFU's partnership with the State does not seem to have presented the same problems and it has been able to maintain a more united front.
revive the old NZFU/SOF rivalry. Despite dramatic improvements Federated Farmers has still not evolved into something of a model pressure group widely admired by political scientists. Perhaps the continuing crisis within the New Zealand farming industry induced by Britain's entry into the EEC will force New Zealand farmers to forget their differences and close their ranks. Full economic nationhood might enable Federated Farmers to emulate the fine record of the NFU. But comparable levels of performance will probably not be achieved because of the head start given the NFU by its early leadership.

4. Comparisons with some of the other new world farmers' unions mentioned in the introduction are rather difficult to make as they emerged in quite different contexts and frequently evolved into agrarian parties. Most of the Canadian and Australian farmers' unions in fact emerged in the vast specialist wheat growing areas of those countries, where the monocultural concentration imposed a common interest on most farmers by making them particularly vulnerable to price fluctuations. Agriculture was also the predominant occupation in provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan and this factor made separate agrarian third parties a much more viable proposition than in New Zealand. In Australia greater distances from the cities and concentration of urban population in one giant metropolis also helped to distinguish the separate political interests of town and country. Farmers' Unions in these countries also paid far more attention to providing members with direct economic benefits in terms of co-operative marketing facilities and reduced rail freight. This probably helps explain why these organisations were more representative of local farmers than the NZFU. The Queensland Farmers' Union, for example, or the Saskatchewan Commonwealth Co-operative Association, both represented about a third of local farmers. See Graham, Australian Country Parties, p 77, and Lipset, Agrarian Socialism, p 58. The considerable constitutional differences of both Canada and Australia also make comparisons difficult, for they also encouraged the emergence of separate agrarian parties. Perhaps British Columbia and Victoria would provide the closest approximations to the New Zealand situation, but even then both that province and state produced successful country parties.

In many ways the NZFU had more in common with the Farmers' Union which emerged in Texas in 1902 and evolved into a national organisation by 1915, because neither union evolved into a political party, even if the NZFU sometimes made the mistake of not differentiating clearly its role as pressure group and party appendage. The American Farmers' Union also experienced many initial difficulties but by 1915 it had established a permanent lobbying agency in Washington - the National Board of Farmers' Organisations - and offered its members a wide range of economic benefits including agricultural banks, cheap fertiliser, postal services and extension courses. See William P. Tucker, "Populism Up to Date: The Story of the Farmers' Union", Agricultural History, Vol 21 No 4 (Oct 1948), pp 198-208.
The NZFU from establishment in 1902 until the start of the great depression in 1929, was a rather ineffective and unrepresentative pressure group, especially in comparison with the NFU. Bremer's unflattering portrayal of the NZFU for the 1920s is true for the entire period. Both Duncan and Cleveland have considerably overrated the performance of the NZFU during its early years and the NZFU's importance in the positive and direct sense has been given undue prominence within our historical orthodoxy. It has been assumed for too long that because farmers were an important and powerful economic and political group that the NZFU per se was also important and powerful. Greater significance should be attached to the NZFU's relative failure. Its emergence initially suggested that New Zealand was beginning to experience the political maturation typical of other English speaking societies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The NZFU and the NFU were indeed similar in that they both represented the attempt of some farmers to counter the influence of other sectional groupings by setting up a pressure group administered at the national level. But the NZFU's relative failure after a reasonably promising start, and the NFU's subsequent successes after much less spectacular beginnings, suggested that the NZFU ran ahead of farmers' sectional needs and was somewhat out of phase with New Zealand's general level of political development. Localism remained a more important factor in shaping political allegiances than occupational loyalties. Sectional considerations were challenging parochialism for political primacy, but that challenge came mainly from the

4. (contd) The Farm Bureau Federation set up in 1919 certainly proved far more effective than the NZFU and is credited by both Hoštadter and Benedict as exerting a major influence on legislative developments. It seemed much nearer the model of the NFU. The Bureau was led by farmers who were primarily businessmen and soon established a close partnership with the Department of Agriculture. Hoštadter, Age of Reform, p 126. It rapidly left behind the last traces of populism which were associated with the American Farmers' Union. Polson certainly considered the Bureau and the NFU as the models most worthy of emulation and Federated Farmers has clearly followed their example.
cities and spread only very slowly into the countryside. In short a combination of socio-economic, political and interconnected psychological factors explained the different levels of performance and organisational success of the two farmers' unions prior to 1930.

English farmers not only had to develop a really effective pressure group if their interests were to have any chance of adequate protection, but they also fully realised that such action was necessary. The majority thought like commercial farmers rather than clinging to outmoded pre-industrial notions. More important they acted on their more realistic attitudes. The majority of New Zealand farmers in contrast did not share such a realisation. They knew that the activities of the NZFU had little bearing on their well being and many were not interested in developments outside the boundaries of their own farms. At most they concerned themselves with the affairs of the immediate locality. Even if they had the time or inclination to read reports of the activities of overseas farmers' political organisations in agricultural periodicals, few perceived a distinctive national farming interest and could see little point in uniting for their mutual good. Dependency upon the London market further helped to retard the emergence of the conception of a definite New Zealand farmers' interest as distinct from Waikato, Southland or Manawatu farmers' interests. The petty political wranglings in Wellington palled into insignificance besides developments at Smithfield, except when sittings of parliament failed to produce roads, bridges or railways. Furthermore, when New Zealand farmers had visions they were generally of a pre-industrial world with no place for businessmen's associations or trade unions, let alone farmers' unions. These men preferred their own earthy and materialistic yet naive, version of the way in which New Zealand society should develop to NZFU propaganda efforts which stressed that lawyers, businessmen, middlemen, manufacturers and labourers had their own organisations and farmers should follow suit
if they wanted to have a greater say in running the country's affairs. If
farmers listened to NZFU propaganda at all their general dislike of the
tripartite system and thirst for independence further reinforced the
notion that it was best that men should be left to run their farms free
of direction from anyone else, whether landlord, State or even farmers'
union.

In direct contrast the majority of English farmers were fully able
to perceive the reality of changes occurring around them and to devise
effective means of coping with those changes. Any lingering Arcadian
notions were left behind in the castles of the surrounding countryside.
An efficient and sophisticated pressure group receiving the united support
of English farmers provided a far more viable solution to easing their
difficulties than adhering to outmoded notions on desired social structure
and political behaviour.

Farmers as an occupational group are "dispersed, heterogeneous, and
individualistic." Yet the NFU was able to overcome the enormous
difficulties confronting any attempt to set up a collective type of political
organisation in the rural context. The determination of its leaders,
the activism of its intermediate level executives, the efficiency of its
administrative procedures and the generally receptive attitude of English
farmers enabled it to succeed where the NZFU failed. New Zealand farmers
were undoubtedly more dispersed and individualistic and possibly more
heterogeneous, but the NZFU was quite incapable of coping with the special
difficulties of farmer unionism until at least the late 1920s. The NFU
lived up to its motto by defending the interests of English farmers in the
face of sometimes apparently impossible odds and earned a reputation which
made it the envy of many urban and industrial pressure groups. The NZFU
failed to live up to its motto, rarely followed any guiding principles until
the later 1920s and drifted into party entanglements. Although trade unions

sometimes complained of its influence their wrath was directed more at the stranglehold of farmers over the New Zealand economy. An economic situation and a political context which heavily favoured the farmer worked against the evolution of an effective farmers' pressure group. New Zealand farmers remained "numerous, competing and unorganised," while English farmers "grew stronger as they grew relatively fewer, became more concerted, more tenaciously organised and self-centred."
Note: - This bibliography refers only to sources cited in the text and to other material which has helped to shape the methodology and argument of this dissertation.

I. PRIMARY

A. MANUSCRIPT AND UNPUBLISHED

1) Official - New Zealand

2) Papers of organisations
   (i) England
   (ii) New Zealand

3) Personal papers - England

3. PUBLISHED MATERIAL

1) Official publications
   (i) England
   (ii) New Zealand
   (iii) Australia

2) Publications of agricultural organisations
   (i) England
   (ii) New Zealand

3) Contemporary books, pamphlets and articles
   (i) England
   (ii) New Zealand

4) Newspapers, periodicals and directories
   (i) England
   (ii) New Zealand

C. Interviews and correspondence
   (i) England
   (ii) New Zealand
II. SECONDARY

A. UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

1) Theses
   (a) Completed
      (i) England
      (ii) New Zealand
   (b) In progress
      (i) England
      (ii) New Zealand

2) Articles
   (i) England
   (ii) New Zealand

3) Miscellaneous - England

B. PUBLISHED MATERIAL

1) Articles and books directly related to this thesis
   a) Articles
      (i) England
      (ii) New Zealand
      (iii) Australia and North America
   b) Books
      (i) England
      (ii) New Zealand
      (iii) Australia and North America

2) Articles and books which have informed the methodology and argument of this dissertation.
   a) Articles
      (i) England
      (ii) New Zealand
      (iii) Australia, North America and Denmark
   b) Books
      (i) England
      (ii) New Zealand
      (iii) Australia and North America
I. PRIMARY

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NFU

National Level


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Subscription list of the Marden Branch 1921 and 1926. (Maidstone).

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Lincolnshire

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(ii) New Zealand

NZFU

National Level

Proceedings of Annual Colonial Conferences were taken from a special publication of the 1902 conference, published by the New Zealand Farmer (Alexander Turnbull); the Farmers' Advocate, 1903 - 1905 (General Assembly); and the Farmers' Union Advocate, 1905 - 1908 (General Assembly).
Proceedings of Annual Dominion Conferences were taken from the Farmers' Union Advocate, 1908 - 1922; the New Zealand Farmers' Advocate, 1923 (General Assembly); and the Minutes of Dominion Conferences, 1924 - 1930 (Alexander Turnbull).


These various sources were cross referenced with the N.Z. Farmer (General Assembly and Massey University Library) for the period 1902 - 1914.

Provincial Level

Generally through reports in the various NZFU papers and the N.Z. Farmer.

Otago


Proceedings of the Lawrence and Waitahuna branches were taken from the Tuapeka Times, 1902 - 1933.

Minute Book of the Taieri Branch of the NZFU, 1901 - 1909. (Hocken)

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Minute Book of the Taieri Agricultural Society, 1860 – 1885. (Hocken).

Employers' Associations

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3. Personal Papers – England

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Census of England and Wales, 1931 Occupation Tables.
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"Royal Commission into the Subject of Agricultural Depression", First General Report, BPP 1894 Cd. 7400 XVI, and Final Report; BPP 1897 Cd. 8540 XV.


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1. Official
(ii) New Zealand

Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives, 1886 - 1930, especially

"Agricultural and Pastoral Associations (Replies to Circulars sent by Minister of Agriculture)", 1891, H-39.

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Statutes of New Zealand, 1877 - 1929.

(iii) Australia


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NFU

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Kent


Lincolnshire

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(ii) New Zealand

a) Periodicals

NZFU


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Farmers' Monthly, Jun - Sep 1926. Monthly. (General Assembly).
Country Party

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Branch of the NZFU.

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b) Pamphlets

NZFU

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the Manufacturer, and the Industrial Worker,
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(ii) New Zealand

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(i) New Zealand

a) Newspapers and Periodicals


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(ii) New Zealand

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Bolton, G. C., "Louis Hartz", pp 168 - 176 and


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(iii) Australia and North America


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McQueen, Humphrey, The New Britannia. An argument concerning the origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism, (Melbourne 1970).

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2. Articles and books which have shaped the argument and methodology of this dissertation.

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(ii) New Zealand


(iii) Australia, North America and Denmark


b) Books

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