

REACTIONS TO URBANISATION
IN
NEW ZEALAND
DURING THE NINETEEN TWENTIES

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ABSTRACT

The nineteen twenties were years of rapid urban growth in New Zealand. City populations increased, urban areas expanded, and an even greater proportion of the country's people were officially designated "urbanites". 1918 - 1930 was the key period in the social transformation. The perceived implications of this change became matters of intense social and political debate. This thesis examines the debate as found in contemporary publications to determine how New Zealanders reacted to urbanization.

In New Zealand urbanization was perceived as a threat to the economy, by upsetting the balance between urban "non-producers" and the rural "producer", population, and as a threat to the national identity of being the outlying farm of the Empire.

Although reactions to urbanization in the twenties were coloured by romantic ideas introduced from Britain, the main thrust of reaction in times of recession and doubt was against the economic effects of urbanization, coupled with an outbursts of nostalgia for the "true" New Zealand of the pioneering period. Land settlement was widely advocated as a solution to the problems of recession and unemployment believed to be caused by urbanization. In times of prosperity attempts were made to improve the urban environment by combining the "virtues" of the country to the "convenience" of the city. The garden suburb was one outcome of these attempts.

CHAPTER I

"HALF AS OLD AS TIME"

A literature summary and discussion of urbanisation.

"Match me such a marvel save in Eastern clime,
A rose-red city - half as old as Time!"

(Petra. J.W. Burgon 1132)

The growth of cities is a process of historical change that has long excited both popular and academic interest. The phenomenon has been a feature of many past civilisations but in the last 150 years, the process has accelerated at an unprecedented rate. This thesis examines the reactions of New Zealanders to the rapid changes initiated by the process, in their country in the nineteen twenties.

The term "urbanisation" is commonly used to describe a wide spectrum of changes associated with the process of city growth, but fundamentally, "urbanisation" implies a "rural" state becoming "urban". A prerequisite of any discussion of urbanisation is thus the definition of "rural" and "urban".

THE DEFINITION OF RURAL AND URBAN

There is little agreement over the definition of rural and urban and consequently over the precise nature of urbanisation. There are commonly two approaches to the definition of urbanisation, one produces a statistical definition based on census returns of population character-

istics, the other a sociological definition based on distinctive ways of life. (1)

The statistical approach is based on such data as population density, or the total population, of arbitrarily defined areas. In these terms rural areas are characterised by relatively low densities and/or small populations. Thus, for example, Tisdale(2) and Gibbs(3) regard population concentration as a fundamental dimension of urbanisation. In the same way the New Zealand Year Book and similar publications measure the level of "urbanisation" by the number of incorporated municipal areas whose populations exceed a stated number. In New Zealand towns with over 1000 people are defined as urban.

In rural to urban migration studies, cities are frequently characterised by higher levels of regional incomes, employment opportunities, public services and economic growth than surrounding areas.(4) "Urban" and "rural" are accordingly defined in terms of high or low levels of these data. The major problem with such statistical measures is that the cut off points between "high" and "low" vary considerably between different study areas severely limiting general application.

The sociological definition of urban and rural as distinctive ways of life is equally difficult. It is argued that social and economic institutions which develop through population concentration, initiate patterns of behaviour peculiar to areas of relatively high population densities. As the urban sociologist Louis Wirth observed in 1921,

Urbanisation no longer denotes merely the process by which persons are attracted to a place called a city ... It refers also to that cumulative accentuation of the characteristics distinctive of the mode of life which is associated with the growth of cities.(5)

Many attempts have been made to isolate Wirth's distinctive characteristics. The classic theories of Weber, Maine, Durkheim, Spencer and Redfield for example, share the view that "urban" and "rural" societies represent extremes of a social organisation continuum, as summarised in Figure 1.1. Urbanisation is defined as the change in institutional structures stimulated by population concentration.

Figure 1.1

Rural/Urban Categories

Author	Rural Category	Urban Category	Distinctive Aspects
Darkheim	Mechanical solidarity (Similarity of consciousness)	Organic solidarity (Correspondence and interdependence of differential activities)	Morphological and institutional structures (6)
Maine	Status	Contract	Relationships between individuals (7)
Redfield	Folk	Urban	Degree of isolation and level of public facilities (8)
Spencer	Military	Industrial	Institutional objectives of society (9)
Weber	Traditional	Rational	Social actions, relations and institutions (10)

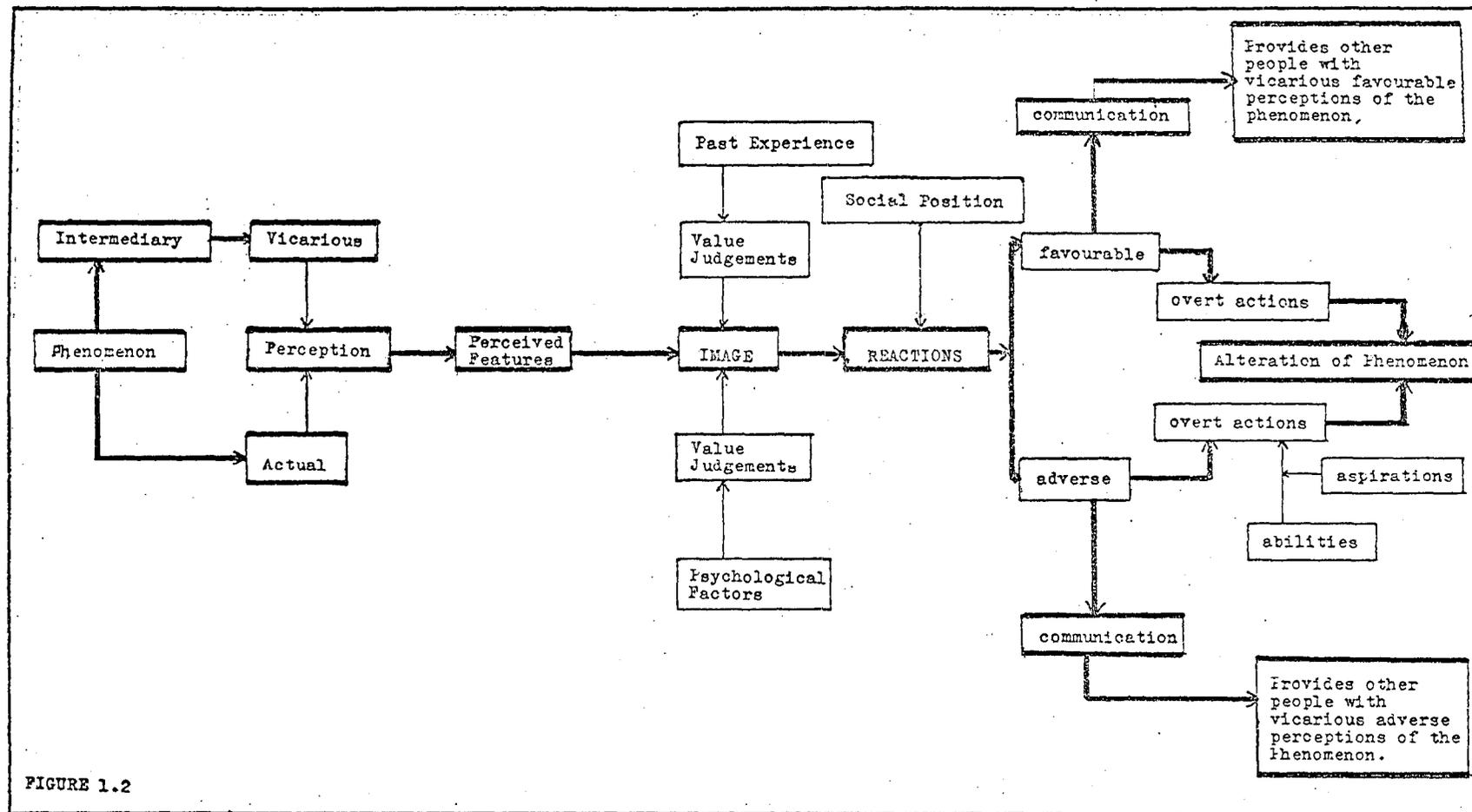
A relationship between population concentration and institutional change in New Zealand has also been suggested by Heenan from an economic point of view:

Urbanisation not only derives sustaining impetus from continuing large increments of consumers and productive workers, but also from the reverberating current of technological development induced by incessant proliferation of economic diversification and duplication with inevitable employment specialisation. (11)

Attempts to verify these theoretical rural-urban distinctions have met with little success. (12) The problem, as the famous sociologist Reiss realised in 1955, was that characteristics assigned to the city were not unique to it. (13) Anderson also points out that urbanism as a way of life is not restricted to the city just as ruralism is not restricted to the country. (14) It also has been suggested that at some stage in advanced western urban development rural-urban distinctions blur and disappear. (15) However, Friedman maintains that there is and always will be a distinction between the centre and the periphery:

It must be recognised that there has been a tendency for the city to disappear as a distinctive way of life ... as urban culture has successfully invaded the countryside ... In a sense the mass communications industry has placed the city in everybody's living room ... and yet something of the city remains [it] is the centre, it may be physically distinguishable or not but it is there. (16)

In other words the periphery (rural) and the centre (urban) may not necessarily be objectively distinguishable, yet the distinction may "exist" subjectively in the minds of the inhabitants of the two areas. The distinction between rural and urban for example, may be based on stereotype characteristics that no longer exist in reality. People distinguish rural and urban by characteristics that are



Generalised Diagram of Noetic Image Formation

perceived to exist in particular locations, and form their attitudes and actions accordingly.

THE NOETIC DIMENSION OF URBANISM

A number of studies have examined the formation and evolution of images of urban and rural locations. (17)

A common theme in these studies is that urban growth is a key stimulus to the formulation and evolution of rural/urban images. The relationship between the stimulus and the image is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 1.2. The phenomenon is perceived either by direct contact or vicariously through an intermediary such as a published account or personal communication. An image of the phenomenon is constructed on the basis of the perceived features and in accordance with past experiences and personal psychological traits. The image so formed immediately produces a reaction which can be modified by the individual's consideration of his social position, abilities, and aspirations. The reaction is an over-all value judgement on the desirability of the phenomenon. The reaction either favourable or unfavourable may be communicated to other people providing them with vicarious knowledge of the phenomenon. The reaction may also result in overt action in accordance with the individual's social position, abilities and aspirations. Such overt actions when multiplied over a large number of people may alter the nature of the phenomenon and evoke a renewed cycle of image formation and reaction. Because the image is likely to contain conflicting value judgements, the reactions

communicated may not be in accordance with overt actions. For example, the city may be verbally condemned by an individual as a place where health and morals deteriorate, but the individual might still migrate to the city to secure the perceived opportunities of wealth and social promotion on which he places a greater value.

The process of image formation and reaction provides a useful framework in which to examine reactions to urbanisation. Urbanisation in these terms is the spread or growth of features that are regarded as characteristic of urban ways of life. The interference by government agencies in traditional ways of life in Southern Italian villages, for example, was seen by the villagers as an "urbanisation" of their way of life because they regarded bureaucracy as a feature of life in Rome. (18) It follows that if the features believed to characterise rural areas are considered better than those associated with cities, urbanisation will elicit an adverse reaction. In the Italian example cited above, the villagers' past experiences with urban (Rome) based institutions were restricted to dealings with taxation officials. This, coupled with traditional conservatism and insularity, produced an adverse reaction that affected the operations of the new agencies.

Similarly, the framework of image, reaction and action can be used in the examination of a national community experiencing what is popularly perceived to be urbanisation. For example, many early American writers, politicians and philosophers viewed the growth of American towns with the utmost concern. Morton and Lucia White's

analysis of the opinions of American writers suggests that their reactions to the changes initiated by city growth were coloured by their perception of European urbanisation. (19) Early American writers feared that "urbanisation" would spread across the Atlantic into the "garden of the world". Later writers saw "dark omens" of European urbanism in the streets of the rapidly growing American cities. It was a situation analogous to a rural community experiencing the growing influence of a nearby city. Overall, this frame of analysis enables the diverse expressions of rural and urban attitudes to be structured in a way that relates ideas to actions and the individual to his society.

New Zealand Literature on Urbanisation

Although literature on the history of English and American rural and urban imagery is plentiful, there are few similar studies of urbanisation in New Zealand. Perry has noted the neglect of urban topics by New Zealand historical geographers, who, "continue to see New Zealand in a rural and nineteenth century framework." (20) A number of historical studies have examined the development of particular cities in New Zealand, (21) for example Pownall's Evolution of Auckland City, - - while others, such as Curson's Auckland in 1842, have made cross-sectional analyses (22) Apart from Heenan's general comments on the "cultural" impact (23) of urbanisation, rural and urban attitudes have yet to be appraised by New Zealand geographers. Some non-geographical studies, however, have considered rural and urban images in relation to urbanisation. The historian Fairburn for example, has made a useful pioneering study

of some aspects of an "agrarian myth" in New Zealand history, (24) and a sociological study by Briggs (25) has traced the attitudes towards urban and rural life styles found in New Zealand literature between 1950 and 1960. But the field remains, "a frontier of research yet to be successfully analysed in depth." (26)

Some Methodological Considerations

The central problem in any historical study of ideas is assessment of reliability of the sources in indicating the contemporary intellectual climate. Because of the limited time available and the lack of previous research into topics related to the concern of this thesis the published materials examined were those likely to contain strong statements of rural and urban attitudes. Publications that lacked obvious town or country considerations were not examined. Some comment on the nature of the sources used is therefore essential.

The principal primary sources were the newspapers of the four main urban centres, popular magazines, such as The New Zealand Observer and New Zealand Life, and journals with specialised reader interests such as Farming First of the New Zealand Farmers Union, New Zealand Forest and Bird Magazine and The New Zealand Highway published by the Workers Educational Association. In addition a few political pamphlets published by "concerned" individuals were examined. In gauging the representativeness of views published in these sources, the following points were considered:

- (a) The degree to which the attitudes were reflected

in government policies and election manifestos. On the assumption that politicians carry out the will of the people and formulate election manifestos to attract as many votes as possible, political behaviour provides a sensitive barometer of public opinion. In a notable instance, the Soldier Resettlement Act of 1917, the government enacted provisions contrary to the more cautious policies previously proposed in response to what it felt to be overwhelming public pressure.

(b) The degree to which published attitudes were expressed in advertising copy. Any widespread idea or attitude is quickly exploited in advertisements to catch the sympathy of the public. Rural and urban attitudes were frequently exploited in the nineteen twenties to sell a range of products, in particular motor cars and real estate.

The sources employed in this study are by no means a comprehensive sample of the published material of the nineteen twenties. Despite this, the selected sources when used in conjunction with suitable measures of public attitudes give a reasonable indication of the relevant aspects of the intellectual climate. A comprehensive analysis of the ideas of the time must await further research.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER I

(1) Although there is some justification for distinguishing the approaches in terms of quantitative and qualitative methods, since rural/urban definitions based on distinctive ways of life are largely based on qualitative methods and statistical definitions on quantitative methods, there are a number of sociological studies which attempt to quantify "ways-of-life" characteristics, see REDFIELD, R. The Primitive World and Its Transformations. Ithica N.Y. 1957.

(2) TISDALE, H. The Process of Urbanisation in Social Forces Vol.20 1941-2:pp. 311-16.

(3) GIBBS, J.P. Economic Geography Vol.39 1963: pp. 119-128.

(4) LEE, E.S. et al. Population Distribution and Economic Growth in the United States 1870 - 1950. American Philosophical Society. Philadelphia 1957.

BRACEY, H.E. A Note on Rural Depopulation and Social Provision. in Sociological Review Vol.6, 1958: pp.67-74.

WOLPERT, J. The Decision Process in Spacial Context. in A.A.A.G. Volume 54, 1958: pp.537-558.

TACHI, M. Regional Income Disparity and Internal Migration of Population in Japan. in Economic Development and Cultural Change Volume 12 No. 2 January 1964: pp.186-204.

SJOBERG, G. Rural-Urban Balance and Mobility in Economic Development. in Smelse, N.Y. and Lipset S.M. (eds) Social Structure and Mobility in Economic Development. Aldine Chicago 1966.

BROWN, L.A. et al. Migration, Functional Distance and the Urban Hierarchy. in Economic Geography Vol.46 No.3 July 1970: pp. 472-485.

PRYOR, R.J. Internal Migration and Urbanisation Department of Geography James Cook University pubn. No.2 1971.

(5) WIRTH, L. "Urbanism as a Way of Life" 1921 in Sennet, R. (Ed.) Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities Appleton-Century. Crofts, N.Y. 1969, p.48

(6) POGGI, G. Images of Society. Essays on the Sociological Theories of Tocqueville, Marx and Darkheim. Stanford 1972: pp. 175-181.

(7) MAINE, Sir H.S. Ancient Law: Its Connection With The Early History of Society and Its Relation to Modern Ideas. John Murray, London 1888: pp. 169-170.

- (8) REDFIELD, R. op.cit. P.53.
- (9) SPENCER, H. The Evolution of Society. Selections from CARNEIRO, R.N. (Ed) Principles of Sociology University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1967.
- (10) WEBER, M. The City Translated and edited by Martindale, D. and Neuwirth, G. Free Press, Illinois 1958: p. 54.
- (11) HEENAN, L.B.D. Pioneer Community to Urbanised Society. Thesis Ph.D. University of Otago 1969: p.16.
- (12) DEWEY, R. The Rural/Urban Continuum: Real but Relatively Unimportant - in American Journal of Sociology Volume 66, July 1960: pp. 60-66.
- (13) REISS, A.J. An Analysis of Urban Phenomena. in Fisher, R.M. (ed) Doubleday N.Y. 1955
- (14) ANDERSON, N. The Urban Community - A World Perspective. Holt, N.Y. 1959
- (15) FRIEDMAN, J. Cities in Social Transformation. in Comparative Studies in Society and History Volume 4 July 1961 : p. 347.
- (16) Ibid. p.347
- (17) The best known of these are:-
- WHITE, M. and WHITE, L. The Intellectual Versus the City. Harvard University Press, 1964.
- WEIMER, D.R. The Idea of Country and Town in American Thought.
- GREER, S. The Emerging 1962 City, Myth and Reality. Collier-Macmillan, London 1962.
- DAVIS, A.F. The American Historian Versus The City. in Social Studies LVI 1965, pp. 91-6 and 127-5
- GLAAB, C.N. and BROWN, A.T. A History of Urban America, Macmillan, Toronto, 1967.
- DORSET, L.W. The Challenge of the City 1860 - 1960, Heath, Lexington 1968.
- STRAUSS, A.L. (Ed.) The American City - A Sourcebook of Urban Imagery. Aldine, Chicago 1968.
- CALLOW, A.B. American Urban History - An Interpretive Reader, Oxford N.Y. 1969.
- (18) SCHATCHER, G. Rural Life in Southern Italy in American Journal of Economics and Sociology Volume 24 No.4 October 1965:pp.422-423.

(19) WHITE, M. and L. op.cit.

(20) PERRY, P.J. Twentyfive Years of New Zealand Historical Geography, in N.Z. Geographer 1969 p.102.

(21) POWNALL, L.L. Metropolitan Auckland 1740-1945 N.Z. Geographer Volume 6, 1950, pp.107-124.

CLARK, W.A.V. Dunedin at the Turn of the Century. N.Z. Geographer, Volume 18, 1962, pp.93-115

WATTERS, R.F. (Ed.) Land and Society in New Zealand, Essays in Historical Geography, Wellington 1965.

FORSTER, J. (Ed.) Social Process in New Zealand, Longman Paul, Auckland 1969.

HANLEY, W.S. Invercargill in the 1870s - The Application of an Historical Model, N.Z. Geographer, Volume 30 No.1, pp.66-74

(22) CURSON, P.H. Auckland in 1842, N.Z. Geographer Volume 30 No. 2, pp.107-128

See also:

ARMSTRONG, . Auckland by Gaslight - An Urban Geography of 1896, N.Z. Geographer, Volume 15, 1959, pp.173-189

(23) HEENAN, L.B.D. op.cit. pp.1-20

(24) FAIRBURN, M. The Rural Myth and the New Urban Frontier, N.Z. Journal of History, Volume No.1, 1975, pp.4-21

(25) BRIGGS, J.A. A Study of the Attitudes Expressed About Rural and Urban Life in New Zealand Novels 1950-1960, Thesis M.A. History, Canterbury, 1971.

(26) HEENAN, L.B.D. op.cit. p.8

CHAPTER II

"THE LATTER STAGE OF CIVILISATION"

Reactions to Urbanisation in England, America and Australia.

"The tendency of people in the latter stage of civilisation to gather into towns is an old story. Horace had seen in Rome what we are now witnessing in England - the fields deserted, the people crowding into cities. He noted the growing degeneracy. He foretold the inevitable consequences."

(J.A. Froude, Oceano, 1886)

In England, Australia and America ruralism was an ideal.(1) The rural ideal contrasted with the feelings of apprehension and uncertainty generated by the urbanism of the industrial revolution. Urbanisation and industrialisation in England and America were inseparable phenomena. In contrast, the growth of cities in Australia did not coincide with the degree of industrial growth experienced in the North Atlantic. Yet in both Australia and America the development of rural and urban images was closely connected with the desire to establish a national identity distinct from that of the "Old Country". The presence of a "frontier" in both Australia and America made a profound difference between new and old world reactions to urbanisation. Consequently, the experiences of urbanisation in these countries make interesting and valuable comparisons and they are also relevant to the New Zealand experience.

By the nineteen twenties New Zealanders were well

FIGURE 2.1

English Rural/Urban Population Change (Percentages).

FIGURE 2.2:

English Rural/Urban Population Change (Numbers).

Urban Definition. (In figures 2.1 and 2.2).

1801 -1871 , all places recorded as towns in the
1851-71 census.

1881 -1971 Rural and Urban Sanitary Districts.

(Urban estimates prior to 1851 tend to be
conservative.)

Statistics for both figures from:-

LAWTON, R. Rural Depopulation in Nineteenth Century
England in English Rural Communities. Mills, D.R. Ed.
Macmillan 1973, p.195.

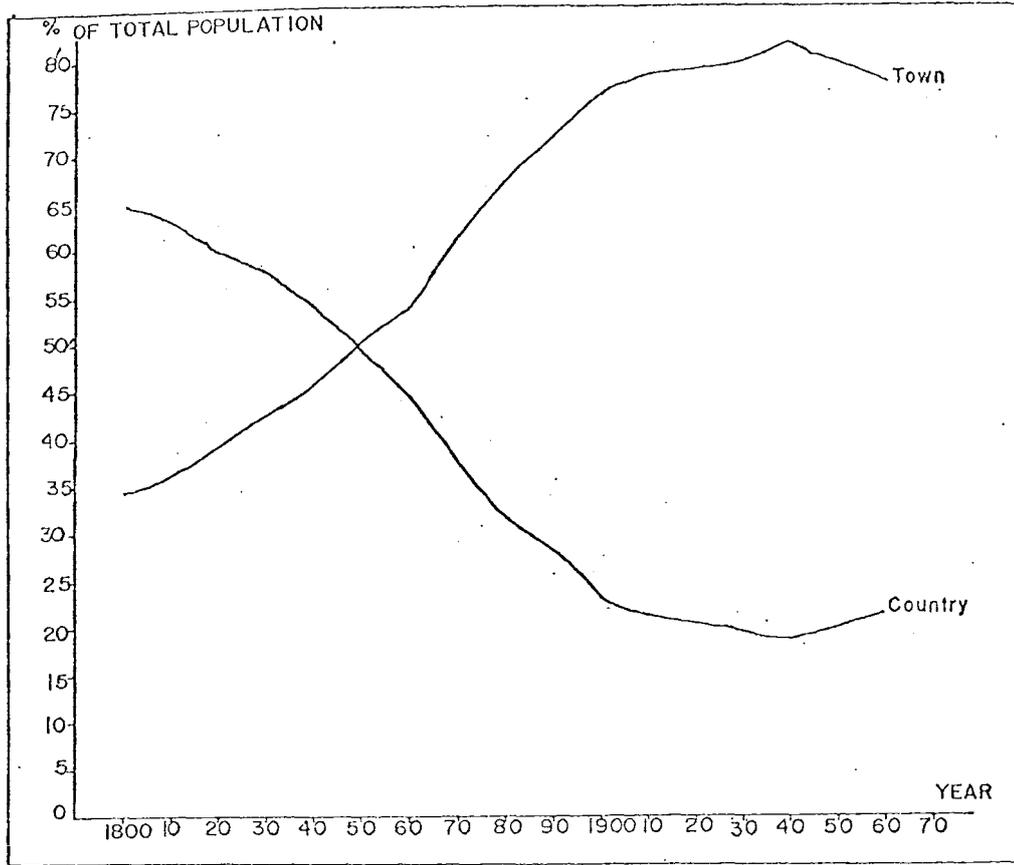


Figure 2.1

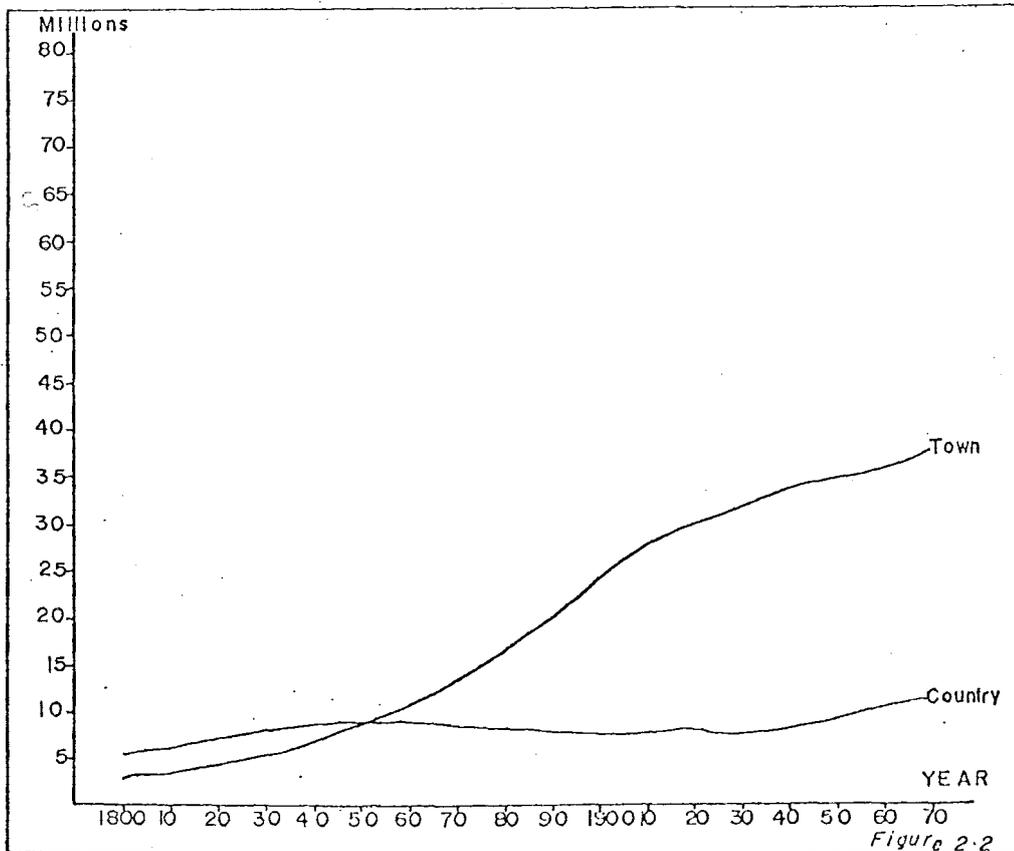


Figure 2.2

aware of the "inevitable consequences" of urbanisation evident in these other countries. Ideas generated in America and Australia but more especially in England, strongly coloured the images of urbanisation in New Zealand. Some consideration of the reactions to urbanisation in these three countries is therefore essential to the full understanding of the New Zealand case.

REACTIONS TO URBANISATION IN ENGLAND

In many respects the process of urbanisation in England was the archetypal model for American, Australian and New Zealand observers. Census figures show that urban growth had begun to accelerate by 1800 (2) (see Figure 2.1). City growth had been stimulated by an increasing rate of country to town migration. A high rate of migration continued throughout the nineteenth century. The country parishes recorded peak populations between 1821 and 1851, after which an absolute decline began (see Figure 2.2). The growth of towns in England during the nineteenth century was, as Saville notes, "an index to the development of the industrial state and social relationships which accompanied the new industrial order." (3) Town growth during the nineteenth century was the product of high natural increase in the towns; continuous inflow of population from country areas; and, of less importance, immigration into England from Ireland, Scotland and Wales. To nineteenth century observers, urbanisation involved three cardinal features: the depopulation of country districts through migration; the concentration of relatively large numbers of people in

industrial cities; and, the upsurge of industrial growth.

Rural Depopulation

Concern over rural depopulation was a feature of urbanisation that was largely overshadowed by the immediate effects of rapid city growth. Rural depopulation excited reaction largely because it indicated to observers that the towns were growing at the expense of the country. From the end of the eighteenth century rural and urban images were dominated by the Romantic movement. Noyes (4) in his analysis of the principal ideas behind the movement, indicates that the romantic sentiment favoured the simple, rustic life in "Natural" environments. Savages and peasants had an Edenic innocence and lived virtuously because of their closeness to Nature. Nature was God's creation and an expression of His benevolence toward mankind. Closeness to nature, therefore, was closeness to God. The city however, had been created out of man's avarice. It was an "artificial" environment and isolated men from the benevolent Will of God expressed through His natural creation. Life in such artificial environments lost the innocence and virtue that characterised rural life. In consequence men in cities degenerated morally and socially. Urbanism was therefore characterised by a whole train of evils. Ruralism, typified in agrarian activities, was an idyllic image while urbanism, typified in industrial and commercial activities, was its fallen opposite.

The origins of the dichotomy between these rural and urban images are difficult to trace. The elements of the romantic pastoral ideal were derived from Augustan and

Renaissance poets who were inspired by the pastoral romances of the Roman poets, especially Virgil. Indeed, Donaldson has suggested that, "the roots of the agrarian myth stretch back to the beginnings of western culture and the paradisaical garden." (5)

The growth of cities was seen as the growth of commercialism and industry. Particularly during between 1830 - 1850 it seemed that while towns prospered agriculture languished. Not unnaturally the more reactionary observers saw a causal connection between the two phenomena. For one of these, William Cobbett, "the greatest city, London ("that monstrous wen") existed simply to devour the wealth of the countryside and impoverish the agricultural labourer, upon whose misery its inhabitants fattened." (6) However, rural depopulation failed to capture the attention and concern of the general public or of the governments during most of the nineteenth century. Partly this was because rural problems paled into insignificance beside those of the city, and partly because of the widespread disagreement over the definition and hence the actual severity of "depopulation".

Definitions of rural and urban were confused. Relative to the town population the country districts had lost ground considerably but the absolute decline was comparatively small and the effects of the rural exodus were not felt evenly throughout the farming districts - some appeared virtually unaffected while in others, villages had greatly declined.

The economic changes produced by industrialisation

were not fully understood by many Victorians. Thus the "desertion of the fields" was considered to have not merely moral and social implications but also to be an abandonment of the traditional source of wealth that had made Britain great in the past. Thus, sporadically throughout the nineteenth century there were calls for measures to be taken to encourage people to stay in the country.

By the ~~nineteen~~^{risk} nineteen nineties however, the situation appeared to be acute. The decline of rural population had been going on for a century and showed no sign of slowing down. Some commentat^{ers}ions saw little reason why it should not continue until everybody lived in the cities.(7) For example, Dr. Rhodes, an eminent scholar at the Demographic Congress held in London in 1891, was reported in the Times as suggesting that "Unless something was done to make the lot of the agricultural labourer better, the exodus would go on, with what results in the future he dare not say." (8) Replies to a paper on rural depopulation presented to the Royal Statistical Association in 1893 which stressed the ambiguity surrounding depopulation, typify the reaction of more cautious observers. One speaker, referring to attempts to establish garden allotments for urban dwellers as a scheme "for bringing back people to the soil," denounced them as "quack remedies for an evil which did not really exist except in a few cases." Another speaker who, "had always been a little sceptical of some of the more gross claims reported in the newspapers," considered the paper on rural depopulation to be "eminently reassuring." (9)

Nevertheless, as the historian Trevelyan has pointed out, the amount of noise about an issue is dictated by contemporary opinion rather than by empirical facts.(10) At the end of the nineteenth century public reaction to rural depopulation was intense and it coincided with attempts to "improve" urban environments. Figuring prominently in these attempts was the establishment of "Garden Cities", (Welwyn and Letchworth) and numerous "garden suburbs", all designed to enable city workers to live in "natural" and "beneficial" surroundings.(11) Such attempts however, were closely associated with reaction against the haphazardness, dirt and unhealthiness of Victorian cities. The romantic rural image was the ideal objective of the "improvements", translated to fit the circumstances of an urban middle class in the early twentieth century.

The Concentration of People

The growth of great towns was a new phenomenon in English life and was regarded with ambivalence by Victorian society. The concentration of people in the towns was an object of attention not only in itself and for the stresses it placed on the fabric of the cities, but also for its rapidity. Most Victorians thought of their age as an "age of great cities". To some, suggests Asa Briggs, this was a matter of pride - cities were symbols of growth and progress: to others the spread of cities and the increase in their numbers were matters of concern and alarm.(12) The following extract perhaps best summarises the fascination and unease felt by Victorians towards the cities that

had erupted so suddenly in their generation,

to behold that vast bricken mass and see it dwindle into a mere rubbish heap - to contemplate from afar that strange conglomeration of vice and avarice and low cunning, of noble aspirations and human integrity, at a single glance - to take as it were an angel's view of that huge town where perhaps more virtue and more iniquity, more wealth and more want, have been brought together into one dense focus than in any other part of the earth. (13)

The masses of people that congregated in the towns represented a powerful and potentially uncontrollable force that was constantly growing; a "slumbering revolution gathering power". (14) The fear of revolution was never far from the propertied mind in the mid nineteenth century. When the social conflicts of the 1830s and 1840s, with the chartists subsided into the "uneasy compromises" of the 1850s and 1860s, the cities were still viewed with suspicion as natural centres of extreme views inculcated by irresponsible demagogues. Victorian writers contrasted the anonymity and brute force of numbers with the peace and "natural order" of ruralism. The more progressive writers, however, approved of the "great" concentration of people. It was, stated Joseph Cowen in 1877, a "source of strength" despite its obvious drawbacks. (15) Nevertheless, the "drawbacks" to population concentration were sufficient to provoke misgivings from the most enthusiastic apologists for the city. Briggs summarises these political misgivings,

Would [the masses] always remain under the control of the men of property, landed or industrial? Might they not seek to take advantage of the fact that they are 'the masses', that strength of numbers could be used to secure not radical but socialist objectives? (16)

The living conditions in towns where large numbers of people had come to live and work are well documented

and widely commented upon. Valerie Pirie, a French visitor to London in 1856, made the following observation on London slums. His reactions were typical of those who saw the poorer areas of English industrial cities:

Wapping, which stretches from London docks to the tunnel, is a seething mass of misery. One catches glimpses of courtyards full of filth littered like pig sties and just as nauseous. Whole families vegetate there, mere skeletons, covered with rags of such incredible dirt that it makes one retch to approach them. Unless you have seen rags in London, you can have no conception of the meaning of the word. ---- If some kind soul gives them a few coppers they rush to the nearest public house and spend it on gin, while their wretched children, naked and crawling over refuse heaps are reduced to nibbling parings of vegetables and other offal only fit for swine. This appalling state of things, being out of sight in unfrequented districts, does not offend the English sense of delicacy. (17)

This appalling state of things, however, did not go entirely unnoticed in England. A number of social commentators, including Dickens (18) and Henry Mayhew (19) published their reactions and did much to provoke agitation for civic reform.

The slums of the industrial centres were widely believed by Victorians to be one of the inevitable consequences of population concentration. A major component of the fear of urbanisation in America, Australia and New Zealand was of the "slum curse raising its ugly and poisonous head." The detractors of urbanisation in these countries had only to point to the "slum horrors" blatantly evident in English cities to "prove" their case. The belief in the inevitability of slums was consistent with the evangelical belief in the inevitability of suffering. (20) By the 1870s however, civic inaction over social evils could be more easily explained by the corrupt complacency of municipal

corporations.(21) Joseph Chamberlain's civic leadership in Birmingham in the 1870s was an outstanding example of political and social reform that was only slowly followed by other cities.

Of particular importance in the early twentieth century was "The Garden City and Town Planning Association" (22) which sought to improve the aesthetic as well as the physical aspects of the cities. It was widely held that improvement of the environment would lead to the "improvement" of the people. In removing the slum environment, it was hoped to remove the slum mentality. This philosophy was closely associated with the romantic doctrine of natural environments. The efforts of the civic reformers showed that slums need not be an inevitable feature of rapid city growth. Nonetheless, because of the sequence of events in England and later in America, population concentration was still regarded in the early twentieth century as a fearsome and damning aspect of urbanisation.

Industrial Growth

The growth of industry during the nineteenth century was as rapid as it was revolutionary. It was regarded as the cause of urbanisation. The Victorian attitude toward the industrial expansion of the economy was ambiguous. On the one hand the industrial and urban achievements were viewed with pride and enthusiasm. The Great Exhibition in 1851, was a deliberate show of confidence in Britain's industrial ability.(23) The catch phrase "workshop of the world" coined by Disraeli in 1838 had become an expression of pride. Similarly, the title of "city" was a coveted

badge of status which had deeper undertones than mere legal and administrative definition. It linked the new urban centre with the great cities of the past. As Briggs commented, "The faster things grew, the more necessary it seemed that they should be rooted in the past". (24) The ostentatious shows of confidence, which mark the mid nineteenth century, showed a need to bolster confidence in the face of uncertainty over the consequences of industrialisation. Because industrialisation had "caused" rapid urbanisation the costs of urban growth seemed to be the costs of industrial growth. Rural depopulation and population concentration were costs which some observers considered too high to justify pride in the title "workshop of the world".

The costs of industrial growth also included the problems of pollution. The expense of industrial pollution varied according to how it was assessed; whether on the "under" significance of industrial growth or on the "petty" annoyances. The Chamber's Edinburgh Journal in 1858, for example, commented,

Manchester's streets may be irregular, its trade inscriptions pretentious, its smoke may be dense, and its mud ultra-muddy, but not any or all of these things can prevent the image of a great city rising before us as the very symbol of civilisation, foremost in the march of improvement, a grand incarnation of progress.
(25)

But smoke and mud were features which were less easily dismissed by other commentators. The comments of the poet William Osborne on pollution in Leeds could have been written about any nineteenth century industrial town.

The Aire below is doubly dyed and damned,
 The air above, with lurid smoke is crammed,
 The one flows steaming foul as Charon's styx
 It poisonous vapours in the other mixed.
 These sable twins the murky town invest,
 By them the skin's begrimed, the lungs oppressed.
 How dear the penalty thus paid for wealth;
 Obtained through wasted life and broken health. (26)

London, because of the magnitude of its pollution problem, was an obvious target for adverse criticism. Ruskin referred to London as, "rattling, growling, smoking, stinking - a ghastly heap of fermenting brickwork, pouring out poison at every pore".(27) and, to Dickens, London was filled with, "melancholy streets in penitential garb of soot," which "steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows, in dire despondency."(28)

The contrast between "clean", "healthy" rural areas and the "dirty" cities infected with cholera and tuberculosis was implicit in such criticism. Such contrasts were not peculiar to the industrial age but rapid industrial growth, and the concentration of people aggravated the problem. Like slums, problems of pollution were considered inevitable consequences of industrialisation. Indeed, with the technology of the nineteenth century air pollution, for example, was an inevitable consequence of industry, but complacency over sewage and industrial waste disposal was notorious. It became one of the first targets of the civic reform movements of the post 1870s. Overseas observers, in America in particular, saw the polluting effects of industrial growth as another inevitable and undesirable feature of urbanisation.

To observers both in and outside England, the newness of the phenomena evoked an ambivalent reaction. On the one hand they saw the power and wealth that resulted from urban-

isation but on the other saw a train of evils following in its wake. The lack of precedent for industrialisation and the rapidity with which it replaced traditional agrarian socio-economic structures was a continual source of uncertainty.

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REACTIONS TO URBANISATION IN AMERICA

In nineteenth century America, urbanisation produced reactions that differed considerably from those elicited in England. In the United States, reactions to urbanisation were closely connected with distinctively American ideals and feelings of national identity. Moreover, the relationship between town and country was materially different in the United States. In England urbanisation affected a large and well established rural population spread throughout the country. America, however, experienced "urbanisation" on its Eastern seaboard while its western states were still being colonised. Largely because of this, American attitudes to urbanisation were more ambivalent and contrasting images of rural and urban, more vividly drawn, than was commonly the case in England.

During the eighteenth and the first few decades of the nineteenth centuries, the growth of towns on the eastern seaboard barely kept pace with the diffusion of thousands of settlers into the surrounding lands west of the Appalachians. This situation is indicated by relatively stable relationships

between the town and country proportions in Figures 2.3 and 2.4. The westward agricultural expansion was concurrent with the establishment of towns. The towns provided the necessary bases from which farmers could move outwards.(29) Thus not only did the westward movement from the immigration ports on the Atlantic swell the country populations, it also significantly contributed to the growth of midwestern town population. During the period 1840 - 1890 the populations of towns such as Chicago, Cincinnati, Milwaukee and Kansas City, nearly doubled (30) but not at the expense of the surrounding country districts.

The eastern seaboard cities of Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York were the foci of colonising efforts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their growth during this period was based primarily on the Atlantic sea-trade. By the eighteenth forties however, manufacturing had become the major source of wealth and expansion. The growth of these cities was extremely rapid. Between 1790 - 1860 the population of New York rose from 33,000 to one million; that of Philadelphia rose from 42,000 to 500,000; the population of Baltimore increased from 13,500 to 212,000 and Boston grew from 18,000 to 778,400 people.(31) During the greater part of the nineteenth century the Eastern seaboard cities were engaged in rivalries with one another to secure as much as possible of the commerce that had begun to flow from the interior. Because of their size, age, growth, and aggressive economic behaviour, these cities dominated thought about American urbanisation.

Reaction to urbanisation in America has been strongly

FIGURE 2.3

American Rural/Urban Population Change (Percentages).

FIGURE 2.4

American Rural/Urban Population Change (Numbers).

Urban Definition. (In figures 2.3 and 2.4).

U.S. Census: places of over 2,500.

Statistics for both figures, from Historical Statistics of the United States. Colonial Times to 1957. U.S.

Bureau of the Census. Washington D.C. 1960.

Table Series A 195 - 209 p.14.

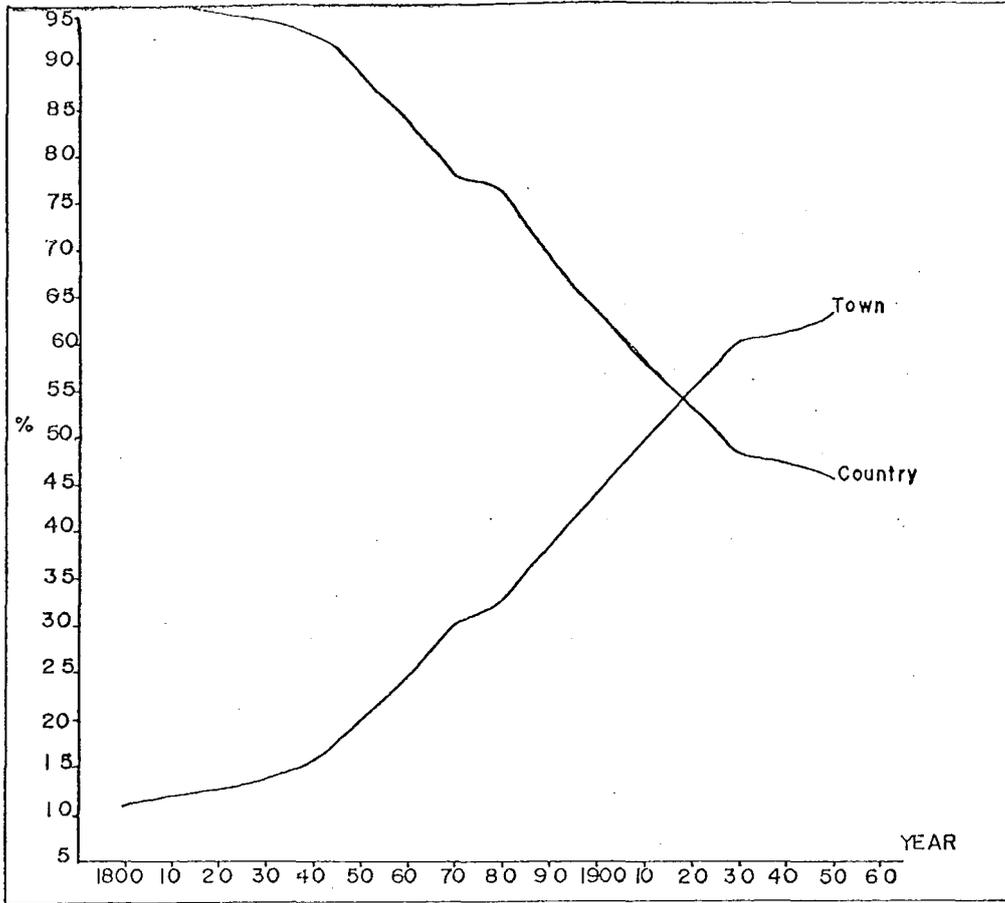


FIGURE 2.3

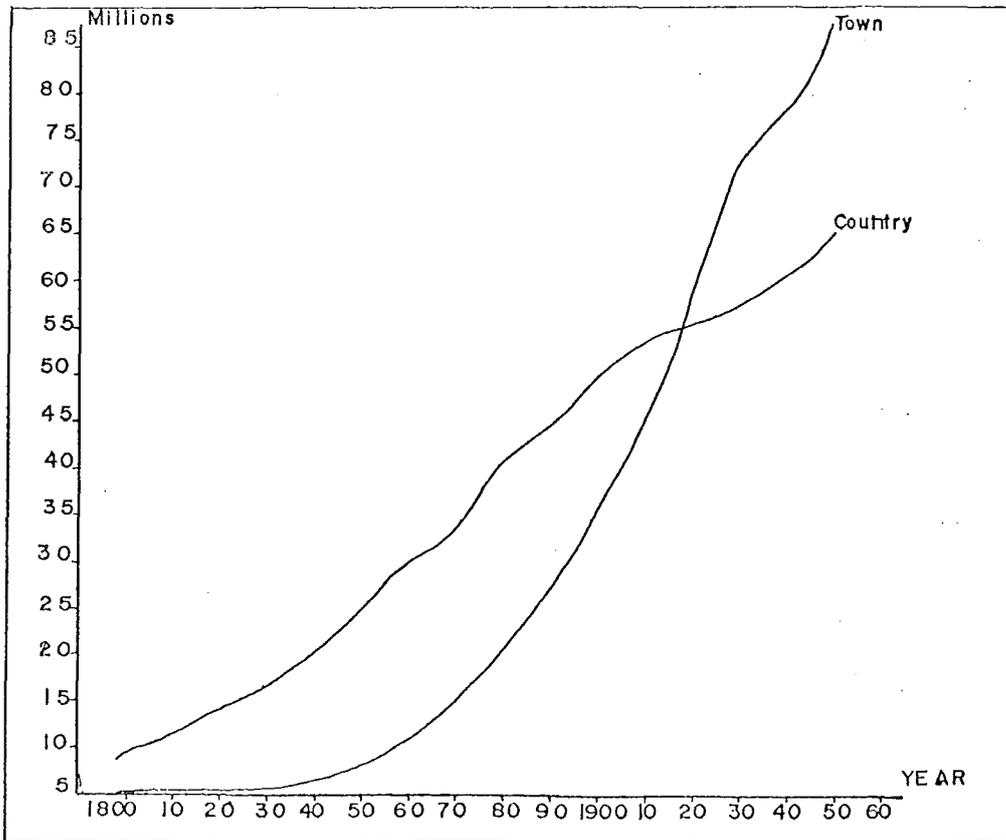


FIGURE 2.4

influenced by the opinions of Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson closely identified American democracy with pioneer agrarianism. But in establishing an agricultural identity for America he also established a mandate for industrial expansion. He thus introduced two conflicting national objectives; one quickly became the American ideal, the other the American reality. Reaction to urbanisation since Jefferson has either emphasised the dichotomy or attempted to reconcile the ideal with the reality.

The Jeffersonian Dichotomy

Thomas Jefferson's reaction to city growth in the late eighteenth century was complex. Although he admitted the necessity of "urbanisation" he never relinquished his dislike of urbanism. He believed that ruralism, the way of life of the independent, freeholding farmer, was the bulwark of democracy which embodied true "American values". Urbanism, in his view, was characterised by landless "mobs" of industrial artisans, which permitted forms of government contrary to democratic ideals and "sound morals". (32)

Jefferson did not attack American cities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but rather the European cities they might come to resemble. The undesirable characteristics of European urbanism were to him inseparable from an industrial economy. Hence industrialisation entailed the growth of a class of landless artisans that would threaten the interests of a republic founded on freeholding cultivators.

For the general operations of manufacture, let our workshops remain in Europe. It is better to carry provisions and materials to workmen there, than bring them, the provisions and materials and, with them their

manners and principles. The loss by transportation of commodities across the Atlantic will be made up in happiness and permanence of government. The mobs of the great cities add just so much to the support of pure government as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners and spirit of a people that preserve a republic in vigour. (33)

Above all other considerations, however, Jefferson was a patriot. He was vitally concerned with the welfare of the American nation. During the Napoleonic wars when trans-Atlantic trade with the European "workshops" was blockaded, he was forced to advocate the development of manufacturing for the sake of national independence. In 1819 he acknowledged, "...experience has taught me that manufactures are now as necessary to our independence as to our comfort..." (34) Although Jefferson disliked cities because of the type of society, the commercial and industrial occupations which were found there, external events forced him to accept the city as a necessary evil. For him the republic and city coexisted only in "a marriage of convenience." (35)

The nature of Jefferson's dream of a permanently rural republic was a 'golden mean', much like Crèvecoeur's "middle ground" (36), between the extremes of primitivism in the untamed wilderness and what Marx termed "overcivilisation".(37) This image of America was the "master symbol" of American aspirations.(38) The contradiction within this ideal that became apparent to post Jeffersonian Americans, was that the creation of the "garden" out of the wilderness needed town based services and town produced machinery. That is, "commercialism" and industrialisation were inherent parts of any attempt to realise the rural ideal. Thus

increasingly during the nineteenth century the Jeffersonian conception of the republic became a "rhetoric formula" that enabled, "the nation to continue defining its purpose as the pursuit of rural happiness while devoting itself to productivity, wealth and power." (39) This gap between the aspiration and the industrial reality provided many writers with inspiration in nineteenth century America.

Literary Expressions of the Dichotomy

The American literary tradition during the early nineteenth century saw America as the lost Eden. The city was the symbol of the fall from grace of the land and its people. In its function as a place of industry, the city represented "the materialism, commercialism, corruption and the evil influences of Old Europe". (40) The pre-civil war writers Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allen Poe, all had "bad dreams" of the city (41). All three saw the city as a place of sin and crime. The extreme models of urbanism were not located in American cities but in London, Liverpool, Paris or Rome. In their novels, suggest Glaab and Brown, there is, "an implied warning that the evil may reach America's shores." (42) The more sensational writers of post-civil war America, however, located their scenes of temptation, sin and crime in American cities, frequently New York.

At a different level the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson also reacted sharply against the cities of the north-east. He objected to the city in the belief that it was an "artificial" institution and therefore conducive to moral and social corruption. However in common with the

novelists Henry James and Henry Adams, he also extolled the virtues of civilisation, law, education, the arts, that were to be found in the city. The American city was primarily condemned in their eyes because of its commercialism. The debasement of morals only followed the avid pursuit of wealth. Adams, for example, felt alienated from the "bankers" New York of the late nineteenth century (43). Similarly New York symbolised for James contemporary America where "history" had given way to commerce.

Literary expressions of anti-urbanism reached their height in the "muck raking" literature of the eighties and early twentieth century. Asa Briggs has suggested that this spate of journalistic virulence was sparked off by W.T. Stead's "journalistic bombshell", If Christ Came to Chicago.(44) Such journalism quickly became a successful formula for increasing the circulations of popular magazines. This form of anti-urbanism examined in detail the manifold examples of corruption in the fallen city with little attempt to examine the underlying causes in American society that had wrought the fall.

Political Expressions of the Dichotomy

The political expressions were largely products of sectional rivalries; that is, farming interests versus industrial and commercial interests. After 1850 the position of the farmer and of agriculture began to decline perceptibly. Jeffersonian anti-urbanism began to assert itself as part of the rationale of an economic group losing its pre-eminence. Although numerically country population outweighed the town (see Figures 2.4), the margin was rapidly decreasing

throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. (see Figure 2.3) Much of the agitation came from agrarian interests in the states in the eastern half of America which were rapidly losing labour and voting power to the mushrooming cities of the north east. Fears of waning political power and growing hostility toward the cities resulted in legislative alteration of the state electoral systems to ensure a continuance of political domination of rural interests despite the growth of urban electorates. The rationale behind such "undemocratic" legislation was the belief that, "agriculture [was] the most essential interest of America".(45)

The pervasive effect of Jeffersonian doctrines in American politics produced a number of legislative attempts to realise the ideal of a rural republic in ways other than electoral gerrymandering. One notable attempt in the nineteenth century was the Homestead Act of 1862. This Act enabled settlers in the west to acquire 132 acres almost free of charge. According to Smith's analysis (46), the advocates of the bill hoped and believed that the homestead system of land acquisition would greatly reduce the number of poor in the eastern cities. Ultimately, it was hoped, hundreds of thousands of slum dwellers would go west and in the manner of the Jeffersonian yeoman, "hew out their homes for their children." The Act did not fulfil all its expectations. Fewer than 400,000 families were established under the Act between 1862 and 1892. A total of two million people benefited compared with a national population increase of 32 million in the same period. It was claimed

at the time that land speculation and business monopolies were to blame. Smith suggests that the Act failed because it was "incongruous with the industrial revolution" that was well under way by 1860.

Francis Rourke in a survey of the impact of anti-urbanism in American politics has shown that by the late nineteenth century a distinction must be made between the agrarianism of the farming bloc and that of the "urban nature lovers", many of whom were farm born youths who "sang the praises of agriculture but eschewed farming as a vocation and sought their careers in towns and cities." (47) Thus, for example, the New Deal programme of the nineteen thirties depression which sought to establish rural communities of 25 - 100 subsistence homesteads which would, "restore certain moral and spiritual values coming from contact with the soil" (48) was opposed by the farming bloc in Congress who felt there were enough farmers at a time of depressed produce prices. Despite the overwhelming response of urban dwellers to the plan when it was enacted in 1933, the programme met with little success. Donaldson notes that as the economy improved, the "back to the land" movement which had been motivated largely by the "hopelessness and despair of the depression", rapidly lost its appeal. (49)

Attempts At Reconciliation

Despite the dominance of anti-urbanism in American thought, attempts were made to reconcile the city with the concept of a rural republic. Before the civil war, towns and manufacturing were seen to play a necessary role in the

creation of the "garden". It was felt by the early apologists of the city, identified by Rourke as predominantly Jacksonian Democrats, (50), that the problems of urbanism were economic, not moral as Jefferson had maintained. The evils of overcrowding, for example, could be avoided by adequate housing, and streets could be clean and healthy if adequate provisions were made in the laying out of towns. However, as Glaab and Brown point out (51) an influx of migrants providing abundant cheap labour, and the financial reverses of the late eighteen fifties quickly thwarted such idealism, and the industrial towns, especially in the north-east, began to acquire the European urban features.

Further attempts at reconciliation occurred notably in the eighteen nineties. White and White identify this period as the "pragmatic phase" in American attitudes to the city in which urbanism was accepted as an inescapable fact of American life. In contrast to their contemporary popular journalists, the writers Walt Whitman, John Dewey, James Adams, and Fredric C. Howe were optimistic over the future of the American city. They looked beyond the obvious ills that were relished by the "muck rakers", to a time when the city would be perfected. In his work School and Society published in 1899, Dewey, for example, advocated that children should be educated for life in an urban society, rather than taught to bemoan, "the lost rural heritage".

(52) Subsequently, however, in The Public and Its Problems (1927) he was more cautious in his advocacy of urbanism. The technology that had made population concentrations possible was, he felt, destroying personal contact; the

cities were filled with "lonely crowds" which was disadvantageous to democracy. "Democracy", he concluded, "must begin at home and home is the neighbourly community".(53)

The most eulogistic expression of this brief pragmatic phase was by Fredric C. Howe. The city was described by Howe as "The hope of Democracy". His book marks the onset in America of the "garden suburb" reaction to urban living, that had arisen in England. "Suburbanisation" rather than "urbanisation" he maintained, represented the hope of the future.

The open fields about the city are inviting occupancy and there homes of the future will surely be. The city proper will not remain the permanent home of the people. Population must be dispersed. The great cities of Australia are spreading into the suburbs in a splendid way. For miles about are broad roads, with small houses, gardens and an opportunity for touch with the freer sweeter life which the country offers. (54)

Donaldson comments that the suburb as a union of urban and rural was regarded by more than one theorist in the early twentieth century as a resolution of the dichotomy that had arisen in post civil war America. J.R. McMahon in his book Success in the Suburbs (1917), for example, states, "On a country place you can attain much of the old frontiersman's independence, while having the comforts and a fullness of life which he did not dream."(55) This kind of thinking was at the back of a New Deal housing programme of the depression. Under this scheme three "Garden Cities" were established: Greenbelt, Maryland; Greenhills, Ohio; and Greendale, Wisconsin. These towns substituted the "emotional appeal of the farmstead" for the more practical designs of Frank Lloyd Wright, an American

interpreter of Ebenezer Howard's ideas. Howard's ideas particularly appealed to Americans in the early twentieth century because garden suburbs produced a life style that, ideally, combined the Jeffersonian rural ideal with the practical exigencies of urban living, a Crevecoeurian middle ground between the farm and the city. The resolution, however, was temporary as disenchantment with the suburb followed its exploitation.

AMERICAN AND ENGLISH REACTIONS COMPARED

In many respects the reactions of Americans and Britons to urbanisation were similar. But because of radically different national ideals and town-country relationships, people in each nation reacted most strongly to different aspects. In the United States urbanisation meant above all else the expansion of industry and commerce in a republic founded upon farming. Population concentration and rural depopulation, strong features of the English reaction, were not emphasised to the same extent in America.

Reaction in England had no consistent statement of anti-urbanism as America had in the precepts of Jefferson. In England there was a diffuse undercurrent of rural nostalgia that found literary and artistic expressions in the work of the Romantic poets and pre-Raphaelite painters. With the exception of the Garden City movement in the early twentieth century, anti-urbanism rarely arose as a political issue. Reaction against urbanisation in America, however, was closely tied to a political ideal. Consequently the American reaction to urbanisation was marked by several

legislative attempts to counterbalance urban growth to preserve the "rural" nature of the republic.

The underlying difference between American and English reactions to urbanisation is the presence of an agricultural frontier in America. The disenchanted Englishman in the nineteenth century could only be conjured to forget or to emigrate whereas the American could "go west". Throughout the nineteenth century the presence of the frontier offered Americans renewed opportunities to realise the rural ideal, but when the frontier closed Americans had, like the English, to seek fulfilment in the symbolic farms of the suburbs.

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AUSTRALIAN AND ATLANTIC REACTIONS TO URBANISATION COMPARED

The process of city growth in Australia differed markedly from that in England and America. Urbanisation in Australia was notable for two distinct features: the lack of major industrialisation and the development of vast numbers of spacious suburban dwellings around relatively small city cores. Urbanisation in Australia was equated more with "suburbanisation", the spread of a way of life typical of middle class suburban dwellers, than with the "evils" of industrialisation. Slum dwelling did occur in the capital cities, particularly in Sydney and Brisbane in the early twentieth century, but complaints against it did not figure greatly in the reaction to city growth. Australians had a rural ideal but it evolved largely out of the litera-

ture of the economic depression of the eighteen nineties; it was not the product of a political ideology.

The white population of early Australia was almost entirely town dwelling, but as the penal settlements gave way to private enterprise, the proportion of people living in the towns decreased as immigrants dispersed into the hinterlands. By 1840 the percentage of people living in towns had decreased to 25% after which the proportion steadily grew. Throughout Australian history a large percentage of town dwellers lived in the six capital cities (see Figure 2.5). In 1901 Sydney and Melbourne accounted for over 60% of the population in the capitals. With the exception of Melbourne, city growth during the nineteenth century was largely stimulated by the expansion of agriculture. The source of Melbourne's wealth and growth was the gold rushes of the eighteen fifties. Melbourne grew from 77,000 in 1849 to 540,000 in 1859 (56) and continued to be the "New York" of the Southern hemisphere until its financial collapse in the eighteen nineties.

The extent of suburban development in Australian cities frequently provoked comment from the nineteenth and early twentieth century observers. Fredric C. Howe, for example, pointed to the "spacious suburbs" of Australian cities in his advocacy of suburban development in the United States. Horne has suggested (57) that the unprecedented level of prosperity of the working classes in the late nineteenth century, and the relatively high proportion of "white collar" middle classes, enabled a large proportion of urban workers to live in suburbs. By 1910, for example,

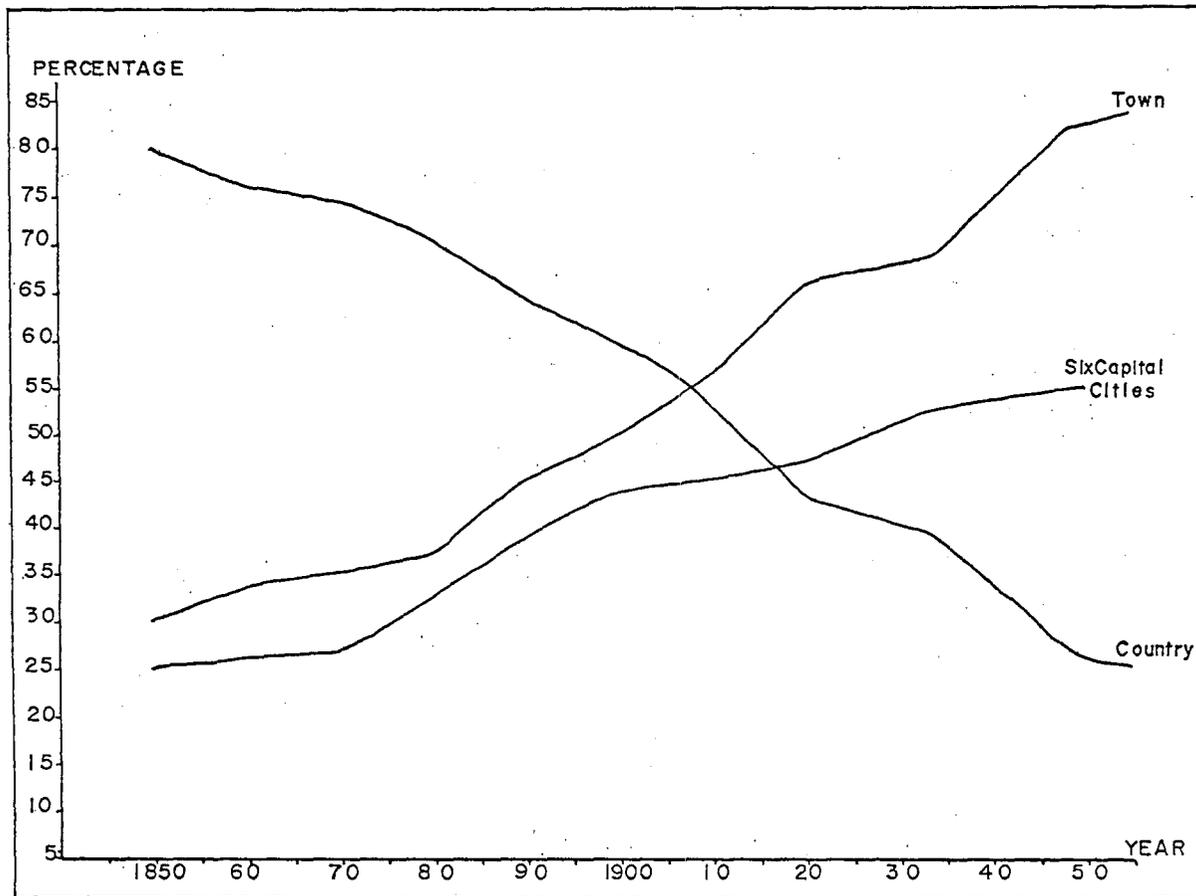


FIGURE 2.5

Australian Rural/Urban Population Change (Percentages).

Statistics:-

before 1901 from GLYNN, S. Urbanisation in Australian History.

1912 - 1954 from The Australian Commonwealth Yearbook 1912-54.

Urban definitions as in the Australian Census Bureau.

about half the houses in Australia were owned by the occupiers, the highest ratio in the world at that time.(58)

Before 1890 prosperity prevailed in Australian cities and civic pride was manifest. The Australian capitals were not isolated from the bush as the eastern cities of America were from the western frontier. The inhabitants of Australian cities were well aware that the bush nomads were "far from being heroic and laden with morals." (59) Nor did the city dweller envy them in their way of life. Yet in the crises of the eighteen nineties, drought, economic distress, political unrest and social changes gave rise to changed Australian attitude towards urban life. (60) The earlier pride and faith in cities which was particularly apparent in the eighteen eighties gave way to feelings of insecurity and distrust. The reaction took the form of rural fundamentalism and nationalism. Although there was some movement out of the towns, "the majority made do with a sustaining legend."(61) This legend was a "specifically Australian outlook", incorporating "a high valuation of 'mateship', collectivist ideas, capacity for improvisation, an anti-intellectual and materialist" (62) However, in his research on Brisbane in the eighteen nineties, Lawson has suggested that the bushman myth was an assertion of a national rural identity distinct from Britain that was largely urban. That is, the bush myth was a reaction against the growth of "English" life styles in Australia rather than simply urban life styles as Ward's thesis maintains.(63)

Although Howard's idea of a Garden City reached

Australia in the early nineteen hundreds there is little evidence available to suggest the idea had much impact. In a study of slum clearance in Sydney (64), Peter Sperritt has suggested that Howard's ideas were a significant part of the rationale behind the agitation for clearance. Howard's ideas were concerned with providing spacious dwelling patterns, this the majority of Australians already had. Australians in their reaction against urbanisation chose to ignore the city and its suburbanism in preference to vilifying it.

Concluding Comments

The common reaction in the three countries to urbanisation was that of antipathy. The reactions differed in expression and were variously mixed with such feelings as patriotism, idealism and nostalgia as well as pride in urban and industrial achievements. In the early twentieth century suburban development in England and America became an expression of a widely felt desire to live a "rural" existence within the confines of an "urban" society. Although subsequently suburban living was condemned, this form of living was for a time regarded as an attainable ideal; a compromise between an undesirable "urban" way of life and an ideal "rural" way of life.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER II

(1) Consistent with the definitions adopted in Chapter I, in this and in subsequent chapters, the following distinctions are observed. "Rural" is used to describe the ways of life perceived to be characteristic of non-city areas. "Urban" is used conversely. "Urbanisation" is used to describe the growth and spread of "urban" ways of life and occurs concurrently with "city-growth" which is used to describe the increase in population of a metropolitan area as defined by relevant census authorities. "City", "town" and "country" are used to refer to the areas designated "incorporated municipalities" and "non-municipalities" by the relevant authorities.

(2) SAVILLE, J. Rural Depopulation in England & Wales 1851 - 1951. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1957: p.4

(3) SAVILLE, J. op.cit. p.4

(4) NOYES, R. English Romantic Poetry and Prose Oxford N.Y. 1956: p.xxi

(5) DONALDSON, S. The Suburban Myth Columbia University Press N.Y. 1969, p.371

(6) OSBORNE, J.W. William Cobbett, His Thought and His Times Rutgers N.Y. 1966, p.134

(7) It may be inferred from Fig.2.2 that the intercensal period 1891 - 1901 saw a sharp increase in the rate of country - town migration. This may perhaps account for the outburst of reaction noticeable at this time.

(8) Quoted in HOWARD, E. Garden Cities of Tomorrow Swan Sonnenschein, London 1902, p.43

(9) The replies of John Walter and Baldwin Flemming to G.B. Longstaff's paper 'Rural Depopulation', in Royal Statistical Association Journal, Volume 56, 1893: pp.435-437

(10) TREVELYAN, G.M. English Social History Reprint Society Ltd. Longmans Green 1948 p.118.

(11) See Chapter VI for a more detailed account of the garden city movement.

(12) BRIGGS, A. Victorian Cities Long Acre London 1963, p.53.

(13) London From a Balloon quoted in Briggs op.cit. p.53

(14) E.P. Hood 1851 quoted in Briggs op.cit. p.65

(15) Joseph Cowen cited by Briggs op.cit. p.65

(16) Op.cit. p.66

(17) PRIESTLY, J. Victoria's Heyday Heineman, London 1972: p.203

(18) Dickens' novels show acute observation of and indignation at the condition of the poor and the inability of parliamentary government to remedy the ills. See especially his Bleak House.

(19) MAYHEW, H. London Labour and the London Poor - first published in 1851

(20) See PRIESTLY op.cit. p.20

And YOUNG, G.M. Portrait of an Age Oxford University Press, London 1953: p.4

(21) YOUNG ibid. pp.123-5

(22) Originally named The Garden City Association; formed in 1900 to implement Howard's ideas in Garden Cities. The Association was renamed in 1909 to emphasise its wider objectives. See Osborne op.cit. p.16

(23) Priestly, op.cit. p.60

(24) Briggs, op.cit. p.47

(25) Cited by Briggs, ibid. p.83

(26) ibid. p.85

(27) ibid. p.72, introduction to A Crown of Wild

Olive

(28) DICKENS, C. Little Dorrit Penguin Edition 1966: p.67

(29) GLAAB, C.N. & BROWN, A.T. A History of Urban America, Macmillan N.Y. 1967: p.28

(30) MARSHALL, . The English and American Industrial City of the 19th Century in Callow, A.B. (Ed.) American Urban History, Oxford N.Y. 1969: p.149

(31) Glaab & Brown op.cit. p.36

(32) WHITE, M. & WHITE, L. The American Intellectual Versus the American City. in American Urban History, Callow, A.B. (Ed.) Oxford, London, 1969: p.355

(33) Quoted in WHITE, M. & WHITE, L. The Intellectual Versus the City. Mentor, New York, 1961: p.25-26

(34) Quoted in ibid. p.29

(35) Ibid. p.30

(36) DONALDSON, S. 1969 op.cit. p.371

(37) MARX, L. The Machine in the Garden, Oxford, N.Y. 1964: p.14

(38) SMITH, H.N. Virgin Land; the American West as Symbol and Myth. Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass. 1950: p.123

(39) MARX, L. op.cit. p.152

(40) Glaab & Brown, op.cit. p.61

(41) White & White, 1961, op.cit. pp.46-62

(42) Glaab & Brown, op.cit. p.61

(43) White, M. & White, L. 1961, op.cit. p.357

(44) Briggs, A. op. cit. p.75

(45) John Adams quoted in ROURKE, F. Urbanism an American Democracy in. Callow, A.B.(Ed.) op.cit. p.375

(46) Smith, H.N. op.cit. pp.220 - 224

(47) Rourke, F. op.cit. p.38

(48) Donaldson, S. op.cit. 1969: p.36

(49) *ibid.* p.37

(50) Rourke, F. op.cit. p.381

(51) Glaab, C.N. & Brown, A.T. op.cit. p.44

(52) White, M. & White, L. op.cit.1961, p.355

(53) *Ibid*: p.355

(54) Quoted in Donaldson, S. op.cit.1969, p.29

(55) Quoted in *ibid.* p.24

(56) HORNE, D. The Australian People Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1972: p.84

(57) *Ibid*: p.132

(58) *Ibid*: p.147

(59) GLYNN, S. Urbanisation in Australian History 1788 - 1900. Thomas Nelson Ltd, Sydney, 1970:p.52

(60) *Ibid*.:p.52

(61) *Ibid*.:p.53

(62) WARD, R. The Australian Legend pp.208-9 quoted in Lawson, R. University of Queensland Press, 1973:p.317

(63) Lawson, Ibid. p.317 - 320

(64) SPERRITT, P. Sydney Slums, Middleclass Reformers and the Labour Response in "Labour History" No. 26, May 1974, pp.65 - 87

CHAPTER III

THE URBAN DRIFT

"Unfortunately there is an unmistakable urban drift in New Zealand ... Modern young New Zealanders prefer to work in an office in town at 30s a week with pictures, girls, unlimited noise and ever open or available pubs, than slave for a farmer at the same money and keep, with no more distractions than open air life can offer."

(D. Cowie, N.Z. From Within, 1933
p.37)

CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS OF URBANISATION IN NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand in the nineteen twenties was in a state of economic and social turmoil. The economy fluctuated from boom to depression and the traditional social structures of the pre-war period were being challenged by technological advances and changing attitudes towards social customs. At the same time the relationship between town and country populations was undergoing rapid change. As Figures 3.1 and 3.2 indicate, the total urban population increased by over half a million between 1906 and 1936 - a 61% increase. (1) During the same period the rural population increased by only 130,000, (22%). Heenan has estimated that between 1911 and 1926 over 40% of New Zealanders changed their place of residence from rural to urban, either by migrating or by virtue of living in a rapidly growing town. (2)

Before the first world war, New Zealand was predominantly a rural country. Its largest urban centres were little more than provincial centres with populations measured

FIGURE 3.1:

New Zealand Rural/Urban Population Change(Numbers).

FIGURE 3.2:

New Zealand Rural/Urban Population Change(Percentages).

Urban Definition. (In Figures 3.1 and 3.2)

1881: Over 1000. 1890: Over 1300. 1900: Over 1800.

1910: Over 2250. 1920: Over 2500. 1930-1970: Over 1000.

Statistics for both figures from The New Zealand Yearbook
1970. p.73.

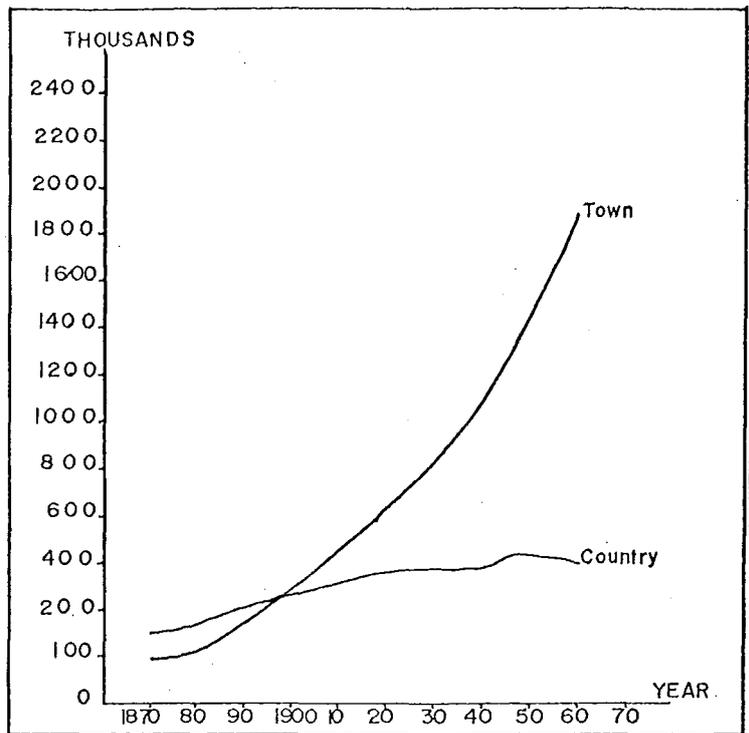


FIGURE 3.1

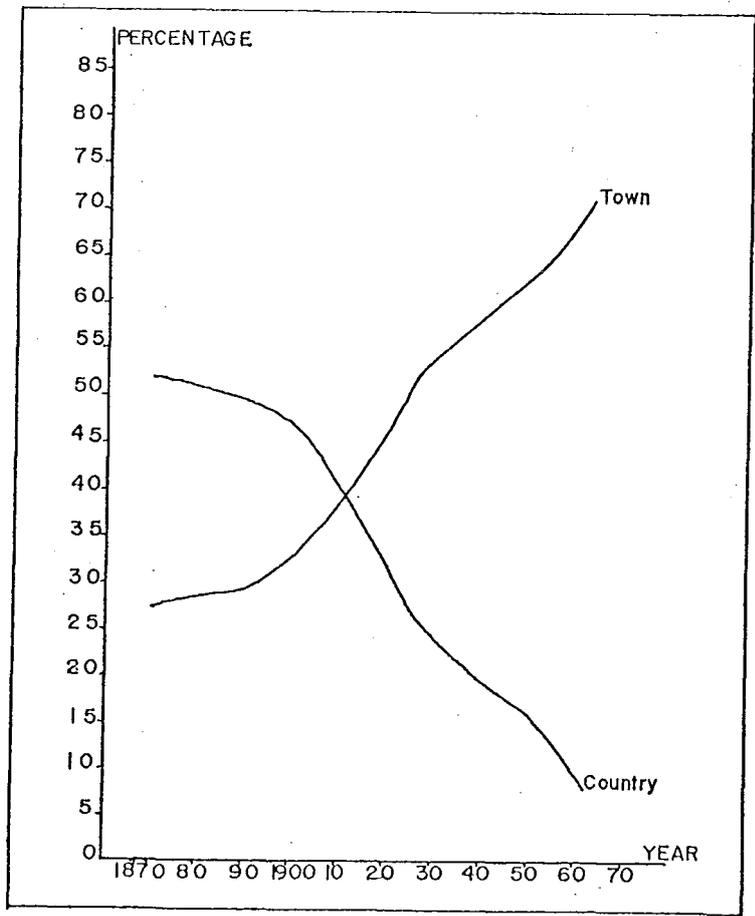


FIGURE 3.2

in tens of thousands. Twenty years later in 1930 New Zealand was a predominantly urban country. Small towns had become provincial centres, and the provincial centres sprawling cities. Hamilton, for example, grew from a township of little over 1000 people in 1911 to a provincial centre of 17,000 in 1930. Similarly Auckland grew from a town of 69,000 in 1911 to a city of 213,000 in 1930, and in the same period Christchurch grew from 60,000 to 126,000. Yet despite the reversal of the relationship between town and country populations, the percentage of the national income earned by the pastoral industries increased from 70% in 1911 to 94% in 1930. Thus economically New Zealand at the end of the nineteen twenties was an agricultural nation although one third of the population was predominantly urban. This chapter analyses the way in which New Zealanders of the nineteen twenties interpreted these substantial changes and the impact they were seen to have on the economic and social structure of New Zealand society.

PART ONE: ECONOMIC INTERPRETATIONS OF URBANISATION

Many New Zealanders believed that agricultural production was the basis of the economy. In 1920 pastoral products accounted for over 90% of New Zealand's export earnings, (3) and one body of opinion held that only those engaged in working the land contributed to the country's economic wellbeing. The militant Farmers Union magazine Farming First, for example, stridently maintained that farmers were the only producers and that all other

A Quarter Century and Its Changes

THE gross money value of all farm products in 1901 was £25,421,231. In that year there were 6 dwellers in the Counties to 5 in the Boroughs.

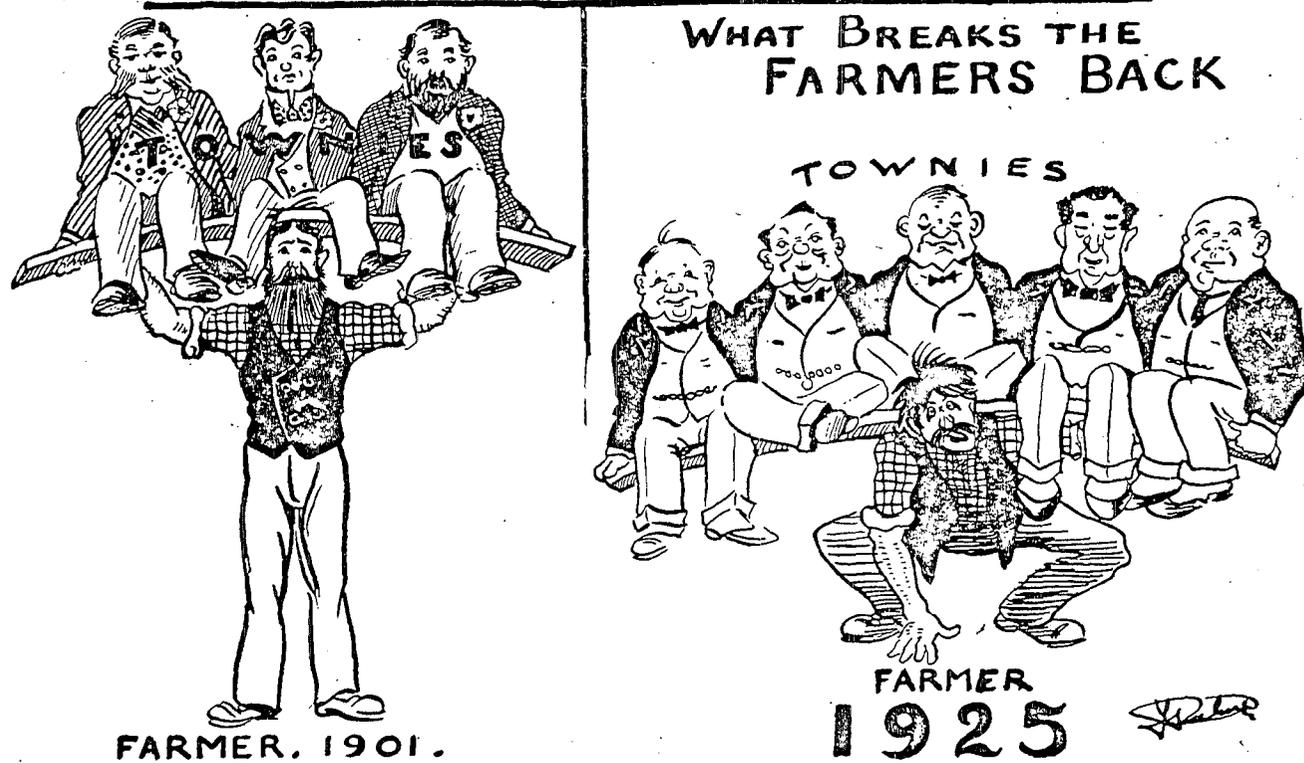
The gross money value of all farm products in 1925 was £97,688,323, when there were about 2 in the Counties to 3 in the towns.

In 1901, if mining, fishing and forest products are added, production outside boroughs was £30,312,574. In 1925 making similar additions, production was £107,843,706.

In 1901, factory products, builders, labourers, industrial products, etc., were valued at £9,214,741, and in 1925 at £32,113,930.

Giving credit for all but primary products to the boroughs, assuming that city labour is not "boosted," and assuming that the County population is primary-producing, the productivity of the County dweller in 1901 was about 2½ that of the townsman. Chiefly through increase in farm production, the average County dweller in 1925 produced a little more than 5 times as much as the average townsman. This is fairly represented in the following cartoon.

WHAT BREAKS THE FARMER'S BACK.



FARMING FIRST December 10, 1927

FIGURE 3.3

occupations, (including the service industries on which they relied to export their produce), were parasitic, "a drain on the land, the only economic producer..." (4)

Urbanisation was seen as the drift of people from productive occupations on the land to non-productive occupations in the towns. Thus Farming First argued that urbanisation increased the farmers' "load". (see Figure 3.3)

The major newspapers, particularly the Christchurch Press, voiced the opinion that producers were found in rural areas and non-producers in the towns. Thus it followed that as the size of towns increased so did the number of non-producers.(5) Other commentators such as J.B. Condliffe, professor of economics at Canterbury University College, stated that producers were those engaged in activities contributing to the economy as a whole and not merely those occupied in the export industries.(6)

The central issue raised by the urban drift was the question of "balance" between the numbers of producers and non-producers. Much of the discussion surrounding the "balanced economy" concept was provoked by the economic situation of the nineteen twenties. As Figure 3.4 indicates, the value of exports and hence the prosperity of New Zealand fluctuated considerably during this decade. This created an atmosphere of uncertainty. In 1926-27 unemployment trebled (see Figure 3.5) and thereafter continued to increase at an unprecedented rate. To most, this seemingly inexplicable increase had been preceded by a slump in export earnings. And in the same year, publication of the 1926 census results revealed a continued acceleration of the

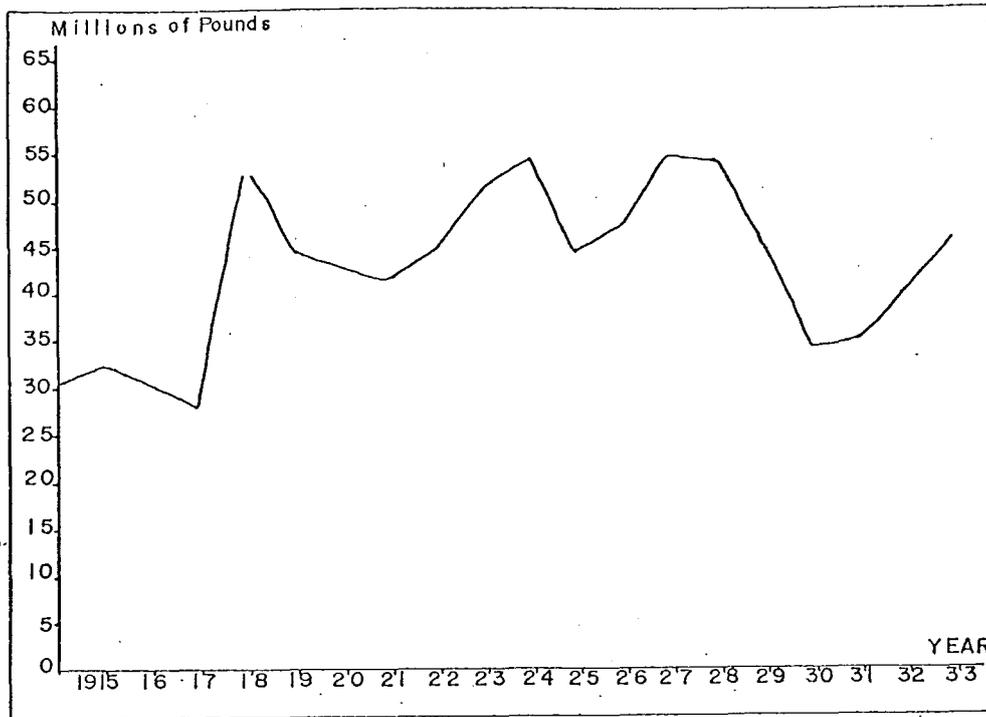


FIGURE 3.4

Recorded Value of Exports From New Zealand 1920 - 1929.

Statistics from The New Zealand Yearbook 1940 p.265

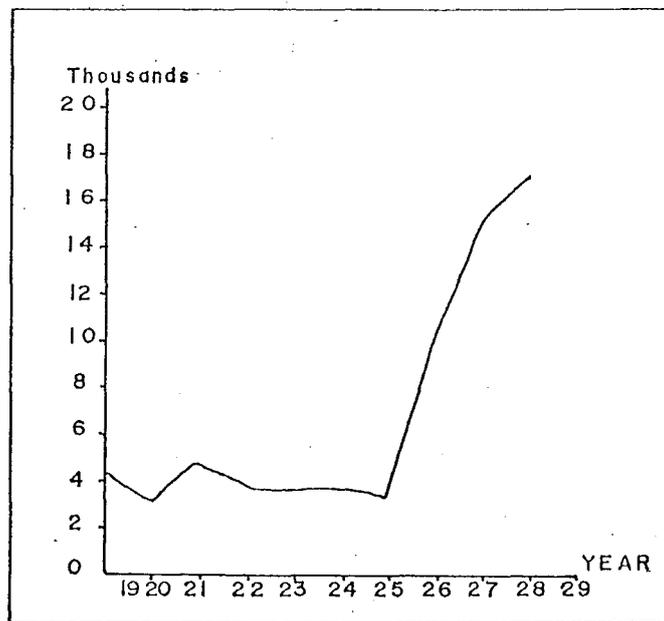


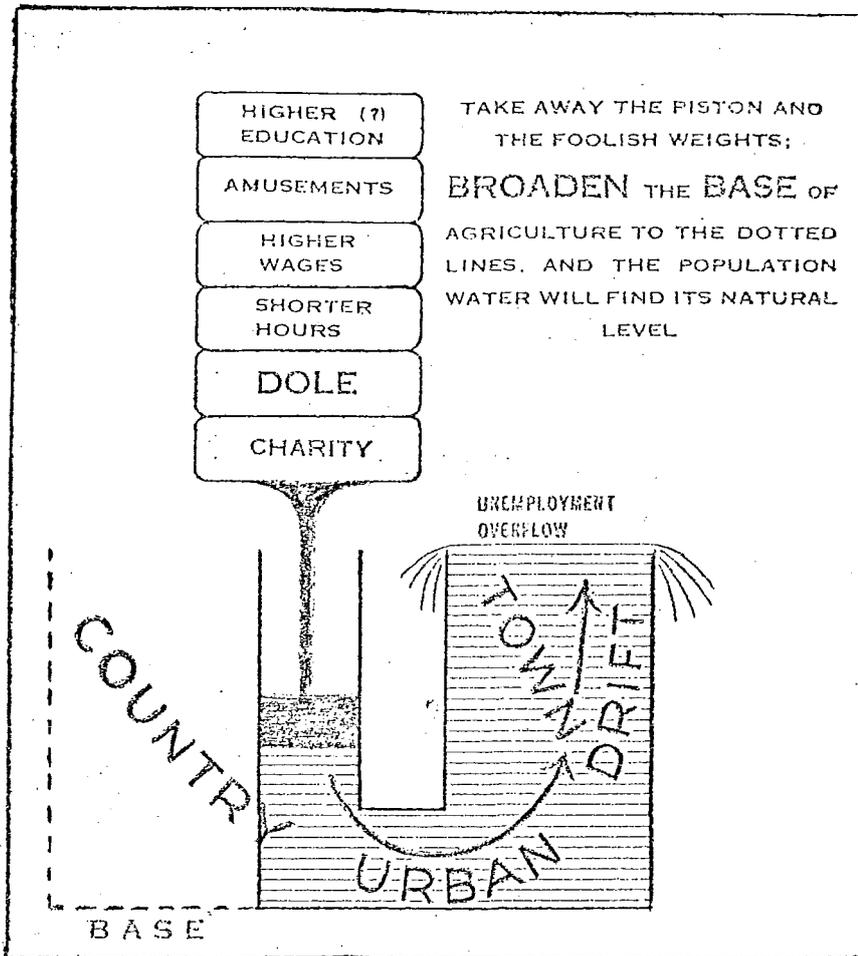
FIGURE 3.5

Numbers of Unemployed Persons in New Zealand 1920 - 1929.

Statistics from The New Zealand Yearbook 1930 p.886

urban drift. (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2) Contemporary observers saw a causal link between urban growth and economic difficulty. Late in 1926 W.A. Sheat, a well known economist of the nineteen twenties (7) summarised the "balance economy" concept. Sheat pointed out that the producer population could be reduced by increases in production efficiency but that once the rate of producer population decline exceeded the rate of increase in producer efficiency, then urban growth endangered the export production capacity of the country. This, maintained Sheat, was what had happened in New Zealand where the urban population had grown too quickly and was out of balance with the rural population. The symptom of this imbalance was the "persistent and increasing" level of unemployment. Sheat concluded that the government should, "compel closer settlement of the better lands", to regain and maintain the "proper" balance between urban and rural populations.

A more polemical statement of this concept was made by F.J. Alley in a political pamphlet entitled "Back to the Land!" Now and How published in 1928.(8) Alley was an extreme left wing member of the Labour Party who advocated among other radical proposals, the nationalisation of land and the establishment of farm co-operatives. Figure 3.6 illustrates his view of the imbalance of the economy. The weights on the piston are those features of urban life which, Alley believed, attracted country people into the towns. If the "artificial" town attractions were removed, then town and country populations would find their own "balanced" distribution. Like Sheat, Alley maintained that the



'Back to the Land' F.J:Alley FIGURE 3.6

symptom of imbalance was urban unemployment. Similarly, Alley argued that the situation should be rectified by land settlement, that is, expanding the agricultural base of the economy. This, he said, would allow more people to get back to the land to the benefit of themselves and the economy.

An economics thesis presented in 1933 offered perhaps the fullest exposition of the balanced economy interpretation of urbanisation.(9) The author, Ford, argued that the 'rising' standard of living between 1895 and 1926 allowed New Zealanders a greater choice of occupation than before. As the, "more congenial and more lucrative occupations" were to be found in the towns urban drift had ensued. In the United States and United Kingdom, Ford continued, similar changes in population distribution had been accompanied by an increasing export trade in manufactured goods. But in New Zealand this had not occurred. Since the bulk of New Zealand's national income was from the efforts of the rural population, the drift from the country led to, "a lack of economic balance". Although the effects of this imbalance were small during prosperous times they became serious "in times of industrial dislocation with all its attendant evils of unemployment and social distress...." Thus, concluded Ford, "the effects of the depression in the Dominion have been intensified by the nature of our economic organisation and the low proportion of our population engaged in the production of exportable wealth".(10) Ford, like most advocates of agricultural expansion, maintained that a fall in export income should be compensated by an

increase in the volume exported. He assumed that an increase in production could be achieved by increasing the number of farmers working the land. Thus the urban drift was blamed for New Zealand's inability to increase its per capita production to make up the fall in the national income. In a similar vein the Press declared: "Until the drift towards bureaucracy is stopped there can be nothing approaching the prosperity that the Dominion should enjoy."

(11) So strong was the belief that urbanisation had caused an "imbalance" in the economy that in times of economic uncertainty agricultural production was encouraged despite declining overseas markets, and at the expense of attempts to diversify the national income. In 1933 Colin Clark, a visiting English economist, ~~ne~~ptly commented that the New Zealand economy was a "museum of economic errors."

(12)

In New Zealand the belief in the balanced economy concept was an expression of a national ideal as much as an acceptance of traditional economic theory. Traditionally New Zealand was visualised as the "outlying farm of the Empire". This idea bears some similarity to early American aspirations to be the "Garden of Europe". The two countries had been colonies of England, and were settled by colonists escaping from the industrialism of Europe. In both the establishment of an agrarian society was espoused as their objective. And in both countries urban growth appeared to threaten the achievement of a farming society. The threat from urbanisation in both countries stimulated numerous attempts to preserve their "rural" natures. In

Figure 3.7: Caption:

1902 - Mr. Witherford's Chief Political Ambition.
Mr. J. H. Witherford; You see, Mr. Seddon, the towns are congested and the people want to get on the land. Also, there are hundreds of returned troopers, with money of their own and farming experience, eager to settle. Now, why cannot the millions of acres of idle Crown, native, and Assets Board lands be cut up and placed at the disposal of the people, so that thousands of smiling and prosperous homesteads shall arise where at present there are only fern and barren waste?

Mr. Seddon: You are right, Joseph Howard Witherford. The settlement of the land must be made the Alpha and Omega of the election. It is the most effective means of augmenting the population and increasing the productiveness of the country. With your help, we shall settle the people in comfortable homes on the land, including our brave boys who fought so nobly in South Africa.



1902—MR WITHEFORDS' JEF. POLITICAL AMBITION.

'The New Zealand Observer'
November 22nd.1902

FIGURE 3.7

Figure 3.8 : Caption:
1912 (10 years later) - Mr. Witherford's Chief Political Ambition Realised.

Hon. Tom Duncan: Well, I'm dommed if Witherford wasn't right after all. I thought grass would only last three years in the north, but I was mistaken. Why, the whole country side, once a dismal waste, is now covered with fat dairy cattle, and creameries, and other evidences of comfort and prosperity. And best of all, there is one of the pretty dairy maids.

Hon. Mr Seddon: Aye, Witherford, old man, Auckland owes you a debt of gratitude. Your policy in ten years has doubled her population, has trebled her flocks and herds, and has added millions sterling to the wealth of her people and to the exports of the colony. And, by the increased wealth of the people, you have boomed local industries by creating an enormous demand for local manufactures, by the establishment of fresh markets in the interior of the country.



'The New Zealand Observer'
November 22nd.1902

FIGURE 3.8

America the ideal landscape was the Crevecoeurian middle ground between the city and the wilderness.. The town and manufacturing were part of the ideal, but only as far as they complimented the activities of the farmers. When American towns and manufacturing began to expand they were seen to jeopardise the American ideal.

In New Zealand the Crevecoeurian middleground was created out of the bushlands. The process and the landscape were visualised in a political cartoon of 1900. (Figures 3.7 and 3.8) As can be seen the town had a place in the ideal. But its place was a service and social centre. During the decades at the turn of the century the development of urban based manufacturing had gradually won some acceptance in New Zealand. In the depression of the eighteen nineties urban unemployment had led to the encouragement of local manufacturing to create employment in towns. After the first world war "Self-reliance" became a popular rationale of manufacturing. By the nineteen twenties the concept of self-reliance had been incorporated in an idealisation of New Zealand as the self sufficient farm of the empire. As the Manufacturers' Association "Buy New Zealand Made" campaign indicates, industry was seen to compliment farming in the interests of independence. (Figure 3.9) But any manufactured goods that required heavy industry were to be imported from the "workshop of the world".

Moreover the concept of a self-reliant farm was far from being generally accepted. Many adhered to a more conservative view that secondary industries were unnecessary

November 17th. 1926

'The New Zealand Observer'



FIGURE 3.9

ON GUARD—SELF-RELIANCE.—NEW ZEALAND GOODS FOR NEW ZEALAND.
Keep a strict watch over your home industries and we'll have naught to fear.

and expensive. Because of high production costs, New Zealand manufacturers needed protection against the lower priced imports. This led Farming First to maintain that protection increased the costs of agricultural production adding to the "burden on the land." (see Figure 3.10) Far from being complementary to farming, argued the editors of Farming First, town industries existed merely to provide employment for those too lazy to work on the land.

Thus the economic debate over the balance between "producer" and "non-producer" populations was underlain by conflicting interpretations of the national ideal. One, a largely conservative view, looked nostalgically to the prosperity of the Seddon years, and visualised New Zealand as a farm producing agricultural products for the British market in return for manufactured goods, a colony of "producers" wholly dependent upon England. The other, a more pragmatic interpretation, saw New Zealand as a self-reliant, independent farm, where manufacturing complemented farming. In both views success (measured in terms of prosperity) would be the maintenance of the "correct" balance.

The conservative view differed from the pragmatic only in its definition of "correct". Both interpretations blamed the failure to achieve the "middleground" on excessive urban drift. Consequently, advocates of the middle-ground idea called for measures to halt the drift and to get people back on to the land. Public pressure for such measures was particularly intense at times of economic crisis.

NATIONAL HEALTH IS IN EXACT RATIO TO THE PROPORTION OF PEOPLE HAVING DIRECT INTEREST IN THE SOIL. —Fraude.

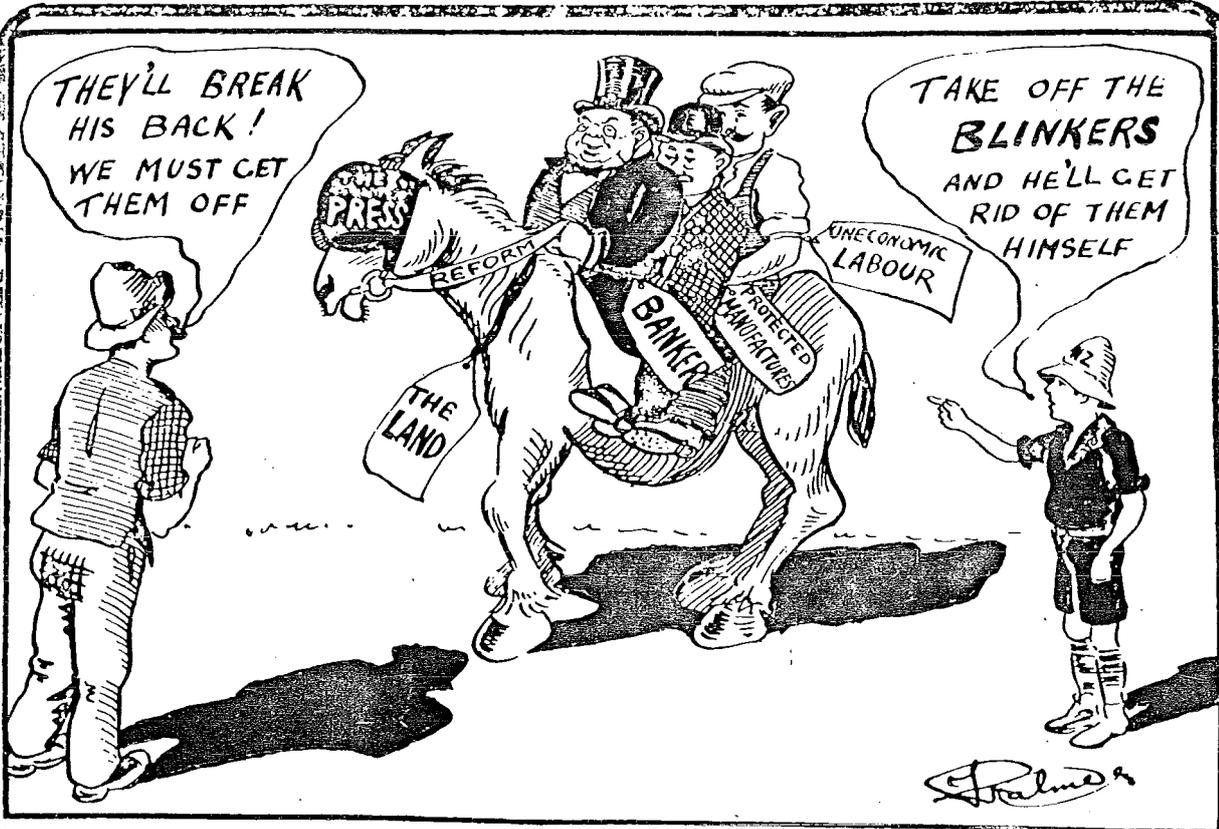
Farming First



Vol. II. No. 3

OCTOBER 10, 1927

Price: 6d. Copy; 6/6 Per Year, Post Free
P.O. Box 1056, Auckland



The Load on the Land.

FIGURE 3.10

PART TWO: LITERARY INTERPRETATIONS OF URBANISATION

The "objective" interpretations of urban drift were complemented by literary interpretations in poetry and prose writing. Literary interpretation of urbanisation had two major themes. One theme viewed urbanisation in romantic terms while the other complemented the economic interpretation in its nostalgic conception of the rural ideal. Both reveal a concern over the social changes that urbanisation was producing in New Zealand society.

In common with the romantic tradition in England, and the precepts of Emerson in America many New Zealanders believed that cities were artificial institutions. The New Zealand philosopher, Dr. I.L.G. Sutherland, (14) summarised this point of view when he stated,

City life of the modern type is profoundly unnatural and produces in human nature a whole range of more or less morbid symptoms only half consciously realised by those who show them Life in the country [however] is far more likely to bring that instinctive happiness which is the foundation of human well being. (15)

The romantic view of urbanisation received strong support from the popular magazine New Zealand Life and Forestry. This journal's stance against urban growth was clearly illustrated on the cover of the 1927 (June) edition. This showed a burnt and blackened tree standing before Wellington city, with the caption: "The tree that was and the city that is." New Zealand Life and Forestry maintained that, "the city ever busy / With its chimneys smoking upwards"(16) was debilitating while the bushland wilderness was a place of beneficial solitary meditation: where man, his "Soul in keeping with Nature's spirit, Mind in sunny

thought immersed ... shall be in tune with all things." (16)

Wilderness and bush, particularly mountain wilderness, was regarded as a counter-balance to the artificiality of the towns. The poem The Real and the Unreal emphasises this attitude. (16a)

You take the crowded city street,
With life and shops galore,
I'll take the little woodland path,
Down by the river shore.

You take the public garden, where
All is arranged by plan,
I'll take the scenes laid out by God,
And undisturbed by man.

You take the fountain on the lawn,
And listen to its tale,
I'll listen to the little brook,
That murmurs through the vale.

You live the artificial life
And I will live the real;
And joy will come to me and mine
That yours can ne'er reveal.

A belief that the bush was a precious heritage in an "age of urbanisation" was fundamental to the position embraced by New Zealand Life and Forestry. But the wilderness was increasingly threatened by indiscriminate bush clearing. In consequence both the need to conserve the bush as a wilderness and the need for modification of urban environments to make them less artificial were stressed by those who regarded urban growth as unnatural.

Simple nostalgia for rural life provided another springboard for opposition to urbanisation in inter-war New Zealand. Many expressed distaste at the growing commercialism of life in New Zealand towns. "Why", asked the poet Arnold Wall,

... do they seem so sinister -
 So darkly hostile and strange -
 Those damned efficient men who come after us
 Our world to change?

I see them so plain
 With their glance hard and cold,
 Harshly condemning and thrusting aside even memories
 Of the good things of old,

Love, war and strong drink,
 The rod, line and chase,
 Red meat, rough songs, the dog beloved,
 The ride and the race. (17)

Clearly the "good things of old" were those features of life nostalgically ascribed to the "pre-commercial" era of the pioneers.

The late nineteen twenties saw a spate of literature that recalled the days of the pioneers. Titles alone - Our Oaken-hearted Pioneers - a reminiscence of the early days (18), The Old Time Woolshed Dances - a reminiscence (19), and Their First Hay Mow - a reminiscence of pioneer farm (20), for example, reveal the nostalgic retrospection that was rife. Invariably a rural past was compared with an urban present. The poem The Men Who Count (see Figure 3.11) summarises the condemnations of the city as being an "un-New Zealand-like" institution. The city was characterised as a "dusty" place of "brawling streets" filled with "empty pride" and "throng" of "restless" men; parasitic and isolated from the rural interior. By contrast, rural dwellers were eulogised for their solitary fight to tame the wilderness as the pioneers had done. Rural dwellers were the "true" New Zealanders, "the strength of our land today". The Men Who Count is an obvious celebration of the creation of the farmers' middleground out of the wilderness.

The Men who Count

By DAVID McKEE WRIGHT.

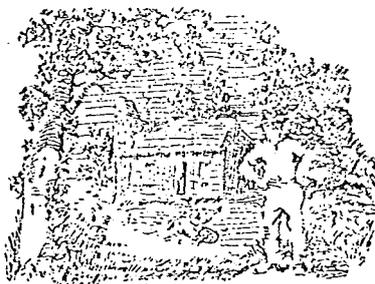
Little they know of our island home, who know but the
brawling street,
The empty jest in the throng of men, the clatter of restless
feet,
The poor little cities that front the sea with their bluster
of empty pride,
Taking toll of the wealth of the men who toil where the
fields of God are wide.

Where the axe-strokes ring upon birch and pine, or the
plains are broad and fair,
Where the mountain stands with its wreath of cloud—
the homes of the South are there.
The kings of toil are with us still as they were when our
day began,
And out in the heart of the wilderness you may grasp the
hand of a man.

I count not much the deeds they do in the dusty ways of
the town,
Where the finer dreams have never a place, and the finer
lives may drown;
But the men who are sinewed and bronzed with toil have
right to a people's name,
The kings whose path through the forest ways is fought
with the axe and flame;

The men who have forced from the river's flood its wealth
of hoarded gold,
The men who breasted the great unknown in the roaring
days of old,
The men who dared in their single strength to stray from
the beaten track,
Who, for dreams they dreamt of the days to be, went forth
and turned not back.

These are the strength of our land today, these and their
stalwart race;
Let the little men of the city ways bow low and yield them
place.
Little they know of our island home, who know but the
mart and street,
Who never have felt with the bushman's soul, with the
moss beneath their feet.



New Zealand Life.

10th February, 1928.

FIGURE 3.11

Concluding Comments

Clearly, many New Zealanders of the nineteen twenties reacted to the changing ways of life they perceived in their country. The changes were most noticeable in the rapidly expanding towns. The larger towns became, the more they appeared to be separate socio-economic units, isolated from the country and its traditional way of life, distinctive of New Zealand. The romantic view characterised the change by referring to the "morbid symptoms of modern urban living" in contrast to the "instinctive happiness" to be found in "natural" areas. The nostalgic view complemented the balanced-economy ideal by eulogising rural ways of life.

Yet despite the strident support of a rural conception of New Zealand society in the face of rapid town growth, there was no violent country versus town controversy. Seemingly, few New Zealanders were prepared to commend the drift toward an urban society. Yet although no strong lobby in favour of urbanisation emerged in opposition to the strident claims of those who advocated rural virtues, it may be that the economist Professor A.G.B. Fisher (21) spoke for many of his contemporaries when he maintained that the urban drift was beneficial because it released people from the land to produce luxuries for the enjoyment of everybody. Because of the obvious strength of the urban drift those who favoured it were less motivated to speak out in support of the drift than were those advocates of agrarianism who felt their position threatened by it. Moreover, the editorial policies of the press in the inter-war years were heavily in favour of the rural position. As one commentator of

the late nineteen thirties remarked,

Anything in the nature of an adequate reply to the calumnies heaped on the urban dweller by the farmer at every conceivable opportunity would be shunned by any self-respecting editor as rank heresy. Even the Manufacturers' Association is almost apologetic in the haste in which, in advancing its claims for assistance in various forms, it seeks to dispel any suggestion of an attack on the rights and privileges peculiar to the farming community. (22)

Yet although the rural ideal was variously interpreted as "middleground" and as wilderness, and although it was perhaps the product of vociferous minorities, it was nevertheless a strongly felt concern dominating political and social thought in the nineteen twenties.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER III

- (1) All figures are from New Zealand Year Books 1900 - 1930 unless acknowledged otherwise.
- (2) HEENAN, L.B.D. Pioneer Community to Urbanised Society, unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin 1969, p.14
- (3) N.Z. Year Book 1920, p.195
- (4) "Town and Country - are they truly complementary?" Farming First No. 3, Volume 2, October 10, p.1.
- (5) The editor of the Press was a consistent critic of the government land policies throughout the 1920s. Editorial comments on the implications of urban drift, from which this argument was abstracted, occurred sporadically throughout the 1920s but especially in July 1926 when the census results were published.
- (6) "Other Aspects of the Urban Drift" J.B. Condliffe. N.Z. Highway 1926, p.5
- (7) "The Urban Drift: Is it a Bogy." W.A. Sheat N.Z. Highway Volume 2, No. 3 1926, p.2
- (8) "Back to the Land!" Now and How F.J. Alley Whitcombe & Tombs, Christchurch 1928
- (9) FORD, R.J. "Some Changes in Occupational and Geographical Distribution of Population in New Zealand 1896 - 1926", unpublished M.A. Thesis 1933, University of Canterbury.
- (10) Ibid. p.115
- (11) Editorial comment Christchurch Press July 7, 1926.
- (12) Quoted in Sinclair p.256
- (13) The whole concept bears remarkable similarity to the Jeffersonian ideal, yet neither Jefferson nor his writings were specifically referred to.
- (14) Sutherland was lecturer in mental and moral philosophy at Victoria University College in 1926.
- (15) SUTHERLAND, I.L.G. City Life and Human Nature in N.Z. Highway 1926, p.14
- (16) Lines 20 - 24 "The River Wanganui", Iris Soeberg, The Mirror December 1928, p.51

(16a) "The Real and the Unreal" by 'Selected'
N.Z. LIFE August 1926: p32.

(17) Lines 1 - 12 "The New Men" in The Order of
Release and Other Poems Arnold Wall, Whitcombe & Tombs
1924

(18) Published in N.Z. Life February 1923

(19) Published in N.Z. Life January 1929

(20) Published in New Zealand Magazine March 1930

(21) "Are there too many Bank Clerks?" A.G.B.Fisher,
N.Z.Highway, No.3, Volume 2, 1926, p.11.

(22) GRAHAM, P. Contemporary New Zealand, Department
of Internal Affairs, Wellington 1938, pp.63-64.

CHAPTER IV

CORRECTING THE URBAN DRIFT

"I venture the opinion that this bill will help greatly to solve the problem. It will in a measure, correct the drift to the cities and turn it backwards to the natural field and home of man - the country."

(1915 Debate on the Soldier
Settlement Bill, Parr)

REACTIONS TO URBANISATION - 1

The economic interpretation of urbanisation provoked a hostile reaction. This reaction was based on a number of assumptions about the nature of New Zealand's economic structure. These were:

(1) That farming was the base of New Zealand's economy;

(2) That the greater the volume of produce exported, the greater New Zealand's prosperity;

(3) That an increase in the number of producers would result in greater volumes of exportable farm products;

(4) That farmers, whose numbers were equated with the "rural" population, were the economic producers on which the economy relied;

(5) That town dwellers, whose numbers were equated with the "urban" population, were non-producers supported by the farming industry;

(6) That economic depression and unemployment were symptoms of an imbalance between rural and urban

populations. Urban drift was seen to increase the number of non-producers and decrease the number of producers. Urbanisation, therefore, appeared to limit New Zealand's ability to produce greater export surpluses. The idealisation of New Zealand as a production farm underlay these hostile attitudes to urbanisation and frustrated attempts to diversify the country's economic structure. The ideal "farm" picture had many facets, each differing in the importance it attributed to self-sufficiency in manufactured goods. For one group urbanisation threatened the ideal because they believed that it made manufacturing necessary; for another, the development of manufacturing had a clear mandate because it made the "farm" nearly self-sufficient. The latter felt that a limited amount of rural-urban migration was necessary to the growth of manufacturing. But if urbanisation progressed faster than industrial expansion, unemployment resulted.

The purpose of this chapter is to indicate how New Zealanders reacted to urbanisation in the light of their interpretation of the phenomenon. In the main this is done by examining political events that evoked pronouncements on the position of farming in New Zealand life, particularly the Soldier Settlement Bill and the General Election of 1928.

The Soldier Settlement Bill

In the debate over the Bill in 1915, only one speaker seriously challenged it. The member for Lyttelton pointed out that country workers were only 20% of the Expeditionary Forces.(1) He argued that the provisions

of the Bill were anomalous, and that it established a dangerous precedent.

What about the industrial workers? [He asked] What about the shop assistants and others who have gone from the country? Is the government going to set them up in small businesses If we accept the principle [behind the Bill], the country must be prepared to go very much further than is now proposed ... Why should not those who want to enter upon other occupations be put in the same position as those who desire to take up land?

But McCombs' speech came towards the end of the debate and its pertinent questions were ignored. Most members felt that the Bill provided the best and most fitting way of rewarding the soldiers for their valour. And a handful of speakers eulogised the ideas behind the Bill. "The Bill is a step in a very desirable direction", proclaimed Hudson, the member for Motueka, "namely in the direction of getting our returned soldiers onto the land in the country instead of leaving them in the cities." (2) Other speakers made it clear that they regarded the Bill specifically as an opportunity to counter the urban drift. As a member for Eden stated, "It will in a measure correct the drift to the cities and turn it backwards to the natural field and home of Man - the country." The member continued by picturing soldier settlements in idyllic terms "... among the fields ... will be nurtured the patriot sentiment combined with democratic and citizen ideals." (3) Such evocative rhetoric carried the day. Despite the miserly financial assistance that it provided for settlers and despite the shortage of suitable Crown land for the implementation of the Bill, the Act for settling Returned Soldiers was passed unanimously. (4)

The manner in which McCombs' queries were ignored is of considerable interest. Although he raised an important objection to the Bill it was one that ran directly counter to prevailing ideas about the place of farms in the New Zealand economy. These emotionally charged ideas proved stronger than cold logic, and although specific references to urban drift were few in the debate on the Soldier Settlement Bill, it is clear that ideas underlying it relied heavily upon the assumption that farming was central to New Zealanders' aspirations.

The Soldiers' Response

Both the soldiers who benefited from it and the public at large responded enthusiastically to the Bill. But it is difficult to assess whether this was in approbation of the opportunity to make a quick profit or enthusiasm for the chance to realise a farming idyll. To owners of private land, the passing of the Bill and its amendments, was an opportunity to sell out to the government at exorbitant prices. To many soldiers it offered the prospect of buying land in the expectation of selling for a quick profit. Although the Bill intended safeguards against speculation by soldiers they were ineffective.(5) In 1920 the market values of dairy farms soared to unprecedented levels. As Sinclair commented, "... nearly half the occupied land [in New Zealand] changed hands between 1915 and 1924 during an orgy of gambling on land values." (6)

In the boom period both agrarian and profit motives were emphasised in real estate advertisements for farms.

NORTHLAND

(The Winterless North)

New Zealand's Land of Promise!

FERTILE!

FRUITFUL!

WINTERLESS!

Here with a loaf of bread beneath the bough,
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse and Thou,—
Beside me singing in the Winterless;
And the Winterless is Paradise enow.

Ah! make the most of what ye yet may spend,
Before ye to into the grave descend;
Invest in land where always shines the sun—
Come to the Winterless North, and all your trouble's done.

(With Apologies to Omar Khayyam)

The ASK ALLEN BELL

Winterless North Information Service



PERSONALLY conducted Parties of six or over met at Auckland and taken to the Winterless North, and the potentialities of the Territory ocularly demonstrated from a Farmer's, Businessman's, and Tourist's point of view. *1/5* I will pay your Steamer Fare one way.

ASK ALLEN BELL

Box 42, Kaitaia, Northland, New Zealand

As Figure 4.1 illustrates, the appeal could be described as "Get rich quick in a rural paradise." Although most advertisements exploited the desire for land, the heaviest emphasis was generally upon the quick profit motive. "Get On The Land", proclaimed the four column headline of a January 1920 advertisement. The text continued,

Opportunity is knocking. The world shortage of wool, mutton, of practically every primary product is calling to YOU. Farming today does not represent a tenth of the difficulties that prevailed ten years ago. The large demand for all primary products assures an ample reward for years to come. Act now - reap the harvest of big money from overseas. (7)

Clearly the advertisements used the appeal of farming to capture attention, but the land was sold by mercenary argument.

The financial expectations of farming exploited during the land boom were, "the exaggerated culmination of a quarter of a century of prosperity built upon a price level which had been rising for so long that it was expected to keep rising." (8) But in the 1920 - 21 season export prices for wool collapsed and dairy produce prices followed a year later. Those who had bought land at boom prices found their returns were inadequate to meet their heavy repayments. In the disillusionment that followed this collapse, the soldier-farmer disregarded his own cupidity and blamed the ideal for "luring" him into farming. As one soldier-farmer complained to New Zealand Life in 1923:

"Back to the Land
The land that gave you birth,
And pluck the fruits
Of bounteous Mother Earth!"
So cries the profiteer, suave and fat,
Although he knows he's talking through his hat.

"Back to the land!"
 The speculators yell.
 The digger shakes his head
 And answers "Hell,
 Two hundred quid an acre! Strike me
 Digger
 A bloke can't make a living at that figger."

"Back to the land!"
 The cocky swears and spits.
 "I'd like ter give them speculators fits.
 Back to the land! The land of debt and mud!
 Ther farming game's become a perfect dud." (9)

However, not every soldier was "lured" and not every soldier-farmer gave up in disillusionment. As W.F. Marsh, Commissioner for the Hawkes Bay Land District commented in 1917, there were basically three types of soldiers applying for land, and their fortunes might be expected to vary accordingly.

There are those who know the game and are prepared to see it through; those who have not the experience but are determined to seize the opportunity offered them, quite realising they may have to suffer hardships; and finally those who have not the experience, not much determination, and the belief that the land is a loving stepmother to all her children. The first will go straight ahead, the second will require nursing for some time and the third will gradually drop out and make room for others. (10)

The public response evoked by the Soldier Settlement Bill indicates that many paid lip service to one or another of the ideals of agrarianism. The belief in farming as an economic base was an integral part of political and economic thought in New Zealand. Land ownership had a universal appeal for farmers and non-farmers alike. However, romantic conceptions of farming based on a belief in the benevolence of nature, were not universal. According to Marsh's appraisal perhaps one in three soldiers had romantic illusions of farming as an occupation. Moreover it is likely that these were urban dwellers seeking an easy

living.

INTERREGNUM

The Soldiers Settlement Bill indicated the prevalence among New Zealanders of a farming mentality but little apprehension of the urban drift. By the late nineteen twenties however, repeated slumps in the export market had shaken confidence in the stability of an economy heavily based on farming. Moreover, rapid urban drift appeared to be threatening the prosperity of the Dominion, and during the mid twenties New Zealanders sought the causes of the urban drift in an attempt to find ways of stopping it.

Social and cultural isolation of the country was an oft cited cause of urban drift. As early as 1913 the New Zealander (11) claimed that the lack of entertainment in the country caused urban drift. The drive to improve country communications was one result of such thinking.(12)

The export market improved after its slump in 1926 but the number of unemployed continued to rise dramatically. Unemployment was believed to result from excessive migration to the towns and the "urban obsessions of our education system" (13) were decried for exacerbating the problem. A special committee was set up by the National Industrial conference which urged the government to "shape the education system in the direction of encouraging as many boys as possible to take up farming occupations rather than professional and commercial vocations." (14) Similarly an editorial in N.Z. Life commenting on, "two of the more important questions of today. How to find employment for

young men, and how to develop country life," concluded that "the present education system educated boys for city jobs which are limited while farming presents an almost unlimited scope for their employment." (15)

With the increase of unemployment and unceasing urban growth, apprehension over the future grew. Cries of "Back to the Land!" became more common than before. Earlier in the twenties, particularly in the aftermath of the land boom, the Reform government had been sceptical of agitators calling for a return to the land, regarding them suspiciously in the light of the recent speculation boom. (see Figure 4.2) But by 1928 a "well known guide, philosopher and friend of the farmers of New Zealand" (16), Prinrose McConnell, was urging the government to open up "the thousands of acres" of unused Crown land.(17) It seemed that land settlement was an "obvious" solution to both unemployment and urban drift.(18)

The election of 1928 was fought on the land settlement issue against a background of economic uncertainty, apprehension over the urban drift and rural nostalgia. The election campaigns therefore provide an excellent measure of contemporary opinion on the question of urbanisation.

THE ELECTION OF 1928

The election of 1928 was contested by three major parties; Reform, led by Gordon Coates, Labour, led by Michael Savage, and United led by Sir Joseph Ward. Reform had won the previous election largely on support from rural

Figure 4.2: Caption:

"Throw open the land for settlement,"
was the appeal to the Minister of
Lands at the Bay of Plenty. "Yes,"
he said, "but I like to listen to
the men who are going on the land,
not the men who want to put
someone else on the land."

'Agitator: I appeal to you to open
up the land and put that man on it.
Hon. McLeod: As he's the party
interested I'll listen to him,
not you."



'The New Zealand Observer'
February 14th.1925

FIGURE 4.2

interests, particularly the small farmer. The Labour Party gained most of its support from urban workers, but was attempting to widen its appeal. The United party was the remnant of the Liberal party which had lost power in 1909 and in the past had gained support from small manufacturers and some sections of the farming community. Ward had been Finance Minister of Seddon's Liberal government in the late eighteen nineties and had a reputation as a senior statesman and financial genius.

The support of farming and a policy that would enable "men to go upon the land" were central planks in United's election platform. In opening United's campaign Ward promised an era of progress based on a £70 million overseas loan. "From a social, economic, industrial point of view", declared Ward,

land settlement is urgent and a portion of every loan raised should be devoted to putting more people onto the land Our exports in [farm products] have already won their way on the British market which could absorb without any difficulty, a great increase from these sources." (19)

The policy met with an enthusiastic reception from both town and country areas.(20) Editorial comment, however, pointed out the impracticability of such a policy. Coates called it, "a policy of borrow, boom and burst." (21) But this justified ridicule made little impact. As Sinclair commented "Droves of [voters] ... returned to the [United] fold, hoping nostalgically that the pastures would be as lush as when Seddon had been shepherd. United gained in town and country ..." (22)

United won by a landslide victory. From being a small third party with twelve seats it gained a majority

of twentynine seats.(23) Clearly, as the political scientist, Robert Chapman's study of the election concluded, "[land settlement] was the only kind of programme which could still collect votes in both rural and urban electorates." (24) Post election headlines such as "Opportunity is here!" and "Prosperity Ahead" (25) as well as articles recalling the Seddon era (26) indicate the response Ward's policy evoked and the welcome it received. Land settlement was the quintessence of hope as an editorial in the N.Z. Observer, (usually a Reform biased periodical) pointed out,

The present political situation is akin to that of three and a half decades ago when the Atkinson government was defeated and John Ballance and Richard John Seddon set to work to remedy the ill that then beset this country. There was then unemployment and general unrest. The key to better times 35 years ago was a vigorous land settlement policy, an opening up of large estates, combined with a State advances system that enabled prospective producers to develop their holdings [If there is] a readiness to place men on the land and assist them ... an era of great prosperity lies ahead. Without doubt land and its development offer the route to prosperity all desire." (27)

The election showed that the perceived effects of urbanisation were matters of great concern to a large majority of New Zealanders in the late nineteen twenties. The "back to the land" movement which dominated the election was a direct reaction against the urban drift. A "return" to farming was considered vital to the recovery of the country's economic balance. Moreover, a "return" to farming was widely regarded as a return to the lost rural ideal of New Zealand's pioneering heritage.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER IV

P.D. abb. Parliamentary Debates

- (1) McCombs, P.D. p.225
- (2) Hudson, P.D. p.215
- (3) Parr, P.D. p.217
- (4) McCombs voted for the Bill despite his objections.
- (5) POWELL, J.M. "Soldier Settlement in New Zealand 1915 - 1923". Australian Geographical Studies, Volume IX, October 1971, No. 2, pp.144-160, p.145
- (6) SINCLAIR, K. A History of New Zealand, Penguin Harmondsworth, 1969, p.224.
- (7) Appeared in The Press January 7, 1920, p.3
- (8) CONDLIFFE, J.B. N.Z. In the Making, London, 1930, p.40.
- (9) Back to the Land by "Alec" in N.Z. Life No. 5, February 1923.
- (10) W.F. Marsh, Commissioner for the Hawkes Bay Land District, quoted in J.M. Powell op.cit. p.157.
- (11) Editorial in The New Zealander, April 1913.
- (12) MURPHY, B.E. "Will Transport Solve The Problem?" in The New Zealand Highway, Volume 2, No.3, 1926, p.7.
- (13) CONDLIFFE, J.B. "Other Aspects of the Urban Drift" in The New Zealand Highway, Volume 2, No. 3, 1926, p.5.
- (14) Reported in N.Z. Life, June 1928, p.2
- (15) Editorial N.Z. Life, June 1928
- (16) Biographical reference to Primrose McConnell in N.Z. Life, October 1928, p.3
- (17) McCONNELL, P. "Farming as a Career", in N.Z. Life, June 1928, p.4.
- (18) Whatever the cause of their unemployment, the unemployed tended to live in the towns because the unemployment benefit paid was higher there than in the country. The benefits differed between town and country because the respective costs of living were thought to differ.

- (19) Extract from Sir Joseph Ward's speech as reported in the Lyttelton Times, October 17, 1928, p.10.
- (20) CHAPMAN, R.M. The Election of 1928, unpublished Thesis, M.A. Auckland University 1948, pp.65-88.
- (21) Chapman, *ibid.* p.65-66.
- (22) Sinclair, *op.cit.* p.254
- (23) Chapman, *op.cit.* p.88.
- (24) *Ibid.* p.187.
- (25) Appeared in N.Z. Life, January 1929, p.5.
- (26) For Example "Seddon the Man and his Premiership", N.Z. Life, January 1929, p.6.
- (27) N.Z. Observer, November 28, 1928, p.2.

CHAPTER V

"A PLOT OF LAND NOT TOO LARGE"

"This was what I prayed for: a plot of land not too large, containing a garden, and near the house a fresh spring of water and a bit of forest to complete it."

(Horace, Satires II, vi I)

REACTIONS TO URBANISATION - 2

New Zealanders reacted to urbanisation by attempting to curtail and reverse the urban drift. The Soldier Settlement Bill was seen by some as an opportunity to correct the drift by employing men on the land. The mid nineteen twenties saw various attempts to slow the movement of people by improving the conditions that were causing them to leave the country. Rural isolation was widely believed to be the most influential of these conditions but few concrete improvements were achieved and the drift continued to accelerate. In the late twenties it was believed that the rapid increase in unemployment was the result of excessive urban drift. The election of 1928 took place amid widespread demands for the government to get people on to the land to correct the imbalanced producer and non-producer populations. The United party won the election by capitalising on this situation. Their election platform promised to "open the land" to all who wanted it and to provide settlers and farmers with generous financial aid. But not all who called for a return to the land would go themselves. In New Zealand as in America, there were many

who "sang the praises of agriculture but eschewed farming as a vocation and sought their careers in towns and cities."

(1)

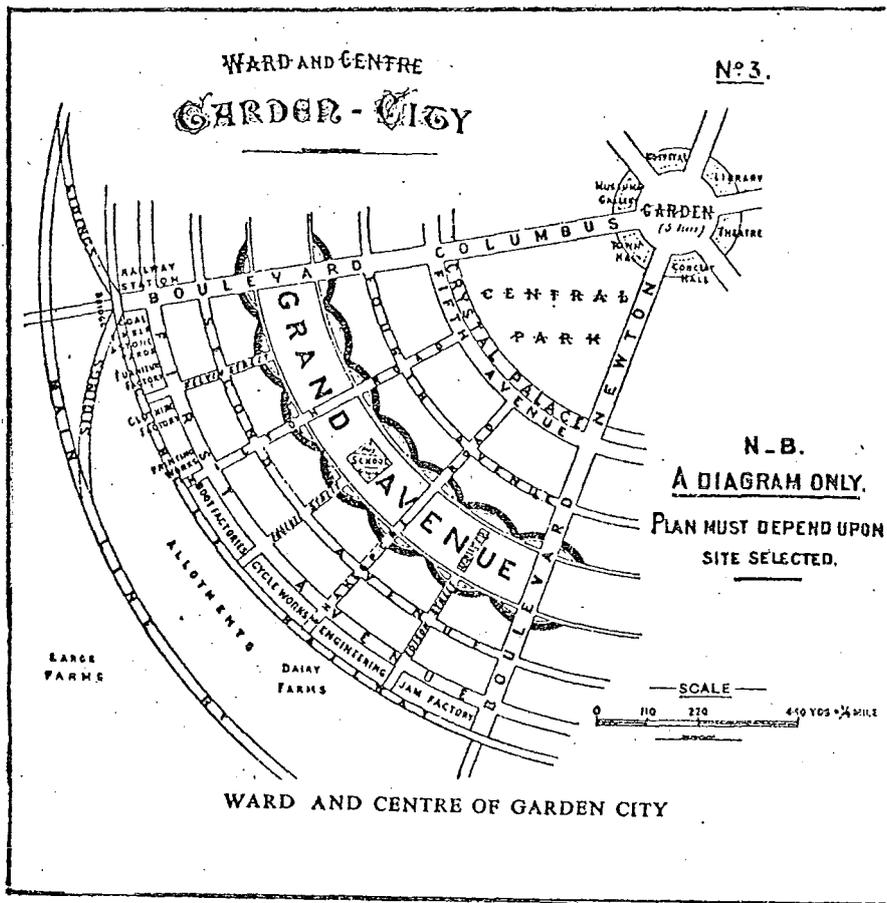
Rural romantics criticised urbanisation for reasons clearly distinct from those who opposed the growth of cities on economic grounds. They argued that towns were artificial and harmful to man whereas the country was a natural and beneficial environment. The larger towns grew, the greater was their isolation from "Nature" and the more harmful they became to man. Urban drift was therefore deplored not only because people left the beautiful countryside, but also because growing towns were increasingly artificial and were more liable to social stresses.

When efforts to curtail the urban drift proved fruitless, these ideas influenced thinking about the dwellings of towns as theorists attempted to show how Nature could be brought into the urban environment. Romantic ideas about country life lay behind the development of garden suburbs in New Zealand in the nineteen twenties. This chapter examines the New Zealand town planning movement which implemented that development.

Pre-War Ideas: The Fear of Slums

In the years immediately before the first world war, progressive editorials argued the need for town planning at a time of rapid urban growth.

During the past few years [the New Zealander maintained] the increase in our towns and cities has been out of all proportion to the total population. However much this may be deplored, the fact remains ... and the best way to face it is to meet the conditions in the most optimistic spirit ... We must strive to make our cities more desirable places in which to



From Garden Cities of Tomorrow
E. Howard 1944 ed.

FIGURE 5.1

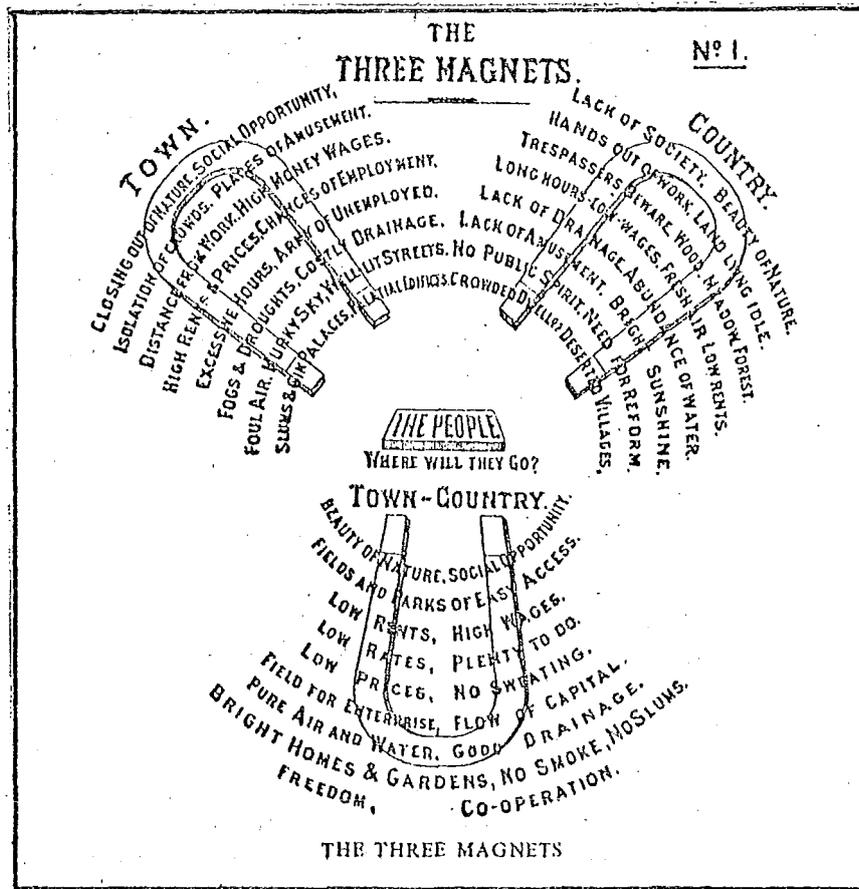
live, and to make the conditions of city life more healthful. (2)

Visiting speakers from the Town Planning movement in England toured New Zealand urging town planning as a way of avoiding the "slum curse" that had blighted English, American and Australian cities. The Rt.Hon. Earl Grey declared,

If with this warning of the awful evils that resulted to a national life through congested life in city slums and the way in which they can be provided, you will only have yourselves to blame if you allow the slum curse to show its loathsome and poisonous head in your country. (3)

Another visiting English town planning enthusiast, Dr. James W. Barret, maintained that the "inevitable" consequences of unregulated and "unscientific" urban growth were "physical and social evils". This had been realised by "leaders of thought", he continued, and "a new movement had begun to establish garden suburbs." (4)

The garden suburb was central to the thinking of British and New Zealand town planning movements. In his book Tomorrow: a Peaceful Path to Reform, Howard advocated the combination of town and country. Inspired by popular reaction against urban drift and rapid uncontrolled urban growth in Britain (5), he suggested the creation of centralised communities with civic, commercial and industrial functions from which "Nature" was not excluded. (see Figure 5.1) Howard argued that people left the beautiful countryside because it lacked the economic opportunities and social amenities offered by the towns, and illustrated this by analogy to the attraction of opposed magnets. (see Figure 5.2) Yet the towns also lacked much. Howard



From Garden Cities of Tomorrow FIGURE 5.2

E.Howard 1944 ed.

maintained that "Human society and the beauty of nature [were] meant to be enjoyed together." The possibility for this occurred in the garden city.

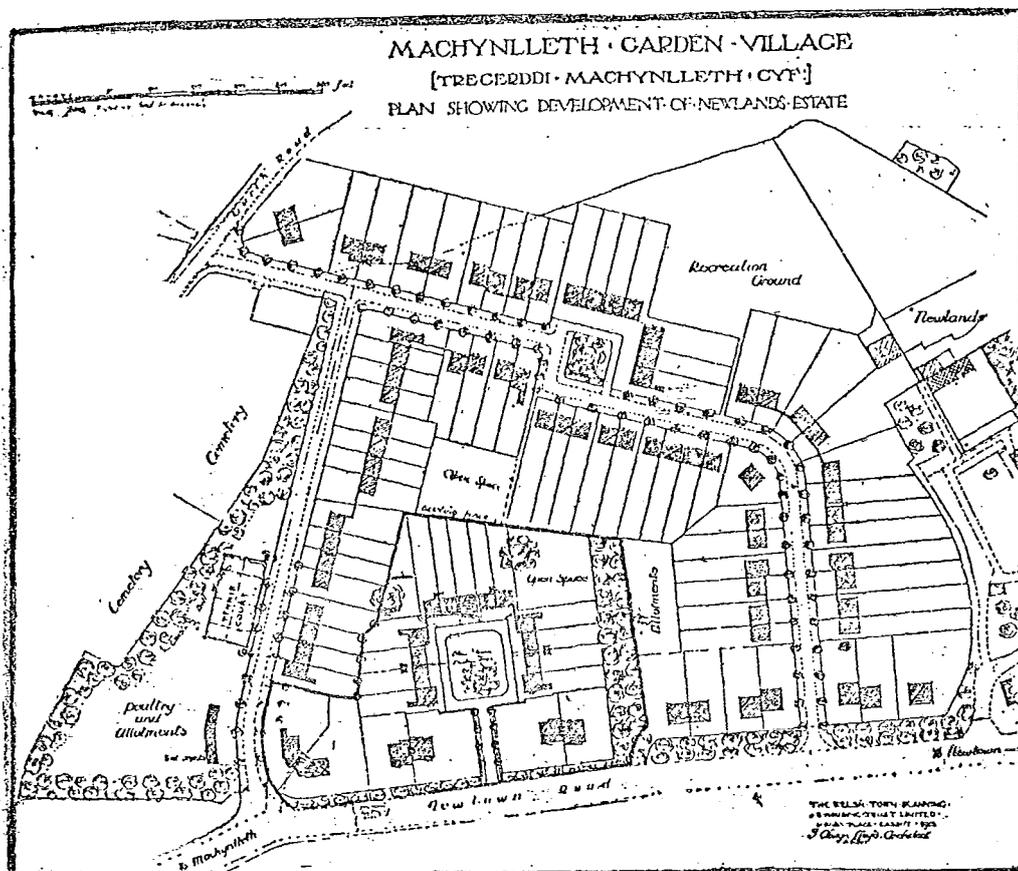
In 1909 the British Town Planning movement successfully sponsored a town planning Act that incorporated some of Howard's ideas. These were, the provision of light and fresh air in housing lay out and the creation of green belts, tree lined boulevards and public gardens when designing streets. (see Figure 5.3) A similar bill was rejected by the New Zealand parliament in 1914. Much of the concern over ^{town}-planning in New Zealand in the following years appears to have been stimulated by this action.

The New Zealand Town Planning Movement

After a brief lapse during the war, agitation for town planning legislation in New Zealand recommenced. But there was a change in emphasis. The New Zealand public were no longer threatened by pictures of overseas slums; instead, they were urged to see for themselves the more sordid streets of their own cities (6) that had resulted from the rapidity with which urban drift had swollen the towns. On a visit in 1918, Lord Islington, a founder of Hampstead garden suburb in England, urged New Zealanders to compromise with urbanisation.

There is a grave feeling in all countries that something should be done to check the concentration of people in towns...[but] you will be trying to check the pressure of modern civilisation which attracts people more and more to the great centres of population. You cannot do anything beyond checking it ... [therefore] Try to urbanise your rural districts; try to ruralise your towns. (7)

One of the most influential figures in the post war



From the report of the First Town
Planning Conference and Exhibition
held in Christchurch 1919.

FIGURE 5.3

Figure 5.3: Caption:
AN EXAMPLE OF A GARDEN SUBURB
THAT INCORPORATED THE PRINCIPLES
OF E.HOWARD'S 'GARDEN CITY'.
Although the density of housing
was suited to English conditions,
the overall design and the ideas
behind it proved very influential
in suburban development in New
Zealand after 1926 when a town
planning bill was passed.

town planning movement in New Zealand was the naturalist, literateur, and chairman of the New Zealand Town Planning Association, A. Leigh Hunt. Like Islington, Hunt maintained that New Zealand must "Bring the attractiveness of the town to the country ... [and] bring some of the beauties of the country, in the shape of trees and flowers and green grass ... into the towns." The aim of town planning, according to Hunt, was to ensure that cities had "plenty of fresh air and sunlight, and [were] clean, wholesome and beautiful [so that] men could grow physically and morally strong." (8) This did not necessarily involve slum clearance. But Hunt argued that New Zealand was at a "turning point". It could either learn from the mistakes of other countries or it could repeat them. There was, proclaimed Hunt, "a magnificent opportunity" to "ruralise" New Zealand cities, to make them less "artificial" and "more God-like". (9)

The Town Planning movement recognised that people were attracted to towns because the towns offered "modern" (urban) conveniences (vide Howard's magnets)(10) But rural-urban migration was believed to place pressure on people and facilities in the towns, thus creating ills such as slums. These could be alleviated by (a) slowing the drift by modernising (urbanising) the rural areas; (b) "ruralising" the towns. The strongest emphasis of the town planning campaign was upon the latter objective. Enthusiasts maintained that this could be achieved by regulating the growth of towns according to garden city principles.

Intensive lobby by the planning movement secured the

passage of the Town Planning Act in August 1926, despite opposition from local bodies who considered it unnecessary.

(11) The Bill made it mandatory for the councils of towns with more than 1000 people to prepare a town plan for future expansion. It also included guidelines suggesting minimum street widths, frontages, section sizes, distances between houses, and the maximum number of houses to the acre. The objects of these provisions were: to encourage the development of open spaces, parks and gardens, (city lungs); to encourage the separation of incompatible land uses by activity zoning and, to encourage the beautification of town streets by the use of trees, gardens and grass.

Intense publicity followed the passage of the Bill. In Auckland and Wellington many estate subdivisions were announced as garden suburbs, capitalising on the publicity created by the passage of the Bill. (12) The more exclusive subdivisions came close to Howard's ideal of providing spaciousness and beauty. But as suburbs on the outer fringes of the city, most developments were quite contrary to his ideas. The "conveniences" of the city were usually confined to basic services such as water, electricity, and a railway station, while most of their "rural" aspects existed merely by virtue of their location on the edge of the city. The Oak-nui subdivision at Mangere, for example, had, "all the conveniences of the city with the quietness and freshness of the country." (13) The Remuera subdivision was a "Garden View Estate" with "tree lined streets" and fifty foot frontages to each section. (14) An advertisement for the "Tamaki Heights Garden suburb" had the

following footnote addressed to "the homeseeker",

If you want to live in the most ideal surroundings that our beautiful city has to offer, where you have the pleasures of the pure country air and seaside combined, yet still a city suburb, make an appointment..." (15)

The promoters of the "Westmere Park Estate" proudly announced that the subdivision led the way in, "practical town planning with its more than generous public reserves along the frontage preserving the fine native trees and shrubs and allowing free access to its sandy beaches." (16) In Wellington the Homeward Estate in Karori was connected to the city water and sewage systems and provided with electric light and gas, "so one has all the conveniences of the city and yet live[s] in the country." (17) The Wyndrum Estate subdivision in Lower Hutt was "embraced" in the Town Planning scheme, having curved roads sixtysix feet wide, foot paths twelve feet wide, and a minimum section frontage of fifty feet. (18) A typical full page garden suburb advertisement is reproduced in Figure 5.4.

Town Planning: A Reaction to Urbanisation?

For A. Leigh Hunt town planning was clearly an answer to the stresses created by the urban drift. Numerous overseas speakers stressed the need for town planning in the face of rapid urban growth. Yet the parliamentary debate over the Town Planning Act in 1926 made no direct reference to the urban drift. Speakers advocating the Bill stressed the need for orderly planned development in towns and cities. The Bill gained much support outside parliament on the grounds that it provided safeguards for the country's physical and moral wellbeing, as well as

ensuring the efficient use of local body rates.

The absence of garden suburb real estate promotion before the passing of the Bill in August 1926 may be variously interpreted. The provision of open spaces, wide streets, and specified frontages obviously limited the number of houses that could be erected on a subdivision and decreased the developer's return on investment. But there is little evidence that the Act drastically lowered density of new housing developments. Since 1905, the Health Act and its amendments, had set minimum requirements for sanitation and building materials. These forestalled widespread jerrybuilding. Indeed it was argued that there was little need for the Town Planning Act because the provisions of the Health Act were sufficient to prevent the development of slums and other undesirable features of unrestricted urban growth. Only in Wellington where the shortage of flat land was already a constraint on expansion, was higher density development characteristic before 1926.

(19) In this context the proliferation of advertisements for garden suburbs in 1926 is remarkable and seems to represent less a change in character of development than the cashing in on enthusiasm for, and publicity of, garden suburb ideas. Moreover, the major dailies of Christchurch and Dunedin throughout 1926 showed little concern for town planning issues. Nor did the papers of either city feature "garden suburb" real estate advertisements subsequent to August 1926. Admittedly Christchurch and Dunedin, especially the latter, were not expanding as rapidly as either Auckland or Wellington in the mid twenties; but they

were, nonetheless, expanding.

Intense public interest in town planning, therefore, appears to have been restricted largely to Auckland and Wellington. In these cities interest appears to have been generated by local phenomena and government action demanded after the failure of local bodies to rectify the "growing evils". That the Town Planning movement saw itself as an answer to the adversities created by the urban drift is indisputable. But for the public at large, the movement merely seems to have provided erudite statements of the simple desire for the best possible living environment. New Zealanders, like Americans and Englishmen, in the nineteen twenties, displayed a penchant for having it both ways.(20)

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER V

- (1) Loc.cit. Donaldson p.381.
- (2) "To Beautify our Cities", The New Zealander, November 1913, p.2.
- (3) "In Praise of Beautiful Towns - town planning the most important social question", a report of Grey's address in Auckland, in The New Zealander, April 1914, No. 8, Volume II.
- (4) "Better Homes For The People" report of Dr. James W. Barret's address in The New Zealander, March 1914, No.7, Volume II.
- (5) HOWARD, E. Garden Cities of Tomorrow, Ed. W. Osborn, 1944, pp.40-43.
- (6) For example, in an article in The New Zealander in July 1925, p.25, "A vision of a better Wellington", readers were urged to "Stroll up Te Aro way and you'll find alleys and slum streets innumerable ..."
- (7) Quoted in Hunt, A. Leigh. "Town Planning, What Is It?" Wright & Carman, Wellington 1918, p.10.
- (8) Ibid. p.3
- (9) Ibid. p.8
- (10) An aspect of the urban drift not always recognised by advocates of a farming economy.
- (11) Parliamentary debate on Town Planning Bill, P.D. August 1926, various pages.
- (12) Over the period October 1926 and December 1926 full page and half page advertisements for garden suburb subdivisions occurred very frequently. The New Zealand Herald often in this period, had five successive pages of large real estate advertisements for such subdivisions. Such intense publicity, however, was absent from Christchurch and Dunedin papers over the same period.
- (13) N.Z. Herald, October 6, 1926, p.8.
- (14) N.Z. Herald, October 22, 1926, p.16.
- (15) N.Z. Herald, November 5, 1926, p.6.
- (16) N.Z. Herald, October 16, 1926, p.23.
- (17) Dominion, October 30, 1926, p.14.
- (18) Dominion, October 30, 1926, p.15.

(19) Town planners were full of the "horrors" of the Te Aro area (vide note 6) and the expense involved in widening Manners Street, (1921 - 25).

(20) Donaldson suggests as much in The Suburban Myth, Loc.cit. p.356.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The nineteen twenties were years of rapid urban growth in New Zealand. City populations increased, urban areas expanded, and an ever greater proportion of the country's people were officially designated "urbanites". These developments, which affected a small and insulated outpost of the Empire considering itself a distant farm of Great Britain, evoked widely differing reactions. By examining these reactions, this thesis has illuminated the nature of rural and urban attitudes frequently alluded to in studies of New Zealand society. The context and wider implications of these findings warrant reiteration and examination.

England was "the first industrial nation."⁽¹⁾ The reactions of the English to urbanisation stand apart from reactions in the New World, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Urbanisation was intimately connected with industrialisation. To contemporary observers the effects of urbanisation were indistinguishable from industrialisation. Moreover, the growth of industry was seen to lead inevitably to the eclipse of agriculture and the traditional ways of life it represented.

The transition from agriculture to industry occurred at the same time as a shift from classic to romantic expression in the arts. The romantic movement was a rebellion against "the cruelty, squalor and ugliness" of

the urban-industrial system.(2) The romantic could either escape into a dream world of an idealised past or of an idealised Nature, or he could protest. The romantic artist did both but his bourgeois audience preferred the first.

Reaction to urbanisation in England is characterised both by a belief in the inevitability of urban-industrial growth and an intense desire to escape the reality which such growth had created. The rural idylls into which the romantic escaped were picturesque "gardens", where neither natural nor industrial reality intruded. Arguably such idylls reflect a changed attitude to nature which, in nineteenth century England, was "tamed" and "surrounded" by the power endowed by science and the industrial revolution.

The New World reactions to urbanisation were quite distinct from those in England. North America, Australia and New Zealand not only had the precedent of the English experience and the ideas that it generated, but were also newly settled countries "untamed" by European civilisation. These countries had passed through a phase of defining their character by reference to the idea of an agricultural "state". To an extent this is understandable. In all these countries, wilderness had to be tamed, the land had to be cultivated and "civilised" if the great design was to be fulfilled. Thus agriculture becomes the country's *raison d'etre* and the symbol of its progress in the struggle to subdue the new land.

Urbanisation in the New World posed a threat to the

national symbol of progress. In times of prosperity the threat receded. Urbanisation was accepted by people characterising theirs as an age of cities. Agriculture was still espoused as a national ideal but commercial and industrial expansion was widely pursued. These were pragmatic phases in which urbanism was recognised as inevitable but perfectable. At such times advocates of agrarianism appeared to be fighting a rearguard action while more progressive elements of society attempted to improve the urban environment. The desirability physically and spiritually of rural environments, and the practical exigencies of urban living in industrial and commercial economics, were recognised. Various movements in all these countries arose advocating a way of life that combined the best of both. In such terms the garden suburb was advocated.

However, in times of tension and economic recession anti-urbanism reasserted itself as a defender of agriculture on which progress and prosperity had been based at the time of settlement. In America in the late eighteen eighties and early eighteen nineties, the closing of the frontier and an influx of destitute European immigrants "cluttering the cities", gave rise to a wave of adulation of the "noble" frontiersman and yeoman farmer. In Australia the bush legend arose when distinctive "Australianism" seemingly disappeared in the recession of the eighteen nineties. During the Great Depression of the nineteen thirties governments in all the new lands turned to agriculture as one way of solving the problems that

beset them.

Of the new lands New Zealand (with the possible exception of Australia) continued to rely upon agriculture as the mainstay of the economy after the initial "civilising" stage of colonisation. Urbanisation in terms of a shift in the balance of population between rural and urban nevertheless occurred in the early twentieth century. Urbanisation was perceived as a threat to the economy by upsetting the "balance" between urban "non-producers" and the farming population, and to the national self definition of being the outlying farm of the Empire. Although reactions to urbanisation in the twenties were coloured by romantic ideas introduced from Britain, the main thrust of reaction in times of recession and doubt was against the "economic" effects of urbanisation coupled with an outburst of nostalgia for the "true" New Zealand of the pioneering period.

This study has examined a brief period of New Zealand's history: the nineteen twenties. The ideas then current still find expression today. Numerous legacies can be found in post second world war New Zealand. The soldier settlements established for veterans of the second war showed the same stress on agriculture, the same desire to get as many onto the land at the expense of creating uneconomic farm units.(3) The British negotiation over entry into the European Economic Community during the early nineteen sixties disturbed New Zealanders not only because of its economic implications, but because it involved a rethinking of New Zealand's traditional role and identity

as Britain's farm. More recently the plans for the satellite town of Rolleston released in October 1975 showed remarkable similarities to Howard's garden city; an essential service core (hospital, library, shops, etc) surrounded by ample "breathing spaces" of trees, parks and gardens. Moreover, the arguments brought forward to justify Rolleston show similar attitudes towards urban sprawl and city growth to those of the town planning movements fifty years ago. The continued demand for "quarter acre farms" despite growing concern over "uneconomic" urban sprawl shows an unconscious acceptance of the belief that everyone should be able to till the soil. The current resurgence of interest in the pioneering days as is seen in the proliferation of books on early New Zealand (4), and the exploitation of this interest in advertisements for products as varied as shampoo and jeans, is clearly reminiscent of the wave of nostalgia that swept the late nineteen twenties. It is more than coincidence that this resurgence should occur at a time of world-wide economic recession.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER VI

(1) Mathias, P. "The First Industrial Nation - an economic history of Britain 1700 - 1914." London, Methuen 1969.

(2) Jordan, R.F. ("Victorian Architecture", Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1966, p.42) suggests that although Romanticism was a rebellion against the formalism of classical artistic expression, the main thrust of the movement in the nineteenth century, was against industrialisation.

(3) The soldier settlement of Valetta on the Canterbury plains is a "classic" example of this "agrarian blindness" - see Burrows, R.B. "Decision Making and Land Development - The Valetta Settlement", unpublished thesis M.A. University of Canterbury 1975.

(4) For example, Anderson, J.C. "Old Christchurch - reprint of Pioneer Canterbury Classic", Capper Press, Christchurch 1975; McGregor, M. "Pettycoat Pioneers", Reed, Wellington, 1974; Nolan, T. "Gold Trails of the West Coast", Reed, Wellington, 1975.

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This bibliography does not represent a comprehensive listing of every article cited in the text. The primary sources which have a strong bias toward rural interests are indicated thus: (R). Published secondary sources on urbanization are restricted to those that refer in some way to the noetic dimensions of urbanization.

Abbreviations

- A.T.L. Alexander Turnbull Library
 G.A.L. General Assembly Library
 C.P.L. Canterbury Public Library
 C.U.L. Canterbury University Library

Primary Sources

- (a) Official Publications. New Zealand Yearbooks 1900-1935, Govt. Printer. Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) 1915, 1917, 1918, 1926. Govt. Printer.
The New Zealand Town Planning Conference and Exhibition, Christchurch 1919; Proceedings and Reports. Govt. Printer. (held in ATL).
- (b) Magazines. (Dates indicate issues referred to).
Farming First 1920-1928 (R) Published by New Zealand Farmers Union Wellington (Issues held in G.A.L.)
New Zealand Highway 1924-28. pub: Workers Educational Association Wellington (Issues held in G.A.L.)
The New Zealand Woman's Mirror 1920-29. Gordon & Gotch. (Issues held in G.A.L.)

(The following magazines underwent numerous title changes during 1914-1930 reflecting changing editorial emphasis.

The titles have therefore been treated as separate magazines.)

NZer 1913-1914 (ATL)

NZ Magazine 1920-25 (GAL)

New Zealand Life 1925-27 (R) (GAL)

New Zealand Life and Forestry 1927-1929 (R) (GAL)

(c) Newspapers (Dates indicate years referred to)

The Christchurch Press: 1900-1905, 1915, 1918-22, 1925-27 (R)

(CPL)

The Dominion: 1926 (GAL)

The Lyttleton Times: 1920, 1926, 1928 (CPL)

The New Zealand Herald 1926 (GAL)

The New Zealand Observer 1918-22, 1925-26, 1928-29 (GAL)

The Otago Daily Times 1926 (GAL)

(d) Miscellaneous Publications.

"Back to the Land!" How and How F.J. Alley Whitcombe & Tombs, Christchurch 1928 (CUL)

FORD, R.J. "Some Changes in Occupational and Geographical Distribution of Population in New Zealand 1896-1926", unpublished M.A. Thesis 1933, University of Canterbury. (CUL)

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