COLD COMMITMENT: The Development of New Zealand's Territorial Role in Antarctica 1920-1960

A thesis presented for the degree of Master of Arts in History in the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

by

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Lands doomed by nature to everlasting frigidity and never once to feel the warmth of the Sun's rays; such are the lands we have discovered, what may we expect those to be which lie more to the South, for we may reasonably suppose that we have seen the best as lying most to the North, whoever has resolution and perseverance to clear up this point by proceeding farther than I have done, I shall not envy him the honour of the discovery but I will be bold to say that the world will not be benefited by it.

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Preface

Antarctica may appear an unlikely topic for historical research. It is a land that has seen relatively little human activity and also a land of the unknown; these aspects prompted me to ask, "Why is New Zealand involved in Antarctica?" Preliminary research pointed to a long-standing connection with the Ross Dependency — which led to another question, "Why is the Ross Dependency there?" And here the published sources soon reached a full stop. Two facts only were plain. Firstly, on the 30 July, 1923, the Ross Dependency was created by a royal Order-in-Council. Secondly, in 1956 the New Zealand Government established Scott Base. Between these dates there appeared to be a gigantic vacuum. Fortunately, the initial despair at finding nothing gave way to relief, and some trepidation, at the wealth of material a little digging produced. Research proved a fascinating but sometimes difficult exercise — fascinating because so much of the material was untouched — difficult because the Ross Dependency involves issues of sovereignty and territorial limits. Governments and government departments are understandably sensitive on these matters, and important documents dealing with the Antarctic and the Ross Dependency were invariably labelled "secret", "confidential", or "restricted". For the period up to 1945, this presented few problems as the documents were all over thirty years old and generally open to public access. However, after
that period I was fortunate to be assisted by the generosity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Research Division, and also to use the voluminous correspondence of the old Marine Department files deposited in the National Archives.

In the overall production of this thesis, I have many people to thank: Firstly, my supervisor, Professor W. D. McIntyre, for patiently reading and commenting on the rather irregularly submitted drafts. I would also like to single out two other individuals for their special assistance: Jim Caffin, of Christchurch, who shared with me his encyclopedic knowledge of Antarctic events and people, and the late Dr. Brian Roberts, of the Scott Polar Research Institute, who immediately grasped the direction of my research and pointed the way. In addition, thanks are due to Professor F. M. Auburn, Rear Admiral Harry Black, U.S.N.R. (Ret.), Jock Graham, Dr. Trevor Hatherton, Arthur Helm, Geoff Markham, the Rosshevet Company, Captain Harold Ruegg, Walter Sullivan and Owen Wilkes for answering my enquiries. I would also like to thank the staff of the Antarctic Division, D.S.I.R., Paul Edmonds, Win Jellyman, Colin Keating and Ian Muir of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the librarians of the Canterbury Museum Antarctic Library, the staff of the National Archives, Sidney Scales for permission to reproduce his cartoon, Stephanie Cape for drawing the end papers, and Bernadine Muller for typing the final draft.
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Frontespeice: Mt. Erebus and field camp. Photo. Antarctic Division, D.S.I.R.

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## Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>A.A.T.</td>
<td>Australian Antarctic Territory.</td>
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<td>A.J.H.R.</td>
<td>Appendices To The Journals Of The House Of Representatives.</td>
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<td>Aust. P.M.</td>
<td>Australian Prime Minister.</td>
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<td>BANZARE</td>
<td>British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition.</td>
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<td>C.S.A.G.I.</td>
<td>Special Committee for the International Geophysical Year (Comite Speciale de l'Annee Geophysique Internationale).</td>
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<td>D.S.I.R.</td>
<td>Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.</td>
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<td>F.I.D.S.</td>
<td>Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey.</td>
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<td>I.C.J.</td>
<td>International Court of Justice.</td>
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<td>International Geophysical Year.</td>
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<td>Min.</td>
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<td>Min. of S.I.R.</td>
<td>Minister of Scientific and Industrial Research.</td>
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<td>N.Z.G.G.</td>
<td>Governor General of New Zealand.</td>
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<td>Sec.</td>
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<td>S.S.Col.</td>
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<td>S.S.C.R.</td>
<td>Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.S.D.A.</td>
<td>Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>T.A.E.</td>
<td>Trans Antarctic Expedition.</td>
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Introduction

Antarctica is New Zealand's coldest, driest, windiest, least known and most inaccessible neighbour. 98% of its surface is covered by permanent ice. It lies over 2000 miles to the south of New Zealand, second only to Australia in proximity and certainly first in size. In one sense, it is a barren and empty land. Human habitation is both tenuous and dependent on considerable outside logistic support. But in spite of this, the stark simplicity of its natural environment holds attractions for the scientist and the aesthetic. And to a resource hungry world, it hides a potential el dorado of riches.

Strategically placed on the gateway to the South, New Zealand has played a larger role in Antarctic developments than in other aspects of world affairs. Ever since Polynesian legend recorded discoveries of "...bare white rocks that towered into the sky", projecting from a frozen ocean¹, the allure of Antarctica has drawn explorers and exploiters past New Zealand, intent on probing the unknown. New Zealand itself has maintained Scott Base, a permanent station on the edge of the Ross Sea, since 1957, and continues a year round scientific programme. Current Government spending exceeds $500,000 per annum while millions are invested in

¹Beaglehole, J. C., The Discovery of New Zealand, Wellington 1939, p.3.
Antarctic installations. At the same time, New Zealand is signatory to the Antarctic Treaty. Along with Argentina, Belgium, Britain, Chile, France, Japan, Norway, Poland, South Africa, the Soviet Union and the United States, it participates in biennial consultative meetings to regulate and monitor activities on the continent. Potential developments in Antarctica range from tourism to the exploitation of resources and possible damage to the fragile ecology. New Zealand's concern over this stems from its geographical location. It also stems from another more possessive factor, a claim that part of the continent, the Ross Dependency, is New Zealand territory. The origins and development of this claim have remained as misty and unknown as the continent itself.

On the 30 July, 1923, the Ross Dependency was created by royal Order-in-Council. Thirty seven years later, in Washington, New Zealand representatives signed the Antarctic Treaty, agreeing to freeze all territorial claims for thirty years, thus marking the emergence of New Zealand as an Antarctic nation of standing. The questions of how and why give no easy answer. The development of New Zealand's

2 The New Zealand Antarctic Research Programme's present budget of $500-600,000 is a slightly misleading figure. It does not take into account additional expenditure, for example, the salaries and equipment expenses of university research staff. The purely monetary value of facilities at Scott Base, Vanda Station, and Cape Bird Station are also difficult to estimate. Costs are massively escalated by distances and the difficulties of building, maintenance and supply. D.S.I.R. Antarctic Division sources. Also Laird, M., "New Zealand earth science research in Antarctica", New Zealand Alpine Journal, Vol.31, 1978, p.72.
territorial role was gradual, spanning forty years and paralleling the growth of New Zealand's wider foreign relations, firstly as the loyal Dominion, and then with imperial ties being reluctantly set aside, as New Zealand felt its way on the international stage. An investigation covering such a large time span naturally involves a great deal of narrative, at the expense of more detailed analysis or the pursuit of inter-related themes.

The Ross Dependency formed only a very minor part of New Zealand's external commitments over much of this period. While it remained a continuing responsibility, it suffered from neglect. The territory was created as part of a more comprehensive British policy, but when that policy faltered and collapsed, New Zealand was left nursing a possession it did not know what to do with. Added to this was the refusal of certain other nations involved in Antarctica to recognise its existence. The different approaches to Antarctic territorial sovereignty and the unfolding of disparate national interests and claims contributed to New Zealand's problems. Consequently, while New Zealand's position remains the central theme, of necessity it must be considered in the light of overall developments.

This is not a detailed study of events in Antarctica. The Ross Dependency was the product of policy, the concern of Governments, politicians, civil servants and diplomats. It was influenced by secret despatches and discussions behind closed doors, rather than the endeavours of explorers and scientists in the field. For this reason the most useful historical sources are government files containing the
correspondence of the British and New Zealand Governments, and the attitudes and ideas of government departments. However, public opinion sometimes impinged on this separate world. The Antarctic was surrounded by an aura of romanticism, reinforced by the epics of Amundsen, Scott and Shackleton. The New Zealand public looked on the continent with a special interest. As a sense of nationhood developed, proposals for New Zealand Antarctic activity were guaranteed to arouse public sympathy. Newspapers, minute-books, and private correspondence indicated the degree of public feeling and the efforts of interested parties. Public enthusiasm, combined with the Government's commitment to maintain its territorial responsibilities, lead to the final establishment of a New Zealand presence.

Any historical research seems bedevilled by problems of arbitrary divisions in chronology. This is particularly so in a case where the importance of narrative combines with a long time span. Nevertheless, between 1920 and 1960, the development of New Zealand's territorial role divides into two periods. Up to the 1940's, imperial policy prevailed. Thereafter, New Zealand began to make its own way.

The greatest step New Zealand took in strengthening its claim was to establish Scott Base. The greatest step it took in resolving the problems of the claim was signing the Antarctic Treaty. It was a fitting if inconclusive end to forty years of overt, often dilatory territorial activity. At the same time New Zealand's signature amounted to recognition on an international level that it had "arrived" as an Antarctic power.
Chapter 1
The Background: Britain's Territorial Involvement in Antarctica

New Zealand became involved in Antarctica as an agent of British Imperialism. On February 6th 1920, the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, Leopold Amery, sent a secret despatch to the New Zealand Government on the subject of the future policy of the British Empire in the Antarctic. The crux of this policy was the statement,

...it is desirable that the whole of the Antarctic should ultimately be included within the British Empire, and that...

a definite and consistent policy should be followed of extending and asserting British control with the object of ultimately making it complete.

He then suggested that New Zealand could assist by assuming control of the Antarctic region to the south in the vicinity of the Ross Sea coasts.¹

This letter was the first indication to the New Zealand Government of Britain's secret ambitions in Antarctica.

While the letter came as something of a surprise to the Dominion Government, for Britain it was the result of a long evolutionary involvement culminating after World War One in a climate of imperial expansionism.

British interest in Antarctica had previously focused on the South Atlantic and more particularly the Falkland Islands. A wind-swept group five hundred miles off the coast of Argentina, they guarded the eastern approaches to the Straits of Magellan and Cape Horn. Despite a long-standing dispute with Argentina over possession, the islands and their dependencies had been claimed for Britain in 1843 by royal Letters Patent, and from 1892, had been a Crown Colony. This farthest outpost of the British Empire existed on a small yet thriving pastoral industry and acted as a major coaling station.

The islands' importance lay in their strategic value. From the end of the eighteenth century the Admiralty had been looking for a suitable base on the Cape Horn route and finally settled on the Falklands in 1833.

Yet further to the south were other possibilities which had been considered in the 1820's. These were South Georgia, sighted in 1675 by an English captain, Anthony De La Roche, and revisited by Captain Cook in 1775, the South Shetlands, probably discovered by William Smith in 1819, and the South Orkney and Sandwich Islands. In 1819 Captain Edward Bransfield had been sent by the Admiralty to check on the suitability of the South Shetlands as a base and, through the bitterly cold mists and driving snow showers, he had caught what was probably the first glimpse of the bleak coasts of the Antarctic Peninsula.² These

discoveries, and the later voyages of British sailors such as James Weddell, John Biscoe and Peter Kemp established British rights of discovery in the Antarctic Peninsula and elsewhere in Antarctica. But these rights were by no means exclusive.

The priority of discovery was open to dispute because Antarctic waters and coasts provided a rich source of fur seals and easily caught southern right whales. As a result, from at least 1819 on, the Antarctic Peninsula region was infested with small sealing and whaling vessels from ports in the United States, Scotland, England and France. It is quite possible that a United States sealer, Nathaniel Palmer, preceded Bransfield in his discoveries. Certainly Palmer and his contemporary William Pendleton, and other sealers, were responsible for new discoveries. 3

However, they were also responsible for something else. The quick profits and cut throat competition meant that within twenty years, the seals had almost completely gone, the colonies falling victims to high prices and uncontrolled exploitation. Port Stanley, in the Falkland Islands, still played host to the occasional lonely whaler or sealer venturing south after 1850, but the empty beaches of South Georgia, Deception Island and the Palmer Archipelago bore mute witness to what could happen if the slaughter of the regions living resources went unchecked.

This preliminary exploitation had removed the most accessible resources, but the Antarctic waters were also rich whaling grounds. The migrating southern right whale had

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already been decimated in more northerly latitudes by the early nineteenth century whalers. However, still abounding in the icy southern waters were the faster and larger rorqual whales such as the blue and fin species, and the baleen hump-back whales. These proved too powerful for nineteenth century whaling technology, but the development of new techniques, particularly the harpoon gun and the iron-clad steam catcher, opened a whole new era to the industry. The companies which could afford the considerable financial commitment were almost assured of quick large profits from the valuable whale products of oil and baleen.

The application of the new techniques in the traditional North Atlantic whaling areas had resulted in an initial boom followed by a decline and search for new grounds. The resources of the South Atlantic were well known but there were problems with processing the catch and operating so far from the whalers' main markets. It was not until 1904 that the Norwegian whaling captain, C. A. Larsen, was able to raise sufficient capital, mainly in Buenos Aires, to outfit a modern whaling station which he based in South Georgia. The success of Larsen's Compania Argentina de Pesca was rapid. So much so that in 1905, undoubtedly pressed by the larger whaling companies, the Norwegian Government asked Britain about the status of the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic areas of the South Atlantic. To this, Britain replied that they were British possessions, presumably because of the earlier British discoveries, but

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certainly backed up by Britain's predominance of sea power in the area.  

Consequently Britain felt some display of state authority was necessary to control the whaling, to support her "inchoate" territorial claims, and possibly to create a new, sustained, and revenue bearing industry to augment the Falkland Islands' dependence on sheep. In establishing such authority, C. A. Larsen proved exceptionally obliging. On 1 January, 1906, he accepted a lease for a shore station at Grytviken Harbour, South Georgia. This amounted to tacit recognition that the island was British territory, although it wasn't at the time. The British Government were to remember Larsen's assistance and enterprise in the future. Also in 1906, an ordinance was issued by the Governor of the Falkland Islands prohibiting whaling without a licence and imposing a royalty on each whale caught, for, in the same year, the first floating factory anchored in the sheltered harbour at Deception Island in the South Shetlands. The rush for the riches was on.

To legalise the regulation of the whaling industry and to consolidate and define earlier British claims to the scattered territories of the South Atlantic and Antarctic,

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6 "Inchoate", rights that exist but are in some way incomplete.
British sovereignty was proclaimed in 1908 by Letters Patent over,

the group of islands known as South Georgia, the South Orkneys, the South Shetlands, and the Sandwich Islands, and the territory known as Graham's Land, situated in the South Atlantic Ocean to the south of the 50th parallel of South latitude, and lying between the 20th and the 80th degrees of West longitude.\(^8\)

This definition appeared to cover only the territories named and not any others that fell within the boundaries of latitude and longitude. If the latter was intended, then Britain was claiming a large segment of Tierra Del Fuego! The Foreign Office has been criticised for such a glaring mistake in preparing the document, but these boundaries were probably only included as rough indicators of the position of the five territories.\(^9\)

The area, now named the Falkland Islands Dependencies, was to be administered by the Governor of the Falkland Islands. His first act was to repeal the 1906 whaling ordinance and to issue a new ordinance in 1908, similarly requiring a licence to whale, but imposing new fees and royalties, and outlining conservation measures. The object of such controls were to conserve the industry by limiting the number of whale catchers allowed to hunt whales, to prevent the destruction of whale calves, either directly or indirectly, through the killing of nursing mothers, and to

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minimise waste in the manufacture of carcasses.\footnote{Report of the Inter Departmental Committee, appendix 5 & p. 7.}

The reasons were obvious. From 1906 on, the industry boomed, bringing with it a semi-permanent population to the previously uninhabited region. By 1911 nine leases had been issued for the establishment of shore stations, eight in South Georgia and one on Deception Island. These leases usually had a life of twenty five years. Nine licenses, renewed annually, were issued for moored factory ships in the South Shetlands, six licenses for the South Sandwich Islands in the 1912-13 season (none of which were ever worked) and four licenses for the South Orkneys during 1914-15 (but only one was worked). No new leases were issued after 1911 and no new companies licensed after 1914. Of the companies operating, thirteen were Norwegian, three British, and one nominally Argentinian, C.A. Larsen's company.\footnote{Ibid, appendix 5.}

The killing of whales and production of oil and by-products rose as rapidly as the influx of new companies. The total catch between 1909 and 1918 was 73,766 whales. In the same period 3,558,000 barrels of oil were produced, with a peak production of 561,000 barrels in 1915-16. At conventional customs valuation, the oil and baleen were worth £10,459,908 although market valuations were much higher.\footnote{Ibid.}
The majority of the workforce employed was Norwegian. The work was hard, frequently dangerous and mainly seasonal. For the whaling companies the most convenient method of operation was usually from moored factory ships, often old converted merchantmen brought south each summer. The companies were usually limited in the number of catchers permitted and the regulations were overseen by a resident British magistrate and constable at Grytviken and another magistrate stationed at Deception Island in the whaling season.

To the Falkland Islands the industry was a goldmine. From 1914 to 1918 the income from an export tax on the whale oil and the fees from licenses amounted to one third of the revenue of the colony, and the market value of the oil export was often worth more than twice the value of wool exports. During the war the oil became an important military resource from which glycerine was produced for explosives. As Britain had been importing whale oil since 1912, direct access to it was vital. Because of this, certain whaling restrictions were lifted in 1915 and production rose sharply. Britain also benefitted from a number of gratuitous deals with Norwegian whalers and once again, C.A. Larsen proved helpful.

But the mounting figures of whales killed could not fail to raise disturbed questions about the industry's permanence. In the minds of certain enthusiasts and administrators were the decline and virtual extinction of the whaling industries in the North Atlantic off Spitzbergen, and in the Dependencies themselves the fate of the fur seal.

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was well remembered. Obviously the whaling regulations were designed to prevent such exploitation. By 1912 it was felt that further measures were necessary.  

In the first place, there were doubts about the limits of the Dependencies. From 1912 on, the Governor, Sir William Allardyce, impressed on the Colonial Office that some redefinition was required, both to claim a larger area of the Antarctic coastline for whaling purposes, and to clear up the anomaly of apparently including part of Tierra Del Fuego. It appears that neither Chile nor Argentina protested over the 1908 boundaries and, in 1915, had asked King George V to arbitrate over a dispute involving islands south of the Beagle Channel. They would hardly have done this if they felt Britain also claimed the area. In fact, no nation had officially commented on the claim, but an American jurist had queried its legal basis in view of the doubts about the first discoveries and argued that possession could only result from effective occupation of the territories, which he felt was not possible in Antarctica. Such criticism sounded the first keynotes of future attacks on Antarctic territorial claims.

15 Pers. Comm. Dr. Brian Roberts, 12 May 1978, "Some thirty years ago I did quite an extensive search in the Foreign Office and Colonial Office archives about this extraordinary error. But I could find no explanation; nor any evidence that either Argentina or Chile protested."
The British Government responded to Allardyce's suggestions and on 27th March 1917 new Letters Patent were proclaimed, which included all territories whatsoever between the 20° west and 50° west, south of 50° south, and between 50° west and 80° west, south of 58° south (see map 1).

This definition was more sweeping than the 1908 Letters Patent. Instead of specifying certain known territories, it incorporated everything within its boundaries, including much coastline discovered by other nationalities. On top of this Britain claimed a large slice of the hinterland running right to the South Pole, most of which had never been explored. This involved applying a legal principle used in the Arctic whereby nations contiguous with the Arctic extended their national boundaries to the North Pole along lines of longitude. But use of this sector principle in the Antarctic was legally very dubious, especially as the idea of British contiguity was obviously ludicrous. It was merely a convenience. One cynical answer to criticisms has been that "International Law, in so far as it exists at all, is limited to the practical application of the rule that possession, supported by the threat of force, is the beginning and end of this branch of law." Such a statement could well apply to Britain's position in the South Atlantic in 1917 and no other nation was really capable or interested in challenging

17 Hunter-Christie, p. 286.
any extension of its claims in the Antarctic at that time. Thus the 1917 Letters Patent were the first major step in Britain's future Antarctic policy.

However, as far as the whaling industry was concerned, the redefinition of the boundaries was not the only solution to worries about its long term survival. Even before World War One people such as Sir Sydney Harmer, director of the Natural History Museum, and E. R. Darnley, a civil servant at the Colonial Office involved with the administration of the Dependencies, were considering measures of conservation.\(^\text{i8}\)

It was Darnley who was responsible for circulating in 1917 certain memoranda on the future of the Dependencies. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Long, acted on these and conferred with the Admiralty. Consequently, also in 1917, he authorised an inter-departmental committee to study the preservation of the whaling industry, the development of any other industries in the Dependencies, and to recommend any necessary scientific research.\(^\text{i9}\)

The committee met frequently from mid 1918 until it presented its report on the 27th August, 1919. The report, over 100 pages long, consisted of a comprehensive survey of the history, resources and future potential of the Dependencies. Its more significant recommendations suggested a complete survey of all living and mineral resources, hydrographic, meteorological, magnetic and botanical surveys, and the investigation and control of whaling with a particular emphasis on encouraging British participation in the


\(^{19}\) Report of the Inter Departmental Committee, p.1.
industry. But perhaps its most important direct recommendation was the creation of an advisory committee under Colonial Office direction to coordinate these investigations. This was acted on in 1919 and the committee was given a wider brief "to conduct research into the economic resources of the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic regions with special reference to the Falkland Islands Dependencies". Following the purchase of Captain Scott’s old ship in 1923, the body was renamed the Discovery Committee. Using both this ship and the William Scoresby, and a laboratory on South Georgia, it supervised a series of investigatory cruises throughout Antarctic waters. These were continued in the 1930’s by the specially built Discovery II. As a result, the Discovery Committee established a scientific interest in the Antarctic which could be used to support claims of an active administration and utilisation of the Dependencies, and also to demonstrate Britain's general involvement in Antarctica.

The inter-departmental committee and its report also had a second and indirect result. It almost certainly attracted the attention of influential figures in the Colonial Office to the Antarctic. "The "Khaki" election of December 1918, had been followed by the appointment of Lord Milner as Secretary of State for Colonies and he brought with him as Under-Secretary, Leopold Amery. Both men were imbued with the vision of a greater British Empire and

21 Hunter-Christie, p.244, stresses this point in defence of British claims of sovereignty in the Falkland Islands Dependencies.
consequently actively pursued policies which would strengthen and enlarge that vision. They have been described as "not the kind of men in this situation to exercise colonial self-restraint", and in his autobiography, Amery stated that he first raised the subject of Antarctica "when I went to the Colonial Office in 1919." Thus the inter-departmental committee's report appeared at a crucial moment. Also at this time, the Hydrographic Department of the Admiralty was interested in the Antarctic. They had prepared two memoranda for the inter-departmental committee in 1918 on the hydrography of the Dependencies and the currents of the South Atlantic. Then in 1919, they were responsible for a detailed monograph entitled "Territorial Claims in Antarctic Regions" which examined such claims and concluded that apart from Britain, only France could present sound claims to Antarctic regions outside the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

Armed with these facts, an imperialist like Amery could not let the rest of the Antarctic remain Terra Nullius. The whaling potential had already been proved and there was no reason to doubt that similar living and mineral riches existed elsewhere around the continent. Strategically he could point to the danger of its use as a base for enemy commerce raiders and submarines. But

probably most important for the Dominion Governments, the southern ocean provided a natural trade route connecting Australia, New Zealand, South America and South Africa, and control of the southern borders of these seas would safeguard Imperial connections. Thus Amery took the initiative and, incorporating these views, informed the New Zealand and Australian Governments of Britain's designs. The gradual development of British involvement in Antarctica had reached the stage whereby it was now an imperial concern. Consequently Britain looked to the Dominions to assist.
Chapter 2

New Zealand’s Connection: The Creation of the Ross Dependency

Proximity is the 'obvious' reason for New Zealand's involvement in Antarctica.¹ This was why Amery suggested that New Zealand, rather than Australia, administer the proposed annexation of the Ross Sea coasts.

From the time of Captain Cook’s voyages, New Zealand had always made a convenient staging post for southern explorers and until 1920, this had been New Zealand’s sole contact with the Antarctic. The colonial Government had regularly assisted such expeditions during their visits. Both of Captain Scott's expeditions received grants of £1,000 from the New Zealand Government, as did Shackleton's 1907 expedition. Interestingly, Shackleton was also appointed a Dominion postmaster and issued with 1d stamps over-printed "King Edward VIII Land", but this was probably the result of Shackleton canvassing financial assistance rather than any conscious administrative act by New Zealand.²

In 1916 there had been correspondence between the New Zealand, Australian and British Governments over the Aurora Relief Expedition, to which New Zealand contributed £1,850.³

¹'Obvious' because New Zealand's geographical relation to Antarctica is an ever-present, yet largely unspoken factor.
²Pers. Comm. Dr. Brian Roberts, 4 May 1978
However, such official support arose more from imperial goodwill than anything else. As one newspaper remarked, "the enterprise that the explorers will try to complete is one very dear to the whole Empire". Any action by the New Zealand Government was a response and not an initiative, for while the Antarctic was perhaps a fitting scene for great feats of exploration, and in this sense a very proper place for British endeavour, the Government could see no political reason why it should sponsor similar expeditions itself. In fact, it actually turned down requests for official backing for Mawson's 1912-14 Australasian Antarctic Expedition.

Individual New Zealanders, however, were very much involved in both the organisation and activities of the expeditions. Considerable public interest was aroused and for a brief moment towns such as Christchurch and Dunedin could feel they were part of larger world events. In 1910, the Lyttelton Times commented, "...if the Union Jack is flown over the South Pole there will be no doubt in Lyttelton's mind that the honour and the glory belong to her as much as to anybody". Because New Zealand was the last port of call, a degree of interest in the southern continent seemed natural. The expeditions and their heroic image helped instil an enduring interest among the New Zealand public which reappeared whenever Antarctic events became news.

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4 Lyttelton Times, 26 Nov. 1910.
5 Emergency supplies were sent by Government steamer, the Tutuankai, to Mawson's Macquarie Island station. Donnelly, p. 84, 149.
By 1920, the explorations of Sir James Clark Ross, Scott, Shackleton and Mawson had taken on a new importance for the British and New Zealand Governments. Amery stated that they, "...furnish(ed) indisputable claims to the greater part of the lands in this area". \(^7\) Ross and Shackleton in particular had raised the British flag and recorded statements of claim for the Crown; Ross in 1841 on Possession Island, and Shackleton's parties at the South Magnetic Pole in 1908 and on the Polar Plateau in 1909. \(^8\) These claims conferred on Britain extensive rights of discovery, particularly in Victoria Land. Yet nationals of other countries had also visited the area. \(^9\) The discoveries and claims of Amundsen's expedition in King Edward VII Land and at the South Pole were as valid as any of the British ones. The Colonial Office, however, was content to dismiss them on the grounds that the Norwegians had started from coasts discovered and mapped by previous British parties. \(^10\) Besides, if Britain was to control all of the Ross Sea, which was necessary for whaling and strategic purposes, the extension of sovereignty beyond the Norwegian claims to 150\(^0\) west was essential. Amery was prepared to ignore Amundsen's activities and suggested that the next step was for New Zealand and Australia to exchange views on his ideas and discuss the control of the Ross Sea.

\(^8\) Quartermain, L.B., *South To The Pole*, London 1967, p.31, 163,177.
\(^9\) E.g. The Anglo-Norwegian whaling expedition commanded by H.J. Bull landed at Cape Adare in January 1895. In January 1912, a Japanese expedition led by Choku Shirase explored the Ross Ice Shelf.
\(^10\) See Memorandum on the Control of the Antarctic, Mar.1921. G 48 A/3.
The New Zealand Government's response to Amery's letter was one of mild surprise. The head of the Department of External Affairs, J. D. Gray, commented, "it is difficult offhand to know what to suggest. This certainly represents the opposite extreme to our present external responsibilities." Previously, Britain had been reluctant to grant anything to New Zealand's territorial clamourings in the Pacific, and yet now here was an offer of a territory larger than all other New Zealand possessions combined. But this was not a period when New Zealand was inclined to question British policy. The attitude of the Government, and probably the country at large, was that New Zealand interests were best served by a dependent status within the Empire. The devotion of the Prime Minister, William Massey, to the mother-country was complete, "asking no question, but permitting no liberties." His Government's external relations were usually subordinated to the interests of Britain and the Empire.

Slightly different relations existed with Australia, however. In May 1920, the Australian Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, wrote to Massey stating that his Government had no objection to New Zealand assuming control of the Ross Sea area, but he suggested the two Governments discuss

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11 Not to be confused with the Department of External Affairs set up in 1943 to handle New Zealand's foreign relations. The original department was set up in 1919 and assumed the duties later taken over by the Department of Island Territories. McIntosh, A.D. "The origins of the Department of External Affairs and the formulation of an independent foreign policy," New Zealand In World Affairs, Vol.1, Wellington 1977, p.12.


what to do with the regions west of $160^0$ west, which were closer to Australia.\textsuperscript{14} Massey was reluctant to do this. He preferred all such matters to be directed to London and recommended they be pursued by the Australian and New Zealand representatives there.\textsuperscript{15}

Consequently, the matter was now taken up by Sir James Allen, the New Zealand High Commissioner to Britain. However, the Colonial Office were obviously in no hurry. Not until February 1921 were discussions held between Allen, Amery and the Australian representative, Senator Millen. They concluded that Australia and New Zealand should have separate spheres of control divided at $160^0$ east. Clearly, British ambitions now encompassed two thirds of the continent, and they were warily eyeing the remainder. However, to accomplish such a massive territory-grab required rather more than a decision between three politicians. The matter was referred to the Colonial Office legal advisers who produced the Colonial Office "Memorandum on Control of Antarctica" in March 1921.\textsuperscript{16}

The document was vitally important for it laid down the legal criterion for Antarctic sovereignty subscribed to by the Commonwealth authorities over the next twenty years. A title to unoccupied areas generally arose from permanent occupation. As this pre-requisite apparently seemed impossible in the Antarctic, the legal officers considered instead that sovereignty could be based on discovery, followed by the issue, and use, of instruments of control.

\textsuperscript{16} Later reprinted as Dominions No.78. G48 A/3.
Obviously, the type of administration carried out by Britain constituted, in their view, a valid claim to sovereignty. As time passed, however, other nations felt it did not.

It was already apparent that the question of discovery was not cut and dried. Expeditions besides the British and Australian had visited the areas intended for annexation. The Colonial Office was prepared to ignore Amundsen's claims in the Ross Sea region but west of 160° east, in the projected Australian sector, the activities of French, Americans and Germans could not be treated so lightly. Consequently, the memorandum stated that action could be taken immediately in the New Zealand area, but it was necessary to be more cautious in the Australian sphere.

How such action could be taken was considered in some detail. New Zealand was presented with two alternatives. The first followed a precedent used in the Kermadec and Cook Islands. By issuing an Order-in-Council under the Colonial Boundaries Act of 1895, the boundaries of New Zealand could be extended to include parts of Antarctica. However, the Act required the approval of the Dominion Parliament, a procedure the 1921 memorandum described as "elaborate". The alternative was to issue Letters Patent under the Royal Prerogative, similar to those used for the Falkland Islands Dependencies. These would proclaim the area to be a British possession and a dependency of New Zealand. Carefully, the choice between the two means of control was left to the New Zealand Government, but the Colonial Office expressed its preference for the latter. It was "likely to attract less
Presented with this information, the decision was left to the New Zealand Government - and nothing was done. The whole question languished for over a year until, suddenly, the developments which had prompted the setting up of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, spilled over into the Ross Sea. In June 1922, the Colonial Office informed the New Zealand Government it had received an application to hunt whales there. The applicant was the pioneer of whaling in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, C.A. Larsen. He was now co-director of the newly formed Rosshavet Whaling Co.

It was well known that there were large numbers of whales in the Ross Sea. Sir James Clark Ross reported innumerable sightings. The first reported landfall on this side of the continent occurred during an exploratory whaling expedition in 1895. This expedition recorded many whale sightings, but all of the rorqual variety which they were ill-equipped to catch. A hint of possible developments was made in a memorandum attached to the report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Research and Development in the Dependencies of the Falkland Islands.

20 Quartermain, 1967, p.56.
It stated, "...the Ross Sea, and the pack ice outside its mouth, is now, as in the days of Ross, frequented by great numbers of the different species of rorquals which are now the object of the whaling industry in the waters between South Georgia and Graham's Land." 21

Various approaches had been made to the British and New Zealand Governments to hunt these whales even before World War One. Certain Norwegian and British companies were keen to use Auckland and Campbell Islands as bases for factories and some had contemplated Ross Sea operations. 22 But New Zealand's Marine Department was unhappy to permit activities near any New Zealand sub-Antarctic islands. The Secretary of Marine remarked, "it is unadvisable to encourage people there on account of the seals". 23 Given this unenthusiastic attitude, and the massive difficulties presented by the climate, lack of suitable anchorages, and limited technology, it was more profitable to whale elsewhere.

The proposals Larsen presented appeared to have a far greater chance of success. He planned an expedition of two factory ships, a support vessel, and ten steam whale-catchers, based on sheltered anchorages either in the Balleny Islands or from the mainland itself. Although bold

22 See correspondence in M2/9/7 Pt.1. A fully fledged colony of up to 300 people had been established on Auckland Island in 1849, but lasted only five years. See McLaren, F. B., The Auckland Islands: Their Eventful History, Wellington 1948.
23 Secretary of Marine to Min. of Marine, 25 Apr. 1912, M2/9/7 Pt.1.
in conception, Larsen had already proved he could carry out such enterprises. He was also aware of British interests in the Ross Sea region and following the example of developments in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, no doubt felt it was wise to approach the British for a licence. 24

The British Government referred Larsen’s request to New Zealand, as he intended to operate through a New Zealand port, and because New Zealand was likely to administer any declaration of British sovereignty over the whaling grounds the British recommended a licence be granted. Larsen’s application amounted to tacit recognition of British sovereignty and hence supported any British claim. Also, if his operations proved successful, then there was every reason to expect a similar whaling boom to that on the other side of the continent. The Colonial Office were also under some obligation to Larsen for supplies of whale oil during World War One. Bearing all these factors in mind, it was clear some decision was necessary on both the issue of sovereignty and the licence.

Massey responded to the first matter quickly. "In the interests of the Empire," he said, "steps should be taken to vest the jurisdiction over the Ross Sea area in the Dominion of New Zealand, unless His Majesty’s Government wishes to retain such control". 25 His Majesty’s Government did not. After all, the whole idea of the previous

24 It was reported that Larsen was advised to do this by the King of Norway. O’Connell & Riordan, p.312. His application was accompanied by a recommendation from the Norwegian Legation in London. S.S.Col. to N.Z.G.G., 31 Oct. 1922. G48 A/3.

negotiations had been for New Zealand to take control. The Colonial Office suggested that New Zealand should accept the Letters Patent option of the 1921 memorandum. Consequently, with the decision already made for it on an issue it regarded merely as a duty to the Empire, the New Zealand Government agreed.

There was more initiative and interest over the licence application, however. On this, Massey replied that his Government was happy to agree to a licence as long as it was not exclusive. But Larsen, with his eye on possible large profits, wanted a monopoly. Massey's attitude had clearly been influenced by his Attorney-General, Sir Francis Dillon Bell. Bell argued that an exclusive licence contravened Section 2 of the Fisheries Act of 1912. However, there were deeper motives. In the first place, the Marine Department still feared poaching on the seal populations of the sub-Antarctic islands. Besides this, there was a strong desire for conservation of the living resources. Bell himself showed a continuing interest in Antarctic whaling and constantly championed whaling restrictions. In 1930, in a debate in the Upper House, he declared, "my interest has been ... to try and save the whale". Yet there was also

28 Bell to Min. of Marine, 10 Jul. 1922. M2/9/7 Pt.1.
another reason. Many New Zealanders were suspicious of the whalers because they were Norwegians. This attitude became clearer in later dealings with whaling companies. 30

Thus, when a draft licence was forwarded to the New Zealand High Commissioner, then attending a League of Nations meeting with Bell, alterations were suggested to remove the exclusive clause and insert protection for seals. 31 The Colonial Office accepted these changes but they would still have preferred an exclusive licence.

The licence finally was granted on the 21 December, 1922. It was to run for twenty one years and included a fee of £200 for every factory ship and a levy of 2/6 on each barrel of oil taken over 20,000 barrels. It also laid down restrictions on methods and catch modelled on those in force in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. The wording of the licence made it clear that a British title existed over the territories between 160° east and 150° east longitudes. It stated that the company would operate in "certain territorial waters belonging to His Majesty situated in or near the Ross Sea". At the same time, any liability by the licensor for privileges attached to the agreement, such as setting up offices in the area, was carefully avoided. Finally, the formal announcement that the area was British territory was anticipated by the provision for the transfer of the licence to New Zealand. 32

30 "Note for the Governor General on the declaration of the Ross Dependency". G 48 A/3 (1).
By issuing this licence, Britain demonstrated its territorial interest in the area and its determination to control the Antarctic whaling industry. For both political reasons, and past dealings, Larsen was encouraged. If he proved that a viable whaling ground existed, tight controls would have to be imposed on any following boom. It was thus imperative to assert British sovereignty and so provide a legal basis for these controls.

Even before Larsen began operations, further licence applications appeared. On the 26 February, 1923, Christian Salvesen and Company, the major British whaling firm, applied. In May 1922, a Norwegian firm did the same. Both applications were referred to Wellington for a final decision but this time the Colonial Office recommended they be turned down. The whaling grounds had yet to be proved, the damage to whale stocks from new operations was unknown, and it was felt that Larsen should be given a fair run. Because of this, the New Zealand Government backed down on its opposition to an exclusive licence. On the 30 May, 1923, the Minister of Marine agreed to defer consideration of any other licences until the results of Larsen's expedition were known. Yet there was some reassurance in the Colonial Office's attitude for it showed rigorous supervision would be applied to the licencees and their operations. This was what the New Zealand Government really wanted.

Larsen's licence lent added urgency to questions relating to sovereignty. The licence had been issued under the assumption that the Ross Sea coasts were undeclared British territory. All that was necessary was to issue Letters Patent formalising British control. The New Zealand Government had already agreed to this course of action and it was expected that the territory would be governed as a dependency of New Zealand. However, in July 1922, legal opinion within the Colonial Office began to have doubts about this procedure.  

If the area was an undeclared British territory, it appeared to fall within the definition of Section 6 of the British Settlements Act of 1887. This Section stated that any British possession not acquired by cession or conquest, or not under any British legislature was defined as a "British Settlement". Secondly, Section 3 of the Act delegated legislative authority to three or more persons within the territory, and the Colonial Office wanted it conferred on the Governor General of New Zealand.  

These questions were put to the British Crown Law Officers. Their reply was brief and somewhat ambiguous. Discovery alone gave only an incomplete, or "inchoate", title, they said, but nevertheless, the Colonial Office was right in asserting that the area was British territory. Therefore, "it was impossible to escape the conclusion" that it was a "British Settlement". Section 3

35 Just who this 'legal opinion' was is not explained, but presumably it was the Colonial Office legal adviser. See O'Connell & Riordan, p.313.
36 O'Connell & Riordan, pp312-13, 316-328.
could be avoided by using prerogative powers under Section 2. The prerogative could be used to delegate the powers of the Crown in Council to the Governor General of New Zealand. The correct procedure was to issue an Order-in-Council under the British Settlements Act.\(^{37}\)

New Zealand was informed of the change of procedure early in 1923 and accepted without question. This was unfortunate. The British Settlements Act had been stretched to a degree that it was almost transparent. Subsequent legal opinion felt that by avoiding Section 3 and the dubious definition of a "British Settlement", the basis of the claim was unsound.\(^{38}\) The Dominion's Office considered the question in 1931 and 1932 when discussing the creation of the Australian Antarctic Territory (A.A.T.). They acknowledged the doubts about using the Act,

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\text{since it must be admitted that this territory (the A.A.T.) is icebound and less habitable even than the Ross Dependency, and that the description of it as a "British Settlement" involves an artificial interpretation.}
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As a result, the British Crown Law Officers ignored the Act altogether and recommended a new procedure. Instead an Order-in-Council was issued and followed by the passing of the Australian Antarctic Territory Acceptance Act by the Australian parliament.\(^{39}\) In 1921, New Zealand had been

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\(^{37}\) O'Connell & Riordan, p.313.


\(^{39}\) O'Connell & Riordan, pp316-328, also Roberts-Wray, K., Commonwealth And Colonial Law, London 1966, p.179.
offered an almost identical method in the Colonial Boundaries Act, but because of the Colonial Office's insistence on secrecy, this had been rejected. As a result the New Zealand Government allowed itself to be put in a position of administering a territorial claim with a very unsatisfactory legal basis.

Once the method of proclaiming sovereignty was apparently settled, there seemed to be nothing standing in the way of a rapid completion of this stage of the extension of British control over Antarctica. In mid-June, 1923, Massey informed the Colonial Office that he wished to delay the immediate issue of the Order-in-Council so he could present authorised information on its background to Parliament. The Colonial Office objected. In the first place, they wanted as little publicity as possible. Secondly, the impending departure of Larsen's expedition made rapid action essential, as the activities of the Norwegian whalers could upset any unconsolidated British rights. Realisation of this filtered beyond the closed circles of imperial communications. The director of the newly formed Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, Frank Debenham, wrote a worried letter to the well-known Australian Antarctic navigator, Captain J. K. Davis. He urged action. "We cannot allow the Australian (sic) sector of the continent to be sequestrated by the Norwegians", he said. They were likely to exploit the information

gathered by earlier British expeditions and cause "the complete and ultimate destruction of the whales". 42

Pressing by the same mixture of nationalism and idealism, the Colonial Office rushed ahead with the issue of the Order-in-Council. On the 30 July, 1923, acting under the British Settlements Act, the coasts of the Ross Sea, "with the islands and territories adjacent thereto between the 160th degree of East Longitude and the 150th degree of West Longitude, which are situated south of 60th degree of South Latitude" were declared a "British Settlement" to be administered as a British territory by the Governor General of New Zealand. 43 The Ross Dependency had come into being.

This large new addition to New Zealand's territorial responsibilities attracted little attention within the Dominion. Massey informed the House of Representatives of the Order-in-Council on the 3 August. Discussion was brief and the only response was mild banter and a tongue-in-cheek suggestion for a parliamentary visit. Massey tried to maintain a sense of occasion but even he was forced to remark, "I am unable to say whether the territory is likely to prove particularly valuable or not as I have no means of knowing". 44

Eleven days later, Sir Francis Dillon Bell clarified New Zealand's attitude to the Ross Dependency. The administration was "on behalf of the Empire as a whole, and not

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42Debenham to Davis, 5 Jun. 1923. The letter was forwarded to Sir Joseph Kinsey, an Antarctic enthusiast who forwarded it to Massey. PM 208/9/1.
specially in the interests of New Zealand". It was a British possession, not a New Zealand one, and New Zealand had to comply with instructions from the Crown transmitted through the Secretary of State for Colonies. But New Zealand was not quite the puppet that Bell portrayed. The Secretary of State for Colonies had cabled,

I have it in command from the King to convey to you His Majesty's instructions that the Governor of the Ross Dependency in the execution of the powers and authorities vested in him by the Order of the 30th July shall be guided by the advice of the Executive Council of His Majesty's Dominion of New Zealand.

However, it was not in Bell's nature, nor in the Government's interest to assert an independent New Zealand role. The Dependency had been created on British insistence and the New Zealand Government was perfectly happy to have any decisions to be made in London. Yet the fact remained that New Zealand had taken on a commitment which fully involved it with both Britain's Antarctic policy and any developments in the whaling industry. Massey had remarked on the 3rd August, "so far as I can see, the cost to the Government will be little or nothing". In the following years, it was found that the cost was rather more.

Chapter 3

New Zealand and the Imperial Antarctic Policy in the Twenties

The creation of the Ross Dependency was only the second part of a policy designed to secure an all British Antarctica. New Zealand had shown it would play a loyal role. However, during the later Twenties there were indications that the Empire's freedom of action was to some extent limited and that its policy could encounter considerable opposition. Later developments affecting the Ross Dependency helped to educate the New Zealand Government in the wider realities of international relations.

The first warnings were not long in coming. Aroused by the 1923 Order-in-Council, in March 1924, the French Government proclaimed sovereignty over an area between 136° east and 143° east, and between 66° and 67° south. The basis of this claim was the eighty year old discoveries of Dumont D'Urville who in 1841 had landed on a small islet near Pointe Geologie, and claimed the coastline for France. Though these rights of discovery seemed even more tenuous than some of the British claims, they had tacitly been recognised by Britain in 1913. Unaware of this however, both Australia and New Zealand reacted. In April 1925, the New Zealand Government asked whether Britain still intended to implement the 1921 proposal to extend British

sovereignty west of the Ross Dependency. The Australians were even more vocal, acting under pressure from a powerful scientific lobby spearheaded by Sir Douglas Mawson, leader of the 1912-14 Australasian Antarctic Expedition. Mawson called on the Australian Government to challenge the French claim and counter-claim all Antarctic regions south of Australia. However, Britain had to reply that in view of the 1913 correspondence and present circumstances it was unwise to challenge the French claim directly.

Like the French, the Norwegians also reacted to the Ross Dependency, but in a different way. They protested that the territory's boundaries ignored the discoveries and claims of Amundsen. After consulting with the New Zealand Government, the British replied that as British parties had discovered the Dependency's coastlines and the Polar Plateau first, they would not recognise the Norwegian claims. This reply was clearly unacceptable to the Norwegians, especially when Britain saw fit to make extensive claims from less substantial discoveries than Amundsen's. Nevertheless, apart from formal protest, which it did again in 1927, Norway could do little through diplomatic channels about the Ross Dependency. However, the British and Dominion Governments had been served a warning that their Antarctic expansion

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4 S.S.D.A. to N.Z.G.G., 24 Dec. 1925. G 48 A/3 (1). The British obviously felt it was unwise to create any unnecessary tension with the French at this time.
was not passing unnoticed.

The imperial policy of total domination of Antarctica reached its climax at the 1926 Imperial Conference. The growing Australian interest, Norwegian protests, and the French annexation led the Conference to approve a plan to further British interests in Antarctica, "in the hope that ultimately it may be found possible to assert and to maintain British control over the Antarctic region". For New Zealand, this promised further commitments and deeper embroilment in territorial expansion.

The plan was to follow three stages: firstly, an announcement that British rights existed in certain areas of the continent, secondly, a formal act of possession (which probably required an expedition), and finally, annexation. The wider aspect of this plan and its expansionary totality bear the stamp of Leo Amery's influence. He was now Secretary of State for the Dominions and chaired and directed the Conference committee on British policy in Antarctica. Initially it was intended to deal with Australian interests and settle the question of sovereignty west of the Ross Dependency. The Proceedings of the 1926 Imperial Conference stated that British rights of discovery existed in Coats Land, Enderby Land, Kemp Land, Queen Mary Land, Wilkes Land, King George V Land, and Daines Land, in fact, half the unclaimed area of Antarctica (see map 2). Not content with this, in secret committee meetings, the British tried to

8 Brit. P a r l . P a p e r s, 1926 Cmd, 2768, XI, 545.
interest the South Africans in the area between Coates and Enderby Lands. But the South Africans were unwilling to become the tools of imperial policy. At the same time, the British approached the New Zealand delegates, the Prime Minister, Gordon Coates, and Sir Francis Dillon Bell. Moves were afoot to expand the Ross Dependency further east.

Early in 1926, a Norwegian whaler, Lars Christensen, had asked the British Government for a whaling licence similar to that issued to the Rosshavet Company. His intention was to operate east of the Ross Dependency from Peter 1st Island, or Dougherty Island. This second island didn’t exist – an interesting commentary on just how much was known about the lands about to be annexed. Drawing on the Rosshavet example, the British felt a licence would strengthen their claim to this area. They thus suggested to Coates and Dillon Bell that New Zealand grant the licence as a preliminary to a later extension of the Ross and Falkland Islands Dependencies.

The New Zealanders were quite willing to agree to this idea, and indeed to all Antarctic proposals at the Conference. The only issue which concerned them particularly was the question of Ross Sea whaling and territorial limits, not territorial expansion. They were perfectly content to leave the execution of policy up to Britain. To the New Zealand delegates, and most other representatives at the Conference,

9 Minutes of the Committee on British Policy in the Antarctic. EA 11/27.
11 Type-written brief prepared for the New Zealand Prime Minister before the Conference. EA 11/22. See also Chapt. 4, p.60.
the Antarctic was only a minor matter. 12

The Conference recognised that its Antarctic plans were ambitious, but not unrealistic. The Conference committee on Antarctica stated, however, that it was important to reinforce any claims as strongly as possible. Aware of the doubts about the legality of sovereignty over uninhabited and unexplored areas, the committee urged that the best way to protect British rights was by close control, "sufficient", they said, "to exclude competing control". 13

But the only effective means of doing this was by naval patrol, which in New Zealand's case was plainly impossible. Yet, if any thought was given to this problem it obviously did not hinder the plans to extend the Ross Dependency.

Negotiations between Britain and New Zealand over Christensen's whaling licence continued into 1927. The details of the licence were handled chiefly by civil servants in London, on the advice of a new and important Commonwealth body, the secret Inter Departmental Committee on Antarctica. After 1930 it was renamed the Polar Committee. 14 Arising from a series of ad hoc inter departmental meetings associated

12 The Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain, was absent when the final reports were considered, so the British Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, remarked "...We can get on with the rest of the business and keep the biggest items till he comes. That would mean we start with the Report of the Committee on British Policy in Antarctica...". It may only have been a small matter, yet when Coates asked whether the report would be made public, the Secretary of the Imperial Conference, Sir Maurice Hankey, replied in alarm, "Certainly not!" EA 11/20.

13 Report E.130, 1926 Imperial Conference. EA 11/22.

14 The records of meetings of the committee are scattered throughout departmental files in the National Archives, Wellington. Undoubtedly, a full set may well be found in the files of the New Zealand High Commission or Public Records Office in London.
with the 1926 conference, this committee had evolved by the mid 1930's into the central co-ordinating body for Commonwealth Antarctic policies. It was comprised mainly of senior British civil servants, but always included representatives from the Dominion High Commissions, particularly Britain's two Antarctic partners, Australia and New Zealand. As an inter department committee, it could only work in an advisory capacity. Nevertheless, it was extremely influential. It met over one hundred and thirty times before it went into recession on the outbreak of World War Two. Behind any Commonwealth action in Antarctica after 1926 lay the deliberating hand of the committee.

The New Zealand Government played a secondary role in negotiations over Christensen's licence. Yet, as with the Rosshavet licence, it was concerned that stringent controls should be placed on exploitation. By mid 1927, the Government was prepared to see the licence signed. In December, the Prime Minister spoke publicly of new New Zealand Antarctic responsibilities. However, in saying this, he was unaware of the implications of recent Antarctic developments.

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15 A leading member of the committee in the Twenties was Sir Harry Batterbee, assistant Under Secretary of State for the Dominions, and later the first British High Commissioner in Wellington. The Dominion representatives were usually the secretaries of the High Commission. One exception was R. G. Casey, who constantly attended while he was the Australian External Affairs Liaison Officer in London. He developed a lasting interest in Antarctic politics.

16 See correspondence in M 29/13.

17 Dominion, 2 Dec. 1927.
After 1927 the activities of Lars Christensen's whalers and a private United States expedition led by Richard Evelyn Byrd upset the completion of British domination of Antarctica and complicated New Zealand's position in the Ross Dependency.

Even while the New Zealand Government was making up its mind about granting a licence to Christensen, one of his whale catchers was exploring between the Ross Dependency and Falkland Islands Dependencies. By 1927 Christensen controlled more of the whaling industry than any other single individual and fearing exclusion from the whaling grounds, concluded that British hegemony and whaling controls were neither in his nor Norway's interests. He thus fitted out a series of exploring expeditions combining commercial and scientific investigation with territorial annexation. In August 1927, he received authority from the Norwegian Government to annex new lands in Antarctica. After his initial probes east of the Ross Dependency, Christensen bought a specially fitted vessel, the Norvegia. Operating east of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, the ship's captain claimed Bouvet Island in 1928. As this island and the continental territorial ambitions entertained by Christensen lay on the opposite side of Antarctica from the Ross Dependency, New Zealand was only indirectly involved. However, the British efforts to confine Norwegian advances affected New Zealand.

18 Christensen, passim.

Britain disputed the Bouvet claim. 20 Finally, after diplomatic negotiations, Britain and Norway reached an informal agreement in November 1928 by which Britain would drop any claim it had to Bouvet Island if in return Norway refrained from occupying those territories named in the 
Proceedings of the 1926 Imperial Conference and assisted in the control of whaling. 21 But this agreement did not exclude Norway from the continent entirely, and Christensen was not prevented from continuing his explorations. What it did was provide a measure of protection for those areas Britain and Australia were interested in.

Christensen's activities had spurred Australians into pressing for the implementation of the main territorial aims of the 1926 Conference. Once again Mawson and his colleagues urged action. In July 1928, the Australian Government consulted New Zealand and Britain about an expedition. 22 The British were disinclined to lend the only really suitable transportation, Scott's ship, the Discovery. 23 New Zealand was even less keen about the idea.

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20 The British Government had been in the process of negotiating a whaling licence for Bouvet Island with a Norwegian firm on the basis of British rights derived from a landing made by a British sealing party in 1825. The Norwegian action led to questions in the House of Commons, see M 25/2190. These actions were associated with another British attempt to get South Africa interested in Antarctica. Report E(30)20, 1930 Imperial Conference. M 25/2190.


23 The British authorities suggested the issue of a whaling licence to a South African firm was sufficient basis to proclaim sovereignty over these coasts. S.S.D.A. to N.Z.G.G., 12 Oct. 1928. M 25/2029.
Sir Francis Dillon Bell, then Attorney-General, disapproved of the initiative coming from Australia rather than Britain. He also questioned the territorial value of an expedition, and was suspicious of expense and funding. Nevertheless, the New Zealand Government agreed to supply the small sum of £2,500 if the expedition eventuated. While the Norwegian advances were disturbing, both Britain and New Zealand obviously felt sure that British sovereignty could still be extended over the Australian areas and east of the Ross Dependency without undue difficulty. Such an attitude did not persist for long. The reason for this was the appearance of a new force in Antarctic politics, the United States.

In January, 1928, the Marine Department's Nautical Advisor, Captain G. S. Hooper, brought to the attention of the Secretary of Marine news of a private United States expedition organised and led by Richard Evelyn Byrd. His intentions, according to newspaper reports, were to fly to the South Pole from a base in the Bay of Whales and even, it was reported, establish an Esquimo colony! Hooper remarked,

I think exploration within the Ross Dependency should be subject to the Governor-General's pleasure... we should not be placid whilst a foreign national avowedly proceeds to plant his country's flag at the coincidental apex of two areas which have been proclaimed to be British Dependencies.

For once there was some local reaction to Antarctic developments. However, Sir Francis Dillon Bell, as Attorney-General,

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dealt it a sharp rebuff. "An international matter such as that which is raised here", he said, "is not one on which it is the duty of the New Zealand Government to advise the Governor". Rather, the matter had to be dealt with in London.26 Such restrictions were largely self-imposed, in line with New Zealand's general attitude to foreign affairs. But feeling that the matter was possibly important, the Prime Minister asked the Dominions Office whether some permission or acknowledgement of British interests should be obtained from Byrd or the United States Government.27

The British replied by sending a full despatch on Byrd's intentions gleaned from sources in Washington. It was agreed that both British and New Zealand rights should be brought to the attention of the United States authorities. The British Ambassador in Washington was instructed to inform the State Department of British rights in Antarctica outlined in the Proceedings of the 1926 Imperial Conference. He was also to offer, tactfully, assistance to the expedition while in the Ross or Falkland Islands Dependencies.28

A note containing these points was duly delivered to the State Department on the 17 November, 1928, but to avoid provocation it was mildly worded.29

Byrd's expedition was important in two senses. Firstly he was pioneering Antarctic aviation, a fact of great significance for the future. Secondly, he hoped to explore east of the Ross Dependency. New discoveries were almost certain

and these could provide a basis for a direct challenge to any further extension of British sovereignty beyond the Ross Dependency. However, the Inter Departmental Committee on Antarctica was busy with a plan to forestall any United States territorial rights.

In 1927, the Australian, Sir Hubert Wilkins, announced his intention to fly across Antarctica from the Antarctic Peninsula to the Ross Sea. The flight was to take place during the summer of 1928-1929, just when Byrd would be establishing his Bay of Whales base. Although Wilkins had received a large grant from the anti-British Hearst newspaper corporation, he agreed to a request to claim territory for Britain and to drop British flags during his flight. In the event, however, Wilkins' flights were unsuccessful in their political objective, for hampered by conditions, he was only able to fly within the Falkland Island Dependencies.

Meanwhile, other avenues for protecting British rights also produced problems. The offer to assist Byrd in the Ross Dependency embarrassed New Zealand. The British Government was informed that no special help could be provided for Byrd or Wilkins. However, while Byrd was in New Zealand he received free radio and telegraph facilities, free rail transport and remission of harbour dues. The offer of assistance in the Ross Dependency, clearly impractical but designed to demonstrate New Zealand administrative rights, was repeated in a telegram from the Prime Minister to Byrd on his departure. The tradition of New Zealand

32 Donnelly, pp. 93-6.
generosity to passing Antarctic expeditions was maintained but this time official assistance had ulterior motives. Byrd left for the Ross Sea on November 1928, watched by a group of rather worried imperialists in London and Wellington.

The Byrd incursions, combined with Norwegian activities now threatening to spread from sub-Antarctic islands to the continent proper were sufficient to tip the balance in favour of a Commonwealth expedition to the regions west of the Ross Dependency. In November 1928, the British changed their minds and offered to lend the Discovery to Australia. The Dominions Office cabled,

...We feel somewhat uneasy as to the present rate of progress towards the realisation of aims of the last Imperial Conference... In the face of foreign activity we feel very doubtful as to the possibility of preserving by diplomatic means immunity, even of areas specified within the Australian sector, unless the claim thereto is strengthened by political demonstration.

As a result, the British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition (BANZARE) came into being. The New Zealand Government contributed its promised £2,500 and offered the services of two scientists, Dr. R. A. Falla and R. G. Simmers. Otherwise, New Zealand's interest was limited, restricted by fear of costs and a feeling that any benefits would probably fall to Australia. Dr. Ernest Marsden, of the B.S.I.R. summed the expedition up. "I presume that the objects of the expeditions are, firstly, territorial as regards Australia's claims to the land westward of the Ross Dependency

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34 Early in 1929, news was received of the Norvegia's intention to visit Enderby Land. N.Z.H.C. (London) to N.Z.P.M., 31 Jan. 1929. M 25/2321.

to Enderby Land ...and secondly to make such scientific observations as are worthwhile".\textsuperscript{36} Indeed, the exploratory and scientific accomplishments of BANZARE over the 1929-1930 and 1930-1931 seasons were extensive. The voyages were significant for Britain and Australia by providing the pretext for the creation of the Australian Antarctic Territory in 1933. However, from New Zealand's point of view developments associated with Byrd were more important.

Early in 1929 reports filtered through that Byrd and members of his expedition had made claims in the area east of the Ross Dependency. The Inter-Departmental Committee on Antarctica asked the New Zealand Government to make discrete enquiries.\textsuperscript{37} In Wellington, the Dominion painted a dark picture by reporting that a member of Byrd's expedition had tried to investigate local records on the setting up of the Dependency, "...and he indicated the possibility of the validity being tested by the United States".\textsuperscript{38} Officials in Wellington were put out by these reports, for if true, Byrd's claims would frustrate any expansion of the Ross Dependency. There was even greater concern when a leak from the State Department hinted that certain elements favoured a United States claim to challenge Britain's implied rights over the whole continent.\textsuperscript{39} The British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Eeme Howard commented drily, "The great interest taken by the public in the Byrd Expedition and the

\textsuperscript{38}Dominion, 8 Apr. 1929.
\textsuperscript{39}Hanessian, J., New Zealand And The Antarctic, Pt.1, New York 1962, p.5. See also the editorial of the Christchurch Times, 23 Jun. 1930.
growing desire of the United States to have a finger in every pie which may produce a plum or two are, however, adequate reasons for expecting a note." But it did not arrive. Instead, the earlier British note of the 17 November, 1928, was acknowledged without comment.

This episode demonstrated the ambiguity which was to accompany the United States attitude to Antarctic sovereignty in the following years. On one hand was the official position laid down by the Secretary of State, C. E. Hughes, in 1924. He stated that claims of sovereignty in polar regions were not valid without permanent settlement, and in absence of this, the United States would not recognise any territorial claims. Hughes' premise seemed to be that polar conditions were so harsh that settlement could never occur. This doctrine was also convenient. It clothed United States activities with a holier-than-thou approach of making no claims and recognising no claims. But at the same time, there was always a constant expansionist undercurrent which threatened to surface with massive claims in the Antarctic Peninsula, Wilkes Land, and later, in the areas of Byrd's discoveries. However, in 1929 it seemed the Secretary of State, G. L. Stimson, wanted to avoid a confrontation.

Replying to a Senate motion demanding a United States claim,

42. Hackworth, p.453. Hughes' doctrine arose from Norwegian enquiries about claims in the Arctic. The whole question of polar sovereignty is one beloved by international jurists and is open to many interpretations. e.g. Auburn, F. M., The Ross Dependency, The Hague 1972, Chaps. 2 & 3, and Kish, J., The Law Of International Spaces, Leiden 1973, passim.
he is reported to have said, "I cannot understand Congressmen who are anxious to abandon the Philippines, which are well peopled and with rich mineral resources, turning next minute to push forward a United States claim to barren and unpopulated territory". 43

Now thoroughly awake to Byrd's activities, the British made one more attempt to confine his claims by using Sir Hubert Wilkins. The Inter Departmental Committee on Antarctica seized on Wilkins' plan for another trans-Antarctic flight during the 1929-1930 season and offered him a grant of £7,500, plus the use of the Discovery Committee's ship, the William Scoresby, on the condition he made territorial claims for Britain. The New Zealand Government also considered a contribution if Wilkins' activities led to an extension of the Ross Dependency. 44 In October, 1929, he received a royal commission to claim territory. 45

Unfortunately for Britain and New Zealand, such elaborate and expensive preparations came to nothing for Wilkins was once again prevented by weather conditions from making long flights.

Having failed to counteract Byrd, and faced with

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44 Minutes of Inter Departmental Committee on Antarctica, 13 May 1929. M 25/2321.

45 On the 9 May, 1929, Wilkins had met a full meeting of the Inter Departmental Committee to discuss his plans. Present were H.R.H. Prince George, Sir Harry Batterbee, Major R. C. Casey (Aust.), A. Crabb (N.Z.), Capt., later Rear Admiral, Edgell (Admiralty), J. Thompson (Ministry of Agr. & Fisheries), J. O. Borley and E. R. Darnley (Colonial Office), A. W. A. Leeper (Foreign Office) and P. A., later Sir Alexander Clutterbuck (Dominions Office).
United States non-recognition, all the New Zealand Government could do was maintain a pretense of administration of the Ross Dependency by empty offers of assistance and diplomatic protest against any infringement of sovereign rights. If there was this much difficulty with existing claims, there seemed little chance that the territory could be expanded. Byrd had named, explored and claimed large areas east of the Ross Dependency, calling the area Marie Byrd Land. In the process, he had demonstrated the value of aircraft in Antarctica on the very doorstep, and spilling into, the Ross Dependency.

Byrd had severely jeopardised the plans to expand the Ross Dependency. The Norwegians now delivered the final blow to the realisation of an all-British Antarctica. The threatened visit of the Norvegia to the Antarctic mainland occurred in the 1929-1930 season and caused something of a minor controversy. South African and British newspapers seized on the intended visit of the Norvegia and the BANZAR expedition to the same areas as a race for territory.\(^{46}\) Within days of this, New Zealand issued revised Ross Sea whaling regulations, adding to Norwegian fears of being elbowed out of Antarctica.\(^{47}\) The clash between the two

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\(^{46}\) Grenville Price, p.27 and Bogen, pp.72-3.
\(^{47}\) This led to another Norwegian protest note on the 8 November, 1929. M 25/2190. The British Government commented that as the Norwegian authorities had sent their previous note over two years before, it was not necessary to follow this one up. However they asked the New Zealand Government to assure the Norwegians that the whaling regulations did not apply beyond the three mile limit. N.Z.H.C. (London) to N.Z.P.M., 27 Nov. 1929. M 25/2321.
expeditions was resolved, however, once they met in the field. The Norvegia turned west to explore beyond Enderby Land while Mawson, leader of BANZARE, took the Discovery east. But the Norvegia's activities had their effect on British policy. At the 1930 Imperial Conference, the committee discussing policy on Antarctica concluded that Norwegian penetration between Enderby Land and Coates Land was a fait accompli. Byrd's claims frustrated any territorial ambitions between the Ross Dependency and Falkland Islands Dependencies, and coupled with the Norwegian claims "interfered with the completion of the full programme for the extension of British control recommended by the 1926 Imperial Conference". Recognising that their ultimate objective was now unobtainable, the committee drew comfort from the fact that present Commonwealth claims were intact. However, policy was accordingly re-aligned. The main aims now were firstly to complete the exploration and then annex the Australian areas, and secondly to reinforce and maintain sovereignty in the Ross Dependency and Falkland Island Dependencies. However, in the face of gradually mounting international interest in the southern continent, this was not to prove an easy task.

49 Britain also was disturbed by Argentinian territorial interest in the South Orkneys arising from a meteorological station they had based there since 1904. The question of applying the sector principle (see Chapt.1, p.14) was played down because of this, despite the Canadian Government's obvious interest in seeing it used in the Arctic.
New Zealand had already discovered this. Quite apart from the questions raised by Byrd's expedition, the New Zealand Government had experienced that it could do little to enforce its control of the Ross Dependency. Over the previous seven years the administration of whaling in the Ross Sea had revealed the shortcomings of an Antarctic territorial claim.
Chapter 4

The Ross Dependency and Ross Sea Whaling

The origins of the Ross Dependency owed a great deal to British experiences with whaling in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. The British Government had realised that whaling was economically and strategically valuable. As shore bases were essential to process whale carcasses, by proclaiming sovereignty over the territories surrounding the whaling grounds, Britain was able to control the industry by licensing the whalers. Consequently, the Rosshavet Company's application for a licence to whale in the Ross Sea had accelerated the proclamation of sovereignty over its coasts. Whaling was not the sole reason for the existence of the Ross Dependency. But because of the rich offshore whaling grounds, for ten years after 1923 it became the main pre-occupation of New Zealand's administration.

On the 10 August, 1923, the Rosshavet licence was transferred to New Zealand control.¹ The next day, the New Zealand Cabinet delegated responsibility for the territory to the Department of External Affairs, with the Marine Department to advise on fisheries.² Effectively this meant that the Marine Department ended up handling most matters. On the 14 November, regulations were gazetted applying all present New Zealand laws and all future legislation to the Ross Dependency unless either

¹This had been specifically provided for in the licence. See Chapt. 2, p.10.
²Cabinet minute, 11 Aug. 1923. PM 208/9/1. See also Chapt. 2, footnote 11.
inapplicable or specifically exempted.\textsuperscript{3} At the same time, Captain G. S. Hooper, the Nautical Adviser of the Marine Department, was appointed Administrator of the Ross Dependency.\textsuperscript{4} The position was created to give Hooper official status as a New Zealand observer with the Ross-shavet expedition, then about to leave Hobart for the Ross Sea. Although these steps were somewhat perfunctory, they were quite adequate to fulfill an imperial territorial responsibility which held few difficulties and promised fewer rewards.

Indeed, a great deal of doubt still existed about how successful the whole whaling venture would be, particularly whether whaling ships could even penetrate the pack ice. Aware of the difficulties, C. A. Larsen had converted an old liner, renaming it the Sir James Clark Ross. It was equipped to winch whales over the side of the ship so they could then be processed, or "flenced", in comparative comfort on the deck, rather than in the icy waters alongside. To capture the whales, the S.J.C. Ross was accompanied by five small whale catchers.

The first season, from 1923 to 1924, proved that a factory ship could operate relatively successfully in the Ross Sea. Because of a failure with the winch system however, the S.J.C. Ross was forced to anchor in the sheltered waters of Discovery Inlet on the Ross Ice Shelf and flence the whales alongside the ship.\textsuperscript{5} This set-back, plus the lack of knowledge about the area, meant the whales did not achieve

\textsuperscript{3}N.Z. Gazette, 14 Nov. 1923, p.2815.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{5}Villiers, A. J., To The Frozen South, Hobart 1924.
the results they hoped for. Only 221 whales were killed, producing 17,791 barrels of oil, then valued at £88,950. In spite of this, the S.J.C. Ross returned again in the summer of 1924-1925 and this time took 427 whales, which, when combined with the previous seasons returns, gave the Rosshavet Company a return of £250,000. Larsen died during the voyage south but he had proved beyond doubt that whaling operations could be carried out in the Ross Sea, and make a profit.

The whalers' success was also to New Zealand's benefit. The Rosshavet Company's whale catchers wintered over in Steuard Island, the S.J.C. Ross always called through Wellington, and the Government received £1,920 in royalties for the 1924-1925 season's catch. There was every indication that Antarctic whaling could provide a small but useful contribution to the New Zealand economy.

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6 Quartermain, 1967, p.410, says Larsen anticipated a catch producing 60,000 barrels of oil.
7 This figure is arrived at by calculating at the then market price of £30 a ton of oil. It is possible that the company received more as the oil was of good quality. See Quartermain, 1967, pp.406-418.
8 Calculated at £30 per ton. The figures for catches and oil quantities came from Marine Dept. figures: M2/9/7 Pt.1. There is a useful summary in The New Zealand Yearbook, 1938, p.903. See also appendix 1.
9 The Marine Department maintained a close watch on operations, inspecting factory ships which called through Wellington, requesting the licensee to observe certain injunctions regarding flora and fauna in southern waters, and report back meteorological observations. In 1924 the Rosshavet Company was reprimanded for failing to render down fully whale carcasses. Min. of Marine to Rosshavet Company, 24 Jul, 1924, M2/9/7 Pt.1.
10 The figures of income from royalties are usefully summarised in G48 A/3 (1), and also in The New Zealand Yearbook, 1938, p.903.
There were, however, clouds on the horizon. As a result of Colonial Office pressure, the New Zealand Government had agreed in 1923 to give the Rosshavet Company an exclusive licence for two years, beyond which any further licences would be issued only in consultation with Britain. This period of grace was ostensibly to prove the viability of the whaling grounds and was extended for a further year in 1925. Consequently, applications for licences from other whalers were turned down. Once it was clear that the Ross Sea was a rich source of whales, a number of whaling companies became interested. The majority of these companies were Norwegian and they grew increasingly annoyed at the New Zealand Government's obstruction. They felt this was blatant discrimination. Their annoyance was understandable for the discrimination was real.

The New Zealand Government was suspicious of the "notoriously keen" Norwegian enterprise. In turning down an application from one H. J. Bull of Oslo in 1925, the Minister of Marine, G. C. Anderson, noted bluntly, "Mr. Bull is a Norwegian, and it has been definitely decided that no further licences will be granted to any foreign company or firm". The Government evidently had concluded that if anyone was going to benefit from the whaling, it would be New Zealand or Britain. Although not made public, any

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13 Note for the Governor-General on the Declaration of the Ross Dependency. G 48 A/3 (1).
future licensee would have to possess two-thirds British capital. For the New Zealand economy, and conservation, such a biased attitude was understandable. Unfortunately, from a realistic viewpoint, it excluded the vast majority of whaling companies. Faced with these restraints, the whalers evolved a remedy.

In 1922, a Norwegian, Petter Sørle, invented a stern slipway for factory ships which meant whales could be hauled aboard and processed while at sea, a method known as pelagic whaling. This development revolutionised the whaling industry and spelt the end of the British licence system. The whalers could now operate independently of land bases and thus outside territorial jurisdictions.

The effects were first felt in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Britain had been less restrictive than New Zealand when issuing licences, but nevertheless applications were refused and British companies had received favoured treatment. As Antarctic waters then accounted for 70% of the world's whale catch, the excluded whalers naturally resented British controls. Many Norwegian whalers felt they were in danger of being locked out of Antarctica altogether. This fear inspired Lars Christensen's activities after 1926. Meanwhile, in September 1925, the directors of two Norwegian firms, the Andvig and Globus Companies, informed the British Government that as a result of successful

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16 See Chapter 1, pp.15-16.
trials with a pelagic ship, the *Lancing*, they now intended to operate around the Falkland Islands Dependencies during the 1925-1926 season, but outside territorial waters and without a licence. They added bitterly, "These are the first consequences of British whaling restrictions". In addition, they announced that another firm, the Polaris Company, was being formed to whale outside the territorial limits of the Ross Dependency, also without a licence. If these threats were carried out and there was every reason to suppose they would, than whale stocks, the whaling industry, and British and New Zealand claims to control activities in Antarctic waters were endangered.

Alarmed by these prospects, the British and New Zealand Governments hurriedly sought some solution. But the problems were obvious. Early in 1926 the Admiralty commented, "...it is difficult to see on what grounds they (unlicensed whalers) can be prevented...apparently the only consideration at present debarring them is uncertainty as to the extent of British territorial jurisdiction". And as if on cue, Norwegian diplomatic sources complained to Britain that New Zealand, by refusing licences in the Ross Sea, appeared to claim jurisdiction over international waters. The New Zealand Government was forced to admit that only the traditional three mile limit applied. And this was the crux

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20 The original source of the complaint was the Norwegian Consul-General in New Zealand. S.S.D.A. to N.Z.G.G., 2 Feb. 1926. G 48 A/3 (1).
of the question. Pelagic factory ships did not need to enter this zone. Still hoping for an answer, however, the issue was raised at the 1926 Imperial Conference. Once again, it was apparent that no control could be exercised beyond three miles. The only minor difference was the decision that jurisdiction extended over permanent ice-shelves, which would include the Rosshavet Company’s use of Discovery Inlet.²² The 1926 conference upheld and elaborated the policy to annex all Antarctica primarily on the continent’s strategic and whaling value. But the idea that territorial sovereignty was the best means to control whaling was now obsolete.

Despite this, in November 1926, the New Zealand Government tried another solution. It issued a set of Ross Sea whaling regulations, imposing heavy fines for any unlicensed operations or breaches of the regulations, and making future licences annual.²³ At the same time, Captain W. Whiteford was appointed Administrator of the Ross Dependency to replace Hooper.²⁴ He was to accompany the S.J.C. Ross as the official New Zealand representative during the 1926-1927 season and ensure the regulations were

²² Report E.121 "Limit of territorial waters off ice-bound coasts", 1926 Imperial Conference. PM208/11/1 Pt.1. New Zealand expressed its doubts about the legal validity of the decision in a typed precis of the pre-Conference report. E.101. G 48 A/3 (1). For a modern legal critique, see Auburn, 1972, Chapt.3.
²⁴ In 1928 there was a disagreement between Whiteford and Hooper over their duties, resulting in Whiteford’s resignation and Hooper’s reappointment until a new Administrator, W. W. Stuart, was appointed in 1929. M2/9/7 Pt.4.
observed.

During this season, the *S.J.C. Ross* was joined by a second Rosshavet Company factory ship, the new pelagic whaler, *C.A. Larsen*. But also operating in the Ross Sea for the first time was the unlicensed Polaris Company's ship, the *Nielsen Alonso*. Captain Whiteford reported that the Rosshavet ships used Discovery Inlet only once, and otherwise operated between twenty to one hundred and twenty miles offshore. The *Nielsen Alonso* operated even further out and was seen to be conducting wasteful processing methods prohibited under the Rosshavet licence. The New Zealand Government had to face up to the fact that its regulations could not be enforced.25 The *Nielsen Alonso* came nowhere near New Zealand, working instead from Hobart.26 The acting Prime Minister, William Downie Stewart, observed that the licence restrictions put the Rosshavet Company in an unfavourable position with its competitor and "...in such circumstances may be expected to ask for its cancellation".27 This was accentuated by the fact the company had paid £12,218 in royalties between 1923 and 1927. The failure of the British controls left only one solution, an international settlement. The Marine Department annual report for 1927 put it quite bluntly. "... pending international agreement

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26 The fact that the *Nielsen Alonso* received special treatment at Hobart annoyed New Zealand Marine Department officials. M2/9/7 Pt.3.
being accomplished we shall be unable to extend to our
licensee any protection whatsoever...".28

Recognition of the failure of the British licence
system did not lead to its immediate abandonment, nor end
New Zealand's association with Antarctic whaling. But it
meant that licences were unnecessary and the controls they
imposed were removed. The result, aided by high oil prices,
was open competition leading to the widespread slaughter of
whales.

Between 1926 and 1929, the three factory ships working
in the Ross Sea probably took up to 5,200 whales, producing
463,000 barrels of oil.29 It was reported that the Rosshavet
catch for the 1928-1929 season was sold on the New York
market for £2 million and £15 million nett from each factory
ship respectively.30 Even though whaling required a high
capital input and was a risky business, returns like these
were attractive.

From 1927 to 1929, a number of attempts were made to
form whaling companies in New Zealand, Australia and Britain.31 The

29 Composite of figures in G 40 A/3 (1). See Appendix 1.
30 In this season the C.A. Larsen produced 73,000 barrels
and the S.J.C. Ross 49,000 barrels. The returns are from
Isachsen, "Modern Norwegian whaling...", p.399.
31 Various companies were floated after 1928. The New Zealand
and Ross Sea Whaling Co. was formed with Dunedin backing,
but failed to develop. A more widely based Pacific and
Ross Sea Whaling Co. took its place and also failed.
Finally the British Antarctic Whaling Co. was established
and received a licence from the New Zealand Government.
All resulted from the promotions of an Englishman, J. Neil.
See M2/9/16 and Quartermain, 1967, pp.413-414.
only successful venture was the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company, a subsidiary of Lever Bros., which applied for a licence from the New Zealand Government in 1928. This was granted in October, 1929. It was realised that the Company could always operate without a licence, and as the Prime Minister commented, "Although we have decided as a matter of policy to grant no further licences to foreign companies, it would be idle to refuse them to British Companies ...". Thus, in the 1929-1930 season, the S.J.C. Ross, C.A. Larsen, and Nielsen Alonso were joined by the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company's ship, the Southern Princess and a massive new unlicensed vessel, the Kosmos. Although these ships did not operate exclusively in the Ross Sea but included adjacent waters, 5,073 whales were killed. In a little more than seven years, between thirteen and fourteen thousand whales had been taken from the Ross Sea region.

This level of exploitation was alarming and aroused public concern in New Zealand. Demands for conservation became more widespread once the sizes of catches increased. Both in the newspapers and in Parliament, there were regular calls for the New Zealand Government to exercise its territorial powers to control the exploitation. In 1926, the Upper House passed a motion calling for a recommendation to the British Government to cancel all foreign licences.

32 For details of the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company's operations see M2/9/19.
34 See appendix 1.
as, in the words of the proposer of the motion, the Hon. G. M. Thomson, "...the whalers are destroying and taking all they can get without reference to the future of the animals they are exterminating".  

The idea of conservation was accompanied by a sense of frustration. New Zealand was apparently unable to control activities taking place in waters under its administration. It seemed that foreigners were reaping the benefits and New Zealanders receiving little or nothing. This opinion was reinforced by the decline in royalties. Income peaked in 1928 at £13,961 for royalties on one season's catch. The following year the Rosshavet Company refused to pay on account of the Nielsen Alonso's operations. The Company pointed out that legal advice obtained by the Polaris Company had stated that New Zealand had no power in law to levy licences in the Ross Sea outside territorial waters. The same legal opinion cast doubts on the validity of the 1923 Order-in-Council.  


36 The Hon. E. R. Davis stated in the Upper House in 1935, "It is strange that foreign countries should get the full benefits of the whaling industry...in a sea that is in a New Zealand Dependency, and also that we should be content to get 2s.6d. per barrel out of this valuable industry. It seems to me to have been a shocking case of selling our birth-right for a mess of pottage". N.Z.P.D., Vol.243, (1935), p.486.

37 The New Zealand Crown Solicitor, A. E. Currie, commented that the legal opinion "...contains several mis-statements of facts and several arguable propositions but it serves to draw attention to the difficulty of enforcing not only these regulations but any other New Zealand laws declared to be in force in the Dependency where an offender cannot be apprehended in the lands or territorial waters of the Dependency." Currie to Sec. of Marine, 9 Jun. 1930. M2/9/7 Pt.4.
The Rosshavet Company's action irritated the New Zealand Government. They were under the impression there had been an original understanding with the Colonial Office to pay royalties irrespective of whether the catch was inside or outside territorial waters. The New Zealand Government even contemplated legal action but the British would not support this. So, to avoid the problem again, New Zealand insisted that the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company pay a royalty on all takings, whether they came from territorial waters or not. This in turn necessitated new Ross Sea whaling regulations as the earlier ones required royalties from catches only within the three mile limit. The Southern Whaling and Sealing Company duly paid royalties amounting to £7,871 for the 1929-1930 season, but thereafter the Southern Princess ceased to operate in the Ross Sea. The only income New Zealand now received was £200 per annum from both licencees to maintain their licences.

The Government toyed with the idea of cancelling the Rosshavet licence, but it was caught in a cleft stick. Possessing a licence was an advantage if any effective controls were introduced and thus the company was quite happy to continue paying its licence fee. Meanwhile, the Government realised cancellation would have absolutely no effect while there was no means of enforcement. It would only

39 N.Z. Gazette, 24 Oct. 1929, p.2747. It was these 1929 regulations, coinciding with the Norvegia-BANZARE controversy, which led to the Norwegian diplomatic protest in November 1929. See Chapt.3, footnote 47.
sever whatever administrative links still remained with
whaling. 40

Everything hinged on the question of regulation of
the industry. Sir Francis Dillon Bell saw the realities of
the situation quite clearly. In an Upper House debate on
Ross Sea whaling in 1930, he remarked, "As I have said — I
am afraid more than once, but I have done so for the pur-
pose of emphasizing the point, there is no power in His
Majesty’s Government in London, nor in our Government here,
to do anything whatsoever in the matter, except by
consultation and agreement and a binding arrangement with
all other nations in the world". 41

Efforts to secure an international convention on
whaling had been under way at the League of Nations since
1924. Although the New Zealand Government had never been
very enthusiastic about the League in the Twenties, it was
felt that the international body could play a useful role
on this issue. As usual, New Zealand’s interests were
delegated to the British representative but the Marine
Department made numerous comments on the draft of the pro-
posed convention in the hope that strong and effective
measures would eventuate. 42 However, New Zealand was now
dealing with the League of Nations, not the Commonwealth,

40 Sec. of Marine to Min. of Marine, 6 Nov. 1929. M2/9/7 Pt.4.
42 Meeting of special sub committee of Polar Committee, 23
and what New Zealand, or Britain, wanted and what they achieved were often two different things.

Britain was as eager as New Zealand for a solution. Initially the British had attempted to solve the problem themselves, firstly by threatening to cancel licences in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, and then after 1928, with the Bouvet Island agreement and Norwegian co-operation, by placing government inspectors on factory ships. But this did nothing to halt the spiralling figures of whale catches. By 1929, the Discovery Committee warned that its investigations showed whale stocks would not stand up to the existing rate of depletion. Consequently, the British Government turned to the League, influencing New Zealand to do the same. Negotiations, however, were slow and it took another demonstration of the folly of uncontrolled exploitation to produce any agreement at all.

In the 1930-1931 season, an estimated 41 factory ships operated in Antarctic waters, producing 3,420,410 barrels of oil from 37,000 whales. Only three factory ships worked in the Ross Sea, a new S.J.C. Ross, the Kosmos and the Nielsen Alonso. But they took 7,067 whales. The result of such huge catches was a glut of whale oil and the collapse of the market price. In the 1931-1932 season, all Norwegian and several other companies agreed not to send

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43 Norwegian Whaling Gazette, Jan. 1966, p.7. See also Chapter 3, p.43.
44 M25/2321.
46 See Appendix 1.
out their whaling fleets. Another result was the finalisation of the first International Convention on Whaling in 1931.

The Convention incorporated complete protection for right whales and female whales with calves, and provided for the collection of statistics and the licensing of factory ships in the country in which they were registered. Unfortunately, there was no attempt to restrain production and the Convention was signed by only twenty-five nations. Germany and Japan, two increasingly important whaling nations, ignored it.47 But the agreement was significant. It established a principle of international regulation of whaling and pointed a way for future solutions to Antarctic problems.

New Zealand ratified the Convention by passing the Whale Industry Act in 1935, thus effectively ending New Zealand's administrative connection with Antarctic whaling. The Rosshavet licence was cancelled as the S.J.C. Ross was registered in Norway, and in 1938 the Southern Princess's registration was transferred to Britain. While Antarctic whaling was to have a continuing influence on political developments in the continent in the thirties, it drifted out of New Zealand's direct concern.

The whaling episode had made the New Zealand Government aware in a practical way of its increasing external responsibilities. Moving the Address in Reply in 1927, Sir James

Allen pointed to "...(the) difficulty and trouble with respect to our administration of the Ross Sea", to illustrate the expansion of New Zealand's contacts with other nations. 48 But more importantly, the attempt to control Antarctic whaling had revealed New Zealand's inability to limit commercial exploitation around the coasts of the Ross Dependency. It is true that technological progress rather than anything else was the cause but it would have been impossible for New Zealand to enforce its control, even if, as Sir James Allen wanted, there had been a wider definition of territorial limits. 49 The distances and expense involved in some sort of policing were totally beyond New Zealand's means. The Government embarrassingly had to admit this and turned somewhat reluctantly to a solution through international consensus. Still, as Sir Francis Dillon Bell said in one of his last speeches before the Upper House,

...we did make an effort to establish law in the territory, and if it proves eventually that the Ross Territory and the point where we reach the South Pole are of any value, the Massey Government and the Coates Government will have done something to elevate the New Zealand flag. 50

Chapter 5
The Thirties: The International Realities of Antarctica

The New Zealand Government adopted a passive attitude to its Antarctic territorial interests once whaling slipped out of its control. With the old imperialist politicians such as Allen and Dillon Bell retired, their successors were more concerned with the domestic crises of depression than the indulgence of maintaining a seemingly worthless possession. Yet in the 1930's international interest in Antarctica flourished, much of it motivated by political or territorial ambitions. Rampant nationalism confronted British imperialism. All three Commonwealth countries, Australia, Britain and New Zealand, faced difficulties defending their Antarctic claims. This was compounded by the decline in British power and the lack of a prominent British politician like Amery to direct policy. Admittedly there was now greater Commonwealth co-ordination through the Polar Committee but it could only act in an advisory capacity. While other nations moved into Antarctica, New Zealand remained a concerned, but impotent, onlooker.

The type of difficulties confronting Commonwealth Antarctic claims were apparent even in the early Thirties. The Australian Antarctic Territory (A.A.T.) was formally proclaimed in 1933 and encompassed all of the continent
between the Ross Dependency and 45° east longitude, excluding Terre Adélie. The tenacity with which the Australians had championed their Antarctic claims contrasted with New Zealand's indifferent attitude. But the size of their claim and the inclusion of territory discovered by the Norvegia infuriated the Norwegians, especially as Australia seemed intent on controlling offshore whaling. To placate them, British authorities repeated a tentative suggestion made in 1929 that Norway claim the area west of 45° east, between Coates Land and the A.A.T. (see map 3). Although temporarily distracted by an internal political crisis, the Norwegians were far from happy.

The British, too, had problems. British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands Dependencies was probably the strongest of any Antarctic claim, yet the Argentinians were prepared to dispute this. They pointed out that an Argentinian meteorological station had occupied Laurie Island, in the South Orkneys, since 1904, and in 1927 the Argentinian government informed the International Postal Bureau of its rights over these islands and South Georgia.

1 The A.A.T. was created by an Order-in-Council on the 7 February, 1933 and a subsequent Australian Antarctic Territory Acceptance Act later in the year. For the reasons behind the difference in instruments of accession from the Ross Dependency see O'Connell & Riordan, pp.316-328.
2 See M2/9/7 Pt.5.
as well.  

Finally, New Zealand was not exempted from difficulties either. In 1933, two separate United States expeditions announced they would operate in the Ross Dependency. Lincoln Ellsworth, assisted by Sir Hubert Wilkins, planned to fly across the continent from the Bay of Whales to the Weddell Sea. This project did not get past a landing at the Bay of Whales, however. At the same time, Byrd was preparing a second expedition. With the general difficulties over other Commonwealth claims and after the experiences of 1929, both the New Zealand and British Governments were sensitive about Byrd's activities and motives.

Byrd's expedition did indeed lead to controversy. Although the details seem trivial, it indicated a deeper conflict. It was a clash between Britain and New Zealand's desire to control, and to be seen to control, activities within the Ross Dependency, and the United States' refusal to recognise their control.

At the request of the Dominions Office, the New Zealand Government again provided Byrd with assistance while his expedition was in New Zealand. On Byrd's departure on the

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4I.C.J. Pleadings, 1956, pp.24-6. This gives a good outline of the development of Argentinian claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies, even though written from the obviously self-interested British viewpoint.

5Byrd received limited free rail facilities, complimentary radio privileges to a maximum of £500, and the cost of transporting goods from Auckland to Christchurch and Palmerston North to Dunedin by Military aircraft. Donnelly, p.149.
12 December, 1933, the Prime Minister telegrammed the now standard offer of New Zealand assistance in the Ross Dependency.6 Unexpectedly, in February, 1934, the offer was taken up. Following an urgent request from Byrd, the Discovery II rendezvoused with one of his ships, the Bear, and a New Zealand doctor was transferred to replace the expedition one who had fallen ill.7

Meanwhile, the Polar Committee was alarmed at certain aspects of Byrd's expedition. It was known he had received a promise of Government support from President Roosevelt, a personal friend. However, more significant was the news of the administration of an oath, in the presence of the United States Postmaster-General, to two members of the expedition to empower them to act as postal officials at a proposed United States post office to be established at Little America II. A special 3 cent stamp had been printed for this purpose.8 With New Zealand's consent, the British Government protested that the postal service would "...infringe the British sovereignty and New Zealand administrative rights". It was also suggested that any future expeditions seek prior permission before using aircraft and operating wirelesses.9

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6A similar telegram had been sent to Ellsworth who had left for the Bay of Whales a week earlier. M 25/2296.
7A number of other New Zealanders were included in the expedition. For a fuller account, see Byrd, R.E., Discovery: The Second Byrd Expedition, New York 1936.
The United States acknowledged the note and merely reserved its rights in the matter. The issue could have rested there but on the 27 October the United States Post Office announced they were sending one of their officials to handle mail at Little America II in order to provide a better service to stamp collectors. Although the British ambassador in Washington, Sir Ronald Lindsay, noted that the action was only catering for philatelists, the British Government sought some clarification. The Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, stated the postal official was "to take charge of handling the mail" at Little America II, which at first glance seemed to support the idea that Byrd was operating an official United States post office. But besides this, Hull remarked that British rights in the Ross Dependency appeared to be based on discovery alone, and of only part of the territory at that. He concluded, "...in the light of long established principles of international law, that I cannot admit that sovereignty accrues from mere discovery unaccompanied by occupancy or use". Hull was reiterating C. E. Hughes' 1924 doctrine of sovereignty based on permanent occupation. It was clear that the United States did not recognise the Ross Dependency.

This reply challenged all Commonwealth Antarctic claims, as they were based on the criterion of discovery and effective control, not occupation. The British could not let this challenge go unanswered and hurriedly despatched a response for New Zealand approval. The tone was amazingly sharp, describing Byrd's actions as unnecessary, gratuitous

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end "an abuse of the hospitality extended to him". The New Zealand Government was asked for its opinion and to suggest alternative means for handling Byrd's mail which would give due recognition to British sovereignty.¹²

For once, New Zealand suggested a different approach. A hastily assembled meeting of departmental chiefs in Wellington came to the conclusion that while the Commonwealth definition of polar sovereignty had to be defended, sovereignty founded on New Zealand's administration was really quite flimsy.¹³ The whaling licences had proved a failure, no officer of the Government had landed in the territory,¹⁴ and there had been no British occupation since 1917. In addition, the Director-General of the Post Office discovered that the United States postal arrangement was for philatelic purposes, and this could be discounted as an act of sovereignty.¹⁵ So, the New Zealand

¹³The meeting took place on the 1 December, 1934, and was attended by J. T. Thomson, Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister's Dept., C. A. Berendsen, Imperial Affairs Officer, G. McNamara, Director-General of the Post Office, & J. Millier, Secretary of the Marine Dept. M25/2296.
¹⁴Captain G. S. Hooper had apparently landed on the Ross Ice Shelf during the first Rossavet expedition and sailed in the whale catcher Star I during an extensive cruise of Ross Dependency's coastline. M2/7/9 Pt.2.
¹⁵He stated, "In my opinion this action is not equivalent to setting up a Post Office.... The whole procedure is designed to throw dust in the eyes of philatelists who will naturally assume the United States opened a branch specially for them". PM 208/12/1 Pt.1.
Government replied that while it was willing to agree to any approach Britain thought suitable, it felt it was unwise to make too much of the matter.  

This reply seemed to modify the British attitude. The note eventually sent to the State Department merely repeated the validity of British sovereignty based on prior discoveries and "administrative and governmental powers" exercised by New Zealand. The note stated that New Zealand would disregard the postal issue unless it was designed as an assertion of United States sovereignty. The United States took the matter no further, but again reserved its rights. 

Both sides were obviously anxious to prevent the controversy going too far, yet Britain was ever ready to leap into diplomatic correspondence, while the United States remained ambiguously guarded. The British and New Zealand reactions, mainly the result of sensitive scrutiny by the Polar Committee, were a response to the growing challenge to British sovereignty in the eastern Ross Dependency. But their protests did little to alter the strength of the United States position, apart from having some legal value in upholding the notion of New Zealand administration. On his return to New Zealand in 1935, Byrd assured the Governor-General that the United States had no ambitions regarding Antarctica and that personally he had respected the boundaries of the Ross Dependency. However, by consolidating and 

17 Hackworth, p.458. 
expanding his discoveries of 1928 and 1929, Byrd had established even stronger inchoate claims for the United States in the eastern Ross Dependency and Marie Byrd Land. These claims could be exploited if the need arose.

There was a small postscript to the diplomatic exchange. This was the rescue of Lincoln Ellsworth from the Bay of Whales after a trans-Antarctic flight in 1935. It was prompted partly by genuine goodwill and partly by the desire to emphasize the Commonwealth's stake in Antarctica. After two previous attempts, Ellsworth finally succeeded in his project and landed just sixteen miles short of Little America II, a major achievement in polar aviation. But during the flight, he had lost contact with his support ship Wyatt Earp and an international rescue had been set in motion. 19 Although the rescue took place in the Ross Dependency, New Zealand played a minor role. The initiative came from Australia. 20 The New Zealand Government agreed to pay £2000 towards the shared cost but stipulated that Britain and Australia had to make up any expenses above £6000. 21 New Zealand's reaction was consistent with its attitude to the Dependency in the thirties. It was looked on as an imperial commitment, but of minor significance and entailing the least possible expense. This attitude was reinforced by the change

of government in 1935. The Australian and British requests came at a time when the new Labour Minister of Marine, Peter Fraser, was just taking office and this in itself caused a delay in New Zealand's response. In fact, the advent of the Labour Government meant Antarctic affairs faded even further into the background. None of the Labour politicians had any experience of New Zealand's Antarctic dealings in the Twenties, and none of them showed much interest. Antarctica was too remote from the problems of economic depression which they had been elected to deal with. Besides, the professed Labour internationalist ideals were strongly at variance with the imperial expansionism which had given birth to the Ross Dependency.

The Labour Government's first introduction to Antarctic developments was at the 1937 Imperial Conference. Before the Conference, Fraser had informed the Prime Minister, Michael Savage, that there appeared to be nothing in the Conference discussion paper on Antarctica calling for further comment. Savage delegated New Zealand's representation on the Conference committee on Antarctica to C. A. Berendsen and Sir Cecil Day, two men with a sound knowledge of previous developments. While the committee's report contained nothing startlingly new and merely reviewed recent events in

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23 Berendsen was now Head of the Prime Minister's Dept. and Imperial Affairs Officer (see footnote 13). Day had recently been appointed New Zealand Liaison Officer with the British Cabinet. Until 1936 he was private secretary to the New Zealand Governor-General.
Antarctica, it is significant that two New Zealand representatives were present. Previously New Zealand delegates rarely attended Imperial Conference discussions on Antarctica.

During this Conference, there were signs that the British and Australians were anxious to step up their activities, and obviously New Zealand was expected to follow suit. The British meteorological service recommended that at least two meteorological stations be established in Antarctica. Undoubtedly, these stations would provide valuable weather recordings, and at the same time, reinforce territorial claims by permanent occupation. These recommendations indicated a change of heart towards the prerequisite of occupation and reflected the growing concern at foreign interest in Antarctica. The Australians took up the matter energetically. Supporting the meteorological proposals, in July 1938 the Australian Prime Minister, J.A. Lyons, sounded out Savage on a joint British, Australian

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25 Australian interest was spurred by Sir Douglas Mawson and J. K. Davis, Antarctic navigator and Director of the Commonwealth Navigation Service. Also, R. G. Casey maintained his earlier interest (see Chapt. 3 footnote 15) and as he was now a Cabinet Minister, he was in a strong position to influence policy. At the 1937 Imperial Conference he chaired the committee on Antarctica and presented Australia's specially prepared memorandum, E(37)22. This referred to Antarctica as "of considerable actual and potential economic importance". PM 208/1/1 Pt. 1a and PM208/11/1.
and New Zealand expedition along the lines of BANZARE.  

New Zealand's reply was non-committal. Departmental opinion felt any weather research would be far more valuable on Macquarie, Auckland or Campbell Islands, a sensible suggestion but one which showed little interest in questions of Antarctic sovereignty. Nevertheless, the Australians pressed on with their project, purchasing Ellsworth's Wyatt Earp in 1939 with the intention of staging periodic cruises to Antarctica. According to one newspaper report, these would be in co-operation with New Zealand. However, official sources indicate that New Zealand was not really interested.

The Australian activity was prompted by growing international pressure on Antarctica and a desire to protect its claim. In contrast, New Zealand paid almost no attention to the Ross Dependency at all. Britain also watched developments with apprehension but was hampered by a deteriorating situation in Europe. The 1937 Imperial Conference had recognised that the Commonwealth Antarctic territories faced competition from Argentina, Norway, and the United States. After 1937, this situation was further complicated.

In the late Thirties, international concern for whaling

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28 Dominion, 9 Feb. 1939.
accompanied by an increasing awareness of the continent's potential economic value, and simple territorial jealousy all caused a sudden surge of interest in Antarctica and a "race" to establish national rights. New Zealand was not directly involved but these developments established a new orientation in Antarctic politics and upset New Zealand's claim to the eastern Ross Dependency.

In April 1938, France altered the boundaries of Terre Adelie from its coastal limits to create sectoral claim. The territory now extended between 136° east and 142° east longitude right to the Pole. The French had been prompted by the British and Australians who were anxious to clarify the extent of the claim. With this done, in October 1938 a treaty of reciprocal Antarctic overflight rights was signed between France, and Australia, Britain and New Zealand.\textsuperscript{29} The suggestion has been that the treaty was designed to create a wartime alternative to the Indian Ocean air route.\textsuperscript{30} Undoubtedly, the pioneering of Wilkins, Byrd and Ellsworth had made people aware of the future possibilities of aviation in Antarctica.

Two other nations also turned their attention to Antarctica. Germany and Japan both were expanding their whaling fleets at a tremendous rate with the avowed intention of reducing British and Norwegian dominance in the industry.


\textsuperscript{30} Kish, p. 75.
Their attitude had been responsible for the failure of the 1931 International Whaling Convention and also led to increased catches in Antarctic waters, reviving fears for the survival of the whale. A new convention was drawn up in 1937, but despite renewal in 1938 and strengthening in 1939, it did not tackle the problem of reducing production.

Meanwhile, the Germans had been considering securing coastal lands bordering Antarctic whaling grounds. In November 1938, they secretly directed an aircraft catapult ship, the Swabenland, to operate between the A.A.T. and the Falkland Islands Dependencies. The ship's aircraft carried out aerial mapping and dropped claim markers in areas inland from those explored by the Norwegia. These activities angered the Norwegians who feared Germany was far more likely to exclude Norwegian whalers from an Antarctic claim than Britain. Thus in January 1939, to protect its interests, and probably encouraged by Britain, the Norwegian Government proclaimed sovereignty over the coastlines between 45° east and 20° east, completing the link between the A.A.T. and Falkland Islands Dependencies. This was quickly followed

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31 During the 1938-1939 season, 34 factory ships (12 Norwegian, 9 British, 5 Japanese, 5 German, 1 U.S.A., and 1 Panamanian) took 36,000 whales for 27,000,000 barrels of oil. For a comparison with earlier figures, see Chapt.4. Also Brown, "A review of Antarctic whaling", p.559.

32 The Japanese refused to sign the 1937 Convention. At the 1937 conference, the Argentinian delegation informed the British that as the Falkland Islands Dependencies were governed from the Falkland Islands, they would not recognise British sovereignty over the Dependencies.

33 Markers consisting of weighted steel javelins with miniature swastikas attached were dropped. Bogen, pp.92-4, gives an interesting view of the German activities from a Norwegian viewpoint.

34 Note: This only claimed the coastal areas. It was not a sectoral claim.
by mutual recognition of Antarctic boundaries between Norway and Australia and Britain. 35

The Germans disputed the Norwegian claim and rumours spread that Germany was planning a new expedition, possibly to Marie Byrd Land. Some reaction was expected from the United States if this was the case. In fact, the State Department was not seriously worried, secure in the knowledge that planning for an expedition of its own was well advanced. 36

After 1937, the United States Government was beginning to change its attitudes towards Antarctica. Until then there was only mild official interest in the private expeditions, buttressed by a policy of non-recognition of Antarctic claims. However, there was always a feeling, particularly in the minds of British observers, that the United States might put forward a claim. Evidence of this surfaced after Byrd's first expedition and some elements within the United States continued to favour a more assertive policy. 37 Dr. Ernest Gruening, Director of the Division of Territories and Island Possessions of the Department of the Interior, was aware of certain somewhat vague requirements of the Government for an official American venture and asked one of his field staff in Hawaii, R. B. Black, to prepare a memorandum on the subject. 38

35 New Zealand also recognised the claim. The Secretary of Marine said that as the claim was on the opposite side of the continent from the Ross Dependency, New Zealand should have no objection. M 25/2029.

36 The British Embassy in Washington commented "it (the German Expedition) did not seem to be causing any concern to the State Department". Brit. Emb. (Washington) to N.Z.P.M., 18 Jul. 1939. M 25/2296.

37 See Chapt. 3, p. 48.

38 Bertrand, K., Americans in Antarctica, New York 1971, p. 408.
Black's report, presented on the 5 May, 1939, outlined a plan for a small five-man expedition. In February 1939, Gruening telephoned Black in Honolulu to tell him that his plan had grown somewhat and he was to prepare an expanded study.\(^39\)

Gruening was reportedly a man who moved rapidly in things which interested him\(^40\) and as Director of the Division of Territories and Island Possession, intimately involved in the dispute then taking place between the United States and Britain and New Zealand over possession of the Phoenix Islands in the Pacific. The parallels between this dispute and Antarctic developments are remarkable. The islands were uninhabited, priority of discovery was often uncertain, and once again the United States refused to recognise sovereignty without occupation. The real reasons, though, were the islands' importance to trans-Pacific aviation and strategy. The Department of the Interior had resorted to "colonising" the islands, ostensibly to carry out meteorological readings, but in reality to establish United States claims by occupation. It was also significant that Black had been the field co-ordinator responsible for landing Hawaiians on Canton and Enderbury Islands in March, 1938.\(^41\)


The Island dispute captured the attention of President Roosevelt, who it seems began to link the Antarctic with his "fixation" about the strategic significance of the South East Pacific. Almost certainly, Gruening had passed on his Antarctic ideas to Roosevelt during discussions over the islands, for in mid 1938 Roosevelt instructed Cordell Hull to prepare a policy study on United States interests in the polar regions. Thus, there is considerable evidence pointing to an intimate connection between the Pacific dispute and a renewed United States involvement in Antarctica. Evidence also of United States expansionism and a readiness to challenge British interests.

However, American concern for Antarctica arose from more than just opposition to Commonwealth claims. The main area of United States activity was in Marie Byrd Land, an unclaimed area. The Commonwealth was less likely to be upset by this than the direct challenge presented in the Phoenix Islands. There was also a joint interest in countering German and Japanese influences, especially around Cape Horn. Finally, it was known that both Byrd and Ellsworth were planning new projects.

The State Department's report on United States polar interests was presented in January 1939. It emphasized

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44 Interestingly, Roosevelt called on Byrd in 1942 to investigate possible base sites in the South East Pacific Islands. Byrd's findings advocated an aggressive territorial policy. Louis, p.271.
aviation and strategy, the Antarctic's potential mineral wealth, and the active political involvement of other nations. Coupled with the report, preliminary planning for an official expedition was undertaken by the Department of State, War and Navy. Roosevelt approved both the report and these plans on the 7 January and it was at this stage that Gruening contacted Black to begin preparations for a Government backed expedition.

Byrd's second expedition had shown that the days of large scale private ventures were over. The costs were too great. Mounting an expedition of any size now called for Government support, bringing with it bureaucratic organisation and the often mixed motives for public expenditure. Following Roosevelt's approval, the United States Antarctic Service was set up under the Department of the Interior to co-ordinate planning for what was now known as the United States Antarctic Service Expedition. Its primary object was to establish a United States presence in Antarctica through permanent occupation. In the words of one of its field leaders, Paul Siple, it was a "colonising expedition". The intention was to build two permanent bases either side of Marie Byrd Land maintained by regular relief expeditions for at least five years. The official motives were made even clearer in secret instructions from Roosevelt to Byrd, who had amalgamated his own plans and assumed over-all leadership. The

45 Gould, p.29.
46 Siple, P., 90° South, New York 1959, p.64.
instructions reminded Byrd that the United States recognised no territorial claims and that no member of the expedition was to compromise this position. But they continued,

Members of the Service may take any appropriate steps such as dropping written claims from airplanes, depositing such writings in cairns et cetera, which might assist in supporting a sovereignty claim by the United States Government. Careful record shall be kept of all the circumstances surrounding each such act. No public announcement of such act shall, however, be made without specific authority in each case from the Secretary of State. 47

The new trend of United States policy evident in this document also appeared in a secret request made to Ellsworth in November 1938. Ellsworth planned to carry out aerial exploration of the hinterland of the A.A.T. and on leaving Cape Town, he received a cable from Hull asking him to drop claim documents in copper cylinders. While only one flight actually took place, it covered a considerable area and a solitary cylinder was duly deposited. 48

The secrecy and elaborate nature of United States plans for Antarctica indicated that although a formal claim was not a certainty, the United States Government obviously intended to ensure it had a major voice in any future Antarctic developments. The size of the expedition and the wealth of its resources were something new to Antarctic activities. The uncompromising nature of the whole official American approach was something New Zealand would have to learn to cope with in years to come. If a claim did

47 Foreign Relations, 1939, Vol. 2, p.13, Siple, p.63-4, has some interesting comments on the effect of these instructions on the expedition and conflict within the expedition.

48 Swan, pp.225-6. News of this alarmed the Australians and spurred them to begin planning further exploration of the A.A.T.
eventuate, it was likely to border on and even overlap part of the Ross Dependency. Admiral Byrd was reported to have said that the United States was concentrating its efforts "in Marie Byrd Land alone", but added, "After the European war is ended and Britain is presumably in a position to discuss this issue, the United States may seek to clear up the matter". 49

News of these developments was slow in filtering to New Zealand. The Dominion reported the expedition on the 18 April, 1939, but it did not become the subject of any diplomatic correspondence until June. 50 Even then despite the cool relations between New Zealand and the United States resulting from the Pacific dispute, 51 plus the intention of the expedition to establish a base in the eastern Ross Dependency and the reaction to the previous United States expeditions, there was little or no official New Zealand response. Both the New Zealand High Commission in London and the British Embassy in Washington pointed out that the expedition was obviously designed to secure resource and aviation rights as much as prevent any German activities. 52 The British Ambassador also informed the New Zealand Government that the United States expected some reaction from New Zealand. 53 But there was almost none. On the 6 November,
1939, the Government asked the British to pass on the usual offer of assistance to the expedition if it desired to set up a base in the Ross Dependency and this was delivered to the State Department on the 17 November. Beyond this, nothing else was done.

The New Zealand Government's attitude was almost certainly conditioned by the circumstances of 1939. Pressure of events in Europe meant Antarctica was the very least of New Zealand's or Britain's worries. The Polar Committee, which maintained a detailed watch over earlier events, held its last pre-war meeting in November, 1938, and so any activities after this date failed to receive such close attention. The Australians showed most alarm, principally because of Ellsworth's claims, but they were pacified once it became clear that the main focus of United States interest was between 70° west and 150° west. Although reports talked of the Monroe Doctrine being applied in Antarctica and mentioned a United States sphere of influence as far as 180° west, undoubtedly it was Marie Byrd Land they were mainly interested in. This factor, coupled with an apparent American willingness to counter German activities and monitor Japanese whaling, probably accounts for the Commonwealth's mild response to United States' bases along the edge of the British and New Zealand territories. Besides, by this time, New Zealand was at war.

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56 Swan, p.253 and the Evening Post, 1 Aug. 1939.
The war altered the whole complexion of Antarctic politics. It had already reduced New Zealand and British interest. Taking advantage of this, and a favourable United States attitude, Chile and Argentina advanced claims between 53° west to 90° west, and 25° east to 74° west respectively (see map 3). These claims overlapped both each other and the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Meanwhile, in March 1940, the United States involvement had come under attack in Congress, mainly on the grounds of unnecessary expense. An appropriation to continue the Antarctic Service was refused, and instead limited funds were voted to return the expedition. This was hurriedly carried out in 1941 and further United States Antarctic projects were shelved.

Besides curtailing United States plans, the war also blocked out Germany and Japan, effectively ending the race for territory by the major powers. However, this was not before German raiders had used the empty expanses of the Southern ocean to disrupt allied shipping, capture a large portion of the Norwegian whaling fleet and mine Australian and New Zealand ports. Indirectly, these set-backs, and

57 The State Department invited Chile and Argentina to send two representatives with the Antarctic Service Expedition ships. In May 1940, Cordell Hull, referring to a possible southward extension of the Monroe Doctrine, said, "Considerations of continental defence make it vitally important to keep for the twenty one American republics a clearer title to that part of the Antarctic continent south of America than is claimed by any non-American country". Suan, p.253.

58 In a way, this confirmed Amery's prediction of the strategic importance of the southern waters. See Chapt.1, p.17. The Germans used the sub-Antarctic Kerguelen Island as a major refitting point. The raider Komet ventured to the edge of the Ross Sea and circled the Balleny Islands in the Ross Dependency early in 1941. For fuller details of their activities and three useful maps of the tracks of the raiders, see Roskill, S.W., The War at Sea 1939-1945, Vol.1, London 1954, p.279, 383, & 545.
the Latin American claims, were responsible for a resurgence of Commonwealth interest in Antarctica.

In 1941, the New Zealand Government established observation posts on the sub-Antarctic Auckland and Campbell Islands in response to reports of German raiders using them as bases.\(^{59}\) Soon after, a British auxiliary cruiser, searching for raiders, discovered Argentinian claim documents at deserted British and American installations in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. With this threat to British territorial claims, and because the pro-German attitude of the Argentinian Government menaced the Cape Horn shipping route, the British drastically revised their approach to the question of Antarctic sovereignty. British Crown Law Officers now concluded that some form of permanent occupation was necessary to reinforce British sovereignty.\(^{60}\) As a result of a Cabinet decision in 1944, two permanent bases were established under the code name of Operation Tabarin on Deception Island and at Port Lockroy, Wiencke Island within the Falkland Islands Dependencies.\(^{61}\)

Neither the New Zealand nor Australian Governments were immediately informed of the change in British policy. However, the British Government's admission that occupation was the only effective way to establish a recognised sovereignty claim meant that at some stage, New Zealand was going to have to reassess its attitude to the Ross Dependency. During the


\(^{60}\) S.S.D.A. to N.Z.P.M., 21 Nov. 1946. M2/9/7 Pt.5a.

\(^{61}\) The operation was named after a well known London night club. Hunter-Christie, p.247.
Thirties the territory was still looked on as an Imperial responsibility. At the same time, the limits of the Empire's influence were shrinking. Thus, falling between New Zealand's unwillingness to assume autonomous control and Britain's inability to service its territorial commitments, the Ross Dependency tended to languish. However, with the more diverse orientation of Antarctic claims, and as the war transformed New Zealand's attitudes to external relations, a new approach began to emerge.
Chapter 6

The Post War Years: A Period of Indecision

After the Second World War there was a major step forward in the growth of New Zealand's territorial interest in Antarctica. Policy had originated previously in Britain. New Zealand was executor and rubber-stamp. The war, however, had shattered many old ideas of Empire and made New Zealand aware that it was a small, but independent Pacific nation. Accompanying this was an almost immediate increase in departmental and political concern for the Ross Dependency which reflected both a growing sense of New Zealand independence and a general upsurge of local interest in Antarctica.

On the wider scene, technological advances and an expanding emphasis on scientific research helped to generate a revival of international interest in Antarctica. The continent was neither so inaccessible nor so hostile to a modern, well equipped party. Some scientists, imbued with a near missionary zeal, regarded it as a gigantic open-air laboratory. However, less idealistic considerations of territorial ambitions and economic gain still dominated.

The post war years were ones of indecision for the New Zealand Government. The Ross Dependency was a minor, even insignificant commitment and there was a restraining factor of cost if science was the only criterion for involvement. But twice in the Forties, in 1947 and 1949, New Zealand
edged towards establishing a presence.

The 1947 developments evolved from indirect origins. One of the issues of contention among the Allies at the end of World War Two was the question of the future status of colonial possessions. One element of this issue had repercussions for the Ross Dependency. The Colonial Office was anxious to tidy up certain legal inconsistencies relating to territorial sovereignty, and among other things, this included the 1887 British Settlements Act. The use of the Act to issue an Order-in-Council to create the Ross Dependency had already been criticised, particularly on the grounds that Section 3 specifically delegated legislative authority on three or more persons within the territory. As the proposed amendment intended to remove this limitation, it highlighted the inadequacies of the 1923 Order-in-Council. Consequently, in September 1945, the Dominions Office asked the New Zealand Government whether it would like a new Order-in-Council issued.¹ This offer sparked off an examination of the territory’s legal status and brought into question the whole nature of New Zealand’s relationship with the Ross Dependency.

The Dominions Office suggestion was referred to the Crown Solicitor in Wellington, A. E. Currie. He replied expressing his grave concern at the insecurity of the title and recommended that it be strengthened. He also felt it

¹Dominions Office to Min. of Ext. Aff. 13 Sep. 1945. PM 208/9/1.
was important for the New Zealand Government to take a more positive attitude towards the territory. Currie stated that while New Zealand's administration remained based on the unamended Act, any criticisms would be quite valid. In his view, sovereignty arising from administrative acts, such as whaling regulations, amounted to very little. He drew an analogy with the Stuart claim to the title of "King of Great Britain, France and Ireland." The answer, he said, was to draw up new instruments of control. The choice lay between a fresh Order-in-Council under the amended Act, an Order-in-Council making the area a de jure territory of New Zealand, an Order-in-Council followed by an Acceptance Act (like the A.A.T.), or action under the Colonial Boundaries Act. Currie also recognised that United States expeditions had weakened New Zealand's position and advocated some form of New Zealand occupation coupled with "development" work.2

These recommendations were forwarded to the Prime Minister's Department, but burdened down as it was by more pressing commitments, the Department quickly forwarded them to the traditional overseer of the Ross Dependency, the Marine Department. By referring to earlier files, the Secretary of Marine, W. Smith, was able to inform Currie that the Colonial Boundaries Act had been considered in 1922.3

The Crown Solicitor had already emphasised that as this Act

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2 Crown Solicitor to P.M. Dept., 15 May 1946. M2/9/7 Pt.5. For "development", Currie suggested visited by naval or tourist ships, a formal court session, mineral surveys and trial shipments of seal skins, seal oil, or penguin oil.

3 Sec. of Marine to Crown Solicitor, 14 Jun. 1946. M2/9/7 Pt.5.
involved the assent of the New Zealand Parliament, it would put the "international character of the territory beyond question".\(^4\) Armed with this new information, he now proposed that the Government seek British approval to use the Act. The Department of External Affairs drafted the necessary despatch to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and submitted it to the Prime Minister.\(^5\) New Zealand seemed poised to take a major step to reinforce the claim to the Ross Dependency and make it a distinctly New Zealand territory. But these developments received a set-back from the Prime Minister. Peter Fraser felt now was not an "appropriate time" to raise the issue, rather it was better that it should be settled "about the time that (the) Statute of Westminster is dealt with."\(^6\) Yet when the Statute was adopted, there was no mention of the Ross Dependency whatsoever.

Thus, in a strict legal sense, the new territory remained a British possession administered by New Zealand, and based on inappropriate legislation. However, the requirements of international law are notoriously flexible and in reality, the British sovereignty that existed over the area had by convention been transferred to New Zealand. In December 1946, a Dominions Office spokesman, questioned about American activity in the Dependency, remarked "...the territory concerned belongs to New Zealand and it is (for) the New Zealand Government to make an announcement if necessary, not


\(^6\) Handwritten note on External Affairs memorandum of 22 Aug. 1946. PM 208/9/1.
for the British Government."  

Besides the legal intricacies, the second part of Currie's May recommendations was even more significant. "It seems desirable", he said, "that at a very early date some further and ample acts of occupation should be undertaken."

The Marine Department "wholeheartedly" supported the idea and in mid July, the Secretary of Marine took the initiative and questioned members of his department and the Air Chief Marshall about transportation. The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (D.S.I.R.), and in particular its secretary, Dr. Ernest Marsden, were also very eager to participate. They saw it as an ideal opportunity to stimulate investigation into the earth sciences. On the 26 July, the Secretary of Marine presented a memorandum to his Minister proposing an expedition and including a draft telegram asking Britain for assistance. However, the matter fell back on the Department of External Affairs, who, with their intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the Wellington establishment, realised that the final decision lay with the Prime Minister. A more careful examination was necessary before the idea was presented to him. Although now delayed by

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7Dominion, 16 Dec. 1946
8Sec. of Marine correspondence, 22 Jul. 1946. M2/9/7 Pt.5.
9SIR 92/9.
10Sec. of Marine to Min. of Marine, 26 Jul. 1946. M2/9/7 Pt.5.
11Handwritten note, Davin to Shanahan, 3 Sep. 1946. PM208/9/1.
the tortuous process of bureaucratic consideration, the significance of these events lay in the amount of local initiative, something quite absent before the war. It reflected a greater general interest in Antarctica within New Zealand. However, the highest level of the Government still only actively responded to external pressures.

In August 1946, the New Zealand, Australian, British and Norwegian Governments were alarmed by American authorisation of a Japanese whaling expedition to Antarctica. It aroused a howl of protest from all four nations. The main New Zealand objections were, firstly, and most important, the fact that the United States had not consulted its allies, and secondly, their insensitivity in allowing the Japanese to operate on the approaches to New Zealand territorial waters and near the Ross Dependency. In the same month, the United States Navy announced plans for a large scale fleet exercise to provide training under Arctic conditions, but conducted in the Antarctic to avoid provoking the Russians. Code-named Operation High Jump, it aimed to explore as much of the continent as possible from the air. Concurrently, scientific studies were to be carried out and a small base established at Little America for the 1946-1947 summer. Once again, in keeping with the ambivalent United

12 A considerable amount of correspondence on this episode, running from August 1946 until mid 1948, is contained in M2/7/9 Pt.5.

States attitude to sovereignty in Antarctica, secret instructions were issued to consolidate and extend American rights over the largest practicable area of the continent. 14

Both of these developments were sufficient to arouse concern in Wellington, but it was a telegram from the Dominions Office on the 21st November, 1946, which had the greatest effect. This altered the whole basis of the pre-war Commonwealth commitment to Antarctica. It stated,

"...in light of (the) forthcoming United States expeditions to Antarctica, Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments would be well advised to take early steps to strengthen their claims... and that this could only be effectively achieved by (the) establishment of at least one permanent base in each sector. 15"

The telegram was the first official indication of Britain's new approach to polar sovereignty, arrived at in 1943 in response to the Argentinian challenge. A valid claim to sovereignty now required effective occupation. Britain had upheld this policy after 1945 by continuing Operation Tabarin under the new title of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (F.I.D.S.) and establishing a number of widely spread bases to maintain British rights over the whole territory. An added reason behind the British desire for Australian and New Zealand action was the likelihood that Britain might have to publicise its activities in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. As the telegram stated, "this in itself can only serve to emphasize (the) present comparative weakness of Australian and New Zealand claims".

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Such an unequivocal request, coming so soon after the local plans of the Marine Department and D.S.I.R., could not fail to have some effect. The Prime Minister's Department remarked, "our position will be seriously prejudiced if no action is taken".\textsuperscript{16} Capitalising on this opportunity, departmental pressure increased. Ernest Marsden stressed that an expedition would be "a tonic for our young scientific personnel and for the country generally".\textsuperscript{17} Newspapers, too, began to sense some of these developments and called for a positive assertion of New Zealand Antarctic claims.\textsuperscript{18} They were able to point to the Australian example. There, the Government had already established an inter-departmental committee to study the British request, and had written to New Zealand suggesting some sort of co-operation.\textsuperscript{19}

The final impetus came from a series of telegrams from Britain on the 14 December which both outlined the plans for Operation Highjump and stated that because Argentina appeared ready to table its claims to parts of the Falkland Island Dependencies at the United Nations, Britain was forced to give publicity to the activities of the F.I.D.S.\textsuperscript{20} This,

\textsuperscript{16} Craw to McIntosh, 27 Nov. 1946. PM208/11/1 Craw commented "...a decision is required from the Government as to whether New Zealand is prepared to send or assist in sending an expedition...".

\textsuperscript{17} Marsden to Min. of S.I.R., 10 Dec. 1946. PM208/3/7.

\textsuperscript{18} Dominion, 14 Dec. 1946, Truth 10 & 24 Dec. 1946. A. D. McIntosh, the Secretary of External Affairs was reported as referring to "...recent and sustained clamour in (the) New Zealand press for (a) positive assertion of New Zealand Antarctic claims." Foreign Relations, 1946, Vol.1, pp. 1499-1500.

\textsuperscript{19} N.Z.H.C. (Canberra) to Min. of Ext. Aff., 13 Dec. 1946. PM208/11/1.

plus pressure at home, was enough to bring the Antarctic issue before the New Zealand Cabinet. The importance attached to the British communications showed that despite New Zealand's developing independent status, the New Zealand Government still placed great store by the British connection.

The Cabinet's response was like that of the Australians, to establish an inter-departmental committee to look into the organisation, work and value of New Zealand occupation of the Ross Dependency.21 But they were by no means convinced that a commitment was essential. Fraser stated publicly that New Zealand had no desire to send an expedition ahead of the Americans. They were quite welcome to use New Zealand territory, he said, and added:

> the Government was sure that its rights in this area ...would be respected by all who engaged in Antarctic expeditions. The Government did not wish to display a dog-in-the-manger attitude on the period of international co-operation before it. 22

In view of the United States non-recognition, there was little else he could say. However, to remind them of New Zealand's claim to the area, a mild note was sent to the United States ambassador in Wellington, waiving the requirement for Operation Highjump to seek permission to enter the territory.23

The politicians' uncertain attitude was not matched within the government departments. The Marine Department and D.S.I.R. leapt into action and by the first formal meeting of

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22 Press, 30 Dec., 1946.
the inter-departmental committee in mid February 1947, their planning was well advanced. The Treasury and Navy Department also co-operated so that by early April, the committee had before it preliminary papers on scientific and economic aspects, planning, logistics and cost.24 Ernest Marsden's enthusiasm was such that he even recommended the necessary executive action to get the expedition underway.25 However, it soon became apparent that the greatest impact lay with a report prepared by the Department of External Affairs. This emphasised the weakness of New Zealand's title, and the strength of the United States inchoate rights, a situation which could only be remedied, the report said, by establishing a number of permanent New Zealand stations. Strategic and aviation interests took a definite second place to the political considerations. Interestingly, the report admitted the validity of the United States claims in the eastern Ross Dependency and speculated whether the United States authorities would consolidate their claims or use them as a bargaining piece for Pacific aviation rights or possession of the northern Cook Islands.26

24 Marsden, and members of the D.S.I.R. and Marine Department were eager to see New Zealand participate in Antarctic whaling. Marsden remarked "...we are rather foolish not to be in this whaling business because production per man is so much in excess of anything our dairy fellows can do". See papers in SIR 28/8 and M25/2321.
The weight given to these views was evident in the final report from the inter-departmental committee presented to the cabinet on the 12 May. The conclusions were that occupation could not be justified on scientific and economic grounds alone, but when combined with the necessity of confirming New Zealand's title, then a small expedition was worthwhile. But this recommendation was never carried out. The Government postponed a decision and for another two years any further planning lapsed.

The New Zealand Government's action was surprising, particularly after all the enthusiasm and activity, and especially after such strong British appeals. The Australian response had been to set up a permanent Antarctic Division of the Department of External Affairs in May 1947, and they proposed to establish bases on Heard and Macquarie Islands in preparation for a base on the continent itself. The main reason for New Zealand's constraint was the expense. This had been estimated at £100,000. But an added factor was a lack of interest among the inner circle of the Government. In a semi-personal letter written three days before he presented the inter-departmental report, A. D. McIntosh, head of the Prime Minister's Department, and Secretary of External Affairs, an extremely influential civil servant, remarked that he was "quite cold" on the subject. "I doubt myself whether the Government will be willing to use the

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27 Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Antarctica, SIR 40/157.
28 Swan, p.325.
money in this particular way", he said. In view of the openness between McIntosh and Fraser, it is not unlikely that McIntosh conveyed his opinions to the Prime Minister. Thus, in just two years, New Zealand had failed to repair the legal inconsistencies inherent in the Ross Dependency, and also failed to take advantage of a perfect opportunity to confirm the title by occupation. It is possible, however, that the purely territorial motives behind an expedition would not have appealed to Fraser. Both he and his deputy, Walter Nash, clung to a firm belief in international co-operation. Fraser had already stated that any New Zealand base would be open to scientists from all nations. In 1948 developments in Antarctic politics gave Fraser ample scope to express his internationalist ideals.

Fraser was able to do this because of the dispute between Argentina, Chile and Britain. The antagonisms which had been building up between Britain and Argentina over the Falkland Islands Dependencies since 1943 reached crisis point in 1947. Both nations protested over the presence of the other in the Antarctic Peninsula and staged naval demonstrations. To reinforce their claims, Chile and Argentina argued that the Monro Doctrine applied in Antarctica, while Argentina in particular wanted to raise the matter at the Ninth Inter-American Conference at Bogota in April 1948.

29 McIntosh to Wade, 9 May 1947. PM208/3/7 Pt.1. However, after a conversation with Fraser in 1949, Marsden said he got the feeling the Prime Minister never even read the inter-departmental committee's report. 15 Jan. 1949. SIR 40/157 Pt.1.

30 McIntosh, "The origins of the Department of External Affairs", passim.
This, Britain was anxious to avoid. 31

These activities alarmed the United States. The prospect of two of its erstwhile Cold War allies squabbling in Antarctica was unsettling. The dispute also swayed the direction of the United States policy towards Antarctica. In December 1946, the Assistant Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, had advised the Navy Department to use Operation Highjump to deposit further claim documents. However, there seemed to be a division of views between a policy of staking a claim and some form of internationalisation or multi-national settlement. 32 The Falkland Islands Dependencies dispute tipped the balance.

There was no indication that the Secretary of State, George Marshall, was at all inclined to follow the pre-war attitude of encouraging Argentinian or Chilean interests in Antarctica. He considered that neither the Monroe Doctrine, nor the Pan American Treaty of Mutual Defence could be evoked by Chile and Argentina to apply to Antarctica. He also rebuked the American ambassador in Buenos Aires for sniping at the British claim. He remarked, "This government believes Britain to be one of the strongest forces in the world today... and the Department does not intend to take any action which would aid hostile groups to weaken United States-British collaboration against totalitarian and anti-democratic elements". 33 The United States

31 Hunter-Christie, pp.290-1.
32 Foreign Relations 1946, Vol.1, pp.1497-8. The State Department felt that a United States claim was "...probably as good a case as the British Empire claims, although possibly not one which they would readily accept."
anti-communist position was paramount and hence some form of settlement seemed in their best interests. Not only would it avoid United States and British embarrassment if Argentina raised the question at Bogota, it might also ensure the Soviet Union was excluded from Antarctica. 34 Consequently, the United States decided it would propose some form of internationalisation of the continent, possibly sanctioned by the United Nations. At the same time, it intended to make an official claim, probably encompassing parts of the Ross Dependency, A.A.T. and Falkland Islands Dependencies in areas where the United States had inchoate rights. 35 This would place the United States on an equal footing with the seven other claimants and provide an additional incentive to force some agreement. The degree of collaboration between the State Department and British Embassy officials on this matter was remarkable, considering the uneasiness which had existed before the war. Britain was quite prepared to accept the United States plans but preferred a multi-national condominium rather than a United Nations solution, arguing that the latter could involve Soviet interference. 36 In any event, Britain was extremely anxious to settle the dispute, otherwise it foresaw increased difficulties and a repeated loss of prestige. Unfortunately the general response from the other claimants was negative. Chile and Argentina rejected the United States approach outright, arguing that it was a matter of national sovereignty.

The Australians were luke-warm. Increasingly they seemed ready to defend their territorial rights with possessive belligerence.

New Zealand, however, did not dissent. The Department of External Affairs told the American Ambassador the Government would "go along" with the idea. Apparently, the first reaction had been unfavourable, but influenced by the British attitude, the Government had changed its mind. Some sort of international regime would undoubtedly have provided a convenient solution to the dilemma of New Zealand's Antarctic claim without necessitating the expense of bases to reinforce New Zealand sovereignty. Peter Fraser remained consistent to his ideals by preferring a settlement under United Nations auspices.

Faced with general disapproval, though, the United States let the issue lie. It was still anxious for a solution, but now felt uncertain whether the offence given to Argentina and the danger of arousing Soviet interest made it worthwhile. Britain, likewise, hoped for a result, realising that it would have to come to some agreement with Chile and Argentina itself, otherwise. Surprisingly the British seemed to acquiesce in the idea of a United States claim. Perhaps they felt it would place the United States in a similar position to themselves. Certainly, though, it showed that the days of aggressive British territorial policy in Antarctica were over.

39 Ibid.
Still intending to follow up a claim, the State Department approached the New Zealand Government for harbour and aircraft facilities in preparation for Operation Highjump II. Permission was granted, but soon after, the whole idea of involvement in Antarctica began to lose favour. There was a division between those supporting the idea of internationalising the continent, and those pressing for a United States claim. Among the latter was Byrd, who felt that "no one knows what resources may be discovered in Antarctica or what resources the United States may badly need." By now though he had lost much of his earlier influence in the government. In 1949 Highjump II was cancelled for economic reasons and the United States withdrew from Antarctica for six years. It was pre-occupied with anti-communism and soon with the Korean war. Britain came to an uneasy agreement with Chile and Argentina regarding the entry of warships into their Antarctic zones, and the internationalisation proposals gradually died away.

The episode had demonstrated how volatile questions of Antarctic sovereignty could become and how sensitive certain countries were to their claims. In addition the Soviet Union was miffed at its exclusion from the proceedings. In 1950 it declared that on the basis of the one hundred and fifty year old discoveries of the Russian Admiral, Bellingshausen it would not recognise any settlement which failed to take

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41 Foreign Relations, 1949, Vol.1, p.799
42 Hunter-Christie, p.291.
notice of Soviet rights. Yet despite the difficulties, the United States initiative foreshadowed the drawing up of the Antarctic Treaty, and at the same time showed that a positive response could be expected from the internationalist-minded New Zealand Labour politicians.

The idealism of Fraser and his colleagues cannot be carried too far, though. Undoubtedly the prime consideration restricting a more active New Zealand Antarctic role was the cost, which, as McIntosh had already pointed out, probably outweighed the material benefits. During 1949, this consideration was again underlined. In January, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations commended to the New Zealand Government an expedition proposal from Professor Frank Debenham, director of the Scott Polar Research Institute. Debenham suggested a low cost expedition to study ice mechanics and physics at McMurdo Sound. Fraser liked the idea. As a scientific expedition it would not upset the negotiations still taking place over internationalisation, and at the same time it might provide a small counter-weight to the five United States expeditions. Significantly, Fraser also indicated that the expedition would enhance New Zealand's territorial claims. Obviously, his concern for international

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43. Soviet Note, 7 Jun. 1950, Polar Record, Vol.5, 1951, No.6, pp.120-1. The note was sent to Argentina, Australia, Britain, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway and the United States.
44. S.S.C.R. to Min. of Ext. Aff., 5 Jan. 1949. M25/2321. His recommendations were based on discussions within the Polar Committee, which had been revived in its pre-war form in 1945.
co-operation did not include surrendering or ignoring New Zealand's rights. He thus authorised a new inter-departmental investigation to carry forward the 1947 findings. Interest grew rapidly and it seemed possible the expedition might become a predominantly New Zealand venture. It received the enthusiastic support of Dr. Ernest Marsden, now in charge of the New Zealand Scientific Office in London. Marsden was not prepared to see the effort he devoted to the 1947 plans go to waste. Both he and Debenham were convinced of the future importance of Antarctic scientific research. Indeed Debenham did not worry whether it was a British or New Zealand expedition which eventuated, as long as it carried on the scientific work "which we abandoned so abruptly nearly forty years ago".

However, a more realistic assessment of costs, made the New Zealand inter-departmental committee think again. At its second meeting in June 1949, C. N. Watson-Munro of the D.S.I.R., said that alone, the scientific return was not enough. Research was more urgently needed in New Zealand, he said, adding prophetically that an expedition was probably more desirable in about five years time. The committee recommended the New Zealand Government tell the British authorities that it could not take sole responsibility for

46 Marsden was quite hopeful of success. He said, "Judging from an odd remark from the PM during his visit to Harwell with me, he may possibly be a little more sympathetic to an expedition. I don't think he had read our 1947 report". 15 Jan. 1949. SIR 40/157.
47 Debenham to Marsden, 24 Jun. 1949. SIR 39/44.
the expedition.\textsuperscript{48} For their part, the British had just imposed severe budget restrictions on the F.I.D.S. and were only prepared to assist if New Zealand did likewise.\textsuperscript{49} Faced with this stalemate, the New Zealand Cabinet decided not to support the expedition and cabled, "as neither the United Kingdom nor ourselves are prepared to take the initiative and bear the financial responsibility, there will be no expedition in 1950-51".\textsuperscript{50} While there was sympathy for an Antarctic venture, the Government was unconvinced the risks and financial burdens were worth while.

In the Forties, every New Zealand move relating to Antarctica was to some degree influenced by British opinion or advice. In this way, New Zealand's relationship with the Ross Dependency since pre-war days was unaltered. What had changed was the sense of New Zealand's independent responsibility for the territory, an independence already reflected in New Zealand's wider foreign policy. On an official level, this had so far only amounted to recognition of the inadequacies of the legal title to the territory and the need for occupation. However, among the public and within scientific circles, there was greater enthusiasm and purpose. The idea of Antarctic exploration and research appealed to a sense of nationalism and national virility. Public opinion was usually ahead of the economy-conscious

\textsuperscript{48} Second meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Antarctica, 3 Jun. 1949. M25/2321. There were two Inter-Departmental Committees on Antarctica, one in 1947 and one in 1949. They were also referred to as the Polar Committees.


Government attitude. Those involved in the type of adventure or research which would benefit from a New Zealand Antarctic presence realised that if handled in the right way, this public support could become an important element in changing the Government's mind.
Chapter 7
The Final Act: The Establishment of a New Zealand Presence

The election of Sidney Holland's National Government in December 1949 brought no changes to the cautious attitude to Antarctica displayed by its Labour predecessor. If anything, New Zealand's occupation of the Ross Dependency became an even more remote possibility. The new Government was concerned with domestic policies, financial restraint, and then the Korean War. Thus the estimated cost of £150,000 for an Antarctic expedition was out of the question, even though the Government stated it was aware of the strategic importance of the territory and conscious that New Zealand "...had not participated conspicuously in scientific discovery and exploration in this region for many years".¹

The Prime Minister was no longer also Minister of External Affairs as Fraser had been, but rather Minister of Finance which reinforced the wariness of any additional expenditure. Balancing this, however, was a slight shift of emphasis in New Zealand's foreign relations.

Holland emphatically proclaimed his loyalty to the "dear old Empire", an attitude which had been downplayed, verbally if not in reality, by the Labour Government.²

mild echo of the deferential spirit of the Twenties and Thirties, it indicated the increased eagerness of New Zealand to co-ordinate its policies with Britain, provided these did not conflict with its new ally, the United States. As previous Antarctic proposals involving New Zealand had generally originated from Britain, this meant New Zealand might fall in more readily with new British suggestions. Yet Holland set himself firmly against any Antarctic commitments. He was personally uninterested, and also completely opposed financially. In September 1953, Holland announced that he hoped there would be no call for a Government sponsored expedition in either that year's estimate or the next.3 However, the Prime Minister's opposition was not insurmountable and eventually succumbed to overseas requests and public pressure.

Unlike the pre-war period, Antarctica was no longer the sole concern of the acquisitive imperialists and the occasional adventurer. Scientific research in Antarctica increased greatly after World War II. There was also mounting public interest within New Zealand, tinged by the historic associations with Scott, Shackleton and Byrd.

The most tangible expression of this general interest was the New Zealand Antarctic Society. Founded in 1933, until the war, it had operated only as a social focus for 'Antarcticans'.4 After being revived in 1949, it was clear

3Dominion, 21 Sep. 1953.
4A suitable phrase to encompass the wide variety of people interested in Antarctica, for reasons varying from scientific interest to a romantic attachment.
that the Society intended to press for a New Zealand expedition.\textsuperscript{5} The new president, Dr. R. A. Falla, was director of the Dominion Museum, at the time president of the Royal Society, on the Discovery Committee, and had been one of the members of the BANZARE. Other members included fellow BANZARE scientist R. G. Simmers, now assistant director of Meteorological Services, and Professor N. E. Odell, professor of geology at Otago University. The significance of such men lay in their connections with government departments, universities and scientific bodies where their influence could be translated into pressure on the Government. Above all, they attracted the attention of newspapers. Thus remarks by Odell that New Zealand was missing a glorious opportunity for Antarctic exploration received perhaps the rather dubious headline, "Professor says N.Z. People Lazy, Complacent Towards Life."\textsuperscript{6} Yet, despite the publicity it received, the Antarctic Society was only a small group. It did not have a major impact on public opinion until the heat of external events once again kindled New Zealand's interest.

In March 1953, Sir Miles Clifford, Governor of the Falkland Islands, presented to the Polar Committee a proposal by Dr. Vivian Fuchs for a trans Antarctic expedition.\textsuperscript{7} Fuchs, appointed director of the Falkland Islands Dependency Survey (F.I.D.S.) in 1950, had already sought support for this project from his friend and mentor, Sir James Wordie, a man

\textsuperscript{5}Minutes of Ant. Soc., 1949 & 1950. 
\textsuperscript{6}Dominion, 2 May 1952. 
with connections in influential circles, and after 1951, president of the Royal Geographical Society. The idea lay fallow until 1953 when Clifford, prompted by Wordie, raised it before the Polar Committee. Fuchs and his supporters recognised the necessity of large-scale government assistance for their ambitious, yet essentially private, project and proceeded to gather support by judicious lobbying through the "old boy" network. Here, the Polar Committee with its representatives from the Foreign Office, Commonwealth Relations Office, and Commonwealth High Commissions, was an ideal medium. In September, Fuchs outlined his plans to the committee in greater detail. The expedition was presented as a co-operative Commonwealth enterprise. It combined the spirit of adventure on a grandiose scale with the advantages of prestige, exploration, scientific work, service training, meteorological investigation, and the political value of following a route wholly within the Falkland Islands and Ross Dependencies. For Fuchs, however, these considerations were only secondary to his main objective. This was to obtain official backing for a challenging adventure in the tradition of Scott, Shackleton and Amundsen.

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10 The Polar Committee noted that a transitory journey like this would not consolidate legal rights and that any challenge to British rights was occurring at the fringes of the territory, not in the hinterland. Minutes of the Polar Committee, 15 Sep. 1953. M25/2321.

The key feature of the project from New Zealand's point of view was the proposal for a reception base at McMurdo Sound, for Fuchs had suggested this might be New Zealand's responsibility. The New Zealand representative at the Polar Committee's September meeting, Frank Corner, remarked that while he could not speak for his Government, he personally felt that if the project got underway, New Zealand's co-operation could be counted on. "There was in New Zealand at present," he said, "a wave of interest in the Antarctic...". 12

Corner was referring to a flurry of newspaper articles in September 1953, questioning the basis of New Zealand's claim and calling for an expedition. 13 Their impact was such that the Government Member of Parliament for Gisborne, Harry Dudfield, asked what the Government intended to do about the territory. "New Zealand could not afford to leave that valuable area solely to the penguins," he said. 14 It was precisely this sentiment which had caused the outburst. Also significant were the agitations of the Antarctic Society. 15 The Society's meetings, and the views of prominent members, had provided the newspapers with ample material. In addition the knowledge that Australia was preparing to establish its

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13 Evening Post, 11 & 26 Sep. 1953. On the 20 September, a headline declared, "N.Z. Expedition to Antarctica proposed."
15 The Antarctic Society was responsible for submissions to the Minister of External Affairs, T. C. Webb, on the 29 Apr. 1953, and the Prime Minister on the 7 Sep. 1953, urging the establishment of a New Zealand scientific station. Minutes of Ant. Soc., 1953.
first continental base, Mawson, in early 1954, did not pass unnoticed. Yet in spite of this, the Government was unmoved. There were vague remarks about attaching a New Zealand scientist to the Australian expedition and louder noises about costs.\(^\text{16}\) Holland hoped there would be no call for a government sponsored expedition for at least two years but he was sufficiently aroused to ask the Department of External Affairs what the Polar Committee was.\(^\text{17}\) They in turn asked the D.S.I.R. to prepare a report on recent Antarctic developments.\(^\text{18}\) Apart from the trans-Antarctic ideas and the Antarctic Society's demands, the report included an examination of an altogether different project which in the long run was to prove the most significant.

Early in 1950, proposals were submitted to the International Council of Scientific Unions (I.C.S.U.) to advance the date of the third Polar Year from a fifty to twenty-five year event.\(^\text{19}\) Approved by the I.C.S.U., the project snowballed with other international scientific bodies joining in. In 1950 it was decided to designate 1957-1958 an International Geophysical Year (I.G.Y.) when a world wide investigation of geophysics would be conducted. A special committee, the Comité Speciale de l'Aneé Geophysique Internationale (C.S.A.G.I.), was created to co-ordinate what

\(^{17}\)PM 208/7/1 noted in Quartermain Papers.
\(^{19}\)The idea of a Polar Year was to conduct a study of all physical properties of the polar regions. By bringing it forward 25 years, the objective was to make a special effort to concentrate on solar studies.
was rapidly developing into a huge international scientific programme. 20 At the first meeting of the C.S.A.G.I., in June 1953, the Antarctic was designated an area of special interest and it was urged that as many observation stations as possible be established there. Following this meeting, the New Zealand Royal Society set up its own National Committee for the I.G.Y. to consider New Zealand's contribution. The geographic location and its territorial interest in Antarctica both pointed to the likelihood of some New Zealand connection with the I.G.Y. Antarctic activities.

Significantly, all members of the National Committee held positions of influence in government departments, particularly the D.S.I.R. 21 However, the Prime Minister had already had his say. On the 16 September, he told the Department of External Affairs that any idea of a New Zealand contribution should be put in cold storage. 22

Surprisingly, the D.S.I.R.'s report on Antarctica was lukewarm towards a New Zealand commitment too. It was "useful" to be in the Antarctic for the I.G.Y., it said, but the range of scientific work was insufficient to justify the D.S.I.R. in taking the initiative. The Trans Antarctic

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20 The central theme of the I.G.Y. was a world wide study of the geophysical properties of the earth, atmosphere and space. As the Antarctic was relatively unexplored and covered such a huge area, a major Antarctic programme was planned.

21 Its members were Dr. M. A. F. Barnett, director of Meteorological Services, Dr. I. E. Robertson, director of the Geophysics Division, D.S.I.R., I. L. Thompson, director of the Carter Observatory, R. G. Dick, Surveyor-General, W. H. Ward, director of the Dominion Physics Laboratory, N. V. Ryder, Victoria University, & G. W. Markham, secretary.

22 PM 208/7/1 noted in Quartermain Papers.
Expedition (T.A.E.) was also attractive, but scientifically it only amounted to a quick reconnaissance. The conclusion was that decisions as to the extent of New Zealand's support and assistance should be made on "political and similar grounds".23

One member of the D.S.I.R. who would not subscribe to this view, though, was Ernest Marsden. Writing from London in early December, he continued to advocate the importance of New Zealand activity in Antarctica. He stated:

One has only to look forward twenty-five years to realise the defence significance of our titular occupation in this area so as to deny it to others who may be unfriendly. Apart from these considerations, however, we have a certain duty to the rest of the world to explore our own territories, and to assess their economic value, either as producers of food or minerals. Then again there is the whole prestige value. Why need we send New Zealand expeditions to Asia when there is such a fascinating area at our own door? 24

But perhaps the scientists involved with the I.G.Y. felt it was too soon to begin pressure. The D.S.I.R.'s attitude contrasted with Marsden's enthusiasm. In any event, departmental support was contingent on the weight of political considerations and as these were yet uncertain, it was a matter of wait and see.

The development of the T.A.E. and the expansion of the I.G.Y. both continued throughout 1954, so that the New Zealand Government was gradually forced into a position where it had

to make a decision about the Ross Dependency. True to past form, that decision was made reluctantly, and in a way that involved the least possible expense.

Fuch's behind-the-scenes campaign to secure government support eventually began to bear fruit. Following yet another summary of his plans before the Polar Committee in May 1954, the British Government decided to conduct a fuller examination of the proposals. In fact, the T.A.E. fitted nicely into the wider context of a revamped British policy towards Antarctica. Faced with both an increasing Argentinian penetration in the Falkland Island Dependencies and an unwillingness to discuss a settlement, the British felt they could not let their de facto position deteriorate further. The original policy of using widely scattered bases to maintain sovereignty over the whole territory appeared ineffective. Therefore, the British Government settled on a new three-phase approach. Firstly, the F.I.D.S. would discover what parts of the Dependencies would be most valuable in the event of a partition and then solidly establish British rights in those areas. Secondly, Britain would present its case to the International Court of Justice. Finally, the T.A.E. would be provided with assistance. It had considerable prestige value, helped with the exploration of the hinterland of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, and could be regarded as an additional British contribution to the I.G.Y. It also meant that a base would be established on Ross Island which might entice New Zealand into the Antarctic.26

26 W. C. Head (New Zealand High Commission, London) to McIntosh, 1 Sep. 1954. M25/2321.
occupation of the Ross Dependency and a vigorous approach to its Antarctic claim would, with the Australians' policy, present a united Commonwealth front and reinforce Britain's position in the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

Obviously, the British were fishing for some sort of New Zealand commitment to the T.A.E. But initially, this was not forthcoming. In September 1954, an inter-departmental committee met to discuss the British proposals in light of a rising tide of feeling in both government and public circles that New Zealand had to do something about its "admittedly tenuous claim". Yet the meeting made no recommendations beyond supporting the idea of a transcontinental expedition and a Ross Sea base without specifically mentioning New Zealand's participation.

At this point, however, an additional factor had to be considered.

Early in October, the second meeting of the C.S.A.G.I., in Rome, passed a resolution calling on the New Zealand Government to establish an I.G.Y. station between Ross Island and Cape Adare. This request meant the whole weight of the Royal Society, with its numerous connections

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27 On the 15 June, the newly appointed Administrator of the Ross Dependency, Captain Harold Ruegg, wrote to the Secretary of Marine suggesting an inter-departmental conference. He said, "New Zealand has two alternatives, either renounce all claims or else establish an effective claim". M25/2029.

28 In Captain Ruegg's view, the various government departments were not prepared to devote part of their budgets to Antarctic ventures. Pers. Comm. 9 Apr. 1978. Also, minutes of the inter-departmental committee, 21 Sep. 1954. M25/2321.

and widespread influence, would be brought to bear on the Government. At the Rome meeting, it also became clear that the United States was preparing to re-enter the Antarctic scene after six years of inactivity. Although their justification was scientific, there were strong political and military motives as well. The United States scientific programme was based on massive naval support, while the 1956 operation plan stated that a major reason for the permanence of United States bases was in "support of United States rights in the area". In 1954 the C.S.A.G.I. had been informed that the United States would set up bases in Marie Byrd Land, at Little America, and on the South Polar Plateau, and as a result, in October the New Zealand Government was notified that a reconnaissance was to be made in the summer of 1954-55 by the ice-breaker U.S.S. Atka. Besides the United States, at least five other countries indicated they would undertake I.G.Y. observations in Antarctica. A major descent on the continent seemed imminent.

Neither the likelihood of a trans-Antarctic expedition

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This visit also triggered rumours of a hydrogen bomb test in Antarctica. Walter Nash demanded a reply in Parliament. On the 12 October, T. C. Webb told the House that the United States Ambassador had assured him the rumour was untrue. External Affairs Review, Vol.4, No.11, p.3.
or the unprecedented activity promised in the next five years moved the New Zealand Government. But it did move public opinion. Sir Edmund Hillary had been approached by Fuchs as early as November 1953 to take part in the T.A.E. This had stimulated Hillary's interest to the extent that he was prepared to push for exploration—and adventure, which was undoubtedly his prime motive—in the Ross Dependency. His intentions attracted a great deal of publicity. Equally important was the role of his father-in-law, J. H. Rose, president of the New Zealand Alpine Club and a keen Antarctician. He was also a close friend of R. M. Algie, the Minister of Scientific and Industrial Research. Co-incidentally Algie was the godfather of Hillary's wife. Influence and connections like these as always existed on a number of levels and pressure mounted up. Indications began to appear in the newspapers in November 1954. The New Zealand Truth commented, "New Zealand is not doing its part for the Commonwealth by leaving the Ross Dependency as an international vacuum". Once again the source of pressure was often the Antarctic Society, and its forceful secretary A. S. Helm. However, the final

34Hillary's character and motives have been the subject of comment and some controversy over the T.A.E. See Love, p.105-11?, and McKenzie, D., Opposite Poles, London 1963, Chapt. 19 & p.81.
35Dominion, 12 Nov. 1954.
36Evening Post, 7 Sep. 1954, reported Helm as saying news of the I.G.Y. and T.A.E., "highlighted the need for New Zealand action".
The impetus came in January 1955. The arrival in Wellington of the U.S.S. Atka aroused a great surge of interest in Antarctica. It also attracted large-scale publicity which, on the Atka's departure, turned into a press attack on the Government for its lack of imagination over New Zealand's participation in Antarctic affairs. Headlines such as "Too Much Shuffling" appeared and a Dominion editorial of the 7 January called on the Government to "bestir itself". 37

Consequently, on the 12 January, the Minister of External Affairs, T. L. MacDonald, announced that the Government was considering both the I.G.Y. and the T.A.E. proposals "with full regard for New Zealand resources and Commonwealth and New Zealand interests in the area". 38

Two days later, an Antarctic Society deputation met MacDonald and Algie, and were surprised at the favourable attitude they found. 39 Yet, despite the growing personal enthusiasm of these two ministers, the Government had really been backed into a corner from which it was having difficulty escaping. For his part, Holland tried his utmost to minimise any commitment. 40

37 Truth, 9 Jan. 1955
40 Evening Post, 10 Jan. 1955, reported Holland as saying he knew nothing about a "British" expedition led by Sir Edmund Hillary. "You would think I would, wouldn't you?" he said, adding, "because Sir Edmund climbed Everest, they seem to think he can climb the South Pole, too". The following day, Holland denied "...emphatically that I said anything that would reflect on his capacity to take part in a polar expedition".
On the 1 February, while in London attending the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference, he admitted that the Cabinet had approved New Zealand's participation in the T.A.E. "in principle". Beyond this, he made no further comment, choosing also to ignore any mention of the I.G.Y. But he was in a difficult position for the British used the conference to lever Commonwealth support for the expedition. First, Fuchs was called in to meet with Holland, the Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies, and Sir Anthony Eden. Their discussions resulted in general approval for the crossing plans. Then, on the 17 February, Sir Winston Churchill announced the British Government would contribute £100,000 to the expedition. No doubt he expected other Commonwealth leaders to react loyally with similar contributions. Australia eventually contributed £25,000 and South Africa £12,000. But Holland seemed unwilling to take the bait. It was reported that he was prepared to do the "fair thing" for the expedition, but unhappy to have a financial commitment of an unspecified amount and prepared to postpone the matter until a Cabinet decision could be made in New Zealand. On his return, Holland still shied clear of any undertaking. The cost in such ventures, he said, "had an unhappy knack of being exceeded". Better, he felt, was a single cash donation to the expedition and then have done with it. However Holland could not ignore the determination,

now apparent even in his own Cabinet, to establish a New Zealand presence in the Ross Dependency. As a result of proposals from Algie and MacDonald, on the 25 April the Cabinet authorised a contribution to the T.A.E. of £50,000, to be co-ordinated by a special committee. It also requested further information on the I.G.Y. and raised the matter of re-enforcing the legal basis of New Zealand's claim.44

A public announcement of these decisions was made on the 15 May. New Zealand would contribute to the T.A.E. and the special committee, the Ross Sea Committee, would supervise the contribution and assume responsibility for the reception base at McMurdo Sound on Ross Island. So finally, after a great deal of pushing and prodding, the Government had decided on some form of New Zealand activity in the Ross Dependency. However, the T.A.E. was not a New Zealand initiative. It was a private expedition, and essentially British at that. The organising committee in London had made it quite clear they were not keen on an independent New Zealand body.45 Thus the Ross Sea Committee was supposed to function as an integral part of the main organisation. This would have been all very well if the continental crossing was all that New Zealand was interested in, but it was not. Once the Government had decided to set up a base in McMurdo Sound, there were other factors to consider. The T.A.E. was a useful vehicle for a more substantial, long-term, and

distinctly New Zealand presence in Antarctica.

The elaborate organisation created to administer New Zealand's contribution showed the Government's desire to see its money was well spent. It was also an indication of a changing Government attitude to Antarctica. Discussions at the Cabinet meeting on 25 April revealed the New Zealand ministers were aware of the need to reinforce New Zealand's claims in the Ross Dependency and that New Zealand's participation in the T.A.E. would only marginally reflect on New Zealand sovereignty. The minutes of the meeting recorded, "If our participation in the Expedition is established on a patently New Zealand basis with the Base at Ross Island manned by a New Zealand party, this should assist in reinforcing New Zealand title to the area and offer positive evidence of New Zealand interest. 46

Even prior to this meeting, a Prime Minister's committee on Antarctica had been set up which provided a degree of co-ordination and direction previously lacking. 47

The Ross Sea Committee was specially designed to provide the type of New Zealand interest the Government desired. It was comprised of representatives of government departments, the Royal Society, mountaineering clubs, and sections of industry and science. Its members were mainly

46 Cabinet minute (55)20, 13 May 1955. M25/2321.
those who had advocated action in the past and to whom a purely New Zealand commitment was imperative. Dr. Robert Falle and Dr. (soon Sir) Ernest Marsden were both members. Arthur Helm of the Antarctic Society was named secretary, while in June Sir Edmund Hillary was appointed leader of the New Zealand component of the T.A.E. 48

Another product of the April Cabinet meeting was the decision to investigate the C.S.A.G.I. resolution of the previous year. An inter-departmental committee was set up to consider a New Zealand contribution to the I.G.Y. and more especially its Antarctic programme. 49 Initially, it appeared the I.G.Y. was overshadowed by the T.A.E., but the D.S.I.R. and other scientists were convinced that New Zealand's future associations with Antarctica lay in scientific research. As far as they were concerned, the T.A.E. was twenty years out of date while New Zealand was going to benefit from the I.G.Y. for twenty years to come. 50

Unfortunately, progress was hampered by expense and competition with the T.A.E. The Secretary of External Affairs,

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48 Initially the committee consisted of C. M. Bowden, retired cabinet minister, R. D. Moore, B. R. Law, Marsden, Professor L. R. Richardson, Falle, H. E. Riddiford, R. S. Odell, T. R. Clarkson, Captain H. Ruegg, Hillary and Helm (secretary).


A. D. McIntosh, summed up the dilemma for the committee, "Adventure appeals to politicians and the public, not scientific work". The Prime Minister, he said, had been "considerably annoyed" when informed of the likely cost of the I.G.Y. involvement. In fact, McIntosh was well aware of the importance of the I.G.Y., but from the political aspect. He was concerned that if New Zealand did not undertake I.G.Y. observations, someone else would: probably either the Americans or the Russians. McIntosh's views on the whole question became apparent in an exchange with the committee secretary, G. W. Markham.

Markham: Is there a point here - apart from the scientific work which is to be done in the Antarctic there is no point in going to the Antarctic?
McIntosh: Political value will have been achieved.
Markham: You will get value for your money if you do the scientific work. McIntosh: It is a marginal advantage.

Thus the Department of External Affairs were prepared to give every assistance by "stretching" the political aspects when the committee's recommendations were presented to the politicians. With this support, reluctance about

51 First meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the I.G.Y., 22 Jun. 1955. SIR 72/173/3. Professor N. E. Odell commented on the Government's attitude to scientific plans, "I only hope the New Zealand Government is not going to procrastinate longer over proper financial support which at present is holding up our D.S.I.R. plans for their contribution to the Inter. Geophy. Year; the £50,000 is earmarked, of course, for the Trans-Continental project, which alone has caught the P.M.'s imagination!" Odell to Quartermain, 31 Sep. 1955. Quartermain Papers.
the I.G.Y. was overcome. The T.A.E. plans meant an I.G.Y. party could be catered for at a reduced cost. In August the inter-departmental committee's recommendations were approved and although it cost the Government an additional £50,000, a joint T.A.E. and I.G.Y. expedition would occupy the proposed McMurdo Sound base.

The New Zealand decision to co-operate in the I.G.Y. Antarctic programme was politically significant as McIntosh had recognised. It represented a more autonomous achievement by New Zealand than the T.A.E. Its importance, and indeed the importance of the New Zealand base, was suddenly emphasised in June 1955 when the Americans announced they would set up a logistic support base in McMurdo Sound.53

This news disturbed those involved in both branches of New Zealand's Antarctic plans. Until now, New Zealand's claim to the western Ross Dependency appeared quite soundly based on the activities of early British expeditions, although the Department of External Affairs had privately admitted doubts about the status of the eastern area for some time.54

In February, United States officials had intimated they could assist with transport, and although the British wanted to avoid relying on the Americans for the T.A.E., the New Zealand Government was quite prepared to accept the offer for at least its I.G.Y. party.55 However, the new American

53 29 Jun. 1955. SIR 39/49. The Department of External Affairs was quick to note that United States plans encompassed more than a mere transit station at McMurdo Sound.


55 Remarks by A. D. McIntosh at the first meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the I.G.Y. SIR 72/173/3.
proposals alarmed the New Zealand Government. The Americans expected to use New Zealand as a staging point, yet they announced the McMurdo Sound base without any warning or prior consultation. Despite this awkwardness, the Government realised that in view of the United States non-recognition of territorial claims and their possible assistance, any strong objections would not be very effective. The Department of External Affairs sent a mild note to the State Department welcoming the United States base, gently reminding them of New Zealand's claim, and calling for continued co-operation: a far cry from the hostility evident in the Thirties. This minor shock roused the New Zealand Government. When a joint United States-New Zealand base was proposed for Cape Adare, also in the western Ross Dependency, the idea was accepted quite quickly.

The scientific and political implications of the I.G.Y. showed the direction of future developments. Science provided the rationale for an Antarctic programme, camouflaging the rarely absent political motives. New Zealand's reliance on British leadership had gradually declined, being replaced by a more independent role and a closer, yet less forthright, relationship with the United States. The T.A.E. was the swan-song of the old imperial Antarctic dreams begun in 1920. However, it, and not the I.G.Y., had given


57 The Department of External Affairs felt it was important to reinforce New Zealand's position in the Western Ross Dependency and feared if it did not join the Adare project (the base was actually sited at Cape Hallett), the Japanese might put a base there. Sep. 1955. SIR 39/49.
the initial impetus to get New Zealand into the Antarctic and provided the means to stay there. The members of the Ross Sea Committee were aware of the long term significance of the reception base, now to be named Scott Base, as much as the scientists. It was just that they generally concentrated on the more romantic, but nevertheless rewarding, interests of exploration.

Between 1955 and 1956, the Government was persuaded to take more and more responsibility for the Ross Sea contingent of the T.A.E. This culminated in the purchase of a supply ship, the H.M.N.Z.S. Endeavour. In a last minute display of administrative concern, Hillary was appointed a magistrate and postmaster, and the head of the I.G.Y. party, Dr. Trevor Hatherton, a coroner and Justice of the Peace. The final cost to the Government well exceeded £250,000. In return, it was stipulated that the facilities of the base would be taken over by the New Zealand Government once the T.A.E. had finished.

The establishment of Scott Base had been a slow and painstaking affair, characterised by delay and fear of costs, even though some of the expense was offset by T.A.E. fund-raising. A reluctant Government was swayed by two factors, the weight of public opinion stimulated by groups such as the Royal Society and Antarctic Society, and the pressures of external developments. In the last resort the Government

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58 After a great deal of searching for a ship, the New Zealand Government was finally offered the F.I.O.S. vessel, John Biscoe, at the bargain price of £10,000. For negotiations over the ship, see M25/2321.
had been prepared to reinforce its claim to the Ross Dependency with the internationally recognised criterion of occupation. Unfortunately, such action did not remedy the inadequacies of the 1923 Order-in-Council nor counteract the rights of other nations in the Ross Sea region, particularly those of the United States. The Americans had stolen a march on New Zealand by setting up McMurdo Base a year before Scott Base. However, it was to both countries' advantage to co-operate over Antarctica and this was accompanied by American silence on the territorial question. New Zealand was certainly in no position to do other than co-operate.

Scott Base represented a turning point in New Zealand's attitude to its Antarctic possession. Apathy and disinterest had given way to activity and participation. The Ross Dependency ended up costing the New Zealand Government far more than Massey's estimate of "little or nothing". Thirty-three years later, New Zealand embarked on a new era.
Chapter 8

Postscript: The Antarctic Treaty*

Scott Base gave New Zealand a tangible stake in Antarctic Affairs. Yet, the continuation of a New Zealand presence after the end of the T.A.E. and I.G.Y. was uncertain. The National Government, now led by Keith Holyoake, still showed signs of dragging its feet. Conscious of this, in July 1957 the Department of External Affairs suggested to the D.S.I.R. that it recommend to the Government a continuing scientific programme co-ordinated by some sort of permanent administration. The primary object of the programme, for those in the Department of External Affairs at least, was to reinforce New Zealand's claim to the Ross Dependency. They were acutely aware that the increased international activity arising from the I.G.Y. had aggravated the problem of

*Note: The preliminary negotiations and the Antarctic Treaty conference were conducted in secret. Unfortunately, access to the relevant files of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs is still restricted. Thus this chapter is based predominantly on published sources. But it is important to bear in mind the comment of the late Dr. Brian Roberts of the Scott Polar Research Institute, who was closely associated with Britain's part in the treaty. The true story as it emerges from the confidential documents is, in my personal view, painfully at variance with a lot of the published versions. In saying this, I refer, of course, only to the political and other motives of each government. I fear it will be some years before this bit of history can be published.


national rights and sovereignty. This in turn could lead to further questioning of territorial claims.

The old dispute between Argentina, Chile and Britain still simmered. The Soviet Union was now also ensconced in Antarctica. Like the Americans, they refused to recognise existing territorial claims. By 1957 a series of Russian scientific stations had been set up, chiefly in the Australian sector. This alarmed particularly the Australians and also the Americans. In addition, three other nations, Belgium, Japan and South Africa maintained I.G.Y. stations bringing the number of countries operating major scientific programmes in Antarctica to twelve. With the Cold War still raging and given the territorial sensitivity of the two South American states, there was a strong possibility of trouble.

In spite of this, it has been agreed tentatively that claims to sovereignty would not stand in the way of scientific investigation during the I.G.Y. The value of Antarctic research was universally recognised and on the whole, all participants worked in harmony. Nevertheless, it was only a temporary agreement. In December 1956, the United States National Committee for the I.G.Y. called for an extension of the programme beyond 1958. As the I.G.Y. involved not just Antarctic, but world-wide research, other national committees were worried by the expense this proposal would entail. But eventually, following the Moscow C.S.A.G.I. conference in mid 1958, a limited extension was

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3 Swan, p.370.
agreed to. Earlier, in September 1957, an ad hoc committee of the I.C.S.U. had met to consider the question of further co-operation and co-ordination of Antarctic scientific work. The result was the Special Committee on Antarctic Research (S.C.A.R.), which was to co-ordinate international Antarctic research and arrange for the exchange of information. The success of the I.G.Y. and the readiness with which the various nations were prepared to accept a continuing arrangement suggested two things. Firstly, there was a consensus that nothing was served by arousing tensions, and secondly, that in the near future scientific investigation was likely to be the main activity in Antarctica. However, the creation of S.C.A.R. was only a scientific initiative. Although hardline claimants such as Argentina and Chile had acquiesced in the I.G.Y., they showed no inclination to give up or even modify their territorial claims. The Australians, too, were sensitive over the matter of sovereignty, well aware that the main Soviet effort was in the A.A.T. Above all, the attitude of the two super-powers was uncertain and it was they who would dictate the future of the Antarctic. The political question remained unanswered and unsure.

The first overtures for a settlement came from the British, for they were concerned that the most likely scene of any conflict was in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Following an unsuccessful attempt to have their case judged

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before the International Court of Justice, late in 1957 the Foreign Office decided to revive the idea of internationalisation. Territorial claims to such harsh and apparently uninhabitable lands were often attacked as ludicrous extensions of national ambitions. An alternative was the creation of an international regime to administer the whole continent. But previous American proposals had foundered on the unwillingness of most nations to surrender their rights to an international body. Unfortunately, the British were putting forward the same idea again.

In January and February 1958, the proposal was elaborated by the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, during his visit to Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand he found Labour again in power, and strong support from the new Prime Minister, Walter Nash. Like Fraser in 1948, Nash retained his faith in the international idealism so dear to the early Labour Party. His belief that proposals required the blessing of the U.N. reflected this. In fact, Nash had already had something to say about an Antarctic settlement. In 1956, he had proposed a U.N. regime for the continent. India seized on the suggestion and raised it before the General Assembly in October, 1956. However, throwing the Antarctic to the unpredictable U.N. did not appeal to Britain, or for that matter to almost every other Antarctic nation.

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7 I.C.J. Pleadings 1956, also Hanessian, "Antarctica: Current national interest..." p.163.
8 External Affairs Review, Vol.8, No.1, p.17.
They preferred to keep their club as small as possible and the Indian initiative was quietly quashed. However, even the new British ideas were unacceptable to Argentina and Chile, possibly because they came from Britain rather than anyone else, but chiefly because of their opposition to any weakening of national claims.

While the British ideas were being canvassed, the United States was also considering a settlement. The State Department realised that with a Soviet presence in Antarctica, any future territorial claim by the United States was fraught with difficulty. The only attractive alternative which would recognise and regularise their activities and interests appeared to be internationalisation. After some initial probes, the Americans adopted a Chilean suggestion of "freezing" rather than abandoning national claims. This idea went a long way towards appeasing the nationalistic tendencies of the Latin Americans. Encouraged by the possibility of success, on the 3 May, 1958, President Eisenhower invited the twelve I.G.Y. participants to attend a conference in Washington in 1959 to consider an Antarctic settlement.

Walter Nash was delighted with the invitation. He foresaw even further possibilities. "I believe that such a conference could well lead to an agreement on Antarctica which could open the way to international co-operation in

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11 Kish, p. 76.
13 Ibid.
other and more controversial areas", he said. His enthusiasm influenced New Zealand's approach to the preliminary negotiations and the conference itself. Nash felt a gesture had to be made to break the "logjam of distrust" in international affairs. As a consequence, New Zealand adopted a liberal approach to the question of claims. In a statement on the 29 May, 1958, Nash remarked that it was essential to put the sovereignty issue in "cold storage" and as long as international co-operation continued, "any New Zealand claim would cease to be of consequence". Nash's idealism aside, an international settlement had a number of advantages for New Zealand. It removed the prospect of having to defend sovereignty in the Ross Dependency, especially when the nation most likely to challenge it was the United States. Without their support New Zealand's Antarctic programme would be in great difficulty. A settlement would also mean a great saving in cost. However, not all New Zealanders were imbued with the Prime Minister's generous idealism. Groups like the Antarctic Society were alarmed by Nash's rhetoric and worriedly urged him to maintain

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14 Evening Post, 29 May 1959.
16 Evening Post, 29 May 1959.
17 Beeby, C. D., The Antarctic Treaty, Wellington 1972, p.9. New Zealand's dependence on American transport to Antarctica was formalised in an exchange of notes in December, 1958. This allowed the United States an operational H/Q and military wireless station, also free transit of personnel, ships and aircraft through New Zealand, and waived jurisdiction to all but major criminal matters over all United States Antarctic personnel while in New Zealand. In return, New Zealand received logistic support. External Affairs Review, Vol.14, No.8, p.15.
New Zealand's claim. A New Zealand Herald editorial commented,

In welcoming the prospect of a concerted approach to the investigation and development of the last continent, New Zealand cannot afford any hasty abrogation of her rights. What Mr. Nash proposed is manifestly right. But Antarctica in general and the Ross Dependency in particular remain of vital concern to this country.

Nash recognised this. Replying to the Antarctic Society, he said, "I am satisfied that we have some claims." He later stated that his approach did not mean New Zealand would specifically renounce its claim.

Indeed, in February 1958, the Cabinet had given approval "in principle" to the D.S.I.R. proposals for a New Zealand Antarctic research programme beyond the end of the I.G.Y. Not only was the Cabinet aware of the importance of upholding New Zealand's claim, there was also over £3m invested in Scott Base and its support facilities. Besides, New Zealand exploits in Antarctica were extremely popular with the public, and any decision to restrict them would have invited widespread criticism. In March, the Cabinet agreed to the setting up of the Ross Dependency Research Committee to co-ordinate New Zealand's programme. At the same time, it approved a research plan for the next three

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20 Nash to Quartermain, 9 May 1958. Nash continued that he would take what action was "necessary and helpful for the benefit of New Zealand, the adjacent countries, the British Commonwealth and all other nations that are interested in any way in the peace and exploration of Antarctica." Also, External Affairs Review, Vol. 9, No. 5, p. 35.
21 External Affairs Review, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 27.
years and delegated its execution to the D.S.I.R. In April 1959, the Antarctic Division of the D.S.I.R. was created to fulfill this role.

The New Zealand delegates who left for the Washington Conference were not prepared to throw away New Zealand's claims carelessly. Nevertheless, they hoped for as wide a settlement as possible. But, as so often in international relations, there was a large gap between a small power's aspirations and its effectiveness.

The conference began on the 19 October, 1959, and soon revealed a considerable diversity of opinion. The hardline claimants were still unhappy about the idea of either freezing their claims or creating any type of consultative or administrative machinery. Basically, they wanted to continue scientific co-operation, and otherwise restrict the scope of a treaty as much as possible. The New Zealanders, led by A. D. McIntosh, adopted a liberal position. They were the only delegation to show

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22Hanessian, 1962 a., p.27, and External Affairs Review, Vol.8, No.4, p.6. The Ross Dependency Research Committee (R.D.R.C.) consisted of appointees from the D.S.I.R., Meteorological Service, Department of External Affairs, Department of Lands and Survey, Chiefs of Staff Committee, the Dominion Museum, the Royal Society, and the New Zealand Universities. It approved forthcoming New Zealand Antarctic programmes and handled matters of policy. The Antarctic Division of the D.S.I.R. was, at this stage anyway, primarily concerned with logistics and organisation.

23Argentina, Australia and Chile. France was particularly opposed to freezing claims, mainly because French legal opinion felt it would be impossible to revert to a pre-treaty territorial situation after the treaty had run its course. See Hanessian, "The Antarctic Treaty", p.458.
any willingness to sacrifice a territorial claim in return for a secure and comprehensive settlement. This attitude reflected Nash's influence. Indeed, to show his interest, Nash attended the conference from the 27 to the 29 October en route to London. Because of him, the New Zealand delegation was prepared to put some effort into a treaty and seek a bold approach.

However, the conference was over-shadowed by the super-powers, who, though willing to accommodate the sometimes volatile views of the other participants, generally dominated the proceedings. Both were anxious to reach an agreement which would stabilise their own interests and prevent a repetition of their competitive rivalry elsewhere.

There are suggestions that Norway did the same. Hanessian, "The Antarctic Treaty", p.460.
Rather surprisingly, at this stage of the Cold War, the Russians and Americans were cordial and co-operative, undoubtedly stimulated by a thaw in relations occasioned by the negotiations over nuclear testing. Antarctica was an area where concessions could be made. In the face of this unanimity, the hardline claimants were not prepared to wreck the conference through intransigence. Neither were the super-powers prepared to adopt more liberal suggestions which would work against their interests or unnecessarily upset the hardliners, thus the final treaty was a tentative document, the result of what was possible, not what was ideal.

The eventual draft of the treaty, prepared in seven weeks, revealed the compromise that had taken place. The treaty provided for freedom of access for scientific investigation and exchange of information, the use of the continent for peaceful uses only, banning of all nuclear explosions and dumping of nuclear wastes, and a system of unilateral inspection. In reaching these agreements alone, the treaty was a bold step in international relations. However, it did not tackle the question of economic exploitation nor satisfactorily solve the problem of whose legal jurisdiction applied to the many nationalities working in Antarctica.

26 The leader of the United States delegation, Herman Phleger, stated later, "This Treaty does not settle all problems of Antarctica for all time, nor does it attempt to do so. It does, however, represent a significant advance in the attempt, based on U.S. initiative, to bring some form of international order to a large area of the earth's surface where none existed heretofore". Antarctic Treaty : Hearings Before The Committee On Foreign Relations, Washington D.C. 1960.
27 Generally, each national was covered by his own country's laws. But there was no provision for an illegal act involving nationals of different countries. Beeby, p. 11410
As far as territorial claims were concerned, Article 4, paragraph 1, stated that nothing in the treaty was to be taken as a renunciation of any previously asserted rights or claims. Paragraph 2 froze the situation by stipulating that no acts or activities could form the basis for strengthening existing or potential claims, or asserting new claims while the treaty was in force. This protected the present status of all nations currently involved in Antarctica and the territorial issue was "swept under a convenient rug". Barring disputes, the treaty was to last for thirty years.

The signing of the Antarctic Treaty was hailed as a great breakthrough, a victory for science. The I.G.Y. and the establishment of S.C.A.R. had underlined the importance of scientific co-operation in stimulating a settlement. There was a common interest in scientific research and problems of logistic support. At the time there were no definite frontiers, no local political activities and no immediately exploitable resources. However, there was still a covert political motive behind the scientific research. If New Zealand was to continue to have a say in Antarctic affairs, it had to maintain its scientific programme. In reality, the treaty was not a victory, it was an expedient.

The Antarctic Treaty did not live up to Nash's expectations. The imaginative and adventurous approach to the

28 Hartley Grattan, p.662.
29 See Beeby for a brief yet concise summary of the Antarctic Treaty and its Articles.
30 Jessup & Taubenfeld, p.168.
territorial issue which he so desired did not eventuate. 31 There was only a limited reference to the United Nations and Antarctica was jealously preserved for the Antarctic “club” of those already involved. Yet while the treaty did not go as far as Nash wanted, it went as far as New Zealand needed.

It gave New Zealand the best of both worlds, maintaining the claim to the Ross Dependency but removing the need to justify it. New Zealand’s Antarctic programme was an important pre-requisite for a say in wider Antarctic affairs, but it could now concentrate on science and exploration rather than overt acts of sovereignty. It also allowed New Zealand an equal voice in the regular treaty consultative meetings, a voice which might otherwise have been drowned out in the territorial clamourings of the larger powers. In addition, the treaty safeguarded New Zealand’s southern approaches by banning military activities and any nuclear threat from the continent. Finally, the conference had given the loquacious Nash an opportunity to expound his beliefs in international co-operation, which in itself gained New Zealand some recognition, if to little effect.

It would be tempting to see the Antarctic Treaty as the culmination of New Zealand’s associations with Antarctica, solving the problem of an insecure imperial legacy by replacing it with an international agreement still preserving New Zealand’s general Antarctic interests. But it would be only partially true. The Ross Dependency still existed and still formed the rationale for New Zealand’s involvement.

The treaty was a stop-gap measure to gain time. New Zealand territorial involvement had not ended. It had been set aside for a later date.
Conclusion

The motives behind international activity in Antarctica are considerably more complex than the romantic idea that it is a continent for science, or the earth's last great frontier. The early nineteenth century explorers were usually more intent on stripping as much of the living resources from Antarctica as their limited technology allowed, than making new discoveries. In the 1900's, Scott, Shackleton and their contemporaries were fully aware of the nationalistic aspects of their expeditions and often deliberately played on this. Even today, much modern Antarctic exploration and research is orientated towards investigating exploitable resources. Between 1920 and 1960, the New Zealand Government's interest in Antarctica was principally territorial. The predominating feature of these years was the need to fulfill the commitment to the Ross Dependency.

However, for much of the time, the Government showed little enthusiasm. The territorial burden was accepted in 1923 almost without comment. The Secretary for External Affairs, J. D. Gray, summed up the Government's attitude with his remark, "It is difficult offhand to know what to suggest...". New Zealand was just doing its duty, satisfying the apparent necessities of imperial policy. After the

1 See Chapt.1, p.22.
failure of the whaling licences, and up until 1955, there were few attempts to enforce even a paper control of the Ross Dependency.

While uninterest was one aspect of the Government's attitude, reluctance was another. This was understandable though. The Government never really wanted the Ross Dependency, and when problems associated with sovereignty began to arise, it was not sure it could afford counter measures. The Government was loath to take independent action. Only external pressure led to any reaction. The New Zealand Government was prepared to listen to requests from Britain and respond to challenges to British or New Zealand sovereignty. The final decision to establish Scott Base and undertake a programme of research and development was the result of a combination of both these pressures - and one other; the demands of public opinion.

Political aspects are important when examining the reasons for national involvement in Antarctica, but they form only part of the wider Antarctic scene. Exploration, scientific research and adventure must also be included in a wider appraisal of the continent. Within New Zealand, there were many enthusiasts who were eager to initiate and participate in Antarctic expeditions. Any territorial motive rarely entered their heads. If it did, it was usually a minor consideration designed to capture the Government's attention. Their interests ranged from personal ambition to a benevolent desire to stimulate research in an exciting environment. The lobbying of groups such as the Antarctic
and Royal Societies, and the enthusiasm of individuals like Sir Ernest Marsden and Sir Edmund Hillary were extremely important in forcing a reluctant Government into a decision.

In addition to the pressure of specific groups, the Government also had to take notice of an interest in Antarctica among New Zealanders in general. This can be attributed to New Zealand's proximity, the presence of departing and returning expeditions, and the fact that New Zealand had long tended to play a significant part in Antarctic affairs. The particular timing of the T.A.E, coinciding with the I.G.Y. and a growing sense of New Zealand nationhood aroused such public interest that even a dominating Prime Minister like Sidney Holland was unwilling to stand in its way. Public opinion has been a major influence in maintaining New Zealand's presence.

Another influence was cost. The Government had to be convinced of the value of New Zealand involvement. In terms of returns, it was possible to argue, as C. N. Watson Munro did in 1949, that money was better spent on research in New Zealand. This point was not lost on economy-conscious politicians. It was countered, however, by the overriding need to reinforce New Zealand's claim to the Ross Dependency. Legally, New Zealand's title was weak. The instrument of control, the 1923 Order-in-Council, was very unsound, New Zealand seemed to have no way of enforcing its administration, and the United States could put forward a far stronger claim.

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2See Chapt.6, p.110.
to the eastern Ross Dependency. Although the belated New Zealand presence restored some rights, it would have been difficult for the New Zealand Government to become overly custodial. New Zealand was saved from what could have become a very embarrassing situation.

For these reasons, and because successive New Zealand Governments never really felt strongly about Antarctica, New Zealand adopted a moderate attitude to questions of sovereignty. Under Nash, this attitude appeared to become positively idealistic. Undoubtedly, it may have gained New Zealand, or Nash, some kudos in international forums, but New Zealand stood to lose a lot for the sake of a gesture. In fact, the New Zealand representatives at the Antarctic Treaty conference were not prepared to give away as much as is sometimes believed. The New Zealand Government's responses to Antarctic developments might have been slow, it might have been dragged onto the continent, firstly by the dictates of British policy and later by organised enthusiasts and public opinion, but by late 1959 it was prepared to stay there and secure as strong a voice as possible. It had been a tortuous process, yet in the end New Zealand had shown it would honour its cold commitment.
**Appendix 1: Ross Sea Whaling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whaling season</th>
<th>Name of factory ship</th>
<th>No. of Whales</th>
<th>Oil produced</th>
<th>Revenue to New Zealand</th>
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<tr>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>Sir James Clark Ross</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>17,791</td>
<td>£ 200</td>
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<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>Sir James Clark Ross</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>32,165</td>
<td>1,920-12-6</td>
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<td>1925-26</td>
<td>Sir James Clark Ross</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>37,700</td>
<td>2,921-5-0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>Sir James Clark Ross</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>22,800</td>
<td>7,176-15-0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C. A. Larsen</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>47,500</td>
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<td>Nielsen Alonso</td>
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<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
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<td>616</td>
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<td>C. A. Larsen</td>
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<td>Nielsen Alonso</td>
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<td>1928-29</td>
<td>Sir James Clark Ross</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>49,000</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. A. Larsen</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>73,000</td>
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<td>Nielsen Alonso</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>64,000</td>
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<td>1929-30</td>
<td>Sir James Clark Ross</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>50,820</td>
<td>400</td>
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<td>C. A. Larsen</td>
<td>1,082</td>
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<td>Southern Princess</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>61,370</td>
<td>7,871-5-0</td>
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<td>Nielsen Alonso</td>
<td>745</td>
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<td>Kosmos</td>
<td>1,922</td>
<td>116,000</td>
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<td>1930-31</td>
<td>Sir James Clark Ross</td>
<td>1,443</td>
<td>112,500</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>Kosmos</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>160,000</td>
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= unlicensed vessel

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