

ROGERNOMICS AND RUPTURE:

HUNTLY'S RESPONSE TO THE CORPORATISATION OF STATE COAL MINES IN 1987

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in History at the University of Canterbury.

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Abbreviations

AJHR	<i>Appendices to the of the House of Representatives, New Zealand</i>
CoalCorp	Coal Corporation of New Zealand Ltd
ERO	Education Review Office
HDA	Huntly Development Agency
MOCU	Management of Change Unit
PSA	Public Service Association
SCM	State Coal Mines
SSC	State Services Commission
WEA	Waikato Enterprise Agency

Abstract

This thesis captures the memories of the 1987 Huntly mineworkers who were severely impacted by the corporatisation of State Coal Mines. There were just 19 days between the announcement of job-loss numbers and employment notices being sent out. Over half of the workforce was made redundant. For some of the miners, there were opportunities and new challenges, for others it was the end of their working lives. This thesis considers how the redundancies affected the miners, their families, and the wider community.

As a coal town, Huntly is steeped in mining tradition. There was an unwritten social contract between State Coal Mines and the community, which was replaced with a clause advocating social responsibility in the State-Owned Enterprises Act. Miners share a deep sense of camaraderie, reinforced by their dangerous working conditions. Social employment policies meant that generations of a wider family network could be working together in one location. Huntly was placed under enormous strain as a result of the widespread redundancies. A level of social dysfunction, including illiteracy and domestic violence, became apparent in Huntly during this time. Despite the shock, the community rallied around to support the miners, and to explore options for future business and employment in Huntly.

This thesis is based on oral history and examines the response of those who were affected in 1987. Their recollection of the corporatisation process and the effects it had on their community are revealing. Furthermore, this thesis explores the reaction of the community to the redundancies and highlights initiatives that were implemented to mitigate the effects. The miners' perspective of how corporatisation affected their community, and the challenges Huntly faces to the present day, are also considered.

Introduction

Huntly is a town built on coal, and the mineworkers and their families can be considered the foundation of the community. In 1987 State Coal Mines was the biggest employer in the area, with a local workforce in excess of 900. As part of the economic reforms that were implemented by the fourth Labour government under ‘Rogernomics’¹ the Huntly mining workforce was reduced by half. It was a huge blow to the community, which was left wondering how it would survive. As a social history, this thesis explores how the mineworkers, their families and the wider community coped during this difficult time.

The rupture which Rogernomics introduced was widespread with severe consequences for those who worked in the public service: ‘redeployment’, ‘retrenchment’, and ‘redundancy’ became commonplace. Over the years, a career in the public service had been viewed as dependable and this fostered an intrinsic sense of security and stability, not only amongst individuals but also within wider community. Under Rogernomics, the government’s objectives turned toward the global markets and profit, and away from social employment within New Zealand communities. The social contract between communities and the public service was broken as the dual objectives of efficiency and profit replaced intergenerational employment and the idea of a job for life.

The restructuring of the public service was initiated by the *State-Owned Enterprises Act* 1986.² The Act was an integral component of the fourth Labour government’s plan to kick-start the New Zealand economy. In an effort to make the public service more streamlined, and therefore more productive, corporations were initially established to replace the less efficient public service. Douglas stated that there would be ‘enormous productivity gains from state-owned enterprises.’³ The government was hoping the changes would lead to businesses which were ‘as profitable and efficient as comparable

¹ The collective changes that were introduced by the fourth Labour government and its Finance Minister Roger Douglas are known as Rogernomics.

² *State-Owned Enterprises Act*, 1986, www.legislation.govt.nz Accessed 6 April 2010.

³ Douglas optimistic, *Waikato Times*, 30 March 1987.

businesses which are not owned by the Crown.’⁴ Initially, nine corporations were established⁵ including Coal Corporation. Its predecessor, State Coal Mines, had economically been the poorest performing public service department.⁶

This thesis specifically explores the state sector reform of State Coal Mines to Coal Corporation as it affected Huntly. The Ministry of Energy was the largest employer in Huntly with operations at the Huntly Power Station and State Coal Mines. State Coal Mines was an active participant in the local community: a public service department with a social conscience, and a history of supporting intergenerational employment. As employers, the public service reinforced within the town a subconscious reliance on the government to provide work. Based on oral history, this thesis captures the thoughts of those who were made redundant and provides a social-history case study of one community. Huntly was severely affected by the corporatisation of its largest employer and examining the aftermath allows an insight into how an individual community faced the challenge during a turbulent period in New Zealand’s recent history.

The first chapter of this thesis contains an overview of the Huntly community. It illustrates the importance of mining to Huntly and reinforces how the relationship of the miners underground strengthens the community spirit above ground. This chapter also contains an overview of Rogernomics and the road which led to the election of the fourth Labour government. New Zealand operated a strongly regulated economy until the 1970s when Britain joined the European Economic Community and New Zealand was required to expand its overseas markets. This exploration was rapidly accelerated in the mid-1980s when New Zealand went from being one of the most economically regulated countries in the world to one which embraced liberalisation and commercialisation. A review of current literature is contained within the historiography which concludes this chapter. While the policies of Rogernomics and the fourth Labour government have been

⁴ Section 4, *State-Owned Enterprises Act*, 1986.

⁵ J. Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1997), 118. Other corporations included Land, Forestry, Electricorp, Telecommunications, Airways, Post Office Bank, New Zealand Post and Government Property Services.

⁶ *Management*, December 1991, 43-49.

widely researched, there is little in the way of New Zealand social history covering this turbulent period. This thesis hopes to fill part of that void.

Chapter Two is based upon an interview with Jane Bryden who was employed by the State Services Commission in 1987. Jane was a member of the Management of Change Unit (MOCU) which developed policy to deal with the impending job losses across the public service. Jane was in Huntly when the job losses were announced and provided information about redundancy and employment options to miners in the days following. Jane's knowledge of the challenges faced by Wellington is revealing. There was a lack of an international benchmark for the changes that Rogernomics was introducing. This meant that although policy was written in Wellington when it was rolled out in Huntly it did not cover the many of the situations which Jane was confronted with. During her time in Huntly there was the revelation of illiteracy and domestic violence, both of which she had not previously encountered.

The miners' interviews form the basis of Chapter Three. The interviews were conducted with State Coal Mine employees who were made redundant on 1 April 1987. Their recollections of the redundancies and its effects, on them personally and on the wider community, illustrate how traumatic the job losses were. These interviews form the foundation of this social history. The miners' understanding of why the redundancies had to occur, their attendance at the announcement meeting and their utilisation of the available support services within the community are examined. There are recurring themes within the miners' interviews, including the unique work culture and the sense of camaraderie, and these are further explored. This chapter concludes with a brief overview of what the miners are doing now.

Chapter Four explores Huntly as the miners' community in the aftermath of 1987. It discusses the changes that the miners' felt occurred within their community. Many families moved out of the Huntly district following the corporatisation of State Coal Mines, some never to return. The loss of up to 100 families in a community of 6500 was widely felt. The demographic of the community changed. Added to that was the strain

that was now being felt by local retailers at the loss of 500 pay packets per fortnight. How the miners' feel about their community and the impacts of 1987 is the basis for this chapter.

Chapter Five looks at the immediate aftermath of the State Coal Mine redundancies on the Huntly. The focus shifts to how the community reacted to the changes and explores how the redundancies impacted on Huntly. The town had been expecting a coal boom in the late 1980s; instead of gearing up for further production it now found itself gearing up to attract new industry and employers to the area. An interview with Barry Quayle, who was head of the Huntly Development Agency, outlines what the community did to attract new business in times of economic downturn. The sharp downturn in business confidence which followed 1987 hit the Huntly retail area particularly hard and this is further investigated. This chapter also looks into the Job Search Scheme which was established in Huntly. It was supposed to provide job and interview skills for those who were looking for work, but was underutilised by the community.

Chapter Six assesses the long term effects of Rogernomics on the Huntly community, both socially and economically. An interview with the longest serving police officer describes some of the challenges that are facing Huntly. Poverty, and its companions unemployment, domestic violence and gambling, are all issues in Huntly to the present day. The Vice Principal of Huntly College explains how the changes in Huntly have affected the college, and what the school is doing to address those issues. This chapter also discusses the compounding effect of corporatisation on social issues which have become more prevalent since 1987.

Huntly in 2010 is a different community from Huntly in 1987. The epilogue which concludes this thesis explores the issues that Huntly faces today. Peter Harris, mayor of the Waikato District, and Kim Bredenbeck, manager of the Waikato Enterprise Agency discuss the opportunities for the northern Waikato region over the next decade. Both Peter and Kim are passionate about the Huntly community, but also realistic about the challenges which face the area. Although Huntly still suffers from significant social

issues, there is an air of optimism. More than twenty years after Rogernomics sounded like a death knell to the Huntly community, the town is still growing and capable of reaching its' full potential.

Social history is based on the shared history of a group of people who are connected by personal circumstance. The common denominator could include gender, ethnicity, class or location. This thesis employs a social history methodology.⁷ By examining their shared story, conclusions can be reached about the miners' response to the redundancies of 1987. The crux of social history is that it concentrates on one group of people who are bound together by a set of circumstances and therefore share a common experience.

This thesis is a social history, based on the experiences of the Huntly community in 1987. As such, it is the mineworkers and their shared perspective which forms the basis of the primary research. Although their unique geographic location is a common thread, this thesis could be considered 'class-based' social research, based miners' experiences. By investigating the influence of mining in Huntly, considering the relationships within the community, and analysing the shared common experiences, the effects of corporatisation on Huntly can be surmised. Common themes shared by the miners include the high proportion of intergenerational employment and their working in a male dominated industry. They shared similar experiences, quite literally at the coal face. From one perspective this thesis could be viewed as a micro-study of one community based on occupation.

Oral history, as opposed to quantitative research, is the basis for this thesis. The experiences of the mineworkers and their community are the focus. How the mineworkers felt about what occurred in 1987 and their collective experiences cannot be reflected in statistical analysis; their voices and their memories cannot be heard. The community suffered a sense of united grief, caused by the number of job losses and the end of mining traditions. There was also personal grief, as the mineworkers and their families faced an uncertain future. While statistics could record the effects of

⁷ M. Fairburn, *Social History: problems, strategies and methods*. (New York, St Martins Press, 1999).

corporatisation via employment numbers, house sales, and the changes to Huntly demographics, statistics cannot demonstrate the personal outcomes. This thesis fills the void in current historiography by analysing the response of those who were most affected by job losses due to corporatisation in 1987. Ever pragmatic, the miners appeared happy to recount their experiences and their thoughts about what happened to them. The miners' memories of 1987 and their thoughts about what happened subsequently, to them and their town, were best captured through personal interviews.

A thesis based on oral history is only possible if there are people available to interview, and this was one of the first challenges that were faced. When this thesis was initially proposed, the objective was to interview 10 percent of the 487 people who had been made redundant. A list of redundant mine workers who were members of the Mineworkers Union was sourced from Archives New Zealand and it contained 336 names.⁸ A list of the Public Service Association staff made redundant has not been sourced. If the figure of 487 as listed in the media is correct, the conclusion to be reached is that the other 151 people who were made redundant in Huntly in 1987 were members of the Public Service Association.⁹ I was reluctant to advertise in the *Huntly Press* for people to interview as I was concerned about the number of respondents that I might get and that it might be overwhelming.¹⁰ I was also wary of people who perhaps wanted to promote their own viewpoints that would not necessarily fit within the scope of this thesis. A more systematic approach was employed using the list of redundant mine workers as a basis upon which to locate people.

On the assumption that the list was accurate, and using it as the primary source of names for those made redundant, a search was conducted using the Huntly telephone book to ascertain how many people were still living within the Huntly district. This was challenging as many of the surnames appeared multiple times on both the list and in the telephone directory. I was also aware that some people had passed away and wanted to

⁸ AAFH 6790 W5510 Box 317 SIU6/5 Pt 1.

⁹ I. Duncan, A. Bollard, D. Buchan and M. Rivers, *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects*, (Wellington, NZIER, 1994), 99. There were 257 public servants employed by State Coal Mines in Huntly in 1987.

¹⁰ D. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 2nd edn, (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55.

ensure that I did not call families of people who have died. I decided to take the list to John and Stan Alder, two brothers who have lived in Huntly all their lives and are now both in their 60s. Both of them have worked for State Coal Mines and CoalCorp in supervisory positions at East and West Mine. One is still currently employed by Solid Energy at East Mine and the other is the Officer-in-Charge of the New Zealand Mines Rescue. I wanted to use their knowledge of the mining industry and Huntly to ascertain how many people on the list were still living locally. The reason I chose these two people to help with locating people on the list is because I knew they would respect the confidentiality of those who had been made redundant and because of the positions which they had previously held and currently hold within the mining industry.

Of the 336 mine workers who were made redundant in Huntly, the Alder brothers identified at least sixty have passed away since 1987. Considering that a number of those made redundant were over 50, this is probably to be expected. There were 110 names on the list of people who were not listed in the Huntly phone book and who the two brothers did not know of or were unsure as to where they are now. Consequently I have interviewed 18 mine workers who live in or around Huntly. I was hoping to interview only people who still live in Huntly but four of the interviews were conducted with people who no longer live in the town. Two of those interviews are not included within this thesis as the interviewees had never lived in Huntly. Two of the interviews are included due to the unique personal circumstances of the interviewees. I included the interview with Karl Crook Senior, who had recently moved to Hamilton, because he was the oldest person on the redundancy list whom I could locate. Karl also comes from a family who have been involved in mining for generations.¹¹ I interviewed Robert Gamble as there were two Robert Gambles on the list and I did not realise, when I initially made contact, that he no longer lived in Huntly. Robert Gamble now resides in Te Hutewai near Raglan. His interview proved worthwhile as he had been made redundant in 1987 and then hired back almost immediately to fill a vacancy at one of the underground mines.

¹¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 18 March 1987. Karl Crook Senior was interviewed and stated that his sons were the fifth generation of miners to work in the Huntly area.

Four people that I contacted declined to be interviewed. One stated that they found it too upsetting to talk about, one said that he did not see the point in going over the past again and two said they did not want to be interviewed. Messages were left for approximately ten people who still lived in Huntly but unfortunately they did not return my calls. In one case I contacted the same family member four times trying to set up an interview with her husband. She assured me that he wanted to see me but unfortunately I did not hear from him. I also tried to obtain an interview with the President of the Mine Workers Union, Bluey Urquhart. He was heavily involved with the union throughout the redundancy rounds of 1987. We spoke by telephone and he advised me to contact him via email to set up an interview but did not respond to my emails after the initial telephone contact. A further challenge was locating people who had left New Zealand to work in Australia as a result of the 1987 redundancies. Each person who was interviewed for this thesis discussed the number of people who left the Huntly area to look for work. The general consensus is that many moved to Australia. It is estimated that 100 families left the Huntly area. Although everyone I interviewed discussed people leaving town I have not been able to get any reliable contact information for those people who supposedly moved to Australia, even when it involved the miner's immediate family. This proved to be somewhat frustrating. Three interviews were conducted with miners who left Huntly after the redundancies for overseas employment, and have since returned to the area. Conversely, when I explained my research to people I was offered names of people who interviewees thought had been made redundant in 1987; however most of those names were not on the list. One of the reasons for this could be the two other redundancy rounds which occurred in Huntly in the 1990s and confusion about who was made redundant on what occasion. Also, there were other job losses associated with State Coal Mines, for example, the closure of the Waikato Carbonisation Plant at Rotowaro. There was a round of redundancies when the plant closed and these occurred around the same time but were not as a result of the corporatisation of State Coal Mines.

Another challenge was the Human Ethics Committee requirements and issues surrounding permission for interviews. I managed to secure an interview with a business

owner who has operated in Huntly from prior to 1987 through to the present day. Although he was very busy, he invited me to meet him after work at his home. After I had introduced myself we discussed the information sheet and HEC form which were a prerequisite for before I could record the interview. The businessman told me that he was not interested in them, and would not have much to say. He then spent the next hour discussing Huntly, the business association, the challenges of operating businesses within the community, the issues the community faced, and his thoughts on the future of the community. Needless to say, I am deeply regretful that I did not record the interview and persuade him to complete the form after he had finished so that I could use the information in this thesis.

After the prospective interviewees were identified I made an introductory phone call and explained my thesis objectives. Interviews were then conducted with the mine workers; the majority took place in their homes. An office in Huntly was made available to me, but none of the miners chose to meet at this facility.

I used a small voice recorder to record the interviews and then transcribed them at a later date. I also had a notepad but note taking was very limited. Interviewing people in their homes provided a unique set of challenges concerning environment. In one case, the television was playing and it is difficult to hear what is being said on the recorded interview. It also meant that if other family members were home they would quite often wander in and listen to what was being said, which in many cases was an unexpected bonus. Many of the men that I interviewed had their wives present and, between the two of them, they would often be able to remember something or someone, prompting each other's memories. Many of the women worked locally and knew the families of the miners who worked with their husbands, and they could help put events into context.

However, it also meant that the interviews could get off track very easily. Often the miner and his wife would start talking about a particular person or event and this led to them going off on a tangent discussing subjects which were not relevant to the thesis

objectives. I did not actively dissuade this from happening as I felt it might help jog their memories about other events.

I used a semi structured interview technique aided by a short list of questions that I used to prompt conversation when required.¹² I was relying on the finding that ‘direct, dramatic and emotional situations tend to produce more fixed and lasting memories.’¹³ I was hoping that conversation would occur without my having to prompt for information. In two particular cases, the interviewees did not seem very comfortable and it was difficult to get them to open up about their thoughts and feelings about being made redundant. I did not push this further as I am aware that, for some interviewees, losing their jobs was very traumatic and perhaps they did not want to dwell on this. I only interviewed one ex-miner who still seemed particularly bitter about the way he felt he was treated. Most of the others seemed to have moved past the trauma experienced and arrived at a place of acceptance. However, this does not mean that they no longer had strong feelings and reactions when discussing the restructuring.

There is a saying that time heals every wound, and more than twenty years have passed since the event. The passage of time can blur people’s memories, which is a weakness of oral history as a methodology.¹⁴ I sensed, in some people, a reluctance to state how affected they were by the events at the time and I hope I was sensitive and respectful of their feelings. It is hard to determine if interviewees were looking through rose tinted glasses. ‘People regularly re-evaluate and re-explain their past decisions and actions.’¹⁵ I did not feel comfortable challenging people about what they told me, even when I knew through other sources that they were not entirely correct. There was confusion about dates and timing of events, but I used other primary sources available to corroborate this information (for example newspaper articles).

¹² See Appendix 2.

¹³ Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 33.

¹⁴ R. Perks and A. Thompson, *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd edition, (New York, Routledge, 2006), 3.

¹⁵ Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 33.

During some interviews issues were raised which I was uncomfortable with. Because I am Maori I was probably more sensitive to discussions based on the role and behaviours of Maori in Huntly. In two particular cases there was a discussion about what was presently happening with Huntly and there was talk about how ‘they’ and ‘them’ were moving from the west side of Huntly to the east side. I presumed that ‘they’ and ‘them’ referred to Maori, as Huntly West has a higher proportion of Maori living in that area than Huntly East. I did not pursue these discussions any further as I did not feel that I could offer my opinions on such topics in someone else’s home. I was also perturbed by the fact that people felt that I would not be offended by such talk when I am so obviously Maori. I understand that the generation of mine worker that I was interviewing did not feel there was anything wrong with talking about Maori in what could be considered a derogatory way. They are probably reflecting the view of many in Huntly from the same era. I resolved these issues after discussion with my supervisor at that time.

In hindsight, I realise that my interview technique had room for improvement. Initially I would turn the voice recorder off too soon. Often, as I was packing up and getting ready to leave, the interviewee would remember something or want to discuss something else and I did not feel that I could pull the recorder out and start it again. However, in the book *Doing Oral History*, there is a discussion about how to wrap-up an interview and it states that because interviews can be difficult and emotional, sometimes it is necessary to speak with the interviewee at the conclusion without having the recorder running.¹⁶ Therefore, I feel in some cases, I was justified in just letting the person speak and although what they said was interesting, I did not record it and, therefore, did not use it within this thesis.

Once the interviews were completed I transcribed them and then used the transcripts to verify what the person had said before including a direct quotation within this thesis. I found it necessary to transcribe the interviews, even though it was particularly time consuming, as having the interview on paper allowed me to recheck what was said on the

¹⁶ Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 109.

recording.¹⁷ It also allowed comparison between the interviewees and their recollections, which was an unexpected bonus.

Basing this thesis upon the miners interviews provided a narrow focus but one which is also most insightful. Upon comparing my interview transcripts it became apparent that there were several recurring themes contained within the miners recollections. This justified the oral history approach as these themes would not have been apparent if this thesis was based on another research methodology. I had hoped to capture the miners memories by asking them how they felt about what happened to them, how it has affected them personally, and how it impacted on their community in later years. Although there has been significant analysis and exploration of the 1980s and the turmoil it produced within New Zealand, it is those who were most affected who give a truly personal account.

Rupture and revolution occurred in 1980s New Zealand providing the background for this case study of the effects on Huntly, the North Island mining community. The restructuring of the public service sector into State Owned Enterprises had a serious impact upon communities. Coal Corporation of New Zealand became operational on 1 April 1987, the same day as 487 Huntly mineworkers were made redundant. This thesis focuses on the experiences of the redundant mine workers, providing insight into how both the individuals and their community coped with massive changes. As a social history it explores the impact of Rogernomics on Huntly, focussing on the coal miners and their families. It aims to explore the consequences of corporatisation on Huntly, and review the subsequent changes which have occurred in Huntly over the past 22 years.

¹⁷ Ibid., 65. It is estimated that each hour of interview takes approximately six-eight hours to transcribe.

1. Historical Context

Huntly

Huntly is a mining town situated on State Highway One, 55 minutes south of Auckland and 35 minutes north of Hamilton. It is conveniently located close to the largest city in the country, and within 90 minutes driving distance of either coast. Divided by the Waikato River, there are two distinct areas: Huntly East and Huntly West. The town's population hovers around 6000.¹⁸ The Huntly Power Station, operated by Genesis Energy, dominates the skyline and is located in Huntly West, as is Huntly College and Waahi Marae. Huntly East is more populous and contains the retail and business areas which run parallel to State Highway One. Because it is sandwiched between the main trunk line and the Waikato River Huntly's main service areas occupy a narrow strip of land and therefore there is a shortage of available land for business expansion and development. At present the only option for business expansion is alongside State Highway One at the southern end of Huntly. Huntly is located amongst undulating dairy country and acts as a service centre for the surrounding rural area.

Huntly was a well established Maori settlement before Europeans arrived in the area. The name was changed from Rahui Pokeka to Huntly because the first appointed local postmaster, Mr James Henry, found the Maori name too difficult to pronounce. Henry was from Huntly Lodge in Scotland and initially the settlement was known as such, until the post office was moved to the railway station and the 'lodge' was dropped.¹⁹ Huntly has always played a significant role in the life of local Maori. Tainui are tangata whenua and there is a large Maori population within the town. As part of the construction of the Huntly Power Station, the government reached an agreement with local Maori and, in the 1970s the Waahi Marae was constructed in the shadows of the Huntly Power Station. Dame Te Atairangikaahu, the late Maori Queen, considered Waahi Marae to be her home. Maori realised the huge potential of the Waikato River and had traditionally used it for transport between Huntly, Taupiri and Ngaruawahia. Taupiri Mountain, the sacred

¹⁸ *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects*. 99. In 1986 the population of Huntly was 6500.

¹⁹ M. Clark, 'Huntly at the Turn of the Century', *Historical Journal Auckland Waikato*, No. 24, April 1974.

burial ground for Tainui, is 8 kilometres south of Huntly on the banks of the Waikato River.

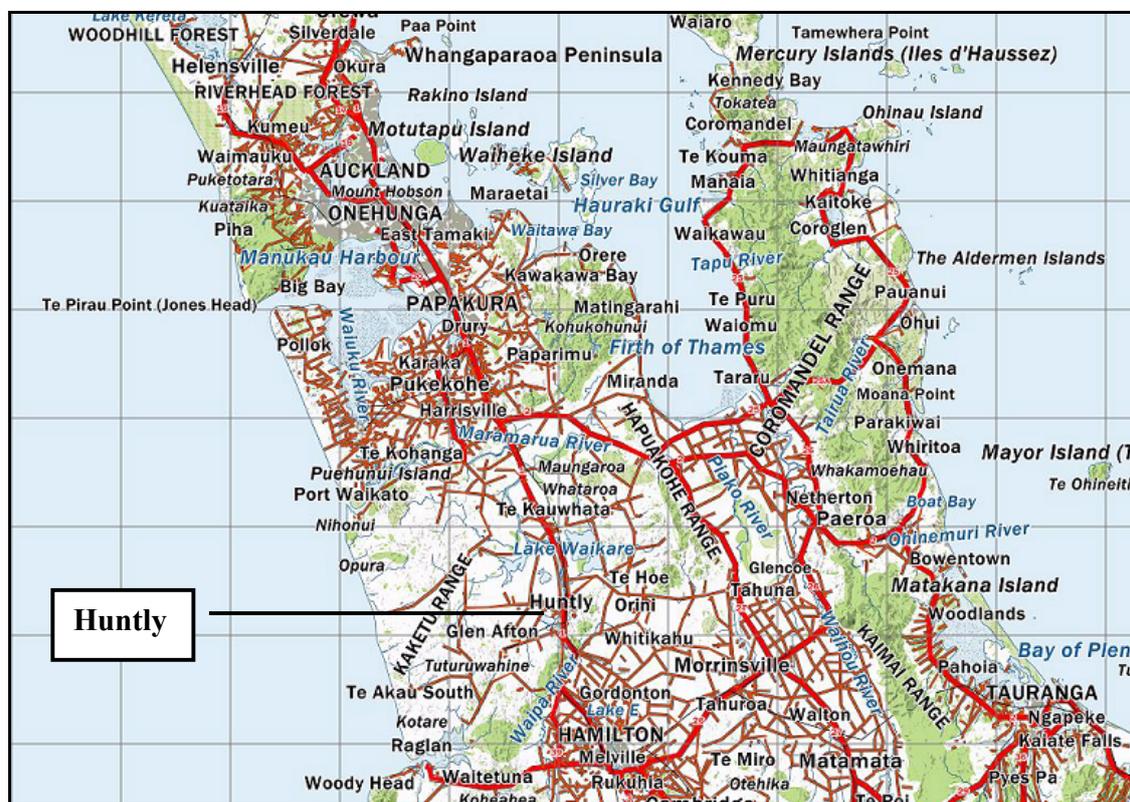


Figure 1-1 Huntly Location Map, courtesy of Forster Software.

In 1987 the Huntly retail area provided a wide range of goods and services and encouraged the community to shop locally. There was no need to travel through to Hamilton as almost everything could be locally sourced. The main street was anchored by two department stores, Farmers and Deka, which were at opposite ends of the retail area. Other retailers situated on the main street included electrical appliance stores, hardware shops, clothing stores, gift shops, a jewellers, a carpet and soft furnishings store, a fabric shop, three takeaway bars, hair dressers, two chemists, a shoe shop, a bookstore, two butchers, a greengrocer, along with a cafe and the local hotel.²⁰ The Bendon factory was at the southern end of the retail area, opposite the Huntly Hotel. A radio station operated

²⁰ Refer to Appendices 3 and 4.

locally in the summer months, providing information, entertainment and news for Huntly listeners. There were several service stations, a car sales yard and also a service centre for farm machinery and motorbikes located within the town. Other services within the town included three doctor's practices, a dentist, two accountants and three lawyer's offices. Although Huntly was a small town in reasonable proximity to two large cities, in 1987, the town was well serviced and supported by its local retailers.

Coal has played an important role in Huntly and the surrounding small towns since its discovery in 1840 when local Maori showed Europeans coal outcrops. Coal mining did not start until 1876 when the Taupiri Coal Mines was formed by the Ralph Family in collaboration with the Waikato Steam and Navigation Company.²¹ The land upon which the mine was based had been confiscated from local Maori as a consequence of the New Zealand Wars and Captain Anthony Ralph was the recipient of the land.²² A number of mines, both opencast and underground, were opened around the Huntly area to work the three main coal seams, Renown, Kupakupa and Taupiri.²³

The dual-fuelled Huntly power station was opened in 1979 and had the ability to generate power from coal or gas. Gas was provided by the Maui field and the coal was sourced locally, with West Mine established to support the Huntly Power Station. State Coal Mines were the key employer, with three mining operations within 10 kilometres of the main street; Weavers Opencast on the west side of the river and two underground mines, Huntly East and Huntly West. At Rotowaro, 11 kilometres to the west, State Coal Mines operated a large opencast facility.²⁴ In 1987, State Coal Mines employed more than 900 people throughout their Huntly operations and was the largest employer in the town.

Huntly is founded on mining and the industry and its unique working conditions has helped to create a tight-knit community. Mining is an intergenerational employer in the

²¹ *Archaeology In New Zealand*, Vol. 34, No. 4, December 1991, 205.

²² *Huntly: A History steeped in Coal*. Sourced from Huntly Coalfields Museum. Author unknown.

²³ *Archaeology In New Zealand*, Vol. 34, No. 4, December 1991, 205.

²⁴ D. Cook, *Lake of Coal*, (Hamilton, Craig Potton, 2006), 95. The township of Rotowaro was moved to allow opencast mining activities. Many locals moved into Huntly, or west to the small mining towns of Glen Afton and Pukemiro.

Huntly area. Most of the miners who were interviewed for this thesis had family members who also worked in the industry. One of the miners interviewed was the fourth generation of his family to be involved and both of his sons had followed him into the pits.²⁵ Although only men were employed at the coal face, there was an expectation that there would be a job for all family members. Local daughters were also employed. State Coal Mines had a wide range of support facilities in Huntly in 1987: a central office which provided comprehensive administrative, financial and managerial functions; a laboratory where coal and water analysis was conducted; and central workshops which housed mechanical and electrical functions. There were 65 apprentices employed by State Coal Mines in 1987.²⁶ Each mine also had a site office which administered the mine payroll and provided clerical support. If you were part of a mining family, employment at State Coal Mines was almost a given.

One of the defining characteristics of the mineworker is their sense of camaraderie with their work mates and this is especially evident amongst crews that work underground. Crews work closely together and rely on each other for their safety. This sense of camaraderie was a recurring theme throughout the miners' interviews. Mining is a dangerous occupation and working underground means trusting your workmates to constantly monitor conditions and the surrounding environment. The strong bond that was built at work also crossed over to leisure time. Huntly families often holiday in similar locations each year; Coromandel Peninsula and Raglan are destinations of choice.

In 1987 the Huntly community was based upon primary industries: coal mining, electricity generation, and farming. Coal mining, and State Coal Mines, played an important role in the community. As an employer the government, through State Coal Mines, had 'pursued social objectives such as maintenance of employment in certain regions.'²⁷ There was an informal arrangement between the employer and the community. Many people who were interviewed for this thesis discussed the relationship between State Coal Mines and the Huntly community in a positive manner, reinforcing

²⁵ K. Crook Senior, [interview], Hamilton, 12 November 2008.

²⁶ Apprentice Plight Sparks Petition, *New Zealand Herald*, 9 March 1987.

²⁷ *Corporatisation and Privatisation - Welfare Effects*, 46.

what the employer did to support its local community. Ex-mayor, Robin Wright, said State Coal Mines would often supply the required labour and/or materials for projects within the town.²⁸ One ex State Coal Mines employee discussed how he was elected to the Parent Teacher Association at the local school because he worked for State Coal Mines. The school understood that he would be able to assist in providing any manpower or materials that were required for school maintenance.²⁹ Local sports clubs also benefited, with donations of both money and materials to various projects.

The introduction of the *State-Owned Enterprises Act (1986)* changed the dynamics of the social contract that existed between Huntly and its largest employer. Section 4 of the *SOE Act (1986)* states that:

The principal objective of every State enterprise shall be to operate as a successful business, and, to this end, to be –

- (a) As profitable and efficient as comparable businesses that are not owned by the Crown; and
- (b) A good employer; and
- (c) An organisation that exhibits a sense of social responsibility by having regard to the interests of the community in which it operates and by endeavouring to accommodate or encourage these when able to do so.³⁰

The informal arrangement which the Huntly community had with State Coal Mines was no longer applicable under the new regime. Although the *SOE Act 1986* clearly states that the organisation was required to engage with the communities in which it operated, the social contract between Huntly and the new corporation would never replicate that which had occurred informally with State Coal Mines. The informal use of materials and manpower to support the local community would not continue. The new corporation was operating within a different paradigm, and had responsibilities which precluded it from being a social employer. State Coal Mines was a corporate member of the community with a social conscience and the creation of CoalCorp led to a breakdown of that social contract. Legislative initiatives as outlined in the *SOE Act 1986* were not comparable to a relationship which had matured over several decades into one of reciprocity and respect.

²⁸ R. Wright, [interview], Dunedin, 30 June 2007.

²⁹ B. Munden, [interview], Huntly, 6 November 2008.

³⁰ *State-Owned Enterprises Act*, 1986.

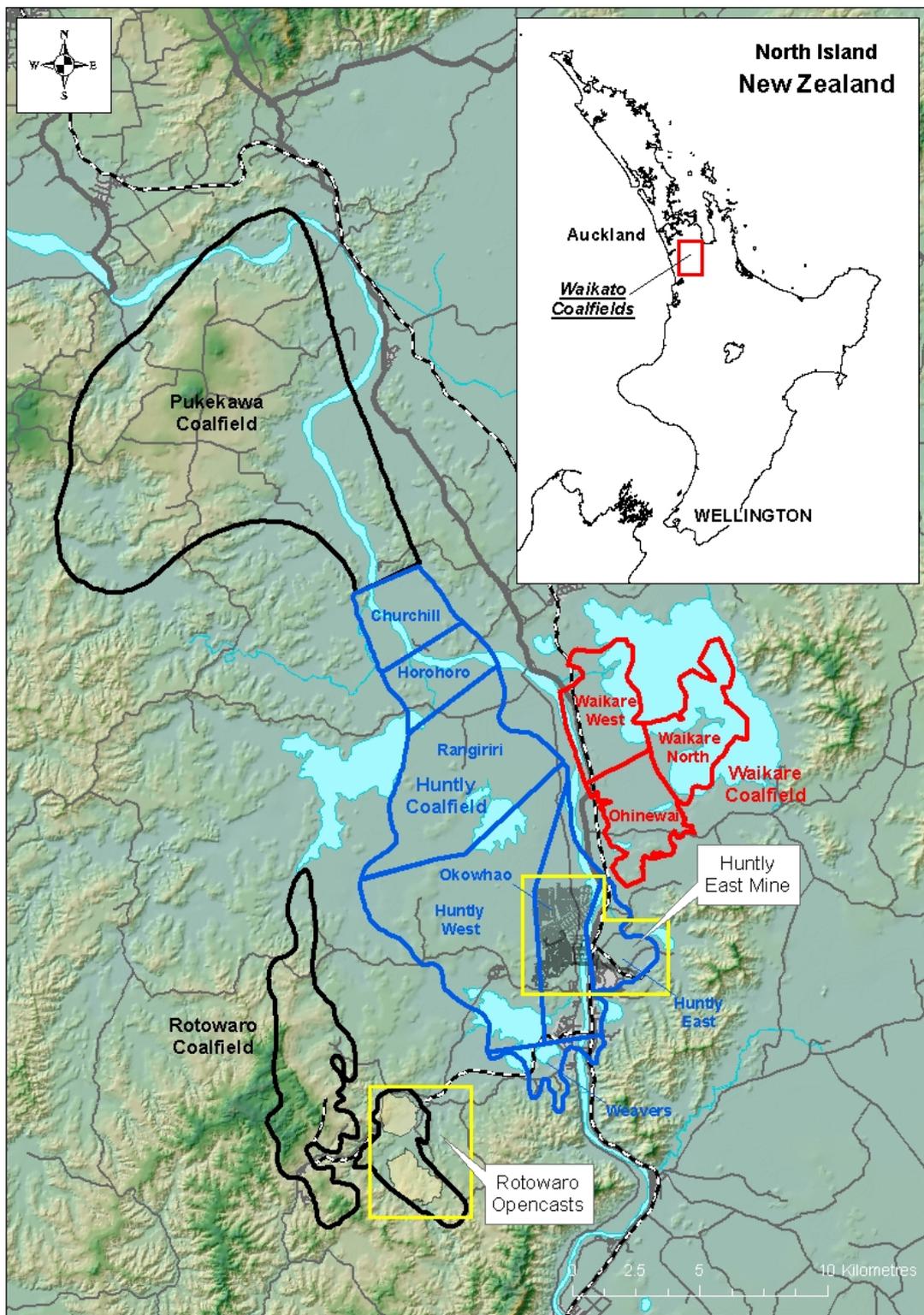


Figure 1-2: Map of Huntly Coal Fields, courtesy of Solid Energy New Zealand Ltd.

State Coal Mines

Government involvement in mining began early in the 20th century when the *State Coal Mines Act* was passed in 1901. This involvement included the purchasing of mining licenses after World War 2, thereby ensuring that there was coal available for the domestic markets. The government interest in mining had two side effects: employment was maintained in remote mining communities, and, valuable mining skills were not lost to the industry. By 1950 State Coal Mines was the largest miner in the country.³¹ Between 1961 and 1973 more than 3000 people left the industry as the government adopted a policy of shutting down uneconomic mines.³² Employment levels in mining communities fell to approximately 1100 by 1988, which is one fifth of what they were in 1949.³³ The 1987 job losses impacted significantly on mining employment levels.

Mechanised mining was introduced to Huntly in the 1970s, and this led to an increase in production and efficiency.³⁴ It also required the miners to learn new skills to cope with the new mining methods and conditions.³⁵ ‘Mining has changed greatly since the old pick-and-shovel days, when miners fired a charge and shovelled the coal into skips. The new mechanised miner does it all now and a new breed of person is needed who is a highly-skilled artisan.’³⁶ For Waikato based mines there was an increase in demand for coal as the Huntly Power Station had dual fuel capacity and could operate on coal or natural gas. The Glenbrook Steel Mill had been expanded as part of the Think Big initiative and this meant an increase in coal requirements.³⁷

In 1978 State Coal Mines had become part of the Ministry of Energy, under the Mines Division.³⁸ In May 1986 the government announced the State Coal Mines was to be corporatised under the *SOE Act* 1986. This decision had a huge impact on Huntly and

³¹ *AJHR*, 1987, D-6, 53.

³² *Archaeology in New Zealand*, Vol. 34, Number 4, December 1991, 207.

³³ *Corporatisation and Privatisation - Welfare Effects*, 43.

³⁴ *Coal and Coal Mining in New Zealand*, Published by the Information Section, State Coal Mines, 1987

³⁵ B. Munden, [interview].

³⁶ M. Clark, A Hundred Years of Commercial Coal, *Historical Journal Auckland-Waikato*, No. 29 September 1976, 25.

³⁷ *AJHR*, 1987, D-6, 53.

³⁸ *Corporatisation and Privatisation - Welfare Effects*, 43.

anticipated increase in coal production. Corporatisation impacted the Huntly power station, as restructuring also affected the electricity department. Huntly had been anticipating an enormous increase in coal production, from 885,000 tonnes per year in 1985/86 to 3.5 million tonnes by 2000.³⁹ Due to the restructuring of the electricity department Electricorp was no longer certain that it wanted coal for the local power station. Glenbrook Steel Mill also revised their required tonnages and this decision, coupled with uncertainty from Electricorp, impacted on several mining operations in the Huntly region.⁴⁰

The woeful economic performance of State Coal Mines contributed to its selection amongst the public service departments to be corporatised. It had run at a loss for 20 of the previous 22 years prior to corporatisation. Roger Douglas stated that the money the government spent each year to subsidise State Coal Mines was being ‘poured straight down the drain.’⁴¹ He pointed out that it cost the New Zealand tax payer \$122,000 per annum for every State Coal Mine employee. Douglas also discussed the inadequate records that were maintained by State Coal Mines stating when the new corporation started investigating the assets of State Coal Mines the most basic of these, including land and mineral rights, were not adequately documented.

State Coal Mines inclusion in the first group of public sector departments to be corporatised was a direct result of the governments venture into mining. As a member of the public service SCM had served the communities where it was based by maintaining artificially high employee numbers. This ensured that miners remained employed in the industry, and employment was available in remote locations. However, it was a costly exercise. Money was invested in both development and increased coal production with no identifiable markets for the coal. This was especially evident in Huntly. It appears that SCM was poorly managed and somewhat fundamentally flawed. At the most basic level SCM was unsure of what assets it owned. During its history prior to 1987 SCM

³⁹ *AJHR*, 1987, D-6, 52.

⁴⁰ *AJHR* 1987, D-6, 52. Production was slowed down at Rotowaro Opencast, Huntly West, Huntly East, Weavers Opencast. These mines are all in a 15km radius of Huntly.

⁴¹ CoalCorp strives for viability, *Waikato Times*, 1 April 1987.

was unable to remain operational without relying on the government injecting huge sums of money into its budget. The cost to the New Zealand tax payer was significant. It is no wonder that it was considered a priority for corporatisation.

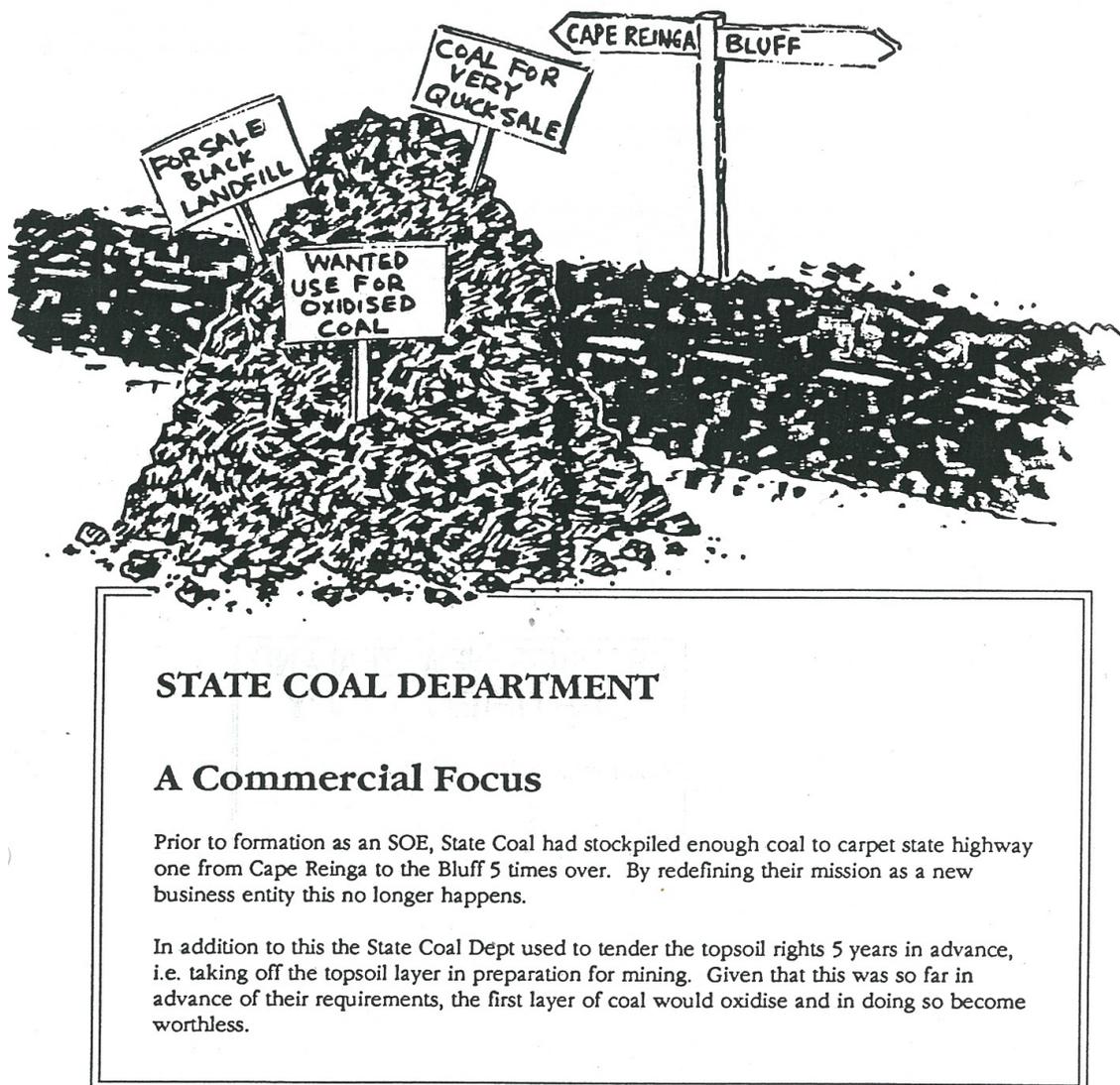


Figure 1-3: State Coal Department, A Commercial Focus, Archives NZ.⁴²

⁴² ABQK 8005 W5164, Archives NZ.

Rogernomics and the Fourth Labour Government

Rogernomics is the term applied to the neo-liberal economic reforms that New Zealand experienced under the fourth Labour government.⁴³ It signified a move away from the Keynesian approach of government initiatives and intervention towards liberal deregulation and free markets. After winning a snap election in July 1984, the fourth Labour government introduced the reforms. As part of this new programme of economic initiatives, New Zealand quickly changed from a regulated and controlled economy to one which embraced commercialisation. The Minister of Finance Roger Douglas, along with his two associate finance ministers David Caygill and Richard Prebble, were referred to as the ‘troika’. They were capable individuals who ‘were ranked fourth, fifth and seventh in cabinet.’⁴⁴ At the same time as New Zealand was experiencing a shift in the government’s focus, comparable changes were occurring in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States throughout the 1970s and 1980s.⁴⁵ The aims of the reforms were broadly similar: liberalisation and commercialisation. Easton describes liberalisation as the ‘opening of markets to competition, replacing such interventions as barriers to entry, price controls, licences and restrictions on some activities, compulsion on others.’⁴⁶ Easton states that ‘commercialisation ... involves using as much as possible the model of private business enterprise to organise economic (and non-economic) activity.’⁴⁷ Both of these concepts were dominant in the thinking and policies of the fourth Labour government and are synonymous with the term ‘Rogernomics’.

The overall package that is termed Rogernomics was a comprehensive array of reforms, the three main components of which were: ‘the reduction and reorganisation of the state sector; deregulation of the economy and the comprehensive commitment to the free

⁴³ Like Rogernomics, Reaganomics and Thatchernomics are a portmanteau of the name of the initiator of the reforms and the word ‘economic’. Reaganomics is named after the 40th President of the United States, Ronald Reagan. Thatchernomics is named after the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990 Margaret Thatcher.

⁴⁴ B. Easton, *The Commercialisation of New Zealand*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1997), 75.

⁴⁵ Britain, under Thatcher, faced radical reform at the same time as New Zealand. D. Yergin and J. Stanislaw, *The Commanding Heights*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 140.

⁴⁶ Easton, *The Commercialisation of New Zealand*, 13.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

market.’⁴⁸ The work of economic reformation started for the fourth Labour government before they were even sworn in. The day after the election, Lange and his ministers were briefed by Treasury and the Reserve Bank about the foreign exchange crisis. It was agreed that the New Zealand dollar would be devalued by 20%.⁴⁹ The sense of urgency which Labour experienced in its first week seemed to continue throughout its first term. An Economic Summit Conference was held in September 1984 with attendees from many different organisations: ‘government, trade unions, employer groups, business and primary sector organisations and social and community organisations.’ The conference reiterated what Treasury had been telling the government; ‘New Zealand’s poor economic performance over the previous thirty years owed much to the way the domestic economy had been managed.’⁵⁰ The government knew that widespread economic reforms were both necessary and imperative.

What makes the New Zealand experience special is the speed with which the changes were implemented. It is widely accepted that Rogernomics transformed New Zealand from being ‘one of the most regulated countries in the developed world to being one of the most open and market-orientated economies anywhere.’⁵¹ Rogernomics also allowed the subsequent National government to continue with radical transformation of the New Zealand economy and society into the 1990s. In order to understand how the fourth Labour government came to power and implemented such a radical, new economic regime, it is necessary to review the decades prior which illustrate how the country was ripe for change. Rogernomics has been labelled as an experiment and twenty years after its implementation, opinion is split as to whether or not the experiment was a success.⁵²

⁴⁸ J. Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2001), 405.

⁴⁹ For further reading see: M. Bassett, *Working With David*, (Auckland: Hodder Moa, 2006), 101–128. P. Dalziel and R. Lattimore, *The New Zealand Macroeconomy*, 5th ed., (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004), 26. Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, ‘This foreign exchange crisis of July 1984 generated a sense of urgency in the first months of the Labour government, to which the pace and scale of the reforms it introduced is often attributed.’ 405.

⁵⁰ Dalziel and Lattimore, *The New Zealand Macroeconomy*, 28.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵² J. Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1997). F. Castles, R. Gerritsen and J. Vowles (eds.), *The Great Experiment*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996).

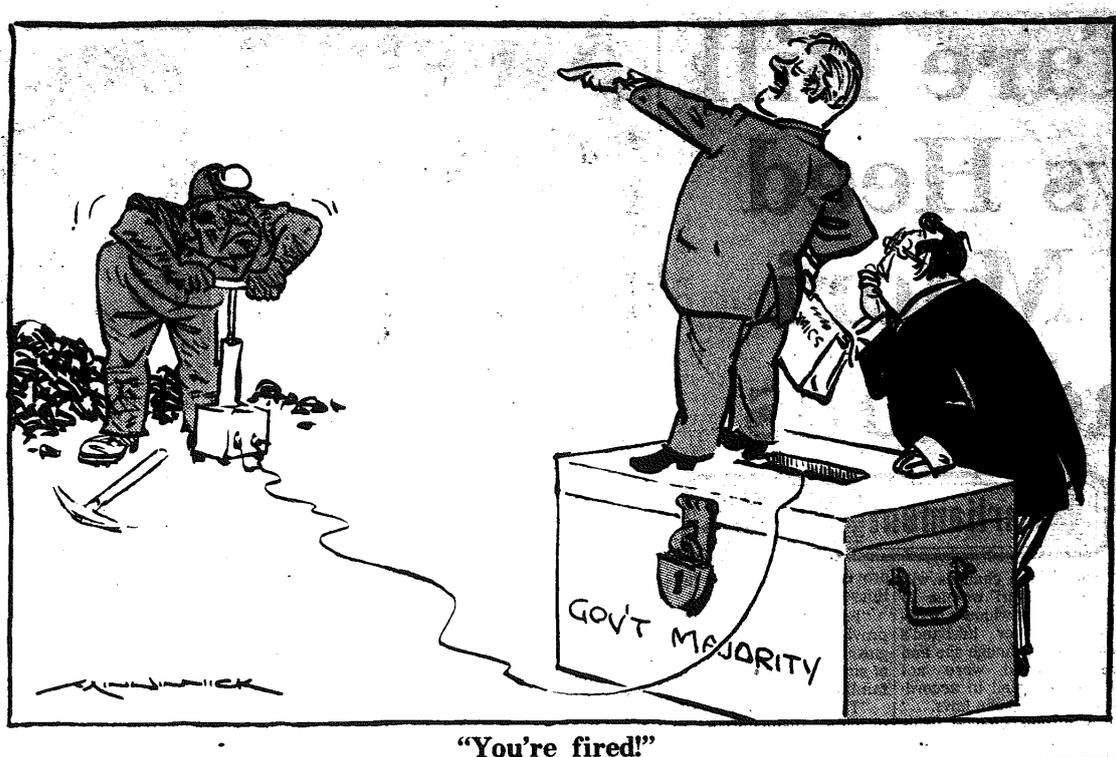


Figure 1-4: You are fired, *New Zealand Herald*, 19 March 1987.

A time of prosperity and relative comfort was experienced throughout the developed world from the end of the World War II to the mid 1970s and this period is often referred to as the ‘golden weather.’⁵³ After the turmoil of the war New Zealand settled into a time where family and home became the focus of many. The war had been traumatic for the country and people set about rebuilding their lives. On the domestic front there was a rise in the number of marriages, babies being born and home ownership. Homes became the focus and during this time whiteware became commonplace and television was introduced from 1960.⁵⁴ The rise in the number of families meant that there was a need for new houses and, consequently, new suburbs. Another effect of the baby boom was the need for more schools and teachers required to cope with the large number of children

⁵³ See B. Dalley and G. McLean (eds.), *Frontier of Dreams*, (Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 2005). Chapter 11: The Golden Weather 1949-1965, 307-335. P. Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Chapter 8: Golden Weather 1950-1973, 176-200. Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, Chapter 10: Golden Weather?, 297-345.

⁵⁴ M. King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2003), 414.

who had been born.⁵⁵ Jobs were plentiful as the population expanded and infrastructure was required to support growth. The country's prosperity was buoyed by overseas demand for New Zealand wool and dairy products.⁵⁶

The New Zealand economy relied on exports to sustain its high standard of living following World War II. Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s it looked for diversification in both product and trade partners and put in place policy to protect home-grown products.⁵⁷ Britain was New Zealand's largest trading partner and the relationship displayed a degree of reciprocity. Preferential access for our primary products to their domestic markets meant that those products anchored our exports. The New Zealand standard of living relied on this almost exclusive relationship. Lack of export diversity coupled with a limited range of staple exports made us vulnerable to external shocks. This was highlighted in the 1960s when the wool price fell dramatically as wool accounted for one third of all exports.⁵⁸ Although New Zealand had been slowly diversifying its exports to include products such as casein and milk powder, the impact of the wool price reduction was keenly felt and measures were put in place to ensure that farmers retained a stable income.⁵⁹ Throughout the 1960s, exports diversified into other primary industries including forestry, fish and horticulture.⁶⁰

By the 1970s global events were starting to have an impact on New Zealand. The 'golden weather' was over and the forecast was no longer as sunny. The high standard of living which New Zealanders enjoyed was under threat. In 1973 New Zealand watched as Britain joined the European Economic Community (EEC). Although this had been anticipated it left the country in a vulnerable position.⁶¹ At the same time, the price of oil tripled and New Zealand's dependence on imported oil illustrated how reliant the country

⁵⁵ The baby boom is considered to be the period from the end of World War 2 to the 1960s.

⁵⁶ Dalley and McLean (eds.), *Frontier of Dreams*, 316.

⁵⁷ Easton, *The Commercialisation of New Zealand*, 3.

⁵⁸ Dalziel and Lattimore, *The New Zealand Macroeconomy*. In 1966/67 and again in 1968 the price of wool fell by 20% on both occasions. 16.

⁵⁹ Ibid. The Wool Commission bought wool from farmers during this period and stockpiled it for selling at a later date when the price was more favourable.

⁶⁰ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 447-460.

⁶¹ Ibid. Between 1965 and 1989 the proportion of New Zealand's exports taken by Britain dropped from over 50 to 7 per cent. 426.

was on overseas commodities. The New Zealand dollar was under pressure from the demise of the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1971 which had led to a realignment of global currencies. Whereas previously currencies had been tied to the price of gold, the United States withdrew its support of this system and that led to a number of global currencies being tied to the US dollar and subsequently floated. In July 1973, New Zealand adopted a ‘system whereby the exchange rate was fixed in relation to a basket of currencies.’⁶² Import licensing restrictions remained in place to protect domestically produced goods from overseas competition.⁶³ New Zealand continued to work on trade relationships with other countries including the United States, Japan and Australia. The oil crises of 1974 and 1979 proved to be a catalyst for the National government to explore ways of reducing our dependence on an overseas supply.

Robert Muldoon, the Prime Minister from 1975 to 1984, introduced a programme called ‘Think Big.’ These initiatives were an attempt to mitigate the effects of the soaring oil prices by making New Zealand less reliant on imported oil.⁶⁴ State funded, it promoted energy projects which would create jobs, decrease New Zealand’s dependence on imported oil, and help boost the New Zealand economy. As part of ‘Think Big’ the expansion of the Glenbrook Steel Mill had an impact on coal production in Huntly. For 5 to 10 years prior to 1987 State Coal Mines had been developing resources to supply an expected order of 900,000 tonnes of coal to the Glenbrook Steel Mill.⁶⁵ In hindsight, many historians and economists state that the Think Big project can be deemed ‘wasteful’ and a failure because the cost of implementing such large scale projects outweighed the benefits that New Zealand received from them⁶⁶

⁶² S. Chatterjee and S. Birks (eds.), *The New Zealand Economy*, Fourth Edition, (Palmerston North; Dunmore Press, 2001), 312.

⁶³ Dalziel and Lattimore, *The New Zealand Macroeconomy*, Fifth Edition. ‘A programme of import licensing greatly restricted or prohibited the importation of various types of consumption goods, thus protecting domestic producers from international competition.’ 16.

⁶⁴ Dalziel and Lattimore, *The New Zealand Macroeconomy*, Fifth Edition. Projects included under the Think Big umbrella included a Petrocorp ammonia-urea plant, the Motunui synthetic fuel plant, expansion of the Marsden Point oil refinery, the Waitara methanol plant, the expansion of Glenbrook steel mill, and the proposal for an aluminium smelter at Aramoana (although this last project did not proceed). 22.

⁶⁵ Announcement Speech, AAFH 6790 W5510 Box 317 SIU 6/5 Pt. 1, *Archives NZ*, 15.

⁶⁶ B. Easton (ed.), *The Making of Rogernomics*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989), 119; Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 401; Dalziel and Lattimore, *The New Zealand Macroeconomy*, Fifth Edition, 22.

The events of the 1960s and 1970s aligned to make New Zealand a heavily protected and subsidised economy. Muldoon, as both Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, was able to implement policies to tightly manage the country's finances. As Prime Minister, he valued New Zealand's strong ties with Britain but was prepared to look elsewhere for trade partners when it became obvious that the trade relationship between the two countries would no longer be as beneficial to New Zealand. As unemployment and inflation rose, he tried to combat both with a wage and price freeze to help contain inflation and large construction projects to create jobs.⁶⁷ As New Zealand remained tightly regulated, other countries were experimenting with neo-liberal reforms with the aim of freeing up their countries borders and minimising government intervention in their economy.⁶⁸

The end of regulation was heralded when Roger Douglas delivered his first budget in November 1984 and the scope of the changes that were required became obvious. According to Michael Bassett, 'several important declarations of policy that would drive much of the troika's activities over the next three years were highlighted in the budget's early paragraphs.'⁶⁹ Among the many changes that Douglas announced that night was 'the elimination of a wide range of farm subsidies.'⁷⁰ This was a shock for the farming community who had relied on a comprehensive range of subsidies to support them. There was a multitude of other changes also announced in the first budget which would affect many New Zealanders including: increases in the price of petrol, power and coal, a reduction in subsidies for airways, an increase in family benefits under the 'Family Care' package, changes to the cost of doctors visits and prescriptions, and an increase in tax on alcohol and tobacco.⁷¹ However, it was the farming community which felt that they had

⁶⁷ Dalziel and Lattimore, *The New Zealand Macroeconomy*, 23.

⁶⁸ A. Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State*, 2nd Edition, (London, Macmillan, 1994), 13.

⁶⁹ Bassett, *Working With David*, 124.

⁷⁰ D. Lange, *My Life*, (Auckland: Viking, 2005), 197. C. Webb, The Pack of Change, *The Press*, 15-09-01. Approximately thirty different subsidies and export incentives were removed from farming in the 1984 budget. 13.

⁷¹ Bassett, *Working With David*, 123-126.

the most to lose.⁷² As it turns out, they were just the first of many groups who would feel the ground shift as Labour tried to stimulate the economy.

The fourth Labour government had a huge amount of work to do and although the 1984 budget was received favourably by the press and eventually the public, it was obvious to those in power that there would be no quick-fix to the problems.⁷³ During the first term, the government appeared to be ‘primarily concerned with reducing the role of the government in the functioning of individual markets.’⁷⁴ Roger Douglas and his associate finance ministers, Caygill and Prebble, were supported by much of the cabinet as they moved forward with their policies of less government intervention.⁷⁵

Historiography

The 1980s were a watershed period in New Zealand history where the focus on changes to the economy turned the national tide away from traditional regulatory policies towards new shores based on market driven reform. It was a pivotal time and recognition of the importance of these changes is evidenced by the number of texts available from numerous disciplines. General histories have examined this period which culminated in the election of a young, university educated Labour government led by a great orator with public appeal.⁷⁶ The feelings of hope and promise that came with this Labour government were eroded by the dire realities of the New Zealand economy. The policies which were implemented to free up the New Zealand economy led to the collapse of the Labour government and a landslide victory for National in 1990, Labour’s worst defeat on record. Considerable economic analysis positions New Zealand’s experiences within a global context, comparing our experiences with those of other economies whose focus

⁷² Bassett, *Working With David*, It was estimated that between 1980 and 1985 the agricultural support schemes had cost about \$2.5 billion. 153.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁷⁴ B. Easton, Economic and other ideas behind the New Zealand reforms, *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, Oct 1994.

⁷⁵ Bassett, *Working with David*, 147. Easton, *The Commercialisation of New Zealand*, 78.

⁷⁶ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 2001; King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 2003; Dalley and McLean (eds.) *Frontier of Dreams*, 2005; Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, 2005.

shifted towards the free market. There is also a wide range of political perspectives available, containing both observations and analysis of the fourth Labour government.⁷⁷ Bassett's book combines his personal relationship with Lange, his position within the cabinet, and his history background to provide an insight into the workings of this fourth Labour government. Lange's own personal memoir illustrates his perspective on the times. What is missing from these bodies of work is a community-focussed frame-of-reference, where the changes that were implemented are examined via the lens of the individual and their community.

This thesis offers a concentrated point of view, that of one community, Huntly, which was severely affected by one aspect of Rogernomics, the corporatisation of State Coal Mines. Examining the social effects of the changes that happen to a community when the major employment provider is severely impacted by redundancies allows an insight into a turbulent period of New Zealand's recent history. The coping mechanisms that the community put in place allow an appreciation into the challenges that were faced. By looking back after more than 20 years and interviewing those involved we can see what effect it has had on their lives and also review the effect that it has had on this individual community. This thesis is a social history. It looks to fill the void that exists in current literature by focussing specifically on the voices from within one community.

The issues of widespread social and economic costs borne by communities as the fourth Labour government implemented its economic reform has been covered in many of the New Zealand general histories which have been published in the last decade.⁷⁸ There is recognition that communities were severely impacted by the changes. Most general histories contain succinct analysis. A recently published general history is *A Concise History of New Zealand* by Philippa Mein Smith. In this account, Mein Smith reviews the Rogernomics package and the reforms which were introduced under the State Owned Enterprises Act 1986. She identifies that there were high social costs to New Zealand

⁷⁷ Dalziel and Lattimore, *The New Zealand Macroeconomy, Fifth Edition*; Easton, *The Commercialisation of New Zealand*; Chatterjee and Birks (eds.), *The New Zealand Economy Issues and Policies*; Easton, *In Stormy Seas*; Easton, *The Making of Rogernomics*; Bassett, *Working with David*.

⁷⁸ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 2001; King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 2003; Dalley and McLean (eds.), *Frontier of Dreams*, 2005; Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, 2005.

from the widespread restructuring of the public service and that restructuring produced a large number of redundancies.⁷⁹ Michael King reviews the ‘deconstructing and rebuilding’ that took place with the election of the fourth Labour government.⁸⁰ King states that many of Roger Douglas’ colleagues were ‘strong on social policy but economically illiterate’⁸¹ and therefore they were not entirely aware of what was happening until it was too late; by then the Rogernomics policies were entrenched, along with the high social costs.⁸²

The cost of constant reform and redundancy from 1984 through the term of the subsequent National government is the focus of *The New Zealand Experiment* by Jane Kelsey. Deregulation, corporatisation, privatisation and changes to the welfare state contributed to what she terms a ‘social deficit.’ The focus of one chapter is on the social costs of the widespread changes that were introduced from the 1980s and how they produced a society that is deeply divided between the haves and have-nots.⁸³ Kelsey reinforces the belief that Rogernomics started this trend which was then continued by National. For those who were affected at ground level, blue collar workers like miners and forestry workers, it was the start of a downward spiral. In some cases, people suffered more than one blow, losing their jobs under one government and having their benefits and entitlements slashed by the subsequent one. According to Kelsey, those who fared the worse were those who could least afford to be affected: the elderly, the poor, children and families.

Rogernomics introduced sweeping changes which were experienced at all levels of community. The effect that these policies had on the fourth Labour government and the rising tensions that it caused are captured by Colin James in *The Quiet Revolution*. James states that ‘it is not the policy *content* of Rogernomics that is the revolution. It is the sharp change of *attitude* it reflects, represents and stimulates.’⁸⁴ Writing in 1986, James’

⁷⁹ Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, 213.

⁸⁰ King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 488.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 491.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 491.

⁸³ Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment*, Chapter 11, 271-296.

⁸⁴ C. James, *The Quiet Revolution*, (Wellington, Allen and Unwin, 1986), 165.

book examines not only the complex relationship between Lange and Douglas but also whether the Labour government would continue with the policies of Rogernomics in their second term or whether voter dissatisfaction with their first term would encourage them to look at other options. James outlines the challenges that the Labour government faced if they continued with Rogernomics and the possible effects. He acknowledges that ‘the impact of Rogernomics has been severe on the farm sector’⁸⁵ and that if Labour continued with their same agenda they risk alienating their traditional voters; however, he also points out that they could have also gained votes from National supporters who supported the new direction that the country is heading in. James thoroughly details the pros and cons of a Labour vote in 1987 and analyses what each offers. James’s book does not explore the social outcomes of Rogernomics.

Similarly, the focus of *Only Their Purpose is Mad* is economic change, and the social costs of reform are not analysed. Containing insightful analysis, Jesson argued that transformation has done ‘considerable harm to New Zealand economically and socially since 1984.’⁸⁶ The focus of his book is primarily economic and the social costs are not discussed. ‘New Zealand was a symbol because it had been through nothing less than a transformation in the years since 1984.’⁸⁷ Bruce Jesson’s critique of the fourth Labour government and their ‘colonisation of New Zealand by the culture of finance’⁸⁸ is a study into the way in which Roger Douglas aligned with members of Treasury and the NZBR to ensure a free-market transformation.

Another hallmark of the fourth Labour government was the relationship between David Lange and Roger Douglas, initially one of mutual respect but eventually one which contributed to the demise of the government. Two recently published works have referred to the relationship between Lange and Douglas and the effect that it had on the government. *My Life*, written by David Lange, demonstrates the respect that Lange had for Douglas and the relationship between the two. Obviously the text is from Lange’s

⁸⁵ James, *The Quiet Revolution*, 195.

⁸⁶ B. Jesson, *Only Their Purpose is Mad*, (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1999), 18.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

perspective but he gives an insight into how Douglas was extremely focussed on what was required in 'our first term in office, when urgency was needed and boldness was at a premium.'⁸⁹ The disintegration in their political relationship became more apparent in 1987 when Douglas presented Lange with options for that year's budget and outlined three policies, one of which he described as radical, 'but radical does not do it justice.'⁹⁰ This was the proposal to sell off a large number of government assets, raise GST and introduce a single tax rate.⁹¹ Lange discusses his feelings of doubt and his dread as he understood that Douglas was on a different tangent. Although the fourth Labour government was responsible for the implementation of Rogernomics it is clear that not all members of the groups were united in support of the initiatives. This book is a personal biography, and while it offers a glimpse into what Lange was thinking and the challenges that he faced, it lacks an in-depth analysis of what effect his government's policies had on the country.

Lange and Douglas's relationship is more thoroughly examined by Michael Bassett in his book *Working with David*. The book is a hefty tome and scholarly in its analysis, relying on Bassett's own recollection of events which are corroborated with caucus notes, cabinet papers and interviews. His writing is two-fold in approach. Bassett was related to David Lange, a distant cousin, and therefore his book contains personal anecdotes about their extended family. He was also a cabinet minister in the fourth Labour government and therefore privy to the inner workings and relationships. Bassett covers the rapid rise of Lange through the political ranks to Labour Party leader, the successful election of Labour in 1984 and the work that was required to strengthen the New Zealand economy. He fully examines the policies of Rogernomics, how they were supported and implemented and what happened when it became known how far Roger Douglas intended to pursue them. Bassett discusses the relationship between Lange and Douglas and how in April 1987 it started to fall apart over difficulties relating to that year's budget. Lange found Douglas's proposals too radical. He offers his interpretation of the issues which faced Labour as it struggled to cope with the internal quarrelling which eventually led to

⁸⁹ Lange, *My Life*, 236.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 237.

Lange's resignation. The communication failure between Douglas and Lange contributed to the breakdown of the government but Bassett also attributes much of the blame for the downfall on David Lange and his relationship with Margaret Pope. It is difficult to read this book as a purely historical text because the personal insights and criticisms that Bassett makes eventually outweigh the historical objectivity.

'Comprehensive economic and social reform would be the hallmark of the fourth Labour government' promised Roger Douglas as he concluded delivery of his first budget on 8 November 1984.⁹² The fourth Labour government is remembered for many reasons and the economic reforms to which Douglas refers have been extensively reviewed and interpreted in the past twenty years. Brian Easton compares the policies which were initiated under Rogernomics to a blitzkrieg in warfare,⁹³ whereby a policy was altered very quickly 'following a surprise announcement and a very rapid implementation.'⁹⁴ He goes on to state that 'policy blitzkriegs were nothing if not audacious.'⁹⁵ In *The Commercialisation of New Zealand* Easton analyses Labour's policies and how Labour privatised the public sector. This book specifically examines the reforms in relation to case studies of health, education and central and local government. It analyses the relationship between the Treasury, the government and the private sector and examines how an alliance was formed between Treasury and the private sector, represented by the New Zealand Business Roundtable (NZBR).⁹⁶ The NZBR and Treasury promoted policy through a government which was interested in what was 'right' for New Zealand as a country. This elite group ignored the implications for those on whom the policy had the most effect, for example the average Kiwi Joe who was on the front line during the blitzkrieg.

The sheer magnitude of the changes that were implemented and the speed with which they were done have been the focus of many texts written from an economic perspective

⁹² Dalziel and Lattimore, *The New Zealand Macroeconomy, Fifth Edition*, 29.

⁹³ Definition of Blitzkrieg: an intense military campaign intended to bring about a swift victory. J. Pearsall (ed.), *Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Tenth Edition, Revised*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 146.

⁹⁴ Easton, *The Commercialisation of New Zealand*, 80.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 114.

as New Zealand in the 1980s was transformed. The economic performance of the country during that time and subsequently been reviewed in *The New Zealand Macroeconomy* whereby New Zealand's economic performance is analysed from the 1960s through to 1984 and then again from 1984 to 2003. The reforms under Labour are divided and outlined into policies of international trade, monetary, fiscal, industry and labour. From an economics viewpoint, this book offers an insight into the reforms and the results that they have had on the economic performance of New Zealand.

As a social history this thesis fills a gap in current historiography by closely examining the experiences of one group of workers within one community who were affected by the changes that Rogernomics introduced. Using oral history as a basis for the research shifts the focus to a more personal level allowing an insight that is not necessarily available in more specifically focussed research. There is a wealth of multidisciplinary academic analysis regarding Rogernomics and the fourth Labour government. In the genre of social history there is scope for more investigation and analysis.

The 1980s ruptured New Zealand society as Rogernomics introduced sweeping changes which had widespread social and economic effects. As a social history, this thesis will examine the outcomes of one of the introduced changes illustrating the impacts of corporatisation and the *SOE Act* 1986. The introduction has provided a background of the Huntly community and the important role which mining fulfilled. An overview of the period leading up to the election of the fourth Labour government is included, as is a brief synopsis of Rogernomics. A review of current literature highlights the need for a community-based study of this period.

2. Wellington goes to Huntly

I was in a brand new frock. It was a gorgeous dress, a wraparound. It would go down very well now. I got out of the car. There were a couple of whistles. I probably stuck out like a sore thumb. I remember getting up on the steps at the back of the truck to sit up on the stand and thinking “What possessed me to wear this dress?” This young policeman said “We have checked quite a few bags and there could be a few tomatoes and eggs that have snuck in.” I have thought about this a few times, I didn’t know if he was having me on or whether he was probably being quite honest. I thought fantastic. I am wearing a bright red dress. I looked like a bulls-eye. My father had a fit when he saw it on television that night.⁹⁷

Jane Bryden was employed by the State Services Commission (SCC) and on 26 February 1987 she was in Huntly as a representative of the Management of Change Unit (MOCU). Her recollection of the announcement meeting, and her subsequent days in Huntly provide the basis for this chapter. It allows a snapshot into the lives of the people who dealt with the immediate aftermath in the Huntly community. Bryden attended the announcement meeting at the Huntly Rugby Grounds, where the entire local mining workforce had been assembled. The purpose of the meeting was to give information to the employees about Coal Corporation of New Zealand Ltd (CoalCorp) and announce how many workers were going to lose their jobs when the corporation took over local mining operations on 1 April 1987. The workforce and its community had been waiting for several months for information about possible job losses. Bryden’s experience allows a different perspective on events. She was not a mineworker who lost her job but her Huntly experience has stayed with her and her recollection of those days is thought-provoking.

As part of the Rogernomics package, corporatisation of various departments within the public service was announced on 19 May 1986. Corporation date was set as 1 April 1987, less than 12 months later. The period between the announcements and the first day of CoalCorp operations was a difficult one for the Huntly community. For several months there was uncertainty about the future of local mining, concern about possible job losses, and trepidation about the implications for the community. The community was

⁹⁷ J. Bryden, [interview], Christchurch, 4 March 2009.

aware that change was imminent, but were unable to get definitive answers about how many would be affected until the announcement meeting on 26 February 1987.

Jane Bryden started work for the SSC on 1 April 1986 as a probationer. The SSC had several responsibilities, one of which was to develop policies to deal with the effects of upcoming corporatisation and ‘the actual staff implications of the decisions.’⁹⁸ The challenges presented by the reorganisation of the public service were not limited to the communities in which the new corporations would operate; it was also a testing time for those who were involved at government level in Wellington. Bryden’s recollection of events provides an insight into what happened in both Wellington and Huntly. Bryden was accompanied in Huntly by MOCU work colleague, Harvey Shannon. The responsibilities of Bryden and Shannon were two-fold: to provide immediate assistance to the salaried staff that had deployment enquiries, and, to deal with wider social issues within the Huntly community. Her experiences also reinforce two of the most common criticisms of Rogernomics; it was conducted like a blitzkrieg⁹⁹, and there was no other alternative offered.¹⁰⁰

Bryden was heavily involved with policy development relevant to the changes that were being made to State Coal Mines:

There was development of an overall policy with the Public Service Association (PSA) on how to handle restructuring and the situations: whether they be restructuring within a public service like MAF (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries); or whether they be restructuring where staff would be moving off to what would be a corporation. They were still state employees but on quite different business models. There was an overall set of guidelines and packages agreed with the PSA at that point, and I was involved in those negotiations. Then case by case that would get broken down into a tighter package of options for people so that it was more relevant to that situation. So you might have had a choice of deployment, retraining, redundancy, these were the sort of transfers with equalisation allowances. ... And then for CoalCorp establishment ... I think pretty

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ See Easton, *The Commercialisation of New Zealand*, Chapter Five, The Troika and the Blitzkrieg; Easton, *Making of Rogernomics*, 174.

¹⁰⁰ Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, 209.

much all the options were agreed as being on the table but I think pretty much that some were more relevant than others.¹⁰¹

Six months after the corporatisation announcements were made, the ‘harsh words of reality’ were delivered to the Huntly community as John Perham, the head of CoalCorp, visited the area.¹⁰² The news for Huntly was not good. Perham outlined that ‘there will definitely be some job losses, but at this stage he does not know how many.’¹⁰³ He explained some of the challenges that were facing the new corporation, particularly those affecting Huntly. These included a decrease in demand for locally mined coal, both from the New Zealand Steel operation at Glenbrook and also the Huntly Power Station. ‘Coal required had dropped from two million tonnes to between 600,000 and 700,000 tonnes.’¹⁰⁴ It was not just the workforce which was under threat: ‘The Corporation would only bid for State mines and assets it wanted. This could mean some mines and hundreds of State Coal houses would be left on the Government’s hands.’¹⁰⁵ Perham went on to say that ‘Details of job losses and corporation mining plans should be available to the public by January.’¹⁰⁶ The period of uncertainty continued for the communities involved.

The Announcement

John Perham returned to Huntly on 26 February 1987 to announce the upcoming changes under CoalCorp. Accompanying him were Jane Bryden and Harvey Shannon. Announcement meetings at Huntly, Ohai, on the West Coast and at head office in Wellington were held simultaneously:

The process for the announcement was rigid speeches. Everybody within CoalCorp and everybody within the SSC who were designated to speak at the public gatherings would not deviate off script. That meant that there was some

¹⁰¹ Bryden, [interview].

¹⁰² Miners hear ‘harsh realities’, *Huntly Press*, 13 November 1986.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Coal Corp Chief Outlines Policies, *Greymouth Evening Star*, 12 November 1986.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

consistency of message and people handling media enquiries and feedback, and political feedback in Wellington knew what had been said.¹⁰⁷

The purpose of the speeches was to inform the work force about the upcoming changes that CoalCorp were making when it started operating on 1 April 1987. The speech illustrated the challenges that had been facing the corporation, and also explained why State Coal Mines had been selected for corporatisation.

Bryden recalls that she and Shannon had not been aware of the Huntly redundancy numbers until the night before the meeting:

We were staying in a motel in Hamilton. We got told the numbers [of workers] that CoalCorp wanted. They [the numbers] were very, very tightly kept. I am sure very senior people within the SSC knew what they were, but really they took a wee while to work on those and develop them so they wouldn't have known until close to the day. I can remember my jaw dropping and thinking Oh my God. We are about to tell this group of people that 65% [of them] were going to lose their jobs.¹⁰⁸

As far as the Huntly locals were concerned, the main purpose of the meeting was to announce the number of employees that CoalCorp would require when it took over mining operations on 1 April 1987. Job losses were expected by the Huntly community. 'John Perham who was the incoming chair [of CoalCorp], made the speech in Huntly and we were all pretty nervous. I think that even he would admit to being pretty nervous when we went into the rugby ground.'¹⁰⁹ Perham's appearance in Huntly, as opposed to one of the other State Coal Mines locations, can be seen as an indicator of the significance of the situation. He understood the significance of the job losses on the Huntly community.

'We knew what we were saying was going to be really difficult – it was a big ask.'¹¹⁰ Bryden recalls that the announcement meetings were taken very seriously indicating an appreciation of the seriousness of the situation and the possible volatility of the crowd:

¹⁰⁷ Bryden, [interview].

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

We had had police briefings on goodness-knows-what. We weren't supposed to tell anyone where we were staying. And all sorts of things like that. We had been doing this job long enough even by that stage, albeit a few months, to know that there is an arrogance about presuming how people will react to that sort of news and assuming that you've got a clear handle on personal circumstances etc. We drove in the entrance in cars ... and if I recall correctly I think they even left a car running.¹¹¹

The official group were told that were there undercover police in the crowd although Jane remembers thinking that in a community like Huntly 'that they know exactly who is in their community and who is not and the plain clothes people would have stood out like anything.'¹¹² She was told 'Don't accept any invitation to go down a mine in the next few days.' Jane recalls that 'the primary role was John's – and I think even he was quite nervous because he made some joke about where we were going to sit. I plonked myself down on a seat, or did he suggest I sat there, at the end [of the truck deck] by the steps and he said "Oh you will be the quickest off aye?" I remember thinking if he was nervous then I am justified in being nervous as a poor probationer.'¹¹³

The meeting at the Huntly Rugby grounds was for all State Coal Mine employees, and families were also welcome to attend.¹¹⁴ The meetings were chaired by the local District Managers; in Huntly it was Rex Duggan. He introduced John Perham, and also Jane Bryden and Harvey Shannon. Bryden recalls that there were only the four of them on the deck of a flat bed truck and that the employees were seated in the grandstand. Duggan explained to the workforce that the role of the SSC was to assist with deployment issues, both for wageworkers and Public Service Association (PSA) staff. 'Secondly, they will have an involvement through their Social Impact Unit for dealing with the wider social issues of these changes, such as alternative employment, housing, and social support for the community.'¹¹⁵ Duggan advised the crowd that there would be time available for questions after the speeches are made. Rex Duggan also explained that the SSC staff

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Huntly Hears the Worst, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1987. 'The proceedings were watched by two policemen.'

¹¹³ Bryden, [interview].

¹¹⁴ Huntly Hears the Worst, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1987.

¹¹⁵ Announcement Speech, *Archives NZ*, 3.

would be available at the information centres for the next four days. The *New Zealand Herald* stated ‘... the atmosphere was fairly relaxed, despite the gravity of the situation. Mr Perham suffered little heckling or abuse.’¹¹⁶

The CoalCorp announcement meetings held throughout the country had been carefully composed. The speeches had a generic component and also included information for each particular location. The speeches started with the objectives of CoalCorp:

The Government had charged us [the Establishment Board for the proposed Coal Corporation] with the task of turning State Coal Mines into a viable and ongoing commercial enterprise;

- (i) providing sound jobs for its employees; and
- (ii) contributing to the economy of New Zealand.

The Coal Corporation was to be a free standing commercial body which should not require Government support or handouts to keep it going.

Our job was to create a strong and efficient commercial business. It is the job of Governments, not the Corporation, to deal with the social consequences of this change.¹¹⁷

The speech outlined many challenges that State Coal Mines had faced, including ‘manning levels that were kept artificially high for social reasons.’¹¹⁸ The government had endorsed the high employment levels within State Coal Mines for two reasons; firstly, it did not want to lose the skills that were invaluable to the mining industry, and secondly, it wanted to ensure a supply of coal for the markets.¹¹⁹ Included in the generic announcement speech was an illustration of Huntly’s situation:

...State Coal is chronically overstaffed for the markets which we can now see. State Coal was staffed up for a coal boom that has turned out to be simply a planner’s dream. It is not there now, and probably never was. Huntly is a classic illustration of this. Vast sums of money have been spent on development, but there are no enforceable long term contracts to [sic] with customers.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Huntly Hears the Worst, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1987.

¹¹⁷ Announcement Speech, *Archives NZ*, 4-5.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁹ *AJHR*, 1987, D-6, 53.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

Staffing levels were discussed and the three criteria for future employment with the corporation were outlined. Whereas the miners were accustomed to the principles of last-on, first-off, the corporation replaced this tradition with new criteria. These included skills and ability, attendance record, and years of service.¹²¹

The number of job losses in each location was outlined as follows in the announcement speech:

On 1 April the new Corporation will require 892 staff compared to 1,728 in State Coal at present. The figures for each area are:

Huntly	now 438	(was 922)
Head Office	now 47	(was 113)
West Coast	now 235	(was 436)
Ohai	now 172	(was 257). ¹²²

The justification for the local job losses was explained as follows:

Head Office and Huntly are the two parts of State Coal which are most affected by the change to the Corporation.

In Huntly this stems from two key factors;

- (i) A lack of firm contracts with our largest customers whose projected usage has changed most;
- (ii) A shift in the emphasis toward opensat [sic] recovery to provide greater customer flexibility and service.

The developments at Huntly over the last 5 – 10 years were based on a demand for about 900 thousand tonnes to New Zealand Steel, and about 1 million 250 thousand tonnes for the Electricity Division (now also a Corporation).

On top of that there is about another 300 thousand tonnes for assorted other markets. That is a total of nearly 2 and a half million tonnes of coal a year. We are now looking at about 1 million tonnes for 1987/88 and we still don't know after that.

New Zealand Steel have had their own problems.

Like us they export a lot and are facing a very oversupplied and low priced world market for their product (also like us).

They have also had problems getting their own capital developments up and running on time (again like us).

¹²¹ Ibid., 10.

¹²² Ibid., 11.

Together these aspects have forced a review of their whole strategy, and for a while it wasn't clear if they would make it through.

That now seems to have cleared, and I believe that they will be around and using our coal for a good while yet. Of course they are not going to pay us more for our coal than they would pay to import it or mine it themselves so there will be real pressure on us to be cost effective and support sensitive.

NZ Steel still plan to take up to 900 thousand tonnes a year, but it is a good few years off, and we have to last that long as a business.

Electricity is harder to explain. It has always been pretty clear that they would prefer to take gas if they could, at current prices.

Gas has lots of advantages over coal in power stations in terms of:

- (i) flexibility
- (ii) storage; and
- (iii) waste product aspects.

At current gas prices it is very hard for us to compete.

The Electricity Corporation Board have looked at the contract which State Coal and the Electricity Division negotiated, but believe that to go along with it would damage their own business. Accordingly they say the contract should be set aside.

While we are not at all happy with that decision, our best advice is that the contract won't stand up in court.

That matter will eventually be sorted out commercially by negotiation between Electricity Corporation and our competing suppliers.

However, Electricity Corporation want to keep coal around as an insurance policy for "dry years" down south, and that means that they have to burn quite a lot to keep the equipment functioning and the skills around. For 1987/88 we will be supplying about 300 thousand tonnes.

That leaves the rest, where again gas is our major competitor. We are confident that with better management and more aggressive marketing and pricing we can keep, and even expand slightly on our existing market share.¹²³

Jane recalls 'I think that when he [John Perham] read out the numbers [the mineworkers] were just shocked – totally shocked. We had been told that they were expecting maybe 25% [job losses].'¹²⁴ 'Gasps, low whistles of amazement and a few choice words muttered quietly greeted yesterday's announcement that Huntly's mining workforce would be cut by more than half.'¹²⁵ The representatives from the SSC and CoalCorp who

¹²³ Announcement Speech, *Archives New Zealand*, 15.

¹²⁴ Bryden, [interview].

¹²⁵ Huntly Hears the Worst, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1987.

were in Huntly for the announcement speech were aware that the 52% reduction in workforce was significantly more than the town had been anticipating. The day following the announcement John Perham said that he was sympathetic to the social impact the cuts would have. ‘In fact, I am churning up inside right now.’¹²⁶ He said later that he felt the crowd were restrained and responsible.

John Perham deviated from the script on two occasions:

To my recollection he changed the order – quite smartly – actually he made a slightly lewd joke at one point. We were standing there – he had his hands in his pockets - and someone yelled something out and he said something like you don’t know what I’m holding onto. It was quite smart because it was the kind of grass roots crowd that actually thought that that was quite funny. And then he read out the actual numbers he changed the order – I think he put Huntly immediately before or immediately after head office – because the percentage of jobs lost was not dissimilar in head office. They probably would have all been redeployed [to other government departments]. The fact that one of the messages in doing that deliberately was to say the head office hasn’t been spared.¹²⁷

The second ad lib came when Perham made comments about jobs at SCM which were not really jobs. Jane recalls:

He made some comment about non jobs, or, you know, or not a proper job. He said ‘You know when you are in a job that doesn’t really exist.’ There was a general murmur of assent in the crowd which was really interesting. Perham went off script, I am sure he did. It was really interesting and I think that it was probably one of those little points along the way and it was one of those points where you started to relax a bit because you think yeah they know that.’¹²⁸

Rex Duggan was the District Manager of State Coal Mines in Huntly. In her interview Jane recalled him being clearly uncomfortable:

In fact that is one of the other things that I look back on with a wry smile, was the local mines manager. I don’t remember his name but I remember liking him. He was clearly ‘the old school’ and had been in the mining industry for a long time and he was struggling with the whole thing. I am pretty sure that he was

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ In the announcement speech Huntly is listed before Head Office.

¹²⁸ Bryden, [interview].

transferring over. You realise that part of the role was to help him. He knew a lot of these guys, he had known their fathers. I remember that he was really struggling that day. He had a suit on and he looked slightly ill at ease in his suit. I remember thinking this is the kind of community that we are all coming to work in and you build up a big respect for them, the kinds of people that have been in these communities all their lives.

After the speech was completed the staff from CoalCorp, the State Services Commission and State Coal Mines did not leave the rugby grounds immediately:

When we finished we got off the truck ... I suspect there was no clear plan. I think it felt inherently uncomfortable to jump in the cars and drive off and I think that was hopefully a positive reflection on all of us – you didn't feel like just jumping in the car and driving off. You had just delivered a big blow to people. My sixth sense told me that I was not under any threat and that there was no problem. We just milled around for a while and my recollection is that we all just chatted to those who wanted to chat and people left the grounds slowly.

The *New Zealand Herald* stated 'After answering about a dozen questions from the crowd, Mr Perham left for a press conference in Hamilton. The crowd moved off fairly quickly, collecting a newly published introductory booklet about the corporation as they left.'¹²⁹

The Deployment Centre

Huntly is a community based on mining and the unique working environment fosters close relationships between the people involved. This became obvious to Jane as she spent four days subsequent to the announcement meeting in the Huntly deployment centre. Being employed by State Coal Mines had meant that there was a job for life, and this sense of intergenerational employment meant that it was not unusual to be working with extended family, including father, brothers, father-in-law, uncles and cousins. Jane recognised the strength of the ties when she was working with the miners. 'Some of the guys were walking out and the older miners were coming in, many of whom were saying 'I am going to take the money even if I get offered a job. I am going to leave it to one of

¹²⁹ Huntly Hears The Worst, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1987.

the young guys.’¹³⁰ There was an impression in the Wellington State Coal Mines office that there were a lot of young workers in Huntly. ‘Huntly workers tended to be aged between 20 and 30 with young children.’¹³¹ Based on the interviews that were conducted with the miners for this thesis, it would appear that assumption was correct; most of the miners had been in their 20s in 1987, with young families.

During the short period that Bryden spent in Huntly she recalls being presented with issues which the SSC had not anticipated, and therefore there was no formal policy to deal with it. The revelation of an underclass and the accompanying social problems, including poverty and abuse, were not anticipated:

It [large scale job losses] was such a learning ground there wasn’t even a benchmark internationally. I can remember that we scanned around internationally and there wasn’t even anything there for communities like that. There is no doubt in my mind that Rogernomics threw up a set of social dynamics that most people, particularly the decision makers at that time, didn’t know were even there. I still reminisce to this day there wasn’t a lot of policy, and not policy that covered every aspect because that was the human factor.¹³²

The other thing that hit home for me personally quite a bit was the social structure stuff. You saw quite a bit of it. You know you would have one guy coming in the morning with this wife and three children and then back in the afternoon with a girlfriend and two others [children]. Then they would come back on their own and have it [possible redundancy payment] recalculated to include everybody which posed a policy issue that needed to be referred to Wellington fairly quickly because how do you claim two spouses? But you could claim all the children. Because nobody knew about each other and you had the distinct sense that nobody was going to get anything anyway, as he was on a plane.¹³³

In another instance, Bryden recalls, ‘Every community and every profession has its bad egg. I remember one guy, married with two kids, back with pregnant girlfriend and baby in the afternoon. He said ‘It’s all secret here isn’t it?’ I said ‘Yes’ and he booked a flight and there were those who were very smart about it.’ Jane’s concern about domestic situations was not limited to workers with more than one partner. She was also disturbed

¹³⁰ Bryden, [interview].

¹³¹ Black Joke Greets News of Layoffs, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1987.

¹³² Bryden, [interview].

¹³³ Ibid.

by evidence of physical abuse within the home. ‘There were one or two set ups that came into the offices that were slightly worrying. There was clearly some abuse, physical abuse situations going on. And I can remember one case in particular, it was clearly very recent. Even I being immune to that sort of thing my whole life, it [the abuse] had clearly been that morning. I am sure it was already happening, but I also suspect it was the stress of the situation.’¹³⁴

Current literature dealing with the social implications of Rogernomics often mentions the advent of an underclass following the huge changes that were implemented in the 1980s but perhaps these issues had always been present.¹³⁵ Rogernomics allowed social issues to be exposed, and while the ruptures may have exacerbated the situation, they existed prior to 1987. What Jane saw in the deployment house over the four day period has stayed with her to the present day.

It was a big learning curve personally for me and one I must say I am always grateful for, as perverse as that is and as little comfort as that is to people who were involved. The other thing that I remember that hit me quite hard was realising, as I was running my finger over documentation, there was illiteracy. Because I think a lot of people making decisions during that time weren’t thinking in terms that illiteracy existed in our country. I think still think that late 1980s period brought those halcyon days to an end. We actually had to come to grips with the fact that yes, we had poverty, and yes, we had abuse and we had incest and we had illiteracy and all those things. And sure it wasn’t in the numbers that it might be in other countries but it was there. I can remember looking at a guy and thinking he’s not following me here. I can still remember him and I can remember what he looks like. I started running my finger backwards and he was just following my finger. I think there is a dreadful arrogance to say to people in that situation we can redeploy you. You know sending the guy to poly-tech to learn to read and write was probably a better option. And I think we did two or three things like that too. If memory serves me there were a couple of life skills type situations we put people through but they had to want to do it, and practical to the end, many of them just didn’t, they just had other things to do.¹³⁶

Bryden recognised that some of the services that the SSC were offering were not appropriate or applicable to some of the people who were coming to the deployment

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment*.

¹³⁶ Bryden, [interview].

house for advice. The problems she encountered with employee illiteracy made her aware that distributing written information was not ideal in a community like Huntly. A booklet was handed out at the announcement meeting to all SCM employees.¹³⁷ It included pages with the following titles: 'Message from the Chairman', Smaller Workforce, Corporatisation explained, CoalCorp Structure, 'Facing the Future', Meeting Market Demands, A Job with CoalCorp. As Jane recalls:

It was so corporate Wellington, running out and handing these [booklets] out. Having said that, in defence of us, it was very difficult to know what to do. It is horses for courses and every individual would probably exercise a different preference so you end up having to do it that sort of way. Where it would have hit hard in places like Huntly, and I am sure there were forestry towns that were the same and as were other coal towns, if they can't read then they are not going to read it.¹³⁸

The role of the staff from the State Services Commission was to offer a confidential service to any State Coal Mines employee, whether their union affiliation was with the Public Service Association or the Mineworkers of New Zealand:

As the SSC we were there for four days for people to come and talk to us about their rights and our obligations to them as public servants and their options. It was a colossal change but it went really well. There was a security guard there at the start and I am pretty sure that we said go away after that. We were both pretty busy as I recall. They [the miners] were told you come in, no names, on an entirely confidential basis unless you want something pursued in which case we would need names.

One of the options which the SSC had been working on with the PSA was redeployment. However, this option was not applicable in every location, including Huntly. While PSA staff employed by SCM could look for redeployment to another government agency that was not an option for the staff in Huntly; there was no other department for them to go to:

Redeployment options were very limited especially if they were committed to the area. They wanted to know what their options were and the reality of the situation was in 90% of cases, redundancy. You learnt very quickly that you didn't greet them with your Polly Anna face, saying we can redeploy you. You can tell coal

¹³⁷ BCBA 1478 74 B, *Archives NZ*.

¹³⁸ Bryden, [interview].

miners ... this is how it is, these are your options and they are often very practical people. You learnt quickly not to talk redeployment and who to talk redeployment to and if people were interested they generally raised it themselves. At that time there was quite a bit of option available for mines over in Australia so a lot were heading over there.

Although redeployment was not a viable option for many, retraining was. ‘There were quite a few who wanted to retrain and we made resources available. I remember putting together two or three retraining packages with guys who were saying they were in that space anyway. They had sort of been saying to themselves that they didn’t want to spend the rest of their lives in the mines.’¹³⁹

Looking back, Jane hopes that some of the lessons that were learnt in Huntly in the 1980s may be factored into the delivery of social services in the present day:

I think the way in which social service delivery has come a long way in the last twenty years. Perhaps Rogernomics had a role to play in that actually? It certainly would have thrown up communities where their established delivery mechanisms for support services would have been just fine. In those days would Social Welfare have considered providing marae based services? Probably not I would suggest. I would like to think that public social services think the same way and if you are going to a community like Huntly you back-up service it. I can’t really speak to a lot of that, you know, we had a job, we went in, we did it, we did it for a few days. There was a lot of follow up work. I don’t recall going back to Huntly again. Because it was quite, and that is what I mean about the speed, it was quite snap-shotty. I can’t remember the date that we were up there and then as you say it wasn’t long afterwards that people got letters whether they were wanted or not.¹⁴⁰ It was probably very soon after. I think it was a matter of days because guys were coming in and saying “well if you do this redundancy calculation and I then don’t get the letter then I will know what I am getting” type of thing and then it was in place.’¹⁴¹

I think probably the other thing that period of time has probably thrown up sadly, and yet there was no upside in this being thrown up, sooner or later was all that revelation about the - what do sociologists call it - whole underclass stuff: the illiteracy, the abuse, the incest thing. I think we had been flying along as a country with the blinkers on about a lot of things. I am not getting into an economic argument about the right and wrongs of Rogernomics. I think maybe a lot of left-

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ The announcement meeting was held in Huntly on 26 February 1987 and the letters were sent to employees on 17 March 1987.

¹⁴¹ Bryden, [interview].

of-centre thinking people will say “well Rogernomics contributed to a lot of that”. It was terrible time and we sold the family silver and we created an underclass of people who couldn’t get jobs but I think also there may well be an argument for that. I am not an economist but I think for us that it demonstrated that it was already there. I might be an extreme coming from a relatively sheltered and comfortable background but ... for me it was quite a revelation for me working up there for a few days. Also I rally a lot now against the “What’s wrong with them? They have had long enough to think about things. They need to pick themselves up by their boot straps.” I am a great one for saying that some of these people don’t wear boots. You can make assumptions about peoples internal abilities to think through a problem or to rationalise their way to a solution and in a way that we might and some people just don’t have the skill set to do that. The fortunate ones of them will almost instinctively know that and they are the ones that will say “look just tell me what I am going to do. Just tell me how much you are going to pay me. Uncle Bob’s going to give me a job in Queensland and I am off.”¹⁴²

Policy and Planning

There is no doubt that SSC staff recognised that corporatisation was going to have a significant effect on communities like Huntly. Furthermore, they were aware that they were unprepared for many of the situations which they were faced with. Perhaps one of the reasons that the social implications of corporatisation had not fully been considered was the speed with which the changes took place. Upon reflection Jane thinks that there are many reasons why the changes happened so quickly:

I suppose that comes back to the philosophy around the changes in the first place - not so much the changes - I still hold to the view that they had to happen. The public service had become a social employer. I think the issue I had – many of us in the SSC because we were dealing with the personnel fall out – you know, Treasury was a bit more immune to it - was the speed at which the changes took place. And, maybe, if it had been done over a greater period of time, attrition would have had a greater say, you know, you could have done more retraining. The converse argument was that doing that sort of thing over a long period of time tends to mean that it doesn’t happen. New Zealand had a bit of a history of that sort of thing. People develop methodologies for avoiding it, the unions in particular, so the whole Rogernomics thing. My view and I think a lot of people, in hindsight which is so clearly important, would say that we benefited in many parts of it – a lot of economists would not say all of it – but I think long term those communities benefited. But it was just the pace. I think in defence of

¹⁴² Ibid.

Douglas and company I don't think that the job would have been done if they had not gone at the pace that they did to be perfectly honest, and what learning would we take out of it? I don't think that we would have the same set of circumstances again. If you had the ability to go back and were perfectly honest about those times your ability to now plan better, put better support structures in place. We would be a little less naïve about the stakeholders that you are going to see. It is much improved. It is a different world to 25 years ago. I don't think you would have the same set of circumstances. So if you ended up having to do the same thing again, I don't know, history would probably tell us to do the same thing again, just plan the aftermath a bit better.¹⁴³

The sense of urgency which accompanied the corporatisation changes appeared to be difficult for many who were involved at the government level in Wellington. There is no doubt in Jane's mind that it took a toll on even the most senior of staff:

I can remember sitting in a meeting, as a mere underling, and my senior colleagues presenting something about the social impacts of what was being done. Douglas chucked it [the document] over the room, they didn't want to know. I suspect to some degree that was how they coped with it and of course you would have to speak to Douglas about that. That was obviously the fundamental difference between him and Lange. David Lange had a problem after a while with what was happening. He was a wonderful man. I would say that a lot has been made of his conscience. If you look at the time line, it [his conscience] took a wee while to kick in and that is not a criticism. Maybe it speaks to what I was saying before about the naivety and the lack of knowledge about the impacts. Once we started getting into it then maybe everyone including David Lange was going "Oh my God." There was an acceptance that you couldn't go back and maybe that is where he went wrong because he thought maybe you could. The difference between trying to put the foot flat on the brake, sort of as he tried to do, and slowing it down, mind you, he didn't have someone who was prepared to try and work with him on that. The people who fronted, the Roger Douglas's, whatever Treasury officials fronted, Mike Moore did to some extent I recall. Ann Hercus, Roderick (Deane). I think the degree to which people felt there was a sense of uncaring, unfeeling going on just reflects just that you know. You don't go on TV and wring your hands. I think there was, only Roger Douglas could respond to this, but I think there was an element of closing their minds off to some of the fall out. I would also respectfully suggest that that was the only way that they could do what they felt was their job.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

The ‘Rogernomics blitzkrieg’¹⁴⁵ is one aspect of corporatisation which Jane strongly remembers. In her involvement with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) restructuring in the late 1980s she remembers the SSC were required to virtually make up policy to deal with situations as they went.¹⁴⁶ She states that she feels that one of the issues that many of her colleagues had was the speed with which the changes were implemented. ‘My view and I think a lot of people in hindsight would say that we [New Zealand] benefited in many parts of it [corporatisation]. Economists would not say all of it. I think long term many of those communities benefited from it. It was just the pace.’

Jane Bryden was involved with organisation of, and the immediate fall out from, the corporatisation of State Coal Mines in Huntly. Even though it was a traumatic time for the community she is pleased that she was given the opportunity to go to Huntly. In later life she has been approached by people who lost their jobs and they have told her that it was the best thing that happened to them:

I remember guys coming up to me two or three years later saying “Oh you were the chick who made me redundant” and I used to gulp and look around and see if there was a uniformed [police] officer. Then they would say “best thing that ever happened to me.” Going back to Huntly, I don’t think anyone meant to underestimate what a big ask it was. I think that we did, but I don’t think that we meant to.

As a member of the MOCU Jane Bryden spent four days in Huntly in 1987 and that experience is a crucial part of this social history thesis. Jane was involved at the organisational level during the restructuring of State Coal Mines. Her experiences summarise what was happening occurring in Wellington at that time. From Jane’s interview a number of conclusions can be reached.

Firstly, there was no global benchmark for the introduced reforms and the SSC were required to develop policy without a comparative model. It is clear that although considerable preparation and planning accompanied the corporatisation of the public sector, the changes that Rogernomics introduced were unprecedented. The SSC

¹⁴⁵ Easton, *Making of Rogernomics*, 174.

¹⁴⁶ Bryden, [interview].

developed policies in tandem with the PSA to address the issues of redeployment and redundancy within the public service. Although applicable in Wellington the policies did not fully address the issues being faced by small-town New Zealand. Therefore they were not able to be used in communities where Rogernomics had the biggest impact.

Secondly, the changes introduced by Rogernomics happened swiftly, hence the term blitzkrieg. Within three weeks of the announcement meeting in Huntly 52% of the mining workforce was made redundant. There was little time for families to prepare for the consequent upheaval and this caused considerable stress within the community. Issues of domestic violence had not been anticipated by the SSC, although Jane's experience in Huntly showed that it was an issue. However, she was not prepared and had no guidelines or means of referral to deal with this. Illiteracy was another problem which had not been anticipated. Booklets were distributed at the announcement meeting which contained information about CoalCorp and the mining future of Huntly. It became obvious to Jane during her time in the deployment centre that poor literacy skills meant that some workers were not going to be able to access the information they required.

Furthermore, while the miners worked in a specialised industry, their skills were not easily transferable. Despite the fact that redeployment and retraining were options the SSC considered applicable, the reality was there were few other employment opportunities for miners in Huntly. Redundancy became the only realistic option for many within the community, as redeployment was unavailable.

Mining is a unique occupation and as such it had an attraction for many involved in the industry. Strong bonds were formed between workmates several hundred feet below the surface. These bonds helped to reinforce the sense of community that was evident in Huntly in 1987. The miners and their families relied on Huntly to support them after the announcement meeting. In a reciprocal manner the community relied on the miners to overcome the challenges that it faced in the years following the redundancies. The miners and their families were an integral part of Huntly, and their recollection of 1987 and corporatisation form the basis of the next chapter.

3. Voices from the coal face.

Throughout the country mines were idle on 17 March 1987 as the entire State Coal Mines workforce waited at home for their redundancy letters to be delivered via the post.

Workers had cleaned out their individual lockers at the end of their previous shift. If the new corporation no longer required your services, you would not return. State Coal Mines would continue paying you until 1 April 1987, Corporation Day. If you were lucky, you had other employment to go to; if not you were not only redundant but also unemployed from that date.

Huntly is a mining community, and as such, it has overcome adversity in the past.¹⁴⁷ However, the implications of the job losses for Huntly in 1987 were huge: the fabric of the community was torn apart as the largest employer shed more than half of its workforce. It was the impact on individuals and their families which rocked Huntly as the town realised that the very foundation on which their community was built would no longer provide work for all who wanted it. After the CoalCorp announcement meeting at Huntly on 26 February 1987 many recognised that they had to look for work elsewhere. A job at the mines had meant that you had employment with the Public Service for life but in 1987 that reality was replaced by a more market driven economic initiative which sought profit above social capital within the community. As far as the community was concerned profits became more important than people.

As the miners were interviewed for this thesis, a number of recurring themes began to emerge from their recollections. These included their attraction to the mining industry, their understanding of the corporatisation process including redundancy decisions, and their use of the support services. Their interviews allow an insight into the experiences of those affected at the grass roots level. These miners and their experiences are representative of the views of Huntly mineworkers in general.

¹⁴⁷ Ralph's Mine, Huntly, 12 September 1914. 43 men killed by underground explosion, Glen Afton, September 1939, 11 men asphyxiated by gas. <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/disasters-and-mishaps-coal-mining/3>, accessed 20 February 2010.

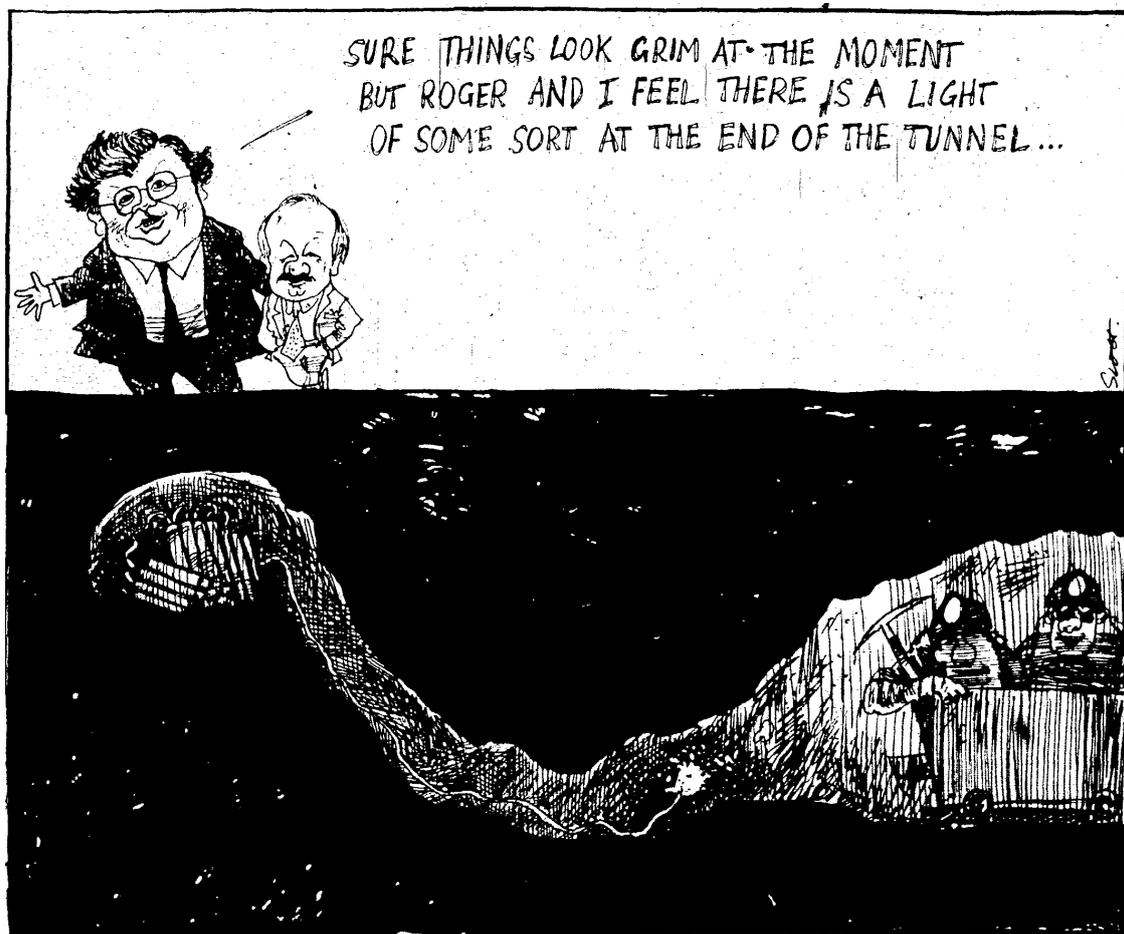


Figure 3-1: Things Look Grim, *Waikato Times*, 24 March 1987.

The Reasons for Corporatisation

Like Jane Bryden, the miners attended the announcement meeting at the Huntly Rugby Grounds on 26 February 1987. However, unlike Jane, none of them had a positive memory of the occasion. There is an understanding amongst the miners interviewed for this thesis as to why the redundancies occurred: that is, corporatisation, the need to make a profit, and a lack of coal markets. It is not clear if this understanding came from attending the announcement meeting, or if it became more obvious as time passed that State Coal Mines could not keep functioning as it was.

Robert Gamble was working at the opencast when he was offered his redundancy. Looking back, Robert thinks the reasons for the redundancies were ‘basically from the government. The government needed to cross structure because they weren’t making money at the time. As workers you didn’t realise that at the time, as you get a bit older you realise and you see things from a different perspective. We were making great money in those days for what we were doing.’¹⁴⁸

Andrew Inglis had been working for State Coal Mines for 11 years when he volunteered for redundancy. ‘I myself think it [corporatisation] was a government thing to try and reduce the staff to make it [State Coal Mines] pay out more. My personal opinion is there may be three guys doing the job, or three at the Railways or the Post Office. They [the government] did the whole lot [corporatisation] at the same time. Everyone had to turn up to work to get paid, therefore there was tax going into the kitty, and we had better hospital systems. When they cut the staff, you had two thirds or three quarters on the dole, the dole numbers are going up, there is no tax going in, and it just killed everything.’¹⁴⁹

Interviewee G had been working underground at West Mine for 13 months when he chose to take his redundancy. He understands that the reason for the redundancies was ‘due to corporatisation of the public sector, to make someone accountable for what was happening.’ ‘We were taking out a great deal more coal than we needed at the time, and hindsight is a great thing, but we were a few years ahead of ourselves. They should have never wound it down to the extent they did. We are in a position now where we can’t supply enough coal and in that situation at that time if we had progressed we would have been all right. At the time I think it was all pretty well known that there wasn’t the market there for the coal, and there was a bit of a downturn with the coal. I do think that it [CoalCorp] was a lot more money orientated.’¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Robert Gamble, [interview], Raglan, 18 November 2008.

¹⁴⁹ Andrew Inglis, [interview], Huntly, 17 November 2008.

¹⁵⁰ Interviewee G, [interview], Huntly, 30 October 2008. This interviewee asked to remain anonymous.

When he thinks about why the redundancies were necessary Reupene Renata states, ‘It is a government bloody owned industry running at a loss, the putea [money] was always being built up by the government. They had to show a bloody profit, redundancies had to become the norm.’¹⁵¹

John Cope thinks that corporatisation was a ‘total reform.’ ‘We understood at the time that we were the first state owned enterprise to be stripped, from being a government department to a corporation. There was all this talk around. We could see that other people were being shaken up.’ ‘I knew it was a sad day for the town because we went from the richest town in the nation to the poorest.’¹⁵² John had been working at East Mine for 18 months when he volunteered for redundancy in 1987 although he had been previously employed by State Coal Mines for several years prior to that.¹⁵³

Unlike John Cope, Karl Loveridge did not volunteer for redundancy: it was compulsory for him. He understands that the redundancies were part of ‘a downsizing and restructure. The way I understand it they [State Coal Mines] were top heavy and they didn’t need the personnel, we just felt like a number.’¹⁵⁴ Karl has very strong memories of the day at the Huntly Rugby Club when the redundancy announcements were made; not only can he see the grounds from his home in Huntly West, but he was getting married in 1987 at the same time as the redundancies took place. ‘Sitting up there [in the grandstand], I remember that. It was shit, it was disgusting, go to work, get an envelope. They whisked them [the people from CoalCorp and the State Services Commission] away pretty quick after the meeting. We got married on the Saturday and were made redundant on the Monday, we weren’t very happy. We didn’t even have a honeymoon. It was hard, we struggled to save enough to get married and so on, and then bang, we had that. I thought I was going to be there [at the mines] for some time.’¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Reupene Renata, [interview], Hopuhopu, 26 November 2008.

¹⁵² John Cope, [interview], Huntly, 4 November 2008.

¹⁵³ Cope, [interview].

¹⁵⁴ Karl Loveridge, [interview], Huntly, 15 November 2008.

¹⁵⁵ Loveridge, [interview].

Like Karl Loveridge, Brett Glass remembers attending the announcement meeting at the Huntly Rugby Ground. Brett thought ‘it was a load of rubbish really.’¹⁵⁶ Brett had been employed as an underground electrician at West Mine for eight years when he applied for voluntary redundancy. Brett states ‘They seemed to think it [State Coal Mines] would run more efficiently if it was privatised, they brought in the razor gang and basically made half the staff redundant.’¹⁵⁷

Max Noda was also employed at West Mine and chose to take his redundancy package in 1987. He remembers at the time there was talk about there being no use or markets for Huntly coal.¹⁵⁸ He discussed his options, including redundancy, with Peter McNally, the West Mine Manager. Max recalls attending the meeting at the Huntly Rugby Grounds and said that in the days after the announcement had been made no one wanted to work, they just waited for their letters.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, Paul Baker understood that the lack of coal markets was one of the reasons for the large number of job losses in the Huntly area. Paul had been working underground at East Mine for five years when he volunteered for redundancy in 1987.¹⁶⁰

The redundancy letters which were sent to employees set the tone for the new corporation and made it clear where their priorities lay. ‘As the success of the new venture will depend on Coal Corporation entering the marketplace as a viable and competitive enterprise ... many people will need to consider other employment options’.¹⁶¹ The miners’ remember that the need for profit was constantly referred to; and that profit was aligned to efficiency and a reduction in staff numbers.

Karl Crook Senior states, ‘To make more profit they had to cut down the work force and have fewer men doing more jobs. Even when we worked hard with the pick and shovel, there was a whole social structure, the camaraderie, we lived together and knew each

¹⁵⁶ Brett Glass, [interview], Huntly, 15 November 2008.

¹⁵⁷ Glass, [interview].

¹⁵⁸ Max Noda, [interview], Huntly, 27 November 2008.

¹⁵⁹ The announcement meeting took place on 26 February 1987. The redundancy letters were sent out on 17 March 1987

¹⁶⁰ Paul Baker, [interview], Huntly, 24 November 2008.

¹⁶¹ Untitled article, *Sunday Star Times*, 18 March 2007.

other. As soon as they put the machines in that all left, the union became corrupted, we still worked at the coal face but it was all about profits.’¹⁶²

The announcement meeting was also very difficult for members of the Public Service Association employed in Huntly. Bill Munden was the only PSA staff member interviewed for this thesis. In 1987 Bill Munden was based at the Huntly State Coal Mines Office, and managed a technical staff of 65 including geologists and engineers specialising in civil, mechanical and electrical work. He thinks most of his staff lost their jobs. He recalls going to Huntly Rugby Ground for the announcement meeting and the unreality and the confusion. ‘In the past when people had left State Coal Mines there had been valedictory speeches and morning teas, there was to be none of that in 1987. ‘I remember grown men were crying and retreating into their shells, it nearly killed them. I was happy to go, I was quite happy to forget about mining. I was ready to retire.’¹⁶³

Although many of the miners have a recollection of the announcement meeting, perhaps it was the shock and hearing how many who were to be made redundant that has contributed to their negative memories of the event. It is hard to think that anyone would be able to fondly recall an experience when not only your future, but the future of your community, was outside of your control.

Redundancy

Traditionally the mining industry had used a last-on, first-off employment method when it was required to terminate staff. After the initial shock of the redundancy announcement had worn off, one of the hardest concepts for the miners to grasp was the method of staff selection used by the new corporation.

I was made redundant. I can’t tell you how I feel about the job losses [he is upset]. I was 26 years in the mines and I was a union official and a union safety

¹⁶² Crook, [interview].

¹⁶³ Munden, [interview].

inspector. Instead of last-on, first-off, put it this way, they sacked all the local officials and kept the national officials so that says volumes doesn't it? I was a member of the communist party for 14 years, a socialist. I was proud to be a miner, until mechanised mining came in and then it wasn't the same job, it wasn't the same as the pick and shovel days. It was decimating, me and my son lost our jobs, I had one son who kept his job.¹⁶⁴ It was all about public sector reform: corporatisation, making it more profitable for private enterprise. The way they picked and chose the miners, I don't know, it was random. Even people that I got jobs, people in my family who had only been in the mines for two years kept their jobs. It was a deliberate ploy by the state to disrupt us and split us up.¹⁶⁵

When the redundancy letters were sent out in the mail, the people who worked for State Coal Mines on Max's street opened their letters together and he says 'it was hard for the people who missed out, and for those who had got a job. It was performance based, not last on first off. A lot of my mates, they were the first to get knocked back because of their attendance. There were about eight affected.'¹⁶⁶ Ian Whyte also acknowledged that attendance played a part in the decision. 'When I was made redundant I knew it was coming. I was single and I never used to go to work on a Friday swing shift.'¹⁶⁷ Paul Baker states that there was resentment by those who had lost their jobs, as it was hard to work out how CoalCorp chose who would be made redundant.¹⁶⁸

Reupene Renata does not feel that the process achieved its objective to keep the more productive staff. 'Some of them [who kept their jobs] should have gone down the road. Some of the lazy ones kept their jobs. A lot of good Maori and good fellas went down the road. When you looked at it there seemed to be a lot of Maori who lost their jobs.'¹⁶⁹ It is difficult to ascertain from the interviews that were conducted for this thesis if Maori were more affected than non-Maori. In a study undertaken by the Waahi Resource Unit in July 1987, it is stated that: 'up to 50% of those made redundant were Maori, with a

¹⁶⁴ Huntly: Those Who Are Staying On ... And Those Who Are Told They Must Go, *New Zealand Herald*, 18 March 1987

¹⁶⁵ Crook, [interview].

¹⁶⁶ Noda, [interview].

¹⁶⁷ Whyte, [interview]. The miners refer to night shift as swing shift.

¹⁶⁸ Baker, [interview].

¹⁶⁹ Renata, [interview].

greater proportion being from the local Tainui Tribe.’¹⁷⁰ A ‘disproportionate percentage’ of the miners were Maori, according to a report by the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research.¹⁷¹ This was probably a reflection of the large Maori demographic present in Huntly.

Mining has many traditions and the changes that were introduced in regards to the employment methods were challenging for the miners interviewed. The period leading up to the redundancy announcements were a particularly stressful time for Huntly. It appears that many of the miners understand the reasons for the restructuring although there is still confusion about how people were chosen. Corporatisation meant replacing traditional methods with new ones. The new methods were based on business efficiency and performance as opposed to traditional established practises. As part of corporatisation, and in recognition of the significant job losses in Huntly, support services were provided to the miners and their wider community.

Support Services

In his speech at the announcement meeting, John Perham had outlined the roles of Jane Bryden and Harvey Shannon, as members of State Services Commission. They were to provide support for workers who wanted to look at redeployment and redundancy options. These support services were available through the deployment centre set up on Rosser Street. Although Jane recalls being busy during the four days she spent in Huntly, hardly any of those interviewed for this thesis utilised those services.

The only person interviewed who used the support services to look at setting up a business was Karl Loveridge.¹⁷² When he used the deployment centre it was after Jane Bryden had left Huntly. Karl and another mine worker were interested in buying a local business; however the vendor withdrew the offer at the last minute and the deal fell

¹⁷⁰ *Coping with Change? The Huntly Experience*. State Services Commission, Waikato United Council, August 1988. 26.

¹⁷¹ *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects*. 99.

¹⁷² *Coping with Change? The Huntly Experience*. ‘Consultants from the State Services Commission advised over 30 ex State Coal Mine employees on private business opportunities.’ ii.

through.¹⁷³ Karl was not interested in buying a house at the time, but did put some of his redundancy money away to use as a deposit on a house in Huntly West in later years.¹⁷⁴

Housing appears to be one category where the miners found the subsequent support services beneficial.¹⁷⁵ Interviewee G stated that he used his redundancy towards buying a house and also used the support services available in the community.¹⁷⁶ Graham Hunt used the support services that were available as he wanted to purchase one of the State Coal Mine houses from Rotowaro and relocate it to Glen Afton. ‘They gave us help with financing the house, through Maori Affairs, and mediated with the land owners that we were buying the section off. They helped us with budgeting when we bought the house.’¹⁷⁷ Similarly, after volunteering for redundancy, Reupene Renata used the money to help purchase a Rotowaro house.¹⁷⁸ He was living in Rotowaro in 1987, and was able to purchase a section at Glen Afton and relocate a house from Rotowaro there.¹⁷⁹

Indirectly, the support services offered were beneficial to Lance Slater. ‘Although we did not use the support services at Rosser Street they probably helped me with someone purchasing our home, who had used those support services. He [the purchaser] had a good deposit and with their advice it happened.’¹⁸⁰

Karl Crook Senior did not use any of the support services that were offered, as he felt they were a waste of time. When he received his redundancy payout, he used the money to pay off a car that he had purchased. At that time his wife had not been back to

¹⁷³ Loveridge, [interview].

¹⁷⁴ Loveridge, [interview].

¹⁷⁵ *Coping with Change? The Huntly Experience*. State Coal Mines continued operating the deployment centre after Jane Bryden left Huntly, and offered a range of support services until mid April 1987. 6.

¹⁷⁶ Interviewee G, [interview].

¹⁷⁷ Graham Hunt, [interview], Huntly, 15 November 2008.

¹⁷⁸ Rotowaro was the mining township west of Huntly that was closed in the 1980s to allow the area under the township to be mined. Houses in the township were sold for relocation to other areas. Several of them were moved further west to the small mining townships of Glen Afton and Pukemiro, approximately 17km from Huntly.

¹⁷⁹ Renata, [interview].

¹⁸⁰ Lance Slater, [interview], Huntly, 14-11-08.

England for 18 years. Some of the redundancy money was used when she went back for a visit, ‘and then that was it, it was gone.’¹⁸¹

Many of the miners used their redundancy money towards either purchasing a house, or paying off their mortgage. Although Brett Glass did not use any of the support services that were available to the mineworkers, he was interested in purchasing a State Coal Mines house in Huntly in 1987. There were complications with the valuations. ‘They [State Coal Mines] gave us a list of registered valuers that we were to use, which we duly did. We got them out to do the valuation and we thought “Yes that is fine, we are happy with that [the price the house was valued at.]” We signed up and paid our deposit, and then they [State Coal Mines] said “No, we want more than that.” We weren’t interested in paying more so we didn’t do it.’¹⁸²

The redundancy money was used by other miners for more everyday items. Lance Slater had been employed by State Coal Mines for 18 months and had another job lined up before he finished on 1 April 1987. He used his redundancy to purchase a set of mag wheels.¹⁸³ Ian Whyte stated that he bought some motorcycles with his redundancy and ‘enjoyed life, so to speak, for quite a few months.’¹⁸⁴

The Attraction of Mining

Mining is a difficult occupation, particularly for those who work underground. The conditions are unique and the threat of real danger cannot be underestimated. It is hot, it is dark, and it is often wet. Men travel back and forwards to the surface on machinery via an access tunnel; to walk from the face to the surface would take a considerable amount of time. While it is taxing, mining also holds many attractions for those involved in the industry.

¹⁸¹ Crook, [interview].

¹⁸² Glass, [interview].

¹⁸³ Slater, [interview].

¹⁸⁴ Ian Whyte, [interview], Glen Afton, 30-10-08.

Intergenerational employment at State Coal Mines was common, and this is evident from the miners' interviews. Most of those interviewed for this social history were continuing a family tradition by working in the mines. Some of those interviewed had completed an apprenticeship with State Coal Mines and there was the sense that they were working in the same place as their families had previously, even if they were not employed as miners. Because Huntly is a small community, it would not be unusual for a miner to work alongside members of their extended family. These strong familial ties meant that there was a sense of tradition in mining; you went into mining as had your family members before you. This sense of tradition also contributed to the expectation that a job with State Coal Mines was a job for life. If you had seen your family members throughout their working lives employed by one company and work in one industry, it is only natural that when you followed them into that industry the same rules would apply to you. This understanding was shattered in 1987 when the redundancies were announced as CoalCorp was focussed on profit and economic viability, not on being a social employer.

With a father, grandfather, uncles and cousins who worked in mining, Ian Whyte is an example of the intergenerational employment which was a hallmark of the SCM operations in the Huntly area. Ian left school at 15 and immediately started working for State Coal Mines. He did various surface jobs including lawn mowing, garden maintenance and picking stone¹⁸⁵ at the Rotowaro Opencast until he turned 18 and was old enough to go underground at Mahons Mine. When Mahons Mine closed¹⁸⁶ he went to East Mine. Ian later transferred to West Mine where he was working there when the redundancies occurred in 1987: he was 24 years old.¹⁸⁷

By the same token, Karl Crook Senior was 16 years old when he started working at the Renown screens. He is one of five generations of his family to be involved in mining, from his great grandfather to his sons. Although he was in the merchant navy for four

¹⁸⁵ Picking stone involves monitoring the conveyor belt at the coal screening plant and picking the stone out from amongst the coal.

¹⁸⁶ Cook, *Lake of Coal*, 83. Mahons Mine closed in 1985.

¹⁸⁷ Whyte, [interview].

years, and had worked for three years at the freezing works, mining was Karl's primary occupation and he was employed in the industry for 26 years. The redundancies occurred just before his 50th birthday.¹⁸⁸

'They [State Coal Mines] did more than they [Solid Energy] do now. It was totally different, completely to what it is now. Father and son had a job, father and daughter too, a father in the mines meant that the family got a job at the mines' remembers Andrew Inglis.¹⁸⁹ Both of his sons have worked in the mining industry and one of his sons is currently employed at East Mine, commuting from Taupo to Huntly on a weekly basis. He stays in Huntly with his parents when he is on roster.

Paul Baker's two brothers, Interviewee G's brothers, cousins and uncles, Robert Gamble's father and grandfather, Brett Glass's grandfather, Lance Slater's brother and brother-in-law, Graham Hunt's father-in-law, Max Noda's father: the sense of tradition and history in these mining families is strong. There were only two people interviewed for this thesis who did not come from a mining background: Reupene Renata and Karl Loveridge. Both were the first members of their family to work in the mining industry, and neither of them was born in Huntly. Karl moved to Huntly when he was 16 years old. Reupene relocated from Turangi to Huntly in 1984 after he was made redundant by the Ministry of Works.

The last annual report submitted on behalf of State Coal Mines it states, 'While State Coal Mines is no more, the intense comradeship amongst coal miners remains. For many families work in the coal mines has been a family tradition. Despite the latest retrenchment this remains the case for many families.'¹⁹⁰ 'There is a history way back there. I think if it [redundancies] had not happened we would still have a lot of the history, fathers, brothers and kids still working there.'¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Crook, [interview].

¹⁸⁹ Inglis, [interview].

¹⁹⁰ *AJHR*, 1987 D-6, 55.

¹⁹¹ Interviewee G, [interview].

Stereotypically, a miner could be described as someone who wears a hard hat and head lamp, and is usually dirty and covered in coal dust. While this paints a picture of a difficult work environment, there were other benefits found underground which helped to mitigate the effects of the dangerous work. One of the overwhelming themes present in the interviews is the feeling of camaraderie and friendship that the miners experienced with their crew, especially amongst the miners who worked underground. The importance of the strong bond amongst the miners cannot be over emphasised, as the men relied on each other in potentially life-and-death situations.

Miners worked in crews depending on each other, and this strongly compounded their relationships which were formed at the coal face and reinforced on the surface. Living in a small community, travelling to work together, sharing an interest in sport, having children that were a similar age, all meant that the mine workers also spent time together outside of their work environment.

Underground mining is not for everyone. Brett Glass is succinct when reflecting on the challenges of working underground. 'It is a pretty harsh environment and it is pretty hard to explain it to anybody who hasn't been there.'¹⁹² Andrew Inglis never worked underground; he managed to avoid it. 'I went over [to East Mine] and had a look but I did not like the look of it.'¹⁹³ Andrew does not feel that the strong sense of camaraderie that was experienced by the underground miners was also present at the opencast operations. Robert Gamble recalls, 'I went from the surface to underground and I was a bit apprehensive but to tell you the truth that was one of the better moves I ever made, going underground, I enjoyed it immensely.' 'It was the hardest job I ever did in my life, on the longwall. I got sent to Australia [for training], it was the hardest job because the conditions weren't right. It was never going to work. They had all the machinery, sitting there at East [mine], and then they decided to move it to West [mine].'¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Glass, [interview].

¹⁹³ Inglis, [interview].

¹⁹⁴ Gamble, [interview].

‘If I had no other options I would go back mining, because I did like the camaraderie, it suited me. It was a challenging job underground and it was quite rewarding at the same time too. If you see them (the crew you used to work with), it is just like yesterday, you have so much in common.’ ‘The hardest part was when you had new ones in the crew, because they are not used to you and they are just learning the ropes themselves. You get hurt yourself trying to push them out of the road, bits falling off the roof as you are bolting or something. They don’t realise what is happening and you have got to push them out of the road because you know what is coming and they are going to get caught. The friendship builds up forever, you rely on your mate behind you, they are working to look after you, if you are in the machine driving, because it is up to him to tell you what is happening in front of you.’¹⁹⁵

When thinking about working underground, Karl Loveridge states ‘I can vouch for the camaraderie: you don’t have it in other industries. In that environment, being underground, you got to depend on your work mates.’ Karl does not feel that the redundancies affected the friendships that he had with other miners, he feels they are still ‘tight’ and he still sees some of his workmates from State Coal Mines. ‘It was a very good atmosphere in Huntly, you could go into the club, have a beer, meet people in town. I don’t work much in Huntly now and if I see someone I make the effort to go and say gidday, or they’ll come and see me, you don’t forget.’¹⁹⁶

John Cope recalls starting his apprenticeship with the older men who used to work on the coal, and the close relationships that those men had. ‘They all worked in pairs and you really had to get on with your mate. The guys always worked in teams in different sections, I am not sure but there may have been twenty groups of those guys. Every three months they would put all the names in a hat, and you got drawn out a new place to work. Some places in the mine were good coal and some places were bad coal, it just depended on the strata of the land. It gave everyone a fair opportunity of working a new place. I would love to hear their stories, some of their stories, and the character of the guys, I just

¹⁹⁵ Gamble, [interview].

¹⁹⁶ Loveridge, [interview].

loved them and I would sit with them for hours talking about stuff. I have lived in a very fortunate time.’¹⁹⁷ John Cope was the first electrician to start shift work in the mechanised mining trials, using a continuous miner and a shuttle car, at Rotowaro.

State Coal Mines operated a significant apprenticeship scheme as part of their operations in Huntly. Apprenticeships offered included electrical, mechanical and fitting and turning. Several of the miners interviewed for this thesis had served their time with State Coal Mines.

Karl Loveridge has lived in Huntly since his early teens and is the only person in his family to become involved in the mining industry. Upon leaving school Karl worked on a local farm until the opportunity of an apprenticeship came up with State Coal Mines; Karl is a qualified fitter and turner.¹⁹⁸

Max Noda also completed his apprenticeship through State Coal Mines and worked as an underground maintenance fitter at West Mine. Like Karl Loveridge, Max had to wait for an apprenticeship to become available after he left school. He worked for six months at the freezing works in Horotiu until there was a vacancy.

Brett Glass completed an electrical apprenticeship with State Coal Mines as did John Cope. John’s brother completed a fitting and turning apprenticeship. The scheme allowed many Huntly locals to get a trade while working with people they know, in an environment that they were familiar with. In 1987 there were 65 apprentices employed by State Coal Mines.¹⁹⁹ The new corporation did not require all of them and a subsidy was established by the State Services Commission to assist in finding new employers for the apprentices affected by corporatisation.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Cope, [interview].

¹⁹⁸ Loveridge, [interview].

¹⁹⁹ *Apprentice Plight Sparks Petition*, *New Zealand Herald*, 9 March 1987.

²⁰⁰ *Apprentice Outlook Brighter*, *New Zealand Herald*, 12 March 1987.

Mining traditions changed in Huntly with the introduction of mechanisation. Bill Munden was responsible for introducing mechanised mining to the Huntly area and in 1987 was the Technical Services Manager at State Coal Mines. Although he worked for the Public Service Association, he brings a different perspective to the miners' memories.

I grew up on the West Coast of the South Island and was the Mine Manager in Ohai when I was asked to go to Huntly and introduce mechanisation in 1969. The men were at the limit of their physical endurance to shovel coal, they were producing about 20 tonnes per shift. It would be the first mechanised mining introduced to New Zealand, and if we could not introduce mechanisation in the Waikato then we would have to close the underground mines and go totally opencast. I was to set up an experimental mine, it was New Years Eve 1969. I had started with State Coal Mines on New Years Eve in 1948. I worked out my career with State Coal Mines until CoalCorp took over in 1987. I had just on forty years with State Coal Mines and I was due to retire anyway.²⁰¹

It was not an easy time for Bill and his family:

Because I was transferred from Ohai, no one could apply for the job, and that created a lot of tensions with the locals and the union at having a 'foreigner' sent up here. There was a letter in the *Waikato Times* about it from the Secretary of the MacDonald Mine Union. What made things worse was that the other two senior positions in this mine were appointed from away, the under manager came from Ohai and the mechanical engineer from Strongman. We had to come up here and look for an area of coal to open up and develop a mine and introduce machinery underground.²⁰²

We spent several months going over drilling records and plotting structures at various places and we finally decided adjacent to the Mahons Mine. There was a rail link, a bath house and infrastructure. Only volunteers from Mahons could work in the mine, I couldn't poach staff from anywhere else. In the end 19 people volunteered. The union at Mahons said "Don't think when it all fails you can come back here and get your jobs. If you come back here you will start at the bottom of the list." Their mechanical engineer said it was a 'Mickey Mouse' outfit and it will fail in any case. I didn't have many friends being a foreigner. But that was something very important because those guys were out on their own with a stranger so I made good use of that. I would call them together as a team, I'd have meetings with them as a team and talk about what we wanted to do, and if they had any better ideas they were to tell me because they knew all about the mines in the Waikato. That worked very well. At the end of the 12-month

²⁰¹ Munden, [interview].

²⁰² Munden, [interview].

operation 23 men had produced as much coal as 120 men in Mahons and it was about the same cost as opencast coal.²⁰³

A lot of people seem to forget that we have a got a mining background, mechanisation might have changed that. A boy, when he left school at 15, he went to the pit top as a rope boy, you started there and worked your way up. Now you come in off the street and get a bit of a course and then you are underground. There is 'pit sense;' the older people can tell you what happens with such-and-such. You can hear it underground. These are intangibles that cannot be written down in a book. You can't get that by running a course.²⁰⁴

Bill's insight into the introduction of mechanised mining illustrates the changes which occurred in Huntly's recent mining history. The miners' camaraderie and sense of belonging was utilised by Bill to help him establish his team. Before the introduction of mechanisation, mining was a physically difficult occupation. The miners who were made redundant in 1987 had specialised skills which did not rely solely on their physical strength but also on their expertise with mining equipment. Like their predecessors from the pick and shovel days, the miners also had an intrinsic knowledge of underground working conditions. These skills, combined with the working conditions, are particular to the industry, and may explain why some returned to mining in later years.

Re-employment

Several of the miners who were interviewed returned to the industry after 1987, and in some cases were made redundant again. Many never left the Huntly area and took the opportunities that were presented by both CoalCorp and Solid Energy. Mining is a unique occupation and, for some, its appeal was not diminished in later years by the redundancies which occurred in 1987.

Paul Baker was employed by CoalCorp and worked underground at West Mine until the methane explosion in 1993 which closed the operation. Paul once again lost his job in

²⁰³ Munden, [interview].

²⁰⁴ Munden, [interview].

the restructuring which followed the explosion.²⁰⁵ Reupene Renata was made redundant again in 1999 from East Mine, although it was not his choice to leave. ‘I have been made redundant twice from the mines.’²⁰⁶ John Cope chose to take his redundancy in 1987 after 18 months employment at East Mine, although prior to that he had been employed as Senior Electrical Supervisor at the central workshops, leaving in 1984.²⁰⁷ Brett Glass also completed an electrical apprenticeship with State Coal Mines and he consequently returned to work for Solid Energy for two and a half years, before choosing to leave again.

Andrew Inglis returned to Huntly for work for a period with one of the contracting companies, Downers, used by CoalCorp at its opencast operations.²⁰⁸ In a similar manner, Ian Whyte is currently employed by a contracting company that operates at the Rotowaro Opencast for Solid Energy. In 1987 he had been working underground at West Mine. Since that time he has also worked for a private mining operation at Glen Afton.²⁰⁹

Many of the miners returning to work for CoalCorp found themselves in different mines than the ones they worked at in 1987. Graham Hunt found himself returning to mining in the 1990s, although rather than working underground he found himself operating machinery on the surface at the Rotowaro Opencast.²¹⁰ Robert Gamble returned to mining within two weeks of being made redundant in 1987; he received a letter saying that he had been made redundant but consequently was hired to a new position at West Mine. Robert did not receive his redundancy as he chose to fill a vacancy with the new corporation. ‘I got a bit of flack from my mates for going back but what do you do? There was a bit of jealousy I suppose. You felt a bit uncomfortable. They had a different perception but it sort of went after a year, once their lives had got established and they had got back on track.’²¹¹

²⁰⁵ Baker, [interview].

²⁰⁶ Renata, [interview].

²⁰⁷ Cope, [interview].

²⁰⁸ Inglis, [interview].

²⁰⁹ Whyte, [interview].

²¹⁰ Hunt, [interview].

²¹¹ Gamble, [interview].

Karl Loveridge has strong feelings about mineworkers who have collected more than one redundancy payment since 1987 from employment with State Coal Mines and subsequently CoalCorp and Solid Energy. ‘When you felt that people were going back, being offered jobs, and going back and working again at the same job, and then getting made redundant again and getting another pay out, that pissed me off, it really pissed me off. I think some of them have had three goes at it.’ Karl was offered a position with CoalCorp in later years but did not take it.²¹²

Life after 1987

There is life after mining, and although some of the miners who were interviewed for this thesis have returned to the coal face, many moved on to other industries. Understandably, those who had completed an apprenticeship had more skills to rely on and this helped them find employment outside the industry. Those who had only known a mining career appeared to have more difficulty finding future employment.

Paul Baker is a qualified carpenter, although unlike many interviewed for this thesis he did not complete his apprenticeship with State Coal Mines. He did not need to go on the unemployment benefit following the redundancies in 1987, and within six weeks he had found another job. Between 1987 and 1991 he worked as a carpenter before returning to the mines for two years. He has been working for himself since 1995.²¹³

By the same token, Brett Glass is self-employed. Brett did not need to go on the unemployment benefit in 1987 and continued to dabble in the share market, something he had done before he was made redundant. He recalls that the redundancies ‘probably came at a good time for me because I was getting a bit stale at the mines and it just gave me the incentive to make that cut and get away from the mine. It worked out quite good for me I think.’²¹⁴ Having a trade to fall back on meant that Brett was able to find

²¹² Loveridge, [interview].

²¹³ Baker, [interview].

²¹⁴ Glass, [interview].

employment outside of the Huntly region and he and his family left town. ‘People that have got good skills have no troubles finding jobs elsewhere and that it exactly what happened – they [CoalCorp] lost some really good personnel.’ Brett returned to Huntly six years ago.²¹⁵

Ian Whyte has worked in many industries since being made redundant in 1987 although he is once again employed by mining at present. Ian worked as a miner and did not participate in an apprenticeship. ‘There were so many people who were actually gutted [about losing their jobs]. I refused point blank to sign up on the unemployment benefit for about 10 months. I started looking for a job, and then I signed up on the benefit until I found a job, but it did not take long.’²¹⁶ Ian has worked at the freezing works at Horotiu, a timber mill, and a cement factory.

Interviewee G also did not complete an apprenticeship and did not find work for approximately two years after he was made redundant. He had to go on the unemployment benefit. When he eventually found work it was locally with the Huntly Borough Council and he remained with them for three years before returning to the mining industry. G went to work at the Rotowaro Opencast for Solid Energy and was made redundant from there in the mid 1990s. He is currently employed in an industry closely associated with Huntly mining.²¹⁷

Max Noda feels that the redundancy was a good start for his family because they were young. Max did not immediately find employment in his trade after he was made redundant. He was unemployed for four or five months and was on the unemployment benefit. He did use the support services that were offered by Waahi Whaanui in Huntly, and these helped him purchase the home where he now lives.²¹⁸ In 1987 Max became involved in organising a scheme through Waahi Whaanui in Huntly which was going to

²¹⁵ Glass, [interview].

²¹⁶ Whyte, [interview].

²¹⁷ G, [interview].

²¹⁸ Waahi Whaanui is a local organization in Huntly which provides support services for Maori including health care and education.

teach basic welding and engineering skills to people who were unemployed, including ex mine workers. The premise was that it was going to be taught in tandem with tutors from the Hamilton Polytechnic and would allow the participants to get their basic tickets. Funding for the scheme did not come through from Waahi Whaanui and therefore the scheme was abandoned.²¹⁹

‘You get cosy working at the mines, you get picked up and dropped off and you are not getting to work yourself. Fitting and turning meant having to travel to Hamilton. I went labouring and did shut down jobs at Tokoroa, although it was too hard at the mill, being away from home.’²²⁰ After doing shut down jobs at Kinleith, Max started working locally in Huntly as a labourer. He was also employed at the Huntly Power Station as a security guard.

Max has had some serious health issues which meant that he could not return to the mines for work, even if he wanted to. It took him a long time to recover from these and to be able to start working again. ‘For the past seven years I have been working for a health organisation, involved in a diabetes prevention programme. The new concept is working with prevention for Maori. We work with people with diabetes and all kinds of conditions. We are based in Huntly. I have a case load of about 30 clients, who are GP referred. The core group are Maori and split between Huntly East and West.’²²¹

Lance Slater had a job organised before he received his redundancy. ‘We bought a property in Hamilton and the job that I took was in Hamilton, but within twelve months of going there we were on the plane to Australia. Worked for three years underground in the gold mines at Mt Isa and it was a neat place, out in the middle of nowhere, just loved it.’²²² Lance is self employed and operates a small contracting company, based in Huntly.

²¹⁹ Noda, [interview].

²²⁰ Noda, [interview].

²²¹ Noda, [interview].

²²² Slater, [interview].

Similarly, Karl Loveridge found work offshore after being made redundant. Karl has been working mainly in the construction industry since 1987. Five years after being made redundant he went to Papua New Guinea for work and has subsequently had 42 work trips there, varying in length from two weeks to three months.²²³

There is recognition amongst the miners that those who had a trade had more chance of finding employment than those who didn't. Reupene had completed a carpentry and joinery apprenticeship as part of the Maori Trade Training Scheme and had worked in other industries before he started mining. He recalls, 'A lot of them who were made redundant didn't have a back up, they didn't have a trade. They struggled to find work. You had to have a trade, or a particular skill, or something else. 'The ones who really wanted to work found bits and pieces, even though you were never going to be paid what you were getting from the mines. We were the highest paid labourers in the land, with a job for life.'²²⁴ 'I didn't use any of the support services. I knew it was there but I had my own mindset on what I was going to do. It never bloody occurred to me to go on the dole. We lived off the money. I did not look for a job for six months. I was growing a bit, and had a steady income. We [he and another mine worker who was made redundant] used to help ourselves, to feed the family. Some of the farmers wouldn't have been very happy.'²²⁵ Reupene eventually returned to his trade, albeit briefly. 'A firm from Oamaru, De Geests,²²⁶ opened up in Huntly and I worked for them until 1990 and then I ended up going back to the East Mine.'²²⁷ Reupene is currently employed by Tainui.

As an electrician, John Cope had another job lined up with an electrical contractor when he was made redundant, and then in 1988 he established his own business. 'I was apprehensive about going to work in another industry, it was the unknown. It was very difficult.'²²⁸ John never returned to work for CoalCorp or Solid Energy. 'When I first left it took me ages to get it out of my system. Mining is so unique and there is just

²²³ Loveridge, [interview].

²²⁴ Renata, [interview].

²²⁵ Renata, [interview].

²²⁶ This was one of the businesses that established in Huntly with the help of the Huntly Development Agency.

²²⁷ Renata, [interview].

²²⁸ Cope, [interview].

something about it that you love. There was awesome camaraderie, and I have never found that in another industry where I have worked.’²²⁹

Karl Crook Senior was 50 when he was made redundant. He looked locally for work and eventually he organised a job in Papua New Guinea; however it fell through. Karl went on the unemployment benefit and did not find employment again; he is now receiving the pension. ‘In my generation a lot of the miners had no trade besides the mines, and a steam ticket which wasn’t up to much. Looking back in retrospect I could have gone to Australia and got a job but who wants to leave their family?’²³⁰

The corporatisation of State Coal Mines was a shock for the mining workforce and the wider Huntly community. The redundancy numbers were more than what the community had anticipated and for the miners’ involved it was a time of considerable tension while they waited to see who was required by the new corporation. The corporatisation process was difficult for the miners as new methodologies were utilised by CoalCorp. Traditional last-on, first-off employment was discarded in favour of work skills and attendance records. The miners’ were made to pack up their personal belongings and wait at home for letters to arrive, notifying them of whether or not their services would be required. While the support services were utilised immediately following the announcement meeting, it appears that in the long term they were poorly utilised.

During the miners’ interviews several recurring themes emerged which allow an insight into not only mining as an occupation, but also the attraction of the industry. It is interesting that several of the miners’ who were made redundant in 1987 took positions with CoalCorp at later dates; for many mining was in the blood. This reinforces not only the importance of mining to the individuals affected and their families but also the ties it has with the wider community. The strong sense of intergenerational employment was evident amongst the interviewees and there were only two who did not come from a mining based family. The value that men placed on their working relationships

²²⁹ Cope, [interview].

²³⁰ Crook, [interview].

underground was also evident. The friendships that the miners speak of have the ability to transcend both time and place. Many of them reminisced about workmates they have met up with again in the following years and they discussed how their friendship is comfortable even after a significant period of separation. Their ties to each other are still strong. It appears that miners who had completed an apprenticeship found it easier to find employment after the redundancies. This is understandable as mining skills are specialised and there would be little demand for them in other Huntly industries. Among the miners interviewed for this thesis some have established their own businesses, some have had a complete change from mining and the trade in which they served their apprenticeship. How they felt about what happened to their community after corporatisation the basis for the following chapter.

4. Huntly: A Miners' Community

Huntly is a town which is steeped in mining tradition that has sustained generations of families involved in the industry. The community ties were thickly woven with the miners at the centre, holding their families and their town together. As a community Huntly has changed since 1987, largely due to the redundancies at State Coal Mines. A number of families moved away looking for work, many to Australia; some have not returned. Some of the miners who were interviewed for this thesis also left the area searching for work, including offshore employment. The Huntly retail area no longer offers the variety of goods and services that it once did. Many of the miners who were interviewed for this thesis expressed concerns about the people who have subsequently moved into the area, as they do not have the same investment in the community. The miners' opinions reflect those of people who have a stake in Huntly; many were born there and Huntly is their community.

Retail Changes

Huntly had a well established retail area in 1987 and it was severely impacted by the job losses within the community. Andrew Inglis and his wife are both Huntly locals. When thinking about the redundancies and the effect that it had on Huntly, Andrew's reaction is negative, 'It killed the town, the town has had it.'²³¹ The Inglis are concerned about the businesses that have closed in Huntly and the effect that has had on the elderly population in the town. Although there are bus services to Hamilton, both Andrew and his wife Lyn are concerned for many elderly who use the service, 'It is a big deal.' The bus no longer stops in Garden Place in central Hamilton, so people are required to walk further for the services they require. 'You can't even buy a dress or underclothes in Huntly now. You only have to walk down the main street; it is all real estate agents and food shops.'²³²

²³¹ Inglis, [interview].

²³² Inglis [interview].

Robert Gamble also recognised the changes in the Huntly retail area: ‘The businesses, they seemed to dive, it went quiet. It lost its atmosphere and its vibrancy for a while, for quite a while, it took about five years to recover.’²³³ Similarly, Karl Loveridge feels that one of the long term effects of the redundancies was the effect on the local businesses in Huntly. He felt that they were hit really hard, and there were less job opportunities with businesses that had relied on the mining industry.²³⁴

According to Lance Slater, ‘There were long term effects on the town, there wasn’t the same money coming in and being spent in the town so that obviously has an effect on all businesses when spending is reduced. A lot of the people that worked in the mines at the time didn’t have cars. They went to work on the mines bus or the trains. They didn’t have to leave town, everything they wanted, the sports clubs, the shops, everything was here. Now everyone just jumps in their car and goes to Hamilton.’²³⁵

Max Noda works for a health organisation in a diabetes prevention programme. As such, he sees the changes to the Huntly retail area as being detrimental to the health issues of his clients:

Because I work in health one of our biggest concerns is the takeaways. You know if you start at McDonalds, we have counted 19 food outlets [in the main Huntly shopping area] that is just food, not liquor. The council wants do fill up the buildings and have rent paid. We have raised it as a concern. How many Chinese bakeries do you need in town? I don’t think that it gives people motivation enough to cook their own kai [food]. McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken used to be a treat when they were in Hamilton but they are a daily occurrence. I think it is overload, the whole lot of Chinese takeaways.²³⁶

In 1987 the Huntly miners’ were well remunerated and the large scale redundancies had an impact on the community retailers. The loss of nearly 500 pay packets per fortnight eroded the business confidence of some retailers. Over time, the availability of goods and services has decreased and there have been significant changes to the main retail

²³³ Gamble, [interview].

²³⁴ Loveridge, [interview].

²³⁵ Slater, [interview].

²³⁶ Noda, [interview].

area. More traditional shops like clothing and shoe retailers have been replaced with fast food outlets. The improvements to State Highway One between Hamilton and Huntly, coupled with Hamilton's expansion north, means that a thirty-minute car trip is all that is required to visit one of the two largest retail areas in Hamilton.²³⁷ As a retail centre Huntly can no longer compete with the shopping malls that are within close proximity, hence there are few specialised retailers left within the community.

The Changing Face of Huntly

Many of the miners who were made redundant in 1987 left the Huntly area searching for work and it is estimated that approximately 100 families departed, many to Australia.²³⁸ Paul Baker is a Huntly local: he has lived there all his life. Along with his two brothers he was working for State Coal Mines in 1987 when the restructuring took place. Paul and his wife Barbara recall that a lot of families moved away to look for work, especially to Australia. Many of them have not returned to Huntly, including Paul's two brothers. 'They only come back for weddings and funerals.'²³⁹ In 1987 Max Noda and his family thought about leaving Huntly to look for work in Australia. At the time, his sister lived in Perth. In the end they changed their minds: Huntly is their home.²⁴⁰

Karl Loveridge thinks a lot of families did leave the Huntly area and moved to Australia looking for work. Because he has travelled extensively for work within the Pacific region, Karl knows of many Huntly people who are working not only in mines throughout Australia and but also in construction in Papua New Guinea. 'I would bump into people that I was working with in the mines in New Zealand. I would bump into them in Papua New Guinea and Ok Tedi.'²⁴¹

²³⁷ The Base at Te Rapa offers 68 stores, 1100 carparks and is 26 km from Huntly. www.the-base.co.nz Accessed 13 April 2010. Westfield Chartwell Square has over 100 stores, a multiplex movie theatre, undercover parking, and is 33 km from Huntly. www.westfield.co.nz/chartwell Accessed 13 April 2010.

²³⁸ *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects*, 103.

²³⁹ Baker, [interview].

²⁴⁰ Noda, [interview].

²⁴¹ Loveridge, [interview].

Mining is an industry with specialised skills and therefore opportunities existed offshore for Huntly miners. Lance Slater left Huntly and took his mining skills to Australia, working there for three years. Doreen, Lance's wife, says that there were a lot of people who actually left the area and moved to Australia. Brett Glass states, 'I imagine there would have been a few that went to Australia, because again like now Australia cannot get enough workers in the mines. I think they were quite happy to take anyone that went from here.'²⁴² Reupene Renata reinforces this view: 'There were lots who went to Australia for work and they never came back: there were better prospects there. They won't be coming back. The Berrymans²⁴³, they buried their Mum and Dad over there [Western Australia]. They are never coming back, they are staying.' Many of the Huntly miners think that Australia was the destination of choice: 'I knew lots who went to Australia and have never come back, they have got better opportunities over there.'²⁴⁴ The options for work in Huntly were limited following the redundancies and Interviewee G felt that 'A lot of people left Huntly, they just moved on, looking for work.'²⁴⁵ Bill Munden states, 'It was a readjustment for Huntly, there wasn't the work around so quite a few went to Australia and some of them are still over there. Of course, they are going rapidly now too.'²⁴⁶ The exodus of people who left Huntly in 1987 meant changes to the town's demographics as other people moved in to take the place of those who had departed.

Any large scale job losses within a community will impact on the real estate market. After 1987 more rental properties became available in Huntly on both sides of the river and house prices slumped. This led to an influx of new people to the area. Combined with the large number of families that left Huntly searching for work eventually the demographics of Huntly changed. The miners and Huntly residents have strong opinions about people who moved into the area at that time. While it is understandable that they lament the loss of the families who left the area to look for work, they are not particularly sympathetic towards the families who moved in to replace them.

²⁴² Glass, [interview].

²⁴³ There were seven Berryman family members who were on the list of those made redundant in 1987.

²⁴⁴ Hunt, [interview].

²⁴⁵ Interviewee G, [interview].

²⁴⁶ Australian mining companies often try to recruit miners from Huntly's East Mine.

Max Noda is a Huntly West resident. When he thinks about the changes that have happened to Huntly he says ‘There are a lot of new people in the town and the old Huntly people, we could walk down the main street and know everyone down the street but now you don’t. I feel quite strongly about it and these people from outside our area, they bring their troubles here. That is why we have a lot of riff raff. Personally, I think we end up being a dumping ground for the communities who don’t want their rubbish, they send them here.’²⁴⁷ John Cope lives in Huntly East, although he works out of town. He is concerned about the number of people who have moved into town over the last ten years to take advantage of the cheaper housing.²⁴⁸

In 1987 Lance Slater was living in Huntly West. ‘We owned our house in Semple Street and sold it to someone who had been made redundant. We were lucky that we were actually able to sell our house at that point for good market value whereas, especially in that area, values declined steeply and we could have been stuck with it. One of the reasons we sold our house in Semple Street was because we could see what was happening with the gangs and people coming in from Pukekohe and South Auckland and we got burgled. There was a lot of bad influence coming into town at that point.’ ‘I think they still have a lot of issues in that part of town, there is still a bad element.’²⁴⁹

Andrew Inglis has lived in the same house for the last 37 years, and has lived in Huntly West for 51 years. Andrew states that Huntly West is a stable neighbourhood and that they have never experienced any crime. ‘They always say the west is the slums of the town but still, it is not really, I don’t think so. Crime is not a problem in our area.’²⁵⁰

Thinking about 1987 and the effect the redundancies had on Huntly, Interviewee G states ‘There were big impacts on people because the money just wasn’t around. I personally feel that it started creating a lot of the crime in town. Because of the sudden downturn in the labour that was needed locally a lot of people shifted away from Huntly which

²⁴⁷ Noda, [interview].

²⁴⁸ Cope, [interview].

²⁴⁹ Slater, [interview].

²⁵⁰ Inglis, [interview].

created a lot of empty houses. There was a lot of unemployment in New Zealand and with the empty houses people started moving in from Auckland, they came down this way. That gave the town a totally different mix, I am not blaming them solely, it might have happened anyway but it created a lot of crime in the town. There were people with a lot of time on their hands and nothing to do with it.²⁵¹

When reflecting on the changes that have occurred in Huntly many interviewees discussed how much the town has changed since they were children and how it no longer offered the same sporting opportunities or activities for young people. For Andrew Inglis and his wife Huntly is no longer the same town that it was when they were younger and bringing up their family. They lament the closure of sports clubs in Huntly, many of which have closed down in the last decade.²⁵² It concerns them that the closure of the sports clubs affects the children in the town. ‘They wonder why the kids get into trouble. There is nothing here for the children, and if your kids aren’t entertained then they get bored.’²⁵³

Graham Hunt grew up in Huntly and says, ‘Huntly has changed a lot. When we were kids we used to go fishing and skylarking around, the kids these days are into serious stuff. The main locals of Huntly, the main body are still the same, they are good people, they are excellent, but the younger generation are a bit disappointing.’²⁵⁴ The changes in behaviour that both Graham Hunt and the Inglis’s are referring to are probably based on generational differences, as opposed to being a direct result of Rogernomics. The increase in technology based entertainment for children, including the internet, cell-phones, computers, social networking sites and electronic gaming means that many children no longer spend a great deal of time outside ‘skylarking around.’

²⁵¹ G, [interview].

²⁵² Three sports clubs closed between 1987-1991: Huntly Rugby Club (1990) Huntly Squash Racquets Club Inc. (1990) and Huntly United League Club (1989). There are six sports clubs listed in the current Huntly Telephone Directory which were also listed in the 1987 directory. Refer Appendix 2.

²⁵³ Inglis [interview].

²⁵⁴ Hunt, [interview].

Paul Baker and his wife Barbara acknowledge that the job losses in 1987 affected children growing up in the community, but not necessarily in a negative manner. Paul and Barbara raised their children in Huntly. They attended local schools and played sports with the children of Paul's workmates. Barbara states 'I always say to the kids, don't ever knock where you started from because that is what made you the people you are. That is why little towns like this have been great, because they [the children] can handle any situation. They grow up with all sorts of people, local school and local sport. They'll mix with anyone and help anyone. The key is respect. You are better off being brought up in a small town.'²⁵⁵

Although the changes which occurred in 1987 were hugely traumatic, the miners remain quietly optimistic when considering their community as it is today. They witnessed Huntly at its lowest and watched the community dust itself off and get back on its feet. Although the recovery was not quick, things are definitely looking up in Huntly as far as the miners are concerned.

When thinking about Huntly now, Max Noda states, 'Affco²⁵⁶ has picked up and the mines have picked up and things are looking pretty good compared to five years ago. I think that Huntly looks nice. I think a lot of the locals appreciate it.'²⁵⁷ I am not sure about the ones who come in with garbage. As a local I think Huntly is looking up. The recession doesn't really happen here, it is already here; we are living it. You can't take too much away from people who don't really have much anyway – we live the recession.'²⁵⁸

Thinking back, Lance Slater reflects, 'I don't know how it affected the politics of Huntly and that sort of thing but I think that some people were happy to take the money, and go and move on to other things. We have been back in Huntly 17 years. When we came back to New Zealand it was on the proviso that we didn't come back to Huntly, so we

²⁵⁵ Baker, [interview].

²⁵⁶ AFFCO operate the freezing works at Horotiu, which is between Ngaruawahia and Hamilton.

²⁵⁷ Huntly's main retail area was refurbished in 2008 by the Waikato District Council. The footpaths have been repaved, parking has been realigned, seating areas and gardens have been constructed.

²⁵⁸ Noda, [interview].

headed to Tauranga. Then we went to Waihi Beach, and my brother Colin wanted a hand with a project that he had on at the time. I spent six months travelling back and forward to Huntly so in the end we started looking around for a place. We saw this place and have been here ever since. It has worked out really well for us.²⁵⁹ Lance and Doreen live on a lifestyle block on Heatherington Road, approximately ten minutes from Huntly. The entrance to West Mine is across the road from his property, and Solid Energy is his immediate neighbour.

A small community is an awesome community place to live in so long as your reputation is honourable, it is the best place. If you go to the big city you could be the nicest guy but you are still just another face, whereas here you can say gidday to every second person you see down the street. You can go into any shop and there is no problem with opening accounts or credit business wise. It is good. I pity people with a dishonourable reputation because a small town works against you because you have a bad name; then you go into the big city. I think Huntly is an awesome place – there is definitely a lot of people that are trying to move it ahead.²⁶⁰

According to Reupene Renata, ‘Huntly is on the bloody up. Solid Energy has just secured another ten year contract with the steel mill, so everything is looking up in the coal industry. Plus they (Solid Energy) are looking at the methane extraction. It’s all good.’²⁶¹ Reupene thinks at the time of the redundancies there was a bit of resentment, but does not think there is so much now. ‘At the time when it happened it was huge. Everybody has got a bit older now, and we understand why it had to happen.’²⁶²

In the long term I don’t think Huntly is the town that it would have been from 1987 if it had still carried on. I think we would have retained a lot of people, the history with the people, it would have been a different town. A lot of the people who work in the mines these days do not understand the history and why they are on the good money. At the

²⁵⁹ Slater, [interview].

²⁶⁰ Slater, [interview].

²⁶¹ Renata, [interview].

²⁶² Hunt, [interview].

time it was hard but there were some good aspects of it at the end of the day. Funnily enough with the economy the way it was we were in a position where we were able to put the money to buy a house whereas when I was working I wasn't earning enough to get the mortgage I wanted, but I was earning too much to get help from other lending facilities. It put me in a bracket where I could buy a house, be it on the dole. There was a lot of incentive then to get into a house. Huntly is starting to come up to a par as to where it was in 1987, work wise and money wise but in the long term the people are not there. Huntly is a pretty good community, there are a lot of good people. I think there is a lot of community spirit out there.²⁶³

Ian Whyte does not feel as optimistic. He states, 'I think Huntly like most other small towns has got worse, it is peoples' attitudes. I think Huntly is suffering, there are constantly jobs being lost, most of the retail shops shifted camp and moved.'²⁶⁴

Robert Gamble feels that the redundancies have had an effect on Huntly. 'My family has all moved out now. All of my brothers are farming. I have one sister who still lives in Huntly.'²⁶⁵ Robert has also moved away and now owns a picturesque farm of 157 acres near Bridal Veil Falls, on the way to Raglan. He says he has no regrets about what happened to him in 1987.

Reflecting on the changes to Huntly in 1987 Brett Glass said, 'It was devastating for the town because the mines was the major employer of the town and everybody knew somebody who worked there, neighbours worked there, brothers, fathers, you know, everybody knew somebody who worked in the mines. From memory I think they laid off half the Huntly workforce, so I mean in a town the size of Huntly, morale goes down.'²⁶⁶

Bill Munden recognises the social role that State Coal Mines played in the community:

The community spirit of the mine worker was broken. In the past they were like a big family that lived together, everybody knew everybody, there was always

²⁶³ G, [interview].

²⁶⁴ Whyte, [interview].

²⁶⁵ Gamble, [interview].

²⁶⁶ Glass, [interview].

someone there to help. If there was anything to be done in the community then they (the community) went to the Mine Manager and the mines supplied the finances. It wasn't strictly legal but this had been done for years and years. The lawns were mowed at the local church at Rotowaro by the handyman from Allison Mine, the bowling club was supported. Everything was built by State Coal Mines. Solid Energy help in the community now, CoalCorp did not do anything to help the community.²⁶⁷

For a long time I was very critical of the Waikato District Council, they did everything for the farmer and nothing for the villagers, but I cannot say that anymore. Huntly is looking pretty good, there are new buildings going up, new businesses coming in all the time, more and more people moving down from Auckland. There are a whole lot of new people in Huntly and I know quite a lot of them. Huntly is progressing; it is not getting any less. Huntly has got a good future I think.²⁶⁸

The community is pretty good. There is no discrimination. Bob (Tukiri, local kaumatua) is just as acceptable on the other side of the river as here. You develop your own mana if you like, you are judged on what you do and who you are and you are part of the community and that is it. I think Huntly is a good community to live in because when I look at the way that people give to the food bank and that, people are always helpful.²⁶⁹

Huntly has changed considerably since 1987. The job losses impacted on the miners' community and rocked it to the foundations. In some ways Huntly is to be applauded for surviving the redundancies. Many of those interviewed for this thesis came from a mining family and this whakapapa means they have a vested interest in their community. Huntly can no longer be considered a retail centre. At present, the main street is largely made up of food providers. Sitting alongside State Highway One these retailers are taking advantage of the thousands of motorists who pass through Huntly each day. While that is understandable the changes to the retail area means that locals are required to shop in Hamilton for anything other than the most basic supplies.

Due to Rogernomics many miners feel that it is not only the local retail area which has been transformed. Corporatisation affected the fabric of their community and they have strong opinions, not only about those who left the area, but also about those who replaced

²⁶⁷ Munden, [interview].

²⁶⁸ Munden, [interview].

²⁶⁹ Munden, [interview]. Bill Munden is involved in the operation of the Huntly Food Bank.

them. Every miner interviewed understood the need for families to move out of the area to look for work in 1987; indeed some interviewees had also pursued employment away from the area. What the miners seem less impressed about are the people who moved into the community to take advantage of the cheaper housing. There is a perception that Huntly became a town where crime was more prevalent and the new residents did not display the same regard for the community as those who had grown up there. Quiet optimism could be used to describe how the miners feel about their community's future. Local industries, including mining, have picked up. Unfortunately the miners concerns about the social issues which have been apparent in Huntly seem somewhat reinforced by the findings which are explored in the following chapters.

5. The Immediate Aftermath of 1987

The mining community of Huntly was left reeling as a result of the corporatisation of State Coal Mines to CoalCorp in April 1987. The conclusion of several months of uncertainty was a town in crisis; nearly 500 jobs in a community of 6450 were gone in 19 days.²⁷⁰ Huntly had been expecting a coal boom, instead it appeared that the potential markets had gone bust and as a consequence much of the workforce was now surplus to requirements. The immediate reaction of the town was a show of support for the mineworkers and their families. Huntly considered alternative measures in an effort to maintain local employment, and both people and petitions travelled south to Wellington to make their case. This chapter explores the immediate aftermath of the job losses on the community. Examining how Huntly coped with this tumultuous period illustrates the innovative changes that were supported by individuals and the community.

Huntly had been experiencing a sense of anticipation and optimism since 1985 and was looking forward to steady employment as the mines expanded to meet new market demands. Both the New Zealand Steel Mill at Glenbrook and the Huntly Power station indicated that their projected usage was set to increase and State Coal Mines set forecasts at 2.5 million tonnes.²⁷¹ As part of the upcoming expansion programme new longwall mining equipment costing \$18 million was purchased for use underground at East Mine and locals saw this as a positive sign.²⁷² Pictures of the equipment were published in the local papers and staff training on new mining techniques was held overseas. The *Huntly Press* ran an article on 28 May 1985 titled ‘The Power Game’ which outlined the proposed changes in the local coal mining industry. The article stated that ‘Over the next ten years coal production is expected to increase rapidly to over 3 million tonnes per

²⁷⁰ *Coal Corporatisation – Job Losses in Huntly*, Office of the Minister of State Services, 9 March 1987. Archives NZ. The announcement meeting was held at the Huntly Rugby grounds on 26 February 1987, the redundancy letters were received on 17 March 1987. There were 720 people registered as unemployed in Huntly on 9 March 1987.

²⁷¹ Announcement Speech, Archives NZ.

²⁷² Mine plans halted; machines mothballed, *Waikato Times*, 9 March 1987. The article states that the equipment was supposed to be operational at East Mine by May 1987 but installation had stopped two months previously until more was known about the mines future.

annum and ultimately to a level of nearly 5 million tonnes per annum after the year 2000.²⁷³ This represented a three fold increase in production, which had been around 1 million tonnes per annum. The article outlined that production would be ‘substantially increased from existing mines at Huntly, Rotowaro and Maramarua and two new mines, Huntly West No. 2 and Ohinewai are planned.’²⁷⁴ The unfortunate reality was that when State Coal Mines was corporatised the market for Huntly coal was still at one million tonnes per annum.

In the two years prior to corporatisation the Huntly community received conflicting messages about the mining future; there was a juxtaposition of optimism about future mining prospects and production increases balanced against concern at the poor performance of State Coal Mines and a decrease in coal demand.²⁷⁵ Both the community and the workforce became more confused as to what the future held. It was not until CoalCorp announced its intentions in February 1987 that Huntly really had a clear picture of what was really happening. ‘For many people, the huge reduction of the mining workforce in the Huntly district was completely unexpected.’²⁷⁶ The day after the Huntly announcement meeting Ron Janes, a member of the CoalCorp establishment unit, was interviewed on the *Checkpoint* radio programme. The reporter stated ‘The reason why Huntly has been singled out for so many redundancies isn’t because Huntly is uneconomic particularly, but because State Coal Mines had been preparing for a four fold expansion in demand for coal over the next decade, mainly from the Electricity Department and New Zealand Steel.’ Ron Janes replied:

Frankly the organisation was overstaffed for the coal that it can produce. State Coal had been staffed up to a boom that has never been realised, the current staffing of the organisation is capable of producing about three million tonnes of coal a year, and to be absolutely frank, we don’t have markets for that volume of coal.²⁷⁷

²⁷³ The Power Game, *Huntly Press*, 28 May 1985.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Big demand fall wrecks State Coal production plans, *National Business Review*, 4 July 1986, State Coal Upgrade Bid, *Otago Daily Times*, 2 August 1985, State Coal loses \$42m, *Dominion*, 10 October 1985.

²⁷⁶ *Coping With Change? The Huntly Experience*, August 1988.

²⁷⁷ BCBA 1478, *Archives NZ, Coal Restructuring*, Checkpoint Radio Transcript, 26 February 1987.

The *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* featured an article on Huntly in May of 1987. The focus was on how the community were coping and what it was doing to attract business. 'Mr Murray Allen who has a couple of fabric shops stated "We'll have to wait and see the effect. What hurts most is we were told there would be a build-up with doubling of production in the mines, then we were told they were going to halve it. The town was gearing up for a boom, and it is bust instead."²⁷⁸ Local retailers and the community had been looking forward to the future prosperity which was going to be provided by the increase in coal production. It appeared that State Coal Mines and Huntly had been gearing up for the production increase only to be told that there was no market for the coal. This contributed to the sense of confusion and shock that many of the locals felt after the redundancy numbers were announced.

Under corporatisation, Huntly was the community most affected by the changes to State Coal Mines. The deputy mayor, George Dowe, was interviewed on *Morning Report* the day after the announcement meeting:

I think that people are more stunned than anything. They had been forewarned that there was to be some cuts, but I don't think that anybody envisaged it as large as what it turned out to be, and you know, you take a great number of jobs out of the community, it's going to have some disastrous effect of some description to the whole community of businesses, houses and all.

When asked by the reporter if there was anything that council could do to help the miners George Dowe replied:

Well the council are endeavouring to do something about it, the last week or fortnight or so they had a meeting or two, and had some local business people that they felt were going to be affected, to get together, and with the town planners and that type of thing and try and work something out, where perhaps they can set some future industry of some description up to employ these people, or help to employ at any rate, but how long that sort of thing takes, I don't really know, but I believe it will take a little time.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ Huntly A town on the hunt ..., *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 4 May 1987.

²⁷⁹ BCBA 1478, *Archives NZ*, Transcript of radio interview between George Dowe, Deputy Huntly Mayor, and *Morning Report*, 27 February 1987.

His sentiment was shared by Robin Wright, the Huntly mayor whose comments reflected the community astonishment. ‘I am disappointed, upset and staggered. We will feel the absence of nearly 500 pay packets around town every week.’²⁸⁰ Rosemary Curle recalls ‘we all suffered emotionally because we knew what a huge knock it was to them [the mineworkers], so we were all prepared to do anything.’²⁸¹

A community in shock

One of the recognised symptoms of grief is denial and it could be argued that the Huntly community displayed this symptom as it reacted to the number of redundancies that were announced by CoalCorp. State Coal Mines staff throughout the country appealed to the government to delay corporatisation and allow the miners time to prepare and organise themselves and their families. Denying the changes were going to take place would not prevent the inevitable, but giving the workforce and the community time would allow them to adjust to the idea. Comments in the media also gave the community a glimmer of hope: ‘No Huntly coal miners would be made redundant if enough pressure could be put on the government’ announced PSA vice president Colin Fesher.²⁸² The Huntly community took its concerns to the streets; a 400 strong march was held in Huntly on 9 March 1987. ‘It had taken almost two weeks for the first shock to wear off – 484 out of 922 jobs lost at Huntly’s mines. But the town was mobilising to see what could be done to stop job losses from crippling the community.’²⁸³

The government did not have any alternatives to restructuring and redundancy although this did not deter the miners from futilely offering options. A motion was passed at the Huntly march to unanimously request a deferment of corporatisation of at least six months.²⁸⁴ Support was offered from the most unlikely groups; ‘A poignant note was struck by the Reefton branch of the Labour Party, who sent a telegram to the Prime

²⁸⁰ Coal Staff Dazed In Face Of Huge Job Losses, *New Zealand Herald*, 27 February 1987.

²⁸¹ R. Curle, [interview], Huntly, 03 November 2008.

²⁸² Mine plans halted; machines mothballed, *Waikato Times*, 9 March 1987.

²⁸³ Mine Workers Rally ... , *Waikato Times*, 10 March 1987.

²⁸⁴ Huntly Miners Out for 24 hours, *Waikato Times*, 10 March 1987.

Minister asking for more time so that the miners could “retire with dignity.”²⁸⁵ Many people felt that natural attrition and early retirement would help to reduce the mining workforce over time, although these measures would not reduce the numbers by the degree required by CoalCorp.

Representatives of the Huntly community took their concerns to parliament, travelling by bus from Huntly to Wellington to show support to the mineworkers. All of the community were going to be affected by the looming redundancies therefore, in a display of community solidarity, a mix of Huntly locals made the journey. They met with government officials to discuss options.²⁸⁶ One group met with Bob Tizard, the Energy Minister. They presented him with a letter from the Huntly mayor, Robin Wright, stating that ‘they were solid, respectable citizens fighting for the security of themselves and their families.’²⁸⁷ The Huntly representatives included ‘a cross-section of the community, including teachers, women’s groups, Maori and mine worker representatives.’²⁸⁸

Another group met with CoalCorp to request they consider giving the miners more time to make up their minds if they wanted a job with the new corporation. Staff from the Public Service Association in Huntly, including the local power station, the post office and the railways also held meetings to discuss ‘further protest action in support of the miners.’²⁸⁹ Messages of support were also received from overseas colleagues; the Pacific region mines’ conference was held in Sydney and the ‘Australian and Filipino delegates were shocked to hear that the new Coal Corporation was planning to cut staff by almost 50 per cent.’²⁹⁰ The miners had support from a wide range of industry and also from mining colleagues from overseas, however it had little influence on the decisions that had already been made.

²⁸⁵ A. Fry, A question of dignity, *Listener*, 28 March 1987. 6.

²⁸⁶ Huntly Protest visit a success, *Waikato Times*, 19 March 1987.

²⁸⁷ Angry Tizard hits reporter on arm, *Waikato Times*, 18 March 1987.

²⁸⁸ Huntly People on March, *Waikato Times*, 17 March 1987.

²⁸⁹ Support given to Huntly miners, *Waikato Times*, 14 March 1987.

²⁹⁰ Support for Miners, *New Zealand Herald*, 16 March 1987.

The support for the Huntly workers was not mirrored by government representatives at the time. Their comments left no room for doubt. ‘I appreciate that a number of people’s lives have been disrupted as a result of this policy, and I hope that they can understand that it is in the best interests of New Zealand and the best interests of the standard of living of all of us that these adjustments be made.’²⁹¹ Although this may have been his way of coping with the changes that were occurring, the reaction by Geoffrey Palmer to the plight of Huntly made it obvious that there was little empathy and little chance that the changes were going to be reversed.

The Huntly community rallied around the mineworkers and received support as it tried to defer the inevitable job losses. As this was happening, there were other initiatives being put in place to help combat the effects of the redundancies; while one of these initiatives is still operating successfully in Huntly to the present day, the other did not receive the support it required to operate successfully at the time.

Huntly Development Agency

The Huntly Development Agency (HDA) was an initiative supported by the local council and community to attract new businesses to the Huntly area. Barry Quayle was the first Manager of the HDA and he recalls that his personal objectives were to ‘establish it, I had to develop it, provide assistance to existing businesses, to a person setting up in business, promoting and encouraging businesses to Huntly, fostering community spirits and perceived image of Huntly.’²⁹² However, what he found was that ‘one thing became clear very early on was that I had to get in the heads of the people in the community because morale of the community was at rock bottom, it was lower than low.’ ‘The town perceived that it was on its own.’ ‘The community just reacted and basically they had very little power as they were being taken apart.’

²⁹¹ BCBA 1478, *Archives NZ*, Transcript of radio interview between Geoffrey Palmer and Morning Report, 27 February 1987.

²⁹² B. Quayle, [interview], Hamilton, 29 October 2008.

This sense of loss and powerlessness was something which Huntly needed to address in order to attract more business to the community. Although morale boosting was not a stated objective of HDA Barry felt that in order for Huntly to attract business it had to present itself in a positive light and show that it could get back on its feet after the blows of corporatisation. The Huntly Spring Festival was an initiative to help raise community spirits. It was held six months after the redundancies in October 1987. Barry Quayle recalls ‘It was to show to the whole of New Zealand that these people had skills and they had worth and they could rise up.’²⁹³ The centrepiece of the festival was the float parade, with a number of local community groups entering. ‘So all these hours were spent by a number of people making floats, one fellow from the power station made a kettle which would have been as high as a room and it had an electric cord and it had steam coming out of it and it was amazing. Another group made a replica of the Huntly power station absolutely down to detail, it was 6 metres long. Maoridom had some of the most sophisticated floats that you have probably ever seen.’ ‘I would ring up and invite a pipe band from here and one from here and it was amazing the number of people who said yes, we will be in, yes, we will support this.’ ‘People came by the thousands, it was 8000, they lined the main street and it was the first time they had smiled in probably seven or eight months.’²⁹⁴ The parade was half an hour long and closed State Highway One to allow the floats to cross from the retail area to Lake Hakanoa.

The Huntly article in the *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly* acknowledged that Huntly was fighting back: ‘Huntly may not be the most beautiful New Zealand town. It is constrained by its environment. It is conservative. It has been switched on and off by governments for years. Yet even with the latest putdown it is demonstrating a remarkable spirit.’²⁹⁵ The article discussed how Huntly was looking for any idea to help increase business and therefore employment in the town. The human interest side of the Huntly story was appealing and although there were lots of towns which suffered drastic changes under corporatisation, Huntly seemed to be the one which most people identified with.

²⁹³ Quayle, [interview].

²⁹⁴ Quayle, [interview].

²⁹⁵ Huntly A town on the hunt ... *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly*, 4 May 1987.

The Huntly Development Agency aimed to support the local economy and the mining community by attracting new businesses to the town. The aim of the HDA was: ‘To reduce the Huntly area’s economic reliance on the coal industry by encouraging growth in existing businesses and attracting new business prospects to Huntly in order to generate further employment opportunities and better utilise existing business and community services.’²⁹⁶ The agency was funded through government grants and also community donations through local businesses and clubs. There was recognition by these organisations that they would have to work together to promote the town and attract business. Barrie Fransham, president of the Huntly Lions Club said District Lions clubs would be putting up \$50,000 to start a generation of income to promote employment in Huntly. ‘The idea behind the fund is a positive statement of faith in Huntly. We’re not waiting on the Government to do something – we’re going to do something about it (unemployment) ourselves.’²⁹⁷

The Huntly Development Agency worked hard to raise the profile of Huntly and to attract new business to the area. Barry Quayle recalls inviting six of the most influential and powerful business men in Auckland to Huntly: ‘we flew them down in a helicopter and landed at what was the Huntly hostel, they flew in the helicopter, we had a big lunch and I put on a presentation to them and gave them one of these kits, this is Huntly, this is all the business opportunities ... they had no idea of that potential.’²⁹⁸ Auckland was also targeted in ‘a marketing drive at Business Expo in Auckland in late August 1987.’²⁹⁹ There was recognition that there was a potential work force in Huntly: ‘NZ Steel, Trigon Plastics, dockyards and three engineering firms made enquiries for staff to fill their

²⁹⁶ AAFH 6790 Acc W5510 317 SIU-6-5 Part One Social Impact Unit Huntly, *Archives NZ* Post Grant Evaluation letter, Barry Quayle to the Town Manager, 26 February 1988.

²⁹⁷ Fund set up to promote jobs, *Waikato Times*, 18 March 1987.

²⁹⁸ Quayle, [interview].

²⁹⁹ AAFH 6790 Acc W5510 317 SIU-6-5 Part One Social Impact Unit Huntly, *Archives NZ Summary of Progress to December 1987 and Planned Activity for 1988/89*. Huntly Development Agency.

employment vacancies although none of these businesses were based in Huntly.³⁰⁰ Huntly also looked further afield, and even internationally to try and attract business.³⁰¹ After the 1987 redundancies, approximately thirty businesses conducted feasibility studies in the Huntly area.³⁰² From May 1987 to February 1988 there were 31 enquiries directed to the HDA from a wide variety of services including kitchen construction, tourism, retail, house construction, environmental consultancy, contract drafting, insurance and engraving. Of the 31 enquiries, 11 had a business established or almost established by February 1988.³⁰³ Although Barry acknowledges that they were not going to attract a large business to Huntly which could employ all the redundant mine workers, this did not limit the HDA from going after a wide range of businesses.

The geographic location of Huntly makes it an ideal satellite of both Hamilton and Auckland. However, in 1987 there was a lack of available industrial land where businesses could be established. This was a significant challenge faced by HDA. 'I remember making a report to council if you want to attract businesses here you have to be business ready. Essentially what would happen is that a business would come in and say right I am thinking of starting up a business. Show me some land that I can build a building on or a building that I can lease or whatever and there was no land that was zoned commercial or industrial, nothing. The council felt that when they [a business] wanted to do something then they would go through a resource consent process and I said well then they are out the door gone.'³⁰⁴ Barry felt that it was a timing issue as much as a cost issue: 'You have got a six month process and it might not get approved, and then it will cost them X amount of dollars to go through all of that hullabaloo. They have got a business that they want to get on with and develop.'³⁰⁵ The lack of available land in Huntly was noticed by others as well. 'Huntly may have plenty of workers, coal, power and gas, but it does not have much land available for industry, and some that it does have

³⁰⁰ Fund set up to promote jobs, *Waikato Times*, 18 March 1987.

³⁰¹ Wright, [interview]. Robin Wright, the mayor of Huntly, went to Taiwan to establish business networks hoping to encourage investment in the Huntly region.

³⁰² Miners Look to Future, *Waikato Times*, 9 April 1987.

³⁰³ AAFH 6790 Acc W5510 317 SIU-6-5 Part One Social Impact Unit Huntly, *Archives NZ, Summary of Progress to December 1987 and Planned Activity for 1988/89*. Huntly Development Agency.

³⁰⁴ Quayle, [interview].

³⁰⁵ Quayle, [interview].

lacks access to the main road. These are among the problems the borough has to consider.³⁰⁶ Barry Quayle thinks that one of the best achievements of the Huntly Enterprise Agency during that period of transition was ‘changing the infrastructure and the readiness and willingness of the council to accept new business.’

Huntly business owners were very concerned about what effect the job losses would have on them. The miners were well paid and the loss of 500 pay packets would have a significant impact on those offering goods and services in the town. People were tightening their belts in preparation of the upcoming changes ‘...one example of the effects of the staff cutbacks on the business community was that some clothing stores were finding it difficult to sell school uniforms to families with children at Huntly College. Two of the three school uniform outlets in town agreed – people were buying only one pair of shorts instead of the usual three, and were saying that they were not sure whether they could remain in the town, depending on the redundancies.’³⁰⁷ Businesses recognised that the miners were crucial to the community. ‘We’ve been through bad patches before and I’m sure we’ll get through them again. It’s a caring community, and everyone feels strongly about the miners.’ said Glenda Plas at a jeweller’s shop. It was not all doom and gloom from Huntly business: ‘Brian and Rosemary Curle greeted the crisis with a gesture of confidence in Huntly by going ahead with their plans to buy a main street restaurant, then spending \$10,000 on renovations.’³⁰⁸ Rosemary recalls, ‘We bought our business either a week before or a week after the miners lost their jobs, we bought our business on 1 March. We had a choice, we could have forfeited our deposit and not buy the shop, because Brian and I were both very passionate about Huntly, because Huntly had come through so many things before, we decided that we could, and I don’t think that we were ever really that nervous about it. We sold it ten years later exactly to the day, 1 March 1997. I did not want to but someone came along and offered us good money.’³⁰⁹ Rosemary recalls that when the miners were paid their redundancies

³⁰⁶ Huntly A town on the hunt, *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly*, 4 May 1987.

³⁰⁷ Call to Ease Huntly Woe, *New Zealand Herald*, 28 February 1987.

³⁰⁸ Huntly A town on the hunt, *New Zealand Woman’s Weekly*, 4 May 1987.

³⁰⁹ Curle, [interview].

there was a huge amount of money in the town for several months and she feels that they survived because they were involved with the food industry.³¹⁰

The concerns of Huntly retailers were warranted. In 1987 there were 200 businesses and 14 sports clubs listed in Huntly in the white and yellow pages of the Waikato Telephone Directory. Of those businesses, four were banks which are still currently operating in Huntly: ANZ, BNZ, National and Westpac. Of the 196 businesses that were listed in 1987, 79 of those were closed by 1991. This represents 40% of the local business base. Those that closed had provided a wide range of services including car sales, service stations, auto-electrical, joinery, home decorators, and accountants. Coffee lounges, gift shops, cycle dealers, clothing and footwear retailers, milk bars, grocers and department stores also closed their doors during this period.³¹¹

It is obvious that business confidence was waning for many local retailers. The exodus of Huntly families moving from the area in search of work, combined with local unemployment and the drop in weekly pay packets meant that retailers no longer felt secure. The logical conclusion to be drawn from the business statistics is that Huntly retailers closed their doors, either because their businesses were suffering, or, they could see the writing on the wall.

The Huntly Development Agency was charged with establishing new businesses and creating employment opportunities in the community, thereby looking after the needs of employers. Job Search Services was established as part of a government initiative to help future employees by providing job skills and training in areas that were affected by corporatisation. While the HDA was well utilised and supported, Job Search Services was not so fortunate.

³¹⁰ Curle, [interview].

³¹¹ Refer Appendices 3 and 4.

Job Search Services

Job Search Services, a government initiative, was established in Huntly to provide a resource for employers and employees in the area. It was described as follows:

As part of the government's initiative to assist those communities affected by the corporatisation of government enterprises, the Social Impact Unit has commissioned the development of job search groups in various locations. The objective of the programme is to provide regional projects in those areas most affected by changing circumstances and to have these regional centres operational by 1 April 1987. The centres will be run by a Job Search Manager and will assist workers with job search skills training and counselling for those who require immediate alternative employment.³¹²

The scheme was advertised locally in the *Huntly Press*. On 14 April 1987 there was an article in the aforementioned paper which stated 'Job Search is available to anyone who has been affected by corporatisation, whether they worked in mining or were affected in a more indirect way.'

Job skills training was important for the Huntly area as many of the mining workforce had gone to work for State Coal Mines straight from school and had no interview experience and/or curriculum vitae. They were highly skilled workers but because they were involved in such a specific industry it would be hard for them to find employment without acquiring new skills. The Job Search service was utilised by government departments who had vacancies to fill. Both the Inland Revenue Department (Hamilton based) and the Department of Social Welfare (Huntly based) advised Job Search of their available vacancies. However, in both of these cases the positions advertised included staff clerks, telephonists, mailroom assistants, clerks and other 'office' positions which were probably not compatible with the skills that the miners had. These positions were more suited to the Public Service Association staff who had worked for State Coal Mines in clerical and administration roles.

³¹² AAFH 6790 Acc W5510 317 SIU-6-5 Part One Social Impact Unit Huntly, *Archives NZ*.

Job skills' training was offered in Huntly but unfortunately the participation by those affected by redundancy was woeful.³¹³ The Job Search Manager in Huntly was Richard Te Moananui. In a document dated 11 May 1987 he states:

Recruitment remains our only real obstacle. Apathy, ignorance of available services, pride and remaining severance pay are all contributing factors. I intend to issue a letter to all redundant workers currently collecting the unemployment benefit to make them aware of the Job Search scheme.³¹⁴

Subsequently, 120 notices were sent out to redundant miners who were receiving the unemployment benefit. In a report dated 29 May 1987 Te Moananui stated that the job search service in Huntly was being closed down, although support, in the form of individual tuition, would still be available from F. W. (Bill) Munden for anyone who requested it. One of the reasons given as to why the service was shut down was because of the 480 mine workers who were:

made redundant the majority of miners appear to have either found employment or moved on. The response to Job Search has been very disappointing. Perhaps the programme should not have been introduced until June-August, the winter months when the effects of being jobless will seem most acute. On the other hand, the more enthusiastic ones, the people who will participate in these projects through their own initiative and spread the word, would want Job Search right from the start. That we've had just one reply to the letters sent to the remaining unemployed, probably the ones who would most benefit from the project, implies a certain reluctance to find work, a hesitancy to join just another government scheme, a preference to live off severance money, the belief that there are no jobs around anyway so why join a job search scheme?³¹⁵

'The Huntly people were very private people and because they weren't all highly educated they either weren't going to understand what was told to them, or they would be made to feel a little bit dumb or inferior for having to go and ask for advice. They preferred not to have that kind of help.'³¹⁶ The sense of frustration experienced by Te Moananui was palpable and upon reflection perhaps the service that was being offered

³¹³ *Coping with Change? The Huntly Experience*. Ten participants attended two courses. Six of the participants found work. 6.

³¹⁴ AAFH 6790 Acc W5510 317 SIU-6-5 Part One Social Impact Unit Huntly, *Archives NZ*.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.* Report – Job Search Huntly, Richard Te Moananui. 29 May 1987.

³¹⁶ Curle, [interview].

and the way it was advertised were not the most approachable or applicable to a community which had issues with illiteracy.

Bill Munden, an ex State Coal Mines Manager, has been actively involved in various organisations in the Huntly community, including the Job Search Service which was set up in 1987 following the redundancies. He was also involved at the support house on Rosser Street, which was initially staffed by Jane Bryden from the State Services Commission. 'The effects of the job losses on the community were disastrous. I worked on the Job Search; we had about ten people in the group that volunteered to go on a course and got jobs. I think the community house got a reasonable amount of use.'³¹⁷

There was recognition that attitudes in the Huntly community had a large part to play in the success of different support initiatives. Bill Munden wrote a letter to the Job Search coordinator dated 30 May 1987; the Job Search Coordinator was part of the Social Impact Unit division of the State Services Commission. In the letter Bill evaluates the positive feedback received from the participants in the two Job Search courses which were run in Huntly. He lists the efforts that the Job Search team went through to recruit people including: newspapers, community consultations, circulars, letters, and consultation with Waahi Marae.' Under a separate heading of 'Community Attitudes' in his report he states,

Despite the fact that over one hundred ex State Coal Mine people are registered for the unemployment benefit there was only one known reply to the circular sent to 110 of them by Richard Te Moananui. The lay off of over 400 people from State Coal does not, on the surface, appear to have had any significant impact on the community.

The reasons for this could be ascribed to:-

1. People with initiative rapidly moved out and took jobs as far away as Papua New Guinea and Australia. Others moved to jobs closer to home, some to New Zealand Steel on project work. Others with severance pay have taken up businesses or are in the process of doing so.
2. Coupled with the unemployment benefit living on severance pay.

³¹⁷ Munden, [interview].

3. Coupled with the duck shooting season and the attitude that for a few months they could take it easy or do house repairs or other activities they previously did not have time to undertake.
4. Indications that a considerable amount of severance pay has been put on term deposit while options are explored. Others are commencing to withdraw portions for living expenses.

A number expressed the view that it was too early and that the crunch was yet to come. The basis for this is:

1. Untapped unemployed who were there before corporatisation estimated at 800.
2. Possible future lay off of Huntly Power Station employees.³¹⁸
3. Lay off of Huntly people on completion of New Zealand Steel project.
4. Uncertainty relative to the continued operation of at least one of the Huntly underground coal mines.³¹⁹

Although Job Search Services should have operated successfully in Huntly, this organisation failed to attract the very people that it was trying to help. There are a number of reasons for this, as explained above in the report by Bill Munden. After interviewing the mine workers, it is evident that there was a sense of pride which may have prevented many of them from participating in any such scheme. This was also reinforced by the idea that one should be able to take care of oneself. The initial reluctance of many miners to go on the unemployment benefit meant that they were not contacted by Job Search Services, who based their recruiting on those who were registered as unemployed. There was a timing issue with the establishment of the Job Search Services. Perhaps the scheme would have been more successful if it had been operating in later months, once the redundancy money started to run out and the options for employment were exhausted.

Support Services

³¹⁸ *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects*, 99. Sixty staff lost their jobs at the Huntly and Meremere Power Stations in 1987.

³¹⁹ AAFH 6790 Acc W5510 317 SIU-6-5 Part One, Social Impact Unit Huntly, *Archives NZ*.

The support services that were offered to the Huntly community and the mining workforce were not just based on attracting business; there was also a realisation that help would be needed for the individual as well. Several measures were put in place to support the individual and the family in the Huntly community following the round of redundancies. Some of the services were arranged through government agencies and others were based around community service organisations and groups within the community.³²⁰

One of the most all encompassing services was the deployment centre which was established in Rosser Street and used by the State Services Commission following the initial job loss announcement. After the SSC had left the area deployment officers staffed the centre to answer any questions that mineworkers or their families may have had. The idea was the deployment centre would provide a one-stop shop where you could access different agencies rather than having to travel from location to location. The deployment centre was very busy initially as people went in for their calculations and for help working out what they were entitled to.³²¹ There were twenty two deployment officers from 'every shift and every mine in the district'³²² with the hope being that because they were locals and had been employed at the mines they would be more approachable.³²³ There was a group of Huntly women who supported each other and organised two public meetings which would allow women to get their questions about redundancy and job loss answered.³²⁴ The deployment centre also became a base for other government agencies to work out of during the redundancy period.

The Huntly community rallied in the immediate aftermath of the redundancies to stand behind the mineworkers and their families. The community had been dealt a paralysing blow but attempted to delay the inevitable by petitioning Wellington appealing for time

³²⁰ *Coping with Change? The Huntly Experience*. Government agencies represented at the Deployment Centre included Department of Social Welfare, Housing Corporation, Maori Affairs, Inland Revenue, and Department of Labour. 6.

³²¹ Deployment centre hive of activity, *Waikato Times*, 4 March 1987.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ None of the miners interviewed used this facility although Lance Slater sold his house to a miner who had used the service to help him arrange financing.

³²⁴ Women get together, *Waikato Times*, 4 March 1987.

and options. Once it became obvious that corporatisation was inevitable, two agencies were established in Huntly to sustain the mineworkers and local businesses. Both the HDA and the Job Search Service faced challenges in Huntly as they tried to achieve their objectives of attracting business to the town and finding employment for those who had lost their jobs as part of the restructuring. The HDA found it hard to attract businesses, especially as there was a lack of available business-zoned land in Huntly; the Job Search service found it hard to attract people because there appeared to be little interest in what they had to offer. One agency was geared towards business and one agency was geared towards people but they were both operating in a conservative mining community which had always looked after its own and had overcome obstacles in the past. However, the advent of corporatisation combined with the large numbers who were made redundant meant that it was going to be difficult for Huntly to pull itself up again.

6. The Long Term Impacts of 1987

The long term impacts from the corporatisation of State Coal Mines are in some ways more difficult to define. Many of the changes which have occurred in Huntly over the last twenty two years can be attributed to the tumultuous 1980s. As a social history this thesis presents the views of those who were present at the time and who still currently live in the community. Their thoughts on what has happened to their town since corporatisation and their concerns are insightful because of their long-term involvement in Huntly. Many of them are 2nd or 3rd generation Huntly locals and therefore they, and their families, have witnessed critical changes. Issues that were raised by interviewees are problems which are fundamental to any community: poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, illiteracy and crime. Indeed, these issues are not unique to Huntly. This chapter will explore four areas of concern for Huntly which are linked to Rogernomics: the revelation of an underclass, the frustrations caused within the community by corporatisation, the changes to the Huntly demographics, and the changes to Huntly's infrastructure. While it is difficult to argue that Rogernomics was the definite cause of social maladjustment, many such problems only came to light after corporatisation was implemented in 1987. It would appear that Rogernomics aggravated underlying social concerns and problems which were infrequent in 1987 now appear endemic in 2010.

The longer term social impacts of Rogernomics are recognised in the working paper *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects* which was produced by the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research in 1994. The objectives of the report were to analyse the 'welfare impacts of corporatisation and privatisation.'³²⁵ This paper provides individual case studies of six organisations which were corporatised including Coal Corporation of New Zealand Limited.³²⁶ The report also contains case studies of

³²⁵ *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects*, 6.

³²⁶ Other organisations reviewed include Telecom New Zealand Limited, Electricity Corporation of New Zealand Limited, New Zealand Rail Ltd, New Zealand Post Ltd and parts of the New Zealand Forestry Corporation.

communities which were affected by corporatisation. The Huntly section reviews community changes including industry, employment, retail, housing and social structure.

The Revelation of an Underclass

Poverty is an issue in Huntly. Up to 1987 Huntly was a community which offered employment in a number of industries including the railways, the power station and mining, with mining being the biggest employer. Mine workers were well remunerated and this helped to sustain a well balanced retail area. The sudden loss of 500 pay packets from the Huntly community was severe and the difference between the unemployment benefit and a miners' pay packet was substantial. For some families, the transition from working to unemployment was extremely difficult to handle. However, it would appear that the mining families have recovered. None of the miners who were interviewed for this thesis are presently unemployed; in fact most of them have been in regular employment for a number of years. The problems which Huntly experiences with poverty do not appear to be directly affecting the miners who were made redundant in 1987. It would appear that welfare dependency in Huntly is not based on the unemployment benefit.

The ramifications of poverty are something which Blair Donaldson deals with each day as the longest serving police officer in Huntly.³²⁷

Poverty is still an issue in this town, even though we have some of the lowest unemployment rates that we have had in Huntly, if the figures are anything to go by.³²⁸ There is still an issue because of what the money is being spent on. There is lots of social dynamics that have changed. Pokie machines were not around 20 to 30 years ago. Now they are doing \$5000 a machine a week sort of thing, and if there is 18 machines in one pub and 18 machines in another pub and \$5000 per machine that is huge money.³²⁹

³²⁷ At the time of his interview in 2008 Blair Donaldson had been based in Huntly for 14 years.

³²⁸ *Ministry Of Social Development*, 19 December 2008. As of September 2008 there were 61 people of working age unemployed in Huntly. One person had been on the unemployment benefit for between 6-12 months, the remainder had been unemployed for less than six months.

³²⁹ B. Donaldson, [interview], Huntly, 26-11-08.

Blair's opinions about the problems facing Huntly are based on the changes that he has seen in the area over more than a decade. The types of crimes which are being committed are different and juvenile crime is now an issue. Blair thinks that intergenerational poverty contributes to this.

There are unemployed people and then there are unemployable people. That is the way I see it. They have come from a generation of hard workers that have been through hell and they have gone through all the embarrassment of being on the dole because at that time it was embarrassing to be on the dole. They did not believe in it. Their [the miners'] kids are completely different and their kids' kids' are our juvenile criminals and it is those juvenile criminals that are having kids now and therein lies the problem. If Dad is down the mines for 16 hours a day he is not going to have much communication with his sons and for his kids and now it is those kids' kids' that we are dealing with. And so there is a breakdown in those years.³³⁰

Reupene Renata mentioned in his interview that he also felt that there was a group in Huntly who were unemployable. 'If you gave them a job they couldn't get up to get to a job. It is institutionalised in some families, they rely on state hand-outs, they don't know anything else.'³³¹ Whether the families that Reupene is discussing are dependent on the unemployment benefit or the domestic purposes benefit is unclear. When discussing present day issues in Huntly, Reupene also expressed concerns about rising poverty in the community, and families who spent significant money on alcohol.

Not only is juvenile crime an issue but the unwritten codes which used to apply within the town have also been broken.

You know that saying, you don't shit in your own nest. Well unfortunately in Huntly that doesn't apply. So, they [juveniles] will rob from their aunties, they will rob from their next door neighbours. They will rob from anyone they can to get that food because they are starving. What they will take is quick cash, a play station that can be flicked off for \$50, and also food. Gone are the days when they were taking plasma televisions or things like that.³³²

³³⁰ Donaldson, [interview].

³³¹ Renata, [interview].

³³² Donaldson, [interview].

Dishonesty offences, such as petty theft make up a large component of police work in Huntly. While Blair thinks that these issues stem from poverty, they could also be indicative of youth boredom. Blair discusses how the appearance of graffiti in Huntly usually coincides with youth boredom and perhaps dishonesty offences also fall into that category. Gang issues, especially with the well established gangs like Black Power and the Mongrel Mob, are no longer a problem in Huntly. Blair feels that this has left a void which is now being filled by juvenile gangs based on overseas gang culture. Unfortunately for the police this means that there is no longer a hierarchical structure operating within the gangs. In the past these hierarchies were utilised by police when there were gang problems within the community.

Gangs - It is a group of youths coming together to do what they want, and if they need money they do a burglary, and if one wants to be tougher than the other then they will smash someone over. It is really frustrating from the police perspective. At least in the old days you could go to the president and say 'Hey listen. This isn't on. Stop what you are doing.' And sometimes they would listen and sometimes they would stop.

Like many communities Huntly faces issues with methamphetamine and due to Huntly's geographic location the mobile 'P' lab has become another area of concern for the police.

Because we are between Hamilton and Auckland we have a lot of traffic going through, and a lot of traffic couriers. They are all methed up anyway so they are driving like bloody maniacs and they are not going to stop. When they do crash you have a meth lab in the back and plastic bags full of chemicals. It is a scourge and it is getting worse.³³³

One of the biggest challenges facing the Huntly community is domestic violence. This issue was identified by Jane Bryden during the four days she spent at the deployment centre on Rosser Street in 1987, and it is still prevalent in the community.³³⁴

³³³ Donaldson, [interview].

³³⁴ See Chapter Two.

Domestic violence is very high in Huntly. It is not white-collar domestic violence where I push you and you will fall over and I tell you to fuck off. Our domestic violence is hard. It is the ‘Bitch, make me some eggs’³³⁵ domestic violence. My team and I go to 40 to 50 domestics a month. For a little town like this that is huge, every single day, hard domestic violence. It is alcohol fuelled and it is ‘P’ fuelled. We don’t go to white collar domestic violence, either A: it is not happening, or B: they are not having the closed eyes, they are not going to the hospitals. I would be naïve to think that it did not happen. The resources that it takes to deal with it are just huge, from the policing perspective. There has always been agencies that want to help victims but at the end of the day it is still going on, it is still the same families, it is still ‘yeah but I love him.’³³⁶

Blair states that crime has decreased since he has been in Huntly; when he first started working in the area there were between 20 and 30 burglaries a week. Now the police are dealing with approximately eight per month.³³⁷ Blair thinks that there are opportunities in Huntly with Tainui and tourism which could help the community. Blair also believes that Huntly presents great training opportunities for new police officers who get to experience a wide range of policing issues in the time they spend in the community.

Bob Tukiri, a Tainui kaumatua has lived in Huntly for 61 years. He has been on the council, and is still a member of the community board. As the chairman of the Board of Trustees at Huntly West Primary School Bob sees children coming to school without lunches and for him that is a concern. The school is decile one and has a roll of 135.³³⁸ Bob visits the families of those children whom he thinks may be in difficulty. He is not convinced that their problems are a result of the redundancies in 1987; he thinks it comes down to more basic issues such as knowing how to budget.³³⁹

The issues which are generated by poverty have more dire consequences than not being able to provide school lunches. Rosemary Curle is one of the Vice Principals of Huntly College. Like Huntly West Primary, Huntly College is a decile one school. It has a role

³³⁵ This is a reference to the scene in the movie ‘Once Were Warriors’ where the lead character, Jake the Muss, violently assaults his wife after she refuses to cook eggs for his breakfast.

³³⁶ Donaldson, [interview].

³³⁷ Donaldson, [interview].

³³⁸ www.tki.org.nz Accessed on 18-2-10.

³³⁹ R. Tukiri, [interview], Huntly, 3-11-08.

of 342 students.³⁴⁰ One of the future challenges that concerns Rosemary is that the school is facing the next generation of poverty, the children, and perhaps even the grandchildren of those who lost their jobs in 1987.³⁴¹ ‘We always say here [at the school] that we have some children in school who have never lived in a house where anyone has gone to work.’ The challenge for Huntly College is to get role models to motivate the children from those households.

Our senior students are really good as they have had so many opportunities at school. We don’t have the luxury of financial support from our parents. We pay for virtually every trip that they go on, they [the parents] all have to pay for something, but if we didn’t have the extra funding coming in we wouldn’t be able to afford to give them the opportunities that we can afford to give to them.³⁴²

Poverty and its effects are a real concern for the schools in Huntly. It impacts on the life of many children within the community.

Social Impacts

Huntly was a community which had existing social problems before corporatisation. This thesis argues that the state sector reforms were a trigger which aggravated these issues. The first point to consider is the way that the redundancies and subsequent job losses were handled: swiftly and somewhat impersonally. Men who had given their working lives to the mining industry, for example Karl Crook Senior, were dismissed as easily as young men who had taken their occupation lightly, for example Ian Whyte.

Some people felt crucified. The people in those days, particularly in the mining industry, still had that hierarchical family living where the male provided. If they could not provide then they felt worthless and did not feel valued. I mean they weren’t people who would travel to Hamilton for a job. They always felt within Huntly they had the security of that job and so they didn’t really know how to go further afield.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ www.tki.org.nz Accessed on 18-2-10.

³⁴¹ R. Curle, [interview], Huntly, 3-11-08.

³⁴² Curle, [interview]. Huntly College does not have school fees.

³⁴³ Curle, [interview].

Being unwanted by the new corporation not only led to feelings of anger and frustration, it was also a blow to self-esteem. Frustration and grief combined to pull at families and place them under tremendous. Many people found themselves in circumstances which led to them acting out in ways which are unacceptable and there was an increase in anti-social behaviours, for example domestic violence and suicide.

The Huntly reaction to the job losses was more severe at a personal level and there was an increase in social service support and delivery to try to combat some of the underlying issues which were exposed. Several people interviewed for this thesis discussed increases in suicide, domestic violence, and the break down of family units due to the stress of the changes.³⁴⁴ This is reinforced by the working paper that was published by the NZIER.

Corporatisation affected the whole community not just the lower socio-economic groups. A lot of highly skilled people suddenly lost their jobs and many had to leave town to find employment. During the period immediately following corporatisation the number of marital and family break-ups in the town increased. Problems with children and young people have also increased. Relationships between Maori and Pakeha began to show increased strain following the redundancies, as did family and inter-personal relationships. For those who received redundancy payments, arguments frequently arose within families over how this should be spent.³⁴⁵

Rosemary Curle thinks that there is still an underlying bitterness present, especially with regards to the redundancies and the way in which they were handled. However, she is also of the view that Huntly has moved on. The interviews that were conducted with the miners for this thesis would support her view. Many of the interviewees were perplexed by the hiring policies of CoalCorp in 1987. Some also expressed frustration at the way the redundancy process was handled.

³⁴⁴ Bryden [interview], Quayle, [interview].

³⁴⁵ *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects*, 104.

One of the needs which were identified for Huntly following corporatisation was the establishment of a Hotline with trained counsellors ‘to respond to some of the extreme stress identified, including some alleged recent attempted suicides amongst women.’³⁴⁶ Unfortunately it appeared that the service was only offered for a one month period. A Women’s Support Group was established by the redeployment group of the State Services Commission ‘and aimed not only to support women but also to reach the men through the women. However those serving on the group found that most people just wanted concrete answers not counselling.’³⁴⁷

Although the Huntly community pulled together to combat the changes that corporatisation presented, the actual backbone of the Huntly community was severely impacted by the job losses.

The anger, fear and frustration arising from corporatisation increased the tensions that already existed. Neighbours, families and friends became angry with one another and these relationships disintegrated as people looked for someone to blame for their situation. It was not uncommon for Maori people to believe that if they were made redundant it was a racial decision. There was a great deal of ill-feeling shown by both Maori and Pakeha toward those who had not been laid off.³⁴⁸

Changes to the Huntly Demographic

The corporatisation of State Coal Mines led to 52% of the local mining workforce losing their jobs. Many people left Huntly after they were made redundant, heading offshore in search of work and taking their families with them. Mining in Huntly was traditionally an intergenerational employer and those feelings of, and for, family contributed towards the morale and the camaraderie of the mine workers. The Huntly exodus left a void within the community and had a profound effect.

³⁴⁶ Ministry of Women’s Affairs: *Coal Corporation, Huntly, West Coast and Southland*.

³⁴⁷ *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects*, 105.

³⁴⁸ *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects*, 104.

Most of the people who left Huntly looking for work in Australia were young, many with small children. Grandparents suddenly found themselves surplus to requirements. The majority of the mineworkers interviewed for this thesis knew of people who had moved away, and many families have not returned.

This contributed to a loss of confidence in the future of the district among those remaining. Those who left were often the ones who took an interest in the running of the town, i.e. held public office or were post holders on voluntary agencies. There are now too few people with the energy or the qualifications to do these jobs. This means that the same few people are trying to run the various organisations and as a result, they are not as effective as they could be.³⁴⁹

There is a dedicated group of people within the Huntly who are involved in numerous community organisations. While their commitment is highly commendable it could be perceived as a double edged sword: it is hard for new blood to be attracted into organisations if there are no vacancies or there is a perception that you have to be part of a certain clique in order to participate. Blair Donaldson wonders if some of the local committees are less effective because they contain the same people and have been dealing with the same issues over time. He thinks there may be a requirement to come up with new strategies, and attract younger people into their organisations.³⁵⁰ Of course this has to be balanced against what happens when no one new steps up to fill a vacancy.

The people who moved into the Huntly community once the miners left were often not locals and there is a perception that they did not have the same social involvement or commitment to the community. Many of the thesis interviewees believe this subsequent influx of people were attracted by the cheaper housing and rentals and this in turn led to an increase in beneficiaries. Huntly locals resent this influx. Although Huntly had always had a beneficiary component, it had previously been outweighed by the mining workforce, which still injected revenue into the community. The new members of the Huntly community were not in the same position to support local retail or other businesses. The exodus of workers also affected school roles and membership in local community groups, including sports teams and organisations.

³⁴⁹ *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects*, 103.

³⁵⁰ Donaldson, [interview].

The effect of 100 families leaving the community is difficult to quantify but the consequences can be hypothesised. There are probably two reasons why families left Huntly, either they went in search of work, or, they used their redundancy money to relocate and start a life in another community. Both of these reasons would reinforce the belief that those who left town were motivated. As such, it would be reasonable to assume that this meant they have invested social capital in the Huntly community prior to their departure. Whether that capital was given in voluntary organisations, sports clubs or public office is somewhat irrelevant. What is important is the fact that those who left had taken their skills with them and this left a void which may or may not have been filled by those left behind.

Impacts on the Huntly Economy

Business and retailer confidence was eroded as a result of the changes introduced by corporatisation. As the miners left Huntly in search for work, the retailers also gradually withdrew and the retail area changed considerably. The majority of the main street is now occupied by food outlets and there is no longer a range of goods and services available. Coupled with Hamilton's expansion north and the new shopping facilities available at The Base in Te Rapa, Huntly will continue to be a basic service centre for locals.

Brian and Rosemary Curle operated La Cuisine, a café, in the main retail area. 'We saw changes in the ten years that we were in town; eventually there were 17 empty shops. Some business people did not have any confidence, they did not sell their business, they just shut their doors.'³⁵¹ One of the biggest blows to the Huntly retail area was when the Farmers store closed its doors.³⁵² Rosemary recalls that by the time she and Brian sold their business both Farmers and Deka were gone, along with the Bendon Factory and the Bendon outlet shop, a toy shop, Junior World, a stationery shop, and some of the clothes

³⁵¹ Curle, [interview].

³⁵² Refer to Appendix 3

and shoe shops. They were replaced by food shops, or just left empty and idle as they waited for tenants. ‘We have just become a service centre, I don’t think of us as a shopping centre, we go in for what we want but you do not go in for an afternoon of shopping anymore. Now we have lots of food shops, lots of offices, lots of land agents – and just your essential services. That is probably all a result of that down turn. I think it takes Huntly a wee while for things to filter down.’³⁵³

The downturns which were faced by the Huntly retail industry were outlined as follows by the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research. It stated that corporatisation combined with restructuring at Horotiu and Electricorp had a severe impact.

The flow-on effects hit retailers particularly hard. ... Retailers are surviving but not thriving. The migration out of the town which followed the corporatisation of State Coal severely depleted their customer base and those who replaced them tended to be in lower income brackets. Ten years ago the town was told that as a result of the Huntly power scheme the population would reach 10,000 people. In anticipation of this growth, many retailers signed long-term leases and then found that the growth did not occur. Many are now committed to inflexible leases and can’t sell up and get out. As a result the shops have become more rundown as the shopkeepers have little money for maintenance.³⁵⁴

Despite the serious issues which the town has to overcome, there is still a sense of optimism amongst those who live and work there. There are families who will never leave Huntly; it is their turangawaewae. Employed people are moving into the community, taking advantage of the cheap housing and the easy commute to both Hamilton and Auckland via the Waikato Expressway. Bob Tukiri feels that the town has a new lease of life.³⁵⁵ Opinions were split fairly evenly amongst the miners interviewed with regards to the changes in the town; some felt that the town had not recovered since 1987 and had since died, while among others there was an overwhelming sense of optimism.

³⁵³ Curle, [interview].

³⁵⁴ *Corporatisation and Privatisation – Welfare Effects*, 101.

³⁵⁵ Tukiri, [interview].

Reupene Renata discussed how the mines still pay well and there is still work available within the industry in Huntly. He is optimistic about not only the town's future, but also about the future of local mining: recently there were reports in the media about Solid Energy signing new contracts with the Glenbrook Steel Mill.³⁵⁶ Blair Donaldson states that he is an 'eternal optimist' and he thinks that Huntly can still pull itself up, especially if the community is supported by Tainui to do so.³⁵⁷ Rosemary Curle states 'It is quite sad [thinking about the changes to Huntly] but I don't let it make me sad because I think you just have to go forward.'³⁵⁸ Lance Slater said 'I think Huntly is an awesome place and there are definitely a lot of people that are trying to move it ahead.'³⁵⁹

In 1987 Huntly was a community which underwent the restructuring of its largest employer under the policies of Rogernomics. The long term impacts of these reforms are considerable, and while Rogernomics might not have caused them directly, it compounded what was already beneath the surface and exposed it. Social problems have emerged which are endemic within the community. Poverty, crime and domestic violence are everyday issues which the police and locals schools must deal with. Beneficiary dependence is troubling and in some families it has replaced intergenerational employment. The search for employment led to many families leaving the area and this resulted in a change in the community demographic as families were separated. The migration of people away from the community eroded the confidence of the locals who remained. Those who moved in to take advantage of Huntly's cheaper living do not appear to have the same level of investment in the community. Businesses and retailers were hit particularly hard by the job losses, and many did not recover. Several businesses simply shut up shop. Huntly survived the changes that were imposed on it and although it is a different community today, that does not necessarily mean that it is less of a community than it was in 1987. The Huntly community contains a dedicated group of people who believe in their town and who lend their names and support to

³⁵⁶ Renata, [interview].

³⁵⁷ Donaldson, [interview].

³⁵⁸ Curle, [interview].

³⁵⁹ Slater, [interview].

several organisations. The reaction of Huntly to Rogernomics shows that even when faced with dire circumstances a town can pull itself up, dust itself off, and start again.

Conclusion

The Huntly community was dealt a massive blow in 1987 when the workforce employed at local mining operations was halved. Huntly exists because of coal and until Rogernomics that resource had supported the majority of families in the community. Corporatisation slashed employee numbers by 52% almost overnight; it could have been a death knell for Huntly but the community did not allow that to happen. Huntly suffered in 1987 and although the town has subsequently grown, with new businesses and industries being established, it is still suffering now.

As one of the first public sector departments to be corporatised, State Coal Mines provided a unique set of challenges to the State Services Commission. Mining is a specialised occupation with skills which are not easily transferable to another industry. The only place a miner can work is at a mine site and deployment to other coalfields was not an option in 1987; indeed the nearest major coalfield to Huntly was located on the West Coast of the South Island and there were similar significant job losses at those locations. The option of redeployment to another sector did not apply to Huntly miners. Although the State Services Commission had worked in tandem with the Public Service Association to reach a range of acceptable outcomes for many of its employees, they were not applicable to all locations and industries. Policies which were applicable in Wellington, where a public servant had the option to be redeployed as opposed to unemployed, did not fit into the Huntly equation.

Jane Bryden recalls that as the Management of Change Unit established policies to deal with the implications of Rogernomics they searched for an international benchmark. At that time there was nothing available and this would reinforce two commonly held views of Rogernomics: the changes which were introduced were unprecedented on a global scale, and, the speed with which they were occurring was comparable to a blitzkrieg. Rogernomics has been held up as a global example of 'successful' government deregulation. Other countries, for example Australia and the United States, were also introducing economic changes which supported liberalisation and commercialisation.

However, their changes were not occurring as rapidly as those in New Zealand and consequently the results did not appear to be as severe. New Zealand had a small population, and this, coupled with the country's reliance on primary industry, meant that Rogernomics impacted on many aspects of everyday life. Almost overnight, New Zealand went from being one of the most economically regulated countries in the world to one of the most liberal; while on a global scale these changes were seen as impressive, many New Zealand communities were left reeling.

A deployment centre was established in Huntly, and staffed by Jane Bryden and Harvey Shannon, in the immediate aftermath of the corporatisation announcement meeting. During her short time in Huntly Jane recognised that there were issues that had not been anticipated in Wellington, many of which could not have been foreseen. Jane was presented with domestic situations where a miner presented with more than one partner, and sometimes children with multiple partners. Due to the confidential nature of the service that she was providing, Jane was unable to say anything. There was also evidence of family violence which she found very disturbing. Huntly was a community under considerable stress, and whether that manifested into an increase in family violence is unknown, but highly probable. Illiteracy was also an issue which Jane encountered in Huntly. Information about corporatisation and redundancy was distributed by the State Services Commission in booklets which were handed out at the announcement meeting. Jane realised that the information was going to be inaccessible to many of the miners because their literacy skills were poor.

While both illiteracy and family violence could not have been predicted, some of the government policies which were particular to Huntly and other mining communities inadvertently supported illiteracy. The Ministry of Energy operated in many remote locations throughout New Zealand and as part of an informal social contract within these regions employment was maintained at artificially high levels. This meant that valuable mining skills were not lost to the industry and employment was maintained in remote communities. The problem with these policies was two-fold: firstly it cost the New Zealand tax payer \$122,000 per annum for each employee who was employed by State

Coal Mines, and secondly, there was little or no value put on male education in these areas. Mining is an intergenerational employer, and in Huntly it was an established fact that if you wanted, you could follow your father or brothers down the mine and have a job for life. Young males could leave school at 15 years old and work at various duties on the surface, including stone picking and lawn mowing, until a position became available underground. There was no need to succeed academically as your future was virtually mapped out. If you had seen other family members leave school and succeed without the need for academic qualifications, there was little motivation to value education. There was no emphasis on literacy and numeracy at State Coal Mines as these were not a prerequisite of employment at the mines. The skills required to become a successful miner included the ability to work well as a member of a team and physical fitness. Pit-sense, the ability to read conditions underground, was also crucial and this can only be learned through experience. Miners were not educated in a class room, they learnt on the job. Somewhat unintentionally, the government had reinforced a job for life at the expense of education within mining communities. Unfortunately it had not anticipated what would happen to those miners if the job suddenly ended.

Mining is steeped in tradition and coupled with the specialised skill set that a miner required was a sense of camaraderie. This was reinforced by intergenerational employment and both of these customs were especially evident in Huntly. This strong sense of tradition was evident to Jane Bryden when some of the older miners told her that they were going to take their redundancy so that there would be jobs left for the younger miners with families. While this was a selfless and somewhat noble notion, it also illustrates the deep sense of closeness that was evident amongst the miners that were interviewed for this thesis, and one of the overwhelming attractions of mining. The sense of camaraderie amongst mining crews coupled with the need to be able to rely on your team mates in dangerous working conditions meant that the Huntly miners were bound together in strong relationships. This relationship amongst working men underpinned a strong sense of community in Huntly, and the importance of mining to the town. Indeed, it is because Huntly's sense of identity is so closely tied to mining that the changes that

were announced in 1987 were so shocking. In turn, this explains why the community rallied around the miners and supported them.

So what of the miners who were affected by corporatisation? All those who were interviewed for this thesis acknowledged the severity of the changes that were introduced by Rogernomics. With the benefit of hindsight, the majority of the miners understand why the changes were necessary. Many of those interviewed were in their 20s with young families at the time of corporatisation. Their responses to redundancy were varied; some had alternative employment organised before 1 April 1987, others went into business for themselves. Some left Huntly in search of work within New Zealand, others chose employment offshore. However, all returned to the area eventually.

Understandably, the miners who had served a tradesman apprenticeship found it relatively easy to find work post 1987; those who had worked exclusively as miners were less fortunate. Although mining was a challenging occupation, the attraction to the industry was strong and many of those who were made redundant in 1987 were subsequently employed by CoalCorp, and its successor, Solid Energy.

Pragmatic is one word which could be used to describe the Huntly miners. Although they freely share their thoughts and opinions about Rogernomics and the changes which occurred, it is obvious that some of them suffered tremendously as a result of the job losses. It was stressful for those with young families especially if they had worked exclusively in the mining industry. Some miners used their redundancy towards purchasing a family home while others put the money towards their mortgages. For many the redundancy money was all too soon gone.

The Huntly community has recovered from 1987 but it is a different town now. The retail area has changed significantly and there is no longer the wide variety of goods available. The job losses affected business confidence and between 1987 and 1991 40% of Huntly retailers had closed their doors. This, coupled with Hamilton's expansion, means that many locals now travel to one of two large shopping facilities on the city outskirts. Indeed food-based retailers are predominant in Huntly in 2010. Attempts to

attract new industry to the town have been relatively successful, although the two main employers, Genesis Energy and Solid Energy are still energy focussed. No major employers were attracted to the area despite the best efforts of the Huntly Enterprise Agency in the 1980s. Most of the new businesses which have been established are considered small to medium enterprises.

While the town has recovered and businesses have been established it is obvious that there still residual effects of Rogernomics in Huntly. Intergenerational employment appears to be have been replaced by intergenerational poverty. Rogernomics is often cited as one of the precursors to the socio-economic challenges which towns like Huntly face, and there is no doubt that the changes which occurred in 1987 as a result of corporatisation have allowed these issues to take hold. Huntly real estate slumped in the wake of the redundancies as many families left the area in search of work. This made the cost of living in Huntly more affordable. It appears to the Huntly locals that many of the people who settled in their community after 1987 do not have the same investment in their mining town. Depending on a Work and Income benefit has become a way of life for many.

It is challenging for those with an investment in the social fabric of Huntly to address the issues which poverty presents. The police and local schools regularly witness the evidence of social maladjustment. Huntly College works hard to provide positive role models for pupils so they have options and potential. Poor literacy and numeracy skills are an ongoing issue for Huntly College. For some families, overcoming their situation is difficult. Domestic violence is rife in Huntly, a symptom of frustration and stress. There is a saying 'it takes a village to raise a child' and in Huntly some children definitely require the community's help.

How does a community face up to these new challenges and whose responsibility is it to address them? While it is not necessarily the miners or their families who are suffering in Huntly in 2010 it is obvious to those involved in the community that there is considerable distress. As a community, the issues that Huntly faces today can be seen as a direct result

of the challenges that it faced in 1987. Huntly bears scars, not just on the landscape from the mining industry, but also within the community. Poverty is an everyday issue for some families. Dysfunctional home lives are challenging children of all ages. However, there are many people within the community working hard to overcome these challenges and provide a brighter future for Huntly's youth. The ties within Huntly are still strong, and for many mining families there is nowhere they would rather be. The miners survived the adversities of the 1980s with the community's support. Perhaps the challenge for the miners going forward is to focus on the generations who have followed them. Huntly's youth are the future of this mining community, and many of them have their own set of hardships which they must conquer. It is unlikely they will be able to overcome them without the community's support.

Epilogue

Huntly in 2010 is similar to Huntly in 1987. Solid Energy is still the biggest employer, with operations underground at East Mine and opencast at Rotowaro. Peter Harris has been the mayor of the Waikato District for the last nine years and will be retiring at the end of the current term. During his tenure he has seen many changes within the Huntly community. ‘From a personal perspective, when I stood for the mayoralty I noticed during the campaign that the people of Huntly used to drop their heads a wee bit. I have noticed now that people are becoming much prouder of their town.’³⁶⁰ Peter sees the future of Huntly tied closely with the future of the northern Waikato and when he discusses this he encompasses the area south of the Bombay Hills including the townships of Meremere, Te Kauwhata, Rangiriri and Huntly. As part of the new Auckland super city Pokeno will also become part of the Waikato District.

Peter sees the future of Huntly and the greater northern Waikato as only positive and one that is filled with many opportunities. State Highway One is going to be rerouted and will bypass Huntly and Ngaruawahia, with the proposed route heading away from the river behind Taupiri mountain and eventually through to Cambridge. This major project will start within the next two years and Peter sees this as a positive chance for both Huntly and Ngaruawahia to maximise their tourist potential.

Tourism could be the way forward for the Huntly community and Peter envisions a time when both Huntly and Ngaruawahia will maximise their tourism opportunities. He foresees Huntly becoming the energy capital of New Zealand, due to its mining and electricity operations. Ngaruawahia has the chance to capitalise on its close ties with the Kingitanga and become the culture capital of New Zealand. At present 37 buses per day stop in Huntly at the River Haven Café which is next to the Huntly I-Site, and opposite the Huntly Power Station. Once the highway has bypassed Huntly and Ngaruawahia it is Peter's hope that tourists will make use of the more scenic option by driving beside the

³⁶⁰ Peter Harris [interview], Ngaruawahia, 16 March 2010.

Waikato River between these two communities. He would like to see pull off areas beside the river where mining memorabilia and information is displayed. Peter hopes that Tainui will seize the opportunities for tourism and host visitors at the local Huntly West marae, providing them with a cultural experience similar to that which is provided presently in Rotorua.

In the last five years two facilities have opened up in the Northern Waikato and both have had an impact on the Huntly community. Spring Hills prison opened in September 2007 and has facilities to cater for 640 prisoners. When double-bunking is introduced the capacity will rise to 900. The prison has provided opportunities for local contractors as part of this expansion. There have also been employment opportunities through the Ministry of Justice within the facility itself.

Hampton Downs³⁶¹ is a world class facility located 15 minutes north of Huntly which hosts a wide variety of motor sports and other events. Set in 450 acres the facilities available include high end accommodation, lifestyle blocks, permanent housing, conference facilities and a motor sports racetrack. Eventually Hampton Downs will have a range of showrooms for high end cars and a large industrial area catering for motor sports. The facility hosts a number of motor sport events and 'if it comes within the parameters of the of the car industry they are prepared to look at it.'³⁶² This facility will support future tourism in the northern Waikato region because of the large volume of people who attend events there.

Peter acknowledges that businesses in Huntly continue to struggle due to the small population and the proximity to large retail facilities like The Base on the outskirts of Hamilton. While there are some local shops and businesses that continually perform well, others struggle. The retail business opportunities in Huntly are limited and Peter's opinion is that while it will continue to function as a service centre for the surrounding rural area, new retailers will always struggle to establish themselves.

³⁶¹ www.HamptonDowns.com

³⁶² Harris, [interview].

While Peter Harris views the entire northern Waikato area as one area Kim Bredenbeck has a more Huntly-centric view. Kim wears a number of hats within the community and as such has a well developed opinion of Huntly. Kim is the manager of the Waikato Enterprise Agency (WEA) which has its origins in the Huntly Development Agency which Barry Quayle established in 1987. Kim has been employed by the agency since 1989 and is heavily involved in the Huntly community. She is also the chairperson of the Huntly College Board of Trustees, the chairperson of Huntly Community Link and is heavily involved in Victim Support at a local level and in a national role.

After twenty years of working for the WEA Kim and her staff face similar issues to those which challenged Barry Quayle. In 1989 when Kim started working for WEA there were 1200 people on the unemployment register in Huntly, in 2009 there was 43 and this year there is 130.³⁶³ The WEA is no longer focussed on employment and business opportunities; over the years its role has evolved to meet the social requirements of the Huntly community:

We do not do macro economic development. We are micro-focussed, we tend to work with individuals and our focus is around business, be it sustainability or start up. We also have a community arm so we are working with and encouraging sole parents to grow their skills around budgeting. Ours is a very pragmatic approach. I have got colleagues out in the region who are macro focussed around future needs and around research. That is not the space that we are in; our space is more about helping individuals. It is driven completely by our need. In some ways our objectives have not changed since 1989. We have got a community focus. There is no good us talking about industrial land needs when we have got a business here struggling and they need to survive now. Economic development can be a very different issue to every area because of where you are located and being responsive to the needs of your community. It is micro-driven and clearly that is because of the make up of our community and the issues that impact on that. The social issues do rub over hugely for us into the other stuff. My involvement in the high school which started five years ago was an economic development issue for the community.³⁶⁴

In her role as Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Huntly College Kim sees many challenges. Huntly has a significant youth issue and Kim sees that as a real concern. In

³⁶³ Kim Bredenbeck, [interview], Huntly, 22 March 2010.

³⁶⁴ Bredenbeck, [interview].

the past 12 months the issue has become worse, although she is not sure why. There have been a lot of break-ins in Huntly and there is an increase in the amount of fighting. It is challenging for the school to address the needs of some of its pupils:

In 2002 I met the principal of Huntly College who showed me that 80% of the pupils could not read or write to any decent level, and the roll was 230 and falling. I came back to work and said to my board "I would like to stand for the BOT because I think this is an economic development issue." The principal was sacked a week later, the board was sacked. The Education Review Office (ERO) put in a commissioner. We had the highest level of expulsions and stand-downs in the country. We had a roll which was 90% Maori. The school was in total chaos. We now have a roll of 350 and it has been that for the last two years. We have done two exclusions in the last five years. We do not have many stand downs. We got a stunning ERO report.

We have got a philosophy that we will not chuck kids out of the school. We spend a lot of money keeping kids engaged. We get kids from shit family backgrounds. They are coming in and they are testing at an 8 year old level for reading. These kids cannot read or write. They have dysfunctional home lives. Sports, dance and performance sometimes are the only saving grace for these kids. We know that we are getting good academic outcomes for our kids. Our Maori male boys are performing at Decile 9. Our Maori girls are the worst in the country, and that is because we can't keep them at school. They are leaving school at 16, pregnant, never to return. We are a Decile 1 school. We have put a lot of focus on our girls this year. We have tried to sex up the subjects, to do hair dressing, to do whatever. We are still not getting these kids to stay here. We have some fantastic female role models in our school. We have a fantastic female role model on our board and she is starting to give us some honest feedback. This is going to be our focus for the next 12 months.

Truancy is still an issue. We know when we take Year 9, we test them and we put them into either classes or home rooms. In home rooms they have got one teacher, Maori, primary school trained. The kids do not need books; they do not need pen and paper. They just need to turn up. If we can get them there every day for 80% of the time, which is 4 days out of 5, we can get them above the national average in six months for numeracy and literacy. Then we can stream them into main stream classes. The biggest challenge is to get them there that many times. It is not always their fault. Often they are left at home to baby sit, so it is a real tough one. It is almost like a cultural thing within their families, that mind set, and it is really difficult to shift. We try desperately to get parents through the gate and we are doing that better.

The social issues which Huntly College faces are endemic and the provision of social services in Huntly is something that Kim is very passionate about. As such, she is the

chairperson of Huntly Community Link which has been a very successful venture into getting social support services into the community.

The Huntly Community Link model of integrated services has been operating for 12 months and it is the most successful model in the country. Work and Income (WINZ) have provided a building designed for the whole community. It is about someone only having to tell their story once.

We have 27 partners in there and they can be there every week, once a week, once a fortnight. We have got people and organisations – it is about bringing city services into the community and helping people access them. Instead of them [the client] telling you, and you referring them to Hamilton, and them never going, this is about getting them access straight away. We have got the process fairly fine tuned around the sharing of information so clients sign up to allow that [information sharing] to happen. They nominate who the information can be shared with. It is client focussed.

The services include the Maori Land Court, Hamilton Law Society, Inland Revenue Department. The WEA is there two half days a week doing Curriculum Vitae. We run the Back-to-Basics programme there, which is working with sole parents. There is Work-Wise and Work-Bridge programmes, working with people with mental health issues and those with disabilities. There is a lot of health stuff, anti-smoking.

It is not just for people on a benefit, it is for everyone in the community who wants to access it. Our single biggest weakness is advertising as there was no budget for that. We have got an advisory group made up of six non-government organisations and six government organisations sitting at an advisory level. We have developed a charter and terms of reference. When people sign up to come in, this is the way that it is, and these are the rules. When Janey [employee of WEA] is down there, she is part of the staff there. There is a sense that they are all working together, they are definitely solving issues for people and the process has been a really smart one and it works really well. It is free, there are meeting rooms that are free for members of the community, and community groups are meeting there after hours and on the weekends. All the resources, the photocopying is all free. The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) have stepped away, they are just one partner but they do foot the bill.

Kim states that the biggest issue facing the Huntly community is family violence.

‘According to the statistics there is more than one incident a day, even though unemployment is relatively low. The Huntly and Matamata WINZ offices are the best in the country. You have a 40% chance of getting a job within three weeks of registering with them. They have got some very good guys out there touting for work. Economically

we haven't even suffered that much in the recession.' Although unemployment is not a pressing issue in Huntly like it has been in the past there is still beneficiary dependence. 'There are a whole heap of people in Huntly on the Domestic Purposes Benefit, it is a lifestyle.'

Kim is fairly pragmatic when thinking about Huntly and its social issues. 'It is not just Huntly's problems. We get captured by our own little issues and think that we are the only ones but we are not.'

Appendix 1: Table of Interviews

Interviewee	Time and place of Interview	Interviewees involvement in Huntly
Robyn and Lorna Wright	30 June 2007, Dunedin	Ex-mayor of Huntly, and his wife
Barry Quayle	29 October 2008, Hamilton	Manager of HDA in 1987
Ian Whyte	30 October 2008, Glen Afton	Ex SCM employee
Interviewee G	30 October 2008, Huntly	Ex SCM employee
Karl Crook Senior	3 November 2008, Hamilton	Ex SCM employee
Bob Tukiri	3 November 2008, Huntly	Huntly kaumatua
Rosemary Curle	3 November 2008, Huntly	- Deputy principal of Huntly College - Huntly business owner in 1987
John Cope	4 November 2008, Huntly	Ex SCM employee
Bill Munden	6 November 2008, Huntly	- Ex SCM employee who was Technical Services Manager in 1987 - Involved with Job Search Scheme in 1987 - Involved with Huntly Food Bank
Lance Slater	14 November 2008, Huntly	Ex SCM employee
Graham Hunt	15 November 2008, Huntly	Ex SCM employee
Brett Glass	15 November 2008, Huntly	Ex SCM employee
Karl Loveridge	15 November 2008, Huntly	Ex SCM employee
Dave Adams	17 November 2008, Glen Afton	Ex SCM employee
Richard Kearsley	17 November 2008, Glen Afton	Ex SCM employee
Andrew Inglis	17 November 2008, Huntly	Ex SCM employee
Robert Gamble	18 November 2008, Raglan	Ex SCM employee
Paul Baker	24 November 2008, Huntly	Ex SCM employee
Blair Donaldson	26 November 2008, Huntly	Huntly Police Officer
Reupene Renata	26 November 2008, Hopuhopu	Ex SCM employee
Max Noda	27 November 2008, Huntly	Ex SCM employee
Jane Bryden	4 March 2009, Christchurch	State Services Commission staff member who worked in Huntly in 1987
Peter Harris	16 March 2010	Mayor of Waikato District
Kim Bredenbeck	22 March 2010	Manager of Waikato Enterprise Agency

Appendix 2: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Some of these questions may have been used, if required, to prompt interviewees into conversation.

How long have you lived in Huntly?

Were your family involved in mining?

How long were you employed by State Coal Mines?

What position did you have?

Had you worked in any other industry besides the mining?

Did you choose the redundancy package or were you made redundant?

Can I ask how you felt when you heard about the job losses in 1987?

What is your overwhelming memory from that time?

What is your understanding as to why you were made redundant? e.g. public sector reform, lack of coal markets, more efficient business practise

If you do not mind me asking, what did you do with your redundancy package?

Were you interested in buying one of the State Coal Mines houses in 1987?

If yes, were you successful?

Did you look for another job after you were made redundant?

If yes, how successful were you?

Did you have to go onto the unemployment benefit?

What impact do you think that the redundancies had on Huntly at the time?

It has been reported that a lot of families left the Huntly area in 1987 and pursued other opportunities, for example, jobs in Australia. Do you know anyone who left? What effect did that have?

Do you think there is still any effect from 1987 on Huntly now?

Did you use any of the support organisations that were put in place at the time? Rosser Street.

Looking back, do you think that the layoffs were a good thing for you personally? If so, why?

Again looking back, how do you think Huntly has changed since 1987? Better or worse?

How do you think the Huntly community is now?

If you could see one thing done to the town what would it be?

Did you subsequently work for CoalCorp or Solid Energy?

Appendix 3: Huntly Business Telephone Listings

Business Name	Location	Year Business No Longer listed in Phone Book
AA Finance		1992
All That Jazz	Main Street	1990
Allen Fabrics	64 Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Allens Sewing Boutique	84 Main Street	1998
Aluminium Industries Huntly Ltd.	Great South Road	Listed in current phone book
ANZ Bank	160 Main Street	Listed in current phone book
ATA Travel Ltd.	143 Main Street	1988
BOP Fertiliser Ltd.	18 Wright Street	1994
BNZ	Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Barrow K Auto Electrician	14 Main Road	1989
Bartholomew Timbers	Great South Road	1988
Battrums TV Radio Electrical Services Ltd.	Main Street	1989
Beddis GB Electrical Contractors	112 Harris Street	Listed in current phone book
Bendon Industries Ltd.	Main Street	1997
	Glasgow Street	1991
Bert Shead Real Estate	Main Street	1995
Bill's Place	Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Blue Bird Restaurant Ltd.	Main Street	1991
Bossad's Book Shop	138 Main Street	1991
Brighton Dairy	110 Main Street	2003
Browne Rod Menswear	96 Main Street	1992
Cathie's Coffee Lounge	67 Main Street	1988
Cawsey's Junior World	92 Main Street	1998
Centre Court Water Beds	Main Street	1994
Challenors Stationers and Fancy Goods	161 Main Street	1999
Challinor and Staines Ltd.	90 Main Street	Operating under a different business name, now called Pharmacy on Main.
Checkout Supermarket	cnr William and Glasgow Street	1988
Clays Transport Ltd.	15 Parry Street	1992
Cobra Exhaust Services	Great South Road	1990
Collins Camera and Gift Centre	78 Main Street	1989

Business Name	Location	Year Business No Longer listed in Phone Book
Cowley Stanich and Co Chrt'd Accts	224 Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Cross Country Rentals Ltd	16 Harris Street	Listed in current phone book
Dean Funeral Services	32 William Street	Listed in current phone book
Elders Pastoral	Main Street	1996
Ellis and Burnand Ltd	Great South Road	1994
Farmers Trading Co.	Main Street	1989
Fergusons Radio Service	88 Main Street	1989
Frank Healey Motors	Great South Road	1989
Fred's Store	Gordon Street	1991
Fry Wilson Todd and Co.	Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Gardners Pharmacy Ltd	Bridge Street	1991
Gill William and Sons Ltd	Great South Road	Listed in current phone book
Ginger Molloy Motorcycles Ltd.	Main Street	2006
Gunn Graham Regd. Master Builders	85 Hakanoa Street	Listed in current phone book
Hakanoa Prime Meats	121 B Hakanoa Street	Listed in current phone book
Hamilton Medical Laboratory	Main Street	1993
Harrison Grierson Consultants Ltd.	Main Street	1996
Hayfield Investments Ltd.	P O Box 56	1988
Healey Tom Electrical Consultants	46 Upland Road	1992
Huntly Bathroom Showroom	27 Ralph Street	1990
Huntly Beehive Ltd.	82 Main Street	1999
Huntly Bowling Club Inc.	Domain	Listed in current phone book
Huntly Car Wreckers Ltd.	414 Great South Road	2002
Huntly Computer Services Ltd.	Main Street	1997
Huntly District Vet Club	Main Street	Vet is still operating in Huntly in same premises
Huntly Drycleaners	Main Street	2005
Huntly Engine Reconditioners	420 Great South Road	1992
Huntly Fertilizers Ltd.	15 Wright Street ???	1997
Huntly Fibrous Plasterers	155 Hakanoa Street	1992
Huntly Florist Centre	56-58 Main Street	1992

Business Name	Location	Year Business No Longer listed in Phone Book
Huntly Freight and Haulage	95 Bailey Street	1992
Huntly Fruit Centre	119 Main Street	1992
Huntly Golf Club Inc.	Te Ohaki Road	Listed in current phone book
Huntly Gun Club	McVie Road	Listed in current phone book
Huntly Gym Club	Wright Street	Listed in current phone book
Huntly Hardware Supplies Ltd.	55 Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Huntly Hire Centre	William Street	Listed in current phone book
Huntly Hotel	Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Huntly Jewellers	106 Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Huntly Joinery Ltd.	P O Box 170	1989
Huntly Meat Supplies	Main Street	1992
Huntly Open Fruit Mart Ltd.	188-191 Main Street	1992
Huntly Plumbers and Drainage	27 Ralph Street	1992
Huntly Press Ltd.	Main Street	1992
Huntly Printing Works	Main Street	1991
Huntly Quarries	Jackson Road	Listed in current phone book
Huntly Real Estate	Main Street	1996
Huntly Rugby Club	Huntly West	1990
Huntly Sandblasting and Painters	Great South Road	1988
Huntly Sheepskin and Souvenirs	108 Main Street	1988
Huntly South Rugby League Club	William Street	2004
Huntly Sports Centre Ltd.	76 Main Street	1993
Huntly Squash Racquets Club Inc.		1990
Huntly Steel Fabricators	Great South Road	1989
Huntly Taxi Radio Base	Main Street	2004
Huntly Thistle Soccer Club	Domain	Listed in current phone book
Huntly Travel Centre Ltd.	130 Main Street	2009
Huntly United League Club	Davies Park	1989
Huntly West Bowling Club Inc.	Semple Street	Listed in current phone book
Huntly West Laundromat	Harris Street	1988
Huntly West Radiators	Bridge Street	2001
Huntly West Sports Complex	Western Road	2004

Business Name	Location	Year Business No Longer listed in Phone Book
Huntly West Takeaways	Bridge Street	1994
Huntly Yacht Club		2004
Irenes Ladieswear Specialists	Main Street	2002
John Brien Motors Ltd	Great South Road	1989
John Holmes Motors Ltd	Harris Street	1999
Kerr and Thorburn Builders Ltd.	P O Box 156	1989
Kosoof L and Sons	116 Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Louise Delicatessen	Main Street	1991
Lower Waikato Rugby Sub Union	Huntly West	1993
Ludwig Engineering	30 William Street	Listed in current phone book
McDermott and McIntosh Solicitors	Main Street	Listed in current phone book
McDonald Tony Electrical Contractors	121 Kimihia Road	1991
McGaughran Mike Plumbers	2 Onslow Street	Listed in current phone book
McInally HS Car Painters	368 Great South Road	2003
Mahon K E Steam Clnng and Painting	20 Lakeview Terrace	Listed in current phone book
Mayfair Shoe Store	Main Street	1995
Mayson Welding and Engineering	Wright Street	1991
Meyer H and Sons Ltd	Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Morgan's Superette	121 A Hakanoa Street	1991
Morris Doug Ltd. Home Appliances	93 Main Street	1998
Morris Doug Service Centre Farm and Electrical	366 Great South Road	1990
Murray B J Reg. Mstr Builder	4 Jacksons Road	1991
National Bank of NZ Ltd	123-125 Main Street	
National Mutual Group Of Co.	86 Main Street	1999
NZI Life Ltd.	Garden Place	1999
NZ Insurance Co. Ltd	Main Street	1998
Nicoal Fashions	8 Russell Road	1992
North End Motels		Listed in current phone book
Nu Look Aluminium Products		Listed in current phone book

Business Name	Location	Year Business No Longer listed in Phone Book
Oak Toyota Ltd. LMVD	43-45 Great South Road	2000
O'Callaghans Ltd.	66 Main Street	1997
O'Reillys Opencast	River Road	Listed in current phone book
Paramount Tyres	Great South Road	Changed to Goodyear in 2003
Peden Maurice Panelbeater	Bridge Street	Listed in current phone book
	Great South Road	
Penny's Place	Main Street	1988
Petes Panel Works Ltd.	414 Great South Road	2004
Phillips and Impey	104 Main Street	1988
Pit Stop Road House	160 Great South Road	1990
Placemakers	Great South Road	Listed in current phone book
Ready Mixed Concrete	Main Road	Changed to Holcim in 2003
Riverlea Dairy	Harris Street	Listed in current phone book
Roberts Barry Pharmacy	Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Roberts Bros. (1983) Cycle Dealers	94 Main Street	1988
Roberts Hairdressers	100 Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Royal Cake Shop	20 Main Street	1990
Rudds Manufacturing Ltd.	56 William Street	1991
Shands Bakery	Great South Road	1991
Skip's Restaurant	510 Great South Road	2005
Smith's Energy Centre	Great South Road	1990
Snapes Dennis Panelbeaters	Main Street	2008
Somerwell Electronics	36 Russell Street ???	1996
Southern Cross Building Society	78 Main Street	1989
Southern Cross Fisheries	117 Main Street	Listed in current phone book
Stevenson W and Sons Ltd. Huntly Quarry	Huntly West Road	Listed in current phone book
Sweetman and Sons		Listed in current phone book

Business Name	Location	Year Business No Longer listed in Phone Book
Taniwharau Rugby League Club	Harris Street	Listed in current phone book
The Good News Shop	Civic Centre Main Street	1988
The Magic Touch	Main Street	1998
The Meat Centre	112 Main Street	1990
The Vege Den	William Street	1988
The Wine House	65 Main Street	1989
Three-D Produce Ltd.	Great South Road	1989
Times Waikato Newspapers	Garden Place	1993
Tinney Brian Motors Ltd.	Great South Road	2003
Tire Welders Waikato Ltd.	272 Great South Road	1996
Todd Paul Ltd. Jeweller and Watchmaker	Main Street	1988
Topp Florists	Main Street	1990
Travel Centre Huntly	130 Main Street	2000
Trend Hair Salon	Bridge Street	1988
TRT Huntly	512 Great South Road	1991
Trust Bank Waikato	Main Street	Changed to Westpac
Tudor Rose Beauty Salon	Main Street	2009
Uncle Tom's Bakehouse	Bridge Street	1990
Video Dungeon	47-49 Main Street	1991
Village Car Sales Ltd.	Main Street	1989
Wacko Burger Bar	Main Street	1991
Waikato Rugby League	Davies Park	1997
Wallbanks Supermarket	Bridge Street	1991
Warnocks Ltd. Mens and Boyswear	Main Street	1991
Watson B and G Earthmoving	116 Great South Road	1991
West Side Videos ???	Bridge Street	1998
Westside Dairy	Bridge Street	1993
White D. Carpenter	Great South Road	1992
Winstone Refractories Ltd.	Rayner Road	1988
Woody's Upholstery	William Street	2000
Wrightson Appliances	Main Street	1988
Wrightson Dalgety	Main Road	1989
Wykes Alf and Sons Ltd.	35 William Street	Listed in current phone book

Appendix 4: Yellow Pages Listings

Business Name	Location	Year Business No Longer listed in Phone Book
Chartered Accountants		
Cooper Owen R	Main Street	1989
Lowdnes Ryan	Main Street	1989
Auction Rooms		
Huntly Auction Mart	Great South Road	1988
Auto Electrical Services		
Huntly Motor Co. Ltd	8 Ralph Street	1988
Automotive Dismantlers		
Ralph L and P	518 Great South Road	1992
Bricklayers		
Flowerday M	McVie Road	1990
Green R	Upland Road	1991
McKay R A	1/108 Hakanoa Street	1989
Builders and Building Contractors		
Brooks P F	20 Onslow Street	1999
Kenyon Steven	62 Fairfield Street	1989
Bus Services		
Simpsons Bus Services		1991
Butchers Retails		
Dow Geo Ltd.	Bridge Street	1995
Rodger Ian Ltd.	Main Street	1990
Chiropractors		
Huntly Chiropractors Clinic	132 Main Street	1989
Dentists		
Forrest T R	178 Main Street	1995
Wright R A	Main Street retired	
Department Stores		
Pawson Gary J.	Bridge Street	1990
Woolworths NZ Ltd	Main Street	1992
Earthmovers		
Trenouth J A	15 Mary Street	1993
Electrical Contractors and Electricians		
Kevin Hally Electrical	4 E Bailey Street	1989
McDonald Tony	Kimihia Road	1991
Fibrous Plaster Manufacturers		
Deverall R L Ltd.	47 Hakanoa Street	1992
Footwear Retailers		
O'Callaghan Shirley and Bill Ltd.	66 Main Street	1990
O'Callaghan Shoe Salon	135 Main Street	1989

Business Name	Location	Year Business No Longer listed in Phone Book
Fruiterers and Greengrocers		
Jack the Slashers		1989
Gift Shops		
The Gift Box	Main Street	1989
Grocers General		
Huntly and District Co-op Society Ltd.	Main Street	1989
Men's Outfitters		
Bryce Rod Menswear Ltd.	Main Street	1989
Milk Bars		
Gaiety Milk Bar	250 Main Street	1989
Painters and Paperhangers		
Thompson MB	45 Upland Road	1988
Painters and Paperhangers Members of Master Trade		
Janssen J	56 Russell Road	1990
Black J W	16 Fairfield Avenue	1990
Panel Beaters		
Collins Kerry	Williamson Road	1989
Physiotherapists		
Tham Mrs L Z	328 Great South Road	1989
Signwriters		
Commercial Markings Ltd	P O Box 165	1989
Tearooms		
Penny's Place		1989
Theatres		
Huntly Cinema	William Street	1989

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