UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND.

THESIS

Presented for the Examination

for

M. A. and Honours

in

HISTORY

by

"ALISH". W.J. Gardner.

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November, 1936.
THE EFFECT OF THE ABOLITION OF THE PROVINCES
ON POLITICAL-PARTIES IN THE NEW ZEALAND
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 1876-7.
Sir George Grey (Thames, Auckland).
Leader of the Opposition 1874-1877.
Premier, Oct. 8th 1877 - Oct. 15th 1879.
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The photo of Grey is taken from Reeves' "Long White Cloud"; those of Vogel, Macandrey and Atkinson from gibert's "N.Z. Rulers and Statesmen" (1st. Edition), and those of Rolleston and Montgomery from Saunders' "History", Vol. II.
BREFACE.

This work aims to describe the disappearance of an election issue during the life of the Parliament which had been elected on that issue. The members of the House of Representatives in the sixth Parliament of New Zealand were elected to vote "Aye" or "No" on the question "Shall the Act for the abolition of the Provinces remain on the Statute Book?"

The elections of 1875-6 were fought between the two recognized parties of Abolitionists and Provincialists. The Ministry of Sir Julius Vogel which had been responsible for the policy of Abolition took its stand against the attacks of the Provincialists led by Sir George Grey who demanded the repeal of the Abolition Act of 1875. Candidates who gave themselves out as Abolitionists pledged themselves to support the Abolition policy of the Vogel Ministry, while the Provincialists were pledged to repeal the Abolition Act. The simplicity of the issue was a great advantage to the Vogel Government, but, as the narrative of events shows, the Abolition question was really settled at the elections.

The pledge of the Abolitionists to "consider favourably" the local government legislation of the Ministry could not be said to amount to an effective party tie, and its efficacy as such was put to the test when the attacks of the Provincialists had been beaten back for the last time.
The actual break-up of the party is traced and an estimate attempted of the part played by Major Atkinson’s Ministry in bringing about its own downfall.

The Provincialist party, though defeated at the polls, lived up to its pledge in a last struggle against Abolition, and the importance of their attack of the Provincialists as a link between the Government and its supporters is emphasized. The party owed its unity and fighting strength to Sir George Grey’s leadership, which I will consider in some detail as the focus of politics in the House during 1876 and 1877.

The formation of a "Middle Party" during 1877 broke up the old division of "Abolitionists" and "Provincialists", and brought about a new alignment of parties. The entry into office of Sir George Grey, and the part played by the leader of the ex-Provincialists in bringing forward new issues forms an important part of the discussion in later chapters. It was Grey himself who finally closed the question of the Abolition of the Provinces by the "colonialization" of the Land Fund. The failure of the professed Abolition Ministry in this respect is pointed out and accounted for.

The narrative ends with the entry into office of a Provincialist Premier and Ministry in an Abolition Parliament, weak at first, but strengthened by the accession of non-Provincialists. The cutting of ties with the past, and the confident hope for the future of the "Liberal" Ministry is the note on which this work will close.
In discussing the history of parties during the period under review the writer has endeavoured to keep in view, not merely its importance in the political development of the Colony but also its significance in relation to the general theory and practice of Parliamentary system. For this purpose a short chapter on government by party is added. The continuity of development is preserved by a preliminary chapter on the historical background in 1876; and in a final chapter an endeavour is made to estimate the importance of the period described both in the history of New Zealand politics and in the wider sphere of theory.

As will be seen from the bibliography I have had access to printed sources only. That limitations are thus imposed on the finality of this research cannot be denied, but of the materials at my command I have made a thorough use. Manuscript or private documents may do something to clear up "the seamy side" of the politics of 1876-7, (particularly in respect of the formation of the "Middle Party" in October 1877), but on questions of fact, the writer has been rarely forced to choose between the versions of events as presented in the two Christchurch papers, "The Press" and "The Lyttelton Times". In such cases the advice of Voltaire has been followed:

"Comment demeler le vrai entre l’adulation et la satire? Il n’y a peut-être qu’une regle sure, c’est de croire le bien qu’un historien de parti dit des héros de la faction contraire, et le mal qu’il sait dire des chefs de la siene. A l’egard des Memoires ecrits par les personnages interesses, s’ils s’accordent; ils sont vrais; s’ils se contraissent, doutes". (b).

Fortunately the partisan spirit was not greatly in evidence in the Christchurch papers during the years reviewed though they lost their detachment from the political parties during the elections of 1879.

The official publications and chiefly the volumes of "Hansard" do not present the same difficulties, but the writer has endeavoured to weigh the speeches of members, not according to their length but according to their matter and their reception in the House and in the press. The privilege of "doctoring" which members enjoy has not been overlooked.

There are several criticisms which may be directed against the work as it stands, and these I will endeavour to meet in advance. In quoting extensively from contemporary authorities, I have risked becoming "annalistic" in the manner of Hasted, but it has been my endeavour to achieve the spirit of 1876 and to make the work not merely a record of events but of opinion as well, and, to that end, to allow no voice but that of contemporaries to be heard in these pages.

It is true that the narrative might gain something in clarity by a study of "main currents" only, but "to simplify is to become inaccurate". (a). For this reason the "personal politics" of the period have been included in this survey in some detail. It is the writer's aim not to "interpret" (a). Prof. A. S. Turbeville in "History", Jan. 1933.
the period but to present a true and full record of it within the
limitation of the contemporary material at his disposal. The
immense importance of a change of Ministry on the political situ-
ation is suggested by lengthy chapters. The full treatment of
political developments, it is hoped, gives a true picture of the
history of the parties during the two years reviewed while avoiding
the detail of a "political history".

The "controversial" viewpoint of the standard histories will not be found here. This may, to a certain extent, be due to the lack of unpublished sources of information. The writer can honestly claim to have approached his subject with no
bias, and there is at no stage an attempt to present a case against
either men or measures, both of which it is hoped have been seen in
due proportion. I have stood outside the materials only to the
extent of considering alternative courses of action, usually those
seen but not taken. In speaking of "parties" the writer has en-
devoured to rid himself of the modern view of them in which every
departure from the two-party system is looked on as a fall from
grace. However the chapter on government by party will, it is
hoped, redress the balance against any lapse into a purely histor-
ical view (in the matter of method).

Finally it is hoped that the period has not been
seen out of proportion and that the close narrative of events has
not obscured the occasions for just censure on the politicians of
1876-77 for neglecting to take the long view.
TYPOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

Contemporary usage has been followed:

(I). In quotations where the original grammar is retained, except in regard to Americanisms such as in "honorable".

(II). In regard to names; Sir G. Grey and Mr. Fisher.

(III). According to "Hansard" and for clearness sake capitals are used for "Abolition" and "Provincialism" and words appertaining to them in every case where there is a party connotation. Also for Province and Land Fund (not of a particular Province). "Counties" set in inverted commas until actually in being as Counties. terms such as "localization" and "colonialization" which never attained to the status of party platforms remain in inverted commas.

Members' names on first appearance are followed by electorate and Province.

Abbreviations:

Auckland..................A
Wellington...............W
Hawke's Bay..............N.B.
Taranaki..................T
R Nelson...................N

Abbreviations.

Marlborough..............M
Canterbury................C
Westland...................W,C.
Otago......................O

Works mentioned in the bibliography are generally cited by short title.

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CHAPTER I.
GOVERNMENT BY PARTY IN THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM.

"Decision by parties is as much an expedient as lighting
by gas. In adopting it as a rule, we are not realizing
perfection but bowing to an imperfection". ————Gladstone.

(1). POLITICAL PARTIES.

The growth of democratic institutions has
been made possible through the rise of the principle of association.
"In democratic countries the science of association is the mother of
sciences; the progress of all the rest depends on the progress it
has made....If men are to remain civilized or become so, the art of
association must grow and improve in the same ratio in which the
quality of conditions is increased".(1).

The English contribution to the practice of
democratic association is the political party. Though the rise of
the modern form of democratic government in England has not lacked
apologists, it took the form of a struggle for power rather than a
contest of theories. Yet the rise of the parliamentary government
in England would not have been possible without the centuries of
experience and fortuitous circumstances which helped to make the
early political history of England. The growth and spread of poli-
tical consciousness had many sources and causes but it was the
strikes its roots so deep into the past that scarcely a single
feature of its proceedings can be made intelligible without

(1). de Tocqueville: quoted, Finer: "Theory and Practice
of Modern Government (1932) Vol 1
p.393."
reference to history". (2). From the experience of the English legislative are derived the institutions of parliamentary government which were copied by the newer democracies on the Continent, in America, and in the British Dominions, all of whom however, lacked the experience or the environment which was necessary for a perfect copying of the two great contributions of England to the theory and practice of government - namely the party system and the Cabinet system.

"The parliamentary system, like every national form of government, reacts upon, and strengthens the conditions of its own existence. It is based upon party and by the law of its nature tends to accentuate party". (3).

(II). THE PARTIES IN THE ELECTORATE.

"Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion". (4).

"The desire for responsible government is paramount; people wish not merely to represent their views but to make and unmake governments. (5).

without considering the history and nature of the electoral machinery through which the parties work, it is possible to discover the methods they use and the principles they adopt in competing for the suggreges of the electors. Parliament is sovereign, and constitutionally knows nothing of the people, but the legislature has lost power not merely to the executive but to the electorate.

Between the modern conceptions of the "mandate" and "delegation" and the classical theory of representation and the independence of members, the parties have endeavoured to strike the medium which will leave them in office, in the greatest possible degree unhampered by pledges, yet conscious of popular support. The parliamentarian acknowledges that his power is derived from the electorate, and his business is therefore to convert the desires of his constituents into statutes. The position however is that the parties interpret the desires of the electorate rather than the electorate expresses his wishes for the party to carry out.

The results of the "bargaining" which takes place between the actual members of the party and their prospective supporters is therefore presented before the electorate as the party's platform, which all the members of the party are pledged to support and which the electors accept as a fait accompli or reject by their votes.

Recent tendencies and the doctrine of the "mandate" have tended to transfer the decisive party battles from the legislative chamber to the election platform. A Ministry is elected and a party returned to support it not only to give effect to a policy, but to remain in office for the duration of a parliament.
Where the parties are in substantial agreement (fortunately a term of wide interpretation) on the forms of society and government, there is opportunity for disagreement on important questions which are yet not fundamental. Parties which cut themselves off from the existing order of society on vital questions, religious or racial or which seek to create a horizontal cleavage between the "haves" and the "have nots" are fatal elements in the parliamentary system.

English politics on the other hand have tended to group themselves round men who are the inheritors of the organization rather that the principles of the party they represent. "As neither party (in the English dualism) has a very definite body of principles to work upon each is disinclined to go to extremes".(6). This view becomes truer of a party the nearer that party approaches to office. The "swing of the pendulum" smoothes over the changes of government when they occur and politics becomes "the deeply interesting game, a never ending cricket match between the Blue and Yellow".(7).

Political parties in the parliamentary system are therefore associations within the State which aim to control the government by nominating men to the legislature who are pledged to support their interests.

(III). THE PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT.

"You choose a member indeed: but when you have chosen him, he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a member of Parliament". — Edmund Burke.

Government in the state must be a unit, but its unity in the parliamentary system is maintained organically because the parties wish to have all the essential reins of government in their own hands. Executive ministers are therefore chosen from and are responsible to a majority in the legislature the connecting link being the fact that both ministers and representatives are members of one and the same party. All parties must however bow to the necessity of a majority in the legislature. Control of the legislature is the first step in the control of the essential government of the country.

How is this majority maintained in the face of opposition? Observers who have viewed with disgust or amusement (according to their principles), the "stage-management" of parliamentary debates show little sympathy with the true principles (or better understandings) which lie at the basis of English party politics. The duly-prized member rising to give the minister his case, the artificiality of the opposition's objections on the principle that any objection is better than none, the dreary hours of "stonewalling" with the accompanying almost criminal waste of time, the sleepers on the back benches: these are only a few of the aspects of Parliamentary life which invite ridicule and criticism. They would be unintelligible without the party system.
Party government is not irrational: on the other hand it seeks to find its own level that is the level of the two-parties system or its operation is halting or actually at a standstill. Men are not sent to Parliament to represent their own views or anyone else’s. As in the electorate, so in the Parliament, the party is a unit, victory is the objective and unity the means no matter what the consequences. "A large majority of members do little more than vote, a few discuss, and a very small minority think". If their party is in power members must cheer on their leaders to success, if in opposition, any stick is good enough to beat the Ministers with only provided they can be by this means discredited.

Principles must not be allowed to obscure power. The achievement of every social purpose implies union but when this must be attained inside a system of government which is before all a struggle for power, the member in revolt against the party system, or propounding from the wilderness a new social idea finds himself impotent. He must get inside the party system and convert its leaders. Even when he has managed to move the electorate, its indignation can be expressed only negatively by turning out the government at the election. The only positive steps such a member can take is to form a party of his own, acknowledge the whole system, and offer up a prayer for his ideals and hope that something of them may still be left over after the inevitable bargaining and compromise. Party is king and where parties are well organized their touch on the electoral pulse is sure. In actual fact there are no possibilities for the Independent in the parliamentary system.
The parties are at liberty to judge the import of the new ideas in the electorate before they become questions of "practical politics". The skilled leader will judge accurately the psychological moment for their adoption into the party platform. On the other hand independence in the parliamentary system has come to mean political futility.

The case of the party waverer is even harder. He is a supporter for instance, of the Government because its general principles are in accordance with his own, but his view of them will still be his own. Two situations may arise in which he finds himself unable to give that vote for the government which is his prime duty as a party man.

It is inconceivable that every practical expression of the party's principles should please every member or any member entirely. Having once recognized the principle of compromise in the philosophy of the parliamentarian, the waverer will recognize, as the party system does, that the conflict is one between two great bodies of principle and he will certainly prefer the principles of his own party to those of the opposition. Actually this is only one side of the picture. The member with a measure of political aptitude will have opportunity to lay his views before the party leaders and if he can contribute anything to the party's stock of wisdom or influence he is assured of a good hearing.

The second situation is that in which the party has gradually lost touch with the electorate, its most criminal sin,
and finds itself faced with an issue for which its unreal political position has not prepared it. Its accepted principles do not teach the party what attitude it ought to adopt, and a sudden infusion of new ideas is not an easy thing for a party in a critical situation to undergo with public opinion far in advance. Past principles and past action are the heaviest liability of a party in this situation and ordinarily parties are an important part - where their appeal to the electorate is rational - the most important, from this source. Reputations have been won by party leaders in such circumstances but always by regaining control of public opinion in appearance, or in action, if necessary, and to move the whole party in such a direction is no mean feat.

In passing it may be noted that New Zealand Governments especially those of Seddon have never lacked the adroitness to disarm opposition by adopting its measures. Summing up it may be said that the crisis is the time when the reputations of new men and new ideas are made in party politics but they are always made in the direction of innovation or reconstruction, never of mere destruction. To the ordinary member falls the less glorious but necessary part of swallowing his principles, and following his leaders back into the fray. The spirit of continuity in party and in government is one which the parliamentary system seeks to preserve.

Such are the difficulties of the Government member, but whereas his views may infiltrate in the Statute Book as he himself has the opportunity to enter into the higher realms
of party leadership and active administration, the Opposition member has only one use and one privilege, to discredit the Government. If possible, in the process he must add to the credit of his own party. The idea of "His Majesty's Opposition" represents a high standard of political enlightenment.

Many observers have noted the paradox of the known political moderation which the parliamentary system has evolved and the situation of a privileged clique within the state who may insult, discredit, and what is worse impede the work of the government.

Actually the opposition orator thundering against the government or less official skirmisher twitting a disgraced and embarrassed Minister are talking even as their victims know they are talking with an eye to the Press gallery and a finger in the electoral wind. "The parties are really in the position of barristers arguing the case before a jury, that jury being the national electorate". (8). The experience and sense of responsibility necessary in the political advocate are often to be found on the left hand of the Speaker as much as on his right, especially when the Opposition is the acknowledged representative of almost half the voters in the country, and the Government frequently supported by a minority only of the electorates. Where long history and established traditions have established the rule of the "pendulum" in politics, Opposition leaders lack (8). Lowell op. cit. Vol 1, p.445.
the incentive to vigorous attack, as they know that the odds at
the next election are in the natural course of events heavily
weighted against the Government. For the young ambitious member
of the Opposition there is a double opportunity. Attack is more
spectacular than defence, and a new member with his name to make,
may build up a reputation in the House and in the electorate far
more easily than his counterpart in the Government ranks. Secondly,
he may infuse life into his own party and obtain for it a reputation
for vigorous action, as the electorate is apt to confuse downright
talk with hypothetical action along the same lines. Here as
elsewhere the voter likes to see a man who knows his own mind.

The "wilderness" is a hard master, and, if members
enjoy the privilege of unrestrained criticism there they must have
the perseverance and fortitude to keep up their attack in the face
of deadening political inaction. The "waste of capacity "which the
parliamentary system causes is an inevitable result of its logical
development.

"In every legislative body a vote is supposed to
express the sense of the House, and there is a universal fiction
that all the members are constantly present. This is far from being
the fact".(9). Besides maintaining a safe majority for the party
within call, Government Whips realize the importance of an impressive
majority. In their capacity as the day-to-day go-betweens of the
parties, Government and Opposition Whips keep a strict surveillance
over the cross currents of party politics. Where the Government's

(9). Lowell op. cit. 1 p. 448.
majority is small and precarious the tact of influence of the whip must be exercised at the most critical moment when waverers make their final decision before the division bell rings.

The real pressure on members however proceeds from the Cabinet. Theoretically its members may be "chosen" from the ranks of the legislature but actually the Cabinet, as the supreme party council exercises, or seeks to exercise, the closest centralized control over every sphere of the party's activity including the legislature. At every stage the Ministry maintains an effective control over the votes, and as far as possible, the opinions of its supporters in Parliament. By the initiation of all legislation which successfully passes into law, by the shaping of Bills in such a form that members of the party will have the greatest difficulty in voting against them, by the control of procedure and the nomination to parliamentary committees, the Cabinet may in the highest degree stifle the objections of private members, opponents and supporters, alike. Where party control is strong the members tend to resign themselves to the belief that Ministers are possessed of special knowledge and experience not available to others and that they will tend to know what is best both in regard to the administrative detail and the caprice of the electorate. The member of strong will can in any case impress his objections by cogent arguments in private consultation with Ministers, or else swallow most of his objections and win the gratitude of the Prime Minister by a vigorous defence of Government measures in the House.
In extremis, the Prime Minister may hold over the head of his party the fear of dissolution, and in proportion as party divisions are strong and the independence of members weakens by the payment of their election expenses by the party, its effect will be the greater, even as it is universally effective. All the oratory of Opposition leaders produces no effect on the members of the Government party, but dissolution is of all things that which a member is most reluctant to face. Logically, then, the Cabinet's control of Parliament is strong and tends to become stronger.

The Cabinet itself is according to the best theories of parliamentary government chosen by the leader of the successful party, and the position of the Prime Minister and the choice and solidarity of his Ministry are factors of the utmost importance in the party's organisation. Interests must be consolidated, reward for long service apportioned, new and spectacular figures introduced if necessary, but nowhere else there must be unity. First, because the Cabinet is the party's acknowledged head which must speak with no uncertain voice, and, secondly, the Cabinet as the co-ordinating body for all legislative and administrative departments must face the task of government as one mind. This is all the more difficult since great powers over particular departments are given to Ministers who have thus the temptation to pursue a military path. Moreover the Cabinet contains the greatest personalities of the party and the clashes of interest are accentuated by personal considerations. The Prime
Minister must keep track of all such tendencies and yet remain in the eye of Parliament and the electorate as the capable and respected leader of a great and loyal party. What the Premier says and does will weigh more than any other single factor in politics.

In fact through the rising importance of the "mandatory" nature of representation, Ministers stand more and more in the public eye, the focus of popular scrutiny as to how far the party is keeping its election promises, and in return they sweep with a comprehensive glance the sources of public opinion, the press "leader", the tendencies of thought and action in the great non-political bodies, in the Church, in industry, commerce and agriculture but maintaining for the most part a successful detachment whatever may be their ostensible concessions.

In a broad view of the parliamentary system, it has been the writer's endeavour to show the logical lines along which party politics develop. It will be seen in succeeding chapters how far the leaders in New Zealand politics at the time of the abolition of the Provinces took a "logical" view of parliamentary institutions.
CHAPTER XI.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND IN NEW ZEALAND IN 1876.
CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND IN NEW ZEALAND IN 1856.

Parliamentary institutions in New Zealand derive from an Act "to grant a Representative Constitution to the Colony of New Zealand", passed by the British Parliament in June 1852. In its general copying of the English form of government, the Act remains the foundation of the Constitution of the Dominion, but the institutions of local government which were set up in accordance with the provisions of the Act, lasted only a generation after their inauguration in 1853. In dividing New Zealand into Provinces with wide local powers of legislation and administration, the Act recognised the particular form which colonization had taken, and the geographical disunity of the country.

The Colony was to be divided into six "provinces", the capitals of which had been and were the six main centres of colonization. Each "province" was to have a superintendent and Provincial Council, with general legislative and executive powers. Certain exceptions were made in favour of the General Assembly of the Colony which in all other respects was to possess concurrent jurisdiction with the local legislatures and, in cases of conflict, an overriding authority. The Constitution Act did not set up a form of federal government in New Zealand. Actually, the hallmark of the federal constitution - a second chamber in the central legislature nominated by the local governments, or
elected on the basis of the local political divisions — was specifically rejected by the Colonial Secretary, Sir John Pakington, in drafting the Act of 1853.

During the period of provincial government in New Zealand, the usual opposition in the central legislative in the federal system between centralizing and localizing tendencies as represented in the first and second chambers respectively, was for many years actually reversed. It is true that the "nominees" form of the Legislative Council made it inferior in strength to the House of Representatives, though its members were nominated as representing the several provincial districts, the Upper House exerted its influence in the direction of strong central government. Its members, being drawn from the wealthier classes in the Colony, especially the "squatters", disliked the democratic tendencies of the Provincial Councils, especially the latter's land legislation.

On the other hand, a good proportion of the members of the Lower House consisted of Superintendents and their "tails", while the great majority, if not actually pledged to maintain the cause of the Provincial Governments in the General Assembly, were glad enough to exert what pressure they could on the General Government in favour of their Province, a process euphemistically known as "log-rolling". With most of them, financial considerations (especially the administration of "mate lands" in the provincial districts) weighed strongest, and this feeling in the end outweighed the attachment to provincial in-
stitutions, which grew up in New Zealand during the two decades and more of their existence.

Colonel Wynyard, in opening the first New Zealand Parliament had told the members that it would "rest with the General Assembly ... whether New Zealand shall become one great nation ... or a collection of ... petty states", but during the three years after the promulgation of the Constitution, the public works of the country were carried on by the Provincial Councils. It was unfortunate that the growth of the Colony to national (for want of a better word) status, took the form of a victory of the Central Government over the Provincial Governments. "Central and local authorities, in fact, regarded one another as rivals rather than as co-operating peers". (1).

The issues between the Central Government and the Provincial Governments were fought out in the House of Representatives. On the wider stage of the Central Assembly, it is true, the Superintendents gained the experience which generally checked their parochial tendencies and facilitated the metamorphosis to a national outlook. (2).

The all-important question of the allocation of the Colony's main source of public revenue - namely, the funds from the sale of waste lands - was settled by the "Compact of 1856":

(1). W. P. Morrell: "New Zealand". (Bonn) 1935, p. 35
the main provision of which was the handing over of land revenue and administration to the Provincial Governments.

The arrangement was, of course, nor legally binding, but the control of the permanent Waste Lands Committee of the General Assembly in practice fell into the hands of the provincial blocs in the two Houses, and the diversity of land laws which was the result, became later a powerful argument both for and against "Provincialism". The fact that this argument was regarded as a "gentlemen's understanding", gave some sort of moral sanction to the federalist pretensions of the Provincial Governments. On the one hand the southern provinces especially Canterbury and Otago, with their rolling plains or fertile hilly country were able to undertake important public works and immigration schemes. They were able to maintain a high minimum upset price for land, but in the north, where "Maori and fern" were substituted for "sheep and grass", Wellington maintained the low price system of Sir G. Grey, which had proved so disastrous in the first instance, and Auckland was willing to try any method which would encourage immigration. The latter Province fought hard to retain the capital of the Colony, and always resented the shift of the Central Government to Wellington in 1865.

The Provinces therefore contended not merely against the Central Government but against one another.

One great alternative to the centralisation of the government of the Colony, brought forward by the Provincialist party in
the General Assembly, was the "separation" of the Islands, but when it came to the point, the financial burdens of the Colony were too great for the Islands to bear separately, and there were not lacking men who deprecated the unnatural divorce of the two parts of the Colony which obviously had a common future, and the disavowal of the "Compact of 1856".

Until the early sixties the Provinces functioned as a primary factor in the Government of the Colony and the encroachments which the General Assembly made on their powers, for instance in the New Provinces Act (1858), were aimed only at the undue pretensions of the Provincial Governments. Certainly after 1864, however, they were on the defensive against the attacks of the General Assembly on their very existence. In that year Mr. Weld inaugurated his "self-reliant" policy and the members in the General Assembly got the habit of looking at the Colony's affairs from something like a "national" viewpoint. This was especially the case in the controversy with the Imperial Government over the withdrawal of the British Regiment from New Zealand in the late sixties.

At the same time the tradition of the "nine sturdy mendicants" was established, and, at the very least, one can say that the Provinces had by 1864 got the bad name which was to run them to death. The Domett Government of 1863 poured out money with a lavish hand, and the finances of the Provinces were shortly in hopeless disorder. Always at a disadvantage on account of the fact that they did not themselves
raise all the money which they spent (their loans had to be sanctioned by the Colonial Government), the Provinces could not deny that they had been responsible for the saddling of the Colony with a large unpopular debt - part of the "dead horse" which had to be "worked-off" in later years. They became the scapegoats (not wholly deservedly) of the Central Government, but the opposition which provincial groups in the House offered to salutary measures of retrenchment, did not improve their case. In the end, the Colony was to some extent put on its feet (in a financial sense) by reductions of the "provincial moiety" from the consolidated revenue of the Colony.

The partial rehabilitation of the Colony in 1869 gave the Provincialists their chance. Fox, the leader of the party, took office with Vogel as his Treasurer in that year. "The provinces, however, were almost past saving". The situation which the Fox Ministry faced, made any attempt to set about redressing the balance between the central and local authorities seem beside the point. Vogel, sent to bless the Provinces and give them some solid work to do, found a curse rising more easily to his lips. Not merely were the Provinces for the most part living from hand to mouth, but the whole Colony was threatened with the prospect of stagnation unless some effort were made, not perhaps on the scale that Grey envisaged when he called on the New Zealand Parliament to "make homes for the millions", but to ensure the future development

of the country by actively preparing for it.

The "public works policy" outlined by Vogel in his Financial Statement of 1870 sought to attract immigrants to New Zealand by making the Colony attractive. As for the ten millions which had to be borrowed to put his policy into effect, Vogel declared that if he were imposing great burdens on the Colony, he was piling up greater resources with which to meet them. The jeremiads of the critics were answered conclusively by the favourable voice of the elections of 1870.

For the task which Vogel envisaged, neither the resources of the Colony nor the efficiency of its government could be too great. There were obvious points on which the Provincial Governments could not compete (since they were to be competitors) with the Central Government. Such work as a national scheme of railways demanded a centralized control with a view to mapping out a national system for the future.

It was however understandable that the wealthiest Provinces, Otago and Canterbury, who were therefore the Provinces most capable of playing a part in Vogel's scheme, should regard the whole policy as nothing less than a bait to the needy North Island, and that it was their land funds which Vogel was dangling on his hook before the eyes of the greedy and impoverished northern Provinces. In the end it was their active opposition to schemes which a clear majority of the electorate had approved, which brought on their heads their own destruction. To the more salutary safeguards which Vogel
proposed to set up (admittedly at their expense) to provide security for the future repayment of railway loans, they offered a stubborn antagonism, while, on the other hand, willing to profit from the less salutary part of Vogel's policy. The Provincial Governments were prepared to accept their share of the borrowed wealth which was flowing into New Zealand, but they were not prepared to sacrifice the only real security the Colony had to offer, namely, the waste lands under their administration.

Vogel came to the conclusion during 1874, when the Provincialists in the House threw out his State Forests Bill, that as co-operators in a scheme of enterprise the Provincial Governments had been tried and found wanting. They had previously involved the Colony in debt and were apparently prepared to do so again, without this time, however, being able to make a substantial contribution to the development of the Colony on the scale which was now required. In their darker days their pretensions were remembered against them, and helped to underline the substantial financial arguments against their administration.

Moreover communication between the various provincial centres had so improved as to obviate any particularist tendencies. Vogel therefore brought forward resolutions for the abolition of the North Island Provinces, in accordance with powers which had been granted to the Central Government in 1868, by Act of Parliament.

The Provincial Governments themselves did not seem likely to inspire any strong defence. The smaller among their
number were now in the position of pensioners of the Central Government, and just at the time when solidarity among the various provincial groups in the House was most essential for the Provincialists, the wealthier Provinces were becoming more and more determined to defend their wealth.

On the other hand the "Centralists" found allies among the disgruntled Provinces which readily confused the unequal working of the provincial institutions, with the merits of the scheme itself. It was felt, for instance in Canterbury, that no good thing could come out of Provincialism.

The Provinces were not to die a natural death. Sir G. Grey, twice Governor of the Colony and the architect - in chief of the Constitution Act of 1852 came out of retirement at Kawau near Auckland to defend the institutions which he, more than any other man, had evolved. He spoke with a voice which appealed to many who were not strong supporters of the provincialist system. He denounced the "squatters" government in Wellington, and in the House, which he entered in 1874, as an Auckland member, he led the Provincialist party in a determined fight against the abolition of the Provinces.

In 1878 Major Atkinson, in the absence of the Premier in England, deduced solid financial arguments in favour of the Government's policy, and promised to secure to the people of Canterbury and Otago (especially the former) the benefits of Provincialism without its expense. The Provincialists, however
could not denounce the financial proposals of the Colonial Treasurer without loosening their hold on the principle for which they were contending, nor had they any answer to the charge that they had thrown away more opportune moments "for less drastic reform". (4). Besides being on the defensive they did not possess the resources of the Colonial Government for holding out financial advantages to the electors.

On the other hand, the Centralists could not offer the poorer provinces the hope of "colonialisation" of the provincial land funds, as they had pledged themselves to continue "localization" to some extent for the benefit of Canterbury and Otago. Between the two extremes the Government sought political "equilibrium" similar to that which Vogel had sought in 1870, though in different circumstances, and for different reasons.

The Act for the Abolition of the Provinces (1875) which was to apply to the whole Colony was owing to the exertion of the Provincialists and the Government's uncertainty as to the opinion of the constituencies postponed in its actual working until the close of the following session in 1876.

The usual quinquennial elections in 1875 were therefore held in circumstances which amounted to a dissolution of Parliament on the abolition of the Provinces. The Abolition question was the question of the day, and of the elections. Other questions which had exercised, or which were to exercise the Colonial Legislature, were either not yet acute enough to compete for popular attention or had entirely disappeared. The Colony was engaged (4). C.H.B.E. Vol. cit. p.117.
in digesting the effects of Vogel's policy of 1870, but the
debt in which New Zealand was thus involved was not forced on
the Colony as an unavoidable difficulty till the depression of
1879. The native question of previous years, by 1876,
was no longer a threat to the very existence of the European
settlements in the North Island, and the wise administration of
Sir D. McLean had opened up a new avenue for a solution of the
problem. The General Assembly was no longer the scene of
complacent utterances as to the impending dissolution of the
bond with the mother country, and the regiments which the Colony
had been so eager to retain at the expense of the British tax-
payer had likewise departed.

Finally the General Assembly was broadly
divided on an issue on which the candidates for election to the
new House must be found on one side or the other as Provincial-
ists. As a matter of fact, the candidates who had been strong supporters of the
Provinces have become wonderfully mild in support of their past
views. All of them admitted that the Provincial Governments
were generally defeated, and their place taken by more resolute
opponents of the demand provinces". (4).

CHAPTER III.

THE LAST FIGHT OF THE PROVINCIALISTS: GREY'S FORLORN HOPE.
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THE LAST FIGHT OF THE PROVINCIALISTS: GREY'S FORLORN HOPE.

The Parliament of 1875 met under circumstances which aroused "much curious speculation" as to the fortunes of Ministers and their policy in the newly-elected House. On the hustings in the latter months of 1875 and January 1876 the Government and their supporters had not ventured to extend the issue beyond the simple endorsement of the Abolition Act. It was their very good fortune to be able to take their stand in opposition to a principle - namely Provincialism - of which the electorate plainly disapproved. The Provincialist party had forced from Atkinson the concession that the Abolition should not come into full force until the last day of the 1876 session. In other words the situation practically amounted to a dissolution on the question of the abolition of the Provinces. Though there were some signs that the Opposition were inclined to nail one or two more planks to their platform in the shape of radical reforms, their opponents kept close to the simple issue.

In moving for the discharge of the Local Government Bill in the session of 1875, Sir J. Vogel had promised that the Government would bring forward a more comprehensive measure, if successful at the polls, in the next session, but between the Government's abolition policy in
its destructive and constructive aspects there was no essential connection. Apart from purely local and personal considerations (the election influence of which need not be considered here in speaking of the essential issue), members were elected to vote "Aye" or "No" on the question "Shall the Act for the Abolition of the Provinces remain on the Statute Book?" It was the business of the Government to bring forward an alternative scheme of local Government for the consideration of members, but as no definite programme had been propounded, the latter could not approve or condemn what they did not know. The "county" system already foreshadowed in outline was to be laid in its final form for consideration not before the electorate but before the House. Mr. Wakefield (Geraldine C.), for instance, stated during the 1878 session that he had never mentioned the "counties" during his election and that he had been elected on the simple issue of Provincialism versus Abolition.(1). The efforts of the Abolitionists were directed not to the "much needed reform" of provincial institutions but to their absolute destruction utterly regardless of what was to take their place. The popular voice was soon heard in favour of abolishing the provinces, without a question of what was to take their place.(2). Members thus possessed great power of great responsibility which would explain by itself their attitude to the Counties Bill when that long-

-awaited measure at last made its appearance in the House on 13th. July 1876.

The Opposition destroyed whatever case they may have had by failing to propound a great or spectacular alternative to Abolition; even Separation was not nailed to the Greyite masthead, and the divisions on Sir G. Grey's Separation resolutions took place after the Counties Bill was in the hands of members. Equally important in weighing the dice against the Provincialists was the fact that both Auckland and Otago, the strongholds of their party, were numerically under-represented in the House. Though containing between them more than half the population of the colony, they returned only 39 members in a House of 88. (3).

Politically speaking the Abolitionists were justified in not widening their platform, but the absence in England of Sir J. Vogel, the leader of the party, and the chief architect of the abolition of the Provinces, effectually excluded any chance there might have been of obtaining a clear pronouncement from the Government on the details of their future constitutional policy. (4).


(4). Mr. Joyce on Separation. Hans. XXI, p.301. "The Government proposals were withheld until we were in session some time." He protested that they had but a "brief space of time" to "become acquainted with them."
The elections were decided, as has been pointed out, on their past record. The only portion of that record put forward for unqualified rejection or approval was the Abolition Act. On many other points, notably financial policy, Government supporters reserved their attitude. So simple an issue left room for considerable reservations, as events were to prove.

Apart then from considerations of local or personal interests, the elections returned an absolute majority in favour of Abolition. To calculate exactly what that majority would be in terms of a division list in the House, was a task which neither of the Christchurch papers "The Press" and "The Lyttelton Times" felt able to undertake. Two factors militated against mathematical exactitude. The reservations and qualifications already mentioned made it impossible to nail down the full complement of members on any single issue, except, of course, an attempt by the Opposition to tear the Abolition Act out of the Statute Book, and it was supremely unlikely that the question of local institutions would be raised in that form.

On the other hand, there had been no general pledge by Opposition supporters to demand an unqualified revival of the Provinces. All professed themselves to be in favour of "modified" financial institutions but the real binding force and centre of loyalty in the party was not a measure but a man, Sir G. Grey, descending from his Elba at Kawau to lead the Provincialist party, and to plead with the people and their representatives where he had once commanded.
It will be convenient therefore to examine first the composition of the Opposition party. The Provincialists were, as a party, exclusively Otago and Auckland men, and their alliance had, since 1862, when Vogel had agitated for Separation, been one of the few regular features of party politics in the colony. It is true that as long as the Provinces lasted representatives from the same Province had voted in a bloc, essentially as a group, not as a party. It was Sir G. Grey's leadership which gave the Provincialists their party complexion. Outside Auckland and Otago there were not above half a dozen members not specifically pledged to Abolition. They might be termed "Independents" if the term did not imply a contrast with strict party loyalty everywhere else in the House. Two Superintendents, The Hon. W. Fitzherbert (Hutt W.), and Mr. Rolleston (Aven., C.), returned on purely personal grounds, expressed themselves in favour of "modified" Provincialism. Though both were experienced and respected public men, neither rallied a party round him on the election issue. Mr. Rolleston declared himself a Separationist but made no great efforts for the cause he professed while Sir W. Fitzherbert declared pointedly that his advocacy of Provincialism had come to nothing. What was important was that neither of them was personally favourable to Sir G. Grey, so that on any given Opposition measure or move the latter could not count them among his party. Two Wellington members, Mr. Brandon (Wellington C.), and Mr. Bunny (Wairarapa C.) and a Canterbury member, Mr. Montgomery (Amarca C.), had voted
111. MR. JAMES MACANDREW. (DUNEDIN CITY, OTAGO).
Leader of the Otago Provincialist group, 1876.
Minister for Public Works in the Grey Ministry 1877-9.
against the third reading of the Abolition Bill, but none of them was connected with the recognised Opposition party.

From Otago came a solid phalanx of seventeen members, the largest and most compact group in the House, "the usual seventeen", as newspaper correspondents came to describe them, during the session. They were the real Provincialists in the House, representing the last stronghold of Provincialism. Mr. J. Macandrew (Dunedin City), the Superintendent, also led the group in the House. Otago and especially its capital Dunedin felt that her treasured commercial primacy would gravitate nearer the centre of the colony if the provincial centres lost their official positions.

In Auckland itself twelve members out of the nineteen representatives of the province at least had been elected on a pledge to support Grey, on whose actions and leadership so much had obviously come to depend. It would be difficult to estimate exactly the forces in the electorate which worked in favour of Grey. Auckland's resentment at the transference of the capital to Wellington and Grey's personal prestige were probably the strongest.

The lack of any definite party connection except a pledge to support or consider favourably certain measures, between the Government and their supporters has already been noted. Outside the Treasury Benches the Ministers could hardly count on more than a dozen "thick-and-thin" supporters
and these were the "tails" of individual Ministers not the compact supporters of any one leader. In this respect the opposition had a tremendous advantage over the Government as the events of the 1877 session were to prove. Sir J. Vogel was absent at the time of the elections, and his successor as leader of the House, Major Atkinson, had even less personal popularity in the House than his predecessor. It may therefore be said that unlike the Opposition the Government lacked the leadership which gave their opponents a rallying point. Already the phrase "Continuous Ministry" was a byword in colonial politics, and it seems probable that the Abolition question cut across a move to break up this so-called "family compact" in New Zealand politics. Ministers with an eye to the main chance must have discerned quite clearly that when they had succeeded in setting up a new system of local institution a strong opinion in the House and the Colony would consider the tenure of office no longer in the interests of good government.

Their most certain support came from those who were satisfied not only with their destruction of the Provinces but with their post-Abolition settlement. The influence of the pastoral class, "the squatters", of the Colony in the electorate was undoubtedly decisive at this period in the history of New Zealand. (5). The Land Act of 1877 is a striking example of their influence, passed as its vital clauses were, in the face of Ministerial opposition.

The success of the Abolition policy at the polls was due to the strong support which it received in the Canterbury Province. The political position of this most successful of the Provinces was unique. If the politics of New Zealand had been fought along the classical lines of federalism a united front of the three "great Provinces", Auckland, Canterbury and Otago ought to have been a postulate in any political contest between central and local influences. The explanation of Canterbury's attitude lies in the position of her Land Fund, which was the largest in New Zealand, and a most gratifying proof of provincial prosperity. Secondly, the Government in taking over the Provinces offered to leave the squatters on their runs under the old conditions as well as to continue a large measure of localization of the Land Fund. Briefly the arrangement offered most of the benefits of provincialism without its corresponding expense. Of the fifteen Canterbury members, the Government could count on at least twelve or thirteen on the question of Abolition. On the post-Abolition arrangements an "honourable understanding" had already been arrived at.

In the central Provinces the Government had a stronghold of Abolition. Smaller and poorer, they were anxious to bring to an end the expensive luxury of provincial government. Beyond the two Wellington men already mentioned, Provincialism had not returned a single supporter in the small provinces. Wellington representatives had the added spur that the Provincial party were suspected of designing to wrest the
political capital of the Colony from them.

The third source of the Government's strength came from the outlying districts of the Provinces. Rundholders and goldminers who carried on their operations far from the Provincial centres were loud in their outcry against the alleged neglect they suffered at the hands of provincial governments. The theme of their protests was that money derived from the sale and exploitation of land in the outlying districts was consumed in public works in the provincial capitals. In Otago the miners of the Wakatipu electorate returned Mr. Sanders, pledged to Abolition, and three others - Messrs Reynolds (Port Chalmers), Pyke (Dunstan) and McLean (Waikouaiti), and if not all Abolitionists were not associated with the Otago provincial group. Westland had once broken away from the Province of Canterbury and all its works to follow an independent cause, but both Provinces were now found in support of Abolition. The same grievance against provincial "centralism" in Auckland returned at least five members opposed to Grey from districts like the East Coast (Mr. Head Bay of Islands (Mr. Williams) and Maraden (Sir R. Douglas).

The political distribution of the House on the question of Abolition found the two "great Provinces" at the extreme north and south of the Colony in opposition to Canterbury, the small central Provinces, and the outlying districts in all Provinces.
Shortly after the elections Sir J. Vogel returned to New Zealand. On March 16th, he delivered an eagerly awaited speech on Government policy in the coming session, at Whanganui, the centre of his electorate. Actually the speech added little to public knowledge of his intentions. Only on two points was he perfectly explicit. The Government would offer an unqualified opposition to any proposal for revival of Provincialism by insular separation or amalgamation of Provinces. On the allied question of the allocation of the Land Fund, the Premier affirmed the principle of handing over the residue of the Land Fund for local expenditure and "no proposal would be accepted which would make the Land Fund lose its special character." The "Press" of March 20th expressed disappointment that Vogel had not taken the public "hitherto kept in ignorance" into his confidence. Plainly the Government intended not to consultate the electorate but to negotiate with its representatives, especially with regard to the nature, size, and powers of the proposed "counties".

On the whole, the position at the opening of Parliament remained the same as during the elections, except that those members who had wavered between Provincialism and "Centralism", hoping for a compromise in Separation now knew they would find a Government determined to use its majority against them whilst it was obvious that the Government had turned their backs on Mr. Whitaker (Waikato A.) the advocate
of the commissariat of the Land Fund who had reason to expect powerful support near Wellington. So such betrayal of their Canterbury supporters could be contemplated.

The excellent summary of the political situation given in "The Press" of Jan. 10th deserves quotation. It applied as well in July as it did in January.

"As for the feeling in the Colony against Ministers, we doubt there is strong feeling in certain parts of the Colony - though for very different reasons; and elsewhere dissatisfaction has been expressed with their conduct upon several points. Many of those who are enrolled among the "Ministerialists" or "Centralists" will not go up to Wellington as cut-and-dried supporters of the present Government. But of one thing the Opposition may be assured - they will not be made tools of. They will not put their fingers into the fire to pull out Opposition dross. They will be in no hurry to get rid of Atkinson and Dinner merely to bring in Grey and Macandrew. Nor will they permit themselves to be led astray by false issues. If not thorough-going supporters of the Ministry now in power, they are thorough-going supporters of the cause Ministers have undertaken to represent, and will do their best to keep them there till their work is done. It is all very well to talk of questions of administration and finance, but the questions before the country are aboliotics and local government. It is by their treatment of these, not on any by-watt dragged into the discussion for party purposes that the policy of the Government must be judged, and its fate determined. So long as Ministers are in real earnest upon these, they may reckon confidently on the support, no matter what differences of opinion may exist on other subjects, of all opponents of provincialism."

Government supporters in fact went up to Wellington to vote for measures not men though abolition was, in fact, intricably bound up with the Vogel Ministry. Until the Counties Act was on the Statute Book the political situation was still a straight fight between Provincialism
and Abolition, but its result was predetermined.

It is legitimate to question whether those members in favour of Abolition yet in no way bound to the "Vogal ministry might not feel themselves justified in crossing the floor of the House either as a mark of dissatisfaction with Vogal's local government measures or to defeat the ministry on all questions but their Counties Bill. From this point of view the Government's majority was dangerously large. In regard to the bill every member had special local commitments which would have to be satisfied during the Committee stages of the Bill.

Other questions which might be asked concern the policy of the Opposition. Would they abandon Provincialism as a hopelessly lost cause? Or would they adopt tactics of obstruction and seek to weaken the Government by delaying its measures? In view of the growing unpopularity of Ministers they had some reason for thinking they had everything to gain by passing time. Lastly, would they test members' loyalty by sidetracking the issue of Abolition and attack the Government on other points?

If the Opposition desired a speedy return to office the first cause was obviously the best. A conciliatory Opposition and a weak Government do not go together. But in view of Grey's avowed intentions the fight must be
to the last ditch and to the last clause, and a continued sojourn in the wilderness during the coming session at least was inevitable for the Provincialists. Their determination and scorning of the easy road to office commands admiration and eventually led them to the Treasury Benches, but for the present everything depended on the manner in which they conducted themselves in the House.

On the other hand, Ministers had to employ every means to make themselves indispensable. Obviously one method would be to leave the Opposition to make the first move and weary the House of Grey and all his ways. If Grey resorted to his uncompromising attitude of last session, many members would have little inducement to cross the floor of the House. Would the Government come down with a constructive local government measure and insist on all its details being approved? Or would they leave the House to determine the details and generally open the way for a scramble in Committee? Would they insist on absolute loyalty from their supporters on every topic outside Abolition until the Counties Bill was passed?

In all these questions two factors would predominate. First, the absence of party organization and secondly, the prestige of the individual leaders. At this stage in New Zealand politics the presence as against the absence of the first factor depended almost exclusively on the second.
Actually the House contained forty-three new members in a total of eighty-eight at that practically half the representatives had had no experience of party discipline in Parliament.

The Governor's speech which greeted members on June 16th 1876 at the opening of New Zealand's sixth Parliament was notable only for its treatment of Abolition as an accomplished fact. Members were invited "to co-operate in making as beneficial as possible the changes which are to take place immediately after the termination of this session". Until the Government's new local Government Bill was in the hands of members, the real business of the session could not begin, and party divisions might be at a discount.

If members were expecting an anti-climax after the battle of last session, they were mistaken. Friday the 16th was key for opening the actual work of the House. Hardly had the Speaker (Sir J. Fitcharbert) delivered a few formal announcements than Sir G. Grey rose in his place to move the suspension of the Standing Orders, in order to bring on a motion to suspend action by the Government in regard to the sale of certain lands in the Auckland Province "known as the Fishe Swamp Lands". Ministers were taken completely by surprise. Vogel hastened to assure the House that the step proposed by Grey was wholly unnecessary; but the new members in the House were anxious for more information while others remembered the promise given last session to allow the Fishe
transaction to be discussed in the House before it was completed. Thirty-seven voted in favour of the suspension of the Standing Orders to give Grey opportunity to move his motion, and only twenty-eight voted on the Government side.

Grey appeared to have chosen the time and subject of this attack on the Government with skill. Of those voting for the suspension ten were pronounced supporters of Abolition such as Hassell Stevens (Christchurch City), Wason (Coleridge C.), and Wakefield (Geraldine C.). The opinion prevailed in the South Island that the sale was nothing more or less than a land job. "The Press" and "The Times" both of June 19th condemned it as such.

In the explanations which followed Sir J. Vogel pointed out that the transaction could not be completed for some time and there would therefore be opportunity for discussion. He deprecated Grey's surprise-attack, and added that, though the Government were prepared to allow the case to be considered on its merits, they would accept an adverse decision as an expression of no-confidence in the Ministry. Major Atkinson (Egmont T.), the Secretary for Crown Lands, spoke with another voice and denied the right of the Legislative to interfere with administrative business. The grant would be issued in the ordinary course. Sir D. Malcolm (Native Minister) added a third reason why members should allow the matter to drop, entering into the merits of the case, and deprecating interference with a matter of good policy. (6).

This diversity of advocates did not assuage members' suspicions, and merely confused the issue, though Vegal's conciliatory attitude caused several abstentions when Grey's motion for postponing the sale came on.

**Did Grey expect to turn Ministers of the Treasury "enemies at once, or did he merely wish to strike a damaging blow at their position? Or on the other hand had he merely in mind the exposing of corrupt practices on the part of the Ministry and their "friends"? He declared himself that he "really did not intend in any way to turn the Ministers from their seats suddenly" by his motion, which he now asked leave to withdraw, professing himself satisfied with Vegal's explanation. (?)** If his intention was merely to hold up an unjust transaction his methods were open to question. The obvious line of action in such a case would have been a question to the Minister in charge of the Department concerned as to whether the Government intended to meet their promise of last session. By his own action, the consequences of which he must surely have realized, he threw the question on to the floor of the House for the parties to struggle over, with exclusive regard to its merits. In spite of Grey's protestations it is impossible to resist the impression that this was a party move, and the fact that several Opposition members professed ignorance of Grey's action gives the further impression that secrecy was used in order to give the move a non-

(?) Hans, XXI, p.21.
party appearance and to bring within its bounds members of the House who were not Provincialists.

It is only fair to weigh against the language held by Sir J. Grey on this occasion two statements he made outside the House later during the session. At a meeting of his supporters on Aug. 19th he informed those present that nothing short of casting Ministers would satisfy him. (8). At a second caucus two days later he denounced the disaffected Auckland members for not combining with him "to hurl the Ministry from office" (9).

Government supporters have no doubt as to what Grey's motives were. Sir A. Douglas (Baradene A.) declared that it was not a question of the place occupied but who should sit on the Treasury Benches. (10). The leaders in both "The Times" and "The Press" adopt language which show they had no doubt as to the fact that Grey was essaying a vigorous party move.

To return to the House, a division was called for after leave to withdraw the motion had been refused. A glance at the division list shows how far Grey's blow had gone home. Twenty-nine members divided on either side and on the Speaker's casting vote opportunity was given for "further discussion". (11).

On the face of it, had the Government suffered a defeat on Grey's motion their position could have been badly shaken. Having counted "aees" they apparently must have felt strong enough to risk a division. The risk was by no means insignificant as four Abolitionists as well as Messrs Brandon and Montgomery, divided against the Government.

"All that the majority of the House has assented to is this, that they will not allow this to be made use of as a lever for the purpose of ejecting the Ministry and thereby defeating the Abolition policy", (18).

If Ministers had any illusions about their own indispensability, they had received a strong hint that the House regarded them as a "Abolition" Ministry not as "indispensable" Ministry. "The Otago Daily Times" (quoted "The Times" June 19th) put the situation thus:

"The present House in no sense trusts the present Ministry". So out of sight it might be added of the Abolition question. Mr. Streat (Invercargill C.) twitted the Government with not having their "pliant majority" of last session but the inevitable result of Grey's Pyrrhic tactical victory was to close up the ranks of the Government's supporters.

The implications of the defeat of the Ministry were now realised. The debate was adjourned without a division and Vogel set to work to rally his party. A caucus of their supporters was called for the 19th; thirty-nine members attended and eleven others were "accounted for". The Ministers demanded that no further steps should be taken to impede the

issue of the Piako land grant, and coupled their continuance in office with the acceptance of this condition by their supporters. All present pledged themselves, on the motion of Mr. Curtie (Nelson City S.), who had voted with Sir G. Grey on both resolutions, to support the Government on their own terms.

Vogel's firm stand was crowned with success, and his appeal to members when the House met again on the 23rd not to make the Piako affair "a party question" was more significant of his strong position than of his non-partisan spirit. Sir G. Grey destroyed what moral advantage he may have had by an extraordinary speech which traversed "everything under the sun but the Piako swamp". General charges were met with general denials.

Mr. Murray who had voted against the Government on Grey's resolutions, expressed what must have been the feelings of a considerable body of opinion in the House. "There are many members who are not satisfied with the nature of these transactions and yet do not feel disposed to pass a vote of censure on the Government which would result in their retirement" from the Treasury Benches. He would vote against the Government again, but he recognised that a great public question was being sacrificed to a greater.

In effect members refused to allow the Abolition policy to flounder or sink in the Piako swamp. They consented to the Government's action solely on those grounds, not because
they approved of the transaction itself or because they believed there was no practical alternative to the Vogel Ministry. The latter was inextricably bound up with the Abolition policy and a move to out it from office was in effect a move to defeat Abolition.

Mr. Rees (Auckland City West A.) characterized Sir J. Vogel as "a political Muntalini" who terrified his supporters "with the threat that he was determined to be 'a dam'd, damp, moist, unpleasant body'. (13), but the House became very soon impatient of the Opposition's flow of words. Members on the Government side deprecated the Opposition's appeal to non-partisan feelings. Mr. Bryce (Tetara W.C.) characterized it as a sham "since it has been a party question all along" (14), and Mr. Sharp (Nelson City N.) shared his opinion, "It is now a question of party and will remain so to the end". (15). In regard to the original issue, Mr. Mason (Clerihisriangle C.) washed his own hands (and probably those of the whole House) of the transaction. The Ministry could take sole responsibility for the transaction and it was hoped that they had received a salutary warning.

The division on Vogel's motion to drop the matter took place on June 37th. After an amendment (which would have destroyed its effect) to Vogel's resolution had defeated by fifty-two votes to twenty, the resolution itself was put.

(13). Hans. XX, p. 104. (14). Hans. XX, p. 95
(15). Hans. XX, p. 156.
Fifty-one members divided for the Government and nineteen against. Actually fourteen of the former had divided against the Government on the question to suspend the Standing Orders (June 16th). Members had in fact had time to consider the implication of a Ministerial defeat. "The Press" of June 30th pointed out their position. As Abolitionists they had no special tie to the Ministry but they were pledged to Abolition, and for the discussion of local government proposals the session could not be too long. All the majority had assented to was this: they would not allow the Piako question to be used as a lever to oust the Ministers or to waste the time of the House.

The exceptional number of votes cast for the Government, however, is a considerable tribute to the firmness and party strength of the Government. The small number of abstentions is to be noted with care, as never again during the Sixth Parliament of New Zealand was a Government able to rally more than fifty members in a Ministerial question.

As against Vogel's success as a party leader, Grey's failure and final abstention on the critical division was a damaging blow to the Opposition. The latter made a "complete mess" of their opportunity and the blame lay largely with Sir G. Grey, who had been too eager to rush into the fray. He should have given his followers "food to fight on as well as daring". (16).

"The Times" warned Grey that "the pear is not ripe" but Grey's

unfortunate manner in leading the premature attack was proof that he had not changed his tactics of the previous session.

"As a party question" said the Wellington "Argus" (17). "the division meant that fifty-five members in the House were prepared to vote to keep the Government in office until its abolition policy had been considered". Of the twenty-seven certain Oppositionists only two - Mr. Brandon and Mr. Fisher (Heathcote C.) were not Otago or Auckland men. The latter having come up to Wellington with an open mind on the subject of parties was now converted to the Opposition side. He was Grey's only gain.

The Address-in-Reply debate which began and finished on the following day provided an anti-climax to the heat of the Pihiko episode. Continual references during the next few days to the allocation of the Land Funds of the various Provinces illustrate the importance of the question in politics, and prepare the way for the assault of the Provincialists on the Canterbury members. (18).

It was well known that parties would not definitely arrange themselves till the Government's abolition policy was known. A caucus of the Opposition attended by twenty-nine members was held on July 2nd to consider policy for the remainder of the session. Several who were "inclined to support the

(18). Mr. R. Wood, (Mataura A.) Hans. XX, p.231.
Government" (19) attended, but no arrangement was arrived at. The Opposition's lack of a palatable policy and a popular leader had its counterpart in the appointment of Mr. C. McLean (Waikouaiti O.) to a ministerial post (Commissioner of Customs). Apart from facetious references to Vogel's ability for discovering unappreciated genius, there is no reason to believe that Mr. McLean brought any following with him into the ministerial ranks such as was later the case with Mr. D. Reid (Taieri O.). He was in fact the only suitable Otago member available, since it was essential to have the Province represented in the Ministry.

The eagerly-awaited Financial Statement was delivered by Vogel on July 4th. As expected, the bone of contention proved to be the allocation of the Land Fund. "The Times" of July 11th suggested that Ministers would be better employed meeting the dangerous situation created by falling prices instead of deceiving the Provinces by a process of "thimble-rigging". The sop to small Provinces in the shape of advances free of interest for public works purposes was looked on as an indirect charge on the Land Funds of the more prosperous Provinces especially Canterbury. The Government's hope on the other hand, that the rising prices of Crown lands would ultimately recoup the Colony as a whole, was doomed to disappointment.

The House was disinclined to consider the financial policy of the Government until constitutional questions had been settled. Matters as far apart as the murderer Minista (19). "The Press", July 4th.
and the Mangitata Bridge were made pegs on which to hang heated discussions on the evils or advantages of Abolition.

By the end of the month the delay in business was being unfavourably commented on.

"The truth is that the members have not troubled themselves about the Ministerial proposals. They have been employed very differently. What they wanted time for was, not to consider the policy of the Government but to concoct a policy for the Opposition. Inactive within the House the members have been as busy as bees outside it". (20).

All through July, in fact, members were engaged in a "whirl of party movements". The caucus of July 2nd was followed by meetings of provincial blocs. "The Otago, Canterbury and Auckland Committees are at work almost daily", wrote "The Times" correspondent on July 15th. "It is no easy thing to reconcile the differences which exist between the various Provinces in material points".

Caucuses of members from the smaller Provinces (July 23rd) decided to support the Government against the Otago proposal for financial separation, which was the result of negotiations between the Otago and Auckland Committees.

The question was: How would Canterbury men accept advances along these lines? The Canterbury men" are masters of the situation, and whichever side gets a large majority of the Canterbury members will certainly win." "The Times" correspondent significantly adds that "the question of how the runs are to be

dealt with at the expiration of the present leases is understood to be one likely to exercise a very important influence on the votes of a good many of the Canterbury members." (21). Ultimately the fear of domination by Otago and the comparative certainty of the Government's offers in regard to the Canterbury land fund and pastoral leases kept them loyal to the "Compact of 1856". On Aug. 4th the Premier significantly warned the House that he regarded the proposal to create the Provinces as a breach of the "Compact". (22).

Before any move could be made in the House by the Separationists a motion of Mr. Whitaker's stood on the Order Paper "challenging the Middle Island land fund and bidding defiance to the Compact of 1856". (23). "Many will be obliged from party obligations to vote against Mr. Whitaker who agree that his proposals are right". (24). The proposals were nothing less than the "colonisation" of the land funds of New Zealand irrespective of provincial boundaries. In itself the motion was premature. The question was: Would the Opposition vote with Whitaker to put out Ministers then put in a Separationist Ministry? The question concerned the Otago members particularly. It was aimed at their land fund no less than that of Canterbury. Apparently they preferred to vote with their conscience and keep their hands free for the future, rather than grasp at the im-

mediate prospect of office.

On the resolution itself, it was notable that the twenty-one votes cast in favour of the resolution included three from Nelson and Marlborough and one from Canterbury, that of Mr. Wakefield, had waived resolutions of his own for the colonization of half the land revenue. His motion was intended to be a chivalrous gesture from prosperous Canterbury to the poorer Provinces. Auckland, except Mr. Cox (Waipa A.), whose vote caused surprise, voted solidly in favour of Mr. Whitaker, Otago as solidly against. There were rumours that a red-herring was being drawn across the Opposition's path and that Mr. Whitaker was endeavouring to split up the "alliance" before passing over to the Ministerial side. Ministers were supposed to be "personally favourable" to his proposals. "The Times" of July 25th regarded the motion as an attempt to explode a "mischiefous petard" among the ranks of the Opposition, but in a political sense, it had no such serious effects. A month later Mr. Whitaker was occupying a seat on the Treasury Benches beside them, and though no evidence can be adduced here to connect the two circumstances, appearances are against Mr. Whitaker.

The resolutions offered an excellent chance to Sir G. Grey to consolidate the ranks of the Auckland provincial bloc. A caucus held on July 10th had tended only to emphasize the split between the Provincialists and the "medium" members from the Auckland Province, but the prospect of all the Auckland members
going into the same lobby as Mr. Whitaker’s resolutions, was a hopeful sign for a future compromise. Sir G. Grey did not derive any advantage from the situation.

"Sir G. Grey's half-hearted support of Mr. Whitaker has angered several Auckland members, and as a result they will be found voting against him on Separation". (25).

A compromise was obviously called for but between "sclerosis" and "Separation" there could be no compromise of principle, and Grey having come forward as a Provincialist was determined to remain a Provincialist to the last ditch.

The result was plain. His speech in Mr. Whitaker’s resolutions took the form of an announcement of his own resolutions on the separation of the two islands.

Moved in the House on the next sitting day (Aug. 3rd), they were eight in number. The most important were as follows: "There should be two Local Governments one for each island (No. 3)"; interest charges on the colonial debt were to be divided in a definite proportion between the insular Governments (No. 4); wide powers, including the disposal of its own revenue "were to be allotted to either government" with the exception of matters of great colonial importance, which must be reserved for the Colonial Government (No. 5), Auckland and Christchurch were to be the centres of the Colonial Government (No. 6). (26).

When Gray rose to speak he was bringing forward the great Opposition alternative to the Government's scheme of "counties". It must be admitted however that his speech did not set forth constructive reasons for the adoption of federal government in New Zealand, being rather a criticism of the Government and its unpopular character (in a political sense). He set forth at length his own labours on the Constitution of New Zealand and criticized the "amalgamation" of his work first in the nominated form of the Legislative Council and secondly in the abolition of the Provinces. In the latter case he declared that the people of New Zealand were being coerced into a form of government which they had never approved. "My only desire now is to secure the happiness of the people of New Zealand, by their being allowed to exercise the right of choosing their own form of government". For himself, "office to me is no object, and I have no desire to obtain it". (27).

As a personal explanation Gray's speech was an eloquent vindication, but as a party manifesto it left much to be desired. There was a great deal of disappointment at the "magnanimity" of the resolutions themselves.

Sir J. Vogel, though following much along the lines of Gray's "personal" manner of speaking, pointed out the defects of separation in a more specific manner than his opponent had pointed out its benefits. In particular he showed (27). Hans, XXI, p. 55.
the predominating position which Otago and Auckland would occupy in the new order. He warned the central Provinces and Canterbury that their interests lay together rather than towards the north or the south. In the new Provincial Parliaments Otago and Auckland would be able to cutvote them. Finally the compact of 1856 would have to be reconsidered or abandoned.

Instead however of disposing of Sir G. Grey as they had of Mr. Whitaker, the Government consented to the adjournment of the debate. Either they must have felt that they had something to gain by allowing the Opposition to take charge of the debate, or they must have been uncertain of their majority. Some of their strongest supporters censured them freely for their complacency in the matter. Actually, in view of the unimpeded flow of talk which lasted nearly a fortnight it might well appear that the Government had no choice in the matter. Members on all sides were eager to air their views on the issues on which they had been elected. Apart from such considerations, the Government were probably glad to catch their opponents "on the run".

The Opposition had taken the initiative, but the issue was still the old "Provincialism" even if it was cloathed in the new garb of "Separation". The Opposition in fact refused the advice of these Abolitionists who were apprehensive of the Government's borrowing policy, and instead carried on their attack on the Government along the old lines. Would they be
able to modify the alignment of parties in the House? Would the "sheep and grass" of the South grasp at the opportunity to rid itself of the "Maori and fern" of the North? The Canterbury men might be glad to dispose of their North Island "incubus". On the other hand, would the financial difficulties of Separation stand between the Provincialists and success? The Public Works Policy of the last six years had imposed on the colony a burden of debt which could not be easily nor less expensively adjusted in a "dichotomy".

(28).

The "caucussing" of July had to all appearances left unmodified the relation of the provincial blocs and groups, except that one Canterbury member, Mr. Wason, had announced his conversion to Separation, while the weighty consideration which his provincial colleagues were known to have given to the Auckland-Otago overtures left room for some doubt, at least, as to their attitude if not their votes.

The minor Provinces were never in doubt and now came down strongly against Separation. Mr. Bryce (Tutara W. C.) noted the voting of the Otago members on the "colonization" of the Land Fund. He did not apprehend any better treatment from a Middle Island Government. "If they get their wish, I do not think they would give a sixpence of the Land Fund to Nelson, Marlborough or Westland". (29).

(29). Hans. XII, p. 64.
The Wellington members were absolutely opposed to any attempt to wrest from them the capital of the colony, while Takapau and Hawke's Bay provided the sweetest sources of Ministerial strength. In the same way the members from the "outlying districts" renewed their opposition to the "new" provincialism. Mr. "asen was admittedly an exception to the rule but his was not the viewpoint of indignation against neglect by the provincial centres. That attitude was more clearly expressed by Sir A. Douglas (Haraden A.). "Looking from these resolutions from the light I do - as the resolutions of a party in this House desires to reintroduce Provincialism - I refused to join with then". (30). Mr. Sanders (Nakitipu O.) and Mr. Williams (Bay of Islands a.) referred more specifically to the neglect which their districts had suffered under the Provincial regimes.

Again the political situation assumed its well-known aspect. Which way would the Canterbury members vote? The Syllionc books were being offered for the last time. Actually, in spite of their somewhat independent attitude towards the Government the Canterbury representatives were bound in honour to respect the "honourable understanding" as it was regularly called with regard to the extension of pastoral leases in the Province. In the previous session members from Canterbury had cast their votes in favour of the Abolition Bill conditional on the extension of the existing arrangements with regard to the waste lands of the Pro-

(30). Hans. XLI, p.316.
vices held under the license system.

With regard to the Land Fund itself "The Times" which did not wish the Government well, advocated the principle of "the land fund for the district". (31). "The Press" characterized the Separation resolutions as an "extraordinary outburst of Provincial greed". (32). It must be clearly point-ed out that the provincial members were practically without exception representative of the "squatting" class with whom such considerations would weigh as of prime importance.

The Financial Statement had increased the charges on the Land fund of the Province, and there was little to choose between the "artistically varnished globule" (diminishing local appropriations of the Land Fund) of the Government's policy and the "pill presented in its hideous nakedness" of Mr. Wakefield's resolution. (33). Canterbury members had little reason to sup-pose that the opposition would improve on his proposals, and Gray, forgetful that the success of his resolutions depended on winning them to his side, did not adopt conciliatory language towards them, or offer them specific benefits. One is glad, however, that he did not bid against the Government for their support on their own terms.

As it became more obvious that the Canterbury men would vote against Sir G. Gray the Opposition speakers

resorted to bitter criticism of their attitude. Mr. Lanarch felt however that "nothing any honourable member could say could alter one vote". (34).

The divisions on Sir G. Grey's resolutions took place on Aug. 16th. The first, second, and eighth were naturally agreed to, though the last went to a division. On the question "That there should be two local Governments, one in each island", every one of the eighty-eight votes was recorded, there being only four pairs, showing the keen interest manifested on the question. Thirty-two divided in favour and forty-seven against. The division list contains few or no surprises. The Otago members with three exceptions voted solidly for Gray's resolution. Three Canterbury members divided on the opposite side from the majority of their provincial colleagues. From Sir G. Grey's Province there were eleven found to follow him. The strong vote on the Government's side may be taken as an indication that the division was generally regarded as settling the issue on which the election had been fought.

The Provincialists had shot their bolt. Recriminations were hurled on all sides at those who were alleged to be responsible for the final defeat.

"It is certainly humiliating that the determination of our Constitution should have been settled by a mere rude act of barter and that the disposal of the runs in Canterbury should have, to all intents and purposes, been the one point on which the Constitution should rest. The Canterbury members have pocketed their bribes like men. . . . We leave the representatives of the Province of Canterbury to mumble the plunder they have carried away". (35).

The Otago members took the opportunity during the debate on the second reading of Mr. Essen's Canterbury Pastoral Leasing Bill to criticize the attitude of the Canterbury members in no measured terms. Their ignorance of the actual issues at stake in Mr. Essen's Bill was striking, but it did not limit their criticism.

In the same way the Auckland members who had not voted with Sir G. Grey were accused of "treachery". At a meeting of members from the Provinces on Aug. 22nd, Sir G. Grey stated his reasons for refusing to accept a compromise from the Government of "work with the Auckland members who supported them, and who, if they had been true, would have enabled him to hurl the Ministry from office" (36).

The opposition of the Canterbury members was responsible for the defeat of Provincialism, and Grey's failure to conciliate the "disaffected" Auckland members finally robbed him of the opportunity to appear at the head of the great areas in the Colony, resisting an attempt to impose on them a form of government which they did not desire.

The purpose of their association having failed, would the Provincialist party break up? On the issue of Provincialism their defeat was irrevocable. Would they now combine with the Abolitionists who were connected with the Ministry on that point only? It seemed as if "the more rational (36). "The Times", Aug 22nd.
Provincialists" would be forced by circumstances to act on
the advice often tendered to them and which they had as often
refused: to accept the fait accompli of Abolition and then
attack Ministers on their financial policy, especially their
extensive borrowing programmes since 1870.

Sir G. Grey had been the leading spirit in the
last fight of the Provincialists, and now that his forecast
hope had failed and Provincialism was obviously no longer a
rallying point for a majority in the House or in the electorate, it seemed possible that the Opposition might disavow his
leadership. There was actually a move among his own Auckland
supporters to "make good terms with the Government for the
Province", but Sir George met this with a direct refusal to
compromise his principles. On the contrary "nothing short
of ousting the Ministry would satisfy him". (37). The
Otago members were expected to depose him as soon as the
debate had ended (39). The fact remained however that though
Provincialism was finished as a political issue, the details
connected with Abolition and the post-Abolition settlement,
had yet to be decided upon in the House.

CHAPTER IV.

EXIT OF THE ABOLITIONIST LEADER: MAJOR ATKINSON FORMS A MINISTRY.
Premier, 15th Feb 1876 - 1st Sept. 1876.
Agent-General for N.Z. in London from 1876.
CHAPTER IV.

EXIT OF THE ABOLITIONIST LEADER.

"There may be many Caesars
Ere such another Julius."
- Shakespeare.

The previous chapter was taken up with a discussion of events in which the Opposition held the initiative. With the rejection of their proposals, however, every practical alternative in local government had been exhausted except the Ministerial proposals. Outside, and indeed inside, the House there was considerable grumbling at the waste of time over matters which were supposed to have been decided at the elections, and though Ministers were probably glad to be able to level charges of factional opposition against Sir G. Grey and his party, it must be admitted that they were not responsible for the delay. The Financial Statement had been delivered three weeks after the beginning of the session, and actually it had been delayed for a week owing to the fiasco debate. The Counties Bill made its first appearance in the House on July 13th, and on the 19th the Hon. E. Richardson (ChCh.City C.), Minister for Public Works, moved for two select committees of the House to consider the boundaries of the Counties in either Island, but members were not disposed to admit that the Counties Bill was the best or the only alternative before the House. Only when all others had been exhausted was the Government at last able to bring forward the Counties Bill.
It must be remembered that the "guillotine" and the "closure" were as yet unknown weapons in the Party warfare of the New Zealand Parliament, Ministers being practically dependent upon their personal prestige in the House and the skill of their Whips. The Ministry contained only two outstanding figures, Sir J. Vogel and Sir D. McLean, the Native Minister. The former had six years ago won his way to the foremost position in the Colony and had startled the country with his spectacular borrowing programme. He was not, however, socially identified with the class which was the Ministry's main source of support, and all sections looked upon him as a political individualist, and even what is now understood by the term "careerist". Already the aftermath of his borrowing policy was becoming apparent in the Colony. Even Abolitionist opinion (1.) deplored the "perpetual blunderings" of Sir C. Grey which were "doing incalculable injury to the Colony ... The situation is serious. The policy of the present Government has given us a long period of losses and consequently inflated expenditure. It is certain that both these are passing away ... we can no longer borrow. Meanwhile there is no sign that the Government appreciate the gravity of the position. Their financial policy proposes only to fend off the immediate difficulty by a continuation of temporary expedients adapted for nothing more effectual than postponing the evil day ... A change of Government is necessary and ought to be imminent. Sir G. Grey, whose especial duty it is to bring about this change, is absolutely preventing it. What he ought to do is obvious enough. There is a considerable party both in the House and in the country, who are as distrustful of the Government, and as determined on its fall, as the recognised Opposition.

They hold off only until the abolition policy is fully carried out. That done, they will unite with any party who will accept financial reform as the next great question of the day ... it is therefore the obvious policy of the Opposition to expedite as much as possible the settlement of the abolition question.....
"But Sir G. Grey and his followers have chosen to do exactly the reverse....Even ill-wishers of the Government have been forced into the position of giving their support rather than risk the responsibility of committing the well being of the colony, for however short a period, to one so incapable and whom it is so impossible to trust". (2).

Two weeks after this was written, Sir G. Grey had still failed to alter the alignment of parties in the House and over a month had passed since the beginning of the session without the essential business for which Parliament had been summoned being as yet considered.

On the other hand the Government "invited pressure by the facility with which they yielded to it".(3), and their Whips were no more successful in restraining the talkativeness of members. Finally the Government's measures of local government reform obviously could not compete with the Separation resolutions for the interest, if not the votes of members. Relatively unpopular in the House and associated with a policy which was about to bring a period of unpleasant reaction on the colony, Sir J. Vogel's Ministry was "kept waiting" by the House until every practical alternative to their one popular point of policy - namely, Abolition, had been considered.

In moving for the second reading of the Counties Bill on August 18th, Sir J. Vogel asked the House "not to prejudice the consideration of the Bill by supposing that the boundaries set forth in the schedule are boundaries which the Government proposes to press upon the House". (4).

Since Abolitionists in the House would undoubtedly resist any attempt to revive the legislative powers accorded to local authorities as under the Provincial system, there was literally nothing left in the Bill to fight over except the size of the Counties. As it happened, there was also considerable objection to the direct election of County Chairmen and the wide rating and borrowing powers of the Counties, but only in the Legislative Council were the objections pressed in such a form as to cause a definite split of opinion on principle.

Mr. Manders pointed out that the only real objections to the Bill were local prejudices as to the boundaries of the Counties. Sir G. Grey, however, characterized the Bill as a retrograde step in civilization. On the other hand observers were asking - Would his party, or those in it whose sole connection with Sir George was opposition to the Abolition policy, throw off their affiliations and resume political "liberty of action?" The caucus of August 19th has already been mentioned. The result of his uncompromising statements was that now that Provincialism had failed, no basis for a new policy for the Opposition could be arrived at. The cross-voting on the clauses of the Counties Bill were, at the very least, an indication that a strong united body of opinion in the House could have made its deep impress upon the details of the measure.
No new policy was put forward, and Contemporaries might be excused for thinking that the Opposition was broken up and Sir G. Grey deposed from leadership of it. From the point of view of achieving unity, the caucus of Auckland members was as unsatisfactory as might be. Mr. Whitaker's name was mentioned as a possible leader to succeed Sir George, but there were not wanting rumours that he had other ends in view. (5).

In the Otago group, there was some talk of Mr. Reid being put forward as leader of a new party of the more rational of the Provincialists, and the "disaffected" Abolitionists. His pronouncement on the Counties Bill - that the Counties were the best alternative failing Provincialism, and that he would vote for the second reading of the Bill, was a sufficiently clear indication that he considered that the props had been knocked away from under the old Opposition platform. "The situation at present" was therefore "simply disorganization among the late Opposition". (6). The Auckland and Otago groups were split, and new leaders and new policies were not forthcoming. The question was not only: Has Sir G. Grey abandoned the leadership of the Opposition, but: is there an Opposition to lead?

It is therefore not surprising that the second reading of the Bill passed without a division. Mr. Stout pointedly asked why so many members were prepared to vote for

the principle of the Bill and yet hoped to effect large amendments during the Committee stages. He recognised that the old issue of Provincialism versus Centralism had passed away, and in its place he saw only a Government opening its arms to all members with the cry, "You just vote for us, and you will get your road or your bridge." To obviate such an undesirable state of affairs he hoped that there would arise in New Zealand the well-known dualism of "Conservative" and "Liberal", but he confessed that there was little hope of such a division in the near future when men like Mr. Reid and Mr. Montgomery "who really believe that this Counties Bill is a sham and a delusion" were to be seen getting up "and, while condemning the principle of the Bill, saying that they would vote for the second reading." (7). The debate collapsed in a surprising manner and the Bill passed its second reading without a division. (8). It is interesting to compare its fate with that of the Abolition Act of 1876, or the Separation resolutions in this session.

An incident in the House shows that not only the Opposition but also the Government had something to lose by the obliteration of parties. On July 23rd a motion had been brought forward by Mr. Murray (Bruce O.) to suspend negotiations by the Government in regard to the erection of a central penal establishment at New Plymouth. The scheme was known to be a pet of the Government, but Mr. Murray's motion evoked an exhibition of

provincial spleen against Tamaki. Ministers stood by helpless while their work was defeated by a majority of thirteen votes (Aug. 23rd). "The Times" of Aug. 25th condemned the ignorance of members on the subject itself and their haste to undo some laudable enterprise on the part of the Administration.

Immediately the second reading of the Counties Bill had passed the House, the anticipated wrangling over the details of the Bill began. Caucuses had been held by most of the provincial groups to consider the boundary schedules in the Bill and such diversity of opinion had been expressed, that it would not be a case of Province against Province, but of district against district, each member being as much dependent on his personal position in the House as on his official party affiliations for writing into the Bill his own particular local requirements or commitments. In such a state of affairs parties would obviously be at a discount. There was not even a division in the House on the basis of "large Counties" versus "small Counties".

Before the actual Committee stages of the Bill had been reached developments occurred which entirely altered the complexion of the political situation. The death of Dr. Featherston, the Agent-General of the Colony in London, was announced by the Premier in the House on July 13th. It was probably well known in political circles that the Prime Minister had marked out the position for himself as his was the first name mentioned in both "The Press" and "The Times" in forecasting Dr. Featherston's successor. No immediate announcement was however made by the Government, and the conclusion was rapidly drawn on all sides that
Sir Julius intended to appoint himself to a position.

That he should be eager to give up the post of Prime Minister for that of Agent-General seems strange enough, even on the basis of the comparative desirability of the two positions, but contemporary opinion saw in the Premier's action a threatening blow to political morality in the Colony.

Sir J. Vogel was apparently willing to upset a Ministry and leave his post before the policy, which had been his before any other man's in the Colony, had been consummated. It was in fact entering its most difficult and dangerous phase.

"Very great inducements had been held out to him to remain in England during his visit to England in 1875, and he now felt justified, on the score of ill-health, in accepting a position which would take him to a more congenial climate than that of New Zealand. His explanation was confessedly inconsistent and it is plain that Sir J. Vogel resigned the Premierships "solely to be Agent-General."(9).

The Abolitionist leader was making his exit from New Zealand politics, but what was the situation he was leaving behind him? It was impossible that his policy would be endangered - even Sir Julius would not have dared to leave his work to the tender mercies of the House had he thought that it might be threatened again - but what would be the effect of his exit on his Ministry and his party?

It should be first noted that the manner in which the House was treated in regard to the appointment was not calculated to smooth away any scruples that members might have on the subject, though perhaps the matter was one which could not be broached in...
an open manner. The speeches of Government supporters in the House subsequent to Vogel's announcement, and the lack of definite knowledge before it was made, show that the Ministry had failed to take their supporters into their confidence. An equivocal reply to a question by Mr. Bess in the House on Aug. 11th whetted suspicion. "Does Vogel intend to give us the slip?" was asked on all sides. More important for the position of parties was the question whether Government supporters would regard Vogel's action as a sign for the dissolution of the Abolition party? The Premier had remarked with feeling early in the session that "members had shown they would go their own way." This was "the most independent House he had known," (10) and he now ran the gamut list of that "independent spirit". On Aug. 29th, as related, Sir J. Vogel announced in the House his resignation and the fact that Major Atkinson had been "sent for" by the Governor.

The exact position is that Sir J. Vogel had resigned and advised the Governor to send for Major Atkinson to form a new Ministry, which, in effect, staked its existence on the ratification of its appointment of the late Premier to the post of Agent-General. Before the question of the Agent-Generalship could be considered, a new Ministry had therefore to be formed.

The formation of a Government during the early period of New Zealand's political history had a highly disturbing effect in the House. As there had been no distinct parties with a continuous existence, length of party service was not the criterion of suitability for office that it is today. It was true that an

(10) Hans. XX, p.313.
election had just been fought which had returned members on the two distinct party lines, but one of the "two voices" had but recently been stifled in the House. The three factors which had formerly weighed most strongly in the choice of Ministers might be expected to assert themselves again. These were: the personal ability and prestige of the prospective candidates for office, their ability to add a "tail" to the ministerial majority, and thirdly the necessity for "proportional" representation of the provinces in the Ministry no less than in the House. The strength of these factors, as will be seen, tends to make a discussion on the party complexion of the Ministry appear besides the point. The continuity of parties essential to ministerial homogeneity was lacking in New Zealand politics.

On the grounds of long service, or "continuous" service, the basic qualification of the modern Minister, Major Atkinson would seem the obvious choice for a successor to Sir J. Vogel. That contemporary opinion expected the Ministry to be formed along the old "personal" lines is shown by rumors which circulated previous to Vogel's announcement. Probably no member in the House enjoyed greater prestige with members than the Speaker, the Hon. W. Fisherbert. His was the name most frequently connected with rumors as to the Premiership. Either (no conclusive evidence on the point can be adduced here) he was not acceptable to the Ministerial group or it transpired to give up the speakership except at the specific request of a clear majority of members. It should be pointed out that,
had the Ministry the choice of a popular or respected leader in view, there was an alternative choice in Mr. Stafford (Timaru G.) an ex-Premier and now the "judicious Hector" of the House. The general impression was that if Major Atkinson became Premier, the Government would not last long. (11) "Major Atkinson was not a popular man, in the general sense of the term", (12) but he was Vogel's deputy as leader of the Abolition party, and was in any case the acknowledged authority on the financial aspect of Abolition. Moreover, "the Abolition Act when it comes into law would find Major Atkinson alone in power of the Ministry which devised the policy which it embodies." (13).

His choice of colleagues may at least be taken as an indication that he realised the necessity for adding to the personal strength of the Ministry. Three new men were included among the nine Ministers sworn in on Sept. 1st. All three were former Superintendents and men of standing in the House. A student of the division lists of the session would be surprised to find in the lists of new Ministers, a name which appeared with the "Ayes" in the division on the Land Fund and Separation resolutions respectively. Mr. Whitaker, as has been pointed out before, would certainly have been a strong, if not the strongest, candidate for leadership of the Opposition, had his views on the Land Fund not been, on principle at least, so irreconcilable with Provincialism. Also, if Sir G. Grey had not appeared on the scene with his special appeal of " Provincialism", and himself

made a tremendous personal appeal, Mr. Whitaker was the obvious choice for the leadership of the Auckland group, having been successively member of the original Parliament of New Zealand, Minister, and Prime Minister. Major Atkinson was acknowledged to have obtained a great acquisition to his Government in Mr. Whitaker. There was, moreover, a circumstance coincident with his appointment, which, though not particularly commented on by the Christchurch papers (14), can not be overlooked by an observer.

In the existing disorganization of the Auckland group and the disgust with Sir. G. Grey's leadership, Mr. Whitaker might be expected to draw over a "tail" with him to the Ministerial side, as well as to consolidate the loyalty of the "anti-Grey" group from the Province (15). The strength of the "personal" grounds on which he was appointed will be apparent later.

The presence of Hon. J. Hall (6) in the Legislative Council as a Minister without portfolio, might be expected to assure the Government's influence there, as well as to add to its administrative ability and personal strength. He was expected to counteract any attack which Mr. Whitaker might aim at the land funds of the southern Provinces. Mr. Ormond was an experienced Minister and a trenchant, if infrequently heard, debater.

Another and more minister source of strength of Major Atkinson's "paulo post futurum" Ministry, was the number of

impending resignations announced by the new Premier in his Ministerial statement in the House. It was believed that this circumstance "would bring about them a host of hitherto undiscovered friends". Besides Sir Julius, the Hon. S. Richardson (Minister of Public Works), Sir D. McLean, and Dr. Pollen (Colonial Secretary) were to retire at the end of the session. The Hon. S. McLean's name was mentioned in the same connection.

Summing up the effect of the Ministerial reshuffle on the personnel of the Government, one may well agree that the Treasury benches were likely to be "far stronger than for the last two or three sessions." Though the Ministry had obviously to remain substantially the same as that which sanctioned Vogel's appointment, and which was in a wider sense the vehicle of his policy, Major Atkinson had added to it that personal strength, which was essential to a Ministry of diminishing prestige. The question was: Would the Atkinson Ministry be a Ministry of reconstructed policy as well as of reconstructed personnel?"

Major Atkinson delivered the customary "policy" speech in the House on Sept. 4th, but his statement in no way modified the main outlines of his predecessor's policy. "The Times" of Sept. 7th described the enunciated policy as "Vogel - and - waterish". Major Atkinson declared, "The fundamental principle of the Government - in fact the basis on which it was formed - is the Abolition of the Provinces." (102.

It would be interesting to see how far the House still regarded Abolition as the main political issue of the day, (102. Hans XIll, p.28
and how far the Ministry was actually considered to be what it claimed — an Abolition Ministry. The working of the Counties Bill was to be "permissive", and a two million loan was to be floated immediately. He said nothing, however, to clear up the impression that he had committed an amazing technical blunder in appointing a Ministry of nine Europeans, whereas there was a legal limit of seven.

The Ministry did not speak with one voice. Mr. Whitaker, speaking as one of the new Government, informed the House that though he realized that the formation of a Ministry involved a large measure of waiving of personal opinion, he had not forgone his views on the "colonialization" of the Land Fund. "If at a future time it should appear to me that the opinion of the majority of this House is in conformity with my opinion, I shall feel myself at liberty to retire from the Government and pursue my own course". (17). Such a statement could not but create a feeling of uncertainty among the southern supporters of the Government, especially the Canterbury members — as to the real policy of the Government, especially as Mr. Whitaker was actually to take social precedence of his political chief. "The principal member of the Cabinet" was self-confessedly at variance with his colleagues on the most important question on which the whole financial and political arrangements of the Government depended. He declared, in fact, that he was only waiting to be sure of a majority to desert and attack the Government. Such a division on principle in the Cabinet might well be regarded as fatal to party government. (17). Hans. XXII. p.13.
Members might well ask - Who is the real head of the Ministry?

In the Council, Mr. Hall declared that the Ministry was entirely a new Ministry not bound to its predecessor in policy but only in personnel. Any such repudiation would have met with overwhelming disapproval in the House, nor did Major Atkinson attempt to make any more in that direction. Mr. Hall probably expressed a personal hope, rather than a Ministerial opinion. This was not the first nor the last occasion when party homogeneity was sacrificed with disadvantage to personal strength in the formation of a Ministry. It was doubtful whether "the strongest Ministry in ten years" would "now last the session out".

The Ministry had three sources of weakness. First, their connection with a doubtful transaction, the extra-legal number of Ministers, and the discordant voices from the Treasury Benches. It is true that legal had chosen a most unfortunate means to make his exit from New Zealand politics but the question was: How much of the blame for the "Agent-General job" would remain in New Zealand with his colleagues?

"Has not the late Colonial Treasurer, Major Atkinson, been looked on as an honourable, straightforward statesman? Has not the late Minister for Justice, Mr. Bowen, been regarded as honourable and straightforward in every sense of the term? Yet what are we to think when we find these gentlemen allowing their chief to sell himself and the country for a subordinate office, and for private gain". (18).

We have seen the effect of his disappearance on the personnel and policy of the Government, and in the debates (18). "The Press", Sept. 1st.
in the House and the Council during the next two weeks, there
was opportunity for members to express their opinions on the
ministerial changes. There was every opportunity for making
the question, which prima facie had nothing to do with the
main issue, a personal one.

The first attack on the position of Ministers came
from an unexpected quarter. Mr. Andrew (Bairnsdale) moved
(Sept. 5th) "That this House does not approve of the proposed
offer of the office of Agent-General to Sir Julius Vogel". (19).

"I trust I have within my realm
Five hundred good as he"

was the burden of his argument, and he regretted that Sir J.
Vogel's health had forced him to forfeit public esteem, yet the
occasion was obviously one for a public appreciation of Sir J.
Vogel's services to the Colony. The Ministry had probably
reason to regret that they had not "appointed Vogel outright
instead of leaving him on the floor of the House for everyone
to jump on". (20).

As it was, the "previous question" was employed to
shelve Mr. Andrew's motion, a concession to opposition which
aroused further (and freer) censure of the appointment. On
their own side they were condemned for weakly allowing the
Opposition to drag Sir J. Vogel through the mud of
critical debate. In merely resisting a negative motion they
allowed the House to disassociate itself from the appointment.

which ought, according to modern standards, to have become as a matter of course, a prime question of confidence in the Ministry.

Actually the "previous question" was moved by Mr. Stout, the junior among the Otago Provincialists. He was differently interpreted as acting as the Governor's "sea-fenced, land dog" and out of fellow-feeling for the late Premier as an Otago man, or as laying a trap which Ministers had walked into. The acceptance of terms on the advice of an opponent could hardly be interpreted as a sign of strength on the part of the Ministry, but Ministers did not agree apparently with those who thought that a direct motion of approval would obtain a majority. The process of washing the hands of the House had proved to be a source of weakness in the case of the Hicks debate, as tending to weaken the connection between the Ministry and the House, but the same means were again employed.

Mr. Andrew's motion was shelved by forty-one votes to twenty-four.

Though Major Atkinson had stated that the appointment of the new Agent-General would be left to the House, Mr. Whitaker, shortly before the motion was put, declared his opinion that the appointment should have been made an executive matter, and as such the fate of the Ministry ought to have been staked on it. The complaisance of the Government was either "a stretch of good nature or bad art". (21). In view of the failure of Major Atkinson to "bounce" in the House during the (21). "The Press", Sept. 7th.
This debate, one cannot resist the impression that the Premier did not feel strong enough to repeat his aggressive tactics on this occasion.

The division bore as little party complexion as a division on such a subject, and such an occasion might be expected to show. Among the "Noes" were found no less than four Otage Provincialists. Mr. D. Reid, a prominent opponent of Sir J. Vogel probably spoke for a considerable body of opinion when he said he would vote against the motion in order to remove Vogel's extravagant influence from the Colony. It was not a graceful dismissal for the leader of the Abolitionists and the proponent of the Public Works Policy, but Sir J. Vogel had by his action solicited such treatment at the hands of the House.

Having shown no outstanding tactical strength in defence of their late chief, the Ministry was not compelled to resist a far more serious attack on their own position. The actual legality involved in their situation has been pointed out. It consisted not merely in the violation of the Disqualification Act (1890), under which only seven Europeans might be called to the Executive Council, but in the fact that Mr. Whitaker, as a member of the House, was ineligible for the office of Attorney-General under the Attorney-General's Act (1886). It is indeed surprising that Mr. Whitaker, a lawyer of considerable reputation, should have allowed the Government to fall into such a simple legal error. The fact that Mr. Whitaker took first his
stand on the legality of the Minister's position and the unwillingness of the Government to whip up their supporters under similar circumstances in the debate on the Agent-General-ship case to rule out any ulterior intention, for instance in the direction of forcing the House to acquiesce in a fait accompli, on the part of the Ministry. In any case an excellent opportunity was offered to that "bench of lawyers", the Opposition, to make the most of the Government's mistake. Writs were taken out against all the Ministers for infringement of the various disqualifying Acts by Sir G. Gray and served on four of their number on Sept. 13th.

In the extraordinary bitter controversy which followed in the House, both parties to the dispute were at fault. The details of the legal side of the question need not be entered into here. Having discovered or implied pointed out to them the illegality of their tenure of office, the Ministers brought forward a civil list bill to relieve themselves from the penalties which they had incurred under the two Acts already cited. The Premier moved for the suspension of the Standing Orders in order to pass the bill through all its stages on Sept. 11th.

This step was either "unnecessary or improper". Unnecessary if the mistake was a purely technical one which could be rectified by the ordinary procedure of the House, improper if Ministers came before the House "in the character of culprits". (22). "The Press", Sept. 13th.
Mr. Ballance moved the adjournment of the debate and was supported by no less than four of the Government's most influential followers. It was indeed a notable occasion on the Ministry’s lack of touch with their party that they moved the suspension of the Standing Orders without ascertaining first whether they had a majority.

A caucus of Government supporters considered their position next day (Sept. 15th). Forty-six members were present, and it was decided that all Ministers save the Premier who was not affected by disqualification should resign. According to "The Times" of September 26th, Sir R. Douglas proposed, on account of the delay in business, that the party should now support the Government "blindly" on matters of policy for the rest of the session. The suggestion was not approved. "The Press" of the same date mentions a motion moved by Mr. Stafford, to the effect that those present would undertake "to support the Ministry in all measures following abolition." The suggestion was "unanimously agreed" to. The greater detail of the account in "The Press", derived from two sources which agree on the fact of a motion to support the Government’s policy, seems to lend more weight to its evidence than that of "The Times".

Major Atkinson announced in the House on the same day that he had reconstructed the Ministry with the requisite six members besides himself. The Disqualification Committee’s report was presented to the House, the Chairman (Mr. Brandon)
expressing his opinion as a private member that the Disqualifica-
tion Acts had been infringed in spirit as well as in letter. 
Government supporters on the Committee denied that Mr. Brandon 
spoke for its members. In short, the Report became the spoil of 
the parties, and several incidents in the House gave rise to 
recriminations. Mr. Jasset brought forward a motion that the 
Speaker should issue fresh writs for the electorates of all the 
Ministers in the House. The motion was obviously inspired by 
Sir G. Grey (23), who on several occasions drew the attention of 
the Speaker to the presence of strangers (i.e. the Ministers) in 
the House. Major Atkinson proposed that an amendment be added 
to a motion of Sir G. Grey "that the report of the Committee be 
concurred in", to the effect that "it is expedient that an In-
demnity Bill" should be introduced at once to relieve Ministers. 
The words of the original motion were struck out by a majority 
of twelve votes. A fresh addition to the effect that Ministers 
had not forfeited their seats, which Sir G. Grey had claimed 
was the case, was moved by Mr. Ballance, not apparently in col-
laboration with the Ministry and accepted by the Premier. Extra-
ordinary developments followed on the Premier's announcement.

The Opposition was evidently determined that the 
amendment should not be carried and on in the motion for the ad-
journment of the debate Mr. Rees began to talk against time in 
the early hours of Friday, Sept. 15th. The Government were just 
as determined that the resolution should be carried. The
Opposition continued to put up speakers until Monday 13th,
when the resolutions were voted upon.

It was shortly apparent that the Opposition as a
whole was not connected with the "stone-walling" policy of
Messrs Rees, Thomson, DeLautour, the first of whom spoke for
over twelve hours. "Messrs Hollestan, Wakefield, Shrimski,
Tons, MacFarlane and many others of the ordinary Opposition
have formally intimated their disapproval of what is being done", (24). Sir G. Grey now stood forth as the leader of an
"ultra-Oppositionist" party, for he was associated with if not
leading the "stone-waller", (25) and it seemed impossible but that
his position would be considerably damaged. The form of his
protest against the incrimination of Ministers laid him open
to the charge of wasting the country's time as well as of
"Zesticus" opposition. The protest was neither dignified nor
effective. Attempts at mediation were made by Messrs MacAndrews,
Shedden and Stout, (26), and it became more and more apparent
that Sir G. Grey did not speak for the whole Provincialist
party.

The amendment of Major Atkinson, together with
that of Mr. Ballance was put and approved by a majority of four-
teen. Among those who voted with the "Ayes" were Messrs Lanarch,
McFarlane, Montgomery, Hollestan, and Wason, all of whom were
either members of the regular Opposition, or had protested
against the amendments themselves at the opening of the debate, Mr. Reid expressly refrained from voting, but made clear his disapproval of the Opposition's tactics, and there were others who, though voting against the amendments, were understood to have dissociated themselves from the "stompsall" group (27).

The last act in the political drama was a motion on the second reading of the Insanity Bill "that the bill be read this day six months". Having protested against the "whitewashing" of Ministers for the last time, Sir G. Gray left the House and was followed by all the Opposition members except two who divided the House. The incident was closed and the Atkinson Ministry emerged from the contest undefeated, the Abolitionist Ministry without the Abolitionist Premier.

How would the "stompsall" affect the future relations of Sir G. Gray with his party? "Their object is delay, the postponement of the question of Provincial Abolition for another year" (28). Without judging the expediency of either ends or means, we may observe that the Opposition leaders had surely had opportunities earlier in the session to gauge the effect on parties in the House, of a frontal attack by the Provincialists on the Government. Defeat offered to Sir G. Gray either the prospect of modifying his tactics or intensifying them, and the notable defections during the debate may be taken as a judgment in a political sense of his choice. "We are glad to

know that the more moderate opponents of the Ministry did not
join in and have no sympathy with this unwise proceeding". (29).
On the other hand the wavering in the Government ranks ranged
themselves solidly against the "obstructionists", as the large
majorities in favour of the Government under particularly un-
favourable conditions show. Mr. Mackenzie spoke of a "Mr. Grundy
party" who spoke against Ministers in the House yet followed them
into the lobby, but the choice which members had to make was the
least of two evils.

On the one hand the Government, after accepting
Sir G. Grey's challenge to settle the matter in the law-courts,
had endeavoured to force through the House legislation which
would obviate any of the ordinary legal processes. Further, not
content with indemnification, the Ministers accepted a motion from
a member who had no grounds for judging the merits of the case,
the effect of which was to make the Government judges in their
own cause. This last step can be considered nothing less than a
colossal blunder. "Sir G. Grey was fairly entitled ... to urge
that in commencing proceedings against Ministers he was acting as
a matter of public duty". (30), but of a golden opportunity he
made a "complete mess".

"Our Premier militant must consider his enemy as
his best ally". (31). Grey had every reason to avoid broadly
dividing the parties in the House, yet he could not have done
more to retrieve the Government from a position into which
their own blundering had led them.

In a wider sense, it was essentially true (as was seen
in the next session) that the Government was only kept together
by the pressure of Provincialism, and once that pressure was
withdrawn, no circumstances could keep the Ministry in office,
and only the most complete folly on the part of Sir G. Grey
could keep him off the Treasury Benches.

On the Ministerial side, the Government could well
expect to see considerable additions to "Mrs Grundy's party",
though there could be no talk of a radical change of Ministry
while the Abolition settlement remained uncompleted. The gen-
eral political effect of the "Impracticable" was to loosen the bonds
of both recognised parties, and pave the way for the re-align-
ments of the next session.

After the excitement and the delay caused by the
change of Government, one might well expect to see a reaction, or
an antipathy in political affairs. The House was now free to
continue with the Counties Bill, but yet another resolution on
the direct issue of Provincialism had to be disposed of. Mr.
Macandrew moved (Sept. 19th) to the effect that the Abolition
Act should not apply to Otage. Sir G. Grey anticipated his
later line of attack on the Government, and his "Liberal"
platform of 1879, in an attack on the squatters' influence in
the House. Mr. Macandrew and Mr. Burns made earnest appeals on
behalf of their Provinces, but Mr. Eyre who "spoke well on both sides", accused the Provincialists of "crying over a dead donkey". The Times of Sept. 29th declared that "the name and shadow of Provincialism are continued while the reality and substance are destroyed". Every one of Otago's "usual seventeen" voted in favour of the resolution or were accounted for on that side, but only seven Auckland members voted to maintain Otago's particularism. It is indeed not surprising if the Provincialist party was at last losing the freshness and vigour which had served it in good stead, even in its repeated frontal attacks on the Government.

Only once again was the direct issue of Provincialism raised, but the whole House was now faced with the issue of Abolition in its most concrete form. As has been pointed out, the Counties Bill reached the all-important Committee stage when the change of Government occurred.

The new Ministry had obviously not changed its tactics or its policy with its leaders. It was still the Abolition Ministry. On so important a subject as the increased payment of members the Ministers were found voting against the majority (Sept 29th). Their attitude was criticized by a section of their supporters, but the issues before the House were still the particular questions raised by Abolition, and not the broad issues of Liberalism and Conservatism.

The Counties Bill, as amended to meet the objections which had been raised on its first appearance, reappeared in the House on Sept. 25th. The most that could be said of the measure was that it was not provincialism, but this time no attempt was made to fill in the boundary schedules which were now left blank. On one or two important details such as the election of County Chairman the Bill had yet to reach its final form. A striking feature of the Bill was its "permissive" nature - the final form and actual inauguration of the County system being left to the local authorities. As compared with the original Counties Bill, the amended measure was practically a new Bill. Actually the Government appears to have made a small concession to Gray's principle of "self-determination" which would in practice not affect the settling up of counties. "The permissive clause will be a practical nullity, and the Bill will come into operation just as though they were not there". (33).

The Bill was "regarded with no great favour" even among Government supporters, but the occasion was one for brilliant constructive thinking, or "hit-and-miss" experimentalism. Its clauses were not yet fully ventilated in Committee and the Bill can fairly claim to be the outcome of comprehensive discussion.

More important for the immediate future of local government was the Provincial Appropriations Bill, which made a late appearance in the House on Sept. 27th, and which provided for the extension of the Act of 1875 until December 1876.

In delaying their financial arrangements, the Government were
putting a powerful weapon into the hands of the Opposition.
If tactics of obstruction were resorted to, the Government
might find that the financial arrangements of the country would
necessitate the extension of the life of the Provincial Execut-
ives. There seemed a possibility that Sir G. Gray would
initiate a second stonewall. Gray's own colleagues, however,
restrained him.(34). It was said that a section of the Pro-
vincialists would now work to get the best settlement for their
provinces under the Counties Bill without any particular regard
to party. In the committee stages there was no considerable
attempt to carry out that "third parallel of attack" which had
not taken place on the second reading of the Bill. "The amount
of talk has been slight considering the importance of the matters
dealt with".(35). There was lively debate on the county bound-
aries in the various provinces, but Stago's desire for two
counties only in the province smacked too much of provincialism
to commend itself to the House. An interesting sidelight on
the "personal" nature of the debates on the Counties Bill is
the fact that the County of Vincent in Stago commemorates the
"accoticus and eccentric" member for Dunstan, Mr. Pyke, familiar-
ly known as "St. Vincent", the sainly prefix being only struck
out on the voices. The addition "Pyke" was likewise struck out,
on a division.(36).

Actually the most important objections and amendments
which might have divided the House on the principle involved

(36) Hans. XXIII, p. 20.
were made in the Legislative Council. These included the secondary election of County Chairman, and the reduction in the borrowing powers of local bodies. Judging by the later use made by Mr. Beaton of the Council one is at least entitled to question (though no particular evidence can be adduced here) whether the Ministry was not resorting to devious methods in order to get its own way. On the other hand the independence and social composition of the Council, make the analogy with its later history at least equally open to question.

The third reading of the Bill was reached in the House on Octr. 5th. Occasion was taken by members to pronounce their last words on the issues of the session. Mr. Sheahan, with some foresight, predicted that the passing of Provincialism and Abolition from the House would destroy the necessary two-party basis of politics. "This tatterdemalion business - this Counties Bill" would produce nothing more than a system of log-rolling in the House. "The only difference is that whereas the provinces rolled logs of good sound timber, we have here dwarfed and useless trunks". (37). Mr. Stout characterized the measure as a "Bill for squatters", and Sir G. Grey asked how the Government "could bring themselves to try to take from their fellow-men rights which their country conferred upon them"? (38).

It is surprising to find that the division on the third reading of the great Abolition measure of the session

bears very little party complexion. "Doubtful" members such as Messrs Danny and Brandon and Provincialists like Messrs Lamarche, Murray and Reid were among the thirty-seven on the government side, while Messrs Barff, (Nokitika W.C.), Henry, (Buller W.) and Henry, (Picton W.) either voted or spoke against the Bill on local grounds. It was indeed a tale ending to the great battles of the parties during the early part of the session.

Actually a "telegraphic battle" was being carried on outside the House. Sir G. Gray was determined to use every means of testing the validity of the whole Abolition legislation, and his correspondence with the Secretary of State gave rise to bitter controversies inside and outside the House with the Government and even with the Governor, the Marquis of Normanby. Gray resorted to such extravagant language as to the position of the Governor.

Mr. Ormond accused the Opposition of wanting to get rid of "the leadership which is weighing them down". (39). Mr. Stout defended his leader and declared "There was no reason why the Opposition should have remained in a minority except that they fought for a principle, and for what they believed to be right, and not for office". (40). To all intents and purposes the principle had now vanished and it might be asked: Would the Opposition drop their old cry and split up for the purpose of either bringing forward an entirely new policy or for entering the arena of "personal politics"?

The main question in politics was now Sir G. Grey's leadership of his party. The Provincialist leader reached the heights of extravagance in a speech on the Government's attitude to his correspondence with the Secretary of State. (Oct. 13th). The same night he endeavoured to move for the postponement of the consideration of supplies, when some provincial charges came before the House. Mr. Sheahan said that "while prepared to support Sir G. Grey to any reasonable extent he felt compelled to vote against him on this occasion", and Messrs. Reid and Swanson likewise criticised his efforts to hold up business. Twice Sir G. Grey pressed for the postponement of business. On the first occasion he found sixteen supporters and on the second eleven. On the first division five Provincialists were found voting against their leader, and on the second division, nine, including Mr. Sheahan. On Oct. 13th Mr. Sheahan admitted that it was probable that the proposals of the Abolition would become law, and being interrupted by a "No" from Sir G. Grey, rejoined that he was "speaking of the question as it stands now". (41). Yet another staunch supporter of Sir G. Grey disavowed his actions in the House on Oct. 31st. Sir G. Grey and Mr. Nees offered considerable opposition to the second reading of the Public Works Bill. Mr. Be Lautour protested that it would not be in the interests of the public that men who were loyally supporting the Opposition "should be driven into deserting their party, on account of their leader's actions". He felt that Grey's obstruction "would deprive him from giving ... that loyal support which he would like to give". (42).

It seemed on the other hand that Sir G. Grey and a small group of "irreconcilables", such as Mr. Rees, were determined on desperate opposition, both within and outside the House. It became rapidly apparent that they could not adopt such a course without committing the "most complete" political suicide.

Members seemed now anxious to assist the Government to bring the session to a close, and so important a measure as Sir G. Grey's Manhood Suffrage Bill, which contained the seeds of such bitter controversy during the next decade was unceremoniously shelved after a short debate. A Triennial Parliaments Bill also brought by Grey, was disposed of in the same manner. The great days of Liberalism had not yet arrived.

The last card of the Provincialists, their last action in the cycle of resolutions moved during the 1876 session, was played on Oct. 26th. Sir G. Grey brought forward an Abolition Permissive Bill. The subject had been thrashed to death. The Provincialists spoke to empty benches (45) and the division on the second reading mustered only twenty-three Provincialists. Mr. Murray had now openly left their ranks and voted against the Bill.

Five days later the session came to an end and on the next day (Nov. 1st) the Abolition Act came into force.

It now remains to review briefly the political tendencies which had appeared in the House, and to consider (43). The "Press", Oct. 27th.
what their probable direction for the future would be. Major Atkinson's Ministry was apparently established, if not firmly, at least, safely for the present, in power. For this they owed a great deal" to Sir G. Grey, and it seemed not improbable that they would be likely to remain on the Treasury Benches as long as the former led the Opposition. "The House accepts the Ministry as the least of two evils, but certainly Ministers do not command the confidence of the House in the way which a Minister should do". (44). They were considered lucky not to find Mr. Fitzherbert against them. "They are allowed to retain office because they form almost the only possible continuation at the present time". With such discordant elements in the Ministry they were considered by "The Times" of Nov. 3rd to merit the style and title of "Ministry of All the Weaknesses". Unless, however, the policy and leadership of the Opposition improved, or were changed radically, there was no particular reason for supposing that the Ministry would confront the House at the beginning of the next session, any weaker than at the end of 1875.

The Opposition on the other hand was almost split up at the end of the session into unconnected groups, which however can be divided into two main classes. On the one hand, a small group clung loyally to Sir G. Grey even in his darkest and most hopeless hours; but it was not possible that their loyalty would outweigh much longer the prospect of political annihilation in further association with their leader's extravagant speech and tactics. The position was, apparently, simply that Grey must

mand his way or go. On the other hand, amorphous groups were detaching themselves from the party, now convinced that Provincialism was beyond recall. The "reshuffle" of new session was thus forecasted. Messrs. Murray and Reid were examples of Provincial leaders who considered their party connections dependent on the defence of Provincialism, and not on the personal tie of allegiance to Sir G. Grey.

Their language in the House might be taken as a forecast of the possibility of a radical or liberal program replacing Provincialism as a party issue on the Opposition's side. The prospect of these groups being absorbed into the general level of "personal" groups, or "interest" groups, along the old lines was, however, just as strong.

It is no part of this work to pass judgment on the Provincial system, but only on the Provincialists' defence of it. The note which has been struck emphasizes the leadership of Sir G. Grey as the bond of the party. Provincialism produced not parties but groups, and the most striking example of this tendency was the effect of Provincialism in Canterbury where the masses already outlined produced an intensely "group" interest.

It ought to be made clear that at this stage the crucial nature of Sir G. Grey's leadership of the Provincialists, and the fact that parties had literally formed themselves round the Opposition leader, was not realized, or at least faced. It is interesting to speculate what would have been
the effect in New Zealand politics of Grey's retirement at this stage. One cannot but feel as Collier says, speaking of his sojourn in England after his second term as Governor "that no power under heaven could have kept him out of Parliament" (in this case the Premiership of New Zealand) had he chosen to ride his time. (45). Without his presence in the House, it is possible that "grouping" would have succeeded to workable Parliamentary government, for it must be remembered that Grey was not only the focus of a party, but also the centre of an antipathy, which could be made the basis of a second party.

Finally we see the Abolition Ministry without Abolition, in office but without any alternative title to office but sound administration of legislation already on the Statute Book.

(45). Collier: "Sir George Grey, p.176."
CHAPTER V.

THE ABOLITION MINISTRY WITHOUT THE PROVINCIALIST OPPOSITION.
IV. Major HARRY ATKINSON (EGMONT, Taranaki).
Secretary for Crown Lands in the Vogel Ministry, 1875-6.
13th Sept 1876-13th Oct. 1877.
CHAPTER V.

THE ABOLITION MINISTRY WITHOUT THE PROVINCIALIST OPPOSITION.

"Gratitude is the weakest of all claims to the allegiance of a party". "The Press", July 21st 1877.

"What is good in business holds good in this House, and unless these gentlemen have a policy they cannot hope to insure their lives". - Mr. Wakefield on the Ministry, Sept. 7th. 1877, (Hans. XXV, p.372).

In approaching the session of 1877 one is confronted with a common anomaly of the parliamentary system; namely a Ministry which is beginning to outlive its "mandate". Provincialism was now a thing of the past, and its decisive influence as a "prop" for the Ministry has already been shown; Abolition was a fait accompli which even Sir G. Grey had to accept when he came into office late in the session.

The Ministry of Major Atkinson now looked even less like an Abolition Ministry. During the recess important changes took place in its personnel. Sir D. McLean, "whose existence as Native Minister had made ministries possible", (1) died in Jan. 1877. The predominance of constitutional questions lessened his influence in the House. Dr. Pollen succeeded to his position. The Hon. B. Richardson retired from the position of Minister for Public Works and Mr. Gream now returned to office in his place.

On Jan. 4th Mr. D. Reid was sworn in as Secretary for Crown Lands and Minister for Emigration. His accession to office had been predicted for some time (2) but with Mr.

Reid as a colleague Major Atkinson had no longer a right to claim that the good government of the country under the post-Abolition system depended on the maintenance in office of a professional Abolition Ministry. Abolition was not in danger since a Provincialist was now called upon to administer the new system which it had brought into being. His accession to office was supposed to have drawn over Hasson Lennox (Invercargill O.) and Burns (Royston O.) to the Ministerial side. Mr. Reid had voted against the Government on all of the "cycle" of Provincialist resolutions during the session of 1876. Though he had declared himself in favour of the Counties Bill, Mr. Reid had subsequently voted in favour of the Abolition Permissive Bill. Previously he had voted with Mr. Whitaker (now his colleague in office) against the Government on the "communism" of the Land Fund.

Elected on the issue of Abolition and pledged to continue the local appropriations of the land funds of the Provinces, Major Atkinson's Ministry now contained two members who had in the previous session denied either or both of these policies. That symbol of party homogeneity, the Ministry, now contained two members who had been divided from their colleagues on the election issues. The conclusion which is forced on an observer is that either new issues would have to be found and they must be found by the Government in order to lead the House, (a task for which their "waiting game" of the previous session made them supremely unfitted) or that New Zealand politics would be conducted along the old personal lines. The appointments of Hasson Whitaker and Reid may be taken as an indication that the (3). "The Times" Oct. 3rd 1877.
Ministry expected party distinctions to be drawn along the old pre-Abolition lines. Major Atkinson himself the great administrator was known to regard the first qualification of a Ministry as its administrative ability.

Administrative ability has never had the same force in the Parliamentary system as the ability to create and present a policy. What was the policy of the Government? Major Atkinson delivered a policy speech at New Plymouth on Apr. 27th. In essence the Government's programme was limited to the consolidation of the county system and to the introduction of certain "supplementary" legislation which had become necessary. The failing off in land revenue was noted and a deficit predicted, but the Premier did not press his statements to their logical conclusion, namely that the system of provincial appropriations and charges carried "within itself a radical and incurable source of disorder", and that unless the appropriations were put upon a uniform and definite basis, the provincial land districts were more likely to suffer that the Colonial Government from any necessary adjustments. In effect, the Government's claim to office was based on its administrative ability and special knowledge with regard to the new system of local government. They had initiated the policy, and their aim was now to consolidate its results.

With regard to their supporters the Government seemed "indeed rather shy of admitting them into their confidence".

"There still remains some connecting link of party union. These links are weak and temporary, but such as they are, the advantage of them rests with the Government. Ministers have not lost the prestige of their late achievements. The halo of abolition
"still surrounds them... They may still to some extent claim to be identified with a principle and a cause. And on this ground they have a prima facie right to expect the support of the old anti-provincialists... Whether Ministers have any policy on which a party can be formed remains to be seen. At present, the understanding on which they were supported throughout the last session has been completed on both sides, and the ties of mutual allegiance are dissolved."

This account of the position of the Ministerialist party in "The Press" of June 6th is clearly inconsistent. On the one hand Ministers are claimed to represent a principle; on the other, they are urged to bring forward "a policy" on which parties can be formed... It is indeed an expression of that anomalous situation mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and in the light of Mr. Reid's appointment it cannot be doubted that the Ministry's real claim to office was no longer Abolition but their ability to administer the post-Abolition settlement.

"At present adherence to party in New Zealand means nothing but adherence to particular men. It does not mean agreement in general principle, or support of any particular class of measures; and we think it will be some years before it does".(4) When men: not measures were at stake, New Zealand politics had shown that the political dice were weighted in favour of a change of Government. Especially in the present case would one expect to find the old forces at work, since the Ministry had been in office not merely since 1875, but as a "continuous" body since 1869. The Abolition

it carried within itself not merely the destruction of the provinces but of those who had destroyed them.

Once consummated, the Abolition policy was no longer a reason for keeping out of office those who had opposed it. Mr. Reid's accession to office set the seal on the passing of the Provincialists. As a decisive and tangible event, it wrote a clear and unmistakeable finish to the old Opposition, but at the same time left the way open for the formation of a new Opposition and for the formulation of a new policy. The opportunity for taking the lead was partly neglected by, and partly closed to, the Government. While the Ministry had unavoidable antecedents the Opposition was clearly entitled to abandon its old cries and resort to the potency of a new appeal to the House and the constituencies.

Failing such a new appeal, the issues would almost certainly confine themselves to a weighing of the relative unpopularity of the Ministers and the Opposition, that is, a battle not of principles but for place.

For this reason more significance attaches to the position of Mr. Whitaker in the Ministry than that of Mr. Reid. The latter stood for the fact that certain issues had disappeared from New Zealand politics, but the former had notably anticipated what must be regarded as the logical development of the abolition of the Provinces - namely the centralisation
of the financial machinery for the Colony. For the present the Ministry was committed to the principle of the localization of the land funds. What would be the position of Mr. Whitaker if a resolution similar to the one which he himself had moved in the previous session was brought forward by a member of the Opposition? Either he must undertake the ordinary duty of a Minister in defending Government policy, in which case he would lay himself open to the charge of inconsistency (an effective accusation in New Zealand politics), or he would desert the Ministry and head that hypothetical "majority" which he had spoken of when first entering office. In the one case the Ministry would defend at a disadvantage, in the other the whole political situation would be thrown into confusion.

In the same way the Opposition contained discordant elements - Separationists, and supporters of the "colonialisation" of the Land Fund which, though they might unite to turn out a Ministry, could never make one. On every count, the old issues connected with Abolition and Provincialism were revealing themselves to either party as political anachronisms. The Opposition by adopting Separation would repeat the "blunder" of the last session, and Ministers would again be able to stoke their existence on one question only.(5).

It is characteristic of New Zealand politics that the political situation was practically talked over at the opinion of the session. The Governor's speech "was kind enough" to admit (5). "The Press", July 26th.
that "some defects have been discovered in the working of the Counties Bill for the remedying of which legislation will be necessary". "The Times" of July 25th felt that "a Government which has nothing better to say of its policy must crumble to pieces from sheer weakness and absolute incapacity".

If the speech was intended to draw out "the Opposition leaders, it failed in its object. "The Ministerial ship lies helpless in an unnatural calm". (8).

The Opposition was in fact awaiting the arrival of Mr. MacAndrew and Mr. Stout before deciding on a policy. During the recess there had been no continuous or coherent communication between the Auckland and Otago groups which had literally to make a fresh start for the session. A small caucus of Opposition members met on July 30th, but nothing was decided pending the Financial Statement which was delivered on July 31st.

Until something was done to clear up the rumour as to Sir G. Grey's intentions to revive Separation, it would be impossible to forecast the alignment of parties. It did not seem likely however that the old issues would be raised again.

"We need not say that the idea of a serious proposal to repeal the Abolition Act is one simply to be ridiculed. The question now is: What kind of amendments are to be made in the county system which has replaced the provinces? If the truth be that Major Atkinson knew how to abolish, but that Sir G. Grey knew how to replace there is nothing...which should provoke the late abolitionists from going over in a body to the ranks of the late provincialists for the sake of securing a better policy for the present emergency". (7). Whether the Opposition intended to bring forward a policy on these or any other lines still (7), "The Press", July 27th.
unknown when Major Atkinson delivered his Financial Statement on July 31st.

One passage in the Statement was long remembered against the Premier. "For the immediate future, the Government believe that the need of the country is political rest". (9). Further "the Government ... believe that the present is a time when the country should not be troubled with questions as to the incidence or the specific character of our taxation". The possibility of revising the basis of taxation by levying a property and income tax was specifically rejected, and the Ministry disassociated itself, in fact, from the questions which were more and more pressing themselves on the Colony silly-silly. On the all important question of the localisation of the Land Fund the Government made two proposals, which could not but be unpalatable to Otago and Canterbury. The prospect of a considerable deficit in the land fund accounts of all provincial land districts except Canterbury and Otago meant that the Colonial Treasurer must either resort to a further issue of Treasury Bills or find some other means of providing for the deficiency. The Premier proposed to charge £56,000 against the land fund of Canterbury and £100,000 against that of Otago for the purpose of meeting the anticipated deficit. Major Atkinson argued that public works ought to be chargeable against the Land Fund. As the poorer provinces were unable to meet these charges out of their own land revenue, the principle of charging the land fund in this way could be maintained by transferring revenue from wealthier districts.

What would be the attitude of the Government's former staunch Canterbury supporters in the face of this violation of the principle of the localization of land revenue? There was a feeling in Wellington shared by "The Times" that the Canterbury representatives cared more for their pastoral licences than for the question of the Land Fund. Mr. Mason, the doyen of the pastoralists was appointed Government Whip for the session, and the rumour that the way was being opened for the extension of the "licences to occupy" to 1890 caused quite a little thrill of anxiety as to how much reason there is for the Opposition bitterness on the subject. (9).

The Canterbury representatives were rumoured to have come to a satisfactory understanding with the Government on the subject, but when the Premier spoke of the "considerable relief" which the Land Fund had undergone, Mr. Stevens interjected amid laughter, "You have relieved us of it, you mean".

"The pretence of localizing the land revenue is too transparent to deceive anybody" wrote "The Times" correspondent on August 1st. There were rumours that the stage group intended to bring the question of the "colonialization" of the land revenue in order to force the Canterbury members to vote for Separation. In either case, the Government was bound to be unpopular for not coming down strongly in favour of "colonialization", or for not affirming the principle of "localization". It was felt that the Premier's (9). "The Press", Aug. 8th.
comutation of the latter term had become so flexible that the certainty of "colonisation" might be preferable even for Canterbury and Otago. (9).

The Government's proposals were therefore not popular with southern members. Meanwhile negotiations were evidently going on amongst the Opposition leaders with a view to ousting the Government. Once again the Canterbury members held the balance. Their position had shifted considerably since the previous session when their loyal support of the Ministry had provided the latter with its chief voting strength. Their main objection to a change of front was understood to be the necessity for accepting Sir J. Grey as leader.

The latter was back in the House as acknowledged leader of an Auckland group. Otherwise the state of parties in the House and the position of the acknowledged leaders of previous sessions was unknown. During the recess neither element had been idle. Sir J. Grey delivered a series of public addresses which anticipated his tours of the Colony in the next two years. The Otago Provincialists had called together a Convention on Nov. 8th, after the prorogation to demand the dispensing of the Abolition Act in the Province of Otago, but there was no possibility of their object being obtained. Their petition to the Colonial Office was to have been conveyed by Sir J. Grey, but the latter fell ill. There was, in fact, no concerted action or attempt to make preparation to meet (3). "The Press" Aug. 8th.
the House with a united front, or a new policy, in the next session.

In spite of the declared loyalty of the Utage ex-Provincialists, rumours were abroad that Mr. (now Sir J.) Fitzherbert was being approached with a view to his leaving the chair. New candidates for leadership were rumoured to be Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Sisbome (Totara &c.) a former minister now back in the House and the author of a valuable book on New Zealand's politics and politicians. (10).

If however there was no Opposition party there could not be said to be a Government party, even after the Financial Statement had been delivered. "Each of the Ministers has a few who believes in him, but the Ministry as a whole has very few devoted followers". (11).

The excitement of the previous session could hardly be expected to disappear altogether with the issues which had raised it. The question was: on what new issues could an Opposition be formed since the Government had manifestly failed to propound a new and comprehensive policy?

The Government's claim to a title of administrative efficiency was challenged by Mr. Jones in two resolutions, move on Aug. 2nd, condemning the Government for continuing the publication of the "Maori" newspaper after the item for the cost of its publication had been struck out of the estimates in the

previous session. It was noticeable that Sir G. Grey accepted
the responsibility of Mr. Beaum's motion, virtually acknowledging
his leadership of the Opposition. (12). The charge was serious
but it was at first dismissed lightly (13). Then the second
reading of the Education Bill, the magnum opus of the session,
came on Mr. Wakefield pointed out that the Ministry could hardly
proceed with business with such a serious charge hanging over
them. A case in connection with the paper was proceeding in the
law courts and Mr. Whitaker urged that the question be dropped.

The "unnatural calm" of the House was suddenly
disturbed from a most unexpected quarter. On the motion for
going into Committee of Supply on Aug. 3rd Mr. Woolcock, that
"mild and unsophisticated supporter of the Government" (14),
moved "That, in the opinion of this House, the time has arrived
when a change in the incidence of taxation is becoming necessary
in order to secure the best interests of all classes of the com-

unity". (15). We have seen the fate of Grey's "abstract" re-
solutions on triennial parliaments and manhood suffrage in the
previous session, and the reception which Mr. Woolcock's resolution
received as a measure of the change of opinion in the House, as to
the issues on which parties should be divided.

Mr. Beaum's resolutions were, however, more in the
mind of members, and Mr. Beaum himself demanded that the Government
should allow him the opportunity of bringing on discussion on the

"Waka Maori". The opposition was evidently not of one mind on the subject, if it could be said to have a common mind at all. Mr. Rees and several others requested that the question be made one of no-confidence in the Government, but Mr. Stout, while acknowledging Sir G. Grey as leader of his party, refused to allow the motion to compromise its members as a whole. The disunited front of the opposition seemed to hold out no hope of the formation of a united party to turn out the Government. Mr. Macandrew and Mr. Sheehan suggested that the matter be dropped while the matter was sub judice, and the subject of the "Waka Maori" was not revived until Sept. 28th when it became a question of no-confidence in the Ministry.

Meanwhile Mr. Woolecock had "suddenly woke up to find himself famous".(16). The debate on his resolutions had been adjourned, and since then "the conviction seems to have forced itself on the minds of a very large number of the members that Mr. Woolecock's proposals afford an excellent platform for the formation of a party, and is precisely the thing required at the present moment as a point on which a majority may agree". If once the opposition took charge of the motion they would possess a powerful weapon against the Government, which had no answer to the charge that such changes in taxation were necessary, and that they had failed to promote them.

Again however the new issue had to hide its time while the more obvious lines of attack on the Government were.

exhausted. On Aug. 7th the Native Land Court Bill came before the House for its second reading. The Bill was known to be the result of careful work by the Ministry, and had been long circulated among members, but, outside the Ministerial group it found no defenders in the House. The Government's discomfort was increased when Mr. Ballance, a staunch supporter of the Ministry in the previous session moved that the Bill should be withdrawn and redrafted "so as to make it more in conformity with the expressed wishes and real interests of the people of both races..." and to make provisions for "the acquisition and settlement of Native lands in limited areas by small settlers". (17).

The amendment was, in fact, couched in terms which would have been more fitting as a preamble to the Bill, than as an amendment to its second reading. The most direct censure of the Government's native administration was implied. The defection of Mr. Ballance from the Ministerial ranks was now discussed, but the Government had no option but to accept his amendment in some form or other.

Major Atkinson endeavoured to avoid the censure on Government policy when the adjourned debate was resumed on Aug. 10th. The Premier moved the further adjournment of the debate until Aug. 16th, when the Government would tell members what they intended to do in regard to the amendment. Mr. J. F. Browne moved the adjournment of the House till Aug. 16th in order to give the Government time to consider their position, that is, with a view to

(17). Hans. XXIV, p.255.
treating the amendment as a matter of confidence in the Ministry. Major Atkinson declined to make it a party question. "The amendment as it now stands was moved by one of our own friends; but if it had been moved by any honourable member on the other side, we should have been ready to meet it." (18). The Premier's logic was somewhat hard to follow as it was well known to members that Ministers had been "button-holing" Mr. Ballance to get him to withdraw his amendment, but without success. (19).

The Ministry were unable to deny directly the charges which Mr. Rees made on the subject, and Mr. Whitaker further damaged their position by stating that the amendment implied "a complete reversal of the policy hitherto pursued". When twirled by Mr. Rees with inconsistency, he replied "I did not say that I alone sympathised with it". (20). This admission of division in the councils of the Cabinet was taken full advantage of by the Opposition. As most speakers had spoken of the amendment to the second reading of the Bill as a question of confidence, it was a surprise to find that the Ministry refused to regard it as such. Mr. Sheehan spoke of the Government as dropping the "gauge of battle" like a "red hot poker". The Government had been unable to prevent Mr. Sheehan from being placed on the Native Affairs Committee (July 25th) in somewhat sinister circumstances. (21).

Vigorous lobbying was carried on with a view to saving the Native Land Courts Bill, but it was found impossible to obtain a majority in its favour though a small militant
minority was urging the Government on. Even more difficult was the Government's position with regard to Mr. Woolcock's motion.

The fall of the Ministry was, in fact, now regarded as a certainty. "It was impossible ... not to look forward to a speedy dissolution of the Ministry". The Ministry had had a clear chance to bring forward a coherent policy based on the re-organization of local government, the education question (Mr. Bowen's Bill was widely approved), and financial reorganization. It is in fact true to say that the Government had not "understood their opportunity", and had not taken advantage of the chaotic state of the Opposition". (22). It was now clear that the Ministry could not rest on its laurels, but must propound a policy, or go. Major Atkinson's desire for "political rest" was exactly opposed to the temper of the House and the country. The tone of press leader and of speeches in the House testify to the demand for a new outlook in politics.

On Aug. 15th Major Atkinson endeavoured to retreat from his position. The House was asked to consent to the withdrawal of the Native Land Court Bill. The motion for discharge, from disposing of the ill-fated measure, opened the way for renewed criticism of the Bill and of the Government's tactics in controlling the House. Mr. Lusk (Franklin A.) moved an addition to the motion "To enable the Government to give effect to the motion of the honourable member for Mangitikei (Mr. Balfour)". Thus both the past policy of the Government was censured, and their future policy dictated to them.

The amendment destroyed the effect of all the industrious lobbying of the Government who had secured a bare majority in favour of the discharge of the Bill. Their prestige had "suffered dreadfully." (23). Mr. Thomson said "we have seen the humble pie brought into the House today and we have seen the avidity and gusto with which the Government have eaten it." (24). The Government was able to hasten to a close their "meal" by thirty-seven votes to twenty-six. Major Atkinson's amendment for a shorter adjournment than that proposed by the Opposition, being carried by nine votes. On the 16th the motion for the discharge of the Bill was carried with Mr. Lusk's amendment, but without a division. If the Government had staved off immediate censure it was a Pyrrhic victory in the full sense of the term. Mr. Pyke compared the Ministry to Pistol. "They eat and exe they swear; but they eat." (25).

As it was the first important division of the session, it is surprising to find that only four members may be said to have "changed sides". Mr. Reid and Mr. Lumsden were now voting with the Ministry and Mr. Ballance and Mr. Wakefield with the Opposition. The abstentions were probably numerous and certainly significant, seventy-five members having voted on a division in the House a fortnight before. As compared with the forty-seven members who had voted with the Ministry against Sir G. Gray's Separation resolutions in the previous session, the Government could now count on thirty-seven votes only.

The question was: Could the abstainers pass over into the ranks of the Opposition? Between the Government's institute and Grey's extravagance a group of members stood undecided. The official Opposition did not show any outstanding signs that they appreciated the necessity for either showing a conciliatory front to their prospective allies or for advancing a new policy to rally members to their side. Mr. Stout brought on a motion for an elective Governor in the Colony which gave rise to bitter recriminations between Mr. Reid and his former Provincialist colleagues. Dr. Hodkinson declared that members ought to act as soldiers under oath, and contend for their cause to the last. Mr. Reid felt it was no reproach to become a member of a Government after the questions on which one differed from the other members of the Government had passed away. His late colleague, however, refused to accept his distinction between men and measures. On other subjects, notably a petition of H. A. Russell, hard words were spoken on either side, and if the experience of the previous session be any indication the Opposition did not stand to gain anything by "personal" debate.

Mr. Woolcock's motion came before the House again on the 17th of Aug. Mr. Bowen moved that the proposed changes should be held over for consideration till next session when the Government would give effect to them. When Mr. Woolcock's resolution became the substantive motion, Sir G. Grey scored a tactical victory by catching the Speaker's eye before Mr. Bowen. He moved an amendment "That the system of taxation should immediately be altered with
relieve the people of the Colony from some onerous duties now paid. Sir G. Grey's speech was more than a tactical victory; it was a comprehensive statement of a "liberal" policy, a decisive and clear-cut stand on a policy such as the House has been shown to have been waiting for. In the opinion of the writer the speech was the turning point in Grey's career which led him into office two months later. Mr. Montgomery called it "one of the most splendid speeches which has been heard in this House for many years."

The House had been demanding a policy, and the leader of the Opposition spoke not as an independent member, but as the prospective leader of a Ministry with power to give effect to his policy. "I really believed that I could sketch out a plan which every man would adopt, and which would yet be carried out, not perhaps in all its details, but which would make an impression on the country and ultimately be carried out".(25).

Though he professed himself willing to follow any leader who could give effect to the policy, there could be no doubt as to Sir G. Grey's right to give effect to his own ideas.

In reply Major Atkinson was generous enough to admit "that the honourable gentleman (Sir G. Grey) is now (26). Hans. XXIV, p.507."
coming out in his true colours as leader of the Opposition, with a definite policy, so that the House can judge between him and us". (27). The Government accepted the principle of a change in the incidence of taxation, but refused to consider it during the session, preferring to make their existence on their administration of the present financial system. On the face of it, the issue was between a "liberal" policy of change, and a "conservative" administration of the present system with judicious change in the future, almost, one might say, the ideal setting for the dualism of "Liberalism" and "Conservatism". There seemed to be a "general idea" that the House and the Colony were "about to turn over a new leaf". (28).

Mr. Montgomery expressed what must have been in the minds of many members: "At last we are face to face with the great question that has been looming before us for the last two or three years. At last we have got a policy. Whether that policy is right or wrong in all its parts, we have got a policy that will ring throughout the length and breadth of the land". (29).

During the next few days members were eager to express their views on the new issues, but in general few resisted the principles of Grey's policy. They ought to have seen that it would be just as impossible to resist Sir G. Grey's right to carry out the policy which he had put forward. The Government could take its stand only on delay, and on the fact.

of Sir G. Grey's unpopularity in the House. It was understood
that several members would vote to keep him out of office. "The

times" of Aug. 23rd spoke of the real issues as being "Whether
the House shall distinctly assert a principle as to taxation, such
as that submitted by Sir George Grey, or trust to indefinite words
put forward by an inconsistent, weak, and vacillating Government".
In the House itself Mr. Lusk voiced the willingness of members to
accept the principle without its promoter". "I am quite prepared
to vote" for Grey's amendment or Atkinson's amendment "so long as
I know that the Treasurer means what I understand the honourable
member for Thames means". (30).".

There was an agreement to close the debate without
a division, a proceeding which would have been absolutely out of the
question if the Opposition had been a unified body led by an "alter-
native" Premier and Government. Mr. Lusk's speech was read to make
clear that all parties were agreed on the principle under discussion.
Mr. Reid was right in pointing out that the Opposition had no right to
adopt Mr. Woolcock's motion and turn out the Government on it.

A tactical blunder by Mr. Stout, however, found
either side of the House voting against its own amendment. It was
indeed a sign of "how injudicious and undisciplined the Opposition"
were. (31). Sir G. Grey was censured also for raising a false issue
of dates. "The question was one of policy not dates". (31). In
order that Grey's amendment might be rejected, forty voted against a
further amendment and thirty in favour. The latter included Messrs
Seigent, Wallace, Brandon, Bryce and Pyke, not previously associated with the Opposition party, and three new members, Horace Gisborne, Travers (Wellington City, N.), and Wallis (Auckland City West, A.). However, it was obvious that the debate had been more only a preliminary skirmish, if indeed there was to be a pitched battle to follow.

It appears that "an income tax and a property tax" were "to the majority of the House both distasteful". (32). Mr. R. Wood, (Parnell A.) moved a resolution that the Land Fund should be once more part of the ordinary revenue, and appropriated annually by the House. Last session a similar motion had been moved by Mr. Whitaker who was then suspected of driving a wedge between Auckland and Otago. Would members accept this way out of the financial difficulty? Thirteen members only voted in favour of the resolution. Naturally all the Otago men were found among the forty-six who voted against it. Mr. Suck refused to be bribed with the plunder of the southern provinces but suspected the Government of mere sympathy with the resolution than they dared to own. That the question might become an important one for the parties in the future, is shown by the fact that a group of Nelson members voted in its favour. It was possible to visualise a situation in which Canterbury and Otago would be set against the rest of the Colony.

"The Times" of Aug. 28th bemoaned the fact that "everything is being postponed till next session". The (32). "The Times", Aug. 25th.
LEADERS OF THE MIDDLE PARTY. OCTOBER, 1877.

MR. WILLIAM ROLLSTON. (AVON, CANTERBURY).
Superintendent of Canterbury, 1868-76.

MR. WILLIAM MONTGOMERY. (AKAROA, CANTERBURY).
Government was proving too adroit in avoiding direct blows to excite any hopes of a grand battle of the parties during 1877. That between forty and fifty members were present, and a canuck of their supporters met on Aug. 24th. It was variously reported and pledging the meeting to support them in passing a number of "necessary measures" as soon as possible. The situation seemed to point to a quiet end to the session. Sir G. Grey had spoken in unmeasured terms in a third speech in the Taxation debate, and it appeared unlikely that he would be able to improve his position in the near future. "Ministers were willing to promise to do anything next session provided they were left in office till then." (33).

It is difficult to see how any step except the one which was now taken could have brought about a change of Government during the session of 1877. During the first days of September rumours were rife as to the formation of a "Middle Party". The power behind the movement was not clearly known, but Mr. Stafford among others was suspected of attempting to repeat his coup of 1868 whereas, however, "country party" had evaporated into the "Toorallooralo", and oblivion. It is a paradox (easily understandable however) that the formation of a third party in the House had become absolutely necessary in order to enable the dual system of parties to function smoothly. In short the move was necessary in order to shift from the old basis of "Provincialism" and Abolition to the new issues of Liberalism and Conservatism. The connection between the old and the new politics will be discussed later.

331 "The Times", Sept. 3rd.
If the object of the new party was power, they had no alternative but to unite with the Grey-MaOAandrew group. Events, however, were to show how far the Ministerial malcontents thought beyond the simple act of turning out the Government of the even simpler desire to form an independent group of opinion in the House. The first meeting of the new party was held on Sept. 6th. Seventeen members were present. General resolutions were passed, but no leader chosen. A committee of six was, however, set up and the names of influential men such as Mr. Gisborne, Mr. Montgomery, and Mr. Rolleston were mentioned. The question of choosing a leader, and obtaining a majority were not settled. The lack of a generally accepted leader was said to be "the sole cause of a strong Opposition not being formed long ago". On the other hand the determination of the Auckland-otago alliance to "stick to Sir G. Grey" was believed to be defeating their own object — namely to obtain a majority against the Government.

In the House itself, the breach between the two recognized parties widened considerably after an exchange of extraordinary bitter speeches which "exhausted the whole catalogue of abuse", on Mr. Anes' motion for a Committee of Enquiry into land purchases in Hawke's Bay. The House had become used to the general accusations of Sir G. Grey and Mr. Aees but the "cold and calculating" charges of Mr. Ormond against Sir G. Grey astonished the House. Their result was anything but that desired by Mr. Ormond. On the one hand his charges were clearly disapproved and on the other Sir G. grey spoke in his own defence "calmly and without his usual wildness".

The debate had "reformed him at all events".

(34) "The Press", Sept. 11th.
His demeanour contrasted favourably with the attacks of the Minister, who was in any case not well situated for the more extreme tactics of "personal" debate. Ministers had "descended" without success to the level of the Opposition's standard in this respect.

The question under debate was shelved by a majority of seven. The Government were reported to be "jubilant over their victory". They had turned aside what was meant to be a direct threat at their existence but they had achieved their purpose by "a change of front, executed for strategic reasons towards the rear". There were also at least four significant abstentions on the division, and the Government had not been able to gain an expression of the House in their favour, but merely a suspension of judgment in the matter.

Hearsay now began to circulate of a direct want of confidence vote. The Middle Party was dubbed by "The Press" of Sept. 13th the "paolo-post-futurum" party, and the whole episode was 'condemned to limbo'. The difficulty was said to be that there was no agreement on a suitable man to move the vote. In any case there is no evidence of effort to consolidate a powerful Opposition by the Gray-Barrington group. The strength of the Ministry lay in sitting still and the Opposition seemed incapable of strenuous effort. "The Times" of Sept. 13th mentioned confidently that a no-confidence motion would be moved by one of the Middle Party and seconded by one of the Gray party. Mr. Ballance and Mr. Bryce were said to hold the

balance between the parties. If this were the case much un-
recorded negotiation must have gone on behind the scenes at
19th decided to postpone action further, probably until after
the estimates had been brought down.

Meanwhile the House proceeded with the Education Bill,
to which the Government must have become "quite attached". It
was their one "lucky hit", but it did not affect the parties. Mr.
Wakefield in speaking against its third reading on Sept. 23rd said
that the Government appeared "to have abandoned altogether the idea
of party government". (37).

An important measure, the Settlement Works Advances
Bill, passed its second reading on the Speaker's casting vote on
Sept. 26th, after a motion to postpone it had been lost in the
same way. The divisions must be regarded as something more than
straws in the wind in view of the growing dissatisfaction with the
Ministry's tactics in the House, and the developments which followed
in October.

On Sept. 26th the anomalous situation was ended. Mr.
Lenarch moved for the discharge of Mr. Ric's motion on the Govern-
ment's management of the "Waka Maori" newspaper, and substituted a
new motion to the same effect, which was instantly accepted by Mr.
Whitaker as a vote of want of confidence. Both sides were ob-
viously confident of victory but there was some feeling that the
Opposition had selected "the weakest portion of their policy" with
which to attack the Government". The difficulty of widening the issue to include the whole of the Government's administration was shown when Mr. Sanarch, who had been chosen to lead the Opposition attack, brought forward his motion on Sept. 27th. Though it was not a great question of policy, the Ministry had accepted the challenge, and specifically requested that their tenure of office should be involved in the motion. The Opposition, however, decided to confine themselves to the actual substance of the motion, against which the Government appeared to have no defence.

At the outset Mr. Whitaker was able to spike one of their guns by showing that the Government had not been financially responsible for the "Maka Maori" but had merely lent their name to it, in order to allow the paper to continue publication. On the association of the Government's name with the paper, however, there was still considerable room for censure, and Mr. Lusk made the most of it. The state of the parties was acknowledged to be so even that Government members on the Disqualification Committee refused to attend sittings while a no confidence vote was threatened. The seat of a Government supporter, Mr. Kennedy, was in question. It became apparent, however, that the Opposition had, after all, not chosen their grounds for the attack well. Mr. Crothers (Wellington City) approved first the motion, then the continuance of publication, and finally condemned the motion as a "wretched mistake". Mr. Holleston declared his intention of voting for the motion for no other reason than to protest against the state of the parties in the House. The Ministerial habit of recruiting themselves from the ranks (38). "The Press", Sept. 27th.
"of the Opposition...is a course which is politically demoralizing and degrading to this House....The Ministry in preparing their measures have no conviction that they will be carried. The success of their measures depends on a variety of small parties which in the aggregate exceed the ministerial party in numbers and influence". He quoted Lord Beaconsfield: "You cannot choose between party Government and Parliamentary Government". Members relieved their feelings in an acrimonious debate on the attendance of members of the Disqualification Committee, but a motion to reduce its quorum fell by three votes on Sept. 28th.

In anticipation of a general shuffle of party ties Mr. Montgomery hit out at Mr. Stafford, without a rumour of whose movements no session could be complete. Though he had been, said Mr. Montgomery, "Even like an overgrown lion in a cave
That goes not out to prey",

he now came forth as the champion of the Government. Mr. Stafford "drawn" into reply made frequent reference to "my party" and the "Government which I support". Mr. Stout expressed the amusement at his patronizing attitude. He pictured the former Premier as the "heavy father" of the present Ministry, standing behind them, saying: "Good boys. Good boys! Do this and you will get my support".

The exact connection between the late Premier and the present Ministry cannot be treated with any certainty here, but Mr. Stafford gave the House to understand that his change of heart in 1872 had been the main cause of the success of the Abolition policy.

The speech of the debate, however, was delivered by one of the "coming men", Mr. Ballance, who ventured to forecast that future (Hans. XXIV, p. 86; (40). Hans XXIV, p. 74 (41) Hans. XXIV, p. 77
of New Zealand politics. "I believe that the man who first appeals to the people will obtain the victory. He will go into office and remain there for years". (Where Grey was to fail, Seddon achieved a spectacular triumph, many years after.) He appealed for parties to form on the classic lines of "Liberalism" and "Conservatism". "I abhor the very name of coalition", he said. (43). His speech was a more immediate forecast of his action during the next few days.

The division on Mr. Hanrath's motion was taken on Octr. 2nd, a Government amendment being carried by forty-two votes to thirty-three. The measure of the change which had occurred in the political situation since last session is shown by the agreeable surprise of "The Press" of Octr. 3rd at so "large" a majority for the Government. It was pointed out that the Ministry had gained two votes, while the Opposition had lost five, since the last important division. The opinion, however, seemed to be that Ministers had been able to take advantage of the feeling that the matter was too trivial an issue on which to turn out a Government. But where was the "great thing" in their policy?" was a question which was now frequently asked. (43). It must be remembered that not one of their major Bills had passed both Houses and the House had been sitting for two and a half months of the session.

The fall of the Government was less than a week away, yet "The Press" was asking "What will be the next step?...The House not being collectively crazy will not listen to any proposal" (42). Hans. XXVI, p.104-108. (43). "The Times", Octr. 3rd.
"to put Sir George in power.... Nor is there any leader besides Sir G. Grey capable of taking the lead".(44).

On Octr. 2nd. Mr. Ballance wrote to the Premier pointing out that he could no longer support the Ministry. His letter was most significant, and the action of so respected a member must have had an important influence in the decision of the Opposition to launch a direct attack on the Ministry, in spite of their own recent defeat. The Middle Party was absorbing the particles which fell from the Ministerial party and the party of Sir G. Grey remained stationary. "The Times" of Octr. 6th probably expressed a hope rather than an opinion when it said, "It is not likely that if the present Opposition parties come into power, Sir George Grey would either take office or continue to lead any section of the House. We think it doubtful whether he would even wish to retain his seat". "The Times" failed to recognise that significance of the fact that "At present the Middle party has no leader", and this only two days before the fall of the Government. We shall see how Sir G. Grey's position was affected by this state of affairs. "The Press" of Octr. 8th stated that "the Opposition are holding frequent meetings at which Sir G. Grey and Mr. Rees do not attend". Though there is no mention of any such aloofness on the part of the Opposition leader in "The Times", one cannot fail to notice that he was not taking a positive or leading part in events.

Parties were obviously so even that there was a widespread feeling that only a dissolution would put an end to the "lurching" in the House.

The Opposition held an enthusiastic dinner on the night of Saturday, 5th and on Monday 8th Mr. Larnach led the direct attack on the Government. There was general satisfaction that the two parties had "come to grips at last". His motion was simply: "That the Government does not possess the confidence of the House". The speeches were mercifully brief and the House went to a division without the usual delay. At a crucial moment the Government put up one of their "smaller guns", Mr. G. McLennan to answer the Opposition, which had a strong case. Mr. Larnach pointed out that the Education Bill, the pride and joy of the Government, had been passed with Opposition votes (it was however not a party measure). Their finance he characterised as a system of plunder of Otago and Canterbury funds. Mr. Sharp (Nelson City N.) declared that the country was tired of the Government's policy of "Ka pai to tahiwa; Ka pai wait-a-bit" which he translated as "wait a bit. We can't give you a policy now, but hereafter we will give you one". (45).

It was probably this impatience which turned out the Government. Right up to the last moment, characteristically enough, the Ministers were confident of a majority. But they did not know their supporters. Major Atkinson looked round as he entered the Government lobby and saw Mr. Baigent (Waimea N.) and Mr. Brandon walking out with the Opposition. He explained "Good heavens! We are beaten!" Such was the adventitious nature of the Opposition's majority. At least six doubtful members voted with the Opposition. There were amazing stories circulating as to the vote of Mr. Joyce (Wallans O.). (45). Hans XXVI. p280.
According to one side of the story (46), he had been "kidnapped" by the Government; according to another (47), he had been locked up at his own request in order to be ready to vote for the Government when the division came on. The only positive evidence which can be adduced here in support of either version is the fact that he voted with the Opposition.

Forty-two voted in favour of Mr. Lenarch's motion and thirty-eight against. Six members paired. It now remains to examine the division list and to estimate whether the old tests of party affiliation held good. We may say that the old lines of "Otago and Auckland versus the rest" have disappeared. Wellington members had either put away their old fear of the "Separation" cry, or did not think far beyond simply turning out the Ministry. Five of their number, Messrs Ballance, Brandon, Bryce, Denny, and Trevor voted with the Opposition. Three Nelson members, Messrs Baigent, Curtis and Sharp, four Canterbury members, Messrs J. E. Brown (Ashley), Montgomery, Rolleston, and Sakefield, and one West Coast member, Mr. Parff (Motutika) also voted with Mr. Lenarch. The "Middle Party" therefore must have numbered about sixteen members including Mr. Pyke, and Messrs Johnston and Macfarlane, both of whom abstained from voting. Though, of course, it is still time to say that the basis of the Opposition was the Otago-Auckland "alliance" under Sir G. Grey the narrative of events has shown how far the latter had lost the initiative in politics, during the last critical weeks. Sir G. Grey had sounded the war cry but he had not led the Opposition attack to victory. If the

figure may be carried further; he had supplied the deadliest
ammunition to the Government's enemies.

The combination of the Middle and Grey parties had
proved too much for the Government party. During the session
the latter had "gained" three members, Mr. Reid and his "tail" of
two, but it had lost the confidence of the House. "The Times" of
Octr. 8th wrote the Ministry's epitaph in advance in an analysis of
their success in leading the House in legislation. Thirty-seven
Bills had been proposed; eight "specimens" had arrived at maturity.
Two had then passed the Lower House and four had passed the Upper
House. Twenty-three were before the House, and four before the
Council, while eleven had not gone beyond their second reading.
The Ministry had relied on the hope that their special claim to
administer the post-Abolition system would weigh strongest with the
House, but the situation was determined (as might well be expected)
not on the facts of administration but on facts of politics. The
Abolition policy had disappeared from the House, and the House re-
corded its decision that there was an end of Abolition as a party
diy on any grounds. It is not merely unfair but unhistorical to
attempt a comparison of the new issues before the House and the old
as dividing lines for the parties. As was seen during the next few
days the members whose votes had turned the scale were not so decide
on the formation of a new Government as on the unsuitability of the
old. The fall of the latter in the middle of a session is signific-
ant. The modern Ministry is elected (in effect) for a Parliament
but the Atkinson Ministry had not the resources or the rigidity of
the modern parties. In their own time they were condemned be-
cause the policy which they represented had disappeared from the
House. Major Atkinson and his Ministry stood firm in the old
ways, more or less content with things as they were, but there was
too strong a body of opinion demanding a new lead and a new policy.

The words at the head of this chapter form an acute
summing up of their mistakes. "What is good in business is good
in this House, and unless these gentlemen have a policy, they
cannot hope to insure their lives". (48).

(48). Mr. E. J. Wakefield on the Ministry Sept. 7th.
Hans. LXV, p.372.
CHAPTER VI.

THE PROVINCIAL LEADER IN OFFICE.
THE FORMER PROVINCIALIST LEADER IN OFFICE; GREY FORCED TO
ACCEPT ABOLITION.

"Whether he will for tact weave his advantages,
is a question which time alone can answer".

"The Canterbury Times" on Sir G. Grey,
Octr. 13th 1877.

A change of Government during a session of
Parliament, in fact under any other circumstances than an
adverse vote at an election, has been almost out of the question
in the post-war Parliamentary system in New Zealand. Before
1890, on the other hand, Ministries were still the nominees, in
fact as well as in theory, of the members of the popular Chamber.
What, however, members of the Legislature gained in strength,
party politics lost in coherence. Yet it is probably true to
say the elections of 1875-6 gave to the parties in the House of
Representatives greater coherence than they had known before,
and the members were divided on a definite question - namely,
Abolition.

How did it come about as Octr. 1877, that a
Provincialist Premier was in office in an Abolition Parliament?
The explanation can only be that the issues connected with Abo-
lation had disappeared with the institutions which raised them.
Mr. Sharp, one of the "deserters" of Octr. 8th evidently regard-
ed the Abolition question as disposed of, in expressing his
determination not to allow it to be raised again.
"I say that with regard to the abolition of the Provinces, I will resist any attempt to restore the provincial form of government as it existed prior to the passing of the Abolition Act, and I shall oppose any attempt at the separation of the Islands, and separate Governments. I regret very much that the Governor's Speech, delivered to this House at the commence-ment of the session, should follow the practice at Home of state-ning nothing but what could be accepted by either party... The Speech should have shadowed forth the measures the Government intended to propose - what policy they intended to pursue, so that members might, now that the large question of Abolition is settled, know on which side of the House to range themselves, so that there might be a distinct Government party and a distinct Opposition, and that we should not have remained during this session, following blindly we know what where". (1).

Mr. Sharp, in other words testified to the dis-appearance of one issue in politics, and at the same time cen-sured the Government for not producing a policy on which new issues could be formed. It was understood that Ministers had tried hard to get a dissolution, but without success. Though it may have been an expensive luxury taking the long view it would probably have saved the Colony two years of unsatisfactory government. "Upon the propriety of the proposed 'revolution' (in the fiscal system of the Colony), the people who were to a man deeply interested 'had' a right to be consulted". (2).

How did Sir G. Grey stand with regard to the new situation? His passage to the Treasury Benches was by no means a foregone conclusion when Mr. Bannock led his successful attack on the Government on Octr 8th. In the first place he had made no attempt since the failure of his final petition to the Colonial Secretary in London to revive Provincialism in a militant form.

During the recess he had delivered a number of speeches on public platforms, notably at Auckland (Novr. 4th) and at Grahamstown, which forecasted his Liberal platform of 1878-9. There was no reference to any proposed attempt to repeal the Abolition Act in his Auckland speech. Whatever Sir G. Grey's views on the revival of Provincialist opposition, the main issue before the House was now the allocation of the Land Fund. Grey had voted in favour of Mr. Whitaker's resolution in the previous session.

Sir G. Grey's entry into office however can not be so easily explained in terms of broad policies. It is true that he had told his constituents on Novr. 4th that the land revenues should be paid into a common fund, but to raise the question in an acute form at this stage would have been to throw an "apple of discord" on to the floor of the House which would split the parties beyong recognition. At the very least it would divide the House "into North and South"(3). There is no reason to believe however that Sir G. Grey contemplated any such action in the near future at least. Grey, apparently, was unwilling to commit himself so near the threshold of office, nor is it possible to see how he could have done so without cutting his party in two. It is easier to point to the fact that the Government had conspicuously failed to deal with the Land Fund question and that there was urgent need of a definite solution of the problem of allocating land revenue in the Colony.

It would however be futile to attempt to rationalize in terms of policies the negotiations which went between the various groups and leaders during Octr. and Novr. 1877. Rather one detects the characteristic traits of "personal politics" making their appearance on the political scene once more. There was reason to believe that the formation of a Middle Party was just as much a sign of Sir G. Grey's de-position from the leadership of the Opposition, as an indication of the break-up of the late Abolition party. When it came to the point, however, of finding a leader and finding one quickly the strongest party ties in the House were bound to weigh most in the choice.

Mr. Lanarch was unable to form a Ministry, but not before repeated rumours connected with the name of the Speaker (Sir J. Fitzherbert) had proved to be groundless, was Sir G. Grey's name mentioned as the probably leader of the new Ministry. "The Times" of Octr. 30th spoke of Grey as "Premier by surprise". Sir W. Fitzherbert was expected to be about to exchange his position in the Chair for one on the Treasury Benches, as leader of the Government, but it was believed that he could find no precedent for such a step, and accordingly refused the offers which were made to him. One of the charges levelled against the Atkinson Ministry was that it contained no leader, and it was unlikely that Sir W. Fitzherbert could have come back into the thick of politics relying solely on his personal position in the House.
In the same way the Middle Party proved too weak to do more than combine with the Grey Party to turn out the Ministry.

At least Sir G. Grey and his followers formed a comparatively disciplined body under a recognised leader. Accordingly the Middle Party leaders had to choose between, on the one hand, the prospect of office with Sir G. Grey commanding the most influential section of their supporters, and, on the other, the return of the Atkinson group to power. The latter alternative was apparently regarded with complete aversion, and the Middle Party was left with what they possessed before Octr. 6th, namely the power in combination with the recognised Opposition party to turn out (or keep out) Major Atkinson's "Ministry".

When the Middle Party "Ministry" approached Sir G. Grey on Octr. 11th the latter agreed to give them his support "on the adoption by them of certain cardinal points of policy, the principal being the unification of the land fund". Mr. Montgomery, the prospective "Premier" and Mr. Kelleston refused to accept such an open attack on the local revenue of their Province. Such was the version of the disagreement between the leaders of the two parties given in "The Press" of Octr. 11th. "The Times" on the other hand spoke of the "harmonious working" between committees of the Grey and Middle parties. Whatever the actual facts (which can be here only indirectly determined through the speeches in the House after Sir G. Grey had assumed office) the Gordon knot was cut by ballot in a caucus of opponents of the late Government held on Octr. 11th. "The Times" of Octr. 12th
spoke of a total of thirty or thirty-one votes cast for Sir G. Grey, while Mr. Rolleston, said to be Grey's rival for leadership, received only one.

The Middle Party leaders retired from the meeting as a protest against the manner of choosing a leader, and the Grey party, logically enough, took charge of affairs.

Mr. Hodgkinson compared the Middle Party to "the ostrich that buried his head in the sand, and thought that because his head was concealed nobody could see any part of him". He accused the leaders of the new party of using the Grey party as a ladder by which to climb up into office. "But they never consulted the ladder; and unfortunately, just as they had got to the very top, the ladder slipped and fell...When their schemes were presented to the light of day, they vanished like ghosts at cock crow". (4).

Whatever the actual number of votes cast, it was now obvious that Sir G. Grey had been left a clear field to choose a Ministry of his own in accordance with constitutional practice. It is probable that the need for a strong leader and the weakness of the Middle Party as compared with the unity of the Grey party were factors of themselves strong enough to turn the scales in favour of Sir G. Grey.

There were good men in the House who sit in
jurisdiction on the Treasury Beaches would have borne the appearance of a satisfactory alternative to the Atkinson Ministry, on most questions of policy. The system of Ministerial responsibility, however, presupposes the control by Ministers of a majority in the House, and as there was no group on the Opposition side except the Grey party capable of forming the nucleus of a majority, Sir G. Grey became the logical candidate for the Premiership. It was now a question as to whether Mr. Malcolm and his friends could work with Sir George. Quite obviously they could not, and Grey was left to form his own Ministry from his own party. The report that Sir G. Grey would not take office "was the expression of the wish that was father to the thought, but Sir G. Grey took office and the Middle Party was saved". 

The measure of the failure to secure co-operation in the actual choice of Ministers is evident from the personnel of the Ministry which faced the House on Oct. 15th. Mr. Saunders (a member of the House in the next session) wrote of Grey's choice of colleagues, "no public man ever committed a more evident and unmistakeable act of political suicide than Sir George Grey committed, when he declared his willingness to be held responsible for the actions of five colleagues, who had never willingly committed an act of self-denial in their whole lives, and who had, each in his own way, proved himself to be so remarkably untrustworthy".

Though Saunders was probably biased as an opponent of the Grey Ministry, and had as

doubt in view the experience of the next ten years, there seemed to have been nothing more definite in favour of the new ministry than the desire to keep out Major Atkinson and for that purpose to give the new men a chance. Actually there did develop later on a determination to keep the Grey Ministry in office until a thorough investigation of the public accounts of the Colony had been carried out, and a Financial Statement made by Mr. Laurance, the new Treasurer.

The fair tone of the leaders in "The Press" shows that in the meantime there was a body of opinion which was willing to allow Sir G. Grey an opportunity to make the most of his undoubted right to office.

The "ministerial statement" delivered by Grey was not calculated to gain him any new supporters. On the all-important question of the Land Fund he had nothing definite to say. He neither plumped for "colonialization" on any definite (or even the existing) basis. He merely thought it possible "to devise a system of administration of public affairs by which the whole administration 'might' be grasped by the powerful hand of one Government - if there 'was' to be but one Government". (?). He promised to surprise members with the "very great simplification in the conduct of public business" which he believed could be brought about in this way.

In view of the acknowledged weakness of his Ministry which included no member who had previously held office, Grey's forecast of a "powerful hand" in control of affairs seems (?) - Hans. XXVI, p.209-1.
rather inappropriate. "The Times" of Octr. 16th was of the opinion that the new combination could "not be called a strong government", and hoped that it might at least act as an "ad interim" Ministry until the forming of parties on new and great issues would cause it to develop into a strong Government.

The full number of Ministers was actually not made up until after the session was ended. Until Mr. Ballance and Mr. Stout joined the Ministry, Sir G. Grey had as colleagues from Octr. 16th 1877 Colonel Whitmore (in the Council); Mr. Lamarch (Treasurer and Minister for Public Works); Mr. MacAndrew (Secretary for Crown Lands and Minister for Immigration); Mr. Sheahan (Native Minister) and Mr. J. J. Fisher (Postmaster-General). It was probably one of the weakest Ministries the Colony had known. "Practically Sir George Grey is the Ministry" (8). "The Times" of October 20th spoke of the "Grey et praepter nihil" Ministry.

"The Times" of Octr. 20th censured Sir G. Grey for allowing himself to be made indispensable to the great body of the two parties which turned out the Government. He possibly "thought it was a clever move". On the other hand "The Times" predicted that the Premier's "vaulting ambition" might "overleap itself" and wondered that Grey should have "preferred the glitter of the moment to the steady light of the future". By his action he had alienated some of the best men in the Middle Party, who (8), "The Press", Octr. 19th.
now considered themselves tricked, "though the great majority
might support him less for love, than dislike of his predecessor".
One cannot see why Sir G. Grey should be expected to compromise
his principles any more than the leaders of the Middle Party.
There was as much justice in the view that "the way he was hoisted
out of the leadership after doing all the uphill work " might be
regarded unfavourably". This applies not merely to his strenuous
efforts as leader in the last fight of the Provincialists, but to
the lead he had given the House in the discussion on the new
"liberal" policy so unexpectedly brought before the House. "Sir
G. Grey certainly deserves the position for the long fight he has
made as leader of the Opposition", wrote "The Canterbury Times" of
Octr. 13th.

In any case the necessity for weighing up the
comparative unpopularity of Gray and Atkinson was forced with no
undue ceremony on the attention of members. Ejected from the
Benches which they had so long occupied, Major Atkinson's "Impet
Ministry" and its supporters now prepared a determined effort to
cast their late opponents, now figuring on the Treasury Benches
as the "stop-gap" Ministry. The latter was to all appearances
so weak as to appear likely to fall to pieces at the first touch.
While they assented within the House to "a slaughter of the inno-
cents" among the Bills which they had sponsored, the late Ministers
were negotiating for a majority. It was rumoured that the new
Ministry would contain a strong representation of the late Middle
Party. An Opposition Caucus was held on Octr. 22nd. Thirty-three
were present and others estimated variously from five to eight, were "accounted for". Major Atkinson was unanimously elected leader of the Opposition and - a fact which is significant in view of his late actions - the late Premier was entrusted solely with the conduct of the party. In the House a Government Impest Supply Bill for £230,000 was reduced by the Opposition to £150,000, a damaging blow for a Government in the late stages of a session. There seemed to be ample reason for the confidence which the Opposition did not attempt to conceal.

Equal to the Opposition's intentions to oust him was Sir G. Grey's determination to hold firm to his position. "We have a right to have time allowed us so that we may ascertain what is the real state of affairs, and make a proper statement to the country; and nothing shall prevent me from doing that. I assure honourable members I will sit here without a sixpence in the Treasury if necessary". (9). This political deadlock was not reflected in the legislative sphere and "the swing of the pendulum" took place with remarkable little sacrifice owing the measures of the late Government.

Major Atkinson took the first step after the lull following the change of Government. Unable to obtain a satisfactory answer to his question as to the Government's intention to expedite business, he moved the adjournment of the debate. Major Atkinson demanded that rumour that had been circulating with regard to an alleged deficiency in the accounts (9). Hans., XXVI, p.369.
of the late Government should at once be cleared up by the delivery of the promised Financial Statement of Mr. Anarch. It was felt however that Major Atkinson was making the matter too much one of his own personal concern. Following along the lines of Sir G. Grey in his first speech Ministerial supporters variously compared the late Premier to "pussy on the doorstep waiting to get in" (Mr. Thomson), "the dog that must rule this part of the world", or "a calf...very reluctant to be weaned" (Mr. Hodgkinson).

On Friday 25th the late Premier launched his motion "That the House has no confidence in the Ministry", actually no more than a week after the Ministry had taken definite shape. After his strong protest against the delay in the production of the Financial Statement the late Premier brought on a motion which would (if successful) prevent any Statement at all being made. This move was either unnecessary or definitely seeking to avoid censure, in which case the House was justified on that single ground in keeping Sir G. Grey in office.

Major Atkinson's motion was revealed at least as a blunder when Mr. Reynolds moved an amendment "That the Government not yet having declared their policy the House declines in the meantime to entertain any vote of want of confidence in the Ministry".

Most honourable members on the hustings gave a pledge to their constituents to vote for "measures and not for men"
Mr. Reynolds claimed that to oust the Government at Major Atkinson's request would be to vote for "men not measures". (10).

He ridiculed the late Premier's argument which amounted to: "Why should we keep members any longer from their homes?"

In reply to Major Atkinson Sir G. Grey admitted that he had been unable to get the men he had wanted for his Ministry. Mr. Montgomery had "refused to join" him "for honourable reasons" which Grey contrasted with Major Atkinson's yearning "for office at any sacrifice of principle". On two points he was more specific. He attacked the late Government's borrowing on Treasury Bills, and plainly disavowed his connection with the late constitutional issues. "I believe in federalism...but I do know that it is the duty of a good citizen...and a wise man to submit himself to the form of Government which prevails for the time being." (11).

Finally Grey spoke of the issues which lay nearest to his heart. In disposing of the old issues he was bringing forward the new. "We have resolved that there should be in New Zealand a party of progress and not a party of conservative notions."

The House could not "ostracise" him. That would only endear him more and more to the people of the Colony. The Premier's excursion into the higher realms of oratory offered Mr. Fox (Wanganui W.), a former Premier and successor to Sir J. Vogel in the Wanganui electorate, an opportunity for an acute and witty remark on the Ministry. Sir G. Grey in opening his speech said "I felt I was like a gentle lamb drinking at a stream of water, and there was

a great wolf higher up stirring up the stream, but accusing me of going so, and determined to gobble me up if he could". Mr. Fox, however felt that the Premier would more aptly be compared to a "flock of sheep" with a "wonderful faculty for throwing dust into the eyes of their followers". (13). Mr. Fox might just as well have used the simile of Sir G. Grey's Ministry as of its chief.

Mr. Montgomery spoke more of what was in the minds of most members in reviewing the disastrous borrowing policy pursued since 1870. Major Atkinson's intimate connection with that policy could not be denied. Whether or not the Grey Ministry remained in office for more than a month, impartial observers could not but recognize the desirability of an "independent" investigation into the accounts of the Colony, whatever the verdict of the investigation might be. Even "The Press" of Nov. 6th said "we shall be glad when the time comes for some Treasurer or other to make an official statement respecting the provincial liabilities". Admittedly, Major Atkinson's "explanation" had not been very successful.

That at least must have been the view of the small group of independent members who were now working for Mr. Reynolds' amendment. Mr. Reynolds declared that he had been "deceived", the last thing he had wanted to see was Sir G. Grey in office but he had the breadth of view to refuse to trust the new men on merely personal grounds. Mr. Boven the late Minister for Education was similarly disposed to take a wide view. "When such a great question as Abolition has been settled it is natural that parties should be disorganized and that the Government should go out".

(13). Hans. XXVI, p.530. (the wolf was, of course, Major Atkinso
He expressed pleasure that the Middle Party had broken up "as a party government depends on two parties". The latter part of his statement was probably an expression of his own hopes rather than of the facts. The Middle Party had certainly given up hopes of attaining office themselves, but they still hoped to hold the balance between the two parties. They were now regularly described as "the Cure".

Meanwhile the debate in the House "dragged its slow length along". It appeared that the only chance of the Government was to protract the struggle until certain pledges of support to Major Atkinson had expired. On the other hand though a group of opinion in the House was willing to leave the Ministry in office for the explicit purpose of investigating the financial position of the Colony, Sir G. Grey's absolute refusal to commit himself to any policy, and his demand for a free hand for next session was considered too great a concession for a "stop-gap" Ministry. (13). Mr. Curtis asked "Is Grey a new man?". Much had been spoken about the broken promises of the late Government but had not Sir G. Gray a "past" also, on which members could judge his qualifications for office? Mr. McLean spoke of "handing over the Colony to Rip Van Winkle". (14).

was being debated in the House and the incident gave rise to a delay of several days in the business of the House.

No debate could be complete without a speech from Mr. Whitaker, who congratulated Sir G. Gray on abandoning Separation, admitting that he was "once a Separationist" himself. He distinctly stated that he would not take office if Major Atkinson was sent for to form a Government. Mr. Murray also felt "confident that the Premier would never go in for Separation. There is a peculiar charm which attaches to those benches (the Treasury Benches) the effect of which is to convert the most rabid Provincialist into the most ardent Centralist". (15).

The issue before the House was not Separation but equally it was not the new "Liberalism". One cannot help feeling that the issue was purely a personal one. Again and again the Ministerial speakers harp on the strain of Major Atkinson's impatience to get back into office. (16).

The situation appears to be the familiar one of a Ministry unwilling to "gamble on its philosophy" so near the threshold of office. Mr. Murray, for instance, declared himself absolutely opposed to universal suffrage and he "would not support the Premier if he were to propose it". (17). Mr. Murray compared the prospect of the return of the late Ministry to office to the "last state" of the man with the seven evil spirits "and the last state of that man was worse than the first".

(15), Hans. XXVI, p. 639.
(16), e.g. (in Hans. XXVI) Mr. H. Wood (p. 573), Mr. Barff, (p. 639) & Mr. Murray (p. 639) and cf. above at page (17), cf. note 15.
The seven included of course, the European members of the late Ministry. A Maori member Mr. Taiaora likened the speeches of his colleagues to the wind and their votes to the breezes which blow from all quarters in the capital city.

Mr. Balfour suggested that the way out of the political imbroglio would be a dissolution. "Now this Parliament was elected to decide an issue which has been settled and which is not before the country; and like most Parliaments, having decided one great question, it is not in a position to entertain other great questions". (18). For the immediate present, however, a conclusion was arrived at through the generalship of the Government whips Mr. Bunny and Mr. J. C. Brown (Tuapeka C.). On Novr. 6th following Mr. McLennan's speech on the Opposition side, the Government did not put up a speaker, and instead a division was called for on the retention of Mr. Reynolds' amendment. Thirty-nine votes were cast on either side, the Speaker recording his casting vote in accordance with constitutional practice in favour of the Government. When the result was announced "Sir George cheered, clapped his hands, and laughed with the pleasure of a child". (19). Major Atkinson advanced from his seat "livid with rage". (20). The whole scene was "most unmanly".

The division can hardly be said to represent more than a tactical triumph. Mr. Gisborne and Mr. Johnstone would certainly have voted against the Government, but they had either failed to ask for "pairs", or the Government whips were guilty of avoiding the

request on account of a "double entendre". The composition of
the parties in the division is worth considering. Members of
the Middle Party were forced to choose between the two main
parties, and the distribution of their votes was slightly
different from that which turned out the Atkinson Ministry on
Octr. 8th. There had been some exchange with the balance in
favour of the Opposition. Messrs Warrington, (Grey and Bell)
and Mr. Kelly (New Plymouth Town.) were two Taranaki members now
converted to the Government side. It was suggested that they
"could support any Government which would favour their Bill"
(probably relating to the Satoris and Dowse transaction). (21).
Mr. Macfarlane now voted in favour of the Government. Members of
the late Middle Party who now drew back from the prospect of
a Grey Ministry were Messrs Brandon, Curtis and Travers, while
Mr. Gisborne and Mr. Johnstone (as already related) did not vote.
One hesitates to undertake a classification of members by Pro-
vinces. It would, for instance, have been of all possibilities,
mast unlikely to find two Taranaki members on the side of the
House opposite the late Premier. Whatever the sectional or
local interests which swayed the votes of members they were ob-
viously not comparable with the old division of Provincialism and
Abolition.

An Opposition caucous was held on the next day
(Novr. 7th). The general opinion was that another no-confidence
motion should be brought on, in order to have a fair division,
(21). "The Press" Octr. 31st.
but "several intimated their disapproval of any further party contest this session". Major Atkinson had at once moved an amendment amounting to a no-confidence motion after the tie on Novr. 6th, but the Speaker's ruling was that the amendment was both repugnant to Mr. Reynolds amendment and substantially the same as the motion which had just been rejected. For the rest of the session the motion could only be treated as a private members motion. Unless the Government choose to allow Major Atkinson "special facilities" for bringing on his motion, it could be avoided during 1877. It was evident that the Government could not resist a second no-confidence motion, such as was now placed on the Order Paper by Major Atkinson. By making use of their control of the Order Paper and by exhausting all the intricacies of the Standing Orders, the Government managed to avoid the motion.

On Novr. 6th Mr. Sheehan observed, "So far as I can see No. 3 (the no-confidence motion) will be No. 39 in a few days".

The Premier, however, was not satisfied with a tactical victory. He appealed to a greater "court of appeal... There is such a thing as a majority in this House - a majority it may be, of one or two, obtained we know not how, and there is such a thing as a majority of this country.... We know and feel that the people of this country believe now that hope is dawning for them; and we say that by no laches, by no mistakes on our part, will we be turned from the position which we now occupy".

(22). "The Times", Novr. 8th.
He reminded the House of a significant fact. "Two years ago, the party that now sits on this side of the House consisted only of some fifteen members". He charged the Opposition with creating "rotten boroughs, like those of Taranaki" and challenged the Opposition to agree to a dissolution, and as there was no reply forthcoming, the Premier expressed his determination to remain in office till he could appeal to the country. (23).

For the immediate present, however the Government had to rely on their strength in the House. By a majority of two the adjournment of the debate on privilege (24) was agreed to but on the next day Major Atkinson's motion was again avoided by a Government member Mr. Jack who spoke till the adjournment. On the same day a second point of order sufficed to defeat the Opposition second attack. Major Atkinson's motion was contingent on the first order of the day, which was a motion for going into Committee, and hence the Speaker could not put any question before leaving the Chair. Major Atkinson had "left off graving his beard and looked almost happy" when the Speaker seemed at first to favour his side of the question but when the final ruling was given he looked as "black as thunder". (25).

The situation was further complicated by a motion which, if voted upon would have practically amounted to a vote of no-confidence, which Mr. Tavera had moved during the debate on the privileges of the House (Novr. 5th). If the Government chose to

(25) "The Times", Novr. 12th.
treat it as a no-confidence motion, Major Atkinson would be caught at a disadvantage as his party was not united on the matter. Such was the weakness of the Government however that in spite of the known disunity among the Opposition, Major Atkinson was able on a division to secure the adjournment of the debate. Again Gray was unable to rally more than thirty-seven members on his side. Even if defeated he could have resigned on a "sidewind" which would have embarrassed his opponent.

Their apparent weakness seemed to offer an opportunity to Major Atkinson to deliver the coup de grace, but at the critical moment the latter found himself without the strength to launch a final attack. On Novr. 13th it was known that Mr. GISbrowne had refused to support him any longer and one can hardly be surprised that many of his followers were "disgruntled with his bad leadership". His no-confidence motion was now No. 14 on the Order Paper and the Government might be considered "safe for the session". (26). Practically, the party struggles of the session were at an end.

Having evaded with such difficulty direct censure, the Ministry now had a chance to make positive efforts to consolidate its position. During the following week two Ministerial statements were delivered, and upon them the House was able to form a judgment as to the policy and administrative ability of the Ministry. Mr. Sheehan delivered a Native Affairs statement on the 15th which "received applause on all sides". It was acknowledged (26). "the Times", Novr. 14th.
by "The Press" of Novr. 17th to be "a very creditable performance". In giving a due meed of praise to Sir D. McLean Mr. Sheehan probably gained the approval of the great majority of members. Rumours were circulated that he was about to quit office, possibly, on the strength of the reception which he had received in the House, the skill with which he, above all, had staved off the Opposition attacks, and the fact that he had explicitly assured the House that no application for a dissolution had or would be made by the Ministry. His chief had been insistent on his right to appeal without delay to the country. It was said that "overtures had been made to him to desert the Ministry" (27) and that he was ready to listen to the offers of the Opposition as he had not been agreeing with Sir G. Grey "at all". (23).

The fate of the Ministry hung on the Financial Statement which had been deferred for several days and which was the subject of endless rumours. It was believed that Mr. Lanarch would reveal startling deficiencies in the accounts of his predecessor. No such revelations were forthcoming. More eagerly awaited however was the Government’s pronouncement on the future of the Land Fund, the crucial question of the session. Mr. Lanarch spoke with no uncertain voice on Novr. 19th, when he delivered his statement.

"The idea that a large proportion (of the Land Fund) is available for localisation is a delusion, only calculated to mislead the minds of the people as to the real position of affairs - such

"proportion not being for the most part derived from actual land sales, but from Treasury Bills. Under such circumstances it is desirable that the subject should be placed upon a more certain and satisfactory footing; with which in view, and for the purpose of simplifying the Public Accounts, we propose to do openly and straightforwardly that which our predecessors in office have hitherto been doing indirectly and disingenuously. Sir, we mean to make the Land Fund colonial revenue "subject to the charges attached to it. It is our intention, however, that twenty per cent of the land revenue shall be localized for public works purposes. Finally the Government intended to set up one uniform land law...throughout the Colony". (29).

Mr. Hanworth improved on Major Atkinson's example by asking the House to consent to a £4,000,000 loan. Otherwise Mr. Hanworth was summoned like Baloun "to curse Major Atkinson, and I, he has blessed him altogether". (30).

The Government's one outstanding proposal, namely the "colonisation" of the Land Fund, as no doubt anticipated, found them many friends. At a caucus of the Opposition on the day following the Statement, it was apparent that the recognized Opposition party could not offer any resistance to the proposed rearrangement of the Colony's finances. Among others Messrs Stafford, Whitaker and Sharp announced their intention of supporting the Government on this point. On the other hand, the Canterbury members felt indignant that Mr. Fisher was allowing himself to be made a party to depriving his Province of its land fund. The Otago members were similarly divided against their colleagues in the Ministry. On all sides it was obvious that a most powerful solvent had been applied to the recognized party affiliations. It was possible that a totally new alignment of provincial groups might find Canterbury and Otago allied in defence of their land funds, but the situation was hopeless.

The Land Fund might "now be considered gone". (31).

The Government had taken the wind out of the Opposition's sails by appealing over the heads of the recognized leaders of the party to the sectional or individual interests of a large portion of their supporters. Gray had been able to make the move from which Major Atkinson had apparently been held back by the commitments of his Abolition policy, and if it had not been apparent before, the Abolition party of 1876 was revealing itself as the champion of "Abolition at prater nihil". "The Press" of Novr. 23rd cited the example of Lord Derby the Conservative Premier and his radical Reform Bill with which he had "dished the Whigs". "This is precisely the spirit in which the Government have made their proposal respecting the land fund. They want to dish the Opposition".

When it came to the point of putting Abolition on a similar basis for the future, the Ministry's past commitments held it back from future progress. (32) The fact that Mr. Stafford was now approached with a view to forming a third party to turn out the Government (32) is proof enough that the Opposition felt the need of a leader who could meet the Ministry on their own ground. Mr. Stafford had not been committed to the localization of the Land Fund. The ex-Premier was however, unable to rally a majority at such short notice.

Abolition had been the issue of 1876, the Land

Fund was now coming forth without qualification as the issue of 1977, but before the end of the session even the new "issue" had been disposed of. The "smell of discord" when actually thrown upon the floor of the House did not produce the struggle which had been predicted. Mr. Stevens protested that the course proposed was "an injustice to the Provincial District of Canterbury" while Mr. Hewen declared that the Province was "made the absolute victim of this proposal". On behalf of Otago Mr. Reid spoke in equally strong terms. "I have only to say that the proposals of the Government for seizing the land revenue will receive my strenuous opposition at every turn. There is no sense of fairness in them." There is "no reason why the revenues of another part of the country should be taken to enrich the poorer provincial districts." (33). Mr. Reynolds found himself "between two bodies of thieves. I say that, by combining together those two parties can break through the Compact of 1856". (34). Mr. Hodgkinson spoke from a slightly different point of view. "As a southern member I would not have adopted the Ministry's policy from choice, but we who support the present Ministry can gain nothing by turning it out". (35). "The Press" quoted the utterances of Mr. Fisher and Mr. Lampard during the session to show that the two new Ministers were pledged to the support of the land funds of their Provinces. The latter had "sold himself for Ministerial position and salary." He was "not an honest man". (36).

Mr. Stout thanked the late Abolitionists who had reaped their whirlwind. "They cried aloud for national life... Sir, they have got their national life — their long session, their myriads of private Bills, and a colonial land fund... the only thing I regret is that in this struggle they have done — what? Why, Sir, they have made an alliance in order to save their rents". The rents were "saved" during the committee stages of the Land Bill (which the Grey Ministry had taken over) on Nov. 13th. Mr. Sheehan "urged the Canterbury people to accept the terms offered..." which included the reduction of the tenure of leases on assessment after 1880 from ten to five years. Mr. Stout declared that the Government would be actually giving the runholders an extension of tenure to which they had no legal right. The Premier went so far as to say that "it was not a mere Canterbury question". The House ought to act as trustees of the public lands, and such an important matter "should not be finally settled till after a general election". (37).

The situation was not however in the hands of the parties, and the Canterbury men had a majority in favour of the Bill as it emerged from the Waste Lands Committee earlier in the session. Though the proposals in the Bill were clearly given out as Government measures the Ministry was defeated on all clauses relating to land tenure. Mr. "anarch divided against his colleagues. It is possible that the Canterbury bloc had secured a quid pro quo in the matter, the Province (37). "The Times", Nov. 14th & 15th: summary of debate in committee.
being compensated for the loss of its land fund by the extension of pastoral leases. The relative values set upon the land fund and the pastoral leases respectively by the representatives of Canterbury cannot be definitely assessed here, but the antici-
pations in the debates on the Financial Statement suggest that the Canterbury men were satisfied with the terms they had got, or at least were not disposed to put up a fight.

It is not possible to consider here the connection between the half-hearted nature of the Opposition's defence of the Provincial land funds, and the excellent terms on which they secured the future tenure of pastoral leases in the Colony. Mr. Stout spoke later of the Atkinson Government as the "big-squatter" Ministry. "Their instincts were squatterocratic in every way". The influence of the "large land holders - and their were many in both Houses" (38) has been already noted in discussing the elections of 1876.

Whatever may have been the views of a large section of members on the new issue now coming before the House, it seems as if they were "devoid of theory" they were at least "shrewdly apprehensive of the concrete fact". (39). The Land Bill passed the House on Novr. 30th. The designs which the Premier harboured against the Bill were not then suspected, but his opposition to its provisions had been outstanding.

The proposals outlined in the Financial Statement came before the House as the Financial Arrangements Bill and the Waste Lands Sales Bill. The main provision of the first of these

Redden: "New Zealand"1938, p
two Bills, as anticipated, was the "colonization" of the Land Fund after a deduction of twenty per cent had been made for the benefit of counties in the provincial land districts concerned. The provincial land accounts were still to be kept separately. In the absence of Mr. Anarch Sir G. Grey moved the second reading of the Bill on Decr. 3rd. He assured the Canterbury members that their sacrifice would not go unrewarded, but would evoke the gratitude of the entire population of New Zealand. A month before he had said he would have seemed to have been a party to the less direct attacks of Major Atkinson on the southern land funds.

Major Atkinson demanded a definite balance sheet of the Colony's accounts, which had been promised but had not been included in the Financial Statement. "He did not argue against the taking of the Land Fund". (40). Mr. Bees observed that the leader of the Opposition was bound to support the Ministry, if he was in agreement with their policy. His remark was a measure of the disappearance of the Land Fund issue. Mr. Rolleston and several of the Canterbury members made their last protest. The member for Aven applied the words of Canning to the situation; "Away with the scent of 'measures not men'". He felt that the proposal to rob Canterbury was such as could only be expected from Sir G. Grey. "Sir, I appeal to the honourable members from the North to consider what they are doing in abandoning the Man of the South". (41). One cannot help remarking the poetical justice which had reversed the cry of the

North Island during the native troubles of the sixties. Mr. Stout declared that it was "perfectly ridiculous to hear Canterbury members talk about 'us men of the South'. The division on the second reading of the Bill took place on the same day. It was a case of Canterbury versus the rest of New Zealand. Only twelve members voted against the Bill. Major Atkinson and Mr. Grant divided with the Government.

The real problems yet to be solved by the House were discussed when the Waste Lands Sale Bill was introduced on 24th July. Mr. De Lautour stated quite clearly what was the attitude of the Ngapo supporters of the Government on the proposal to set up a minimum price of £2 for waste lands throughout the Colony. "I quite agree with the doctrine which I believe the Opposition have agreed to, that the question of dealing with the Land Fund should be an open question. I agree with them in that view because the fate of the Bill before us will determine the second Bill (the Financial Arrangements Bill), and, if the representatives of the smaller provinces do not see their way to meet us in the sacrifice we are making in the South, I and others will hold ourselves free to act as we think fit with regard to the colonization of the Land Fund". (42). The sacrifice made on both sides apparently removed the prospect of the "large Provinces" being set against the "small Provinces". The issues indeed had been settled and it was too late to begin a second wrangle over the details of land administration in the Colony. In the committee

(42). Hans, XXVII, p.635.
stages however Major Atkinson and Mr. Bevan tried to throw out the motion setting up the new minimum price of £2 by free selection, without success.

Provincial feeling was not dead however even if the Provincialist party had merged into the "Grey" party which was to be the Liberal party of 1879. On Novr. 23rd Mr. Hodgkinson asked the House to consent to placing on the Supplementary Estimates the cost of a bridge over the Aparima River in his electorate. The subject was unimportant but it provoked a long discussion on the effects of Abolition. Mr. Reid felt that motions of this type should not come before the House. Mr. Rolleston pointed out that Mr. Reid's proposals for a large Board of Works in each Province would have obviated the necessity for Abolition. Mr. Stout drew the moral that "Abolition was, after all, only a question of money". (43). Captain Russell (Horner II, R.) stated that when he was canvassing for his last election he found that there were far more questions asked as to the necessity for bridging this river or doing some work in the district than as to his political fitness to represent the constituency. So long as they continued to have men returned to the House on account of their social standing rather than because they represented certain political creeds...there was not the slightest chance of the growth of liberalism in the House.

The new issues and the possibility of a Liberal policy for the future was discussed by the Premier in bringing the session to a close on Decr. 3th. He thanked the House for the (43). Hans. XXVII. p. 531.
liberal funds which had been placed at his disposal. He regretted the absence of well-defined parties. Next session he would endeavour to remedy this state of affairs by bringing forward "great and well defined measures which must have the effect of creating a strong public opinion". These would include bills for adjusting the representation of the people in Parliament, for revising the incidence of taxation, and for facilitating the acquiring of freehold property by small land owners. "We start unweighted in the race which leads to complete freedom - to institutions of the most liberal kind." (45).

Major Atkinson in reply did not think it possible to form too well defined parties in New Zealand "just now". He wished that instead of disquisitions on things in general and allusions to the human race and what posterity would think of the Parliament of 1877 that the Premier would indicate how he intended to meet the Colony's financial requirements for the coming year.

Sir G. Grey had the last word. In discussing Major Atkinson's criticism of his tariff proposals (he had thrown out suggestions for reductions in this direction which would enable every worker to have a 'free breakfast table') he said,

(44) He had asked for £4,000,000 but actually got only £2,500,000, owing to the absence of some of his supporters from the House. Such was apparently the spirit in which the Colony was voted into millions of debt.

(45) Hans. XXVII, p. 797.
"I knew it was impossible to introduce a system of taxation of the kind I have proposed without raising against myself a host of enemies among the wealthy people who are the friends of the honourable gentleman.... I care nothing for the assertions of the honourable gentleman - I care nothing for the difficulties I have to contend against - while I knew I have a phalanx of friends who will follow me to the death in this struggle". (46).

The session ended on a higher note than it had opened, marred only by Gray's abortive attempt to undo the work of the Legislature on the Land Bill. His advice to the Governor, however, to veto the measure was not accepted. Gray's objection was to the "undue advantages" the Bill "gave to the Canterbury runholders". (47).

In other respects Sir G. Grey could look forward to the future with confidence. The enthusiasm with which he was received at Auckland on Dec. 19th made his entry into the city a triumphal progress. It was moreover "his just due". The people of the Province had good reason to be grateful to him.

In coming forward to defend the Provinces "he had overestimated public support"....

"Sick at heart and in body he retired to the solitude of Kawau, and never showed himself till the commencement of last session. Many a man would have after such a reversal, given up all hope, and have abandoned his post. But Sir George Grey is not an ordinary man. For persistent energy, and for that rare faculty of waiting for his opportunity, he has few equals. During the early part of the session he showed great tact and moderation. The wheel of political fortune suddenly turned and Sir George Grey became Premier of New Zealand". (48).

To catch the spirit of 1877 and to feel the hope with which Grey the Radical entered office is difficult to an age familiar with the materialism of "liberal" politics in the great Liberal era from 1890 to 1912. Grey never got his chance to "make bones for the millions" in the land of his adoption. His character was ill-adapted (as it proved) to the uncongenial tasks of a Colonial Premier. (49). His Ministry, too, was not the first nor the last to be made the scapegoat for financial depression, such as overtook New Zealand in 1879. Here however it is only necessary to suggest the note of confidence in 1879.

The Ministry was greatly strengthened by the accession of two well known members during 1878. On the 13th of July, 1878, Mr. Ballance was appointed a member of the Executive Council, (50), as Minister for Education and Commissioner of Customs, (51). On March 13th Mr. Stout was gazetted as Attorney General.

Grey had collected together the nucleus of a strong Ministry, but it was not a Provincialist Ministry. At the most he had succeeded in abolishing the Abolitionists. He had himself carried through as much Abolition legislation as the professed Abolition Ministry, but his thoughts lay in the future and not in the past.

Note to Chapter VI. There is a curious mistake in C.H.S.E. Vol. cit. p.172, where "the elections of 1877" are spoken of as having "put" Sir G. Grey "in office". There is also mention of "the programme upon which Sir George Gray was elected in 1877".

(51). " " " Vol. II, p.325.
CHAPTER VII.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PERIOD 1876 - 7 IN THE
HISTORY OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN NEW ZEALAND
AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN RELATION TO THE THEORY
AND PRACTICE OF PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT.
CHAPTER VII.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PERIOD 1876-7 IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF NEW ZEALAND AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN RELATION TO THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT.

(a). HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE.

The years 1876 and 1877 appeared to contemporaries as a "bridge" period in the development of the Colony. Taking our stand at the beginning of 1876 we should certainly be inclined to agree with their view. In politics, great questions were finally decided, and a body of legislation in relation to local government and land administration was placed on the Statute Book, such as could not but vitally affect every inhabitant of the Colony.

The two parties of "Abolitionists" and "Provincialists" had kept up a keen fight till the very last, and when the "evil day" of the Provinces arrived on Novr. 1st 1876, an abrupt end to the issues which had given birth to the parties, seemed to promise an equally abrupt end to the old political alignments. Such actually proved to be the case. Before the second session of the Abolition Parliament had come to a close, the professed Abolition Ministry was out of office, and a professed Provincialist Premier was in office. There was no return to Provincialism, instead Abolition was carried to its logical conclusion by Sir G. Grey.
The abolition of the Provinces did not of itself give rise to a tendency towards a "national" spirit. The geograp-
hic situation of New Zealand once a moderately complete system of
communication had been achieved, did not permit of "two stars" or
more holding"their course in one sphere". Mr. Macandrew was cer-
tainly the only member in the House to convince his colleagues that
his loyalty to his Province outweighed his loyalty to the Colony
as a whole. Mr. Stout's utterances in the same direction were
ridiculed as "mock modern Otago patriotism". Both men were, by
1878, Ministers of the Crown.

To judge by the speeches of members of the House
after the fall of the Atkinson Ministry (and even before it) it
seemed as if the new issues to replace the old had been enunciated
by the new Premier, who, in possession of the initiative in polit-
ics as well as of power, appeared to be in a favourable position
for providing a lead to the country as a whole.

The fate of the Land Bill, however, proves clearly
enough that the sixth Parliament of New Zealand was not a body of
"Liberals" and "Conservatives" but of men, the majority of whom
possesses considerable property and "a stake in the country".
There did not seem much chance of clear cut issues appearing in a
Parliament of which it could be written:
"Upon finance no one is at daggers drawn. Local government pre-

cisely no difficulties of adjustment. The Land Fund question alone
stands out as the great obstacle to fusion".(1).

It may therefore be said that until a dissolution had taken place and an election had been fought on new issues, a considerable body of members would be content to allow Ministers to rise and fall without modifying Government policy in any new positive direction. Laissez-faire had often been the ruling spirit in the House, and might well have made its appearance there once more.

Previous to the entry of the Grey Ministry into office "any concession to Radicalism or Collectivism made by the House had been viewed in the most easy-going fashion", (2), but in 1877 there was a Premier in office determined to introduce radical reforms as a deliberate policy. The tragedy of Sir G. Grey's Premiership was that neither he (nor even the Atkinson Ministry which gave way to him) was able to obtain a dissolution within a reasonable period after the abolition of the Provinces had been completed in 1877. The effect on Grey's character of the galling weakness of his Ministry in face of the laissez-faire spirit of 1878 must be contrasted with the high hopes with which he farewelled the House in Decr. 1877. A more unsatisfactory session (from the point of view of party government) than that of 1878 has not taken place since 1870 at least.

To crown the inability of Sir G. Grey to rise above the circumstances which were so irksome to him, a depression overtook the Colony in 1879, and his Ministry which had been notably extravagant was regarded as the first obstacle to be removed in the path of retrenchment. Had it not been for that event, which testifies to the power of economic forces in New Zealand politics, it is possible that

(2). Reeves. op. cit. p.246.
the subsequent course of the Colony's political history might have followed a different course. How near Sir G. Grey came to bringing forward a different solution for New Zealand's misfortunes is shown by the remarkable effect of his "stumping-tours" of 1879. "New Zealanders profess to despise oratory, yet it moves them as Grey for instance showed". (3). In 1877 however his failure was still in the future.

When it comes to considering "men" apart from "measures" during the years under review one is struck with the lack of "captains" in the field and the number of "lieutenants". As for the one obvious captain: "The leader of a colonial party should possess certain qualities which Sir George Grey did not possess".(3).

"He cared not for precedent, Parliament, rules,
He considered opponents were villians and fools;
But HE was the lad with the bonny blue 'ee,
Would make all New Zealand, rich, happy, and free;
So knowing in love so grand in a row,
There never was knight like this knight of Kawau". (4).

One can say however that in 1877 the failure of Sir G. Grey's regime was by no means a foregone conclusion.

The only man in the House to compare with Grey was Major Atkinson. Though he was not a popular leader, and both as Premier and as leader of the Opposition, he had been a rather surprising failure (especially in the latter capacity), his prestige as a financier was undimmed by Mr. Lenarch's Financial Statement.

(3). Reeves: op. cit. p.249.
(4). "Political and Other Ballads" compiled from the "Auckland Free Lance", 1879.
Of the two former Premiers in the House Sir Edward Stafford was by 1878 a spent force and Sir William Fox though he was to have another chance during 1879 had been too long out of the House to wield much influence in 1877. Sir Julius Vogel's exit from politics was made in an unfortunate manner which militated against his reappearance in the near future.

Taking for a moment the backward view, we can witness in 1877 the fall of the "continuous" Ministry which had been in existence since 1869. The Ministry which had been Vogel's "public works policy" Government in 1870, was reduced by 1876 to the "Abolition" Ministry. By 1877, even that prop had been knocked from under its platform. Its return to power was, however, expedited by the failure of Grey's Ministry, and by the rise of capable men in the ranks of the anti-Grey party, which shortly was given the name of "Conservative". In 1879 the "continuous" Ministry was again a fact of politics, and its courage in facing the situation was undoubted.

The rise of the "Liberal" party from the beaten Provincialists during 1877 was mainly the work of Sir G. Grey, but it would hardly have been predictable in 1875 that he would be in office two years later. He did not then appear as a remote possibility as an "alternative" Premier, and in spite of his great exertions, there was little likelihood of his remaining as leader of any party had it not been for his more moderate tone during the session of 1877. The "Liberal policy was made possible by the concentration of land administration in 1876, but it was
Grey's eloquence which brought it before the country as a party issue.

From the more remote twentieth century view, modern writers are apt to slur over the whole period from 1876 to 1890. It is "drab and confused" (5), and in preference a view is taken backward to the more picturesque period of provincial government or forward to the more conspicuous era of Liberalism. The years between the abolition of the Provinces and the elections of 1890 have been unfairly neglected by historians, and it is to be hoped that fresh research will redress the balance of historical interest in their favour.

(b). POLITICAL IMPORTANCE.

Political parties in New Zealand in 1876 and 1877 had not achieved the essential features of modern parliamentary government as outlined in the first chapters of this work. They had not attained to either continuity of organisation, or the dualism without which the parliamentary system cannot function in its strongest form.

Members had been elected as Abolitionists or Provincialists, but the result of the election had been to make the abolition of the basis on which the parties were divided a foregone conclusion. The election issue was

bound therefore in a very short time to disappear, and only so long as the Provincialists chose to keep up the struggle would it be necessary for the Abolitionists to remain together as a party.

The party of Abolition did not have a "mandate" in the modern sense. Its strength, in regard to the question of Abolition, lay in sitting still, and not in the success of a spectacular policy such as Vogel's "public works policy" of 1870. The Abolitionists were therefore willing to follow the line of least resistance by merely withstanding the attacks of the Provincialists. They were willing to allow the party warfare to stagnate while they remained in office, but the Opposition contained too many elements of vigour and enterprise, for an "era of good feeling" to hold sway after the abolition question had been settled. There is however a rather apt parallel between the age of "Jacksonian democracy" in the United States and the position of the parties in New Zealand during the session of 1878. The Opposition lacked the power of attack and the Government was incapable of carrying so mild a measure as a beer tax Bill. Party warfare was at a standstill, but personal animosities were at their height. The success of party government is clearly seen from the experience of the years 1876-8 to depend as much on a strong Opposition as on a strong Government.
The Atkinson Ministry, in spite of its chagrin at its expulsion from office, was indeed fortunate in being able to transfer to the Grey Ministry the most difficult period of reaction after the Abolition question had been settled, and also the approaching depression.

Parties during the period reviewed showed that lack of continuity which enabled the great English parties to carry on of themselves long after the issues which had brought them into being, or on which they contended from time to time, had disappeared. The Atkinson Ministry took its stand so firmly on the policy of Abolition that it ceased to have a justification after the end of 1876. Even in personnel the Ministry was equally eager to cut itself off from the past to which it owed its success by incorporating in its ranks men who had differed, or still differed from them, on the fundamental points of their policy. The entry of Mr. Whitaker and Mr. Reid wrote finis to the old party which had been the Abolition party, but which might have retained a continuity of organization for the future. Major Atkinson denied the logic of parliamentarism by destroying the faith of the House in the homogeneity of his Ministry. From the time when the Abolition Government could be dubbed the "Limpet Ministry",(6) its strongest title to office was in its determination to remain on the Treasury

Benches. Major Atkinson sacrificed the future continuity of his party to its present tenure of office. The "continuous Ministry" remained in office at the sacrifice of a "continuous" party.

Its conduct in this respect contrasted notably with that of the provincialists. The leadership of Sir G. Grey, and the vigour with which the provincialists contended in a lost cause, welded the party into a unity which was able to outlive not only the issues for which it had contended but also the errors in judgment of its leader. The unity of the provincialist party owed a great deal to the fact that a powerful group of its members were united on certain great principles which provided a basis for a policy of aggressiveness and criticism. Grey rallied round him the literal tenacities in the old provincial councils.

The party he led was not large but it made up for numbers in solidarity. As the one party in the House which preserved this latter attribute, the ex-provincialists became the logical "alternative" candidates for office when the Atkinson Government fell below the margin of diminishing utility as a Ministry outliving whatever "mandate" it had.

To estimate the factors which weighed most strongly in the party allegiances of individual members is a more difficult matter. Quite apart from the difficulties of commun-
-ination, the question of "delegation" and representation probably did not trouble the members of the House in 1876 and 1877. They gave their support or offered opposition to the stated policy or the past record of the Government and for the rest acted as they were drawn by their interests. The basic principle for which one must look is not division into provincial groups, but between the group of land-owning and mercantile interests, on the one hand, and the party of professed liberal policy on the other.

It is however to the credit of the party of the ex-Provincialists, that they were able to include in their ranks several members whom one would expect to find identified with the party of Major Atkinson, on the basis of classification of interests.

The nearest approach to division into territorial groups which members of the House achieved, was the "Caucussing of Aug. 1876. The object of the provincial caucus was to unite the members of a provincial bloc, or to arrive at an agreement between the members from the Provinces. Its incompatibility with the more ordinary methods of obtaining party unity by agreement on the principle of policy was clearly pointed out by "The Times" of Aug. 29th 1876, which deprecated the evil effects of territorial caucuses on the unity of the Opposition. The Provinces, moreover, were by the majority of members, supported or condemned, not for their own sake, but for the material advantages which they offered
(and which their abolition threatened to jeopardize), or, on the other hand, appeared to withhold.

"The Lower House of a Colonial Parliament resembles, in most ways, the London County Council more than the House of Commons". This description of Reeves (7) was probably truer in 1870 than in his own time. Lacking the exciting issues of foreign policy, the extension of the franchise, or a question like Irish Home Rule, on which there was fundamental disagreement on principle, the New Zealand House of Representatives concentrated its attention on more prosaic details which, however, affected a vast majority of the colonists of New Zealand in the closest possible degree. Of the strength of feeling on the land question, no more striking instance can be found than the passing of the Land Bill relating to pastoral leases in Octr. 1877. These clauses were strongly opposed by the Ministry, but they passed into law without much ado. Such details were perhaps too close to the interests of each and every man in the Colony to permit of their being fought out on the plane of principle, and however much Sir G. Grey appealed to the emotions of the House, he could not, except by a dissolution, alter the composition of interests which it contained. Major Atkinson was nearer the actual facts than his chief opponent in regarding Parliament "as a place for the transaction of public business". (8).

(7). op. cit. p.255.
(8). Reeves op. cit. p.255.
The general effect, however, of the lack of a division on principle was the weakening of party ties. Though the same leaders reappeared in the House, even the organization and composition of the parties did not remain the same. The whole House therefore tended to be the critics of the Government's policy, though the majority of members supported the Ministry's measures with their votes. The connection between the Ministers and their supporters tended to base itself wholly on consideration of interests, a tendency strengthened by the independence of members and the long duration of the New Zealand Parliament. The fate of the Native Land Court Bill during 1877 is an example of the lack of a party connection between the Ministry and the "Ministerialist" party. It was probably equally significant of the influence of the permanent Government officials, a force in politics which was occasionally commented on, during 1876 and 1877.

New Zealand in 1876 was probably incapable, in view of the smallness of the political stage, and the issues involved, of producing an outstanding statesman. Sir J. Grey certainly stood head and shoulders above the rest of the members in his grasp of the principles of popular government, but in a legislature of only eighty-eight members who were dealing with problems which directly concern themselves, a grasp of principles was probably not the greatest attribute of success in New Zealand politics. His "liberal" policy was overtaken by financial depression and did not rally a majority in the House during 1876-8.
but it prevented party contests in the House from degenerating into an oscillation between "Tweedledum" and "Tweedlededee". Sir G. Grey could not lead a Liberal party until an election had taken place, and when, as Premier, he obtained a dissolution in 1879 it was in the shadow of his own failure, and a depression which lay outside his control. During the years 1876 and 1877, there could not be said to be a Liberal party in the House, and the session of 1878 has already been pointed out as "the doldrums" of party government in New Zealand. It would have been possible to predict another future for the Grey Ministry in 1877, if a dissolution had been obtained either in that year or the next, or even if depression had not overtaken the Colony in 1879.

Finally a word must be added on the political character of the Legislative Council. The Upper House was in the position of an adviser who had to be consulted, rather than that of a co-ordinate legislature. Its debates were "very useful, but artificial, and rather monotonous",(9) but its power, though not exercised through the medium of political parties was often used in a decisive manner on important occasions. "The Times" which spoke on one occasion of the "dull decorum" of the Council, whose political surface resembled "the waters of a canal", hoped on another occasion (Octr. 21st, 1876) that the Legislative Council would not retreat from its anti-borrowing position in regard to the Counties Bill. The Council did not retreat, and undoubtedly its view on the matter was a more correct one than that of the Lower House. The Council, as

(9) "The Times", July 7th 1876.
has been said, stood in the position of adviser and critic, but within those limitations it exercised its powers to the full.