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THE PALMERSTON NORTH POLITICAL LABOUR MOVEMENT,

1916 - 1935.

A research exercise presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours in History at Massey University.

B.J. Webster, 1980.

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Abbreviations

AJHR	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives.
ASCI	Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.
ASRS	Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.
EFCA	Locomotive Engineers, Firemen and Cleaners Association.
FSU	Friends of the Soviet Union.
LRC	Labour Representation Committee.
MDT	Manawatu Daily Times.
MW	Maoriland Worker.
MES	Manawatu Evening Standard.
NUWM	National Unemployed Workers' Movement.
NZCP	New Zealand Communist Party.
NZJH	New Zealand Journal of History.
NZLP	New Zealand Labour Party.
NZLP:ACR	New Zealand Labour Party : Annual Conference Report.
NZRR	New Zealand Railway Review.
NZSP	New Zealand Socialist Party.
NZWEA:AR	New Zealand Workers' Educational Association : Annual Report.
PNCP	Palmerston North Communist Party.
PNLP	Palmerston North Labour Party.
PNLRC	Palmerston North Labour Representation Committee.
PNSDP	Palmerston North Social Democratic Party.
PNUWM	Palmerston North Unemployed Workers' Movement.
RW	Red Worker.
SDP	Social Democratic Party.
WCTU	Womens' Christian Temperance Union.
WEA	Workers' Educational Association.

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INTRODUCTION

Within a year of the formation of the NZLP in July 1916 the Palmerston North political labour movement was running Labour candidates in local body elections. The struggle for political power preoccupied the efforts of both the New Zealand and Palmerston North political labour movements for the next two decades, until, in 1935, both achieved electoral success. This monograph is a narrative and analysis of the establishment, development and eventual success of the Palmerston North political labour movement. It is essentially a local history of a national political party.

The approach adopted is that of local history, in that it is a study of a national phenomenon (the NZLP) in a local setting (Palmerston North). This approach has certain potential advantages over national history, for as Finberg points out:

... all national histories are perforce written selectively. Faced with countless phenomena, the [national] historian must bring them as best he can into a manageable compass. He therefore selects those which impress him as significant, and arranges them into some sort of pattern. In doing so, he runs the risk of overlooking some local occurrences which, once perceived, necessarily upsets or alters the whole pattern.¹

In contrast, the local historian:

... has a clearer and truer view, within his limited horizon, than the national historian surveying a vast field from his exalted watchtower. He may supply important information which his more exalted colleague has overlooked; at the very least he provides a useful corrective, by exhibiting in all its diversity a past too complex to be securely imprisoned in generalized statements.²

In this sense local history is a useful adjunct to national history; what Oliver calls the "hidden agenda"

of academic local history, to "illuminate" national history.³ Oliver describes national history as:

... in essence a set of generalisations, a set of general statements that are held to be true of a particular country at a particular time In very many cases, what pass as true general statements about New Zealand as a whole ... are in fact derived from a limited, indeed an overlimited, number of specific local instances.⁴

The history of the early New Zealand Labour movement suffers from this weakness. Oliver finds that it is "substantially the history of labour movements in a small number of localities."⁵ In effect it is a "synthesis" of the histories of a small number of localities (usually the four main centres and the mining townships), "masquerading as a national generalisation"⁶ Oliver cites evidence of the lack of trade union militancy in several, smaller New Zealand centres during the early 1910s, in particular during the Great Strike of 1913, a period when the New Zealand industrial movement as a whole was allegedly militant.⁷

There are similar shortcomings in the history of New Zealand political labour movement. There is a sad lack of local histories, and of studies of the moderate wing of the movement.⁸ Plumridge has recently criticized Gustafson's Labour's Path to Political Independence (1980) for being a "traditional narrative account of events at the executive level."⁹ Brown's history of the early NZLP, though still the standard reference work on the party, does not address itself to the essential local dimension of Labour's political evolution. Plumridge in contrast, in her study of the Christchurch labour party in the period 1914 - 1919, concentrated more upon events "'on the ground' in Christchurch" than at the national level, claiming that this local dimension to the party's development was more important than the national perspective.¹⁰ To convert the electorate to its cause, the Christchurch Labour Party had to create its own, locally acceptable political image, and this image:

... had as much to do with the public's perception of the party's credibility, respectability and the ethos it was thought to embody as with the concrete proposals [policies] it put forward.¹¹

In Palmerston North the public's perception of the Labour Party was also critical, and distinctive. There were local factors that the PNL P had to take account of to achieve political success, a recipe for political victory peculiar to the Palmerston electorate.

Yet the Palmerston North political labour movement was more than just an electioneering machine. This case study also reveals the variety and importance of the movement's non-electoral activities and functions, and the richness and strength of political imagination to be found even in a secondary centre. This non-electoral aspect of the Palmerston North political labour movement gave it an existence and dynamic of its own.

The local study also provides an interesting insight into the relations between the "centre" and the "periphery" of the NZLP.¹² What was the relationship between the PNL P and the NZLP? and how did the PNL P react to developments at the national level? And here Oliver asks an interesting question:

... to what extent ... is the retreat of industrial and political labour from extremism in the 1920s due to the building up of a nationwide party [the NZLP] which enabled the moderation of the smaller centres to bury the extremism of the main centres?¹³

A history of the Palmerston North political labour movement presents an opportunity for studying some of the "neglected moderates", of providing a "useful corrective" to the national history of the political labour movement, and of investigating the local dimension of the movement's development.

1. Palmerston North and the Palmerston North
Labour Movement to 1916.

In 1916 the town of Palmerston North was less than 50 years old. It had been founded in 1870, its development based initially on sawmilling and flax dressing. By the turn of the century the two most important factors in its phenomenal growth rate were established; its position both as the leading service centre for a rich farming hinterland, and as the crossroads of the southern half of the North Island's transportation system.¹ These developments attracted population; between 1887 and 1897 Palmerston North's population more than trebled, from 1,800 to 6,000. With an expanding internal market and labour force, a variety of small, mainly craft industries were set up (eg engineering, coach building, brick and tile making, brewing and cordial making, rope and twine manufacturing), in addition to the agricultural service industries (dairy factories and freezing works were established in the area in the 1880s and 1890s).

Table I. Population of Palmerston North
Borough, 1874 - 1936.*

Year	Population
1874	193
1886	2,606
1901	6,534
1916	12,829
1921	15,649
1926	18,101
1931	21,000
1936	22,202

*Palmerston North was declared a city on August 1, 1930.

Source: New Zealand Census, 1926, 1936,;
New Zealand Official Year Book, 1931.

The town had achieved regional dominance by 1900, and was to continue to grow more rapidly than the other centres

in the Manawatu region during the 20th century.

The Palmerston electorate was established in 1890, and it took in a considerable portion of the surrounding district. It was therefore a mixed seat, with both urban and rural interests that required political representation.² The interests of the farmers at first predominated. In the election of 1890 James Wilson, a sheepfarmer in the Rangitikei (and between 1900 and 1920 president of the New Zealand Farmers' Union), headed off a challenge from an urban based Frederick Pirani. From 1893 to 1902 Pirani represented Palmerston, first as a Liberal, but later as an independent liberal. Finally in 1902 he stood as an Opposition candidate and lost to the Liberal, W.T. Wood. The Liberal's hold on the electorate lasted only another six years, when in 1908 the Opposition (and after 1909, Reform) candidate David Buick took the seat. Palmerston was not to change its political allegiance (from Reform) until 1935.

The comparatively early triumph of Reform in Palmerston (a Reform Government was not formed until 1912) was an indication of just how rapidly the settlers whom Pirani had championed under the Liberal banner in the 1890s had become established, and politically conservative, farmers. By 1908 the region's agricultural pattern had been set; intensive pastoral farming, dominated by the small family farm with 75 per cent of the land held on freehold. Buick's victory expressed the alliance of interest that had developed between the conservative urban and rural sections of the electorate.³

One of the factors leading to this sectional alliance was the rise of the New Zealand labour movement, which the Liberals were allied with.⁴ In Palmerston North the first labour organisation had appeared in 1890, in the form of a branch of the Knights of Labour. In 1890 Pirani had in fact stood as a labour candidate, with the endorsement of the local Knights of Labour. The Knights were an American organisation, with a mildly radical program (they disapproved of strikes). Though it stressed the interests of the workers, it was never strictly speaking a labour organisation (in

Palmerston North its members included many local farmers), and its existence and influence in Palmerston North was ephemeral and limited.⁵

It was not until 1914 that Palmerston voters had the opportunity of returning the representative of an independent labour party. In that year James Thorn stood, unsuccessfully, as a SDP candidate.

The PNSDP was formed in 1913, its support based on the local trade union movement. The first trade unions probably appeared during the 1890s, perhaps as the result of the periodic organising tours undertaken by unions in Auckland and Wellington. The first officially recorded unions were branches of the ASRS and painters and decorators' union, which had a membership of 144 and 25 respectively in 1900. The union that was to dominate the region's labour movement in this early period, however, was not formed until 1906. This was the flaxmill workers' union, representing the employees of the Manawatu flax mills, the most important industry in the region from the late 1900s to the late 1910s. The union was the largest and most militant in the region, and though the mills were located outside the Palmerston electorate (the flax swamps lay between Tokomaru, Shannon and Foxton) the flaxmillers had a decisive impact on the labour movement in the town. By 1908 they had formed a NZSP branch in Palmerston North. In the 1911 general election John Robertson stood as a labour candidate for the Otaki electorate (which incorporated the flaxmills) with the backing of the flaxmill workers' union. Robertson was a resident of Palmerston North, and a member of the PNSDP when nominated to stand in the election. (When elected, however - by what Fitzgerald calls a "fluke", the result of vote splitting as two Reform candidates stood - Robertson claimed allegiance only to the flaxmill workers' union, denying that he was a NZSP candidate). And in 1912 and 1913, it would appear that the upheavals of Waihi and the Great Strike would have passed by unnoticed in Palmerston North but for the flaxmill workers. In October 1912, during the last days of the Waihi strike, the flaxmill workers held a demonstration in the Square, in Palmerston

North, at which a "bit of a scuffle", as Oliver puts it, occurred.⁷ Significantly, what appears to have been the only response to the strike in Palmerston North, unsectacular as it was, bore no relationship to the town's own labour movement.

By the time of the general strike of 1913 Palmerston North had a SDP branch, and again its establishment was the work of the flaxmill workers. In 1911 their union had affiliated to the "Red" Federation of Labour, and in 1913 Bill Parry, vice-president of the Federation of Labour, was appointed as the union's first full-time organiser. Parry attended the Unity Conference in July 1913, when the SDP was formed, and on his return began organising support for the new party. Some time between July and mid-October an SDP branch was established in Palmerston North. This SDP branch was to be the first continuous link with the town's political labour movement after 1916.⁸

In 1914 James Thorn arrived in Palmerston North to contest the seat as an SDP candidate. He polled 23.8 per cent of the vote, a significant achievement considering that one of his opponents was a Liberal candidate. The results indicated that, although the town's own labour movement may not have played a leading role in the establishment of independent, labour politics in the electorate, Palmerston North's workers were ready and willing to vote for an independent labour party. Thorn actually polled more votes than the Liberal candidate; Palmerston's workers had deserted the Liberal ship before the NZLP arrived.

2. Rod Ross and the Palmerston North Social Democratic Party.

In 1917 Rod Ross brought the NZLP to Palmerston North by establishing a LRC, comprised of the PNSDP and local trade unions. Electorally the following five years saw almost uninterrupted progress for the Labour Party in Palmerston. It was a period when many men and women - locally, nationally and internationally - were prepared to listen to and endorse new ideas, new political and economic analyses of society.¹ For the Palmerston North labour movement in particular, it was a period when the appeal and practicability of militant, doctrinaire socialism was tested, and in the end, rejected.

The early war years saw a lull in the activities of the Palmerston North labour movement, as was the case nationally. Thorn remained in Palmerston North, sustaining the existence of the local SDP. In December 1916 he fell victim to the new sedition laws, for his opposition to military conscription. In Palmerston North it was once more the flaxmill workers who took the lead in the labour movements protests against conscription. In fact the flaxmill workers' union gained some local notoriety for its part in the agitation. Public meetings were held during June, and in July Percy Robinson, secretary of the flaxmill workers' union and resident of Palmerston North, was arrested and fined £25 for "writing with seditious intention", a breach of the War Regulations.² Thorn also spoke out against conscription. On December 19th he was arrested in Wellington for a speech he had given in the capital entitled "Labour and the War."³

More significantly, 1916 saw an attempt to form a Palmerston North Trades and Labour Council by the local trade unions. During December delegates from the painters and decorators', flaxmill workers', freezing workers' (probably Longburn) and carpenters' unions, along with the local ASRS and EFCA, met to draw up a constitution for the proposed Trades and Labour Council. These moves proved still-born however, as in early 1917 Rod Ross, newly arrived

in Palmerston North, successfully persuaded the same trade unions to form a LRC instead.⁴ The NZLP had arrived in Palmerston North.

The first constitution of the NZLP had made LRCs the local organisational unit of the party, to which trade unions, Trades and Labour councils, SDP branches and "other properly constituted progressive organisations which subscribe to the constitution and platform of the Party" could affiliate.⁵ The LRCs were intended to select and run candidates for general and municipal elections, with power to formulate their own municipal policy.

It was the 1917 municipal elections that Rod Ross had foremost in his mind when he organised a LRC in Palmerston North during March and April. It first met on April 11 and Ross boasted to the Worker* that "practically every union in Palmerston North" was represented.⁶ Joe Hodgens, of the carpenters' union, was elected chairman, and Percy Robinson, of the flaxmill workers' union, secretary.⁷ The meeting concentrated on the selection of candidates and the formation of a platform for the local body elections to be held later that month.

It was the first time that Palmerston North had seen a Labour ticket, and Ross was keenly optimistic of its chance of success. Of the four candidates run, however, only one was successful. Zillah Gill was returned to her seat on the Hospital Board. Even this success was a poor indication of the electorate's response to the Labour candidates and their platform (which stressed the expansion of municipal enterprise). Zillah Gill appears to have won on "personality and incumbency" rather than on policy or labour endorsement.⁸ Ross and Robinson, standing for council, came third to last and last respectively in the poll.

* The Maoriland Worker, from February 1924 the New Zealand Worker. The title changed again to the Standard in October 1935.

For Ross the results were the first of many rebuffs to his brand of politics that he was to suffer. When he arrived in Palmerston North, sometime between mid-1916 and early 1917, Ross was a recognised labour leader. He was born in Glasgow in 1869, attended Edinburgh University, and arrived in New Zealand in 1900. He soon became active in the New Zealand political labour movement, first as a foundation member of the Wellington Socialist Party. In 1913 he took an active part in the formation of the SDP, being a member of the party's national executive in 1913-14 and 1915-16. After the formation of the NZLP he moved to the Manawatu, working first as a storekeeper at Glen Oroua and then at Linton, before he bought a farm at Awahuri (a few miles north-west of Palmerston North). He soon bought a house in Palmerston North, and for awhile was something of an absentee landlord, making only periodic visits to his farm "for the purpose of general management."⁹

By April 1917 Ross was secretary of the PNSDP, having re-established the party's weekly meetings, which had probably languished since Thorn's arrest four months earlier. The party then joined the new LRC, and played a leading role in the organisation of the labour ticket in the April municipal elections, providing all the candidates, and, probably, most of the policy.

Although the SDP had ceased to exist as a national political party when the NZLP was formed in 1916, individual SDP branches, such as the one in Palmerston North, continued to exist. Most of them soon changed their names to Labour Party branches, but some refused to do so. The first constitution of the NZLP had not in fact provided for the establishment of NZLP branches, for as Gustafson notes:

... the emphasis at first was on attracting into one political organisation [via affiliation to local LRCs] existing industrial, political, and other interest groups rather than on attempting to create new primary level organisations.¹⁰

For the NZLP was a coalition party, its formation represented a compromise between the moderate and militant

sections of the New Zealand political labour movement, in particular the United Labour Party and the SDP. Some SDP leaders felt that their more militant party should remain in existence, independent of the NZLP, hoping that it would:

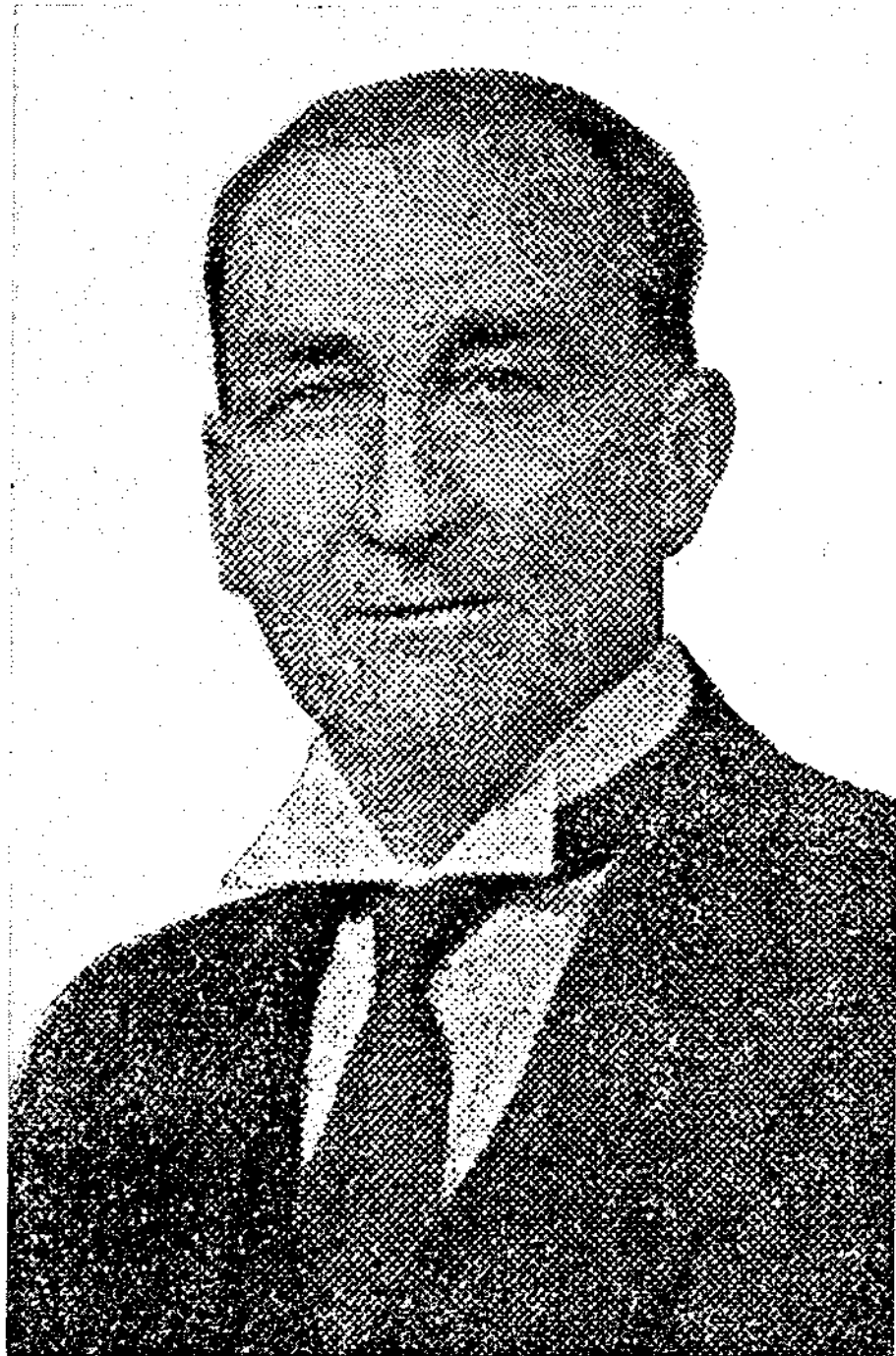
...remain as the conscience of the new party and as a rudder that would steer the much larger, non-socialist trade-union support in a socialist direction."

The Christchurch SDP failed to see any need for the obliteration of their efficient, vigorous and successful SDP branch, which had its own Parliamentary representative since 1913 in James McCombs.¹² In Palmerston North, however, Ross was concerned with making the local SDP a socialist "conscience" and "rudder", and he managed to prolong its life until April 1922. Only one other branch, in Wellington, outlived it.

Ross's support for the NZLP was thus qualified, despite his role in the formation of the new party. In fact he was one of the eleven SDP members who were appointed as the NZLP's first national executive. It is clear, from his subsequent statements and actions that Ross intended to use his quasi-independent stance to keep the NZLP on the road to socialism. In the end this led to his complete estrangement from the labour movement, locally and nationally. Until 1922, however, through the PNSDP, Ross, and his socialism, were to dominate the Palmerston North political labour movement.

Unexpectedly, 1918 saw the first opportunity for the NZLP to test its support in Palmerston. In November the sitting Reform M.P. for the seat, David Buick, died, a victim of the influenza epidemic. The Palmerston North political labour movement, through the LRC, chose Alexander Galbraith to stand for Labour.

Like several other personalities in this period, (eg Percy Robinson) Galbraith entered Palmerston North labour politics via the Manawatu flaxmills. Galbraith was an experienced labour activist. Born in Otago in 1882, he



Alexander Galbraith.

(Scott, S. Outline History of the New Zealand Labour Movement, Auckland, n.d.)

had worked as a railway guard, miner and timber worker on the West Coast between 1907 and 1917. He became chairman of the Westport branch of the ASRS, a "Red Fed" and a member of the SDP. In 1917 he arrived in the Manawatu, working at the flaxmills, where he organised Marxist discussion groups, and by 1918 he was an executive member of the flaxmill workers' union.¹³

The by-election campaign was fought against the background of a heated and strained atmosphere; demobilization, the influenza epidemic, the rising cost of living, the prohibition campaign (the national prohibition poll was set for April 1919) and the Russian revolution. A strong anti-government sentiment manifested itself, and two independent candidates took to the hustings alongside James Nash (Reform, but standing as a National candidate because the wartime coalition between the Reform and Liberal parties was still in existence) and Galbraith. Cries over war profiteering, inflation, land aggregation and land speculation were voiced, and Galbraith quite confidently stood before the electors and proclaimed himself a "New Zealand Bolshevik and a Red Fed".¹⁴

The results were surprisingly close, Galbraith coming second to Nash by only 299 votes. But this did not represent Palmerston North's endorsement of the extreme left. Galbraith had in fact only marginally improved on Thorn's 1914 result. Although he won 35.8 per cent of the poll, he had added less than 200 votes to the cause of independent labour politics from 1914. More than a third of those eligible declined to vote. A low turnout is characteristic of by-elections. By-elections are also often poor indicators of the true political alignment of the electorate, as where only the fate of one seat is at stake voters may feel freer in the exercise of their choice, and deviate from normal voting patterns.

Thus Nash began his seventeenth year term as Palmerston's (Reform) M.P. It is interesting to note how the editor of the Times* interpreted his success; "the support which came to Mr. Nash was largely of a personal nature", due more to

* The Manawatu Daily Times

a recognition of his record of community service, as mayor for example, than to political allegiances or policies.¹⁵ Mash was labelled a "parochialist excelsis",¹⁶ thereby fulfilling a prerequisite for parliamentary honours in Palmerston North. For unlike Galbraith he was well known, and considered to be "of us and for us in every sense."¹⁷ He was also a self-made man (he had started his working life as a grocer's assistant; by 1918 he was an established real estate agent), another characteristic that appears to have endeared him to the electors.

For the Palmerston North political labour movement the result gave an indication of the limited support that a radical Labour Party could achieve in Palmerston, a lesson which some local labourites were not slow to perceive.

The PNSDP remained confident and optimistic, however, that next time Labour would triumph. At the party's annual meeting in January 1919 the previous year appeared to have been a constructive one; membership had increased to 30 (it reached 90 by September 1919), there was a credit balance, and at the meeting fourteen new names were nominated to be elected members of the PNSDP.

For the municipal elections in April five Labour candidates were run by the LRC, two were successful. Zillah Gill remained on the Hospital Board, and Joe Hodgens won a seat on the Council. The LRC also ran nine candidates for the school committee elections, of whom four were successful. It was an indication of things to come.

In 1919 Galbraith left Palmerston North to continue his communist proselytising in Napier. For the 1919 general election Moses Ayrton was selected to represent Labour in Palmerston. Ayrton was a Yorkshire born Christian socialist, a lay leader in the Methodist Church. In 1913 he joined the SDP, and in the Grey by-election of that year, acted as campaign chairman for the successful SDP candidate, Paddy Webb. By 1916 he was the party's national vice-president. Between 1915 and 1918 he served on the Grey Hospital Board and Runanga Borough Council as a labour

member. In 1917 he worked as a tutor for the WEA on the West Coast, and it was as a WEA tutor that he arrived in Palmerston North in 1918.

Ayrton was soon active in the PNSDP. In July 1919, with the backing of the PNSDP, he mediated in an industrial dispute at the Manawatu flaxmills. As a result the deadlock between the employers and the union, which had lasted since May, was broken, with "substantial concessions" won for the employees.¹⁹ Fitzgerald argues that Ayrton's conciliatory manner, his strong belief in "class co-operation", was behind this success.²⁰ According to Gustafson he was a quiet, philosophical, evolutionary socialist; he saw socialism "essentially as an expression of Christian ideals of social justice."²¹

In fact Ayrton made class co-operation the theme of his election campaign:

... the spirit of co-operation [is] aboard,
and the interests of the working farmer and
the wage earner [are] identical.²²

(Ayrton was obviously trying to woo the more depressed section of the local farming community, a NZLP tactic). It was an appeal to a "brotherhood" of the common man, politics that opposed militant labour and big business.²³

As a speaker Ayrton gained considerable popularity. Before the election campaign the local RSA had formed a debating society, and Ayrton and Ross were invited, as members of the PNSDP, to take part in two debates.²⁴ The first was on the subject of land nationalisation (which they argued for), the second on compulsory military service (which they argued against). They won both. Once the campaign began Ross, Ayrton's campaign secretary, received invitations from "numerous" local organisations for Ayrton to address their meetings, including a combined meeting of local lodge members.²⁵

Labour's only opponent in the contest, the Reform M.P.



Moses Ayrton.

(Paul, J.T. Humanism in Politics. New Zealand Labour Party Retrospect, Wellington, 1946.)

James Nash, was meanwhile versing the electorate in scare tactics. Ayrton did his best to assuage the "Holland, Semple and Co." extremist bogey put before the voters.²⁶ His response was to renounce radicalism; he stated his belief that the strike weapon was a "relic of barbarism", and made reference to "that horrible doctrine of class war."²⁷ As far as he was concerned, the:

... cost of living problem, the question of prices of foodstuffs, the future of the Pacific, indentured labour, etc., the subject of militarism and the increasing cost of navalism, these subjects were of burning importance to the average householder and the man in the street, which far outweighed the piffle talked about Holland, Semple and Co.²⁸

Dissatisfaction over the rising cost of living, and with the failure of wages and salaries to keep pace with price inflation and tax increases, was an important factor in the NZLP vote in 1919. In Palmerston North this was particularly so, for by November 1918 the retail prices of the three basic groups of food commodities - groceries, dairy-produce and meat - had risen by 53.03 per cent over the July 1914 levels, a rate unrivalled in New Zealand. By November 1919 the figure was 58.38 per cent, still six per cent above the national average.²⁹

In the event Ayrton polled 42.9 per cent of the vote, a significant advance on the 1918 by-election result. To some extent this was simply because there were only two candidates, only a choice between Reform and Labour. This in itself, however, indicated that in Palmerston the NZLP had already inherited the Liberal mantle. Ayrton's ability and his moderate brand of politics, and in particular his apparent success in projecting to the electorate (which, it must be added, was largely unfamiliar with him), an acceptable image of the NZLP, must have also aided the Labour cause.

In the 1919 electoral roll Ayrton's occupation was given as university lecturer, because Ayrton was a WEA tutor. The WEA was first formed in New Zealand in 1915, as an adult education organisation, designed especially for those unable to attend university. Because of a lack of teachers, no

WEA courses were run in Palmerston North until 1916. In that year B.E. Murphy (one of the foundation professors of the Victoria University College) took a class in economics. In 1917 37 students were enrolled in Murphy's economics class, which ran for 24 weeks. Ayrton joined Murphy in 1918, and that year 28 male students were enrolled. Ayrton remained in Palmerston North as a WEA tutor until 1920, when he moved to Wellington, where he became national secretary of the Labour Party, 1920-22.³⁰

Enrolment in WEA courses in Palmerston North during the period up to 1935 peaked in 1928, when there were 121 students in classes on economics, psychology and hygiene. And in that year there were more females than males enrolled. The 1930s depression all but crippled the association however; in 1931 there were only 9 students enrolled in a course on "New Zealand Problems."³¹

According to Hall a "preoccupation with the welfare of the working class was an implicit part of the aims and aspirations of the founders" of the WEA in New Zealand.³² During its early years it attracted many labour leaders to its classes (including Holland, Savage, Fraser and Semple). The WEA itself welcomed this support. Trade unions affiliated to the association, providing much needed financial aid (in default of adequate Government funding). In Palmerston there were close links between the WEA and the labour movement, especially during the late 1910s.³³ The most obvious was through Moses Ayrton. In 1917 W.R. Birnie, an active labourite, was class secretary of the WEA in Palmerston North. The local flaxmill workers' union made a contribution of £5 to the association in 1918, and in 1919 the PNSDP affiliated to it. (Ross was an ardent supporter of the WEA). Gustafson suggests that for the labour movement the WEA "provided relatively neutral ground on which the militants and moderates could meet, debate and get to know one another."³⁴ And in Christchurch during WWI, according to Plumridge, it acted as a forum for labour agitators and fostered the political consciousness of the workers.³⁵ In Palmerston North it stimulated, and provided an outlet for, the ideological ferment that

existed within the local political labour movement in this period. The support for Rod Ross, and the endorsement of Alexander Galbraith by the LRC in 1918, expressed a real (but temporary) interest in radical socialism. Like Ross and Galbraith, the WEA helped acquaint Palmerston North workers with Marxism and other revolutionary economic and political theories; and for awhile many local labourites were willing to listen. This was no isolated phenomenon; within the NZLP the years from 1917 to 1921 saw a "resurgence of socialist theorizing", provoked by the Great War and spurred on by the Russian revolution.³⁶ Locally and nationally, however, this courtship with militant, doctrinaire socialism was to be shortlived. By the early twenties the more doctrinaire NZLP leaders, such as Fraser, had realized that New Zealand workers wanted increased wages rather than socialist ideology. The reality of the New Zealand political situation demanded that the Labour Party adopt "generally acceptable legislative proposals", and retain unity with the moderates.³⁷ The militant-moderate conflict within the NZLP was inevitably resolved in favour of the moderates; theory was sacrificed for political practicability. The formation of the NZCP in 1921 provided an outlet for those unwilling to accept these developments.

Rod Ross instead chose complete isolation from the labour movement. Palmerston North had its own militant-moderate conflict, a local struggle between the supporters and the opponents of militant, doctrinaire socialism. The conflict first came to light during the 1918 by-election, when there was a "movement" to have Galbraith withdrawn as the Labour candidate.³⁸ Some local labourites apparently felt he was "too rugged", that he "lacked polish", in the words of one of Galbraiths' indignant supporters.³⁹ The issue at stake was almost certainly Galbraith's communism. One of those involved in this "movement" was Joe Hodgens. Hodgens was a local labour leader; the first chairman of the LRC established in 1917, one-time secretary of the Palmerston North ASCJ and a PNSDP member. Although documentation is lacking, it appears that a number of local labourities began rallying behind Hodgens in opposition to Ross's domination of the Palmerston North political labour movement. At the annual meeting of the PNSDP in January

1919 this group attempted, unsuccessfully, to have the name of the party changed to that of a NZLP branch. By April they had formed a rival NZLP branch, independent of the PNSDP. Delegates of both organisations attended the third Annual Conference of the Labour Party in July, where they attempted to establish their own party as the dominant and legitimate labour party in Palmerston North. In an attempt to prevent the rival Labour Party branch from running candidates for election in Palmerston, the PNSDP proposed a remit asking that:

... no one be eligible as a labour candidate for Parliament who has stood in opposition to an official Labour candidate for a Parliamentary seat, until six years have elapsed from the date of such opposition.⁴⁰

Conference however, was as yet little interested in the dispute.

Ross was steadily alienating himself from the labour movement, above-all because of his ideological obstinacy. He was first and foremost an intellectual propagandist, never fully committed to political action through the NZLP. His socialism was fundamentalist, dogmatic and uncompromising. In the end he turned his back on the party that he had helped create because he felt it had reneged on its socialist objective. Before he did this, however, he made repeated attempts to inject his brand of politics into the labour movement, locally and nationally.

It was precisely this doctrinaire socialism that men like Joe Hodgens found intolerable. So too did the local community. In April 1919 the PNSDP was invited to take part in the peace celebrations in Palmerston North, organised by the Peace Celebrations Committee. As secretary of the PNSDP, Ross (who had lost a son in the war) wrote to the Times explaining the party's reasons for declining the invitation:

... we do not believe the proposed peace celebrations are in reality what they pretend to be, but are, on the contrary, merely the glorification of the victory of one group of capitalists over another. We believe that the peace of the world can only be secured by the workers of all

countries uniting against the common enemies of mankind, the makers of all wars, namely, the capitalist class.⁴¹

Sincere as Ross's ideological stance was, it had no place in Palmerston politics. The response of the editor of the Times to the resolution is revealing. The editor called the PMSOP a "small coterie" which "usurps the right to voice the wishes and aspirations of the loyal democratic wage-earners of New Zealand."⁴² The break-away PNLP branch also declined the invitation to participate in the peace celebrations, but for different reasons. It refused to accept the invitation because it felt that the itinerary of the celebrations (which had been decided upon without consulting the PNLP branch) failed to give the "workers" sufficient recognition of their war effort (the labour organisations were apparently allotted a place at the tail end of the planned street procession).⁴³ In this the PNLP branch was motivated by sectional jealousy rather than socialist ideology.

The differences between the two Palmerston North labour parties were also revealed at the 1919 Annual Conference of the NZLP, when both put forward land policies. Ross's dogmatic and doctrinaire socialism was nowhere more fully expressed than in his ideas on land reform, and in his attempts to have the Labour Party adopt his land policy. As a member of the SDP national executive, Ross had attended the conference that gave birth to the NZLP (in July 1916). Ross was then an acknowledged expert on land policy, and along with J.T. Paul, James McCombs, Peter Fraser and A.P. McCarthy, he was appointed to a special committee to draft a "comprehensive" land policy for the new party.⁴⁴ The NZLP was anxious to construct a Labour land policy, and the question was not finally settled until the late 1920s. For Ross it was a matter of designing a policy consistent with the party's original socialist objective. His answer was land nationalisation and the establishment of large scale state farms. Few others, however, shared his ideas on the issue.

The fate of the 1916 land committee is uncertain,

but the land policy which the NZLP put before the electorate in the 1919 general election was framed by another special committee, which excluded Ross, appointed at the 1919 Annual Conference. At that Conference Ross attempted to have his policy adopted by proposing the following remit:

That we oppose the policy of private enterprise in land, and substitute for same the policy of national farms for the production of commodities for use and not for profit.⁴⁵

The rival PNLP branch put forward its own, comprehensive land policy. Significantly, it was not a socialist policy. Instead of land nationalisation it sought the "recognition of the interests of the whole community in land."⁴⁶ Its architect was almost certainly John Robertson (the independent socialist M.P. for Oroua 1911-1914), who still resided in Palmerston North. Robertson's interest in land policy dated from at least 1913, and by 1919 he was a sufficiently recognized authority on the question to be appointed to the special land policy committee at Conference. In fact the policy eventually adopted by the party differed only in minor, if significant, detail to that initially proposed by the PNLP branch.⁴⁷

Curiously, Ross's proposal for the establishment of state farms did become NZLP policy, but not as part of its land policy. Instead it found its way into the platform section "State Ownership", where it remained until at least 1928.⁴⁸ This was little consolation for Ross, however. During the period between the 1919 and 1920 NZLP conferences he wrote a series of letters to the Worker, making scathing attacks on the land policy adopted in 1919.⁴⁹ (While John Robertson had several articles published in the Worker elucidating and defending the policy).⁵⁰ At the 1920 Annual Conference Ross proposed the following amendment to the land platform:

Delete everything under land, and urge that a conference be called of all farmers who are members of the Labor party to draw up a Land policy to be submitted to Conference.⁵¹

Ross, himself a farmer, argued in support of this motion that "every plank in the party's platform must be in the direction of the Socialist objective", and that the existing land policy "did not tend that way."⁵² According to Brown, Ross asserted that that policy "would simply perpetuate an inefficient small landowning class."⁵³ The proposal to delete the existing land policy was heavily defeated, but it was agreed to hold a conference of farmer members of the party as well as the National Executive.

The special land policy conference, with Ross apparently in attendance, met in Wellington in March 1921. The policy amendments there decided upon were submitted to the Annual Conference in July as a remit. At that Conference the party went at least some way in satisfying Ross, by accepting a land policy providing for the gradual nationalisation of land. Although, as Brown states, this represented a "substantial step to the left", it was not far enough for Ross.⁵⁴ It was the last time, however, that he was to be involved in the formation of NZLP land policy. He was increasingly pre-occupied with the threat to his domination of the Palmerston North political labour movement.

In an attempt to maintain their position in Palmerston North, Ross and his supporters in the PNSDP attempted at the 1920 Annual Conference to have the rival PNLB branch outlawed. The president of the PNSDP, Tom Reid, moved that:

Where branches of the SDP function as a branch of the New Zealand Labor Party no other branch be formed without the consent of the National Executive.⁵⁵

Ross seconded the motion "and gave some good local reasons why the remit should be carried."⁵⁶ (It was defeated).

The "local reasons" became clearer during the local body elections of April 1921. It will be remembered that Joe Hodgens had won a seat on the Palmerston North Borough Council in 1919, as a LPC (Labour) candidate. In the 1921 municipal elections he dissociated himself from the LRC. Instead he entered the election campaign as the candidate of the carpenters' union, in competition with the three

official (LRC) Labour candidates. He soon withdrew altogether from the contest, however, hence losing his seat on the Council. (While the three LRC candidates, and Ross was one of them, were all defeated in the poll).

It was the antagonism between Hodgens and Ross which led to this public breach in the Palmerston North political labour movement. As a Labour member of the Council (between 1919 and 1921) Hodgens was obliged to obey certain instructions from the LRC, such as making reports of Council business to the LRC. But Hodgens refused to co-operate with Ross, when he, as secretary of the LRC attempted to obtain such reports during 1919 and early 1920. Hodgens claimed that he was responsible not to the LRC, but to the carpenters' union, and by the time of the 1920 Annual Conference, that union, and with it Hodgens, had disaffiliated from the PNLRC. The PNLRC branch formed in early 1919 had meanwhile dissolved, so that Hodgens and his supporters had in effect left the NZLP altogether. Joe Hodgens' star, however, was far from being eclipsed.

By this time Ross had all but lost his earlier position of influence in the NZLP. In 1916 Ross had been a member of the party's National Executive. At the 1917 Annual Conference it was decided that the National Executive members should represent different areas and Ross was elected as Executive member for Palmerston North. In 1918, however, he lost that position to Zillah Gill. Then in 1919, an indication of Ross's flagging support in Palmerston North (as the office of Divisional Area Executive member, as it was called, was decided by a poll of local affiliated organisations) Joe Hodgens became Palmerston North's representative on the National Executive. Hodgens, however, soon resigned from the position.

With Hodgens and the carpenters' union no longer members of the PMSDP or the PNLRC, Ross seems to have been able to inject more of his left-wing socialism into the LRC. This went so far as an attempt to have the 1921 Annual Conference accept his proposal for the abolition of the Arbitration Court. Ross moved the remit (on behalf of the PNLRC), justifying it by asserting that "there can be no

arbitration between the robbers and the robbed", and that "the political party should keep in touch with the industrial movement"⁵⁷ The gulf between Ross and the NZLP was now wider than ever. In 1916 the NZLP had accepted the arbitration system as an essential compromise to achieve unity. By 1921 even the former "Red Fed" militants of the party (like Harry Holland) were committed to it, rather than to the alternative tactic of industrial action through strikes. Even the anti-political Alliance of Labour was, by the early 1920s, beginning to see the importance of arbitration, as deteriorating economic conditions gave direct action a dubious appeal. The remit was defeated.⁵⁸

The conflict between the two Palmerston North factions reached a climax in 1922. It finally revolved around the question of who should represent the NZLP in the Palmerston electorate in the 1922 general election. The PMLRC, and Ross, chose Victor Christensen, and he was in fact endorsed by the NZLP National Executive in late 1921. But then a complaint was received by the National secretary of the party, Moses Tyrton, alleging that there had been "irregularities" in connection with Christensen's nomination.⁵⁹ The complaint came from J.D. Carty, a member of the local USRS. The National Executive decided to hold an inquiry, and although they found that the alleged "irregularities" were without foundation, they suggested that the ballot be reopened. This the PMLRC refused to do. The Executive then sent two of its number, Peter Fraser and Tom Brindle, to Palmerston North in an endeavour to settle the question. At a meeting held in June 1922 it was decided to lay all the details of the dispute before the Annual Conference to be held in July.

At the Conference one of the first items on the agenda was the "Palmerston North Dispute!"⁶⁰ To Ross's consternation, the National Executive proposed that a special committee of five be appointed to consider the matter. The committee was formed, and duly met. When it reported back to the Conference, Pat Hickey, its chairman, stated that the majority of the committee "were shocked at the revelations made."⁶¹ As the committee could not agree unanimously on a course of action, a majority and a minority report were

proposed. The former called for the re-opening of the ballot, the latter for the confirmation of Christensen's nomination. The majority report was put to the Conference, with an amendment from Peter Fraser:

That we declare Palmerston North out of the official Labour seats to be contested this coming general election.⁵²

This motion to declare Palmerston "black", was only narrowly defeated, while the majority report was carried.⁵³ Ross later alleged that Conference voted on the issue without having any of the details of the dispute before it.

The ballot was re-opened, and by early October a new candidate for the Palmerston seat had been chosen, endorsed by the National Executive, as the official NZLP candidate. This was Joe Hodgens.

Hodgens had somehow recovered his position in the Palmerston North political labour movement, while Ross had all but lost his. A letter received by the NZLP national secretary in April 1922 was perhaps a manifestation of the backstage moves by which Hodgens and his supporters undermined Ross's position. It read:

At a meeting of the Palmerston North Social Democratic Party held last night, [April 24] it was unanimously decided to alter the name of the Social Democratic Party to that of "The Palmerston North Branch of the New Zealand Labour Party." Kindly note.⁶⁴

It was sent by Ross, who had now become secretary of the PNLP branch. But not for long.

By the end of 1922 Ross had severed all links with the PNLP (and hence also with the NZLP). In the 1922 general election Christensen stood as the "Independent Labour Candidate", with the backing of Ross and his supporters, in competition with Joe Hodgens, the "Official Labour Candidate."⁶⁵

The 1922 general election was a foretaste of the 1931 and 1935 elections, fought against the background of economic depression (in this case that of 1921-22). It was not severe enough, however, to seriously threaten Reform's support. The NZLP attacked the Government's deflationary economic measures (which included salary and wage cuts.) Labour offered a positive electoral platform, promising among other things a 40-hour week, motherhood endowment, and pensions for widows and invalids. The result (Labour won 25 per cent of the vote and seventeen seats) showed that while the party had now secured the vote of the urban wage earner, it had failed to attract white-collar support, let alone that of the farmers.⁶⁶

In Palmerston Joe Hodgens was more successful. Palmerston North's wage earners had already demonstrated their loyalty to the NZLP in 1919. As Hodgens realized, it was time to woo the more conservative 'middle section' of the Palmerston electorate. In reply to accusations that he stood for "extreme labour", he attempted to make use of his record of service to the community:

I have dwelt in this town among you for 16 years and have done all that a respectable citizen can do.⁶⁷

In this, however, Hodgens could not compete with the sitting Reform member, James Nash. Hodgens took 40.1 per cent of the vote, less than Ayrton had won in 1919. It was in fact an important advance on the 1919 result, because Hodgens had another, independent labour candidate to contend with; Victor Christensen. The latter polled six per cent of the vote, six per cent that would almost certainly have otherwise gone to Hodgens.⁶⁸

The election was the first and only time that Ross tested the electoral appeal of his doctrinaire socialism, which Christensen represented. And for Ross the election was a means of venting his spleen on the Labour Party. His bitterness was understandable, but his political naïvety astonishing. He called on Hodgens to withdraw from the campaign, to make way for Christensen, whose "profound

knowledge of economics" better qualified him for office.⁶⁹ And he accused Hodgens of having "scabbed" during the 1918 by-election.⁷⁰ Ross also had something to say about the NZLP's land policy; that it was drawn up by men who knew nothing about farming, and that it was designed to deceive the small farmer. And in two letters published in the Standard*, Ross acquainted the electorate with the details of the "split in the Palmerston North labour ranks."⁷¹

Christensen and Ross were portrayed as radicals by Hodgens, the latter claiming that he was much "nearer" to the labour movement than Ross.⁷² The most controversial and colourful issue dividing the two groups, however, was the Palmerston North Socialist Sunday School.

Socialist Sunday Schools had existed in New Zealand as early as 1912, when one was established in Waihi. In 1915 a Socialist Sunday School was formed in Christchurch, under the leadership of J.H.G. Chapple, a former Unitarian Minister. The school gave children religious training, as at conventional Sunday schools, and lessons in the evils of capitalism. It was still meeting in the mid-twenties. Chapple campaigned for the establishment of schools in other areas, and in 1919 one was started in Auckland. Ross also responded to Chapple's call, and in September 1920 a Socialist Sunday School was set up in Palmerston North. In 1921 Ross described its first year of activities:

Every Sunday the Sunbeams [children] have the glorious gospel of Socialism explained to them. The teachers make clear to the Sunbeams how wrong and unjust the present system is, how the workers are oppressed and robbed of the fruits of their labor. We emphasize the spirit of internationalism Socialist songs are sung every Sunday, the 'Red Flag' never being omitted.⁷³

There were also classes in astronomy and evolution, and, one of Ross's particular interests, in the international language of Esperanto. Like its counterpart in Christchurch,

* The Manawatu Evening Standard.

the Palmerston North Socialist Sunday School was not a completely secular institution, for religious lessons were given, and religious hymns sung. It was a short-lived phenomenon, however, its existence ending with Ross's withdrawal from the Palmerston North political labour movement in 1922.

During the 1922 election campaign Hodgens used the school as a bogey, dissociating himself from its "blasphemous teaching."⁷⁴ In a letter to the Times "Vindex" described one of the hymns sung at the school as an "anarchist lullaby"; and accused Ross of being the "originator, preceptor-in-chief and Pooh-Sah generally of this agency for submerging the childmind in religious unbelief."⁷⁵ Those involved in the school were quick to defend it. One of its teachers, Emma Birdsall, took particular exception to the charge that the school was anti-religious. She quoted one of the hymns sung, the first verse of which ran:

One cosmic brotherhood,
 One universal good,
 One source, one sway!
 One purpose moulding us,
 God enfolding us,
 In love always.⁷⁵

Christensen was also a teacher at the school, and his association with it appears to have finally damned him in the eyes of the electorate.

Ross had been rejected, by the NZLP, the PMLP and the Palmerston electorate. His intellectual approach to politics, his complex theories and Marxist rhetoric, his belief in the need for fundamental changes in New Zealand society; these were all characteristics out of place in New Zealand politics. In the end his obstinancy, his inability to modify or compromise his socialist principles, cost him all. He later declared that he had left the Labour Party because it:

... had departed from its socialist principles in favour of opportunist tactics more likely to catch votes from the unthinking multitude.⁷⁷

To Ross socialism was a kind of secular religion (he believed Christianity was a "lingering example of medieval superstitions") in which capitalism, not Satan, was the enemy.⁷⁸ All trappings of capitalism were to be outlawed according to Ross's blueprint; for example gambling was "something vile and demoralizing."⁷⁹ He once asserted that although "logically",

... the case for Socialism is irrefutable ...
 this fact alone is not all sufficing. We
 have to convince the average worker of this.⁸⁰

Ross was no populist; his politics were derived not from what the electorate wanted, but from what was in their interest, as he saw it in the light of socialist theory.⁸¹ For him the Socialist Sunday School was an educational medium for spreading the "glorious gospel of Socialism." And as a propagandist, Ross enjoyed the controversy that its existence provoked. (Ross claimed that the school had been "repeatedly attacked by our local capitalist press."⁸¹)

The PMSDP itself was a propaganda organisation. Ross used it to erect a wall of ideological hostility between the party and the local community. It was more an intellectual movement than a political party. And unlike most New Zealand labour parties it was not trade union dominated. Ross himself was a middle-class radical.⁸³ This distinctive characteristic was partly evidenced in the prominent role of several women in the PMSDP.

The most notable of these was Zillah Gill, who was an active member of the PMSDP between 1917 and 1921. In 1917 she became a Labour member on the Palmerston North Hospital Board (having been first elected to the Board in 1915, without a Labour ticket.) She retained her seat until 1921, being one of only two successful Labour candidates in local body politics throughout the period 1916 to 1935. At the second Annual Conference of the NZLP she was elected National Executive member for Palmerston North, and in 1919 became an executive member of the PMSDP. At the 1919 Conference Gill made a protest against the continued

existence of "child labor" in New Zealand, and against the poor standard of classrooms and equipment in New Zealand schools.⁸⁴ These expressions seem to have been typical of her welfare orientated political sentiments, for Gill was not a militant socialist like Ross. Indeed she was able to combine involvement in the PNSDP with an active role in the local WCTU, an eminently respectable (and Christian) organisation. By 1921, however, she had withdrawn from all active involvement in Palmerston politics.

Another leading PNSDP member was Emma Birdsall. She attended the 1920 and 1921 annual conferences of the Labour Party as a PNSDP delegate. At the 1920 Conference she was appointed to the important immigration policy committee. Birdsall was also a teacher at the Palmerston North Socialist Sunday School. And like Gill she was a WCTA member. Finally, her association with the Palmerston North political labour movement appears to have ended after 1921.

Although neither Gill nor Birdsall were doctrinaire radicals, they were willing to accept Ross's intellectual leadership, and embrace his socialist vision. For a brief period Ross brought a real ideological and intellectual force to the Palmerston North political labour movement, and for awhile a small number of Palmerstonians were receptive to his socialist message. To those concerned with votes won for the Labour Party rather than minds converted to socialism, however, Ross was a liability. Joe Hodgens believed so, and with the support of the NZLP leadership, he had by 1922 convinced the majority among the local labour movement of this. And unlike almost all NZLP leaders Ross was not a trade unionist, making his position vulnerable in a party comprised of trade unionists and ex-trade unionists.⁸⁵ In Palmerston North Ross lacked both the union links and the electoral or popular appeal which Hodgens enjoyed.

After 1922 Ross's involvement in the political labour movement was limited to a few criticisms of the Labour Party.⁸⁵ In 1924 Peter Fraser made a bitter and unfair, but probably true, evaluation of how the NZLP felt about Ross's departure:

There were no sighs, except of relief, at getting rid of the fretful bickering which at last amounted to boredom, when Mr. Ross bade the Party adieu.⁸⁵

Rod Ross died in 1934, in Palmerston North, to the end rigidly adhering to his socialist philosophy.⁸⁷

3. Joe Hodgens and the Palmerston North Labour Party in the Twenties.

In 1922 the Palmerston North political labour movement entered the mainstream of New Zealand labour politics, with a moderate and non-doctrinaire PNLP comprised almost entirely of moderate and pragmatic trade unionists. Joe Hodgens did more than any other to achieve this position. Yet Labour's electoral record in Palmerston North during the remainder of the twenties was disappointing and frustrating. The electoral record is only one dimension of a political party's existence, however. The activities of the PNLP in-between elections provide an interesting and important insight into the character and functions of the party.

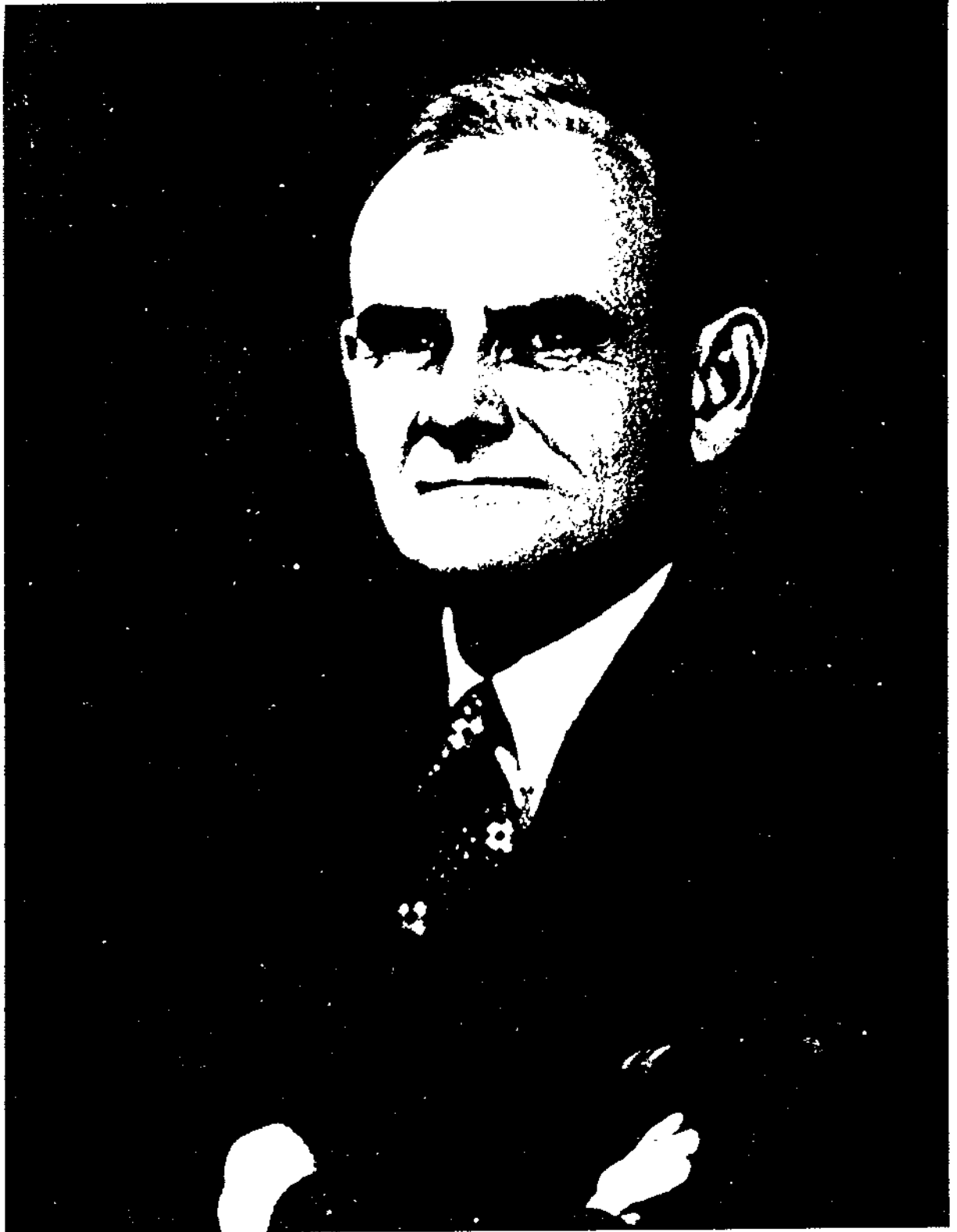
Joe Hodgens was no militant socialist like Ross. His political objectives were much more practical and limited. Put crudely, Hodgens simply wanted to ensure that the underdog - whether the worker or the pensioner - got a fair go. In the words of one of his supporters, Hodgens stood for "the uplift of his fellows and for the general happiness of human society."¹ Like the majority of Labour leaders he wanted to abolish poverty rather than capitalism.² By the early twenties Hodgens was the aristocrat of the Palmerston North labour movement; a skilled tradesman with his own building business, an employer of labour, and a home owner.³ His staunch Catholicism and genial personality precluded his support of Ross's dogmatic and antagonistic socialism.⁴ He was a socialist by sentiment rather than by doctrine, motivated politically by an emotional identification with the interests and the concerns of the workers, of whom he was a member. The critical factor in his rise to power was his local acceptability, his popular appeal in Palmerston North. Local acceptability was a prerequisite for electoral success in Palmerston North. And although a labourite, Hodgens was yet acceptable because he was a representative of 'sane labour', rather than a militant. The reaction of the Times to Hodgens' break with the PNLR in 1921 reveals the importance of this distinction. The editor claimed that the PNLR was a "minority group" which:

... has tried to impose irksome and humiliating restrictions upon its former nominee. Mr. Hodgens seems to have gone as far as he reasonably can in meeting the wishes of his sponsors, but when these took the shape of peremptory and unreasonable demands he found it irreconcilable with his self-respect to retain his association with the group in question. Councillor Hodgens is a practical man who realizes that public life is largely a matter of compromise and reciprocity and that ... much more can be achieved for the purpose one has in view by a policy of give and take than by an attitude of aloofness and irreconcilability. His affiliations are and have always been with organised Labour, and he finds amongst his [Borough Council] colleagues a vein of real sympathy for all reasonable representations on Labour's behalf. What more natural than that he should resent the attempted dictatorship of a little group of impracticables unacquainted with the many-faced problems of administration.⁵

Considered together with the 1922 election result the implication was clear; in Palmerston the NZLP needed a candidate who was both well known and respected locally, and whose labour politics were moderate and conciliatory.

Having successfully dislodged Ross from the leadership of the Palmerston North political labour movement, Hodgens and his supporters set about consolidating their position. Hodgens became president of the PNLP branch and PNLRC, while Percy Robinson and Robert McGlone (both of whom were on Hodgens' election committee in 1922) became secretary and vice-president respectively of the PNLP branch. Robertson also became secretary of the PNLRC. In 1923 Hodgens was elected as the NZLP's National Executive member for Palmerston North. And at the 1923 Annual Conference (in early April) they succeeded in having a remit carried which effectively exiled Ross and Christensen, and their supporters, from the Labour Party. It read:

That the following persons shall be disqualified from standing as a Parliamentary candidate for six years and as a municipal candidate for four years: Anybody who being a member of the party, stands as a candidate except under the nomination of the party; anybody who is a member of the party, and, who nominates or openly supports an opponent of the party.⁵



Joseph Hodgens.

(Palmerston North Public Library.)

Hodgens now felt free to return to local body politics, and in the April municipal elections he regained his seat on the Council. He did so on the LRC ticket, suggesting that his break with the PNLRC in 1921 was more a reflection of his hostility to Ross than his distaste for LRC regulations. (In fact in May 1923 he gave a talk on Council business to the local ASRS.) The LRC ran three candidates for Council, and one for the Hospital Board. Only Hodgens was successful, a pattern that was to remain unchanged for the remainder of the period under study.⁷ In the campaign there was a noticeable lack of Labour municipal policy in the speeches of the Labour candidates, an indication of the effect of Ross's departure.

In some ways the absence of Ross and his small band of socialists was a serious loss for the Palmerston North political labour movement, particularly in regard to the role of the PNLP in the formation of NZLP policy. It lacked a figure of Ross's intellectual stature, and consequently became an obedient supporter of policies made elsewhere. In 1924 however, the PNLP did play an important part in helping establish the first contacts between the NZLP and the Maoris (although an effective electoral alliance between the two was not achieved until the 1930s.⁸)

Rangi Mawhete, a Maori resident of Palmerston North, initiated these moves by writing to the PNLP suggesting a conference between Labour and Maori leaders. Hodgens relayed the letter to the party's National Executive. A conference was duly convened, at the Parawanui Pa, near Bulls, in December 1924.⁹ The PNLRC arranged accommodation for the NZLP leaders in Palmerston North (including Holland, Semple and McCombs) and provided transport out to the Pa. Finally, Hodgens was one of the speakers at the meeting held on December 20, at which several Maori leaders spoke strongly in favour of the NZLP.

The PNLP also became involved in the peace movement of the twenties, in which the NZLP played an active role.¹⁰ Indeed, one member of the local labour movement had

achieved martyrdom, during 1917 and 1918, for his anti-war sentiments. By 1917 the Government had introduced conscription, despite the opposition of the New Zealand labour movement. In March 1917 Mark Briggs was arrested in Palmerston North for refusing to "parade" for an army medical examination after being called up.¹¹ After being court martialled three times, he was forcibly transported to France. There his consistent refusal to perform military service resulted in his being given "Field Punishment No. 1" (in which the victim was tied to a stake with his arms outstretched and left in the open for several hours), and being literally dragged into the front line.¹² He was finally returned to New Zealand in late 1918. Briggs had been one of the radicals of the Manawatu flaxmill workers' union during the early 1910s, but in 1915 he had moved to Palmerston North and gone into an auctioneering business. During the twenties and thirties he became an active member of the PNLP, and in 1936 the former war "shirker"¹³ was appointed to the Legislative Council.

The NZLP, and Harry Holland in particular, became the champion of the conscientious objectors like Briggs, using the evidence of their heroic pacifism and brutal treatment in protests against the war. The NZLP's pacifist sentiments were kept alive during the twenties and early in the decade the party set up the No More War Movement.¹⁴ In September 1924 national "No More War" demonstrations were held, and in Palmerston North the local Labour Party took an active part in their organisation and leadership.¹⁵ In 1928 the PNLRRC put forward a remit at the Annual Conference of the Labour Party calling for the abolition of compulsory military training and the organisation of further peace demonstrations. By 1929 Palmerston North had its own No More War Movement branch, which held open air meetings in the Square in the summer of 1929-30.

The reaction of the Standard's editor to the 1924 peace demonstration was characteristically negative. The demonstrators were criticized for their political naivety (in hoping to bring an end to warfare). The fact that the Labour Party was involved, and that the protest was held on

a Sunday, also provoked the editor's disapproval. These circumstances also inhibited local church leaders from participating. Percy Robinson later rebuked the Palmerston North Council of Christian Churches for its refusal to take part in the demonstration. Non-religious activity on Sunday was still widely disapproved of in this period, and the frequent Sunday meetings of the Palmerston North political labour movement sometimes alienated local community leaders. During the 1918 by-election the openly pro-Reform editor of the Standard claimed that such meetings were offensive. And in 1921 the Borough Council placed a temporary ban on the use of public halls for Sunday meetings (a move which the Worker called "thick-crusted ignorance."¹⁶) In June 1924 several PNLP supporters were threatened with police prosecution for selling political pamphlets at a Sunday meeting of labourites.¹⁷

The NZLP approached the 1925 general election aggressively confident of victory.¹⁸ Unfortunately for the PNLP Joe Hodgens declined nomination as the party's candidate in both the 1925 and 1928 elections (for what he called "personal and domestic" reasons.¹⁹) He was still active in the party, however, and in 1925 became election committee chairman for the new candidate, Walter Bromley.

Walter Bromley was a Wellington trade union leader (another "importation" as James Nash derisively referred to non-local Labour candidates²⁰), national secretary of the Amalgamated Engineers' Union, and secretary of the Wellington Trades and Labour Council. He was also prominent in the NZLP, having been assistant national secretary in 1923, and a member of the National Executive in 1925.²¹

Bromley opened his campaign early in October, and from the beginning gave considerable attention to the NZLP's platform "showpiece" for the 1925 election, the usehold land policy.²² He parroted the NZLP's line of attack on Reform's agricultural administration, and its handling of farmers' problems, arguing that Labour's usehold tenure was better than Reform's "mortgagehold" and land speculation.²³ James Nash's response was to reassert his, and his party's,

belief in freehold, and emphasize his identification with the interests of the primary producers. Labour was fighting a lost battle, for as Sinclair points out, by the twenties land tenure reform was a political anachronism.²⁴

The British shipping strike which ran during the election campaign provided Labour's opponents with valuable propaganda. Bromley's response was defensive and repudiatory; he "hoped" that strikes, which were an "ugly weapon", would "some day" be "laid aside."²⁵ Bromley was at least a moderate. The Palmerston electorate, however, also demanded that their parliamentary representative be a native son. And nothing could prevent "Coates and Confidence" from sweeping Palmerston in 1925.²⁶ James Wash won his largest ever majority, reducing Labour's support to 32.9 per cent of the vote.

The result was a serious setback for the PNLP; Reform had never looked safer in Palmerston. It was a nationwide phenomenon, expressing the electorate's indifference to the policies and ideology of the NZLP.²⁷ New Zealanders were more than satisfied with the prosperity which Reform appeared to represent, and which it promised to maintain. Labour was in the doldrums. NZLP membership stagnated in the second half of the twenties; less than 2,000 new members joined the party between 1925-26 and 1928-29, compared with over 20,000 between 1921-22 and 1925-26. The growth of the party's electoral support was also checked. The NZLP reacted by consciously attempting to adjust its policies to political realities, and by 1928 the party had all but abandoned the contentious socialization objective as an immediate aim.²⁸

The PNLP also suffered these vicissitudes, from the indifference of the electorate. The prosperity of the mid-twenties seemed to have bred a lack of interest in politics. This was perhaps implicit in the support for Reform, and symbolized by its slogan "More business in government and less government in business."²⁹ The PNLP itself was infected by it. In 1927 Francis Allerby, secretary of the PNLR, complained to the Worker that only the "faithful few" turned

up at LRC meetings.³⁰ Such membership apathy is not uncommon in political parties, which often lapse into a state of inaction between elections. But the PMLP also lost interest in politics, finding temporary distraction in a new (but already lost) cause, prohibition. At the Annual Conferences of 1926, 1927 and 1928 the PMLP attempted to have the NZLP adopt prohibition as a policy platform, apparently oblivious to the flagging support of this reform, in the party and in the New Zealand electorate. By 1928 the prohibition movement had in fact collapsed.³¹

In the immediate post-war period Palmerston North had a strong and effective liquor reform movement. The local labour movement had many "drys" in its ranks, including Ross, Ayrton and Eromley. There was no clear or official relationship, however, between the Palmerston North political labour movement and the local prohibition movement.

Table II. Prohibition Poll Returns, 1919-1928

Poll	Percentage vote for prohibition	
	Palmerston	New Zealand
1919 (1)	54.7	49.0
1919 (2)	52.7	49.8
1922	53.1	48.6
1925	50.4	47.3
1928	42.1	40.2

Source: R. Newman "New Zealand's Vote For Prohibition in 1911", NZJH, 9:1, 1975, p.66.; MDT 11 April 1919; 18 December 1919; MES 8 December, 1922; 5 November 1925; 15 November 1928.

At the national level the prohibition issue was a constant source of internal disunity in the NZLP, but by 1920 the party had decided to remain aloof of the question by supporting the system of triennial prohibition polls,

with state control as a third option.

Within the labour movement there was widespread support for prohibition. In Palmerston North the leading members of the PNSDP were "drys". At the 1918 Annual Conference Zillah Gill, on behalf of the PNSDP, called for the removal of the third option of state control from the party's prohibition platform. Gill, and Emma Birdsall, were members of the local WCTU, and therefore among the more ardent supporters of prohibition. At a meeting of the Palmerston North WCTU in April 1919, Gill attempted to impress upon her fellow members the important difference between the NZLP and the PNSDP on the issue; the latter, she emphasized, was in favour of total prohibition.³²

Ross's prohibition sentiments give some indication of the complex and chameleon-like nature of the issue. Personally he was a teetotaller. As a radical socialist he disliked the middle-class nature of the prohibition movement, and hence had nothing to do with the New Zealand Alliance. As a democrat he favoured a bare-majority poll to decide the question. His socialism made the option of state control appealing, but he felt that his anti-liquor sentiments overrode this. He strongly opposed any compensation for the "liquor trade", however, believing that financial compensation should be paid instead to the workers who would lose their jobs if prohibition was introduced.³³

The question of whether the prohibition sentiments of PNLP members won the party votes at election time is again complex. Only Christensen, (in the 1922 general election), made it into an election issue, though to little effect it seems. In the 1928 election campaign, the president of the local branch of the New Zealand Alliance, H.E. Pacey, urged prohibitionists to vote for Walter Bromley (who was again the Labour candidate for Palmerston). Bromley was known to be a "dry", and Pacey endorsed him because of this, not because he supported Bromley's Labour politics. This was not an unusual tactic by the Alliance (supporting a candidate because he or she was a prohibitionist, irrespective of party allegiances). The negative press reaction

to Pacey's action, and the fact that Bromley made no attempt to acknowledge or utilize this endorsement, suggests that this link between the local Labour Party and prohibition movement was unprecedented and one-way.³⁴ There were many "drys" among the Palmerston North political labour movement, but there was no continuous or organisational connection with the local prohibition movement. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that prohibition was a vote catcher for Labour, or non-Labour, candidates in Palmerston. Most voters seem to have kept their politics and their prohibition separate. The two most successful candidates in this period, James Mash and Joe Hodgens, maintained an independent stand on the issue. And the general spread of the "dry" vote among Palmerston polling booths in the prohibition polls serves to reinforce the conclusion that it was generally considered a non-political, non-partisan issue.³⁵

By the mid-twenties the temperance cause was steadily losing support, and as far as the NZLP was concerned the issue had been buried by 1920. The PNLP disagreed. At the 1926, 1927 and 1928 Annual Conferences the delegates of the PNLP branch and PNLRC presented prohibition remits, on each occasion they were defeated. The question at stake, they argued, was how the labour movement could most effectively fight the "liquor trade", "one of the worst Capitalistic monopolies in the Country", and an implacable enemy of the Labour Party.³⁶ It was not a question of supporting the prohibition movement (which, it was conceded, was also "anti-labour"), but rather of using prohibition as a weapon against the devilish "liquor trade".³⁷

This was not a new argument; support for prohibition not as a moral reform but as a means of striking at capitalism.³⁸ Yet it was not simply a question of political creed, of socialism (the PNLP) versus capitalism (the "liquor trade"). State control had theoretically provided a sop for such socialist sentiments since 1919. And had the PNLP not long before rejected militant socialism? (in the form of Rod Ross and the PNSDP.) Indeed the proponents of these prohibition remits were loyal supporters of Joe Hodgens (though Hodgens himself had temporarily withdrawn from

active involvement in the PNLIP.) They included one very middle-class Palmerston North labourite, Bob Davidson; an established businessman, car owner and homeowner.³⁹ These facts suggest that their support for prohibition was apolitical, but that their Labour sympathies forced them to repudiate the middle-class led prohibition movement and to envelop their prohibition remits to Conference in socialist rhetoric.

The apathy of the electorate and of the labour movement itself was a major problem for the Labour Party, in Palmerston North and at the national level. One technique employed by the NZLP to combat it was to send out touring speakers at regular intervals. Throughout the period many well known Labour leaders made visits to Palmerston North for this reason (they included Harry Holland, James Thorn, Robert Semple and Peter Fraser.) The PNLIP spent much time and effort trying to attract them. For this purpose the PNLRC in 1927 promised any members of the Parliamentary Labour Party who found themselves "at a loose end and requiring a change from the windy city" a "pleasant weekend" in Palmerston North.⁴⁰ The visiting speakers usually attended meetings of the PNLIP branch and PNLRC, as well as making public speeches, in the summer often in the Square. Political pamphlets were distributed at these Labour rallies, often obtained through the Clarté Book Room, the NZLP's book-store located in Wellington.⁴¹

Another important activity was fund raising, as the Labour Partys' finances were always in a precarious state. In Palmerston North a variety of methods were employed, including collections at meetings, donations from individuals and affiliated organisations, raffles, button sales and card tournaments. In 1926 local labourites (mainly women) formed the Palmerston North Social Club. The Social Club held weekly, and sometimes bi-weekly, euchre tournaments. Attendance varied between about 150 and 200, and the money raised was contributed to the NZLP. It continued to function until 1932.

Such activity also provided an important social outlet for the members of the Palmerston North political

labour movement, a non-political meeting round where members could get to know one another. The PMSDP had held such social evenings, and by the early 1930s the PMLP branch was staging annual socials and dances. In 1934 the branch had a nine member social committee. As Plumridge has pointed out, political parties satisfy social needs as well as political aspirations.⁴² This was perhaps particularly so during the depression, when economic hardship may have restricted the participation of wage earners (workers and wives) in other social activities. Even during the twenties, however, it was a vital feature of the PMLP, helping sustain the party during inter-election periods. Significantly, this social dimension of the PMLP evolved out of the social activities of the local trade union movement. The unions had social clubs or social committees, some of which organised regular dances and sporting events. The railwaymen, Longburn freezing workers and the local Post & Telegraph Association held picnics. The highpoint of the labour movement's social calendar was the annual "Manawatu Trades Union Picnic." The first was held in 1920, at the Ashhurst Domain, and in 1928 some 1500 people attended.⁴³

For the Palmerston North political labour movement the twenties ended in frustration, its electoral support actually falling until, in 1928, it was just above the 1914 level. In 1928 Labour faced a serious challenge from an alternative conservative party, as for the first time since 1914 the Liberal Party (under the new name of United) ran a candidate in Palmerston. Both the NZLP and the Liberals correctly perceived the public's disillusionment with the performance of the Coates Government, but Labour seriously underestimated the threat from the revived and re-organised Liberal Party.

In Palmerston Walter Bromley again stood for Labour. He opened his campaign with a discussion of the latest NZLP land policy. The party had finally come to accept the freehold land tenure, an acknowledgement of New Zealand political realities. As elsewhere in New Zealand, however, finance dominated the election campaign; in particular, Ward's \$70 million loan proposal.⁴⁴ While

the NZLP was officially pledged to restrict borrowing, and Reform attacked Ward's financial policy as one of "borrow, boom and burst", United hypnotized the electorate by (apparently) promising to greatly expand the old Reform policy of "loans and works."⁴⁵ As an alternative conservative party, (Labour was still radical, "beneath the surface", according to James Nash⁴⁶) United in Palmerston made significant inroads into Labour's support. The United candidate, C.A. Loughnan (a retired solicitor) took 21.7 per cent of the vote, leaving Bromley with 28.0 per cent. For the PNLP it was a sombre warning that given a more moderate alternative to Labour, the Palmerston electorate was only too willing to support it.

4. Depression, Dissension and Victory.

The depression arrived in New Zealand, and in Palmerston North, in the late 1920s. For the Palmerston North political labour movement it brought bitter internal feuding, ending in the near dissolution of the PNLP. Economic hardship, whether through unemployment or wage and salary reductions, acted as a catalyst to militancy for many Palmerston workers. The result was another split in the local labour movement. This conflict first appeared in 1931 and it was not finally resolved until 1938. Once again Hodgens championed the moderates, but this time the threat from the left came from a small band of communists. The vehicle for their challenge to Hodgens' domination of the Palmerston North political labour movement was the PNLM, and its local branch, the PNUWM. The depression also brought victory at the polls for Joe Hodgens, but only just.

Although the full severity of the depression did not hit Palmerston North until 1931, the first symptoms were apparent before the twenties drew to a close.¹ Tables III and IV give an indication of the timing and severity of the depression. The value of building construction in Palmerston North declined by over 75 per cent between 1929-30 and 1931-32, while the number of unemployed increased by fourteen times between July 1929 and July 1931.

Table III. £ Value of Building Permits in Palmerston North, 1929 - 1936.

Year	£ Value
1929-30	280,810
1930-31	147,131
1931-32	65,069
1932-33	55,253
1933-34	67,318
1934-35	74,712
1935-36	132,113

Source: Local Authorities Handbook of New Zealand, 1931-37.

Table IV. Palmerston North Registered Unemployed, 1929-1935.

Date	No. on unemployed register, Palmerston North
8 July 1929	86
7 July 1930	134
4 July 1931	1272
2 July 1932	1592*
1 July 1933	1344
7 July 1934	1150
6 July 1935	1338

* Maximum registered unemployed 1,601 on the 6 August, 1932.

Source: AJHR, 1929 - H 11 9; 1930 - 1935 - H35.

Efforts to alleviate the economic distress caused by the depression, above-all by unemployment, dominated the activities of the Palmerston North labour movement after 1928. The PNLMP was in fact so preoccupied with the events and repercussions of the depression locally, that its influence on the direction of NZLP policy became negligible. Between 1929 and 1935 the PNLMP proposed only two policy remits to Conference (both in 1929, and both were defeated.)²

For many local trade unions the depression spelt disaster. The membership of the flaxmill workers' union fell from 497 in 1929 to 38 in 1934. In 1929 the Palmerston North branch of the New Zealand Workers' Union ceased to exist when the Government decided to halt work on the Wilson railway deviation. Most of the men employed on the project (which had been started in 1926) were transferred to other public works schemes. Between 1929 and 1934 the membership of the local ASRS declined by 38 per cent, and that of the local ASCJ by 62 per cent. By 1931 there were more unemployed than trade unionists in Palmerston North. And the community was unprepared to handle the unemployment problem. The Government's Unemployment Board (set up in 1930) had simply failed to make provision for the relief of the numbers out of work. In April 1931 the Palmerston

North Unemployment Committee (formed by the Council in 1929) dispatched a telegram to the Prime Minister describing the position of the local unemployed as desperate, and calling on the Government to authorize the Hospital Board to provide sustenance.³

It was in this environment of burgeoning unemployment, which neither the unions nor the Labour Party could prevent, that the Unemployed Workers' Movement was established. The NUWM, formed in 1931, acted as a substitute trade union for the unemployed, many of whom had begun to feel that their own trade unions were neglecting their interests.⁴ Its appeal lay in its spirit of militance, its defiant attitude towards the Government. In stark contrast to the "official" labour movement,⁵ (the Alliance of Labour and the NZLP in particular) the NUWM advocated direct and immediate action against the Government's economic retrenchment policies. To many of the unemployed the support of the NUWM and its policies seemed their only effective means of protest. The NZLP, however, was opposed to the NUWM because of its connections with the NZCP. The latter was closely associated with the Unemployed Workers' Movement from the beginning. For the Communist Party the NUWM was a vehicle for spreading its influence in the New Zealand labour movement. The communists did not control the NUWM though, as they were too few in number and too divided amongst themselves. What the NZCP did do was provide the NUWM with a militant ethos and a militant policy. Its "Communist Leanings" won it the enmity of the NZLP.⁶ The Labour Party had officially dissociated itself from the NZCP, and denounced communist tactics, in 1925. During the depression there was bitter hostility between the two parties.

Yet in Palmerston North such a polarization of attitudes failed to appear. The PNUWM, which was led by communists, won the support of the majority of the Palmerston North labour movement, including many left-wing members of the PNLP. The PNUWM was formed in January 1931, organised by Leo Sim. Sim was a leading NZCP member, at one time the party's national secretary. He was a farmer by

occupation, at Himitungi, just north of Foxton. In 1931 he played a prominent role in the formation of the NUWM, and for the remainder of the depression he tried to pursue its policies and objectives in Palmerston North. Sim also set up a Communist Party branch in Palmerston North (in his role as national organiser for the NZCP.) Through to 1935 the membership of the PNCP remained very small (the NZCP had only 353 members by December 1935), and it was completely overshadowed by the PNUWM. Its mere existence, however, was regarded as a threat by the community, and by a section of the labour movement. The party's only effective influence lay in its common membership with the PNUWM (Sim and other local communists were actively involved in both organisations.)⁷

The PNUWM lost no time in rallying the unemployed, whose numbers were growing by the day during 1931. It began organising deputations to local authorities, demanding sustenance. Sim often spoke for the delegations, making hollow threats to the Council and Hospital Board Officials. The PNUWM kept up a steady barrage of activity during 1931, spurred to action with each new Government policy decision related to unemployment. In September the newly formed Coalition Government, with Coates as Minister of Unemployment, introduced the first relief camp scheme (for single unemployed). The PNUWM responded by holding meetings, and passing resolutions against what it considered were "Slave Camps."⁸ More deputations were made, to the Hospital Board and the Palmerston North Relief Committee (another local authority organisation, formed in 1928), and regular open-air meetings were held in the Square, with speeches by visiting NZCP leaders.

The PNLP was meanwhile busy protesting against wage and salary reductions. These cuts rallied even the normally quiescent government employees in Palmerston North. Members of the local Post Office and Telegraphy department and local school teachers, as well as Palmerston North railway workers, met during March. Significantly, they resolved to express their discontent via the ballot box, by voting for the NZLP. Joe Hodgens and the PNLR also came

out against the cuts.

In May 1931 Hodgens was endorsed by the NZLP National Executive as the Labour candidate for Palmerston in the December general election. His response to the appearance of a Communist Party branch in Palmerston North was characteristic and unequivocal. He would not tolerate any communists in the PNLP. At a meeting of Labour supporters on July 1, he demanded that three men, "whom he suspected of having Communist leanings", be removed from the meeting.⁹ Hodgens realized that he could ill-afford to associate with communists if he wanted to win in the December election. And he knew that to be successful he had to champion the interests of all those estranged by the Government's economic retrenchment, working class and middle class alike. And the PNLP was aware that Hodgens was the only Labour candidate likely to succeed. Again, he alone had been successful in the 1929 and 1931 municipal elections. Indeed in 1931 he was appointed deputy-Mayor. Hence the PNLP branch had gone out of its way to persuade Hodgens to stand for parliament.¹⁰

The 1931 general election in Palmerston was a depression election. The two dominating issues were unemployment and the deflationary economic policy of the Government.¹¹ James Nash, now a Coalition candidate, defended this economic strategy by stressing the importance of looking after the farmers' interests. Hodgens protested at the social cost of the economic sacrifices made (and being made) by the community for the sake of the primary producers. He also espoused the NZLP's proposed solution to the depression, which stressed financial reform. This policy was intentionally designed to expand Labour's support among blue-collar and white-collar wage and salary earners. The aim now, as Brown describes it, was to "revive, to modify and to reorganise capitalism, not to replace it."¹² Hodgens called his campaign:

... an appeal to the sound commonsense of the people to safeguard their own interests, and help themselves up the difficult road.¹³

It was an appeal to "the middle class and the wage earner ... against the money Shylock."¹⁴

For a brief period Hodgens faced a threat from another, left-wing labour candidate. On November 5 Leo Sim announced his decision to contest the Palmerston seat on behalf of the NZCP. And although he had withdrawn from the campaign by mid-November, his appearance seems to have sparked off a witch-hunt, one that somehow left Hodgens tainted with extremism. Hodgens found himself accused of being a radical, and a "Bolshevist."¹⁵

The election gave Hodgens 44.4 per cent of the vote, a disappointingly small gain on his showing in 1922. It was no doubt a frustrating rebuff for Hodgens, who had proven himself locally. By 1931 he had been a Councillor for ten years (1917-1921; 1923-1931) and a member of the Manawatu - Droua Power Board for six years (1925-1931). At the time of the 1931 general election he was deputy-Mayor; a member of the Council's electric and gas committee, of the local Licensing Committee, the Palmerston North - Kairanga River Board, the Palmerston North Unemployment Committee and the Builders' Federation.¹⁶ The Palmerston electorate, however, still mistrusted the party that he represented. And because James Nash had been an Opposition member from 1928 until the formation of the Coalition in 1931, he seems to have escaped responsibility for the Government's economic retrenchment policies.

In 1932 the Coalition's determination to balance the budget united in opposition virtually all sections of the Palmerston North labour movement. The abolition of compulsory arbitration, followed by further wage and salary cuts, and a rise in the unemployment tax, served to produce a violent reaction in some areas of New Zealand in April and May.¹⁷ There were no spontaneous protests in Palmerston North.¹⁸ And when the PNCP advertised its intention to hold a public meeting in Church Street (outside the city "relief depot") on May 13, the local police placed a temporary ban on street meetings.¹⁹ It was a clear indication of how fearful were local authorities at the prospect of

social unrest. In March the PNLRC had organised a "monster meeting" of the labour movement, even inviting the PNUWM to attend.²⁰ Joe Hodgens was present at the meeting, as a representative of "organised labour", in this case the PNLRC.²¹ In April the PNLRC organised two protest meetings at the Opera House, with two guest speakers from the Parliamentary Labour Party. At the second rally:

... Lusty cheers were given for the Labour Party after a series of resolutions denouncing wage and pension cutting, the Unemployment Act, and calling on the Government to resign immediately ...²²

Meetings and resolutions; this and parliamentary opposition was all the NZLP was able or willing to do until it achieved the electorate's mandate. The leaders of the NUWM were not prepared to wait that long. They wanted some immediate action, and, in default of the "official" labour movement, they were intent on providing it. At the NUWM's Third Annual Conference in March 1932 a comprehensive policy was formed, more militant and far-reaching than the existing one. Its objectives included the abolition of the Arbitration Court (which was NZCP policy), and demands for a seven hour day, five day week, no reduction in pay and no overtime. Such a policy precluded any support from the NZLP or the national trade union movement, but for the unemployed it was something definite, however impracticable.²³

The NUWM Conference also decided to set up United Front Committees, under the slogan of "Employed and Unemployed, Fight Together."²⁴ By the end of the year Palmerston North had its own United Front Committee, comprising delegates from most of the local trade unions, the PNUWM, the Palmerston North Home Protection League* and the local FSU †, as well as several "unofficial" representatives of local "workers" groups.²⁵ The last mentioned may well have included some of the more left-wing members of the PNLRC, whose association with the PNUWM intensified as the depression wore on.

* See below p.p. 52, 72.

† See below p.61.

The United Front Committee was just one of many committees formed by the PNUWM during 1932 and 1933.²⁶ The deputations to local authorities, to make protests and to demand sustenance for the unemployed, were continued. In 1933 the Unemployment Board decided to extend the camp scheme to include married men. By September the PNUWM had organised a special Anti-Camp Council, which, among other things, printed and distributed foolscap news sheets called the "Anti-Camper."²⁷ Palmerston North's real struggle against the camp schemes, however, did not begin until May 1934.

The story of the PNLP branch in 1933 is somewhat confused, because of contradictory evidence. According to the Worker it was a year of great progress for the PNLP branch.²⁸ Ernest Ward, vice-president of the branch in 1932-33, and president from 1933, initiated a membership drive, so that by March 1934 (according to his reports in the Worker) membership had risen to 257. This, however, conflicts with the figures listed in the NZLP Annual Conference Reports, which show a fall in membership of the PNLP branch from 130 in 1928-29, to 24 in 1932-33, and 39 in 1933-34.²⁹ A fall in membership would seem likely, as NZLP membership fell by nearly 20,000 between 1929-30 and 1934-35. Perhaps the difference was between new members who, although they may have "enrolled" (as Ward said they had done) had failed to pay their subs, and hence were not listed in the Annual Conference Reports.³⁰

Despite the ambiguous evidence, however, there is no doubt that 1933 was a year of important achievements for the PNLP. Ward claimed that the PNLP branch:

... had experienced the greatest leap forward in its history, particularly in its numerical strength, and the interest taken in the lectures and meetings.³¹

At the annual meeting of the branch in March 1933 38 had attended. In September 1933 there were 72 present at a branch meeting, and a debate early in 1934 drew an attendance of "90 odd."³² As elsewhere in New Zealand the

depression had stimulated great interest in politics, charged by an emotional revulsion at the conditions of the unemployed.³³ According to Ward there had been a "feast" of lectures by NZLP personalities to sustain this interest.³⁴ The branch had also been involved in welfare work; among other things it had successfully persuaded the local Drainage Board to put covers on their lorries, for the comfort of the relief workers they transported. And towards the end of 1933 the PMLP branch moved into a new home, when the Rialto Hall (in Cuba Street) was declared open. Perhaps the most impressive accomplishment for the PMLP in 1933 was its organisational activity. Two Labour Party Committees were set up within the electorate early in the year, one at Longburn and one at Terrace End. The latter soon developed into a Labour Party branch, independent of the original, City branch of the party. And by mid-year a Palmerston North Housewives' League Branch had been formed, affiliated to the PMLRC. The League may have been a revived and renamed version of the Palmerston North Social Club discussed earlier, because it too organised fund raising activities and made contributions to the NZLP. It was also engaged in welfare work; during 1933 busy making and mending clothing for the "poor and needy."³⁵ The organisational activity of the PMLP in 1933 is consistent with the experience of the NZLP in the depression, for despite the fall in national membership, many new branches (and new affiliations like the Palmerston North Housewives' League) were formed.³⁶

At the time of the formation of the Labour Party Committee at Longburn,³⁷ the Longburn freezing workers' union was in the middle of a bitter strike that was to end in the virtual destruction of the union. The strike began in September 1932, after the union's national executive had refused to accept wage cuts proposed by management for the 1932-33 season, and it ended in complete defeat for the freezing workers in May 1933. It was the only real case of industrial militancy by a Palmerston North trade union throughout the period under study.³⁸ Nationally the freezing workers had established a reputation for militancy, and for anti-political (and anti-NZLP) sentiments. During the bleak, deteriorating economic conditions, and an uneasy, unattractive Government, undermined the efficiency of such

syndicalist ideas. By 1929 the freezing workers' union had affiliated with the NZLP.³⁹

In Palmerston North the Longburn branch of the union, though not affiliated to the PNLRC until 1933, made financial contributions to the Labour Party during the twenties and thirties. In 1929 the union held its weekly meetings in what were then the PMLP "rooms" at 41 Rangitikei Street, and had two delegates on the PNLRC.⁴⁰ This relationship was not official, however, but instead was due to the Labour sympathies of many of the union's executive. Indeed, in the early thirties it became an increasingly strained relationship, as the depression stimulated renewed militancy among many of the freezing workers.⁴¹

In 1932 there was a disagreement between the PMLP branch and the union over the Palmerston North Home Protection League. The latter was an allegedly apolitical welfare organisation, formed in May 1932 by local Labour supporters. It was the PMLP branch's version of the PNUWM, concerned with representing the interests of the local unemployed. The Longburn union, which had achieved close links with the PNUWM, seems to have at first seen the League as a rival to the PNUWM. By November, however, their differences had been resolved, and the League, along with the freezing workers, joined the United Front Committee.⁴²

Superficially the PMLP was still united in 1933. In April Joe Hodgens was endorsed by the NZLP National Executive as Labour candidate for the Palmerston seat (the general election set for 1934 had not yet been postponed), after the PNLRC had selected him "without opposition by the affiliated organisations."⁴³ Hodgens was still the only labour leader in Palmerston North with popular appeal. In the May municipal elections, besides retaining his position as deputy-Mayor, and being re-elected to the power board (after a two year sojourn), Hodgens succeeded in ousting James Nash from his seat on the Hospital Board. It was the first indication of Nash's flagging support as the local representative of the increasingly unpopular depression Government. In 1934 that Government further estranged the

Palmerston electorate by attempting to send a number of married unemployed workers to a relief camp. This also brought the as yet latent conflict in the local labour movement to a climax, ending in disaster for the PMLP.

In January 1934 the Gisborne United Workers' Movement "Hunger March" passed through Palmerston North.⁴⁴ The PNUWM had circulated a pamphlet in anticipation of their arrival, accusing the Unemployment Board of "slowly murdering men, women and children", and threatening that the "Day of Reckoning is at Hand."⁴⁵ While the local community did not approve of the tone of the PNUWM's protests, everyone in Palmerston North had by 1934 come to loathe the Unemployment Board for its cheese-paring unemployment policies. Thus Palmerston North's Mayor, Augustus Mansford, had no hesitation in granting the unemployed marchers permission to hold street collections, or in helping arrange accommodation for them during their two night stay in the city.

When in May the Unemployment Board announced that a number of married unemployed workers in Palmerston North were to be sent to a relief camp, it rallied the entire community in opposition. The PNUWM took the lead. On May 19 it organised a "mass" street demonstration, the first of many to be held in the ensuing weeks.⁴⁶ The demonstrators first called on the local representative of the Unemployment Board. Various speakers, including members of the PNUWM and PMLP and Leo Sim, addressed the marchers, who had grown in numbers to about 300 strong. They presented their demands to the Unemployment Board officer; "no cuts, no camps, no piece work"⁴⁷ and full trade union rates or maintenance."⁴⁸ With little satisfaction from the officer the demonstrators next marched off to see Mayor Mansford, singing the "Red Flag" en route. The marchers included a number of women and children in their ranks, and banners were carried. Two boys wielded one banner that read, "Fight to keep our Daddies."⁴⁹ Mansford was fully sympathetic with their cause, but advised them to put their case before the Minister of Unemployment, Adam Hamilton, who was due to arrive in Palmerston North the following week. After finally calling on James Nash, the marchers disbanded and

held a meeting. There an Anti-Camp Committee was organised, and preparations made for the arrival of Hamilton.

The Minister arrived on May 22nd, and was met at the railway station by a procession of unemployed, led by the PNUWM and Palmerston North communist leaders. With the Minister was one of the two workers' representatives on the Unemployment Board, Walter Bromley. Bromley had been appointed to the Board in 1931, and had since won the antipathy of the labour movement nationally for his association with its policies. Both Hamilton and Bromley were given a rowdy reception by the crowd at the railway station, before they went on to give an address to the Palmerston North Citizens' Lunch Club. There Hamilton stated that the Unemployment Board wanted 50 of the local married unemployed men to go to the relief camp on the Kaingaroa Plains.

Later in the day Prime Minister Forbes also arrived in the city, and that evening a huge crowd of people gathered outside the Grand Hotel, on the Square, where Forbes was staying. In fact the whole city had by now rallied behind the unemployed, for the threatened breakup of families was something all sections of the community - the labour movement, the local authorities, church leaders, businessmen, women and children - could and did unite against.⁵⁰ According to the Workers' Weekly* the crowd outside the hotel numbered somewhere between four and five thousand (probably exaggerated), and they "paraded around the Square behind a red flag, singing militant songs."⁵¹ The local Times described it as crowd "on the point of breaking at any moment and causing trouble".⁵² They were waiting for Forbes to appear on the hotel balcony. Before he did so Joe Hodgens addressed the crowd, referring to Bromley as "Mr. Judas", and requesting those assembled that:

... we ask [the Prime Minister] to consider the predicament we are placed in and that our men are being driven into a slave camp ...⁵³

* The NZCP newspaper and propaganda journal. Before November 1933 it was called the Red Worker.



The procession of unemployed which met Hamilton and Bromley on May 22, 1934. The Square, Palmerston North.

(RW, 5 June, 1934.)

He went on to:

... outline the companionship of home life and pointed out what it meant to a man to be severed from the home circle.⁵⁴

At this stage Forbes appeared, and met with "boos, hisses and catcalls" from the crowd.⁵⁵ After he had made a sympathetic but uncompromising statement, a woman addressed the crowd and urged all to stand firm in their demands. When Forbes asked what the people of Palmerston North were doing to assist their unemployed, there were cries of "Everything!" and "Ask our worthy Mayor." Mansford then joined the Prime Minister on the balcony, to "deafening cheers" and "He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Calling for fair play, Mansford asked the crowd to cease its "epithets" directed at Forbes, and spoke of the work of local bodies in the handling of unemployment relief in Palmerston North.⁵⁸ Forbes then agreed to meet privately with a delegation of the demonstrators, which comprised Mansford, Joe Hodgens, Leo Sim and Frank Lee (the last two named were both communists). The outcome of this meeting was an assurance from Forbes that he would take up the matter with Cabinet when he returned to Wellington. This apparently appeased the crowd, for the time being.

Meanwhile local businessmen planned a meeting for May 24. The Times reported that:

They consider that the proposal of the Unemployment Board to take numbers of our local relief workers and put them at tree-planting in the middle of winter on the bleak, snow driven Kaingaroa plains is grossly unjust ... They consider the proposals unsocial, unchristian and immoral.⁵⁹

On May 23 there was a large public meeting at the Opera House. John Flavell chaired the meeting, stressing the need for unity if the workers were to successfully resist the Government's decision. Letters of sympathy from the Palmerston North RSA and the Mayor were read out. Rodney Lee, president of the newly formed

Anti-Camp Council (organised by the PNUWM), spoke out against the "slave camps."⁶⁰ Mrs Frank Lee, whose husband had just received notice to go to one of the relief camps, urged women to join in the struggle. Three representatives of the PNLPC also spoke. Joe Hodgens, representing the PNLRC, called for a change of government, pointing out the unanimity of Palmerston North opinion against the camps. George Gulliver added the protest of the Terrace End branch, and Ernest Bond, representing the City branch, praised the efforts of Palmerston North's Mayor in the struggle. At this stage the PNUWM proposed the following resolution:

That this meeting demands that camps be optional, and we further demand the restoration of cuts. Failing work, we demand full sustenance.⁶¹

In support of the resolution, and in reply to the PNLPC spokesmen, Frank Lee argued that "there was not time to wait for the ballot box - the demands were immediate."⁶² Leo Sim, with references to the Communist Party of Russia, stated that it "was only by organised might that they would succeed."⁶³ J.P. Queenan, a Longburn freezing workers' union delegate on the PNLRC, suggested that a petition be circulated calling on James Nash to resign as Palmerston's M.P., "and so break the first link in the chain of gansters."⁶⁴ This did not go far enough for Sim, who argued that "They could get nowhere except by direct action."⁶⁵ Hodgens replied by stating that:

... the workers had their constitutional method of getting rewards, and he had yet to be convinced that the power of the arm was the right one.⁶⁶

In the end the chairman refused to accept any resolutions of a "political nature", and the meeting dispersed.⁶⁷ The lines of dispute indicated during the meeting were, however, to crystallize during the next few days.

On May 25 Mansford chaired a meeting of local businessmen, and businesswomen, city councillors (including Hodgens),

and church leaders. The president of the Palmerston North RSA was also present. Mansford defended the city's handling of unemployment relief, and came out in support of the local labour movement in the struggle against the camp schemes. A committee was set up to make a report.

At this stage Ernest Ward, president of the City branch of the PNLN, was able to claim (to the Worker) that the unemployed:

... have the backing of the business men now and the whole city is firm in its decision to see that the men ordered to camps get a fair go.⁶⁸

He added that:

It is worthy of note that the [PNLN] is in the front, and at the demonstrations Mr. J. Hodgens put up a great fight.⁶⁹

This 'united front' however, was soon to dissolve. The Palmerston North local authorities and community leaders, and Joe Hodgens, would go no further in their opposition to the Government. In fact some of them felt that they had gone too far already. Behind the scenes Hodgens, as president of the PNLRC, had expressed his hostility towards the PNUWM. The PNLN City branch was fervently pro-PNUWM; four of its executive members were delegates on the Anti-Camp Council, Ernest Ward, G. Brodie, G. Hansen and T. Burns. On May 25 the Times published a letter by "A Struggling Mother" accusing Hodgens of duplicity.⁷⁰ At the demonstration on May 22, she stated, Hodgens had freely associated with the leaders of the PNUWM. At a meeting of the PNLRC on May 23, however, he had "emphatically refused" to agree to a request of the PNUWM to send a LRC delegate to one of its meetings.⁷¹ In a letter of reply Hodgens defended his actions, accusing the PNUWM of being communist led, and stated that the NZLP had:

Some years ago ... realized that the Communist element in our movement was a menace, so they were kicked out My position as the approved candidate of the Labour party for the

Palmerston electorate renders me very much responsible in seeing that the good name of the party, won after many a fight, remains untarnished, and any ability I have will be so directed.⁷²

What of the pro-PNUWM sympathies of many among the PNLP?

Some of our individual members have crazy ideas sometimes, but thanks to the intelligent majority common sense prevails.⁷³

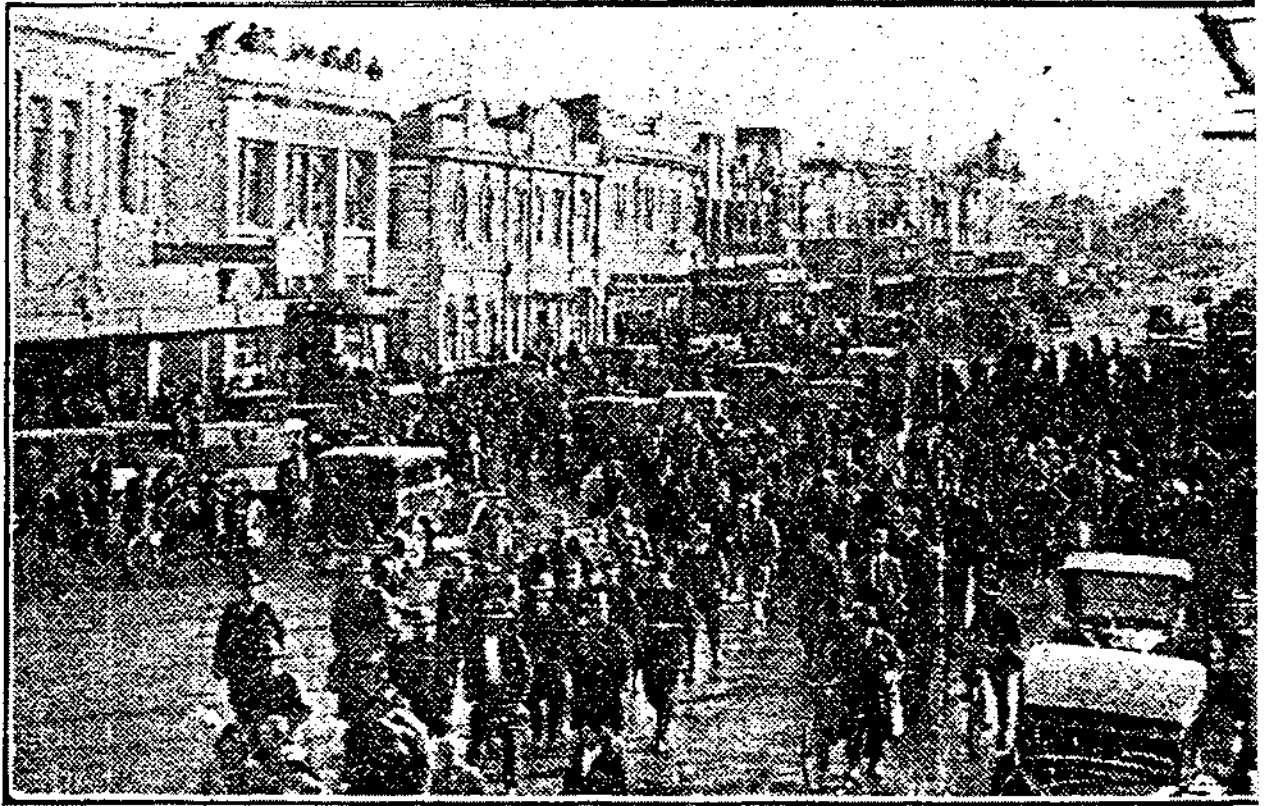
Hodgens was also a councillor, and on May 28 was present when the Council officially dissociated itself from the demonstration of May 22. While still opposed to the relief camp proposals, the Council felt it necessary to censure the tactic of demonstrations.

The PNUWM and the Anti-Camp Council were meanwhile organising further action. A demonstration was planned for June 9. The Council responded by placing a ban on street processions, effective as of June 8. Joe Hodgens, city councillor and deputy-Mayor, seconded the resolution for the prohibition, an action which did not go unnoticed by his opponents in the labour movement. Notices of the ban were sent to the leaders of the PNUWM; to Leo Sim, Frank and Rodney Lee, Herbert Passey, John Flavell and Emily Highstead.

The Workers Weekly front page headline for June 16 tells the story of the outcome of the PNUWM's decision to go ahead with their protest march planned for May 29.

"POLICE BRUTALITY AT PALMERSTON NORTH.
UNEMPLOYED DEMONSTRATION BROKEN UP."⁷⁴

About 50 people, including a number of women and children, had taken part in the march, which had set out from the meeting rooms of the PNUWM at 41 Rangitikei Street at ten in the morning. A large contingent of police from the surrounding district, some mounted, halted the procession before it had reached the Square. Five of the male marchers were arrested when they offered some resistance to the police.



The banned PNUWM demonstration of May 29, 1934,
is broken up. Rangitikei Street, Palmerston
North.

(RW, 16 June, 1934.)

During the ensuing court case, the police gave their interpretation of the cause of this "agitation".⁷⁵ About twelve local communists and their supporters, claimed one Inspector Rawles, had "worked their way into" the PNUWM, with the object of "creating disorder."⁷⁶ The Palmerston North authorities, however, had over-reacted; the Council's ban on street processions was ruled "ultra vires" by the Palmerston North Magistrate's Court (and the charges against the five arrested men dropped.⁷⁷)

The PNUWM and the Anti-Camp Council continued their struggle. On June 30 the former sent a deputation to the Mayor protesting at the unemployed having to work for "charity rations".⁷⁸ A meeting of the Anti-Camp Council on July 3 endorsed this demand. Mansford's sympathy with these two organisations, however, had cooled considerably. Like Hodgens, he would have nothing to do with communists. Both believed that the communists in the PNUWM were responsible for the disturbances of May 29. By threatening social order this action destroyed the alliance between the community and labour movement that had temporarily existed. The PNCP had in fact directly provoked Hodgens and Mansford by circulating a leaflet entitled "Who Are The Misleaders?", naming both men.⁷⁹

The Unemployment Board had by early July backed down on its proposal to send any married unemployed to relief camps. This was a dubious victory for the PNLB, for the anti-camp struggle had split the party into two, openly hostile groups. On one side stood Joe Hodgens and his supporters, including Percy Robinson, Rowland Watson and the Palmerston North ASRS. This group found the militancy and communist membership of the PNUWM and the Anti-Camp Council intolerable. In contrast Ernest Ward, and with him the majority of the Palmerston North labour movement, were active supporters of these two organisations. And in July the Anti-Camp Council comprised representatives of the following organisations; the PNUWM, the PNCP, the Longburn freezing workers' union, the hotel workers' union, and two other, unknown trade unions, and, the City and Terrace End branches of the PNLB and the PNLRC.

The faction led by Ward had developed very close relations with the PNUWM, and therefore with local communists. It was an alliance of opposition to the Unemployment Board rather than of political doctrine, but it was anathema to Hodgens. The conflict had been simmering for some time. Hodgens, it appears, had been up to his old tricks again, by refusing to comply with PNLRC instructions regarding his actions on the Palmerston North City Council. (Hodgens was still a Labour member on the Council). According to Ward this conflict became so "sharp" by September 1933 that the City branch had removed Hodgens, and Rowland Watson, from their posts as delegates to the PNLRC.⁸⁰ As president of the PNLRC, Hodgens had refused to allow the replacement City branch delegates to take their seats on the LRC. At this stage James Thorn, national secretary of the Labour Party, made a visit to Palmerston North and persuaded Ward, and the City branch to take no further action until the branch's annual meeting in March, 1934. There Percy Robinson attempted, unsuccessfully, to contest the presidency of the branch against Ward. The internal bickering and manoeuvring continued throughout 1934, the PNLRC apparently split down the middle by the two groups. In July a meeting of representatives of the Longburn union, the Hotel workers' union, the Housewives' League, and the Terrace End and City branches of the PNLP passed a resolution of no-confidence in Hodgens as the Labour candidate for the Palmerston electorate. Later in the year the party's National Executive disaffiliated the Longburn freezing workers' union from the Labour Party because it was unfinancial (the union had almost ceased to exist by June 1934, in the aftermath of its crushing defeat in the 1932-33 strike).⁸¹ Ward interpreted this as a conscious move by the National Executive in support of Hodgens, for it removed J.P. Queenan, the pro-Ward Longburn delegate on the PNLRC. Finally, the National Executive decided that decisive action was called for. The National Executive's report to the Annual Conference of 1935 describes its version of the events.

For nearly two years there has been a deplorable lack of unity in Palmerston North, due without doubt to the persistent efforts of the [City]

Branch to discredit and ultimately cause the withdrawal of the Party's Candidate - Mr. J. Hodgens - and this culminated, after many efforts to bring about unity, in the Executive's decision to disband the Palmerston North [City] Branch and to suspend the LRC.⁸²

In justification of this drastic move, the National Executive stated that it had given the matter "earnest consideration" at thirteen meetings during 1934.⁸³ It had sent several Labour Party leaders to Palmerston North in attempt to resolve the dispute:

... but although upon occasions agreement has seemingly been reached, the trouble has again broken out almost before the arbitrator had reported to the National Executive.⁸⁴

The report indicated one of the causes of the dispute; the City branch had:

... defied the National Executive's ruling that they were not to allow the local secretary of the F.S.U.⁸⁵ to address members at a Branch meeting; it not only permitted this but provided facilities for the sale of F.S.U. literature.⁸⁶

The NZLP, and Joe Hodgens, would not countenance any association with communists when electoral victory seemed so close, and when many Labour leaders were increasingly impatient to occupy the treasury benches. The close links which had developed during the depression between the PNLP and the PNUWM, whose leadership comprised a number of communists, and which was closely tied with the PNCP, was intolerable to Hodgens and to his Party's National Executive.

The decision to disband the [City] Branch and the L.R.C. [the report continued] was come to when it was seen that there was no hope of a solution while the [City] Branch was under the domination of officers and contained members who were palpably determined to disrupt the Movement, and only after Mr. Savage had spoken in Palmerston and conferred with the Party's Candidate and other supporters of many years' standing,

was it decided that the solution was the disbandment of the [City] Branch.⁵⁷

To Ward this was nothing less than a betrayal of the "rank and file" (whom he always claimed to champion), by the "bureaucratic leadership" of the labour movement, in particular by Hodgens and the NZLP National Executive.⁸⁸ The latter, however, were keenly aware of the approaching general election.

The suspension of the L.R.C. was made with the consent of the L.R.C. officers [Hodgens was president, Rowland Watson secretary] in the hope that it would enable the formation of an Election Committee prepared to work for the return of Mr. Hodgens, in whom the Executive has every cause for confidence. The Executive's decision was taken on December 10th. [1934] and there has been a vast improvement in the situation since. The other Palmerston North Branch - Terrace End - is wholeheartedly supporting the candidate, who has every prospect of victory.⁸⁹

It was not surprising that the "situation" had "improved" by the time of the Annual Conference (April 1935), as Ward and his supporters had little or no recourse to this action. By disbanding the City branch and suspending the LRC the Executive denied them both the voting power and the forum to challenge Hodgens locally, while the latter's position as Labour candidate was further ensured by the support of the Executive.

The City branch met for the last time on February 28, 1935, and decided on its response to the National Executive's action. After much discussion, in which the members defended their actions, it was decided to dissolve the branch. The following resolution was carried and published in the Times:

That we, as a branch of the New Zealand Labour Party, refuse to accept the national executive's disaffiliation as legal, but that this branch resign from the New Zealand Labour Party as a protest against the undemocratic and morally dishonest officialdom that has been carried out by the national executive.⁹⁰

Ernest Bond, vice-president of the branch, expressed his feelings thus:

I do not care now if the ship damn well sinks.
The whole situation is rotten from start to
finish.⁹¹

The meeting ended with a decision to form a Palmerston North Labour and Economic Society, and a provisional committee was set up. Nothing further was heard of the Society.⁹²

The PNUWM continued its agitation through 1935, in February organising a petition calling for an increase in relief pay. It amassed 641 signatures, which represented about two thirds of the local registered unemployed at the time. Deputations to local bodies were continued, but the activity, and the support, of the PNUWM began to decline as the general election approached. It was by 1935 isolated both from the community and the PNLP, condemned for its links with local communists.

This was demonstrated in the 1935 municipal elections, when two "unemployed" candidates stood for the Hospital Board.⁹³ Although they did not stand on a PNUWM ticket (the NUWM was theoretically non-political) it was obvious that the electors associated them with it; both were heavily defeated. Ernest Ward also entered the elections, standing for Council as an independent, and went to considerable lengths in an attempt to dissociate himself from the NZCP. He came second to last on the poll. Frank Lee stood for the Council as a NZCP candidate, and came last. The Labour ticket fared much better, in fact Joe Hodgens' star had never shone brighter. In the Council and Hospital Board elections he came second in the poll. And he did so with the endorsement of the Palmerston North Citizens Association.⁹⁴ The "Citizens' Ticket" intentionally nominated only eight candidates for the nine Council seats:

... the intention being to allow for the candidature of Mr. J. Hodgens who, the [Citizens'] committee recognises, has given valuable services to the municipality over a number of years.⁹⁵

And so Joe Hodgens entered the final straight on the road to political victory. By March he had, with the authority of the Labour Party National Executive, formed an Election Committee, and appointed Percy Robinson as his chairman. Only the Terrace End branch of the PNL (with a membership of twelve in 1934-35) and the Palmerston North Housewife's League (with 21 members in 1934-35) remained to support him.⁹⁶ Victor Christensen, the renegade of 1922, had by 1935 become an active supporter of Hodgens. During the election campaign the only manifestation of the latest split in the PNL came in a letter to the Times by "Flaxworker", who dubbed Christensen, Hodgens and Robinson as the "three black crows" of the Palmerston North labour movement.⁹⁷

The "three black crows" were preoccupied with opposition from a different quarter, for Augustus Mansford, Palmerston North's Mayor, had decided to contest the general election as an "Independent" candidate.⁹⁸ Mansford's motivation for standing was a moral and emotional revulsion at the plight of the unemployed during the depression. His politics were the politics of opposition to and resentment at the Coalition Government and the Unemployment Board. By 1935 a fund of hostility towards central government had developed, and added to the Mayor's personal following, Mansford's candidature represented a significant threat to both the party candidates, Hodgens and Nash. Mansford was certainly no Labour supporter; having been a member of the New Zealand Legion, an ultra-conservative quasi-political organisation formed in 1933. His political allegiances were somewhat blurred and unstable,¹⁰⁰ but he eventually joined the National Party, standing for that party in Palmerston North in the 1943 general election. Like James Nash his economics were those of a businessman (Mansford was an accountant by profession). Both doubted that Labour could fulfil its expansionary financial and welfare policies, the quintessential response of orthodox economics to Labour's plans for financial reform.

In Palmerston North, as nationally, Labour's election policy was highly controversial. Unemployment was perhaps

the issue, particularly as it was still very much evident locally, though on the decline.¹⁰¹

The results clearly demonstrated the electorate's desire for a change; the two anti-Government candidates took 67 percent of the vote, relegating Nash to third place. But Palmerstonians were almost equally divided between the two alternatives to Nash. Hodgens had won, but on the slimmest of majorities, just ahead of Mansford. Labour's support had in fact declined from 1931, absolutely and proportionately. Faced with a candidate representing an unpopular, depression Government, and one representing an untried Labour Party, many Palmerston voters were only too willing to support a third, anti-Government, anti-Labour and locally respected alternative in Mansford. In Palmerston Labour's reputation as a radical party had not yet died. It required three years of Labour Government to convince even a majority of Palmerstonians that the party Hodgens represented was benign and credible.¹⁰²

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

It took just under twenty years and the bitter experience of the depression for the Labour Party to win power. In the Palmerston electorate the party won with only one third of the vote, a result that eloquently expressed the limitations of Labour support in Palmerston in this period.

Between 1917 and 1922 the Palmerston North labour movement provided a temporary refuge for Rod Ross and his militant socialism. From his base in Palmerston North Ross attempted to infuse and reinvigorate the NZLP with his socialist philosophy. Neither the Palmerston North labour movement nor the NZLP, however, were willing to accept Ross's totalistic vision, and by the end of 1922 both had rejected him.

Yet only in 1918 did Labour in Palmerston North project itself as a class party; only Alexander Galbraith of the four (official) Labour candidates who stood in Palmerston in this period used the rhetoric of class.¹ And when in 1922 Ross, through the medium of Victor Christensen, put his brand of politics before the electorate the response confirmed what Hodgens had realized in 1918; that in Palmerston class politics were very much at a discount. Moses Ayrton's christian rhetoric was far more acceptable. But not even Hodgens, with the saving grace that he was locally respectable, could seriously challenge the extremist and "subversive" image of the NZLP in Palmerston, which proved remarkably enduring.² This despite the fact that by 1935 the NZLP had "abandoned almost all pretense of being socialist."³ In contrast to the bald socialist objective of 1916, in 1935 the party's official objective was;

... to utilize to the maximum degree the wonderful resources of the Dominion.⁴

Labour's politics were now majority politics. The party promised what most of its supporters had wanted in 1919; higher wages, improved pensions and social security, without the "foreign doctrines" or the socialist rhetoric.⁵ In

Palmerston, however, a majority did not perceive these changes until 1938,

After 1916 the leaders of the NZLP became increasingly determined to achieve victory, and by the end of the twenties the party was prepared to tailor its policies to the dictates of the electorate, rather than to the prescriptions of socialist theories.⁶ Labour also became an increasingly disciplined party, as the professional politicians like Holland, Fraser, Savage and Mash gained control. By virtue of their ability and force of character, and, it might well be added, the indifference of a large section of the party's 'rank and file', these leaders were able to impose their "personalities, perspectives and policy preferences" on the NZLP.⁷ In 1922 Rod Ross, and in 1934 Ernest Ward, were victims of these "oligarchical tendencies."⁸

When Joe Hodgens was in control, the PNLP was a loyal and obedient subject of the party leadership. As Oliver suspected, the moderates of the smaller centres did help to "bury the extremism" of the main centres (though it should be added that the labourites in the main centres took the lead, while the moderates like Hodgens provided the rubber stamp to NZLP policy amendments at Conference.)⁹ In fact after 1928 the relationship between the PNLP and the NZLP became all but oneway. And when, during the depression, the PNLP developed close links with the PNUWM, and with Palmerston North communists, the party's National Executive had the power to effectively silence and exile those involved.

One of the reasons for Ross's fall from power was that he lacked a power base in the trade union movement. After 1922 the PNLP was dominated by unionists, as the NZLP had always been. In Palmerston North their allegiance to the Labour Party was almost automatic. When the party arrived in Palmerston North in 1917 the local unions accepted the political leadership of the NZLP without hesitation, and their commitment to Labour continued throughout the period. Of the unions within the electorate, only the Longburn freezing workers expressed any of the syndicalist

sentiments of the Alliance of Labour, and then infrequently. It was the most militant union in Palmerston North, but only in comparison with the other local trade unions. But because of its national executive's hostility to the NZLP, its small size and physical isolation from Palmerston North, it failed to effect any significant influence on the PNLP.

The relationship between the two wings of the Palmerston North labour movement - the political and the industrial - was largely complementary and congenial. The unions provided the political wing with its social base.¹⁰ They supplied the PNSDP with most of its members, while the PNLP branches derived virtually all their members and much of their character from the unions. (Even the Palmerston North Housewives' League was comprised of unionists' wives.) Most of the local trade unions were small, weak and moderate. They were moderate whether organized by industry or craft. The largest was an industrial union, the ASRS,¹¹ but it was also the most consistently moderate (and pro-Hodgens) during the period under study. Rod Ross and his small band of socialists in the PNSDP, and during the depression the large following won by the militant PNUWM, only obscured the underlying conservatism of Palmerston North workers. It is significant that only 50 people took part in the banned PNUWM demonstration in May 1934.

The PNLP had a secure and politically loyal base in the local trade union movement (despite an aversion to Hodgens felt by some of them.) But in terms of electoral strength their vote was patently inadequate. The total number of unionists probably never exceeded 700, and even with the support of their wives it was obvious that to be successful the Labour Party in Palmerston North had to expand its support into the wider community. This is what Joe Hodgens attempted to do. His efforts won him the opposition first of Ross and the PNSDP, and later of many among the PNLP membership itself. The dividing issue was a question of priorities, for Hodgens thought first of power. Labourites who shared this conviction, in Palmerston North and elsewhere in New Zealand, believed that in order to do anything, to introduce any of its policies,

whether socialist or not, Labour must first hold office. In the final analysis it was (and remains) a fundamental law for political survival.¹²

To become a majority party in Palmerston, the Labour Party had to represent itself as a moderate, centre party. Palmerston was a truly New Zealand electorate, with a cross-section of urban, semi-urban and rural interests, of radical, moderate and conservative political attitudes. The area of political consensus was centre politics, both extremes of the political spectrum were mistrusted. Labour's electoral record in Palmerston was therefore particularly symbolic, for as the editor of the Times realized as early as 1925, electorates like Palmerston were the "real test electorates" for Labour, because:

... until such centres as Palmerston can be won for Labour, that party has no hope in the wide world of occupying the treasury benches.¹³

And yet before 1938 the party could not break past the two fifths ceiling of support achieved in 1919. The reasons were complex.

There is the New Zealand perspective; the pragmatic and non-doctrinaire character of the New Zealand voter, which the Reform Party symbolized. In Palmerston North there were no large industries, and consequently no large concentrations of unskilled workers to provide a seed-bed for political radicalism. The local ASRS, by far the largest trade union in the electorate, had only 200 members by 1929 (before the depression began to cause a decline in membership). The Manawatu Knitting Mills, one of the city's largest employers, had just 105 workers by 1937. Palmerston North was an important industrial centre, but its industries were small and diverse.¹⁴

Palmerston North had no 'class suburbs', no marked residential segregation. There were areas where the more financially well off predominated, and a few where the poorer grouped together. Contemporaries sometimes referred

to "old Palmerston", an area of lower quality housing between Rangitikei Street and Pascal Street.¹⁵ A polling-booth analysis of election results reveals that this area, along with the streets immediately east and west of the railway station (then in Main Street), around College Street West, and, later in the period, in Longburn and Milson, were pockets of Labour support. Writing of the city's residential pattern in the early 1960s, Anderson stated that:

... the city is characterised more by the uniformity of its housing than by its variety or range of quality. No doubt the flatness of the site inhibited the development of more clear-cut areal differences in housing quality.¹⁶

And except perhaps for Milson (which was a semi-isolated railway settlement in this period), there were no real suburbs, making difficult the development of exclusive neighbourhood communities within the borough.¹⁷

The great majority of Palmerstonians were committed to their community, including the wage-earners, because they believed in the material progress that they could achieve within it. An ethos or mentality of progress and growth pervaded Palmerston North during the twenties. Palmerston North was an expansive centre, its rate of population increase over double that of the national average in the three inter-censal periods 1916-1921, 1921-1926 and 1926-1936. In 1930 the town achieved city status, a recognition of its dominant position within the Manawatu region. Most Palmerstonians were satisfied with the status quo, at least until the depression. Private home ownership became the dominant form of residential tenure in this period, and people who own real estate (or just aspire to owning it) are least of all likely to question the desirability of private property.¹⁸ The proportion of New Zealand born in the town's population was also increasing, making for a more assimilated and homogenous population, with more people socialized in local social and political traditions. It is perhaps significant that Palmerston North's Irish population was well below the national average (although the percentage of Roman Catholics was almost exactly the

same as the national average.)

The moderate character of the electorate, the satisfaction with Reform's strategy of economic growth, was reinforced by other factors. One was the small but significant "rural" population incorporated within the electorate (though it is also noteworthy that by 1938 the electorate was 100 per cent "urban.")¹⁹ And there was a tendency for farming centres like Palmerston North to link their prosperity, and to some extent their political interests and attitudes, with the surrounding farming district (within and beyond the electoral boundary).²⁰ This relationship was institutionalised in several ways; by dairy factories, freezing works, stock and station agents and other agricultural service industries and general merchants. Socially it was reinforced by, among other things, the annual Agricultural and Pastoral shows.

Within this community Palmerston North workers were for most of the period well integrated. Only during times of economic distress, particularly in the 1930s depression, was there any evidence of class antagonism (and then only by a small minority of the labour movement.) The local ASRS was in fact directly involved in community affairs; in 1918 the union co-operated with the Palmerston North Friendly Societies Council in organising some holiday entertainment for children, and with the Manawatu School Committee's Association in a project to secure "better educational facilities" for local schools.²¹ And in 1933 the union participated in fund raising activity, organised by the City Council, for the benefit of the unemployed. For its part the community accepted the labour movement, industrial and political, and sympathized with the economic and political aspirations of the workers. Although there were very few labourites among the town's notables or social elite - the leaders of business, local government, school committees, and respectable private organisations like Rotary and the RSA - this did not mean that they were social outcasts. The local community leaders were not reactionaries. In 1917 Mayor Nash declared Labour Day a public holiday,

reportedly at the request of local businessmen. And during the depression the PNUWM and the Home Protection League enjoyed representation on the Palmerston North Unemployment Committee. What the community would not tolerate, however, was the politics of confrontation. They were estranged by the class rhetoric of some NZLP leaders (particularly Holland) and abhorred the threat to social order which they believed the NZCP symbolized.

Joe Hodgens knew this, and in trying to purify the PNLP of such elements: he could be uncompromising and even underhanded. To win in Palmerston, he realized, Labour's radical ethos had to be exorcised. Hodgens' success in doing this was his foremost contribution to the Labour cause in Palmerston North. As Gustafson has noted:

Electors vote not so much for policies but for people who they think will carry out acceptable policies. The credibility of the party's candidates is therefore of paramount importance.²²

Hodgens was credible to the Palmerston electorate. In the PNLP he alone developed a strong and enduring popular following; he alone gained local acceptability, as a labourite. And because he was locally trusted, he helped break down Labour's reputation for being a revolutionary and unsafe party, just enough to take the seat in 1935.

Table V. Palmerston Electoral Record 1918 - 1935

Election	Candidate	Party*	Vote	%age vote
1918 †	Galbraith, A.	L	1931	35.8
	Mash, J.A.	NG	2230	41.3
	Crabb, E.H.	I	1130	20.9
	Buchanan, A.	I	101	1.8
1919	Ayrton, M.	L	3613	42.9
	Mash, J.A.	R	4617	54.9
1922	Hodgens, J.	L	3666	40.1
	Christensen, V.A.	IL	558	6.1
	Mash, J.A.	R	4733	51.7
1925	Bromley, W.	L	3344	32.9
	Mash, J.A.	R	6584	64.9
1928	Bromley, W.	L	3208	28.0
	Mash, J.A.	R	5558	48.5
	Loughnan, C.A.	L	2484	21.7
1931	Hodgens, J.	L	5220	44.4
	Mash, J.A.	Cr	6465	55.0
1935	Hodgens, J.	L	4730	34.3
	Mash, J.A.	N	4380	31.7
	Mansford, A.	I	4615	33.4

Source: Chapman, RM. "The significance of the 1928 general election", MA thesis, Auckland University, 1948., Appendix.

* L	-	Labour
NG	-	National Government
I	-	Independent
IL	-	Independent Labour
L	-	Liberal
Cr	-	Coalition. Reform
N	-	National

For the 1918 by-election Chapman designates A. Buchanan as a Reform candidate. In Palmerston North however, he proclaimed himself an Independent. See MDT, 12 December, 1918.

Table VI. Electoral and Parliamentary Strength of New Zealand Political Parties, 1919 - 1935.

Election	Party	%age vote	Seats
1919	Labour	24	8
	Reform	36	43
	Liberal	29	17
1922	Labour	25	17
	Reform	40	35
	Liberal-Labour	26	21
1925	Labour	27	12
	Reform	47	51
	National (Liberal)	20	9
1928	Labour	27	19
	Reform	35	25
	United (Liberal)	30	25
1931	Labour	35	24
	Coalition (United-Reform)	44	42
1935	Labour	47	53
	National (Coalition)	31	17

Source: Lipson, L. The Politics of Equality : New Zealand's Adventures in Democracy, Chicago, 1948, pp. 187-8.

Table VII. Palmerston North Labour Representation Committee;
Affiliated Organisations and Membership,
1929 - 1935.

Affiliates	Membership (usually for year ended Mar.1)						
	1928 -29	1929 -30	1930 -31	1931 -32	1932 -33	1933 -34	1935 -35
<u>Unions:</u>							
ASRS	200	150	150	150	150	123	140
ASCJ	82	82	82	82	92	31	31
Hotel Workers	100	100	100	100	100	65	100
Painters and Dec- orators	25	25	25	25	25		
Drivers	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Plumbers			25				
Longburn freezing workers					110	110	
<u>Branches:</u>							
PN (City)	130	61	61	61	24	39	
Terrace End						10	12
Housewives' League						17	21
Totals	587	468	493	468	541	445	334

Source: NZLP : ACR, 1929 - 1935.

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2. Ibid., p.29-30.
3. Oliver, W.H. "Relationship of Local History to National History", in Seminar For Local Historians, Palmerston North, 1978, p.41.
4. Ibid., p.38.
5. Ibid., p.39.
6. Oliver, W.H. Towards a New History? Otago, 1971, p.39., and see Oliver, "Relationship", p.39.
7. Oliver, Towards a New History? pp. 6, 8-9.; and Oliver, "Relationship", p.10.
8. Plumridge, E.W. "Our Newest Labour History is Old-Fashioned", Comment, 12, September 1980, p.31.
9. Ibid., p.32.
10. Plumridge, E.W. "Labour in Christchurch: Community and Consciousness", MA Thesis, Canterbury University, 1979, Preface.
11. Ibid., pp. 246-7.
12. Oliver, Towards a New History? p.10.
13. Ibid., p.10.

1. Palmerston North and the Palmerston North labour movement to 1916.

1. Hope, G.W. "Palmerston North as an Urban Node: Its Character and Functions", MA Thesis, University of New Zealand, 1957, p.20.
2. Symondson, B. "Frederick Pirani. MHR. Palmerston North, 1893-1902. A Study of His Political Career", MA Thesis, Massey University, 1977, pp. 15, 24.
3. See Chapman, R.M. "The Significance of the 1928 General Election", MA Thesis, Auckland University, 1948, p.131.; and Chapman, R.M. "The Decline of the Liberals", in Chapman, R.M.(ed.) Ends and Means in New Zealand Politics, Auckland, 1972, 6th ed., pp.20-2.

4. Olssen, E. "The 'Working Class' in New Zealand", NZJH, 8 : 1, 1974, p.46.
5. Symondson, pp. 22, 23, 28.
6. See Roth, H. Trade Unions in New Zealand, Wellington, 1973, p.11.; Fitzgerald, MK. "The Manawatu Flaxmills Employee's Industrial Union of Workers, 1906-1921", MA Thesis, Massey University, 1970, pp. 10, 5, 16, 26.; McLeod, J. "Palmerston Politics: A Study of a Single Electorate, 1905-11", Research Exercise, Massey University, 1977, pp.21, 41.
7. Oliver, Towards a New History? p.9.
8. The PNSP had ceased to exist by 1913. See Gustafson, B. Labour's Path to Political Independence. The Origins and Establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party, 1900-19, Auckland, 1980, pp.69, 174 n 23.

2. Rod Ross and the Palmerston North Social Democratic Party.

1. Gustafson, pp.95-96; Brown, B. The Rise of New Zealand Labour, Wellington, 1962, pp.42-3.
2. See Fitzgerald, pp.35-9.
3. MW, 3 January, 1917.
4. The attempts to form a Trades and Labour Council ended with this. The author found only one more, ambiguous reference to a Trades Council in Palmerston North in the period under study. If it did exist then its activities were clandestine. See Minute Book of Longburn Freezing Works and Related Trades Industrial Union of Workers, 26 July, 1931.
5. Brown, B. "The New Zealand Labour Party 1916-1935", MA Thesis, Victoria University, 1955, Appendix B.
6. MW, 18 April 1917.
7. Until 1919 the LRC in Palmerston North was the LRC for the Manawatu region, comprising the four electorates; Palmerston, Oroua, Manawatu and Otaki. By the time of the 1919 general election a Manawatu LRC had been established, and the one in Palmerston North thereafter became the PNLRC. See Gustafson, p.180 n 37; and MW, 29 October, 1919.
8. Rush, G.W.A. Local Government and Politics in New Zealand, Auckland, 1980, p.195.

9. This paragraph was based on the following sources; Gustafson, pp.93, 166, 176 n 34.; MDT 17 January, 1934; Palmerston North Borough Council Rate Book, 1922; MW, 17 September, 1919.
10. Gustafson, p.93. The first Annual Conference of the NZLP, in 1917, amended the party's constitution to provide for the establishment of Labour Party branches. See Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.33.
11. Gustafson, p.93.
12. Plumridge, "Labour in Christchurch", pp.65-6.
13. For this paragraph see; Gustafson, pp.156-7; Dominion, 10 October, 1959 ; and Fitzgerald, p.42.
14. See MDT, 2, 7, 9-14, and 17 December, 1918; and MES, 2 December, 1918.
15. MDT, 20 December 1918.
16. Ibid., 17 December 1918.
17. Ibid., 18 December 1918.
18. For this paragraph see; Gustafson, pp.153-4, 156-7; Fitzgerald, p.42; Evening Post, 4 October, 1950; MW, 26 July 1916; 29 August 1917; NZWEA: AR, 1918.
19. Fitzgerald, p.42.
20. Ibid., p.42.
21. Gustafson, pp.153-4.; and Fitzgerald p.42.
22. MDT, 6 December 1919.
23. Ibid., 27 October 1919; 3 December 1919.
24. In this period many urban branches of the RSA were pro-Labour. See Gustafson, pp.102-3.
25. MW, 24 September 1919; 3 December 1919.
26. MDT, 1 December 1919.
27. Ibid., 3 December 1919
28. Ibid., 1 December 1919.
29. Monthly Abstract of Statistics, December 1919.
30. See NZWEA: AR, 1915-17, 1920; and MW, 6 December, 1916.
31. NZWEA: AR, 1915 - 1931, 1933 - 35.
32. Hall, D.O.W. New Zealand Adult Education, London, 1970, p.16.
33. In the twenties the Palmerston North WEA appears to have become 'respectable', and to have lost its earlier relationship with the local labour movement. Two of the town's Mayors (F.J.Nathan and then A.J.Graham) were president of the Palmerston North WEA between

- 1924 and 1929, and a number of prominent businessmen were active supporters of the association. See NZWEA: AR, 1924-28; and MW, 23 December, 1925.
34. Gustafson, p.90.
 35. Plumridge, "Labour in Christchurch", p.216.
 36. O'Farrell, P.J. Harry Holland - Militant Socialist, Canberra, 1964, pp.107, 96, 97-102.
 37. Ibid., pp.110, 33, 102, 194-5.
 38. MW, 15 January, 1919.
 39. Ibid., 15 January, 1919.
 40. NZLP: ACR, 1919.
 41. MDT, 3 April, 1919.
 42. Ibid., 5 April 1919.
 43. Ibid., 25 April, 1919.
 44. Paul, J.T. Humanism in Politics. New Zealand Labour Party Retrospect, Wellington, 1946, p.158.
 45. MW, 30 July, 1919.
 46. Ibid., 30 July, 1919.
 47. The policy adopted included a provision which, although ambiguous, seemed to provide for the gradual nationalisation of land. See O'Farrell, p.101. The strong similarity of the PNLP branch land policy and that adopted by the NZLP is interesting considering that Sinclair claims Walter Nash to have been the principal architect of the 1919 land platform. See MW, 30 July 1919; 6 August 1919; and Sinclair, K. Walter Nash, Auckland, 1976, p.33.
 48. Brown, "Labour Party", Appendix C.
 49. See MW, 17 September, 1919; 1, 14, 22 and 29 October, 1919; 12 and 19 November, 1919; 5 and 19 May, 1920; 2 and 30 June, 1920.
 50. See MW, 6, 20 and 27 August, 1919; 3 and 10 September, 1919.
 51. MW, 18 August, 1920.
 52. Ibid., 18 August, 1920.
 53. Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.65.
 54. Ibid., p.65.
 55. MW, 4 August, 1920.
 56. Ibid., 4 August, 1920.
 57. MW, 1 June, 1921; 24 August, 1921.

58. Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.27., and Stone, R.C.J. "A History of Trade Unionism in New Zealand, 1913-1937", MA Thesis, Auckland University, 1948, pp. 60, 62, 64, 78.
59. MES, 11 November, 1922.
60. MW, 19 July, 1922.
61. Ibid., 19 July, 1922.
62. Ibid., 19 July, 1922.
63. MES, 11 November, 1922.
64. Paul, p.162.
65. MDT, 30 November 1922; and MES, 11 November, 1922.
66. Chapman, R.M. The Political Scene, 1919-1931, Auckland, 1969, pp.16-17.
67. MDT, 7 December, 1922.
68. Though it should be noted that non-voting had fallen by over 10 per cent from 1919.
69. MES, 21 November, 1922.
70. MDT, 5 December, 1922.
71. MES, 3 October, 1922; 11 and 29 November, 1922.
72. MDT, 5 December, 1922.
73. MW, 14 December, 1921.
74. MDT, 25 November, 1922.
75. Ibid., 4 December, 1922.
76. Ibid., 1 December, 1922.
77. MW, 30 April, 1924.
78. MW, 29 October, 1924.; and see Gustafson, p.120.
79. MW, 27 September, 1922.
80. Ibid., 19 March, 1919.
81. See O'Farrell, p.211.
82. MW, 14 December, 1921.
83. See Plumridge, "Labour in Christchurch", p.46., and Sinclair, pp.113-14.
84. MW, 24 July, 1918.
85. See MW, 12 and 26 March, 1924; 30 April, 1924; 2 December, 1925.
86. MW, 9 April, 1924.
87. MDT, 17 January, 1934.

3. Joe Hodgens and the Palmerston North Labour Party in the Twenties.

1. MES, 20 November, 1935.
2. See Gustafson, p.146.; and Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.151.
3. MDT, 22 November 1922; 14 January, 1955; MES, 3 October, 1922; Mrs J.P. Harvey.; and District Electors' List (Palmerston North Borough), 1915, 1935.
4. There is no evidence that in Palmerston North Labour was a 'Catholic' party. In fact relations between the PNLP and the local churches were far from amicable. See MW, 10 December, 1922; 16 November, 1932. After a study of the 19th century Catholic Church in Palmerston North, Nick Simmons came to the conclusion that local Catholics were comparatively affluent, and politically conservative. See Simmons, N.A. "Nineteenth Century Catholicism in Palmerston North", Research Exercise, Massey University, 1979, pp.33, 47, 49. Finally, the author had a sample list of PNLP activists checked against Catholic Church records, and found that only one besides Hodgens was a Catholic. See O.J.Dolen, Vicariate Office, Archdiocese of Wellington.
5. MDT, 2 April, 1921.
6. MW, 11 April, 1923.
7. In 1925 and 1927 Hodgens also won a seat on the Manawatu - Groupa Power Board. MDT, 30 April, 1925; 27 April, 1927.
8. See Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, pp.176-7, 178.
9. Brown incorrectly claims that the conference was held in July 1925. See Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.176., and MW, 11 June, 1924; 28 January, 1925.
10. See Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, Chapter 7.
11. Holland, H.E. Armageddon or Calvary. The Conscientious Objectors of New Zealand and "The Process of Their Conversion", Wellington, 1919, p.54.
12. Fitzgerald, p.40.
13. Gustafson, p.118.
14. Powell, J.P. "The History of a Working Class Party, 1918-40", MA Thesis, Wellington, 1949, p.20, 20 n 2.
15. See Nash Papers, Z173 0583; MW, 3 May, 1922; and MW, 16 October, 1924.

16. MW, 1 June, 1921.
17. For this paragraph, see; MES, 23 September, 1924; 16 December, 1918; MW, 10 December, 1924; 19 June, 1924.
18. Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.77.
19. MES, 10 November, 1928.
20. Ibid., 20 October, 1925.
21. MW, 15 July, 1925; 21 October, 1925.
22. Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.67.
23. MES, 2 and 22 October, 1925.
24. Sinclair, p.72.
25. MES, 28 October, 1925.
26. Chapman, Political Scene, p.30
27. Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.79.
28. See Overacker, L. "The New Zealand Labour Party", American Political Science Review, XLIX: 3, 1955, p.718; Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.216; and O'Farrell, p.159.
29. Burdon, R.M. The New Dominion. A Social and Political History of New Zealand, 1918 - 1939, Wellington, 1965, pp.62, 63.
30. MW, 29 June, 1927.
31. Grigg, A.R. "The Attack on the Citadels of Liquordom. A Study of the Prohibition Movement in New Zealand, 1894 - 1914", Phd Thesis, University of Otago, 1977, p.376.
32. Minute Book of WCTU (Palmerston North), 16 April, 1919.
33. See NDT, 1 April, 1919.; MW, 8 May, 1918; 21 August, 1918; and Grigg, pp.361-6.
34. See MDT, 10 and 13 November, 1928.
35. Grigg, pp.361, 367.
36. MW, 5 May, 1926.
37. MW, 15 June, 1927.
38. Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.30.; and Newman, R. "New Zealand's Vote For Prohibition in 1911", NZJH, 9 : 1, 1975, p.65.
39. See MW, 19 December, 1923; 11 November, 1925; and New Zealand Electoral Roll, 1922, 1925, 1923.
40. MW, 13 July, 1927.
41. MW, 19 May, 1926; 21 July, 1926
42. Plumridge, "Our Newest Labour History", p.32., and Plumridge, "Labour in Christchurch", no.40-7.

43. MW, 14 March, 1928.
44. See MES, 19, 24 and 30 October, 1928; 7, 9 and 12 November, 1928.
45. Chapman, Political Scene, pp.51, 55.
46. MES, 30 October, 1928.

4. Depression, Dissension and Victory.

1. See MDT, 12 January, 1928; 6 April, 1929; and MES, 24 October, 1928.
2. NZLP: ACR, 1929 - 1935.
3. MDT, 14 April, 1931.
4. Harris, P. "The New Zealand Unemployed Workers Movement, 1931 - 1939: Gisborne and the Relief Workers' Strike", NZJH, 10: 2, 1976, p.139.; and Stone, pp.132-6.
5. Morris, P.G. "Unemployed Organisations in New Zealand, 1926 - 1939", MA Thesis, Victoria University, 1954, p.38.
6. Harris, p.132.
7. This paragraph was based on the following sources; Morris, pp.31-2, 35; Powell, pp.40,59; Harris, p.138; New Zealand Electoral Rolls, 1928, 1931, 1935.; MES, 5 November, 1931; MDT, 24 May, 1957.; RW, 12 January, 1933; and Robertson, R.T. "Isolation, Ideology and Impotence. Organizations For the Unemployed During the Great Depression, 1930 - 1935", NZJH, 13: 2, 1979, p.151 n 7.
8. RW, 3 October, 1931.
9. MDT, 2 July, 1931.
10. See MDT, 15 April, 1931.
11. See MES, 11, 18-21, 23, 25 and 26 November, 1931; 1 December, 1931.
12. Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.151.
13. MDT, 18 November, 1931.
14. MES, 17 November, 1931.
15. MDT, 2 December, 1931.
16. See MDT, 21 November, 1931; 15 September, 1936.
17. See Burdon, p.142., and Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, pp.153-4.
18. MDT, 14 and 20 May, 1932.
19. RW, 12 January, 1933; and MDT, 20 May, 1932.
20. MW, 16 March, 1932.

21. Ibid., 16 March, 1932.
22. MW, 20 April, 1932.
23. See Morris, pp.35-6, 39-40, 44, Appendix D; and Stone, p.134.
24. Morris, p.44.
25. MW, 30 November, 1932.
26. See RW, 14 September 1932; 7 November 1933; 1 and 29 May, 1934.
27. RW, 2 October, 1933.
28. See MW, 14 March, 1934.
29. See NZLP: ACR, 1929, 1933, 1934.
30. MW, 22 March, 1933.
31. Ibid., 14 March, 1934.
32. Ibid., 14 March, 1934.
33. See MES, 2 November, 1935; and Sinclair, K. A History of New Zealand, Auckland, 1969.
34. MW, 14 March, 1934.
35. MDT, 28 April, 1933.
36. See MW, 11 April, 1934; and NZLP: ACR, 1930 - 1935.
37. The Longburn Labour Party Committee was comprised of individual residents of Longburn, rather than the Longburn freezing workers' union. Trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party through LRCs.
38. In 1920 the local ASRS and EFCA had been involved in the North Island rail strike, which lasted only a few days. See NZRR, 28 May, 1920; MDT 29 and 30 April, 1920; and Roth, p.46. In 1924 the Palmerston North ASRS branch again stopped work, obediently complying with the strike call from "HQ" in Wellington. The strike was called off within a week. See MDT, 22 and 30 April, 1924; NZRR, 30 May, 1924; and Roth, p.47.
39. NZLP: ACR, 1929.
40. Minute Book of Longburn Freezing Works and Related Trades Industrial Union of Workers, 16 November, 1929.
41. Ibid., 7 October, 1932; ? February, 1933; ? May, 1933; and Mrs. A. Cox.
42. MW, 30 November, 1932.
43. Ibid., 12 April, 1933.
44. Ibid., 14 February, 1934.
45. Harris, p.136.
46. RW, 29 May, 1934.

47. Piece-work had been introduced by the Unemployment Board in September, 1933. See Morris, p.74.
48. RW, 29 May, 1934.
49. Ibid., 29 May, 1934.
50. See MDT, 23 and 25 May, 1934.
51. RW, 5 June, 1934.
52. MDT, 23 May, 1934.
53. Ibid., 23 and 25 May, 1934.
54. Ibid., 23 May, 1934.
55. Ibid., 23 May, 1934.
56. Ibid., 23 May, 1934.
57. Ibid., 23 May, 1934.
58. Ibid., 23 May, 1934.
59. Ibid., 23 and 25 May, 1934.
60. Ibid., 24 May, 1934.
61. Ibid., 24 May, 1934.
62. Ibid., 24 May, 1934.
63. Ibid., 24 May, 1934.
64. Ibid., 24 May, 1934.
65. Ibid., 24 May, 1934.
66. Ibid., 24 May, 1934.
67. Ibid., 24 May, 1934.
68. MW, 6 June, 1934.
69. Ibid., 6 June, 1934.
70. MDT, 25 May, 1934.
71. Ibid., 25 May, 1934.
72. Ibid., 28 May, 1934.
73. Ibid., 28 May, 1934.
74. RW, 16 June, 1934.
75. MDT, 19 June, 1934.
76. Ibid., 19 June, 1934.
77. Ibid., 3 July, 1934.
78. Ibid., 2 July, 1934.
79. Ibid., 2 and 3 July, 1934.
80. RW, 16 March, 1935.
81. Mrs. A. Cox.
82. NZLP: ACR, 1935.
83. Ibid., 1935.
84. Ibid., 1935.

85. At the 1933 Annual Conference of the NZLP it was resolved that the National Executive should "investigate" the F.S.U., which was suspected of being a communist front organisation. Subsequently, membership of the F.S.U. was declared to be incompatible with membership of the Labour Party. See Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.176.; and Sinclair, Nash, p.110.
86. NZLP: ACR, 1935.
87. Ibid., 1935.
88. RW, 16 March, 1935.
89. NZLP: ACR, 1935.
90. MDT, 1 March, 1935.
91. Ibid., 1 March, 1935.
92. The Palmerston North (City) branch of the Labour Party was reformed in mid-1936, and became a "loyal" supporter of Joe Hodgens. See MW, 24 June, 1936. The PNLRC was re-established in 1937-38. See NZLP: ACR, 1937, 1938.
93. MDT, 7 May, 1935.
94. The Palmerston North Citizens Association was formed in 1931, in order to "secure suitable candidates" for the municipal elections. Its endorsement almost guaranteed election. See MDT, 27 April, 1933.
95. MDT, 13 April, 1935.
96. The Terrace End branch had thrown in its lot with Hodgens when the National Executive had "disbanded" the City branch. See MDT, 1 March, 1935.
97. MDT, 7 November, 1935.
98. Independent candidates abounded in the 1935 general election. A total of 42 stood. See Rollo, C.G. "The Election of 1935 in New Zealand", MA Thesis, University of New Zealand, 1950, p.32.
99. Pugh, M.C. "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression", MA Thesis, Auckland University, 1969, pp.107, 80.
100. It is interesting that during the election campaign Hodgens accused Mansford of being "backed by the Douglas Credit people." Although there is no evidence that Mansford was a Douglas Credit supporter (it would have been highly unlikely considering his economic

conservatism), this does suggest that there were no links or sympathies between the PNLP and the local Douglas Credit branch. See MES, 16 November, 1935; MDT, 7 July 1934.; and Clifton, R. "Douglas Credit and the Labour Party, 1930-35", MA Thesis, Victoria University, 1961, Appendix C. Mansford himself was much closer to the Democrat Party in his politics, but he was not, as the Standard's editor claimed, a candidate of that party. See MES, 26 November, 1935.; Pugh pp. 172, 177, 179, 205.; and Rollo, p.115.

101. See MDT, 2, 7, 9 and 14 November, 1935.; MES, 2, 16 and 22 November, 1935.
102. In 1938 Hodgens, in a two-way contest, won 57 per cent of the vote.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS.

1. The author uses Campbell's definition of the rhetoric of class; "language that posits a conflict between a working class and a capitalist class." See Campbell, C. "The 'Working Class' and the Liberal Party in 1890", NZJH, 9 : 1, 1975, p.48.
2. MES, 30 April, 1931.
3. Sinclair, Nash, p.93.
4. Paul, p.165.
5. Sinclair, Nash, pp. 96, 114; and see Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, pp.39-40.; and O'Farrell, p.102.
6. See Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, pp. 216, 222.; and O'Farrell, pp.159-161, 180-1.
7. Gustafson, p.151., and see Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.76.; Sinclair, Nash, pp.67, 70-1, 106.
8. Gustafson, p.151.
9. See Sinclair, Nash, pp.70-1, 106; O'Farrell, p.135.; Sinclair, K. "The Lee-Sutch Syndrome. New Zealand Labour Party Policies and Politics, 1930-40", NZJH, 8 : 2, 1974, pp.99-104.
10. See Chaoman, "Significance of the 1928 General Election", p.33.
11. It should be noted, however, the ASRS was not a pure example of industrial organisation. During the period under study there were three other railway unions, comprised of clerical and skilled workers; the Railway

- Officers' Institute, the EFCA and the Railway Tradesmen's Association. See Hare, A.E.C. Report on Industrial Relations in New Zealand, Wellington, 1946, pp.182-3.; Roth, pp.47, 114.
12. O'Farrell, pp.18, 59, 178.; and Brown, Rise of New Zealand Labour, p.222.
 13. MDT, 3 and 5 November, 1925.
 14. For this paragraph see; Milne, R.S. Political Parties in New Zealand, Oxford, 1966, p.3.; Gardner, W.J. "The Reform Party", in Chapman, R.M.(ed.) Ends and Means in New Zealand Politics, Auckland, 1972, 6th ed., pp.25, 26; Billens, R.H.(ed.) et.al. From Swamp to City, Palmerston North, 1937, n.p.; Anderson, A.G. "Palmerston North. Its Growth and Characteristics", in Saunders, B.G.R.(ed.) et.al. Introducing Manawatu, Palmerston North, 1964, pp.117, 119, 126.
 15. MDF, 6 December, 1918.
 16. Anderson, p.124.
 17. Ibid., p.124.
 18. See Plumridge, "Labour in Christchurch", pp.21-4.
 19. AJHR, 1918 - H28; 1922 - H48; 1927 - H46; 1937-38 - H45.
 20. Chapman, "Significance of the 1928 General Election", p.131.
 21. NZRR, 15 January, 1918.
 22. Gustafson, p.140.

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