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Settlement, Conflict and Community: Irish Protestant Migrants on New Zealand's Pākehā Frontier, 1870–1900

Gerard Horn

On 7 March 1872 the settlers of the lower North Island township of Wairoa (later Waverley) met to formulate a response to the perceived threat of displaced Māori returning to the locality after the recent cessation of military hostilities. The region had experienced violent conflict for over a decade. There had been a short outburst of fighting nearby in 1847,[1] but an extended confrontation had erupted in the neighbouring province of Taranaki in 1860,[2] hostilities then extending across much of the North Island throughout the 1860s.[3] The conflict came close to Wairoa, and the locality's major town, Wanganui, during 1868–9 when a local tribal leader, Tītokowaru, led armed resistance against further settler encroachment onto Māori land.[4] Despite the longevity of the warfare, in 1872 many of the region's European settlers were in no mood to compromise. At the culmination of what appears to have been a hot-tempered meeting, Wairoa's European settlers issued the following warning to local Māori:

> We, the settlers hereby warn you that we intend to prevent any Maoris from settling in these districts. Time will not change us. No passes or permits will alter our determination. We are always watching. We were once your friends. You destroyed the friendship. Be not misled by pakeha-Maoris [sic]. Keep out of our sight and live. We send you this not to cause trouble but to prevent it.[5]

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[1] T. Ryan and W. T. Parham, *The Colonial New Zealand Wars* (Wellington, 2002), 33–7.

[2] Explanations of the conflict vary see Keith Sinclair, *The Origins of the Maori Wars* (Wellington, 1957), Alan Ward, 'The Origins of the Anglo-Maori Wars: A Reconsideration', *New Zealand Journal of History*, i, 2 (April, 1967), 148–70 and James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland, 1986).

[3] For a review of the historiography see Danny Keenan, 'The "New Zealand wars" or the "Land wars"? The case of the war in Taranaki 1860–61', *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, 1 (October, 2002), 99–108.

[4] James Belich, *I Shall Not Die: Titokowaru's War, New Zealand 1868–1869* (Wellington, 1989), 183 and 198–204.

[5] *Taranaki Herald*, 16 March 1872, 2.

Despite condemnation in the press, the sentiment seems to have been widely shared amongst settlers living in adjacent settlements.[6] Similar resolutions were passed on 18 March at a meeting in Hawera and on the following evening by forty-five settlers from Manutahi and Kakaramea.[7] The settlers at all three meetings insisted that they had returned to their lands only as a result of a guarantee given to them by the then New Zealand Premier, William Fox, that Māori would not be permitted to resettle anywhere in the land between the Waingongoro and Okehu rivers.[8]

This paper examines the relationship between early Irish-Protestant settlers in the Wanganui region and nascent Pākehā identity, largely through the experiences and relationships of two Co. Armagh-born brothers, Samuel and William Austin. It focuses on three agents of cultural and ethnic change, all with international parallels: the relationship between British settlers and Māori,[9] the relationship between these settlers and 'the frontier',[10] and the relationship of the settlers to their own transplanted culture.[11] The paper suggests that despite these influences, any process of moving towards a coherent Pākehā identity was not linear, being complicated and animated by the persistence of old world identities, networks and affinities. The aim is not to provide an analysis of the relationship between Māori and Pākehā,[12] nor settlers and the land, even in the relatively confined setting of Wanganui's rural hinterland. Rather it is to test the impact which these sporadically antagonistic and violent relationships had on the emergence of a pan-British Pākehā identity, and to establish where Irish Protestants fitted into this development. The processes by which settlers defined themselves as a distinct community, in relation to Māori, New Zealand and Britain, through these conflicts, were played out in the Wanganui districts

[6] For reaction see ibid., 16 March 1872, 2 and *Wellington Independent*, 18 March 1872, 2.

[7] *Evening Post*, 25 March 1872, 2.

[8] Rollo D. Arnold, 'The Opening of the Great Bush, 1869–1881: A Social History of the Bush Settlements of Taranaki, Hawke's Bay and Wellington' (Ph.D. thesis, Victoria University Wellington, 1971), 67.

[9] Cf. Albert Memmi, *The Coloniser and the Colonised*, trans. Howard Greenfield (London, 1990; 1967). For New Zealand see Peter Gibbons, 'Transporting Culture: the View from the Kermadecs', *Turnbull Library Record*, xxvi, 1–2 (1993), 9–20.

[10] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History,* 3rd edn (New York, 1962), 1–38.

[11] Louis Hartz (ed.), *New Societies: Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia* (New York, 1964), 'A Theory of the Development of New Societies', 1–65, especially 3–23. For New Zealand see Keith A. Pickens, 'The Writing of New Zealand History: A Kuhnian Perspective', *Historical Studies*, xvii, 68 (April, 1978), 384–98.

[12] Cf. Philip Steer, 'Disputed Ground: The Construction of Pakeha Identity in Novels of the New Zealand Wars' (MA thesis, VUW, 2004), 11–43.

in the years after the cessation of military hostilities.[13] The pressures on pre-migration relationships and communal identities, however, only represent part of the story, and the fragmentary extant evidence relating to Irish settlers suggests the persistence of old world connections. To be sure, processes of interaction and change can be distinguished, but to elide the ethnic aspect and pre-migration loyalties of New Zealand's nineteenth-century European settlers would be to ignore a critical component of the period's history.

The fall-out from the Wairoa meeting provides a telling insight into one section of Irish Protestant opinion on the relationship between Māori and Pākehā, which was highlighted in the editorial pages of Ulsterman John Ballance's *Wanganui Herald*.[14] The *Herald* was among the first papers to report the meeting at Wairoa, and alongside Wellington's *Evening Post* was one of the few to comment favourably on the colonists' actions.[15] A bombastic editorial announced that:

> The attempt to restore rebel natives to the district that they ravaged with fire and sword is met with the firm determination of the settlers of Wairoa to resist. Nor will resistance be in vain. British colonists have banded themselves together to preserve their lives and property against probable destruction by murderous cannibals … Donald McLean and his Philo-Maori myrmidons may reverse on paper the policy which was announced in the face of the Colony by the Premier, that no Maori fire should be lit between the Okehu and the Waingongoro, but he cannot trample upon a hundred armed men, animated by a unanimous and fixed determination to stand by the solemn compact upon the faith of which these men returned to their farms.[16]

Born in Glenavy, Co. Antrim, in 1839, Ballance was the son of a modest but secure tenant farmer.[17] He received his early education in Belfast before

[13] James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from the Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Auckland, 1996), 242–3.

[14] Ballance was a repeated advocate of aggressive military action against Māori. For differing interpretations see Timothy McIvor, *The Rainmaker: A Biography of John Ballance, Journalist and Politician, 1839–1893* (Auckland, 1989), 36, and Belich, *I Shall Not Die,* 67.

[15] The *Evening Post* had some form in this regard, see Cedric Mentiplay, 'New Zealand in 1865 through the eyes of Henry Blundell' (MA thesis, Victoria University College, 1940).

[16] Quoted in the *North Otago Times*, 4 June 1872, 4.

[17] Timothy McIvor, 'John Ballance, New Zealand Premier 1891–1893: Irish Origins and

completing an apprenticeship as an ironmonger, and at 18 emigrated from Belfast to Birmingham, there working as a commercial traveller, while being exposed to the associational and political culture of the city.[18] In 1866 Ballance migrated again, this time to New Zealand, in response to his wife's ill-health. Settling in Wanganui, he operated a series of small businesses before becoming the founding editor of Wanganui's *Evening Herald*.[19] He went on to become the parliamentary representative for Wanganui, a minister in the Grey and Stout-Vogel cabinets, and later Premier.

Those trawling for signs of Ballance's Ulster background might see in his endorsement of the settler position a reflection of the province's covenanting heritage, and the playing out of the conditional loyalty of that tradition and its culmination in a right to bear arms.[20] The *Herald* advised 'the settlers to stand fast by their rifles, and the first cannibal that returns to force him back, or lay him low'.[21] Whatever the philosophical root of Ballance's position,[22] and it may merely be coincidence that the other organ to enthusiastically throw its support behind the settlers was an Irish Protestant owned operation, the *Evening Post*, the incident suggests a continued defensiveness amongst the settlers of Wanganui and its hinterland.[23] One by-product of this mentality is that the *Evening Herald* and its successor, the *Wanganui Herald* were critical of anything perceived as relating to Irish religious discord.[24] It took this position on the basis that such attitudes were unbecoming of those engaged in the work of colonisation, and that the successful development of the colony depended on leaving such old world attitudes behind. Commenting on sectarian riots in Christchurch in late December 1879, the *Post* declared that:

Influences', *Familia: Ulster Genealogical Review*, ii, 5 (1989), 32–7.

[18] Details from McIvor, *Rainmaker* and his 'On Ballance: A Biography of John Ballance, Journalist and Politician, 1839–1893 (Ph.D. thesis, VUW, 1984).

[19] Ibid., 22–5.

[20] David W. Miller, *Queen's Rebels: Ulster Loyalism in Historical Perspective* (Belfast, 1978). Another way to view this might be as a manifestation of what David Hackett Fischer has termed the 'border idea of order', see *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford, 1989), 765–71.

[21] Quoted in the *Wellington Independent*, 19 March 1872, 2.

[22] Rob Stevens provides a more critical interpretation of similar attitudes, see 'Land and white settler colonialism: the case of Aotearoa', in David Novitz and Bill Willmott (eds), *Culture and Identity in New Zealand* (Wellington, 1989), 21–34.

[23] L. J. B. Chapple and H. C. Veitch, *Wanganui* (Hawera, 1939), 92–109.

[24] For American parallels see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925,* 2nd edn (New Brunswick, 1988), 12–13. The newspaper changed name in early 1876, see *Wanganui Herald* (hereafter *WH*), 24 March 1876, 2.

> One might have imagined that men coming out to a new country to engage in the heroic work of colonisation would at least leave behind them such out of date antagonisms as those between Orangemen and Roman Catholics, which belong wholly to old world prejudices, and are utterly absurd and unmeaning at the present day and at the other end of the world.[25]

Although this secular attitude anticipated and perhaps facilitated the inclusion of Irish migrants in wider Pākehā society, it does not necessarily follow that it led to older identities and affiliations being automatically subsumed into a new colonial one, even among the settlers' loudest champions.[26]

Ballance's view of Māori was not the only one to be expressed by Irish Protestant settlers.[27] Even those directly engaged in combat with Māori occasionally provide glimpses of a more complex set of relationships between the area's existing population and the its more recent arrivals. The memoirs of Samuel Austin, a Presbyterian from Tandragee, Co. Armagh, offer such an insight.[28] Austin had arrived in Wellington with the 65th Regiment in mid-winter 1846, and continued to serve until 1859.[29] On his discharge he settled in Wanganui, eventually taking up a leasehold farm outside the town.[30] Insofar as he recalls any exchanges with local Māori between his discharge and 1865, the relations appear to have been positive. During these years, as he worked his land and 'pushed along', a 'native planted one fourth of an acre in Potatoes of his own land and gave them to me also some Pigs and Fowl'.[31]

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[25] *WH*, 31 December 1879, 2.

[26] Thus Rollo Arnold's description of Kaponga, in neighbouring Taranaki, implies differences with Māori and also within the settler community, *Settler Kaponga: A Frontier Fragment of the Western World* (Wellington, 1997), 56.

[27] See Edmund Bohan, *Climates of War: New Zealand in Conflict 1869–69* (Christchurch, 2005), 52–3.

[28] The Austin papers include two moderately different versions of the memoirs, combined with a third set of notes on the wars and a small collection of ephemera which provide insights into Austin's views on issues beyond the details of military campaigns. To distinguish the memoirs they are referred to in this paper as Austin Memoirs 1, being the soft-bound copy, and Austin Memoirs 2, being the hard-bound volume, Queen Elizabeth II Army Museum Archives, Waiouru, Personal Recollections: Samuel Austin, NZ Cross, 1992.1005.

[29] Austin Memoirs 2, 3–5. There is no pagination in this draft of the document; the page numbers quoted assume the first page of the document to be page one.

[30] The memoirs do not record the exact location of the original farm, ibid., 6.

[31] Ibid., 6.

In 1863 the land which Austin leased was sold, and he shifted his farming activities, settling in the Brunswick area.[32] The following year he records that a great number of Māori, 'passing and repassing [sic] between Wanganui and Taranaki' frequently came within a few hundred yards of his house. Although this upset some of his European neighbours, Austin recalled that he 'went and saw them pass and had a chat with the head cheif [sic] Pehi and introduced me to the other cheifs [sic]'.[33] Austin's fortunes received a set-back in February 1865 when his neighbour, Capt. James Duff Hewett, was killed and mutilated by Māori.[34] He was immediately called-up for volunteer duty, being stationed at the nearby Stewart's Redoubt.[35] If Austin was discommoded by the attack and the mobilisation of volunteers, he was outraged when prevented from returning to his homestead to secure his property, which was rapidly looted, prompting him to observe that 'The Imperial Soldiers were a great deal worse than the Natives for both officers and men took whatever they could lay their hands on belonging to the settlers'.[36]

Austin spent the next five years in military service, fighting against various Māori groups. During this time he was closer to some Māori than most settlers, being the quarter-master sergeant of the Wanganui Native Contingent, made up of kūpapa (Māori siding with the British Crown).[37] Austin was occasionally critical of Māori, describing Te Arawa as 'all bounce and great rougs [sic]', also observing that 'as in Island [sic], all natives are prone to thieve a little but the Arawas are the worst that I have met with since I came to New Zealand'.[38] His sardonic criticism was not, however, confined to Māori. He described, Thomas Handley, a settler who had been appointed as a sergeant on account of his skills as a guide, as 'about as much use as a Goat[,] in fact not so much…' and was repeatedly critical of European officers, on one occasion complaining 'these are the men who are put over good soldiers to lead us into action…'.[39] At the same time, he was fulsome in his praise of the military prowess of young Māori soldiers in the Native Contingent,

[32] It may be the case that Austin's lease-hold property was also in this area, ibid., 7.
[33] Ibid., 7
[34] James Cowan, *The New Zealand Wars: A History of the Maori Campaigns and the Pioneering Period*, ii, *The Hauhau wars*, 1864–72 (Wellington, 1956), 46.
[35] The account of Hewett's death is significantly more elaborate in the second set of memoirs, see Austin Memoirs 2, 7 and, Austin Memoirs 1, 4–5.
[36] Austin Memoirs 2, 7–8.
[37] Austin Memoirs 1, 7.
[38] Ibid., 37.
[39] For example, Austin Memoirs 2, 10, and ibid., 25.

claiming that the 'young lads I have often seen them when in action do what no European would have done that is put up the Rifel [sic] 3 or 4 times to their shoulder before firing and when they did fire Generally brought down their man …'[40] By the time Austin's memoirs reach 1866, he usually qualifies any use of the words 'we' or 'our' as referring to the Native Contingent and separates their actions from those of what he regarded as the less competent imperial troops.[41] Intriguingly, having very briefly described his enlistment at Banbridge, Co. Down, then his departure for England and later Australia, Austin's memoirs make little if any reference to Ireland beyond brief mention of meeting with a Colonel Greer, who he described as a 'country man of my own I knew him and his family at Home.'[42] Yet for all of this, what will become clear as the paper progresses is that Austin's life outside the military suggests his Ulster background, and the ties of family and friends, remained of crucial importance to him.

In addition to the interaction between European and Māori, there has also been considerable historical focus on the role of the frontier in shaping New Zealand settlers' society.[43] At its most vociferous, this view argues that the pursuit of land and employment drove New Zealand's nineteenth-century settlers into the isolated depths of a rapidly expanding (European) frontier, creating a dysfunctional, bondless society lacking the potential foundations of community life.[44] Prominent amongst the symptoms of this were high rates of litigation, transience, alcoholism and violence.[45] Several striking illustrations emerge from the criminal prosecution in 1877 of Patrick Mahony and Patrick Grady for assault, their unlikely victim being the diarist and soldier Samuel Austin.[46]

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[40] Although prepared to concede the ability of young Māori in terms of marksmanship and bravery, he ignored the sophistication of their tactical and organisational talents, ibid., 8. In this regard Austin confirms Belich's analysis, *New Zealand Wars*, 316–17.

[41] Austin Memoirs 1, 49 and passim.

[42] Austin Memoirs 2, 19.

[43] For the contrasting approaches elucidated in Pickens 'Writing' 384–98, see Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand,* Rev. edn (Harmondsworth, 1969), 50–150; also W. H. Oliver, *The Story of New Zealand* (London, 1960), 48–110 and Oliver's *Towards a New History?* (Dunedin, 1971), 21–2.

[44] Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies, 1850–1900* (Auckland, 1989) 158–87.

[45] Ibid., 195–233. For a more positive interpretation cf. Peter J. Coleman, 'The New Zealand Frontier and the Turner Thesis', *Pacific Historical Review*, xxvii, 3 (August, 1958), 221–37.

[46] Fairburn would no doubt reject the methodology employed hereafter see 'A discourse on critical method', *New Zealand Journal of History*, (hereafter *NZJH*) xxv, 2 (October, 1991), 158–77.

If viewed out of its ethnic context, as might occur in a statistical analysis of drunkenness or petty-criminal proceedings, the trial appears to confirm the existence of an atomised society, the absence of old world restraints facilitating, conceivably even encouraging, such dysfunctional behaviour.[47] On the evening of 30 June 1877 Austin had been drinking at the Red Lion Hotel, Wanganui, where he met Mahony and Grady. Mahony, like Austin, lived on the Cherry Bank estate and solicited a ride in Austin's horse and cart back to the farm. Austin, who acknowledged in court that he had known the defendant for some time agreed, and according to one of two boys also being given a lift, the journey commenced in good spirits. A little later, however, the mood soured. According to Austin,

> Grady pulled me off the dray and struck me several times; he struck me in the mouth with his fist twice; he and his two friends kicked me when I was lying prostrate; while I was being held the boys cried out 'murder', 'do not murder him' whereupon they let me up … I am still under the impression that if the boys had not called out 'murder' I would certainly have been killed.[48]

Austin's testimony provided further evidence of chaos and lawlessness on the frontier, when he deposed that the incident was not the first time he had been assaulted on the same road.[49]

Despite this, probing more deeply into the assault on Samuel Austin shows that in the late 1870s, at least, identities established in Ireland remained important. Tellingly, the incident also illustrates that not all old world identities and relationships necessarily constrained anti-social behaviour.[50] William Duigan, the young witness at the trial, testified that the men had left the Red Lion Hotel in good spirits and on friendly terms as the journey to Cherry Bank commenced. Shortly thereafter Grady, Mahony and the third unidentified assailant began, according to Austin, to speak in Irish. Later again, Mahony approached Austin and enquired of him whether he was an

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[47] Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett, 'Did Wellington Province from the 1850s to the 1930s have a Distinctive Social Pattern?', in David Hamer and Roberta Nicholls, *The Making of Wellington, 1800–1914* (Wellington, 1990), 255–83.

[48] *Wanganui Chronicle* (hereafter *WC*), 5 July 1877, 2.

[49] Ibid., 5 July 1877, 2.

[50] See, Angela McCarthy, '"Bands of Fellowship": The Role of Personal Relationships and Social Networks among Irish Migrants in New Zealand, 1861–1911', *Immigrants & Minorities*, xxiii, 2–3 (July–November, 2005), 339–58.

Irishman, and if he believed in St. Patrick. Although Austin confirmed he was an Irishman, according to his evidence his refusal to endorse Ireland's national saint provoked the assault:

> [Mahony] asked me did I believe in St. Patrick;" I replied that I did not; "Well then," he replied, 'you cannot be an Irishman;' he then held a conversation with the other two men in Irish when suddenly they all jumped out of the cart, Mahony exclaiming, 'Holy Virgin Mary protect us, and we'll murder Austin'[51]

As the fracas proceeded, one of the assailants turned his attention to the horse and, demanding a knife from his fellows, claimed that he would cut her throat. Concerned at the threat to the animal, Austin told them that:

> 'If you want to do anything more, you had better do it to me instead of the mare, as she belongs to Mr McGregor;' one of them replied, "McGregor is a - - black Protestant, and if he were here we would serve him the same … [52]

Patrick Grady, the only defendant to present himself in court, unfortunately from an historical perspective offered no evidence in his own defence. He admitted the assault, but his lawyer argued that his actions were not premeditated, that the incident had broken out over the issue of religion, which in his words 'had always been a bone of contention between colonised Irish men'. Furthermore, there was no evidence to suggest that the affray would be repeated.[53] '[T]he assault … ', submitted defence counsel, 'arose in hot blood between hot blooded people [and] was not of such a serious character as might have been expected before the evidence was heard … '[54] The judge agreed with counsel, fining Grady two pounds, as well as the costs of the case, with an alternative of seven days' imprisonment, but threatening that should the defendant appear before him again punishment would be much more severe.[55]

It would be wrong to extrapolate from this incident that nineteenth-century New Zealand was a hot-bed of sectarian unrest.[56] Even considering

[51] *WC*, 5 July 1877, 2.
[52] *WC*, 5 July 1877, 2.
[53] *WH*, 4 July 1877, 2.
[54] Ibid., 4 July 1877, 2.
[55] *WC*, 5 July 1877, 2.
[56] The place of sectarianism in early New Zealand life is the subject of a contested

its overtones, the affray could be dismissed as an irrelevant, alcohol-fuelled confrontation rather than as evidence of transferred Irish political and religious loyalties. Taken in isolation, the trial might permit such an interpretation. This would, however, involve ignoring some of the more interesting factors which seem to have been at play. Given that Austin and Mahony were fellow employees on McGregor's farm, it is likely that Mahony was aware of Austin's particular religious and political convictions. In 1875 Austin applied for, and obtained, a warrant for an Orange Lodge to be opened in Wanganui.[57] This in itself may not have been known to Mahony, but it is hard to imagine that he did not realise that Austin was the Worshipful Master of the local lodge. Wanganui had enthusiastically marked the Twelfth of July 1876 with a soiree and an attendant rise in sectarian tension, with Austin's role in the lodge being prominently recorded in the *Wanganui Chronicle*.[58] Lest the level of sectarian animus be overestimated, it should be noted that ultimately the anniversary's celebration passed without incident and 'but with a few exceptions the behaviour of all was commendable; fun and frolic being the chief features observable … '[59]

In examining the manner in which imported ethnic affiliations and identities played out in colonial Wanganui it is necessary to look briefly at the public discourse surrounding Orangeism which emerged in the town in the 1870s and 1880s. In this regard, the attitude of the *Wanganui Herald*, a bastion of colonial nationalism, liberalism, and a champion of home rule for Ireland, is of obvious interest.[60] It assumes even greater importance in that Ballance, its founder and editor, was of Ulster Protestant and Orange extraction, if not sympathies.[61] The *Herald*'s reaction to the public display of Orangeism in July 1876 was low-key, largely restricted to the publishing of letters in favour of and opposed to the establishment of a lodge in the town, before

literature. For a range of viewpoints see: Richard P. Davis, *Irish Issues in New Zealand Politics, 1868–1922* (Dunedin, 1974), 11–24; Seán Brosnahan, 'The "Battle of the Borough" and the "Saige O Timaru": Sectarian Riot in Colonial Canterbury', *NZJH*, xxviii, 1 (1994), 41–59; P.S. O'Connor, 'Sectarian conflict in New Zealand, 1911–1920', *Political Science* (hereafter *PS)*, xix, 1 (July, 1967), 3–16; and Melanie Nolan, *Kin: A Collective Biography of a New Zealand Working-class Family* (Christchurch, 2005), 43–4.

[57] Joseph Carnahan, *A Brief History of the Orange Institution in the North Island of New Zealand from 1842 till the Present Time* (Auckland, 1886), 27.

[58] *WC*, 13 July 1876, 2.

[59] Ibid., 13 July 1876, 2 and *WH*, 13 July 1876, 2.

[60] See *WH*, 10 April 1883, 2.

[61] J.L. Dighton, 'The Life and Work of John Ballance' (MA thesis, VUW, 1929), 1–2.

an abrupt declaration in early August that quite enough had been written on the issue.[62]

In February 1877 the issue was raised again when the *Herald* felt compelled to point to a mistake in the most recent edition of the *Wanganui Almanac*, which had recorded that a William Austin was the 'Grand Master' of the Wanganui lodge. While Samuel Austin's 'Protestant feelings', claimed the *Herald*, 'can find no other outlet than in such platitudes as the "Glorious, Pious and Immortal Memory"[,] Mr William Austin, happily, believes that his creed depends on no such fictitious safeguards, and as a true colonist sees the beauty of forgetting old world feuds and meaningless shibboleths'.[63] The *Herald*'s editorial conveniently neglected to mention that Samuel and William Austin were brothers,[64] and that both were members of the local Orange lodge. Notwithstanding their fraternal affiliations, real and associational, the Austin brothers appear to have held markedly different views of Orangeism. On 13 July 1877, in a further editorial, this time excoriating the Orange institution, the *Herald* described Samuel Austin as a 'thoroughgoing Orangeman, who holds the sentiment typical of the institution, that a "papist" is not to be trusted out of your sight, and [is] to be watched with the greatest suspicion when he is in it'.[65] The editorial cautioned its readers that it was 'the duty of every colonist to prevent by every means in his power, the sowing of the seeds in this young country of those religious feuds which have been the curse of every nation in Europe'.[66] William, as will become apparent, took a more open-minded view.

The Orange affiliations of William Austin were raised on two occasions in the *Wanganui Herald* between 1877 and 1884, and with good reason. While John Ballance was not particularly enamoured with Orangeism, William Austin was both a friend and ally in local politics. In the February 1877 editorial, having condemned Orangeism in New Zealand as a 'childish concern … breeding and perpetuating ill-feeling where none should exist', the *Herald* acknowledged that some of its 'warmest friends [had] associated themselves with this anachronism'.[67] William Austin's joint links to the Orange Order and John Ballance were raised again in 1881, when the *Wanganui Chronicle*, presumably

[62] *WH*, 17 July 1876, 2, 21 July 1876, 2, 28 July 1876, 2, 31 July 1876, 2, 2 August 1876, 2 and 4 August 1876, 2.
[63] *WH*, 13 February 1877, 2.
[64] Lewis McGill, pers. com., 8 June 2009 and Barbara Mabett, pers. com., 1 July 2009.
[65] *WH*, 13 July 1877, 2.
[66] Ibid., 13 July 1877, 2.
[67] Ibid., 13 February 1877, 2

in a mischievous attempt to gain electoral advantage for their preferred candidate, published a letter questioning how Austin, as an Orangeman, could support candidate Ballance, who the correspondent suggested, 'if not a member of the land-league, [was] a prominent sympathiser with it'.[68] William Austin responded personally, declaring that the *Chronicle*'s correspondent was a 'fawning lickspittle with no creed but implicit obedience to his lord and master, the man of means…' and was frequently in demand in the office of the morning paper in 'its effort to set class against class in Wanganui'.[69] In contrast to the impression of his brother provided by the *Herald*, William Austin claimed to have little suspicion of Catholics, declaring: 'I am happy in the knowledge that I have many Roman Catholic friends, whom I love and respect; and, when we agree in politics, I shall be always found fighting with them – for their liberty is my liberty, and their rights are my rights'.[70] True to his word, in 1889 William Austin donated ten shillings to the Parnell Relief Fund.[71]

The full extent of the connections between Ballance and the Austin family were revealed on the third occasion that William Austin's membership of the Orange Order arose as an issue of note. As the 1884 general election approached, Ballance faced a potentially difficult struggle to recover the Wanganui seat that he had lost at the previous election. As usual, he faced opposition from the town's conservatives, and in 1884 this difficulty was compounded by the entry of George Hutchison to the electoral race.[72] The Scottish-born Hutchison had developed a reputation as a supporter of Catholic education when standing in an earlier election in Hawera, and as the election approached it was expected that Wanganui's Catholic voters would support him *en masse*.[73] While Ballance's opposition to Bible-in-Schools had ensured Catholic support in the 1879 general election, he remained a supporter of free and secular state education until assuming the Premiership in 1891, and as a result was under pressure from Hutchison.[74] Catholic voters, however, were not the only group with an interest in the candidates' attitudes to Catholic

[68] *WC*, 16 November 1881, 3.
[69] *WH*, 16 November 1881, 3.
[70] Ibid., 16 November 1881, 3.
[71] *NZ Tablet*, 28 June 1889, 16.
[72] G. H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (2 vols, Wellington, 1940), I, 423.
[73] *WH*, 11 July 1884, 2 and *WC*, 15 July 1884, 2.
[74] T. J. Young, 'The Political Career of John Ballance, 1875–1890' (MA thesis, VUW, 1964), 57–8.

education. Prior to the election the Auckland-based Grand Lodge of the North Island circulated a letter to candidates enquiring as to their position on issues in which the organisation took an interest, in particular the question of state-funding for Catholic schools.[75] While Ballance refused to respond to the letter, Hutchison attempted to fudge his response so as not to alienate Wanganui's Orangemen. His response signalled support for a bill that would mandate the government inspection of church-run orphanages.[76]

Having replied in confidence, as requested, to Samuel Austin, Hutchison was no doubt distressed to discover his response made public in an anonymous letter to the *Wanganui Chronicle* on 16 July. Whether Hutchison's response was exposed as part of an electoral plot, or simply to reveal perceived duplicity in the matter of education, at the nomination of candidates later the same day he insinuated that Ballance had orchestrated the ambush.[77] Hutchison's fruitless attempt to use the hustings to explain his complicated position on religious education only stimulated further questioning about his Orange connections. Asked if he had ever been an Orangeman, Hutchison admitted that he had once attended a lodge meeting, and had been initiated, but claimed not to have returned.[78] At this point the Ulster pincer movement was complete, William Austin questioning Hutchison's honesty in the matter:

> Mr W. Austin – Do you say that was the only night that you were in the lodge room? Was that the only time you were in it?
>
> Mr Hutchison – If Mr. Austin says I was there twice, I won't contradict him. (Laughter). I don't know what he is driving at.[79]

A show of hands followed the nominations, Ballance defeating the other two candidates by a considerable margin, receiving eighty votes compared to Hutchison's fifteen and the third candidate Watt's thirteen.[80] At the request of Mr Watt, a ballot was held the following week in which Ballance's showing was equally strong, he securing 541 votes compared to the 205 of Hutchison and the 154 of Watt.[81] It seems unlikely that Austin's attempt to outmanoeuvre

[75] *Evening Post*, 10 July 1884, 3.
[76] *WH*, 17 July 1884, 2
[77] *WC*, 16 July 1884, 2, *WH*, 16 July 1884, 2 and 17 July 1884, 2.
[78] Ibid., 17 July 1884, 2.
[79] Ibid., 17 July 1884, 2, for reaction, see *WC*, 19 July 1884, 3.
[80] *WH*, 16 July 1884, 2
[81] Ibid., 23 July 1884, 2.

Hutchison made a significant contribution to such a comprehensive result.[82] The *Herald* nevertheless recorded that on the day of the count apprehension in the Ballance camp dissipated as word reached them that the town's Catholic vote had been split, guaranteeing their man victory.[83] Doubtless the triumph was doubly sweet for one of the *Herald*'s printing staff, William Austin's son Samuel, even if the *Herald* had felt compelled, in the wake of the controversy, to include an editorial comment to the effect that the Samuel Austin of their office was not, and never had been, a member of the Orange institution.[84]

Perhaps the most interesting point about this hustings clash was raised in a pseudonymous letter to the *Wanganui Chronicle*, which sought to simultaneously defend Hutchison and attack Ballance as a 'free thinker'. Mocking the Orange Order as a self-styled bulwark of Protestantism, 'Vindex' queried why Wanganui's Orange Lodge appeared to have thrown its support behind a godless candidate who was 'not content with denying his maker, but anxious to teach our children the tenets of a Bradlaugh or a Besant'.[85] But a contrary question also needs to be asked: why was a progressive 'free thinker', a supporter of the Irish land league and home rule, relying on the support of Orangemen? The answer, if a little circuitously, provides the link between the building-blocks of an ethnic migrant community (kinship, friendship and formal association) and its more ephemeral manifestations (in things like political expression and identity): they were his mates.

Despite Ballance propounding an ideology in which old world identities were left behind, a number of his close Wanganui associates were from Ulster or claimed other Irish Protestant backgrounds, and of these the Austin family at least were Orangemen. Although John Alexander McKane Wallace, for example, did not play a prominent role in public life, he was, according to his obituary, intimately associated with Ballance on account of their common Belfast backgrounds.[86] It is unlikely that Wallace's brother, Arthur, who also lived in Wanganui, was a political supporter, as he predeceased Ballance's first election to parliament by a year.[87] The McMinns, Alfred and Alexander, were a second pair of Ulster-born brothers who supported Ballance and

[82] Young suggests that unlike the 1879 election, where religion played a role, in 1884 Ballance's appeal was linked to his support for developmental spending. 'Political Career', 106–7.

[83] Ibid., 23 July 1884, 2.

[84] *WH*, 17 July 1884, 2 and Barbara Mabett, pers. com., 1 July 2009.

[85] *WC*, 21 July 1884, 3.

[86] *WH*, 30 December 1895, 3.

[87] *WC*, 31 August 1876, 2.

had close occupational and financial connections with him.[88] Another Irish Protestant with whom Ballance had a long-standing connection was James Duigan, of Kingstown, Co. Dublin. Although the two had a tempestuous political relationship, by the 1890s Duigan had assumed editorship of the *Wanganui Herald* and appears to have been a reasonably close confidant and business associate.[89] He also provided intelligence to Ballance on Wanganui's local political scene while the latter was in parliament in the colonial capital, Wellington. In August 1892 he wrote to the Premier, informing him of the distress felt among local Liberal supporters at the question of female suffrage, it being believed by local members that women's votes would be influenced by churchmen in league with conservatives. The threat to Ballance's own position, warned Duigan, was particularly grave as he was consistently denounced as an atheist by James Treadwell, the local Presbyterian minister.[90]

Ballance's political circle extended far beyond Ulster men and other Irish-born Protestants. James Boyle, an Irish Catholic printer at the *Wanganui Herald*, co-supervised the 1884 election count for Ballance, alongside William Austin. Similarly, not all Irish Protestants in Wanganui were necessarily on friendly terms with the Liberal leader. In his belated attempt to gain compensation for his injuries sustained in the Land Wars, William Lingard suggested that, because of personal animosity between himself and Ballance, he had been unable to pursue his claim during the latter's premiership.[91] Lingard's referee in a related land claim, J. R. Sommerville, also fell afoul of Ballance in the 1890s.[92] Ballance hardly built his political success on a network of Irish Protestants, only seventeen of the 117 Liberal party Members of the House of Representatives elected, between 1891and 1912, being Irish-born, although the prominent Orangeman and land-nationaliser Richard Meredith was among them.[93] Indeed, the extent to which Ireland influenced his political

[88] G. H. Scholefield, *Newspapers in New Zealand* (Wellington, 1958), 56 and McMinn to Ballance, 14 June 1892, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (hereafter ATLW), Ballance Papers, MS-Papers-25-17-600.

[89] *WH*, 18 August 1903, 5.

[90] Duigan to Ballance, 27 August 1891, ATLW, Ballance Papers, MS-Papers-25-17-266.

[91] William Lingard petition to House of Representatives, n.d. [appears to be 1914], Archives New Zealand Wellington (hereafter ANZW), Maori War Series, AD/32/11/534.

[92] Sommerville affidavit in William Lingard, ANZW, Maori War Series, AD/32/11/534 and Sommerville to Ballance, 28 June 1892, ATLW, Ballance Papers, MS-Papers-25-18-630.

[93] David Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891–1912* (Auckland, 1988), 49–50 and 66.

thinking is matter of some contention. While early investigation suggested the formative influences were his political education in Birmingham and his reading of liberal theorists,[94] more recent histories suggest that his Irish youth bore heavily on his thinking, particularly his approach to the land question.[95] His career nevertheless shows that despite his rhetorical commitment to an early colonial nationalism, both for himself and for some of his supporters connections, friendships and political allegiances based on old world identities and loyalties persisted.

Predictably, after his election as Premier, a number of Ballance's correspondents referred to their common place of birth. J. D. R. Hewitt, brother-in-law of prominent Ulster-born Wellington merchant G. V. Shannon, wrote as a 'Derry man' to congratulate Ballance, 'an Antrim man', in attaining the position, observing that 'knowing the country as I do I can appreciate the difficulties you have overcome'.[96] A Fr Laverty of Lyttleton thanked Ballance for his position on Catholic education and addressed him as a 'fellow countryman' and, presumably in reference to his time in Belfast, 'a Towney'.[97] A most intriguing piece of correspondence in this regard was penned by George Vesey Stewart, founder of the Orange settlement of Katikati in the Bay of Plenty, who nobly offered to stand as a Liberal candidate in his local constituency, given the absence of other strong government candidates. Stewart magnanimously suggested that if his own candidacy was unacceptable Ballance might consider Galway Anglican G. M. O'Rorke as a suitable nominee.[98]

Recent historians of nineteenth-century New Zealand have successfully challenged the complacent representation of the country as a series of tightly-knit, mono-cultural communities, highlighting the conflicts which went hand-in-hand with the processes of colonisation, mass immigration and rapidly expanding European settlement. This paper has contended that although these conflicts resulted in important social and cultural developments in the colony, they were balanced by old world identities and allegiances which repeatedly,

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[94] T. G. Wilson, *The Rise of the New Zealand Liberal Party, 1880–90* (Auckland, 1956), 32 and ibid., 42.

[95] Young, 'Political', 2–3 and 83–90, Arnold, 'Great bush' 351–7 and Brad Patterson, '"The small farmer class must be encouraged": Irish influences and the New Zealand lands reform movement', in Patterson (ed.), *From Ulster to New Ulster* (Wellington and Coleraine, 2004), 51–74.

[96] Hewitt to Ballance, 16 March 1891, ATLW, BP, MS-Papers-25-04-119.

[97] Laverty to Ballance, 25 July 1891, ATLW, BP, MS-Papers-25-08-237.

[98] Stewart to Ballance, 24 April 1891, ATLW, BP, MS-Papers-25-05-140.

if sporadically, surfaced, this being demonstrated in the personal histories of Irish Protestant migrants settled in Wanganui and its hinterland. The evidence from Wanganui suggests that, despite their occasional protestations to the contrary, old world identities persisted, at least for first-generation migrants to the area. Moreover, the timing of occasional outbreaks of sectarian violence and tension, and the development of Irish ethnic organisations from the 1870s, suggests their tenacity in outlasting the formative early colonisation.

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