

## GROWTH AND EXPANSION IN 1870's . . .

the land, contributing in a large part to the cost of the railways. Opposition to any surrender of provincial rights arose from a mixture of self-interest and a desire to retain local autonomy, and was sufficiently strong to prevent any proposals for the large-scale resumption of land being passed. Vogel himself did not feel impelled to press the issue.

### Land Values Soar

Whether there was a full realisation in Canterbury of the heights that the land boom would reach or why the boom should have been so largely confined to Canterbury is impossible to say. The provincial authorities were still continuing to sell land at the high price of £2 per acre, and up to 1871 it was sold in fairly modest quantities. In 1866, when runholders were taking advantage of their pre-emptive rights, over 86,000 acres were freeholded, but in the next few years the figure fell off, being just over 15,000 in 1869. With the speeding up of railway construction in 1872, the area freeholded rose to 105,000 acres and reached a maximum of 585,000 acres in 1878.

The way was clear for a wild boom in land values, and as the boom gathered momentum values soared in places miles away from any railway or proposed railway. The large squatters, partly from the need for self-protection, but largely from a desire to profit, freeholded as much of their land as they could, often mortgaging their properties to do so. Very few squatters had their land purchased over their heads, even if they were afraid of the possibility. The boom reached its height in the areas around Christchurch, the newspapers during 1877 and 1878 containing accounts of farms selling at over £20 per acre around Templeton and Rolleston, land which a few years earlier had been purchased at £2 per acre. Similar prices were given for land close to Timaru.

A favourite device for selling land at an inflated price during the years 1877-78 was the selling of sections in new townships. A typical advertisement from the "Lyttelton Times" in July, 1878, drew attention to the sale of "The whole of the remaining sections in the township of Freetown situated in the centre of Horsley Downs." One wonders if there were many buyers for the 67 sections advertised. The report of the Secretary

for Crown Lands in 1879 forms an interesting conclusion, as he said, "In the Canterbury Land District, for instance, there is very little Crown land remaining that anyone would care to purchase at £2 an acre."

### Prosperous 1870's

A boom in land values, a rise in prices of wool and wheat, and large-scale Government spending all contributed to the prosperity of the 1870's. Wool prices began to rise again in 1871 and reached 15d. a pound in 1872, but fell gradually to 10d. in 1877. Wheat prices followed a different course, ranging from 4s. 6d. to 5s. a bushel between 1870 and 1876, but rising to 6s. 3d. in 1877 and dropping the following year.

How the land boom survived the drop in the price of wool is hard to understand, but another notable feature of the 1870's was the great increase in productivity. Wool exported amounted to 8,000,000lb., valued at £458,000, in 1865; 12,486,000lb., valued at £490,000, in 1870; 15,000,000lb., valued at £1,000,000, in 1875, and 16,127,000lb., valued at £700,000, in 1880.

A large part of the improvement during the 1870's came from the increase in sheep numbers on the plains, where the carrying capacity was raised by the sowing of English grasses. There was little increase in the number of hill-country sheep. In the late 1860's and 1870's production of wool was increasing much faster in Otago and Southland than in Canterbury, but from 1875 the rabbits brought this advance in the south to a halt.

With the decline in wool prices from 1875, farmers on the better-class land turned increasingly to wheat, the area in wheat rising from 52,000 acres in 1870 to 194,000 acres in 1880.

The sharp fall in world agricultural prices in 1879 brought the boom in land to a sudden end, and the effect of this, combined with a drop in Government spending, a fall in imports, and a general lack of confidence in the future, brought about a general depression as sudden as it was complete. According to one estimate, land values in Canterbury increased sevenfold during the period, and as the production of the land increased, at a much more modest rate, the difficulties of many farmers and runholders who had bought late can be easily imagined.

Despite the demand for labour on public works, the influx of immigrants must have tended to keep wages from rising, because in 1873 station labourers were paid 17s. 6d. to £1 a week, with keep; this rose to 25s. in 1876 and dropped again to 15s. to £1 in 1880. Shepherds as skilled men were not affected so much by the sudden onset of depression, for they were receiving £50 to £60 a year in 1873 and £65 to £70 in 1880.

### Lack of Amenities

With the collapse of the Vogel boom, there was a general desire to make him and his policy the scapegoat. Yet it is difficult to imagine today just how lacking New Zealand was in the ordinary amenities of life before 1870. There were only 700 miles of telegraph line and 46 miles of railway in three separate gauges. Main roads were little more than bullock tracks, rivers were unbridged, and the towns lacked sanitation, lighting, and paved streets.

By 1880 the Canterbury Plains were beginning to assume their present appearance, most of the land being sown down in English grasses or in crop and the homesteads being surrounded by young plantations and shelter belts. But the homesteads were much fewer. Roads had been formed over most of the plains, and the railway system was much as it is today. Canterbury's population had just passed the 100,000 mark, and exports stood at £1,329,000. Nearly 1,300,000 acres of land had been broken in; 193,000 were in wheat, 153,000 in oats, and other crops covered 140,000 acres. Wheat production had reached 5,000,000 bushels annually and had taken third place among the country's exports. With the improvement in the pastures of the plains and downland, sheep flocks were still increasing rapidly, reaching 3,608,000 in 1880. Canterbury in the next decade was preparing to assume Otago's place as the greatest producer of wealth in New Zealand.

## Vaccination Against Contagious Abortion

APPLICATIONS by farmers for a vaccination of their calves against contagious abortion in 1951 are now due. The charge is 1s. 6d. per calf for the first 14 calves in any herd and 1s. 3d. per calf thereafter. The closing date for applications is January 13 and a late fee of 10s. is payable on all applications received after this date.

As in previous years members of veterinary clubs should apply to the secretary of their club and other farmers should apply to their nearest Inspector of Stock, from whom they can obtain the necessary application forms. Applications to Inspectors of Stock must be accompanied by a cash payment calculated on the basis of the charges mentioned above.

It is desirable that applications be sent in as early as possible so that vaccinating officers can arrange the work efficiently. Farmers are therefore requested to forward their applications by January 3.

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