



### On The War Trail

Between parliamentary sessions Richard John Seddon roamed the country attacking his critics—and granting favours to his supporters. William Blomfield, *New Zealand Observer and Free Lance*, 3 June 1899. ATL ref.: H-723-013.

signature on an avalanche of comic art that was to continue for more than half a century, to give the Auckland weekly its distinctive character. The *Observer* had a succession of owners before Blomfield became part-owner in 1892, with W. J. and J. M. Geddis. In 1894 this entrepreneurial trio began Christchurch's *Spectator*—best remembered for publishing David Low's first cartoon—and the *New Zealand Free Lance* in Wellington in 1900.

These magazines, and the *New Zealand Graphic*, *Ladies' Journal* and *Youths' Companion*, launched by the *Auckland Star*'s Henry Brett in 1890, gave particular prominence to cartoons. The *New Zealand Graphic* ran front-page cartoons between 1892 and 1908; the *Observer*'s front-page cartoon was only one of many every week after 1893; the *New Zealand Free Lance* ran regular full-page cartoons on inside pages.

Not surprisingly, the best cartooning coincides with pivotal political periods, and the Liberal government of the 1890s with its radical policies stimulated the first golden age of New Zealand editorial cartooning.

Among the leading cartoonists of the time, the *New Zealand Graphic*'s Ashley Hunter and Vyvyan Hunt provided the bridge between the very stiff and formal style of the earlier *Punch* cartoonists and the much faster, more spontaneous work of 'Blo', his brother J. C. Blomfield, and Fred Hiscocks. This trio best captured