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# JOE IVESS: Rag-Planter

Wherever He Wandered A Newspaper
Sprang Up

(A Talk by DR. G. H. SCHOLEFIELD, from 2YA)

In using the term rag-planter I'm not casting any reflections on the memory of Joseph Ivess, for he himself used it in reference to the myriads of little newspapers that fluttered for a while in small townships all over New Zealand. Joseph Ivess was the most picturesque of that gay band of pioneers who, with a handpress and a hatful of type, rushed from point to point in this country to hoist the banner of free journalism wherever men needed such an organ of expression

organ of expression.

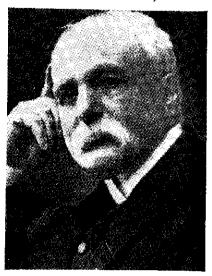
Ivess was born 100 years ago to-day (February 8, 1844) in the Irish village of Askeaton, County Limerick. At the age of eight he came to Australia and went to school at Emerald Hill, Melbourne, a few years before Sir Joseph Ward was born in that suburb. Having learned the printing trade in offices where the brogue of the Irish emigré was strong, he set out at the age of 24 to carve his destiny. Like Richard Seddon a year later, Ivess made for the diggings on the West Coast of New Zealand. At that time, 1868, feeling ran high wherever Irishmen were gathered. Ivess got his first job in New Zealand managing a paper which John Manning had established at Hokitika to keep alive the flame of Irish indignation. The New Zealand Celt, as it was called, was held in part responsible for the Hokitika riots in 1868, and Ivess duly appeared as a witness at Manning's trial. When the Celt died, he helped to run two sportive weeklies in Hokitika, the Tomahawk and the Lantern. Then, in 1872, he hoisted his own flag as a newspaper founder in the mining town of Reefton. Though he soon moved on, the Inangahua Herald fought for its existence for 60 years against one and sometimes two competitors. And I believe that even to-day Reefton is not a borough.

#### Anchor in South Canterbury

Then Ivess went to Greymouth and leased the Evening Star. Within a year he was in the North Island founding a paper at Patea. Next year he was back in the South at the birth of the Akaroa Mail, which was followed in a few months by the Ashburton Mail. In all his wanderings Ivess seemed to recognise some sort of anchor in South Canterbury. In 1879, having lost the mayoralty of Ashburton by 11 votes after starting a paper specially to promote his campaign, he sailed again for the North. Nine times in all he changed his abode from one island to the other. He always had a strong desire to serve the public, and in this field his first chance came in 1873 when, at the age of 29, the electors of Inangahua sent him to the Provincial Council at Nelson,

## Suffrage and the Handshake

About a year later he stood for Parliament in Taranaki. At that time the electorate of Egmont extended 80 miles from New Plymouth to Patea. Ivess had no chance of defeating the veteran Sir Harry Atkinson on the platform, but he conceived that he might achieve that object by a personal canvass of the settlers in the electorate. With a stout



JOE IVESS
In New Zealand, 26; in Australia, 5

heart, therefore, this energetic young Irishman, with his fresh complexion and thick black hair, called on practically every outback settler throughout the bush districts. They appreciated his enthusiasm, but Ivess learned at this early stage in his career that the suffrage does not automatically follow the hearty handshake.

In 1882 he stood for the Canterbury constituency of Wakanui and after a disputed election won the seat. A year or two later he lost it through an alteration of the boundaries, but for more than 20 years thereafter, till 1908, he persisted in his efforts to gain a Canterbury seat. Nor did he hesitate to try elsewhere. At Napier he leased an evening paper to support him against a political giant, the Hon. J. D. Ormond, and, when he failed, he gave up the paper and went to Australia in search of fresh fields. In his last attempt at Parliament, in 1911, he polled less than 10 per cent of the total votes in the bush electorate of Waimarino.

#### Hope Sprang Eternal

Though many men prominent in public life in New Zealand have made their living from very modest country journals, they have without exception concentrated on one undertaking. Ivess was not a man of that stamp. Every little township in the bush, every new goldfield, he pictured as a future great city, and he gave them all a newspaper. No sooner had he put up his shingle in one place than another tempted him. The grass over the fence always looked greener than that in his own paddock. Often he stepped in to compete with the man on the spot. On one memorable occasion, in 1896, he invaded Hawera from Patea in an attempt to scare off Pat Galvin, but he had produced only two issues of his paper when he gave in.

According to my reckoning Ivess started in New Zealand 26 papers and in Australia five; he controlled or bought another seven or eight in New Zealand and stood in as godmother at the birth

(continued on next page)