

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Written for "The Listener"
by ALAN FULTON

ON visiting Auckland recently, Wellington's Mayor, Mr. Appleton, trod the battleground of an old feud which has waxed and waned through New Zealand's hundred-odd years. This feud was waged between Auckland and Wellington and concerned the location of Parliament and the capital city. New Zealanders to-day do not question Wellington's right to this honour if only because of its central position, but when the capital was situated at Auckland the rivalry was strong, hot, and more than somewhat bitter.

Faced continually with the possibility that the capital would be removed from Auckland, the colonists of that district waged a mighty pen-and-paper war in support of their city, but the decision was never much in doubt. Many arguments were used to prove the need for maintaining the capital in the north and the following extract, written in the quaint round-about style of the first half of last century, is typical of them all. It is extracted from the Auckland newspaper *The New Zealander* of November 11, 1845:

"That the seat of government was placed on the shores of the Waitemata has been the source during the last five years of the ebullition of the most acrimonious feelings from all the southern settlements founded by the New Zealand Company. Even after it was acknowledged that Wellington was neither the most eligible nor the most accessible harbour in the Northern Island for a capital, it was urged that—as there had emigrated to that settlement such numbers as to far exceed the population of the government settlement on the Waitemata in the year 1840—the capital should be fixed where the greatest number of Europeans are located.

"Our readers will remember with what envious exultation our Southern contemporaries did for the years 1841, 1842 and 1843 put forth the number of shipping inwards as well as the great value of their imports. As soon as the whale fisheries on the coast and in Cook Strait were productive, corresponding publication was made of the great amount . . . to disparage the Northern district with a view to influencing the Home Government in the belief that

Port Nicholson was the only place in the three islands fit for a seat of government."

Hard Words

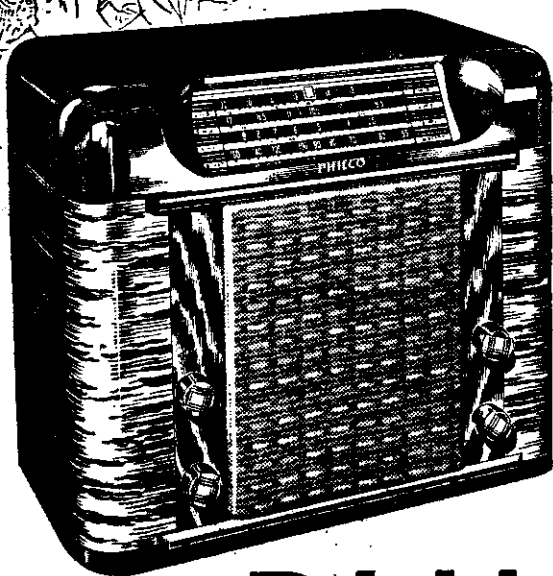
When on June 17, 1845, Sir Robert Peel, in the House of Commons, criticised Auckland in favour of Wellington, *The New Zealander* interpreted this

as "one of those artful political stratagems in debate, to neutralise wavering opponents, for which he is celebrated!" and the paper added, "We shall only observe that if the Home Government ever sanctions such an atrocious breach

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