

WHEREAS a Petition has been addressed to His Majesty by the Members of the Legislative Council and the House of Representatives of the Colony of New Zealand praying that His Majesty may be graciously pleased to take such steps as He may consider necessary in order that the designation of New Zealand may be changed from the "Colony of New Zealand" to the "Dominion of New Zealand."

And whereas His Majesty has been graciously pleased to grant the prayer of the said Petition.

And whereas in pursuance thereof there was this day read at the Board the draft of a Proclamation substituting the title of

THE DOMINION IS FIFTY

FIFTY years ago, on September 26, 1907—it was a Thursday that year, too—New Zealand became a Dominion. You might have expected it to be a solemn event, and up to a point it was. But looking back now you'll find something agreeably different about even the Parliamentary salute to the occasion. "Getting off to a flying start," says Jim Henderson in the radio documentary he has written to mark the anniversary, "members of Parliament ate to the success of the new Dominion. Parliament adjourned early. Members gathered at Bellamy's at the invitation of the Premier, Sir Joseph Ward, and sat down to an oyster supper—Bluff, you know, was in Sir Joseph's electorate. Then just after midnight the Premier rose and proposed the toast: 'Success to the Dominion.'"

Dominion Day, 1907, which will be the most widely heard of NZBS Dominion Day programmes (YAs, YZs, Xs), is a sound picture of life as it was in New Zealand 50 years ago. Its tones are not too measured, for a nation, like a man or a woman, can afford to relax as it looks back over its first half-century "on its own." Besides, even if the Wellington *Dominion* in its very first issue that day could screw itself up to say that "our acts of today will be the tradition of a race of men in centuries to come"—whatever that was intended to mean—the *Otago Daily Times*, never notorious for its levity, could point out that "in the minds of a great many sensible people we are having much ado about very little." "The day," the *O.D.T.* went on, "may fittingly be looked to as a finger-post in the history of this land, but it is no landmark and no sign that we have reached the cross-roads. . . Self-reliance is a good thing, but modesty is no less an excellent virtue." A little nearer the controversies of our own day, *The Press*, in a passing reference, not merely hoped but *trusted* that no attempt would be made to carry out the suggestion that the Mayors of the four cities should be raised to the rank and title of Lord Mayor. "Let us," it added, "preserve some sense of proportion and humour."

In the big centres, where some had a holiday and some hadn't, the flags flew, the bands played, troops and cadets turned out, salutes were fired to the new Dominion, and speeches—many speeches—were made. At Parliament House, after the Proclamation and the

Message from King Edward VII had been read, visiting Maoris broke into a haka, while elsewhere in the town English sailors from a visiting warship swarmed aboard trams chanting, "Ere yer are fer the Bank, Marble Arch or Piccadilly. A penny hall the way!" At Auckland there were races at Avondale, so, of course, most people went there, while at Victoria Park a westerly blew hats about and made banner-carrying hard work. Already the Cathedral City, Christchurch, had a special service at the Cathedral, of course, and hung evergreens around the Post Office; and at Dunedin, where "public enthusiasm ran high," the new Art Gallery was opened—formally—and after dark fairy electric arc lamps "most artistically arranged," were lit. Public enthusiasm, apparently, *didn't* run high at Foxton, where the Town Clerk read the Dominion declaration from the Council steps to one Press representative and one resident. In Greymouth the Fancy Dress Hockey Match—Ladies v. Gents—had to be postponed because of rough weather, but, never softies who were afraid of a bit of wet, the people of Greymouth probably had better ways of celebrating, anyway.

Greymouth also, according to the *Grey River Argus*, was the home of the first child born under Dominion rule. He was one of many born that day in one part of New Zealand or another, and six of the poor little perishers were named "Dominion." Other children born that day or that year had names equally if not quite so obviously derivative. But New Zealanders didn't celebrate Dominion Day only by eating oysters, writing leaders, making speeches, and having and naming children. They welcomed a big surprise from the Railways Department—acetylene lamps in carriages; grumbled over the cost of telephones; bought and sold all sorts of odd things at odder prices; rowed about Rugby—for the Aucklanders, back from the Mainland, noticed in Christchurch that when a Canterbury man was tackled the crowd hooted and yelled.

When, on Dominion Day, 1957, you have listened with wonder or nostalgia to these and other incidents in Jim

RIGHT: "Flags flew, bands played"—and the Governor-General presented a new Dominion Colour in Wellington



SIR JOSEPH WARD
Oysters for supper

Henderson's piece of historical recreation, you can tune to your YC station for a programme of music by New Zealand composers. This will include Douglas Lilburn's setting of Allen Curnow's *Landfall in Unknown Seas*, played by the strings of the National Orchestra under James Robertson, with William Austin as narrator;



LEFT: From the London Gazette recording the Royal Assent to the Proclamation of Dominion Status

three pieces for piano by Owen Fletcher, Georg Tintner and Peter Cooper, played by Peter Cooper; and *Six Songs of Women*, by David Farquhar, sung by Gabrielle Phillips, with Gwyneth Brown at the piano. David Farquhar's songs are settings of poems by an anonymous 14th century poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Philip Sidney, Thomas Lodge, Richard Rowland and Raydia d'Elsa.

Besides the programmes produced by the NZBS, *Tribute to New Zealand*, a BBC programme for Dominion Day, will be heard from YA and YZ stations in place of *Radio Newsreel* on Dominion Day and repeated in the Main National Programme the following Sunday afternoon (September 29).

In its General Overseas Service the BBC will mark the occasion with five programmes. The first of these, *Where the World Begins*, written by John Gundry and produced by the NZBS for the BBC Transcription Service, has already been described in *The Listener*. *Poetry from New Zealand*, selected by Professor Alan Horsman, of Otago University, will include work by six New Zealand poets, read by New Zealanders. Under James Robertson, the National Orchestra will be heard with Dr Thornton Lofthouse, James Hopkinson and Maurice Clare in Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5. This programme was recorded in the Cathedral Church of St Paul, Wellington. *Songs of the Maori* will be introduced by Lindsay Macdonald, formerly of 2YA and now a General Overseas Service announcer; and finally a special edition of *Commonwealth Club* will bring New Zealanders in London to the microphone.

The National Film Unit is sending to the BBC for use on television historical material going back to 1911. This includes shots of H.M.S. New Zealand being handed over to the British Navy (King George V and Winston Churchill are among those seen), New Zealand troops landing in Britain and entering Sling Camp in the First World War, scenes from Royal tours of New Zealand, and military operations in Korea and Malaya. The material, which accents Empire and Commonwealth co-operation, ends with scenes from activities of the New Zealand Antarctic Expedition. It is of special interest that shots from the First World War were taken by Charles D. Barton, official cinematographer with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, who is now with the National Film Unit.

Turnbull Library Archives

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