

burning issue of 1877-78, the route for the proposed Manawatu Railway Line. The *Rangitikei Advocate* was 'absolutely committed to the Foxton route,... Dungan was going hot for Palmerston North'. McMinn had attended all the pro-Foxton meetings and on one occasion had by his mere presence broken up a secretly-organised pro-Palmerston North meeting at Woodville.⁹ One of Dungan's editorials on the issue speaks for itself:

There are some men who would prefer to reign in hell than serve in heaven, while others who find it morally impossible to speak a word of truth,... and glory in their preeminence in falsehood. Such a man is the editor of the *Rangitikei Advocate*.¹⁰

In 1880, contemplating establishing his own newspaper, McMinn first planned to set up in Feilding, accepting the inevitable competition with the two-year-old *Feilding Guardian*. But he was persuaded by Sylvester Coleman, a Palmerston North land and commission agent, to found his paper in Palmerston North instead.¹¹ Coleman's motivation for this is not clear. He had moved to Palmerston North from Marton, where he had no doubt known McMinn, and for two years had been on the Council which Dungan had just joined. Evidently McMinn took his advice and on 29 November 1880 presented him with the first copy of the *Manawatu Standard*, *Rangitikei Advertiser*, and *West Coast Gazette*. The *Standard* was probably therefore a political as well as an economic rival to the *Times* (understandably, Leary did not advertise in the *Standard*), it was also a daily competitor to the biweekly *Times*, and had the self-confessed objective of initiating a chain of newspapers in the central North Island—an unusual, and one of the earliest such undertakings in New Zealand. Competition among newspapers was the norm, but that in Palmerston North, with a population of just under 1400, was to be particularly fierce. Nor was it likely to be mitigated by the fact that where Dungan was from Dublin originally, and Catholic, McMinn was from Belfast, and Protestant.

From the beginning the *Standard* seems to have hit the *Times* hard. After a few months Dungan had moved his premises to the commercial centre where McMinn's were, and was advertising for a double demy printing machine to equal the *Standard's* size.¹² He was also indulging in venomous editorial exchanges with his 'reptile contemporary',¹³ accusing McMinn of, among other charges, pirating the *Times's* news telegrams. (This was not true, though it was apparently a known practice in New Zealand. The *Manawatu Standard* had become a member of the United Press Association on 27 November 1880, for a fee of twenty-five pounds.)¹⁴ This slanging match culminated in a suit for criminal