

Julius Vogel and the press

PATRICK DAY

Julius Vogel, a 26-year-old journalist resident in Victoria when Gabriel Read made his gold strike in May 1861, must have realised the opportunities awaiting in Otago and rushed to the scene. He arrived there in the spring of 1861 and immediately found employment on the staff of the *Colonist*, James Macandrew's newspaper.¹ His stay there, however, was to be measured in weeks, for he was to find with W. H. Cutten of the *Witness*² not just employment but a partnership. On 15 November 1861 they began New Zealand's first daily, the *Otago Daily Times*³—the first newspaper to indicate the circulation possible in the 1860s, and also the first to use the industrial age printing technology.

When the paper was started the printing press used for the *Witness* was replaced by a hand-worked cylinder printing machine brought over from Melbourne.⁴ At this point the circulation of the *Otago Daily Times* was 2750,⁵ an enormous increase on previous rates; the *Witness* in late 1855, for example, being recorded as having 210 subscriptions.⁶ A steam-driven two-cylinder machine was imported from Britain and was in service in August 1862;⁷ at the time of introduction of this technology the paper's circulation topped 7000.⁸ While the *Otago Daily Times* remained during this period the paper with the highest circulation, this type of growth did become a general feature of the press.

Vogel's entry into New Zealand journalism and the commencement of the *Otago Daily Times* represents the turning point in a process of commercialisation for the New Zealand press. A desire for commercial profit had long been present among the country's newspaper proprietors, but was not realised until the advent of the *Otago Daily Times*, which was immediately a profitable newspaper. It began with a price of 3d which doubled in August 1862 at the same time as the new steam-drive printing machinery enabled the size of the paper to be doubled.⁹ The return they received enabled Cutten and Vogel to meet the management demands of a daily paper, which were quite different from those of a more leisurely weekly. The staff engaged in the manual work of newspaper production had to be increased and their wages had to be high, double that of their Melbourne confrères, so as to keep them away from the

An expanded text of a paper read to members of the Stout Research Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, 9 October 1985.