

refused to pursue further the matter of the Wairau plains. The land question was a perennial problem. There was great uneasiness when the New Zealand Company's new land regulations were announced in March 1846. The new regulations which were to give all land purchasers the right to reselect new land while losing three quarters of each new acre led the landowners to petition William Föx, the Nelson Agent of the New Zealand Company, a petition which was published in the *Nelson Examiner* on 6 June 1846. With the creation of the Provincial Councils in 1853, the General Assembly gave them the power to legislate laws to regulate the sale and disposal of waste lands. When the Nelson Provincial Council introduced the sale of agricultural rural lands by auction, the *Nelson Examiner* found it 'mischievous in a high degree'.¹⁷ Nor did it agree with the Council when it introduced into its Waste Lands Bill of 1857 a credit sale system whereby through paying down eight percent of the original price of a piece of land, the purchaser could buy any piece of land. The *Nelson Examiner* argued that fifty persons with fifty pounds could be enabled by the bad provisions of a bad bill to purchase all 50,000 acres of land in a particular area to resell at a great profit.¹⁸ Although sale by auction was retained in the act that was passed in 1858, the credit sale system was removed, probably as a result of the *Nelson Examiner's* criticism.

The *Nelson Examiner* attributed to various factors the agitation which became popular in the 1860s for provincial independence from the central government. The rugged, largely virgin terrain of the country, made inaccessible by poor communication and transportation, isolated most of the early provinces from one another and from the central government first situated in Auckland and from 1865 on in Wellington. First mentioned in Auckland,¹⁹ the quest for provincialism became a political expedient that developed into a strong movement for separation, particularly in Otago in 1861, following the discovery of gold. Separatism was a staple for press commentary in Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin, and Elliott often lifted extracts on the subject from the *Lyttelton Times*. While some politicians limited their demands to the creation of small independent provinces, others sought the creation of two colonies separated by Cook Strait.²⁰ The *Nelson Examiner* was, however, more moderate in its interpretation of the politics of separation. Elliott noted that disproportionate disbursement of government revenue was central to the separation question, but argued that creation of colonies was a prerogative of the Queen of England. Moreover, the military security of several small provinces would be too expensive for the central government to maintain.²¹

The *Nelson Examiner* is one of the notable chronicles of the hostilities between Maori and Pakeha. The distrust and suspicion