

France and New Zealand: A Post-World War I Trade-Based Relationship?

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Men would always struggle on economic grounds, and when these struggles reached an acute form the only way out was war.

General Pau, leader of the French mission to New Zealand 1918-1919.¹

I beg to call to your kind attention to this attempt (to establish commercial relations between French and New Zealand traders) which has a character of general utility and which will have for(sic) direct result the strengthening of the bonds of friendship and sympathy between the two countries, started on the common battlefield.

French consul Hippeau to the Hon. G.W. Russell, New Zealand minister of internal affairs, April 10, 1918.²

The General Pau-led French mission was in Australia when the armistice ended World War I. The mission's primary task of building morale and encouraging enlistment was therefore superseded by building post-war trade and peacetime relationships with Australia and New Zealand.³ The mission's arrival in New Zealand posed a dilemma for (as Adrian Muckle

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¹ Anon, "French Ideals: The Nation's Place in the World."

² Archives New Zealand – hereafter ANZ, Overseas Representation in New Zealand - France- Powers of French Consuls 1918-1942, C583 303, EA1 309, 61/360/11, Hippeau to Russell, 10 April 1918.

³ Dwyer, "Ahead of their Time," 30-53; Muckle, "Empire in the eyes of the beholder," 163-178; Aldrich, "La Mission Française en Australie de 1918: L'Australie et les relations Franco-Australiennes au lendemain de la guerre," 195-305. Members of the Mission had an interest in and knowledge of Australasia or possessed a relevant specialisation. The mission objectives were: to encourage the military effort (and thank Australians for their sacrifices), discuss with Australia the future of the South Pacific, and to encourage successful commercial exchanges between Australia and France. The mission had therefore to respond to the circumstances of the war

explains) the mission secretary André Siegfried recognised a “distinction and tension between New Zealand as a part of the British empire and as an aspiring colonial and imperial power in its own right”.⁴ An earlier, apparently minor diplomatic misunderstanding between New Zealand and Britain suggests why this distinction mattered and how it may have contributed to New Zealand’s ambivalent national status with a consequent indifference to the possibility of direct trade with France and other nations.

Identifying a date when New Zealand achieved independence has been the source of a long running, unresolved debate. Evidence of this uncertainty persists in the many suggestions for an appropriate day of annual national celebration. Options range from the date of signing of the much-debated treaty of Waitangi between the British government and New Zealand Maori through to ANZAC Day (the symbolic war memorial commemorations held every April 25) that some New Zealanders accept as a quasi-independence day.⁵ The argument runs on two parallel tracks. On the one side are the legal interpretations and scholarly opinions based on the significance attached to formal government action. Examples include the passing of various statutes by New Zealand’s parliament and the signing of treaties by New Zealand as an independent state. On the other there are the emotional arguments based on a claim to partial autonomy while simultaneously reaffirming affection for and solidarity with Britain. The debate matters. If a definitive date of independence exists New Zealand should have acted thereafter solely in the national interest in matters of trade and diplomacy. Avoiding the issue has led to vague sentiments such as Rachael Bell’s summary that the war was a period of change that has “often” been suggested as leading to a “new nation.” These have been left to sit with little dispute alongside the various legal definitions.⁶ Given this void it is not surprising that W. David McIntyre has been able to identify another eleven instances with similar claims, none of which have been unreservedly accepted as an appropriate national day.⁷ The indecision reflects uncertainty about New Zealand’s national identity and the relationship with the British colonial parent in the post-war years. To paraphrase Robert Aldrich, because the history of the colonies is an integral part of the history of the mother country and vice versa the unresolved independence debate sits within the ongoing relationship between New Zealand and Britain rather than being a defined event.⁸ While New Zealand’s relationship with Britain was not always whole-heartedly and mutually reciprocated it was not one that New Zealand wanted to renounce through a definitive declaration of independence.

McIntyre’s list of possible New Zealand national days includes June 28, 1919 designated as “Versailles Day”. This suggestion was arrived at by interpreting the British dominions’ signature on the Versailles treaty as tacit recognition of their independence. Thereafter (it can be argued) the dominions were equal partners within the empire, as Prime Minister Massey was to claim in the New Zealand parliament. Taken at face value this

but also to prepare for after-war events. The philosopher and scientist Siegfried had previously visited New Zealand to study and write.

⁴ Muckle, “Empire in the eyes of the beholder,” 163.

⁵ “Modern Anzac Day,” Ministry for Culture and Heritage, www.nzhistory.govt.nz/war/modern-anzac-day.

Descriptions include vague definitions such as: “... the beginning of something else – a feeling that New Zealand had a role as a distinct nation, even as it fought on the other side of the world in the name of the British Empire”.

⁶ Bell, introduction, 11. The ambiguities legislated in the 1931 Statute of Westminster exemplifies the problem.

⁷ McIntyre, “The Development and Significance of Dominion Status,” 7.

⁸ Aldrich, *The French Presence in the South Pacific*, 323.

construal permitted an independent New Zealand to interact with France or any other country as freely as Great Britain herself, if she so wished.⁹ There was every reason for France to encourage this degree of independence as the culmination of the Pau mission's efforts that had in turn built on a 1916 initiative by the Auckland-based French consul. If a bilateral relationship was established, New Zealand's backing for French post-war objectives such as renewed military support if Germany again threatened, extracting reparation payments and excluding Germany from the League of Nations might be maintained alongside a further source of much-needed supplies of raw wool consigned directly to the French mills rather than to their German competitors.

The French utilised two trade related tactics to build the relationship. Substitution of German industrial products with their French equivalents was an obvious step given the active antipathy shown by many New Zealanders towards anything identifiably German during the hostilities. Secondly, encouraging direct exports of primary produce and extractive products to France for further manufacturing would reduce New Zealand's overwhelming dependence on the United Kingdom market while lessening potential supplies for Germany delivered via Britain.¹⁰ Various circulars and instructions were therefore issued by the French government to its diplomatic representatives — including the Auckland based French consul — to establish if these were viable alternatives.¹¹ There was a concurrent overhaul of French diplomacy in New Zealand as a result of which the honorary consul in New Zealand was replaced with a professional diplomat, a M. Léon Hippeau, who was appointed vice consul in late 1916.¹²

Early in 1917 at least nine articles were published throughout New Zealand under the auspices of France's consular office in Auckland, inviting New Zealand firms that wished to import French goods in lieu of their German equivalents to apply to the National Office of Foreign Trade (Office National du Commerce Extérieur) in Paris for the names of suitable suppliers.¹³ Import substitution could potentially curtail Germany's economy by mimicking a blockade. Coincidentally, New Zealand's attention had already been drawn to trade

⁹ New Zealand Parliamentary debates v.184: 19th Parliament 6th session (1919), 35-40; New Zealand Parliamentary debates v.200: 21st Parliament 2nd session (1923), 730-732. In order to support the ideal of a unified Empire speaking with one voice during the 1923 Washington Conference Massey was to claim that despite the dominions signing at Versailles as separate entities this did not mean they became independent. This contradicted his earlier statement.

¹⁰ Aldrich, *The French Presence in the South Pacific*, 331. Wool from Australia and New Zealand was very important to the French textile trade's survival as was noted by "several consuls."

The New Zealand Official Year-Book, 1915: Destination Of New Zealand Exports. The 1915 New Zealand Year Book noted that "the proportion of exports shipped to the motherland has become of overwhelming importance." Presumably some diversification would be wise.

¹¹ Archives nationales, France – hereafter AN, Elimination de la concurrence austro-allemande des marchés étrangers, "Commerce et industrie (1921-vers 1962): Réponses des agents diplomatiques." According to the research archivist few of the reports from Auckland are extant in the French archives and those available appear to have been merged with their Australian equivalents. Nevertheless, their likely content and the historical narrative can be reconstructed from other sources, including newspaper articles.

¹² "Journaux officiels (Paris): Sont nommés vice-consuls de 1re classe," Archives Diplomatiques: Journal officiel de la République française. Lois et décrets, 146; Anon, "Consular Changes." Hippeau first appears in the New Zealand Year Book of 1917 as the vice consular representative but he is no longer listed by the time of the 1921-22 edition. Hippeau was an experienced career civil servant who had previously held appointments in Havana and at the French foreign office in Geneva. It was noted in local newspaper reports that he was designated as a vice-consul (rather than honorary consul, as his predecessor had been.)

¹³ Anon, "A Third Party." To replicate the search results: www.paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers?phrase=2&query=French+goods+in+lieu

opportunities with France. In one of his regular updates to Prime Minister Massey (written about three months before Hippeau was appointed) the acting prime minister Sir James Allen had informed Massey that the Paris office of the British chamber of commerce had suggested via Britain's colonial office that Australia, New Zealand and South Africa might appoint trade commissioners to visit the main trade centres in France. The significance is two-fold: the suggestion came from the British chamber of commerce and the colonial office had passed it on to New Zealand.¹⁴ The possibility of direct trade with France was already being considered in 1916 and the British had not raised any objection.

The first mention in the British archives of the French approach to New Zealand importers appears as a file note dated January 30, 1918. The content is instructive both for its convoluted passage through the colonial bureaucracy and as an illustration of the control by the mother country. A memorandum was addressed to the under-secretary for the colonies by the under-secretary for foreign affairs, accompanied by a letter from the British ambassador to France (Lord Bertie) regarding the "Correspondence between French Vice Consul at Auckland and the New Zealand Government".¹⁵ The accompanying documents indicate that a foreign office memo dated January 29, 1918 was sent to Lord Bertie asking him to raise with the French government the activities of the French vice-consul in New Zealand who had been "addressing the New Zealand government direct(ly) on questions which are considered outside his legitimate sphere". Ambassador Bertie was requested to "approach the French government on the subject in such manner as you may think best suited to the circumstances with the view of discontinuance of the practice to which the governor general calls attention." The colonial office had asked the foreign office to intervene because, as the colonial office forcefully stated, "the dominions have not complete independence in external affairs and three of the four subjects mentioned in the French note are outside purely internal (i.e. New Zealand) business".¹⁶ Although not all the enclosures referred to are attached there is sufficient detail in the copy of Bertie's letter and the associated memoranda to glean the cause of French consul Hippeau's disquiet-causing activism. Hippeau had apparently been in contact with the New Zealand governor general regarding

Questions of a general political order, such as the development of commercial relations between France and New Zealand, the sequestration of a number of bells in the belfry of a German church at Christchurch and(sic) which were cast from cannon captured by the Germans in the war 1870-71, the establishment of a French Consular Agency at Apia, Samoa, and the question of claims respecting private interests in enemy territory.¹⁷

¹⁴ ANZ, Miscellaneous files and papers - Allen and WF Massey correspondence 1st September - 1st August 1919, James Allen to Massey 29 September 1916.

¹⁵ Britain, The National Archives – hereafter TNA, CO 7735, 115. It is unclear who first raised the matter or when they did so.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, CO 7735, 116.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 121. Anon, "German Bells" *Poverty Bay Herald*, 24 July 1918; Anon, "The German Bells," *Taranaki Herald*, 13 August 1918; Press Association, "German Bells" *Sun*, 16 July 1918. A number of articles published in mid-1918 referred to the destruction of the bells originally hung in the Lutheran Church in Christchurch. These were allegedly cast from French cannon captured by the Germans "some years ago" (during the 1870-71 war in one account). Deemed by Sir James Allen and other politicians as "offensive" to the French they were removed,

Ambassador Bertie's actions were transmitted by letter to the New Zealand governor general with the enclosures and the advice that the French had been asked to desist.¹⁸ Various file notes with discussion points followed, until on April 1, 1918 (then foreign secretary) Arthur Balfour abruptly told the colonial office to drop the matter entirely.¹⁹ While Balfour made it clear that the "local authorities" could provide an appropriate explanation to the French consul thus avoiding offence, a broader discussion on the issue of foreign relations with the dominion could await a more substantial issue before being raised again.

While this blunt instruction to the governor general and "his" New Zealand government was still being prepared in London (drafts in the London archive indicate it was still being rewritten on April 25, 1918) Hippeau (probably alerted to these developments by his Paris superiors) wrote directly to the New Zealand minister of internal affairs. Doing so bypassed the governor general and London, while showing French persistence and a belief that the matter was a New Zealand domestic concern within the consul's purview. In his letter dated April 10, 1918, Hippeau requested publication of another invitation to New Zealand importers in the *New Zealand Gazette*. His covering letter explicitly requested government recognition (albeit passively) of his (Hippeau's) trade enterprise. It also made clear that this was an initiative of the Office National du Commerce Extérieur.²⁰ Unlike the earlier newspaper copy the accompanying version of the notice requested communication with Paris via the local consulate(s). The substantive issue was again the desire on the part of the French to develop a commercial relationship with New Zealand with the not unreasonable rationale of replacing the pre-war imports of high-end German goods with French products.²¹

Despite this, the New Zealand department of internal affairs in Wellington wrote to the under secretary at the colonial office on April 18, 1918 to inform him of this fresh initiative and to seek further instruction. The New Zealanders saw the latest action as that of the vice-consul "acting almost in a diplomatic capacity". They were especially concerned with Hippeau's reference to "strengthening bonds" that could be interpreted as a Dominion giving diplomatic standing to the vice-consul's approaches.²² Simply addressing such a minor matter

smashed and melted down, apparently with the agreement of the French Consul. In: "German Bells" *Sun*, 16 July 1918.

"Earl of Liverpool, GCB, GCMG, GBE, MVO, PC," www.gg.govt.nz/office-governor-general/history/former-governors-general-0. "Sir Arthur William de Brito Savile Foljambe Liverpool, 2nd Earl, had the distinction of being both New Zealand's last Governor and first Governor-General." Unattributed quotation from the website of the New Zealand Governor-General. Source given therein as *The New Zealand Almanack*.

No written communication from the then Governor General (Lord Liverpool) to the British authorities has been identified but it seems likely that Hippeau had asked Liverpool for assistance. Liverpool seems to have forwarded the communication to London. Whether the elected New Zealand Government was informed and their opinion - if any - is unclear.

¹⁸ ANZ, Overseas Representation in New Zealand - France- Powers of French Consuls 1918-1942, Long to Liverpool, February 22, 1918.

¹⁹ TNA, CO 16134/18, W Raudey(?) on behalf of Balfour to Long, 1 April 1918, 148.

²⁰ ANZ, Overseas Representation in New Zealand - France- Powers of French Consuls 1918-1942, Hippeau to Russell, 10 April 1918.

²¹ Aldrich, *The French Presence in the South Pacific*, 309-310, 331. French Consuls appear to have taken a broader view of their responsibilities in trade and foreign affairs than the British assumed was the case for officials designated as Consuls.

²² ANZ, Overseas Representation in New Zealand - France- Powers of French Consuls 1918-1942, Heenan to the Under Secretary, 18 April 1918, 1; *ibid.*, Liverpool to Long, 21 June 1918, pages not numbered. Walter Long had

through the vice-consul (it was surmised) might have implications for foreign relations beyond the brief of a dominion government. The colonial office wanted none of it. In a letter dated April 25, 1918 the New Zealand government was instructed through the governor general to discontinue the dialogue with the local consulate.²³ The New Zealand government was clearly instructed that it could not participate in establishing trade links with France and that anything that even hinted at New Zealand assuming a foreign policy was proscribed by the imperial authorities.

Despite the rejection, General Pau's mission to the dominions went ahead in 1918-19 with the New Zealand leg included as an adjunct to the Australian visit.²⁴ The French delegates only travelled on from Melbourne to Auckland after some urging from Paris as various obstacles, such as a transport delay owing to the influenza epidemic, caused logistical problems.²⁵ The involvement of the New Zealand government in the visit appears, even at the best interpretation, strangely restrained although the invitation was passed from the New Zealand government via the British foreign office to the French government consistent with diplomatic convention.²⁶ By all accounts the mission was well received by the public and there was no shortage of crowds in attendance at the public welcomes.²⁷

General Pau's preliminary report (telegraphed from Auckland to Paris by the vice consul) succinctly summarised the political circumstances he found in New Zealand. In the absence of Prime Minister Massey and his deputy, who were representing New Zealand at the Versailles Peace Conference, no one was authorised to implement any initiatives or to make decisions even on matters involving the "simple execution (of) current affairs". Discussion of official matters was restricted to what Pau diplomatically called "useful conversations". Issues such as the peace treaty, the forthcoming imperial conference or anything else of consequence was off limits. Pau's assessment was that New Zealand would follow British policy since New Zealand "does not appear to me to have any claim to an independent policy".²⁸ Pau understood

already replied when answering Lord Liverpool's earlier request. He had pointed out that such requests should be politely declined without giving offence. Liverpool had indicated he would do so, with some minor adjustments to allow for local sensitivities.

²³ Long to Liverpool, 25 April 1918, pages not numbered.

²⁴ Muckle, "Empire in the eyes of the beholder," 163-178; Aldrich, "La Mission Francaise en Australie de 1918," 195-305; Dwyer, "Ahead of their Time," 30-53.

²⁵ France, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter AMAE), 31/CPCOM, Oceania, Second New Series, New Zealand, 1896-1918 / 10: report "French Mission in Australia," pp. 11, 13, 20, 22.

31/CPCOM/10 piece 13, Telegram decrypted Paris 14 December 1918, the Minister of Foreign Affairs to General Pau: "It would be very unfortunate if the Mission did not respond to the invitation of the New Zealand Government. Do not give up on the journey to Auckland unless you have found that it is absolutely impossible to find a means of transport. Get in touch with the French Consul in Auckland, who may be able to help you find a passage, and who in any case can prepare the New Zealand Government to recognize the impossibility (difficulty) of where you are."

²⁶ Dwyer, "Ahead of their Time," 44. The Australia leg of the tour was meticulously planned but there is no evidence that this was the case in New Zealand.

²⁷ Anon, "The French Mission". See page 2: This report, sub-headed "Enthusiastic Gathering" and "Bonds of Common Sacrifice" was attended by the Auckland Mayor, Councillors, assorted dignitaries and "other specially invited guests". It noted that "Seats could not be found ... members of the mission were loudly cheered". Typical of many such reports, the comments are rich in platitudes ("bound together by the closest friendship and national interests") alongside praise for French and British colonisation from the New Zealanders. Hopes were raised that "the time was not far distant when our trade with France would assume a direct form and reach considerable dimensions", according to the Mayor, Mr Gunson.

²⁸ AMAE, 31/CPCOM/10 Telegram sent from Auckland on January 31st, 1919 from General Pau to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paris as the Mission departed, 45.

the domestic political nuances as he also informed Paris that the New Zealand reform-united coalition Ministry would only survive until the next election. The French Government were thus aware that the Massey-Ward led coalition had a limited future.

The newspaper record suggests that commercial opportunities arising from the visit were not vigorously pursued. New Zealand's self-imagined status as an important contributor within the empire depended on maintaining the current trade patterns with the United Kingdom. This priority conflicted with the establishment of a post-war trading relationship with France and the logical conjoint of an independent foreign policy. When meeting with the Auckland chamber of commerce, Dr Siegfried, M. Mathieu and M. Leclerq-Motte, who were all interested in developing trade, noted the complementary product range of each country. New Zealand's strengths in primary produce and French expertise in high-end manufactured goods suitable for replacing German imports made a reciprocal trade agreement logical.²⁹ One unstated problem was the need for shipping. Direct trade would bypass Britain as a global trading hub and undermine an essential component of the empire's perceived economic strength. Moreover, the use of non-British vessels to transport goods directly to foreign destinations would remove much of the rationale for New Zealand's place in the empire and thereby her justification for defense by the royal navy.³⁰

The French mission's final report emphasized the commercial and cultural aspects of the visit, rather than the internal obstacles arising from the arrangements of the British empire or the sightseeing that the New Zealand authorities seemed determined to force on the visitors.³¹ Their report suggested that there were foundations for a closer relationship by fancifully claiming that the French and New Zealand people did not know each other before the war but interaction through the "unexpected visitors" to France (i.e. soldiers) had resulted in an acquaintance of much greater depth than those that came as civilian (presumably British) "Cooks' excursionists". New Zealand soldiers had got to know the "real" people of France with the consequence of a "mutual knowledge" and friendship developing. The mission claimed to see opportunity, both commercial and cultural, arising from this foundation. Moreover, the mission viewed New Zealand as an independent, responsible, self-governing nation. This status, the mission awkwardly but correctly explained, could be sustained while New Zealand remained in a free association within the empire. There was no need to challenge the empire's primacy in the New Zealand narrative.³² Most importantly, the French noted that New Zealand had the power to control its own tariffs and make independent commercial arrangements. Given these basic pre-cursor requirements for any nation claiming sovereignty New Zealand had the freedom to act. These views are consistent with those expressed by

²⁹ "Yearbook collection: 1893–2012," *Statistics New Zealand*, 1919; Anon, "Commerce With France." Imports from Germany in 1914 were four times the value of those from France although both were insignificant compared to imports from Britain.

³⁰ Wellington: Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives Session I, A-05, 1907, Colonial Conference, 1907 (Minutes of Proceedings of the), 129-131.

³¹ The French Mission, *The Economic Relations between France and New Zealand: Report of the French Mission to New Zealand, December 1918-January 1919*, 9, 17–19.

³² *Ibid.*, Mission en Nouvelle Zelande, 12. The report does, however, highlight what the French perceived to be a low birth rate amongst the white population thereby limiting the potential of the country.

Massey in the New Zealand parliament regarding New Zealand's sovereign status when the Versailles treaty was ratified.³³

Wool was identified as a significant opportunity. While direct exports of New Zealand raw wool to France were miniscule, as much as a quarter of the New Zealand wool consigned to the United Kingdom was being re-exported to Europe. During debate on the finance bill (10 November 1920) Massey had expressed concern about the forthcoming Bradford wool sales owing to the destruction by Germany of the French and Belgian woollen mills.

Some of our best customers for wool before the war — France and Belgium in particular — are not now able to manufacture, and therefore not able to buy. They did not come here to buy much before the war, but they did take a good deal of our wool, buying it in England.³⁴

When (leader of the opposition) Holland pointed out that “A lot of your (sic) wool went to Germany before the war”, Massey replied:

I know that. The Germans are getting to work now, but they are not doing much up to the present. The other countries — France and Belgium — will not get up to full production for years to come, and consequently they are not ready to commence to buy our wool in large quantities.³⁵

Although Massey was correct in his assessment that the short-term opportunities for raw wool exports to Europe were limited he was mistaken in his belief that the French wool industry would not rapidly recover. Demand for raw wool was not only growing, it was exceeding supply. The problem was that recognition of that fact would have had consequences beyond contemplation for an empire-centric dominion.³⁶

The French mission's concluding remarks recognised that continued good will could be built by developing commercial relations within the sectors identified as having the best prospects. This would require cultivation on both sides. The problem was — as vice consul Hippeau had discovered — direct trade and closer relations could not develop without confronting and resolving New Zealand's ambivalent sovereignty. Maintaining direct communications would be of great assistance as would a continued interest from universities and intellectual circles in French language and culture. There was also a passing reference to the desirability of French missionaries continuing to visit New Zealand but these were adjunct issues. In short, the mission appears to have concluded that New Zealand had the legal right to develop trade if she so wished, the goodwill was there and, notwithstanding the short-term challenges of the shipping shortage, France was open to expanding trade. M. Hippeau's report

³³ New Zealand Parliamentary debates v.184: 19th Parliament 6th session, (1919), 35-40. By signing the Treaty in their own right, Massey freely admitted, the Dominions ceased to be dependencies and became partners within the empire. Taken at face value this interpretation by extension permitted New Zealand as an equal partner to interact with France as freely as Great Britain herself, if she so wished.

³⁴ New Zealand Parliamentary debates v.189: 20th Parliament 1st session, (1920), 922.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ The French Mission, *The Economic Relations between France and New Zealand: Report of the French Mission to New Zealand, December 1918-January 1919*, Yearbook collection: 1893–2012, 1920, 26, 61-63.

(telegraphed to Paris immediately after the mission's departure) stressed the goodwill generated by the visit and specifically referred to the enthusiasm shown by both the metropolitan population and the "indigenous people" (indigènes). Hippeau made the point that the enthusiastic reception and overall positive reaction to the visit was even more of a triumph owing to the mix of sentiment at the time, coinciding as the visit did with the war's end, the close proximity to the influenza epidemic, the summer holiday season and the uncertainty over rising post-war costs.³⁷ The historic British-sourced, anti-French attitudes in New Zealand could apparently be overcome using the spirit of post-war goodwill.

The reaction within New Zealand political circles showed some enthusiasm on matters of goodwill but less on those of substance. The French visitors were greeted as fellow victors rather than visiting trade partners. The typically unimaginative acting prime minister (Sir James Allen) when updating Massey wrote that "I have nothing particular to say about them".³⁸ Although providing Massey with some detail of the visit it appears that the significance of an offer of a direct commercial relationship was lost on Allen who seemed to have placed greater significance on the presence of Dr Siegfried as a geographer and political philosopher than he did on his role in promoting trade. Allen apparently assumed that Siegfried was in New Zealand to study and would again be writing about New Zealand's social conditions.³⁹ Whether by design or accident the offer of trade that the mission promoted was rejected by the New Zealand Government through neglect, perhaps conditioned by the London colonial authorities quashing of the French vice-consul's earlier local initiative on the grounds that the dominions could not make their own trade-related decisions.

Conclusion

The public enthusiasm that greeted the French delegation was both a de facto endorsement of the renewed French diplomatic initiative in the post-war South Pacific and a missed opportunity for a loyal member of the British empire to develop economic independence. New Zealand was offered the opportunity to diversify her trade base and develop an independent standing within the post-war world. Although Britain proclaimed herself a keen supporter of free trade, her enthusiasm only lasted for as long as London continued to be the commercial and financial hub for the world, the royal navy controlled the world's sea lanes, the British merchant marine dominated as the largest shipping service for distributing the finished products and importing raw materials, and the United Kingdom controlled global manufacturing within selected industries such as textiles. The dominion of New Zealand remained in Britain's interests only for as long as it contributed to this model. Removal of any one of the four key elements risked the viability of the British free-trading structure and opened the possibility of a world order managed within discrete trade blocs controlled by protectionism and tariffs. Hence British interests came under threat as post-war London lost financial business to New York, the naval strength of Britain was rebalanced against that of France, Japan and

³⁷ AMAE, 31/CPCOM/11: Oceania, Second New Series, New Zealand, French Mission in Australia, Hippeau to Pichon, vice consul de France à Auckland., 52-54. The 'indigènes' may have referred to rural dwellers or, more probably, Maori.

³⁸ ANZ, Miscellaneous files and papers - Allen and WF Massey correspondence 1st September - 1st August 1919, James Allen to Massey, 17 January 1919 - 18 January 1919, 8-10.

³⁹ Anon, "After-War Problems." Siegfried did write after his visit but in his book New Zealand's attention was drawn to the problems Britain faced in trade and population rather than issues specific to this New Zealand visit.

the United States through arms limitation agreements, the American merchant fleet concurrently expanded in part owing to cabotage laws, and new industries such as manufacturing motor vehicle displaced textiles.

New Zealand tried to ignore these post-war global trends and the changes they were forcing on Britain. Moreover, the paralysis in local decision-making owing to the absence of Prime Minister Massey and Finance Minister Ward in Europe thwarted the immediate French aim of establishing a direct relationship by turning her trade aspirations into action. Although later public support tacitly endorsed Massey and Ward's uncomplicated stance in support of French post-war policy at Versailles, little of substance was achieved by the French trade mission. Under Massey's leadership, development of a New Zealand dairy industry with the sole aim of supplying a British wholesale market that was assumed to have unlimited demand continued. Meanwhile continental demand for wool increased.⁴⁰ Pasture for dairying relied on fertiliser manufactured from Nauru Island phosphate, a source acquired through the territorial trade-offs agreed at Versailles.⁴¹ With this prize secured there were few concerns in the short-term in either Britain or New Zealand arising from the benign neglect of the French overtures and consequent disregard of the wool industry. The promise of closer ties and opportunities for trade went unfulfilled and with it went the opportunity for France to extend her influence within the British empire and New Zealand's to establish her independence and broaden her trading base. The order from the London authorities to curtail local trade initiatives with France was not in New Zealand's long-term interests, but nor did they prove to be in Britain's in the post-war world. At least one option for a New Zealand's day of independence — Versailles Day on June 28 — can therefore be eliminated.

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⁴⁰ Siegfried, *Post-war Britain*, 89-90. "Britain's dependence on foreign imports for food is such that the Empire does not supply even half of key commodities such as wheat, meat and dairy. She cannot renounce foreign trade."

⁴¹ Kray, *Caging the Prussian Dragon*, 134-135.

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