

WILLIAM ARCHIBALD MURRAY: A PIAKO FARMER WHO
INVESTED IN WAIORONGOMAI MINES

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Abstract: *Proudly Scottish and from a sheep-farming family boasting a distinguished lineage, William Archibald Murray settled in Otago with his brothers in 1858 and acquired a large estate. A successful farmer, he was elected to parliament in 1871 and held his seat until losing it in 1881, becoming infamous as a parliamentarian because of his highly opinionated but tedious speeches. He advocated a wide range of ways to assist the development of New Zealand, but was accused of using his position to attempt to benefit himself and his family.*

Acquiring a large estate in the Piako district in the 1870s, this undeveloped land became a successful farm. On the basis of his experience, he advised others how to farm successfully, and criticized government and council policies affecting farmers, producing alternative ideas, which once more would benefit himself. He invested in Te Aroha mining in a small and unprofitable way, again urging both council and government to assist the field. Because of his land dealings at Te Aroha and Waiorongomai he was accused of being a land shark. He continued to produce fertile ideas on how to benefit the district, none of which would have been to his personal disadvantage. In his desire to encourage settlement he sought ways to separate Maori from their land, and despite arguing that the state should not interfere in people's lives and should leave them to make their fortunes without being taxed heavily, in practice he wanted state support for a variety of proposals. Despite determined efforts to express his views through his many letters and occasional speeches, he failed to be elected to the county council or to parliament in 1891.

In addition, Murray produced and publicized several inventions, mostly to help farmers. His last years were spent pioneering another district, named Glen Murray after his family, and his ill health, caused, it was argued, by the exertions involved in breaking in new land, meant he did not inflict so many of his views on the community. A compulsive self-promoter, he managed to annoy many of those he claimed to want to help.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

William Archibald Murray arrived in New Zealand in 1858.¹ In 1886, when revisiting Berwickshire, in lowland Scotland, where he had been born, he was a guest at a luncheon of the Lammermoor Pastoral Society. His family, who farmed at Marygold, was described as perhaps having a 'greater reputation' than any other local farmers. In responding, Murray said that 'while Scotsmen were everywhere true to the land of their adoption, they never forgot their native place', and 'always' talked of 'the old country as home'.² The *Observer* described him as 'about as Scotch as they make them'.³ In 1877 he obtained 'a coat of arms & crest' from Edinburgh.⁴

Murray was born at Marygold on 3 December 1832 to John, described as a farmer and gentleman, and Jean (Jane, her children recalled), neé Hunter.⁵ According to an obituary, Murray and his brothers George and Thomas

were exceptionally well informed in all matters connected with sheep-farming. For many generations this has been the occupation of nearly all branches of the family. For many generations this has been the occupation of nearly all branches of the family. Since 1660 there has been an unbroken record of the occupation of sheep-farming in Berwickshire by his ancestors. The founders of the family are said to have been two brothers who landed in Dumfries. One remained there and one went to Lanarkshire, and became the ancestor of Andrew Murray, Earl of Bothwell, [William] Wallace's favourite general, and the Earls of Annandale. Somewhere about the 14th century, the Murray descendants of these houses settled in Berwickshire.⁶

According to a fellow Scot who farmed in the Morrinsville district, Nicol Ashton Larney,⁷ who in 1900 said he had known him for over 22 years, the Murray brothers 'were all noted for their enlightened and

¹ *Waikato Times*, 18 November 1886, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1900, p. 2.

² *Berwickshire News*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 18 November 1886, p. 2.

³ *Observer*, 7 November 1891, p. 6.

⁴ William Archibald Murray to Collector of Customs, Auckland, 4 May 1877, Customs Department, BBAO 5544, 1877/377, ANZ-A.

⁵ Death Certificates of William Archibald Murray, 26 June 1900, 1900/2299; Thomas Murray, 9 August 1899, 1899/6748, BDM; Ancestry.com.

⁶ *Clutha Leader*, 13 July 1900, p. 3.

⁷ See Death Certificate of Nicol Ashton Larney, 1915/2767, BDM; *Bay of Plenty Electoral Roll, 1899*, p. 38; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 822.

practical knowledge of agriculture and sheep husbandry'. Their father had been one of 'the earliest breeders' of Border Leicester sheep, 'and many of the leading flocks of this breed in Scotland and England' could trace their ancestry to his flock. He believed Murray's ancestry could, according to genealogists, be traced back to the time of the first king of Scotland. 'For over 400 years the Murrays were Earls of Annandale, the favourite general of Wallace being Andrew Murray, Earl of Bothwell', and both of these titles would be given to properties he owned in the North Island.⁸

OTAGO

Murray and his brothers were, reputedly, the first members of their family to have left Scotland for the colonies.⁹ Why Murray migrated to New Zealand is not known, but one possible reason was a rumour that he had unsuccessfully courted the Earl of Annandale's daughter;¹⁰ the fact that he never married may support this belief. He arrived in Otago with his brothers, George, Thomas, John, and James Hunter, in May 1858.¹¹ One obituary described them as 'among the early pioneers' of Otago.¹² 'Three times' during his life Murray 'went into fresh or only partly opened up country'.¹³ Murray and Thomas, who had been born in 1816,¹⁴ acquired land in the Mount Stuart and Waitahuna district, 'where they successfully carried on sheep-farming and agriculture on a pretty extensive scale'.¹⁵ As Mount Stuart Station was between Milton and Waitahuna, with Lawrence and the future Gabriel's Gully goldfield nearby,¹⁶ 'at the outbreak of the rush to Gabriel's Gully' in 1861 it 'did a profitable business in supplying the

⁸ *Waikato Argus*, 21 July 1900, p. 2.

⁹ *Clutha Leader*, 13 July 1900, p. 3.

¹⁰ Norton Watson, 'Annandale and the Allan Family', *Auckland-Waikato Historical Journal*, no. 30 (April 1977), p. 20.

¹¹ *Otago Witness*, 8 May 1858, p. 6; Ernie Alexander, *Glen Murray's Incredible Pioneers: Over 100 years of amazing history* (Waiuku, 1996), p. 9; Probate of William Archibald Murray, BBAE 1569/3691, ANZ-A.

¹² *New Zealand Herald*, 27 June 1900, p. 6.

¹³ *Clutha Leader*, 13 July 1900, p. 3.

¹⁴ Death Certificate of Thomas Murray, 9 August 1899, 1899/6748, BDM.

¹⁵ *Waikato Argus*, 21 July 1900, p. 2.

¹⁶ NZMS 260-H45, Map Library, University of Waikato.

miners with beef and mutton'.¹⁷ Thomas spent years crossbreeding sheep, based on knowing the man who had bred the Southdown sheep,¹⁸ and later told Piako farmers that starlings had solved the grass grub problem.¹⁹ John gave Murray the credit for introducing machinery into Otago for sowing potato seed,²⁰ and Thomas said he had investigated ways to obtain good fertilizer.²¹

In 1867, Murray was elected to the Otago Provincial Council.²² Long after he settled in the North Island, Murray retained 'a deep interest in all that concerns Otago and the many esteemed friends there amongst whom I spent so much of my early colonial life. Otago means even more to me than my native Scotland'.²³ In 1882, writing to friends in Otago, he complained of missing 'the high principle in the Press which is characteristic of so many leading newspapers in the South. Some papers here, otherwise well conducted as business ventures, systematically suppress or distort the truth which they or their friends' interests differ from'.²⁴

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR BRUCE

From January 1871 to November 1881, Murray represented the Bruce electorate.²⁵ According to an obituary, 'he was much looked up to by his constituents and was held in the highest esteem by his colleagues',²⁶ a highly contentious assessment typical of kindly obituaries. His involvement in parliament has not been traced in detail, but it was clear from comments made at the time that his speeches were seen as tedious, self-opinionated, and somewhat incomprehensible. As would be repeated throughout his life, when first standing he presented his electors with a very full account of his

¹⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 27 June 1900, p. 6.

¹⁸ Letter from Thomas Murray, *Waikato Times*, 7 February 1884, p. 2.

¹⁹ Letter from Thomas Murray, *Waikato Times*, 16 September 1882, p. 3.

²⁰ Letter from John Murray, *Waikato Times*, 14 March 1882, p. 3.

²¹ Letter from Thomas Murray, *Otago Daily Times*, 25 June 1873, p. 2.

²² *Otago Daily Times*, 25 March 1867, p. 5; *North Otago Times*, 2 April 1867, p. 3.

²³ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Clutha Leader*, 9 December 1890, reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 26 March 1892, p. 2.

²⁴ 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 29 April 1882, p. 102.

²⁵ *New Zealand Parliamentary Record*, ed. Guy H. Scholefield (Wellington, 1913), p. 102.

²⁶ *Clutha Leader*, 13 July 1900, p. 3.

views on all kinds of issues.²⁷ In 1876, a journalist stated that ‘anyone who reads “Hansard” must have been struck with the wearisome platitudes of Murray’.²⁸ An editorial confessed ‘to very often not understanding what Mr MURRAY *does* mean, we are, in fact, in a difficulty which we are quite sure he shares with us’.²⁹ In 1875 one newspaper commented that ‘the late Parliament did not number among its members nor is the new House of Representatives likely to possess a more self-opinionated member’.³⁰ In November, the *Bruce Herald* weighed up his strengths and weaknesses:

Although we are far from holding the opinion that Mr William Archibald Murray is, or ever will, be a bright and shining light in the political world, we cannot help admitting that he is a useful man as a representative, always approachable, untiring in promoting the interests of his particular district, and generally acting from an honest conviction that he is doing right. If Mr Murray were a horse, we should describe him as one of a good useful stamp, with any amount of work in him, but one that no man should ever think capable of attaining distinction on the turf.³¹

Later that month an Auckland newspaper published a devastating critique of him, prompted by one of his speeches:

We observe from the telegraphic summary of his speech that he delivers himself of sundry strong sentiments, containing the customary accusations which weak and evil-minded persons frequently imagine are deserved by those who oppose them simply because they *do* oppose them. Mr MURRAY has a special hatred to the Press, and a seemingly similar antagonism to the NATIVE MINISTER [Sir Donald McLean]; but, of course, he entertains a political hatred of all Ministers; and yet he seems a simple-hearted, innocent-looking soul, on the best terms with himself. He has long been known as one of the bores – nay, *the* bore of the House of Representatives. He rose on almost every possible occasion; he was ready to make, and did with frequency make, discreditable accusations against those whom he opposed, repeating inaccurate statements made by others, and keeping

²⁷ *Bruce Herald*, 4 January 1871, p. 6.

²⁸ Dunedin Correspondent, *Marlborough Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Bruce Herald*, 7 March 1876, p. 5.

²⁹ Editorial, *Otago Daily Times*, 14 August 1878, p. 2.

³⁰ *Tuapeka Times*, 29 December 1875, p. 3.

³¹ Editorial, *Bruce Herald*, 2 November 1875, p. 5.

back the refutation of the same, which was as well known as the charge. He was reckless of accusation without proof, and was occasionally handled with some vigour, although, as a rule, the elevation of Mr MURRAY to the perpendicular was the signal for a stream of members to pour out of the House.

Because newspapers ‘touched on his foibles and the intensity of his boredom’, he had assailed them; he described some journalists elected to parliament as ‘vagrants, and attributing motives of the meanest kind to them’. Only once, when opposing insular provincialism, had he made a glimmering of sense.³² In June 1879, an Otago journalist accused him of ingratitude to Sir George Grey:

Not three years and a half ago the present Premier acted the part of a political parent to the hon. member for Bruce, and Mr William Archibald Murray could not find words to express the veneration of respect for the Knight of Kawau which then possessed his soul. This is saying a good deal, for the honourable member, to do him justice, is seldom at a loss for words. Few of his constituents will have forgotten the time – just before the session, during which the Abolition Act was made law - when the leaders of the Opposition to that measure came down South for the ostensible purpose of helping to do honour to one of their number, but really to rouse the people of Otago to a sense of their duty and of the great wrong that was about to be done them. Most of us remember the words uttered by Sir George Grey at Milton, how he described William Archibald as one of the ablest and most conscientious politicians in the country, and how he told that little story about the member for Bruce suddenly leaving a musical party at the call of duty, and rushing to the House, fiddle in hand, just in the nick of time to alter the result of a division on a question of vital importance. He also delicately managed to drag in the fact that Mr Murray was the possessor of an autograph letter from Sir Robert Peel, and in other ways sought to raise him in the estimation of the free and independent of Bruce, who just at that time were beginning to attach more importance to the oft repeated statements that their member’s frequent orations had a soporific effect on the House. And after all this, Mr Murray has exhibited the basest ingratitude, actually venturing to express disapproval of most of the recent actions of his former political chief, and intimating pretty plainly that next session he may be found voting on the other side on various important measures.... Mr Murray is, no doubt, smarting under a sense of neglect, and he cannot but feel that since his party have

³² *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 November 1875, p. 6.

assumed office he has been passed over for men, who, in his own estimation, are his inferiors in intellect and administrative capacity. This is very sad, but then it must be borne in mind that, however useful he may have been to his party when in Opposition, some of his peculiarities would be decidedly embarrassing to any Government. Mr Murray used to be popularly credited with carrying a new Constitution for the Colony in each coat pocket, and half a dozen alternative schemes for fiscal reform in his hat, while he was also supposed to have nearly perfected plans for paying off the British national debt, securing the confederation of the Australasian Colonies, opening up a remunerative trade between New Zealand and the Antarctic continent, and soothing the savage breasts of the King natives by presenting each of them with a Jew's harp. All these, and other equally important matters, have no doubt been brought frequently under the notice of his colleagues by Mr Murray, and his proposition having been received coldly, he now regards himself somewhat in the light of a Blighted Being, whose dreams of greatness and distinction have been cruelly dispelled. He is certainly to be pitied – even more so than the party he has deserted.³³

When nominations for the Bruce electorate were made at Milton in September that year, the man who seconded Murray's nomination considered that he was 'an honest, upright' member who had done his duty 'faithfully and well. – (Dissent.) Whenever I forwarded him any communication relating to the affairs of this district, he invariably answered it immediately, and did all in his power in the matter'. The man who seconded another candidate's nomination believed that Murray had 'benefited nothing by his experience in the Assembly, and what he has done for this district could be put in a nutshell – (Hear, hear.)' As for Murray accusing Sir George Grey of 'favouring his boon companions', he asked

What has Mr Murray done? Was the Mount Stuart railway-station placed at the corner of his brother's garden for the benefit of the County of Bruce or for that of Mr Murray's relations? Was there anything in connection with Mr Murray and the land at Murray's Flat which could be creditably spoken of? Gentlemen, you who remember anything in connection with Murray's Flat will recall how the Murrays ploughed the land up there and erected a house upon it, and actually fenced it in before the land belonged to them. Did not Mr W.A. Murray make charges of corruption against Sir George Grey behind his back? But I make

³³ 'Civis', 'Passing Notes', *Otago Witness*, 14 June 1879, p. 16.

these to him (Mr Murray's) face. Mr Murray says he would like to see the people settled upon the land; and, when last addressing us, read a number of selections from authors on political economy to show that in order for the prosperity of a people there should be no land monopoly. Well, now, he himself has a very large lump of land somewhere in the North Island, and which he has lately bought at – I don't know the price, but I dare say he got it at the very lowest price he could. How does that coincide with the views contained in his address? and when residing here he obtained large pieces of land under the agricultural lease system, and manufactured applications in order to keep the miners off the land. He sold a very large lump of land in this Province at a great profit, and went up, as I said before, to the North Island and invested in ten times the amount. He possesses 8000 or 10,000 acres of land, for which he paid less than 10s per acre. Now, gentlemen, would Mr Murray like to say that if this is a small holding how we all can get 10,000 acres apiece?

In responding, Murray at first declined to 'refer to personal matters', but then responded to the charge of monopolizing large areas. 'I may say that I did occupy large agricultural leasehold sections, but I made them capable of production and profitable to the country, and I say that I should be glad to see everyone in New Zealand do likewise'. Asked whether he would support Grey once more, he answered: 'I support not persons, but principles. I support constitutional government in New Zealand, not personal government. I go in to pin my faith to no individual. If I go up to Wellington as your representative, I hold myself responsible to God, to myself, and my constituents; I place no man as the keeper of my conscience'. He then explained why he had ceased to be 'a personal follower of Sir George Grey since 1875'. Asked if he thought he might be able to form a government himself, he said he would consult his constituents.³⁴ One year later, a North Island newspaper published a 'parliamentary portrait':

Like unto a voice crying in the wilderness and hoarse with much crying is the member for Bruce. As long and as hungry as a Scotch cadet. His hatred of Sir George Grey and suspicion of James Macandrew stands in the place to him of political principles. He wanted to grind an axe [serve his private interests]³⁵ on the State grinding stone and Sir George Grey would not let the stone turn. The axe was a large one too. Earlier in life he had the reputation of being honest. He has a weakness

³⁴ *Otago Daily Times*, 3 September 1879, p. 1.

³⁵ *The Phrase Finder*, online.

for finance – delivering a financial statement every year. He is very anxious to reform the Constitution. He was a Provincialist before he took to axe grinding.... In accord with his constituents as they also want to get something for themselves. He gets angry in debate and abhors chaff [teasing].³⁶ He got the duty taken off saffron.³⁷

When he stood for re-election in 1881, the *Otago Daily Times* portrayed him as

a tall, active, restless man with an original daring mind, that in the days of the Caesars or the Stewarts would have certainly brought him to the gallows. He has no reverence for existing institutions, no veneration for the powers that be, no fear of the most daring novelties, and no want of confidence in himself. His mind is both inventive and imitative, so that he produces new constitutions, new laws, new financial statements, and new policies as freely as other members produce new walking-sticks. But whilst he has something new to propose every week, he has all the pertinacity of the man with only one idea, and perseveres year after year with any of his favourite projects, in defiance of, though not entirely regardless to, opposition, indifference, or ridicule. He is in no sense a successful speaker. His language is neither Scotch nor English; his utterances too rapid and indistinct, and his command of language is not equal to the demand his fertile brain and his rapid utterance makes upon it. He fails, too, altogether in the art of keeping in sympathy with his audience, and is more prone to defy and despise them than to lead them with him. His industry and power of research are very remarkable, and notwithstanding the great attention he devotes to his numerous hobbies, he always keeps himself well informed on every question that comes before the House.³⁸

Two years later, this newspaper noted that his new schemes and ideas about a new constitution were not original and had received no parliamentary support.³⁹ In 1881, one correspondent described a letter about improving the structure of local government⁴⁰ as being about ‘one of the crazes which occasionally agitate his political mind, and, as is usual

³⁶ *Dictionary.com*.

³⁷ *Wairarapa Standard*, 9 September 1880, p. 2.

³⁸ ‘Verax’, ‘Political Sketches’, *Otago Daily Times*, 20 September 1881, p. 3.

³⁹ *Otago Daily Times*, n.d., cited in *Te Aroha News*, 6 October 1883, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *New Zealand Herald*, 20 April 1881, p. 6.

with his letters and speeches, one cannot discover a new idea'. He repeated a rumour that Frederick Alexander Whitaker, who represented the Waipa electorate,⁴¹ had used Murray 'to call for some returns in the Assembly which young Whitaker thought judicious not to have his named mixed up, and which must have pained the "high" minded political Murray when he found he had been "had" '.⁴²

In 1886, when Murray, in responding to a request that he re-enter parliament, stated that because New Zealand politics was an 'unsatisfactory arena' he intended to revisit Britain, the *Tuapeka Times* mocked his pretensions:

Mr Murray takes it for granted that the electors of Bruce have to a man declared in his favour as a parliamentary candidate. No doubt there are a few of the electorate who will remember Mr Murray's great services, but the feeling in his favour is not so unanimous as he evidently leads himself to believe. He speaks as if he had been hard pressed to relinquish his purpose of visiting the Home Country that he might, in view of an early dissolution, represent Bruce in the New Parliament. Mr Murray tried to enter the "unsatisfactory arena" of local politics during his stay in [the] Auckland [Province], but was invariably unsuccessful. Even the Road Board would not have him at any price, and in the election of a candidate to fill a vacancy in the County Council, beyond the votes Mr Murray gave himself, the support he secured was exceedingly limited indeed. Perhaps the ex-member for Bruce in going Home has got something else in view – probably a seat in the Imperial Parliament. If so, we wish him every success; for such talent as his is only thrown away in a tenth-rate colony like New Zealand. He will be just in time to solve the Irish question, and, in this respect, his assistance will be invaluable to Mr Gladstone and the Liberal party during the present crisis.⁴³

Murray described himself as an independent.⁴⁴ A friend described him as inheriting 'patriotic feelings of a high order, joined to an independence of

⁴¹ See *Descriptive Handbook to the Waikato: Its condition and resources* (Hamilton, 1880), pp. 25, 27; *Observer*, 29 October 1881, p. 104; *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 January 1884, Supplement, p. 3, 12 July 1884, p. 10; *New Zealand Herald*, editorial, 13 June 1884, p. 4, 17 June 1884, p. 3; *Waikato Times*, 1 May 1884, p. 2, 5 July 1884, p. 2, 11 June 1887, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 21 May 1887, p. 2.

⁴² Auckland Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 26 April 1881, p. 2.

⁴³ *Tuapeka Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 3 April 1886, p. 2.

⁴⁴ *Waikato Times*, 3 October 1891, p. 2.

character that totally annihilated “colour,” as a factor in his politics’.⁴⁵ After deducting expenses, he paid the surplus of his payment as a parliamentarian to ‘local charities, libraries, and like institutions’.⁴⁶ He claimed that he had done his best to check Julius Vogel’s expensive schemes.⁴⁷ According to Larney, being an ‘uncompromising opponent’ of Vogel’s ‘large schemes of extravagance’ resulted in ‘many ... offers and inducements’ being made to him ‘to join forces with the Vogelian Party, all of which were indignantly declined’.⁴⁸ In 1890 he added a racial slur to his criticism of Vogel’s obtaining of large loans in London:

As Sir Julius Vogel’s ancestors had sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites, so he had virtually sold the people of New Zealand to his countrymen in London, with the result that many settlers in New Zealand were suffering worse than Egyptian bondage with the difference that the Jews were now the slave drivers and we were virtually paying tribute to Jerusalem.⁴⁹

He later criticized Vogel’s alleged attempt ‘to run New Zealand as a general joint stock co-operative trading association’.⁵⁰ These views did not prevent him, once he had purchased land in Piako, from asking Vogel to construct a road to link that district with the Waihou River,⁵¹ to his personal advantage. Six years later, he lobbied the Premier to build a railway from Hamilton to Thames,⁵² which would be of personal as well as public benefit.

Murray took the credit for organizing the defeats of the Continuous Ministry in 1877 and of the Grey Ministry two years later.⁵³ When returned to parliament for the last time, a critic stated that he ‘was elected to support Sir George Grey, and to get a new drainage measure through

⁴⁵ *Waikato Argus*, 21 July 1900, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Waikato Times*, 6 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁷ *Waikato Times*, 3 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁸ *Waikato Argus*, 21 July 1900, p. 2.

⁴⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 22 July 1884, p. 2.

⁵¹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 October 1874, p. 4.

⁵² William Archibald Murray to John Hall, 18 October 1880, Sir John Hall Papers, MSy 1100, Political Letters received in 1880, p. 111, MS 1784, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁵³ *Observer*, 17 September 1898, p. 7.

Parliament; but we are all well aware that he did not do one or the other'.⁵⁴ When standing for the Waikato seat in 1891, he claimed to have been responsible for John Bryce being appointed Native Minister in 1879.⁵⁵ According to his account, which Bryce denied, the Premier, John Hall, when 'in doubt as to whom to select', consulted Murray 'as to who would be most acceptable to the country', and he 'at once' named Bryce and was 'entrusted' with approaching him, 'which he did next day'.⁵⁶

Larney believed that New Zealand was indebted to him 'for many of the useful measures contained in the Local Bodies Administration Acts, the Fencing Act in particular, being his almost wholly'.⁵⁷ Murray told a political meeting in 1890 that he had successfully moved three resolutions 'in 1879 or 80':

(1) That all lands should be rated without exception; (2) That the Government should pay the rates on Crown lands to provide access thereto; (3) When expedient the Government should advance the rates on native lands with power to recoup such advances by taking Native lands at fair values. He might state that another resolution moved by him in the House at the same time ... was to the effect that Government should have a Trust Commission appointed that would be empowered to advance money to local bodies for new works where so required by the ratepayers. These resolutions provided the nucleus of Major Atkinson's local government proposals, such as the Crown and Native Lands Rating Act, Roads and Bridges Construction Act, Local Powers and Finance Act, etc, which were passed in subsequent years.⁵⁸

In 1882 Murray stated that, with the assistance of the Member of Parliament for Clutha, he had obtained an endowment of 50,000 acres for the Clutha River Trust.⁵⁹ The following year, he claimed that, 'some years ago', with the assistance of other Otago parliamentarians, he had got grants and a loan of £50,000 for roads, bridges, embankments, and other works, to be paid in ten yearly instalments.

⁵⁴ Auckland Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 26 April 1881, p. 2.

⁵⁵ *Waikato Times*, 1 October 1891, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 October 1891, p. 10; letter from John Bryce, *Waikato Times*, 6 October 1891, p. 2.

⁵⁷ *Waikato Argus*, 21 July 1900, p. 2.

⁵⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

⁵⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Thames Advertiser*, 24 April 1882, p. 3.

In the estimates for 1881 an item of about £10,000 appeared as a grant for certain bridges, and seemed to have a strong political significance. When the estimates, the real business of the Assembly, were as usual being hurried through at the close of the session in the small hours of the morning, and by a quorum of the House, I said that unless the vote was to be as a loan, or my constituents were placed on the same footing as to their repayment of the £50,000 I would have to ask my friends to help me in striking out the item. The Government said, would I withdraw my opposition if the debt of £50,000 was cancelled. I said if they would introduce a clause in the Appropriation Act for that purpose I would. This was done, and a few weeks later, with others, I had the satisfaction to see the splendid bridge over the Molyneux at Balclutha formally opened *free from debt*.... I could see nothing to have prevented the Hamilton road bridge being included, but that was the business of the Hamilton Representatives, and did not concern my constituents.⁶⁰

In 1880, as chairman of the Tariffs and Industry Committee, he encouraged the development of tobacco and distilling industries.⁶¹ In 1889 he wrote that his 'resolutions which led to the passage of the Crown and Native Lands Rating Act were not correctly embodied therein'. His 'purpose was that after a certain number of years the Government (excepting cultivations, settlements and interments,) should take re-payment' of the rates it paid on Maori land 'in such native land at full value and open it for settlement on perpetual lease'. Rent of four or five percent on capital value 'could be devoted for hospitals and charitable relief of the people of the colony irrespective of race, and partly perhaps to aid technical education in agriculture, mining, and manufacture'.⁶²

In 1880 Murray, as a member of a royal commission about developing industries, obtained some of the evidence collected around New Zealand.⁶³ It investigated better ways of preserving meat for overseas markets and of economically transporting primary produce. He wanted the government to award annual prizes to stimulate the breeding of better livestock and to certify the excellence of farm and dairy products. Only with 'an unlimited,

⁶⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 9 January 1883, p. 3.

⁶¹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 5 August 1884, p. 3.

⁶² Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 30 July 1889, p. 3.

⁶³ Royal Commission on Local Industries, 1880, Internal Affairs Department, IA 100/1, ANZ-W; 'Report of the Colonial Industries Commission', *AJHR*, 1880, H-22.

certain, and comparatively steady market' in Britain would farmers have a modest prosperity. Combined with 'liberal land administration', this would encourage them to improve their land and increase the colony's wealth.

Thus many persons now congested round our seaport cities, swelling the ranks of the unemployed, causing embarrassment and grave concern and threatening to degrade the cities of New Zealand into gigantic workhouses, supported by State loans, would find employment in the country, and become profitable customers for many industries which confidence, capital, and the presence of a large and prosperous rural population would create. These would in turn provide an important home market for agricultural produce, while, with the exceptional advantages which New Zealand possesses in the readily available and abundant water power, excellent coal, splendid climate and geographical position, large industries might, in the shape of exports, add their quota to the stream of our national wealth.⁶⁴

Later in the year, when contemplating a trip to Melbourne and Britain, he asked the Premier, Sir John Hall, whether he could 'do anything for the good of New Zealand (gratuitously)' whilst overseas.⁶⁵ In his last year in parliament he chaired a select committee into industries and tariffs, which recommended assisting a variety of potential primary industries and establishing a Department of Science and Industries.⁶⁶ He gave himself the credit for getting the Protection of Crops Bill through the lower house, but it was thrown out by the Legislative Council because, he claimed, its members did not want their game poisoned.⁶⁷

In 1876, the *Bruce Herald* called on him to resign his seat as he had 'sold out all his property' and was living in the North Island. A Thames newspaper noted that, prior to the previous election, he had 'held out some kind of hopes that should he thus permanently retire from the district he

⁶⁴ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Bruce Herald*, n.d., reprinted in *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 April 1880, p. 10.

⁶⁵ William Archibald Murray to Sir John Hall, 29 November 1880, Sir John Hall Papers, Political Letters received in 1880, MSy 1100, p. 111, MS 1784, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁶⁶ 'Final Report of Colonial Industries and Tariff Committee, Together with Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence', *AJHR*, 1881, I-10.

⁶⁷ *Waikato Times*, 3 August 1882, p. 3.

would resign'.⁶⁸ In May 1881, Murray told his constituents that he would be unable to visit them again before retiring from parliament.⁶⁹ By October, he announced he would seek re-election 'if a requisition is presented to him'.⁷⁰ When he addressed his constituents at Milton, a large majority voted that he should stand for re-election; 20 supported an amendment 'thanking him for past services and address, but considering that there were two local candidates in the field he should retire'.⁷¹ He did stand, coming second out of three candidates with 401 votes to the winner's 551.⁷² By living in Piako he had lost local support.⁷³ A Waikato correspondent had referred to him earlier that year both as 'the hon. member for Piako' and as a 'future Colonial Treasurer'.⁷⁴ After his defeat, Murray 'complained that there was a block Catholic vote against him';⁷⁵ he was a Presbyterian.⁷⁶

In 1877, a satirist drew a cartoon of him as an equestrian statue, inscribed 'To New Zealand's Greatest Orator and Financier, erected by his Parliamentary Admirers'; he was waving his violin, and could it be a donkey's head inscribed on the base?⁷⁷

ACQUIRING LAND IN THE PIAKO COUNTY

In giving evidence to the Piako Swamp Sale Committee in 1875 about the quality of the soil and how to drain it, Murray stated that he had toured the district three years previously. Told he could purchase it for 5s an acre, instead in 1872 he purchased an unstated acreage six miles from the Swamp Company's property for 12s an acre, which was very cheap. 'I could have got 30s per acre for it six months after I bought it'. Had he known that

⁶⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, citing *Bruce Herald*, 6 June 1876, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 May 1881, p. 3.

⁷⁰ *Bruce Herald*, n.d., cited in *Waikato Times*, 8 October 1881, p. 3.

⁷¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 October 1881, p. 3.

⁷² 'Return of Votes Recorded for Each Candidate at the General Election, 1881', *AJHR*, 1882, H-1, p. 3.

⁷³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 May 1883, p. 17.

⁷⁴ 'Waikato Whisperings', *Observer*, 11 June 1881, p. 426.

⁷⁵ *Observer*, 24 December 1881, p. 236.

⁷⁶ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 June 1888, p. 14; Death Certificate of William Archibald Murray, 26 June 1900, 1900/2299, BDM.

⁷⁷ Cartoon of 'William Archibald Murray, M.P. for Bruce' (1877), Political Cartoons and Posters, 24315, Hocken Collections, University of Otago Library (online).

dry portions were for sale he would have bought some for £1 an acre. 'I was asked £2 per acre for land adjoining the Company's land at that time, but I thought it was a preposterous price, and would not treat'. He had insufficient funds to purchase all the swamp.⁷⁸

In 1869, Thomas Bannatyne Gillies, Superintendent of the Auckland Province,⁷⁹ had purchased 2,415 acres of land near the future township of Morrinsville from its Maori owners for £300.⁸⁰ These freehold acres were part of the Maungatapu Block, which in the early 1880s Murray called the Peko Peko Block.⁸¹ From May to July 1873, he negotiated to acquire part of this block from Gillies, paying £560 in cash as a deposit and taking out a mortgage to meet the remainder of the purchase price.⁸² In 1874 it was reported that Murray had purchased 12,000 acres,⁸³ including all of Gillies' freehold and leasehold land, for £2,500. Murray named his estate Annandale 'in memory, it is thought, of the Earl of Annandale's daughter whom he had once courted unsuccessfully'.⁸⁴ From at least 1879 onwards he held 10,000 acres, paying 'a nominal rent' on the leasehold half.⁸⁵ An 1880 report stated that, of this area, 'about half' was leased from Maori owners 'who cannot sell it as it is a reserve'.⁸⁶ In 1882, his 3,727 freehold acres were valued at £13,000; he still had property in Tuapeka County, Otago, worth £10, and also in Hamilton worth £60.⁸⁷

Murray and his brothers were not content with this large acreage. In March 1875, Murray sought information about land

⁷⁸ Evidence of William Archibald Murray, 'Piako Swamp Sale Committee', *AJHR*, 1875, I-6, pp. 11-13.

⁷⁹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 42, 105.

⁸⁰ Watson, p. 20.

⁸¹ *Waikato Electoral Rolls, 1880*, p. 13; 1882, p. 15.

⁸² Jackson and Russell to William Archibald Murray, 2 May 1873, 20 May 1873, 3 July 1873, 22 July 1873, Letterbook no. 9, pp. 1141, 1223, 1396, 1493, Jackson and Russell Papers, MS 360, Library of the Auckland Institute and War Memorial Museum.

⁸³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 September 1874, p. 5.

⁸⁴ Watson, p. 20; Stephen Allen, *Early Morrinsville* (Morrinsville, 1959), p. 12.

⁸⁵ *Brett's Auckland Almanac ... for 1880* (Auckland, 1880), p. 58; *Waikato Times*, 21 January 1882, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 19 January 1884, p. 2; 'Agricola', 'Ten Days in the Waikato', *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 June 1879, p. 13.

⁸⁶ Waitoa Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 19 July 1880, p. 3.

⁸⁷ *A Return of the Freeholders of New Zealand ...* (Wellington, 1884), p. M 78.

in the vicinity of Te Aroha which private persons are not interdicted by Govt proclamation from buying from the Native owners – Amongst them

Te Waiharakeke Block

Te Ruakaka Block

Te Hungahunga Block

Harateatea Block and others

I also wish to know if the Govt wd. have any objection to our buying these lands named, privately for the purposes of settlement. We wd. be willing to expend an amount equal to the purchase money at least, in opening the lands by roads etc and to offer the greater portion at moderate prices to be afterwards arranged and on easy terms.⁸⁸

His offer was declined, as the Crown was negotiating to acquire these blocks.⁸⁹ In May he wrote to the Native Minister, Donald McLean, in response to officials wanting the government to receive the signatures of all those Maori claiming present or future interests in the Maungatapu block, which he was leasing. He did not believe any further signatures were required apart from those listed in the Crown Grant, who had all assented to the trust arrangement. ‘Seeing the annoyances that are involved in dealing with the Natives & the class of men through whom such transactions have usually to be conducted, great delay must be caused by the course indicated & I will be put to great & I think unnecessary expense’. He was renting for 8s an acre, which ‘is considered ample, as I take both bad & good’. As the land could yield three times the current rent, if the owners preferred he could pay them £800 in cash and the interest on the balance for 20 years at seven per cent. He wanted the arrangement sorted out, as ‘I have no heart to proceed with improvements for it places great difficulties in the way of improving even my freehold from its nature & position’. If McLean assisted him he would be helping to improve New Zealand. He added that the Maori owners had ‘seriously retarded’ the

⁸⁸ William Archibald Murray to Under-Secretary, Native Office, 16 March 1875, Maori Affairs Department, MA-MLP 1, 1875/296, ANZ-W.

⁸⁹ Memorandum of James Mackay, 13 July 1875; Under-Secretary, Native Office, to William Archibald Murray, 24 August 1875, Maori Affairs Department, MA-MLP 1, 1875/296, ANZ-W.

survey of the main road, which could not have happened if the land was his freehold – only the ‘Trust difficulty’ had prevented it being freeholded.⁹⁰

Two years later he inquired about obtaining a Crown grant for the Ruakaka block, at Te Aroha, but was told that, because Ngati Rahiri occupied it, a grant could not be issued without using force,⁹¹ which the government was not prepared to use.

By January 1884, Murray had decided that he had taken up too much land:

Having to depend solely on hired help, and having far more land than I can profitably use, I am constrained to go in for stock and turnips instead of grain, though I should be very pleased to see more settlers here and to sell them farms that will grow anything and only keep as much as I can rightly use; for I find it is the greatest mistake to have more, no matter how good it is.⁹²

Ten months later he offered to sell 204 acres of ‘good land’ close to the railway line, allegedly cheaply.⁹³ Was this the land, valued at £350, that he claimed he ‘gave ... away for £96 thankfully’?⁹⁴ The following March, William Shepherd Allen, then living in England,⁹⁵ bought his Annandale Estate with the intention of settling his sons on it. This estate, plus some extra land, gave Allen a total of 2,619 acres of the Maungatapu Block, in two portions.⁹⁶ The purchase price was given, at first, as being £6 10s an acre, and, later, from £5 to £6 an acre;⁹⁷ he took possession in March 1886.⁹⁸

FARMING THE ANNANDALE ESTATE

⁹⁰ William Archibald Murray to Sir Donald McLean, 15 May 1875, Sir Donald McLean Papers, MS-Copy-Micro-0535-073, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁹¹ Under-Secretary, Native Office, to William Archibald Murray, 19 February 1877, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

⁹² Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 12 January 1884, p. 2.

⁹³ *Waikato Times*, 16 October 1884, p. 3.

⁹⁴ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 20 September 1888, p. 3.

⁹⁵ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 788.

⁹⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1885, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 2 July 1885, p. 828.

⁹⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 March 1885, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 10 March 1885, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 19 March 1887, p. 2.

⁹⁸ *Waikato Times*, 10 March 1885, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 19 March 1887, p. 2.

In May 1875, when Murray first visited to decide how to improve his land, one newspaper believed that his 'large experience' coupled with the 'adequate capital' at his disposal could not 'fail to render him a most valuable settler'.⁹⁹ In 1883 it described him as 'one of the most enterprising settlers in the Piako district'.¹⁰⁰ From late 1880 onwards he was assisted by two of his brothers, John and Thomas,¹⁰¹ and another brother sent 11 'very fine pedigree merino rams' from Mount Stewart in April 1881.¹⁰²

An agricultural reporter who visited in mid-1879 described three-quarters of the freehold as being a swamp whereas the leasehold was 'undulating dry land', both portions being 'of good quality'. Murray had drained 'all' the swamp 'with drains 20 chains apart'.¹⁰³ However the following year it was stated that 'much' of his land was still swamp, 'but all good'.¹⁰⁴ The swamp had great potential; when he sank a well in 1882 it went down nearly 30 feet through 'nothing but rich vegetable mould'.¹⁰⁵ A reporter rode over part of his reclaimed swamp four years later, 'where the soil as far down as thirty-five feet was nothing but decomposed vegetable matter, mixed with burnt flax and charred timber'.¹⁰⁶

A correspondent reporting on swamp reclamation in October 1882 wrote that he had

a large extent of swamp, and is reclaiming it slowly, but surely, and to see his paddocks from the road as you ride along shows how excellent the land is. They look splendid, and he has had wonderfully good crops off them of oats, turnips, &c. That time is one of the great essentials to swamp draining has been proved by this gentleman, who tried to grow crops on the swamp immediately on its coming in, but in some instances did not get anything worth harvesting, Now the same land is A1.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 13 May 1875, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 May 1883, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Waitoa Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 19 July 1880, p. 3. *Waikato Times*, letter from John Murray, 14 March 1882, p. 3, 16 September 1882, p. 3.

¹⁰² *Waikato Times*, 2 April 1881, p. 2.

¹⁰³ 'Agricola', 'Ten Days in the Waikato', *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 June 1879, p. 13.

¹⁰⁴ *Brett's Auckland Almanac ... for 1880* (Auckland, 1880), p. 58.

¹⁰⁵ *Waikato Times*, 19 December 1882, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Own Reporter, 'Annandale, Morrinsville', *Waikato Times*, 24 June 1886, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ A Correspondent, 'Swamp Reclamation in the Waikato District', *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 October 1882, p. 23.

In June 1882 ‘a very fine specimen of the pumpkin species (iron bark)’ was displayed in Hamilton, ‘5 feet 10 inches in girth’ and weighing ‘no less than 122lb’. It had been grown ‘on land which, but a few months ago, was an impassable swamp’.¹⁰⁸ In December, 72 acres were in wheat. His land, ‘when taken in hand six years ago, was just capable of carrying the same number of cattle that is now carried and fattened in a paddock, sown in turnips, of 60 acres’.¹⁰⁹ In 1886, 1,600 acres were described as being of very good quality, 400 were of ‘moderate’ quality, and 300 were ‘decidedly poor’.¹¹⁰

Along the ‘many miles of drains’ he dug ‘he planted rows of Eucalyptus trees, but although the land was much of it peat soil there was sufficient fall to the east to enable it to be drained into the Waiharakeke’ Stream.¹¹¹ By March 1880 he had broken in the land around his house, with hundreds of acres in grass and clover, ‘well stocked and admirably fenced’.¹¹² In July, a reporter saw about 1,000 acres were cultivation and ‘a handsome dwelling house’ being erected.¹¹³ A Waitoa correspondent wrote, two weeks later, that his land had ‘a considerable frontage to the main road’. Upon 3,000 ‘improved’ acres 300 cattle were ‘being fattened for the market. A large barn-like building is the dwelling house. It is two storeys high, and to appearance not unlike the sawmill near Kopu’.¹¹⁴ In contrast, another correspondent referred to his ‘beautiful homestead’;¹¹⁵ in the absence of any photographs it is not possible to assess whether it had the beauty of a sawmill. It was certainly an improvement on the previous house, as ‘an old Wairoan’ discovered in 1880 when revisiting the district. When entering the Murray brothers’ land after leaving the Matamata Estate, ‘with half an eye he could see he was coming to Bachelors’ Hall, but noticing a large stock of newly-sawn timbering, learned that a new frame house was to be erected,

¹⁰⁸ *Waikato Times*, 20 June 1882, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Waikato Times*, 19 December 1882, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 19 March 1886, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Allen, p. 21.

¹¹² *Waikato Times*, 23 March 1880, p. 2.

¹¹³ Own Reporter, ‘Tour in the Aroha, Waitoa, and Piako Districts’, *Thames Advertiser*, 3 July 1880, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Waitoa Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 19 July 1880, p. 3.

¹¹⁵ A Correspondent, ‘Through Piako to Te Aroha’, *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1881, p. 4.

as a sister was coming. His answer was that he was glad to hear it, but shrewdly suspected it was somebody else's sister'.¹¹⁶ If it was, no marriage ensued.

The same visitor recorded that the Murray brothers were 'making a good show with their farm. The land is first-class, and will well repay working'.¹¹⁷ Murray was impatient to develop it. In October 1880, he asked the Premier to determine the route of the railway line through his land 'without delay so that I may go on with my fencing draining & cultivation as over 200 acres of valuable land is & has for some months remained comparatively valueless to me'.¹¹⁸ An agricultural reporter noted, in mid-1879, that Murray

goes in strong for cocksfoot grass. What is somewhat singular, during his operations he has sown altogether about 500 bags of rye-grass and only 7 of cocksfoot, yet he had the best show of the latter. He now uses the following mixed grasses to the acre: - 10lb cocksfoot, 3lb rye-grass, 6lb clover, 1lb rib-grass, 1lb rape, 1/2lb turnip. I saw some young plants of *Lotus Corn. Major*, which Mr Murray believes to be the best clover to grow, as it spreads almost like twitch.¹¹⁹

In October 1881, Murray had 'a paddock of young grass so luxuriant that he commenced mowing it for his horses more than three weeks ago'.¹²⁰ By the following January, 'a large portion of his land were 'cultivated or in grass'.¹²¹ As more development was required, four months later he sought tenders for clearing manuka.¹²²

In 1879, he had 500 cattle and 700 sheep, 'all in good condition'.¹²³ The largest number of sheep recorded was 2,420, in 1885.¹²⁴ He bred merino and

¹¹⁶ Own Correspondent, 'The Progress of Piako', *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 July 1880, p. 15.

¹¹⁷ Own Correspondent, 'The Progress of Piako', *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 July 1880, p. 15.

¹¹⁸ William Archibald Murray to Sir John Hall, 18 October 1880, Sir John Hall papers, Political Letters received in 1880, MSy 1100, p. 111, MS 1784, Alexander Turnbull Library.

¹¹⁹ 'Agricola', 'Ten Days in the Waikato', *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 June 1879, p. 13.

¹²⁰ *Waikato Times*, 4 October 1881, p. 2.

¹²¹ *Waikato Times*, 21 January 1882, p. 2.

¹²² *Waikato Times*, 4 May 1882, p. 2.

¹²³ 'Agricola', 'Ten Days in the Waikato', *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 June 1879, p. 13.

Lincoln sheep.¹²⁵ In March 1883, his 2,000 sheep fed on 25 acres of turnips for a month, after which the land was to be ploughed and replanted in turnips. ‘This is an experiment Mr Murray is trying of cropping, and so far he is highly satisfied with the result’.¹²⁶ In 1884, at the Waikato Sheep Fair he sold 50 ‘half-bred lambs’ and 800 long-wool ewes.¹²⁷ Also in that year he entered a fat wether with ‘long curved horns growing out of the tips of its ears and hanging almost to the ground’ in the Auckland agricultural show.¹²⁸ His wool clip that year was ‘superb’.¹²⁹

Animals helped him to clear the land. During most of the winter of 1882 he ran 1,400 sheep and 50 cattle on 64 acres of turnips planted in ‘new and rough ground’. They were ‘all fat, and besides improving this turnip field the sheep have killed all the fern and ti-tree of an adjoining grass paddock, showing that sheep are better for improving the country’.¹³⁰

Late in the year, he called tenders to ‘cross plough and harrow about 200 acres’ to break in this land.¹³¹ Three months later, he was sued for £59 12s for clearing 172 acres of scrub ‘as agreed’. The judge accepted Murray’s denial of ever having made this arrangement, and the plaintiff accepted a non-suit.¹³² The evidence showed that Duncan Campbell, a labourer, had agreed to clear ground at 7s an acre for the man who had a contract for ploughing, but had declined to clear the whole block at that price because some parts should have been paid at the rate of 15s. Murray, who was to pay half during the contract and the other half when it was finished, had told Campbell to ‘keep before the plough at all times’, but when the work was completed he would not pay until the contractor certified the work. Campbell had cut the scrub about nine inches off the ground, making the land ‘quite fit for the plough’, and had asked Murray to measure the work when it was completed, but ‘he said he had no time’. Further evidence revealed that John Murray had called for tenders and that Campbell had

¹²⁴ *Waikato Times*, 25 January 1883, p. 3; ‘Annual Sheep Returns’, *AJHR*, 1883, H-19, p. 10; 1884, H-3, p. 10; 1885, H-11, p. 8; 1886, H-8, p. 9.

¹²⁵ *Waikato Times*, 2 April 1881, p. 2.

¹²⁶ *Waikato Times*, 3 March 1883, p. 2.

¹²⁷ *Waikato Times*, 26 January 1884, p. 3.

¹²⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 1 November 1884, p. 2.

¹²⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 8 November 1884, p. 2.

¹³⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 21 September 1882, p. 2.

¹³¹ *Waikato Times*, 25 November 1882, p. 3, 30 November 1882, p. 3.

¹³² District Court, *Waikato Times*, 13 February 1883, p. 2.

burnt the cut scrub 'when the dry weather came'. Murray told the judge that he had told Campbell that he would give him half the money when he completed clearing and burning each paddock and the other half when they were ploughed. When 'Campbell said It may never be ploughed', Murray responded that he 'was not going to pay for work until it was ploughed'. He had 'repeatedly complained' about how the ploughing was done. Just over 130 acres were to be cleared; Campbell cleared only 108, and not to Murray's satisfaction. Murray had let contracts to others to clear other areas.¹³³ One month after selling his property to Allen, as Murray was to remain in possession for another year he called tenders for ploughing 200 acres and clearing another 250.¹³⁴

One feature of Murray's farm management was planting trees. In 1879, 'like some of his neighbours' he 'planted a considerable quantity of trees – some in rows, which will be utilized for wire fencing'.¹³⁵ The following year, a guidebook reported that he had 'taken great pains in forest culture, having planted large quantities of young trees with a view to the future wooding of his estate'.¹³⁶ A reporter visiting in 1886 described the planting around his house:

A plantation surrounds the homestead, amongst which are oaks of four years' growth, doing well and already attained to a good height. There are fine straight-stemmed gums of seven years' growth, and many other varieties (seven in all) of the Australian eucalyptus, the *Wellingtonia gigantea*, hazel, acacia, ash, varieties of the spruce, &c, &c, and a young orchard of apple trees, well forward.¹³⁷

Murray blamed much of farmers' financial woes on birds destroying their crops, using his own experiences as an example. He had had 'to cut green a crop of oats which a practical farmer said would be over 60 bushels an acre, as the birds were devouring the soft milky grain in myriads. I am certain that I could grow 40 bushels of wheat here if the birds and weather permitted it to be harvested'. He was convinced that 'good mixed turnips

¹³³ Hamilton District Court, Judges' Notebook 1879-1884, pp. 101-110, BCDG 11399/1a, ANZ-A.

¹³⁴ *Waikato Times*, 10 March 1885, p. 2, 9 April 1885, p. 3.

¹³⁵ 'Agricola', 'Ten Days in the Waikato', *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 June 1879, p. 13.

¹³⁶ *Descriptive Handbook to the Waikato* (Hamilton, 1880), p. 67.

¹³⁷ Own Reporter, 'Annandale, Morrinsville', *Waikato Times*, 24 June 1886, p. 3.

and grain husbandry' would be profitable if he could 'get rid of the gramniverous birds first'. Even though these ate much of the grain sown,

this would not destroy the chance of a crop. This season I sowed oats broadcast, after rape, in the end of May; all the oats on the surface were eaten, which I did not mind, but when the young grain came up, the ground seemed literally white with the tender shoots the birds had pulled up, and the crop appeared to be ruined. However, more shoots from deeper buried seed came up, and a gentleman from Canterbury a few days ago said it was about the best he had ever seen, though perhaps it might be too thick. I only sowed two bushels of Tartar oats per acre, and these are now eight inches long on an average. In the middle of June I sowed another field, new land twice ploughed, and the same thing occurred; the larks seemed to have cleared off the young braird [fresh shoots],¹³⁸ and I got some wheat soaked in a liquid which Mr [Adam] Laybourn¹³⁹ sent from Auckland. The wheat was all eaten, but I saw no dead birds. Oats which I sowed in an adjoining field, after turnips, seemed to have shared the same fate, and I gave this a seeding of poisoned wheat, which was all eaten by mid-day next day, and there were still plenty of live birds and no dead ones; while the oats, which seemed to have been hopelessly destroyed, are as fine a crop, so far, as I have ever seen, and I have grown 100 bushels per acre at Waitahuna, Otago, and I only sowed 1 1/2 bushels of Tartar oats per acre in the last two fields. I am moved by observation to the opinion that larks do harm only on badly covered and farmed fields, soon after sowing, and that in harvest they do little harm, feeding like sparrows and the valuable kingfisher, on grubs and insects. In harvest it is the ruinous depredations of the sparrows and linnets which we have to fear; they do no good in compensation, while the lark seems to do rather more good than injury.¹⁴⁰

Claiming to speak for farmers, Murray regularly complained about government policy affecting them, usually because of the effects on his own farm. For instance, following on from other people complaining about 'the mismanagement of the Government railway', he stated that, having 'some years ago suffered from the same', he used river steamers instead. In 1882, when he purchased 'a small steam engine to drive my chaff cutter, and fearing the want of appliances to unload and unload from the steamers at

¹³⁸ *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 1964), p. 143.

¹³⁹ See *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 August 1889, p. 30, 14 September 1889, p. 17, 28 September 1889, p. 21, 31 May 1901, p. 23.

¹⁴⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 3 August 1882, p. 3.

Aroha and on the wagon, I had it sent by rail to Hamilton', which cost him £3 5s 6d, 'double what would be the cost by steamer to Aroha, whence I could have got it in a day, instead of in three from Hamilton, and about as much as the freight from London to Auckland'.¹⁴¹ Two months later, he called for the construction of a railway line between Hamilton and Te Aroha. 'I speak feelingly, as it costs 6s per ton per mile to send my produce to Te Aroha, or a rent on the crop of £3 per acre'.¹⁴² In May 1883, he renewed his accusation of bungling by the railways and complained about trouble in transporting sheep from Hamilton to Auckland. The delay in constructing the railway bridge at Hamilton that would bring the railway to his property was 'ruinous to many'. As in the case of the Waiorongomai tramway, 'we realize the feeling of hope deferred which almost inclines one to leave this district, and go where, if there is taxation, there is also some equivalent, some public energy, and some prospect that a man may obtain the return for industry and expenditure within a reasonable time'.¹⁴³

He continually complained about transport difficulties and costs because he wanted to sell sheep to the New Zealand Frozen Meat and Storage Company in Auckland.¹⁴⁴ In January 1884, referring to 'the disastrous failure' of one shipment of meat to London, he wrote that he had

expected £200 more than the amount insured for and got nothing. I see by the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company's returns that my sheep, which were all alike, and of the finest and most suitable quality, and bred on this farm, brought from 1 1/2d to 8d per lib, showing, by contrast, the great loss as "somebody had blundered."¹⁴⁵

In yet another letter about his farming successes and woes, written in January 1884, he complained about the costs of cutting chaff and grumbled that people did not pay for their chaff quickly, making its cutting unprofitable for him.¹⁴⁶ The following year he gave details of the unnecessary costs (he argued) imposed by central and local government. 'The general government property tax, two county rates, two road board

¹⁴¹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 29 June 1882, p. 3.

¹⁴² Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 24 August 1882, p. 3.

¹⁴³ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 3 May 1883, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 29 December 1883, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 January 1884, p. 22.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 12 January 1884, p. 2.

rates' took 'nominally about 200 per cent' of his income, but really 'about half the net return for his capital and toil are so absorbed. Government taxes and interferes with our sheep'. The dog tax did not really protect them from dogs but was really just another special tax, and the Slaughterhouses Act forced him to sell animals to butchers at a low price. Railway freight was too expensive, and goods were damaged 'by careless neglect'. Unless he paid 'an extortionate charge to the railway department' for loading his wool 'they let it get wet and refuse to pay compensation'.¹⁴⁷

In March 1886, all his animals and equipment were sold. 'High prices were realised, and everything quitted satisfactorily'.¹⁴⁸ Precise details were not provided, but by the time he sold up it was reported that he had spent a 'large amount of capital in bringing the land into cultivation, fencing, draining, etc'.¹⁴⁹ In June, Henry Buttle,¹⁵⁰ who had become Allen's farm manager six months previously,¹⁵¹ showed a Hamilton reporter over the property, who published elaborate details of what Murray had achieved and what remained to be done. The 2,400 acres were 'perfectly flat', and the railway to Te Aroha ran through the centre of the estate

and within three hundred yards of the house. A flag-station has been provided for their accommodation. The residence is a comfortable looking two-storied building, and is approached from the road through a well-grassed ten-acre paddock. A small but neat flower garden has its place before the verandah, which occupies two sides of the building, one half of which is a conservatory, and contains a large spreading grape vine. The grapes, however, did not turn out well under the glass, apparently for the want of ventilation; but to the left of the flower garden is a tresselled vinery, which, being in the open aid, gave a very considerable yield.

The reporter then described the plantation of trees around the homestead, which he considered would provide 'durable timber' in the future. Across the railway line and main road, the reporter and Buttle rode

¹⁴⁷ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 29 October 1885, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 20 February 1886, p. 2, 6 March 1886, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 19 March 1887, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ See paper on the temperance movement in the Te Aroha district.

¹⁵¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 17 December 1885, p. 3.

through two large fields of healthy looking turnips, thirty acres and fifty acres, respectively. The next was a large sub-division of one hundred and twenty acres which had been previously roughly turned over, but which Mr Buttle intends to put under the plough again and plant in turnips for next summer.

He also planned to plant 'one corner of this paddock, about twenty acres', in forest trees. This paddock ended at the Piako River, the other side of which was owned by others.

We next rode over a field of sixty acres, freshly ploughed and ready for grass and turnips. I noticed a novelty in the way of a dividing hedge. The ti-tree scrub [manuka] had been left standing in a long strip alongside the fences and kept trimmed. It had a very good appearance and also served as shelter for the sheep and cattle. The soil so far was of good quality. Where we came next was reclaimed swamp.... The pasturage was very plentiful and rich, being chiefly rye grass and cocksfoot. We passed through several paddocks of sixty and eighty acres each of this description. Several mobs of cattle, yearlings, fat beeves, dairy cows, and also horses were seen.

Under Murray's management, this land 'was laid very bare', and Buttle had 'decided to let it recover, and has consequently not much stock running on the farm. At the present there are only 300 merino sheep and 250 head of cattle'. Maori contractors were clearing 60 acres 'of new ground', and 110 acres were being ploughed for planting with turnips and rye. 'Several large grass paddocks were visited, which were clothed with a luxuriant covering of grass'. More work was required to break in the land, for Murray had only cultivated half of his farm.¹⁵² The following year, there were 3,000 acres 'in a high state of cultivation'.¹⁵³ Allen would further develop the land, and erect a 'very large house', which still exists, to replace Murray's.¹⁵⁴ In 1892, the improved value of Allen's more than 10,000 acres was £15,800.¹⁵⁵ By 1902, Allen owned 4,300 acres, all except 1,000 'capable of cultivation', and ran a flock of 2,000 sheep.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Own Reporter, 'Annandale, Morrinsville', *Waikato Times*, 24 June 1886, p. 3.

¹⁵³ Special Reporter, 'A Trip to Te Aroha', *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1887, p. 29.

¹⁵⁴ *Waikato Times*, 11 April 1892, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Auckland Weekly News*, 1 October 1892, p. 38.

¹⁵⁶ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 788.

PROVIDING ADVICE

Murray had no hesitation in telling farmers and the government how to make farming more productive and more profitable and regularly extolled his own efforts. In a postscript to an 1882 letter on 'What Shall Farmers Grow?' he promised that 'When time permits I will address you on various matters of interest and advantage to our settlers'.¹⁵⁷ He was as good as his word.

An 1890 letter explained that during the holiday period of 1880-1 he had gone to Orange, New South Wales, 'to inspect the freezing works then just established there. On my return to Wellington, between 40 and 50 southern members of both Houses, and others met', and appointed him, another parliamentarian, a farmer, and 'a leader in the Gear Meat Company' as 'a committee to prepare a report which was left to me, and was published in Wellington and southern papers of the time'.¹⁵⁸ In 1880 he had explained the work of this royal commission into local industries, which he chaired. It was considering the export of meat and other products 'preserved by the freezing or other process, improving the value of agricultural and pastoral produce in general', and 'more rapid and unrestricted economical communication' with markets. It was hoped that the United States might reduce its duty on wool and that 'a powerful firm' would, 'for a very moderate bonus', establish 'a direct line of first-class steamers' to carry passengers, mail, farm produce, 'preserved meat', and gold to Europe. Annual prizes awarded by the government might 'stimulate improvement in the quality and production' of all types of produce, and it was necessary to sell in Britain, where prices were much higher. The current lack of 'well-directed enterprise amongst colonists, which is disastrous to us all', required

earnest consideration, and prompt and prudent action. Why, the steamers to which I have alluded, would carry meat produce, &c, without injury, and grain and oatmeal in bins, as safely as in a granary. Though the profits of the farmers might not be large, they would have an unlimited, certain, and comparatively steady market, which, with liberal land administration, would encourage them to extend their improvements, their holdings, and the exports which will bring wealth into the colony. Thus many persons now congested round our seaport cities, swelling the

¹⁵⁷ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 21 September 1882, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 6 May 1890, p. 2.

ranks of the unemployed, causing embarrassment and grave concern and threatening to degrade the cities of New Zealand into gigantic workhouses, supported by State loans, would find employment in the country, and become profitable customers for many industries which confidence, capital, and the presence of a large and prosperous rural population would create. These would in turn provide an important home market for agricultural produce.¹⁵⁹

His report stated that because of New Zealand's 'great advantages in growing root and green crops and artificial grasses there was practically no limit to the increase of our stock carrying capacity, and the development of the export trade in wool, frozen meat, and produce, if we had only a remunerative and unlimited market'.¹⁶⁰

In September 1882 he wrote that, being 'impressed with the advantageous prospects which the export of frozen meat and butter open to agriculture, early last year I made it my business in Australia to get the most reliable information'. With another parliamentarian, he had invited over 40 men 'from all parts of New Zealand' to meet in Wellington, resulting in a report on what farm produce would be successful. 'Subsequent events have fully confirmed the correctness of our report', as he explained in detail. 'Arrangements might be made to get vessels with freezing apparatus to visit Auckland periodically to freeze and take our surplus meat, butter, etc, until a freezing factory is established. A steady and profitable demand will soon create the supply'.¹⁶¹

In September 1882 Murray expressed his pleasure at 'the vitality of the agriculturalists of Waikato in trying with energy to secure more profitable markets'.¹⁶² The following month he was elected a provisional director of the Auckland Freezing Company.¹⁶³ He continued to support the frozen meat trade, writing in March 1883 that 'all we want is a sure and profitable market for produce, and less government and taxation to assure general prosperity and increased values for property'.¹⁶⁴ Nine months later,

¹⁵⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Bruce Herald*, n.d., reprinted in *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 April 1880, p. 10.

¹⁶⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 6 May 1890, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 21 September 1882, p. 2.

¹⁶² Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 21 September 1882, p. 2.

¹⁶³ *Waikato Times*, 5 October 1882, p. 3.

¹⁶⁴ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 20 March 1883, p. 3.

when he wanted to sell sheep to the New Zealand Frozen Meat and Storage Company, he suggested that slaughtering be done in the country alongside the railway lines. 'I fear the cheese market may be over-done, but for butter the market is unlimited', and he recommended that frozen butter be sent to America. 'What we require for our farmers is a better market for their products, and to be able to produce cheaply by having greater facilities for economical production'.¹⁶⁵

In January 1884, he was critical of the 'disastrous failure' of a shipment of meat to London on the 'Mataura', which had caused him financial loss.

My attention has been drawn to the coincidence of the names of some of the leading spirits in this new Freezing and Fisher and Co.'s combination with those who were regarded as largely to blame for the failure of the company which the Waikato farmers tried to start. Some thought that these were actuated by penitence for their hostility or apathy to the first project, or felt the condemnation of public opinion. Anyhow, it would not do to directly oppose the current of the popular wish to establish an export which has everywhere else produced, and is continuing increasingly to produce, greater prosperity and brighter prospects, not only to agriculturalists, the mainstay of the community, but through those of all classes; for if farmers earn more they will spend more in increasing their productive powers, and this means money circulating among all classes, and especially more steady employment to the industrial classes. The Mataura business was not encouraging, and the seeming lack of zeal in pushing on the freezing works, temporary or otherwise, is having a most prejudicial effect upon the prosperity of this province. I would be sorry to credit rumours that the company, which has been got up under the pretentious name of the New Zealand Meat Freezing and Storage Company, was got up merely to keep others out of the market, and that they did not intend to go into the business *con amore*, if at all. If this should be so, it would be most unfortunate that the Harbour Board has given them that most valuable area of ten acres at a nominal rent for half a century, and without restricting its use to the legitimate business of the company, and thus virtually to sacrifice the estate given to the Board as a public trust, to create a monopoly.

He continued to criticize the granting of this land, and hoped 'better things of the company' and that 'rumours' would be proved incorrect. He

¹⁶⁵ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 29 December 1883, p. 2.

concluded 'by reminding the company of a certain old saying about horses waiting while the grass grows'.¹⁶⁶ The editor commented that Murray's 'insinuation' against the company was 'inexcusable, in view of the means the company has taken. We have seen no appearance of a moment having been lost, but the contrary'.¹⁶⁷ Five months later, he criticized the management of this company for ruining the new trade. Too much money was being spent on 'bricks and mortar' in Auckland, and the freezing factory should be established in Waikato, not beside the Auckland sewer outfall.¹⁶⁸ Nearly two years later, when writing about the need to develop the Auckland waterfront, he complained that the harbour board was acting unfairly against the New Zealand Freezing Company.¹⁶⁹

Murray continued to be concerned about prices received in Britain, and in 1889 praised a new type of butter box,¹⁷⁰ invented by James Alexander Pond.¹⁷¹ The following year, in yet another long letter he gave his views on the best way to organize the frozen meat trade. It would be necessary to change the present 'system of railway mismanagement', erect abattoirs in the Waikato, '(where the refuse would be useful for manures), and send the mutton and beef in suitable cars direct to the Freezing Stores in Auckland. By and bye it might be well to have a branch freezing place in Waikato where cheap coal and pure air and water would be favourable'. There could be another one established in Tauranga.

The difficulty of taking lambs is not a practical one; I speak from long and wide experience. Let the track through the bush to Tauranga (Thompson's track) be felled at once several chains wide (now is the time to begin it), and in 10 months hence, before the winter rains, burn off and sow in cocksfoot, clover and ribgrass. At the same time and in like manner, bush might be cleared and prepared for accommodation paddocks. The funds to do this would be small and could be advanced by Government to the combined county councils of Tauranga and Piako, in whom the road and paddocks would be vested in trust for the public. A small sum from the accumulated sheep rate would pay the

¹⁶⁶ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 January 1884, p. 22.

¹⁶⁷ Editorial comment on letter from William Archibald Murray, *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 January 1884, p. 22.

¹⁶⁸ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 31 May 1884, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *New Zealand Herald*, 5 January 1886, p. 3.

¹⁷⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 19 January 1889, p. 7.

¹⁷¹ See paper on his life.

interest; we have surely as much right to expect this as the Canterbury squatters to have it for rabbit fences. Assuming the bush land to belong to Government I have written to the Commissioner of Crown Lands suggesting a sufficient temporary reservation thereof.¹⁷²

In August 1882, Murray had written a long lament about the woes of farmers:

It has been well said that if farmers counted the cost they would have hesitated in their choice of a business, and if we consider their numerous difficulties, the uncertainty of the weather and markets, the want of available roads, the difficulty of procuring trained and reliable assistance in their labors, the swarms of pests, bird, beast, and reptile, there is no wonder that we hear the complaint that farming does not pay. It is much to be regretted that some of the farmers' chief disadvantages should be the result of the ill-directed zeal of some officious busy-bodies whose actions seem to corroborate what Dr Watts says about Satan finding work for such. We would hope that in charity the persons who inflicted the rabbit and small bird pests did so through ignorance rather than from malignity.

Whilst the former had 'not yet become a serious evil in the Waikato', the latter could 'only be regarded as a grave public calamity, requiring to be grappled by prompt and general remedial action'. After explaining the difficulties of distinguishing between a bird that was a 'trivial offender' and a 'guilty criminal', he wanted government experts to be 'more practically and usefully employed in assisting farmers' instead of 'indulging in theoretical philosophy'.¹⁷³ To assist in draining land, he suggested that a Land Drainage Department be formed.¹⁷⁴ He was on a committee established in 1888 to form a Board of Agriculture,¹⁷⁵ but no more was heard of this.

In 1893, in a remarkably brief letter for Murray, he informed farmers that he had received 'a sample of Windsor beans' from an English firm which he had passed on 'to friends in Canterbury'. He considered that 'the more we can increase the profitable variety of our productions we have less

¹⁷² Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 6 May 1890, p. 2.

¹⁷³ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 3 August 1882, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ *Waikato Times*, 20 March 1880, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ *Waikato Times*, 21 June 1888, p. 2.

risking of our eggs in one basket', and thought that the beans might 'yield better returns than all being confined to wheat-growing'.¹⁷⁶ The following year, he wrote to the Minister of Lands about inferior barbed wire, a sample of which he had sent to the *Waikato Times*, and called for a reduction in the duty on this 'worthless' wire.¹⁷⁷ Officials agreed to consider his suggestion that inferior wire be banned for use in boundary fences and that the duty be lowered.¹⁷⁸

His brother Thomas considered himself to be an expert on the use of lime, drainage, and the dairy industry in general, and occasionally wrote to the press on these topics.¹⁷⁹

MINING INVESTMENTS

The only investment in South Island mining traced was ten of 1,200 shares in the Barracouta Quartz Mining Company, working on the Arrow River in 1866.¹⁸⁰ Two weeks after the opening of the Te Aroha goldfield, he reported 'great excitement' about the discoveries to the Premier, and when the latter visited in February 1882 Murray told him that this was 'a substantial and permanent gold district, with reefs of great thickness'.¹⁸¹ Later that year, he told a Tauranga newspaper that he had 'heard many competent miners express the opinion that, taking into consideration the vastness and comparative richness of the Waiorongomai reefs, a great and permanent city will rapidly arise there'. He expected the government would be forced to make a branch railway line to Waiorongomai to transport 'the large quantity of coal' needed to supplement water power in the batteries

¹⁷⁶ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Auckland Weekly News*, 4 November 1893, p. 14.

¹⁷⁷ *Waikato Times*, 16 June 1894, p. 8.

¹⁷⁸ *Waikato Times*, 31 July 1894, p. 4.

¹⁷⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, letter from Thomas Murray, 18 October 1884, p. 17, 'To Correspondents', 15 July 1893, p. 15; *Waikato Argus*, 31 January 1899, p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ *New Zealand Gazette*, 3 April 1866, p. 134.

¹⁸¹ William Archibald Murray to Sir John Hall, 9 December 1880, Sir John Hall Papers, MSy 1100, Political Letters received in 1880, p. 192, MS 1784, Alexander Turnbull Library; *Thames Advertiser*, 24 February 1882, p. 3.

crushing ‘the millions of tons of auriferous quartz in this unique and wonderful goldfield’.¹⁸²

Despite this enthusiasm, Murray merely sent some specimens of ore to be tested in Wellington in 1881, and did not take out a miner’s right until May 1882.¹⁸³ He then acquired interests in four claims, converting two of his interests into scrip shares in the Eureka and Victoria companies.¹⁸⁴ Later he acquired at least 88 shares in the Hero Company, which were liable to forfeiture in 1884 if a call was not paid.¹⁸⁵ He even applied for a water race near the battery,¹⁸⁶ presumably contemplating establishing a rival battery.

Thomas was the only brother to invest in mining, having shares in the same Waiorongomai claims and companies.¹⁸⁷ He also had 88 shares in the Hero Company in 1884.¹⁸⁸

In 1890 Murray urged the government to assist the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company to drive a tunnel from Army Creek to the main reef. He described the company’s proposal as ‘much more liberal and businesslike than demands to aid gold mining have hitherto been’. Rather than the government being asked to provide all or most of the money required, the company offered ‘to spend £30,000 of their *own* money if the government will *lend* them £10,000’. The tunnel would ‘render the vast network of mineral bearing reefs’ accessible at a low level ‘to be worked to the best and most economical advantage. If this proves successful the £10,000 to be repaid to government, but if a failure the government to lose the £10,000, while the Company lose £30,000’. He emphasized the benefits

¹⁸² Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 24 July 1882, p. 2, reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 5 August 1882, p. 2.

¹⁸³ *Thames Star*, 1 September 1881, p. 2; Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Miner’s Right no. 1892, issued 9 May 1882, Miners’ Rights Butt Book 1881-1882, BBAV 11533/1i, ANZ-A.

¹⁸⁴ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 26, 39, 40, 45, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 18 May 1882, p. 728, 14 December 1882, p. 1884.

¹⁸⁵ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1884, p. 7.

¹⁸⁶ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 176, no. 146, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

¹⁸⁷ Te Aroha Warden’s Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-1887, folios 26, 39, 40, 45, BBAV 11500/9a, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 18 May 1882, p. 728, 14 December 1882, p. 1884.

¹⁸⁸ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1884, p. 7.

to the colony's coffers if all this foreign capital was invested and the increased revenue and employment if the tunnel succeeded. 'It seems to me that in the public interests the Government would be to blame if they do not accede to such a generous offer'. It was 'no reply that some £27,000 of government and our county money has been lost on the tramway; like much of the Piako County expenditure the money has been fooled away, and if the Piako County had to do with spending the money I would say do not give a penny'.¹⁸⁹ Although the Mines Department responded that it had no money available, Murray told a public meeting that 'very probably a sum would be placed on the Estimates next Session for the purpose of having this most important work carried out'.¹⁹⁰

In 1881, it was reported that a seam of lignite had been found on his land,¹⁹¹ but nothing further was ever heard of this discovery. His investments in non-mining companies were minimal. In April 1882, Thames gossip credited him with being 'by far' the largest shareholder in the Thames Newspaper and Printing Company.¹⁹² If that was so, he quickly sold his shares, having only 50 of its 5,000 when it was formed in that month and selling these by March 1888.¹⁹³ Being a provisional director of the Auckland Freezing Company in 1882,¹⁹⁴ he would have held shares, but the number is unknown because its records have not survived. He acquired 10 of the 20,000 shares in the North New Zealand Farmers' Co-operative Association in December 1885.¹⁹⁵ Despite his interest in the frozen meat trade, he did not hold any shares in the New Zealand Frozen Meat and Storage Company.¹⁹⁶

THE MOUNT PLEASANT ESTATE

¹⁸⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1890, p. 2; enclosed with William Archibald Murray to Colonial Secretary, 5 May 1890, Mines Department, MD 1, 90/119, ANZ-W.

¹⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ *Waikato Times*, 30 September 1881, p. 2.

¹⁹² 'Thames Tittle Tattle', *Observer*, 29 April 1882, p. 102.

¹⁹³ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 38 no. 240, ANZ-A.

¹⁹⁴ *Waikato Times*, 5 October 1882, p. 3.

¹⁹⁵ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 46 no. 295, ANZ-A.

¹⁹⁶ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 43 no. 277, ANZ-A.

In 1884 Murray sold ‘the piece of Maungatapu Block between Annandale and the Kereone Road, bounded by the Waiharakeke’, and later sold his ‘remaining small piece’ of freehold to a man named Rockcliffe, which was named the Mount Pleasant estate.¹⁹⁷ It comprised 427 freehold acres.¹⁹⁸ In July 1887 it was described as ‘very pretty with its clumps of forest and patches of planted trees’.¹⁹⁹ In October 1888, when complaining to the council about its demand for rates (lodged in February), Murray wrote that he had been neither owner nor occupier then, ‘and only came into possession two or three months ago, as Mr Rockcliffe (who owned land nearby)²⁰⁰ paid me no interest, and would not keep on the place. I forgave him about £1200, and took over the *now* valueless place, losing over £1000’. He could have sold the property to William Allen, but Rockcliffe had promised to pay,

and now it seems after all my generosity to Rockcliffe the rates are not paid; though he repeatedly assured me they had been paid. He even wanted not to pay Mr [William?] Thorne’s²⁰¹ account for my releasing him from the mortgage – so much for gratitude – and now I suppose he tells you to get the rates out of me.²⁰²

After the council considered his letter, he wrote demanding an apology for the ‘gratuitous, unwarrantable, and slanderous’ comment that he was ‘a culprit’; the chairman, who had no recollection of making this statement, declined to apologize, describing his letter as ‘a gratuitous piece of impertinence’.²⁰³ Earlier that year he had complained that this property was overvalued.²⁰⁴ In a subsequent letter protesting at the level of the land tax, he wrote that it was

¹⁹⁷ Allen, p. 31.

¹⁹⁸ *Te Aroha Electoral Roll, 1891*, p. 25; letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 20 September 1888, p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ Special Reporter, ‘The Matamata Estates’, *Auckland Weekly News*, 23 July 1887, p. 8.

²⁰⁰ See Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 12 May 1888, p. 2.

²⁰¹ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 133, 281.

²⁰² Letter from William Archibald Murray, Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 13 October 1888, p. 2.

²⁰³ *Te Aroha News*, 30 November 1889, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 16 May 1888, p. 2.

once sold for £1200, but not paid for. The valuation is £750. I offered it to the mortgager at almost any price, and to forgive him years of back interest, and charge him only 5 per cent, for what would be fixed at the future price, but he declined my offer. We tried auction, I paying cost, but not a bid given.

Allen had offered 'privately £215 as it lay into his place. This was declined, and I took it at £300, losing about £1000 by the fall in values'. Valuations were false, as in many cases properties were really worth nothing, their whole value 'going in taxation', which was 'but organized confiscation'. He had

thought to have made a home again amongst you, but for all they overtax me, they will not even get me a road to my place at *my own cost*. Property here is a liability rather than an asset. It will not pay the taxes and the cost of working, and toil as we will to improve it, it seems that we are only working for the tax gatherer. Fortunately with other means I am not dependent on New Zealand farming.²⁰⁵

In 1888 he asked for an access road from Mount Pleasant to a neighbour's property, but 'the chairman said the Council had nothing to do with that road'.²⁰⁶ Two years later he again asked for a road to his farm, to be told to apply to the Waitoa Road Board, which, in mid-1891, agreed to construct it, on condition he paid all the expenses.²⁰⁷ As this agreement was not fulfilled, its new owners, who had not seen the property, told the board 'that they were led to believe there was a road', and asked for one; Murray was 'very anxious' that this be done, but the board declined because it would run through private property.²⁰⁸

Murray had 193 sheep in April 1891, selling them all by the following April.²⁰⁹ In July 1890 he offered a 'Good improved Sheep Farm – Rent free to good improving tenant'.²¹⁰ The location was not stated, but presumably

²⁰⁵ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 20 September 1888, p. 3.

²⁰⁶ Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 16 June 1888, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ Piako County Council, Minutes of Meeting of 18 January 1890, Matamata-Piako District Council Archives, Te Aroha; Piako County Council, *Te Aroha News*, 25 January 1890, p. 2; *Waikato Times*, 13 June 1891, p. 3.

²⁰⁸ Waitoa Road Board, *Waikato Times*, 5 December 1895, p. 3.

²⁰⁹ 'Annual Sheep Returns', *AJHR*, 1892, H-30, p. 24.

²¹⁰ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1890, p. 2.

was Mount Pleasant. In early 1892, this farm was offered for sale, but it did not sell for over three years.²¹¹ The sale price was not made public.

ACQUIRING LAND AT WAIORONGOMAI AND TE AROHA

In the first week of June 1882 Murray was granted three business sites, allotments 24, 55, and 56, at Waiorongomai.²¹² In October, he complained to the Thames High School Board that when he had applied for three sections, planning to erect shops and other buildings, the plan of the proposed settlement contained 20 sections whereas a new survey had 26. 'He asked the authority for making such alterations without his consent. He demanded that sections be laid out, of the extent of those which he had taken up, as he wished to build without delay'. The board responded that the plan had been changed once it had decided on the size of allotments.²¹³

In August 1883, the mining inspector sought the forfeiture of allotment 24, but withdrew his plaint later in the month because a building was being erected.²¹⁴ It was forfeited in October 1887 because he had not paid the previous year's rent.²¹⁵ A tenant renting one of Murray's houses who owed him £7 4s by August 1885 and had not given up possession was ordered to pay the full amount and leave within two weeks.²¹⁶ In 1886, Murray purchased another residence site, which in 1897 he sold back to the man he had bought it off.²¹⁷ In 1895, he was still registered as owning two other sites, but had not paid the rent for three years because he had sold them. As he had lost his copy of the license and would not sign an affidavit to that effect, the mining inspector sued for their forfeiture, and they went to the family who had purchased them.²¹⁸

²¹¹ *Waikato Times*, 26 March 1892, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1895, p. 2.

²¹² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folios 175, 176, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

²¹³ Thames High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 10 October 1882, p. 3.

²¹⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaint Book 1880-1898, 26/1883, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

²¹⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folio 55, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

²¹⁶ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, *Waikato Times*, 6 August 1885, p. 2.

²¹⁷ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folio 97, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

²¹⁸ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaint Book 1880-1898, 7, 8/1895, BBAV 11547/1a; Plaints 1895, 7, 8/1895, BBAV 11572/2a; Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folios 56, 57, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

In April 1882, Thomas Murray, 'to meet the requirements of newcomers to Te Aroha', was erecting 'four new dwelling houses'.²¹⁹ Later in the year, he and his brother John were each granted a residence site on the road to Fraterville, on the edge of Te Aroha.²²⁰ He acquired three business sites in Te Aroha in that year, selling two at the end of the following year and the third in 1892.²²¹ Of his six business sites in Waiorongomai he sold two in 1886 for £150, forfeited three in 1890, being ordered to pay the outstanding rent, and abandoned the remaining one in 1891.²²² After paying one year's rent, his one residence site there was forfeited in 1884.²²³

In mid-August 1882, his brother John acquired two business sites in Waiorongomai, allotments 26 and 30.²²⁴ He was also granted a residence site, soon forfeiting all but one site for not paying the rent.²²⁵ John, George, and James Hunter Murray each acquired one residence site in Te Aroha in November 1882, forfeiting these two years later.²²⁶

Murray and his brother Thomas also leased farms in the Thames High School Endowment. Murray leased Section 16, containing over 100 acres, which in 1883 the government refused to freehold.²²⁷ Nearly three years

²¹⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 19 April 1882, p. 3.

²²⁰ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 221, BBAV 11505/3a, ANZ-A.

²²¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Rent Register 1881-1900, folios 155-157, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

²²² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 17/1885, BBAV 11547/1a; Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folios 183-186, 405, 406, BBAV 11501/1a; Sale by Thomas Murray to Bertha McCovey of Allotments 11, 12 of Block XI, with buildings, 22 April 1886, BBAV Certified Instruments 1886, BBAV 11581/7a; Letterbook 1883-1900, p. 293, BBAV 11534/1a, ANZ-A.

²²³ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Rent Register 1881-1900, folio 295, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

²²⁴ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Applications 1880-1882, folio 194, BBAV 11505/3a; Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folios 187, 188, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

²²⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Business Site Licenses Butt Book 1882-1884, folio 65, BBAV 11548/1e; Occupation invited for Business Site, Allotment 26 Block 1 Waiorongomai, 18 October 1887, Mining Applications 1887, BBAV 11289/11a; Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folio 292, BBAV 11501/1a; Sale Agreement between John Murray and Thomas Cahill, 26 January 1889, Certified Instruments 1889, BBAV 11581/10a, ANZ-A.

²²⁶ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Rent Ledger 1881-1900, folios 292-294, BBAV 11501/1a, ANZ-A.

²²⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 September 1883, p. 3; *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1886, p. 7.

later, a request to purchase the freehold was declined by the high school board and he was told to pay the rent due at once.²²⁸ By then he had sub-let this 100 acres.²²⁹ In 1888, when rent was owing, he explained that Robert Mackie,²³⁰ 'with whom he had made arrangements, should now have paid the rent and declining on his own part to pay anything more'. As the board had not sanctioned a transfer to Mackie, Murray remained liable.²³¹ In June 1890, he was ordered to pay £63 3s 9d and to give up possession.²³²

Thomas held Section 2, of 37 acres, Section 3, of 24 acres, and Section 5, of 50 acres, a total annual rental of £20 17s 6d.²³³ In November 1882, he offered part of section 59 for a road to Waiorongomai on condition that the board fenced one side. The chairman investigated whether the road was needed;²³⁴ it was not.

In December 1884, his brother John was granted permission to sell Sections 2 and 3, which, early the following year, were sold to Edwin Hadfield,²³⁵ a miner.²³⁶ In December 1887, when payment of arrears of rent was sought, Thomas 'wrote that payment had been entrusted to a Mr McLeod Murray, and that he was astonished to find the latter had not fulfilled the trust'. The board discovered that a sub-lease, which it had not sanctioned, had been arranged, and improvements made; it ruled that if the rent was not paid within a month, the board would 're-enter the property'.²³⁷ 'McLeod Murray' was his nephew John McLeod Murray, son of his brother John.²³⁸ In mid-1888, Thomas transferred Section 5, which was

²²⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 11 March 1886, p. 3.

²²⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1886, p. 7.

²³⁰ See paper on his life.

²³¹ Thames High School Board, *Te Aroha News*, 18 February 1888, p. 2.

²³² Thames Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1890-1895, folio 4, BAOL 13735/1a, ANZ-A.

²³³ *Te Aroha News*, 20 March 1889, p. 7.

²³⁴ Thames High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 November 1882, p. 2.

²³⁵ *Thames Star*, 18 December 1884, p. 2; Thames High School Board of Governors, Minutes of Meeting of 13 April 1885, High School Archives, Thames; *Thames Advertiser*, 14 April 1885, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 8 August 1888, p. 2.

²³⁶ See paper on the New Find mine at Waiorongomia.

²³⁷ Thames High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 December 1887, p. 3.

²³⁸ See paper on George Devey and his family.

unoccupied, to another farmer.²³⁹ In December, the board considered his letter suggesting they eject Hadfield from Sections 2 and 3,²⁴⁰ provoking a letter to the local newspaper from Hadfield:

I don't understand Mr Murray's way of doing business, but he was the original owner of the land until he sold it to me. Now, if Mr Murray wants the land back why does he not eject me? Because he knows that he cannot! He knows that he has received £60 of hard cash; £50 at one payment, and £10 at another. When I paid the £10 I was to have the transfer the following week; instead of that I never received the transfer, and the last heard of Mr Murray he was actually offering my land for sale. Now Mr Murray, owed back arrears of rent on this land before I bought it, which he has never paid up to this, and that is the reason I cannot get the transfer. Mr Murray who dare not sell my land, now tries to persuade the Governors to do what he cannot do himself. But as Mr Murray has gone so far, I think it only right to give an explanation. I wish to say I have paid no rent to Mr Murray, nor never intend to do so. When I get the transfer I am prepared to pay all rents and taxes due by me according to my agreement with Mr Murray. I consider Mr Murray has acted very unjustly in keeping me out of the transfer for three years, which has been the means of preventing me from making improvements and making use of the land.²⁴¹

In his brother's absence, John responded, even though he was 'possibly acting in opposition to his wishes in taking the slightest notice' of Hadfield's letter

holding himself up as a martyr of ill usage. By a perversion of the truth, as in this case, it is sometimes possible to make the worst appear the better cause, but even this poor satisfaction is wanting. As the circumstances are so well known here that I need hardly give a rough sketch of the subject in question – premising only that every transaction my brother acquiesced in was *to be subject to the consent and approval of the Thames High School Board*. The matter is in a manner under two periods, the minutia of which I need not enter into here; the first embracing the effect that on certain conditions my brother would part with his interests in these sections to Mr Hadfield, but which conditions

²³⁹ Thames High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 August 1888, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1888, p. 2.

²⁴⁰ Thames High School Board, *Te Aroha News*, 4 December 1888, p. 2.

²⁴¹ Letter from Edwin Hadfield, *Te Aroha News*, 12 December 1888, p. 2.

the latter failed to fulfil, although I believe he did pay £50 on account, all of which and more was swallowed up in expenses and interest. Then a time came when Hadfield's interest in the matter was *extinguished by the Official Assignee*, my brother to bear the brunt of arrears of rates and taxes. In pity for this man's position, my brother unfortunately complied with the request to try to get the Board to take him or his wife as tenant, but this, after a time, was peremptorily refused, though the result would in all likelihood have been different if Hadfield had not again failed to pay any rents. I need not extend an uninteresting subject further than to say that last year my brother instructed me to take the necessary steps to remove Hadfield from the sections, but on the urgent and plaintiff appeal of Mrs Hadfield last February I left it in abeyance.²⁴²

Hadfield denied this account and insisted he had bought the land. When he was in bed with a broken thigh, Thomas had sought to sell the land, and was still trying to do so to pay his own rent. Despite implying he would take Thomas to court,²⁴³ Hadfield never did.

In June 1890, Thomas was sued for £65 5s of outstanding rent owing on sections transferred to him by the original lessee; he had only paid £3 1s 3d. As nobody was in possession of the land, he was ordered to pay the remaining amount and return the land to the board.²⁴⁴ Nearly three years later, Thomas told the council he could not pay rates on the sections Murray had leased in Thomas' name, and asked it to sell the land to meet the debt. 'He had lost £1,000 at Te Aroha and Waiorongomai', and was 'ill and bed-ridden'.²⁴⁵ (He would die six years later, aged 83.)²⁴⁶

WAS HE A LAND SHARK?

Murray certainly intended to profit from his land dealings. On the Allandale Estate, close to the road and railway line between Te Aroha and Morrinsville, at an unrecorded date he laid out a township, erecting 'a blacksmith's shop and cottage on it, and employed a smith to initiate the

²⁴² Letter from John Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 19 December 1888, p. 2.

²⁴³ Letter from Edwin Hadfield, *Te Aroha News*, 29 December 1888, p. 2.

²⁴⁴ Magistrate's Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 14 June 1890, p. 2; Thames Magistrate's Court, *Te Aroha News*, 19 June 1890, p. 2.

²⁴⁵ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 2 February 1893, p. 2.

²⁴⁶ Death Certificate of Thomas Murray, 9 August 1899, 1899/6748, BDM.

town, but the experiment failed, no other allotments being taken up', as settlers were more attracted to nearby Morrinsville.²⁴⁷ Once he obtained 'a proper title' to the leasehold portion of his farm he had 'intended to cut it up into small farms of 100 to 400 acres each, to be offered on the deferred-payment system',²⁴⁸ but failed to attract interest.

In March 1892, Murray was believed, in 'a foolish report', to have gone missing on his last property, swamp land at Glen Murray.²⁴⁹ It prompted the Sydney *Bulletin* to call Murray a 'land-grabber' who, after getting lost,

wandered about for several days feeding miserably on roots, at the imminent risk of his life. Nobody should be allowed to own enough property to get lost upon it. When a man grabs a great solitude, and then is bushed in the middle thereof and dies because he has seized so much land that he can't find his way out of it – well, he must have some cheerful ideas in his last moments, one would think.²⁵⁰

The *Observer* considered this item 'very good, but the facts are all wrong, as Mr Murray was never lost', but did not challenge the description of him as being a 'land grabber'.²⁵¹ Eleven years previously, he was described as 'one of the land sharks charged by Sir George Grey with having written to the late Native Minister with a view of securing an additional area on the favors to come principle, but the matter got wind, and the negotiations came to nothing'.²⁵² With the loss of the files of the Maori Affairs Department for this period and of the papers of the minister, John Sheehan, this letter cannot be traced. Murray had written to Grey in his capacity of Superintendent of the Auckland Province in April 1875 opposing other land sharks:

I understand that private parties have been permitted to buy from the Natives all the bush land on the Waitoa River (some very recently) except that which was previously for years in the hands of the Government and which has it seems been granted in

²⁴⁷ Own Reporter, 'Annandale, Morrinsville', *Waikato Times*, 24 June 1886, p. 3; Allen, p. 17.

²⁴⁸ 'Agricola', 'Ten Days in the Waikato', *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 June 1879, p. 13.

²⁴⁹ *Waikato Times*, 8 March 1892, p. 2; *Auckland Star*, 8 March 1892, p. 5.

²⁵⁰ *Bulletin* (Sydney), n.d., reprinted in *Observer*, 26 March 1892, p. 6.

²⁵¹ *Observer*, 26 March 1892, p. 6.

²⁵² Auckland Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 26 April 1881, p. 2.

monopoly to one party to the exclusion of other settlers; as I cannot believe that such proceedings are consistent with a Policy of progress and colonization I have taken the liberty of bringing the matter under your notice in view of the proposed enquiries into the doings of the Native Lands Department.²⁵³

Grey did not reply. As this letter was sent after Murray had acquired land nearby he may have wanted to purchase more and been offended at being excluded by 'one party' getting in ahead of him. He certainly opposed land being acquired by larger capitalists. Four months later, just before parliament validated land dealings with Ngaiterangi, of the Tauranga district, Murray vainly opposed returning these 160,000 acres to their original owners because 'it would be an indirect way of letting it be bought up by capitalists'. He preferred paying 'the value of the land to the Natives, and the Government could then themselves deal with it for purposes of colonization'.²⁵⁴ Ten days later he supported Grey's move to make null and void all recent Orders in Council dealing with confiscated land, because these were designed to legalize illegal acquisition by private individuals, and supported Grey's call for an inquiry.²⁵⁵ He made 'no statement as to whether the charges made' by Grey of 'very grave abuse' were 'well grounded or not, but I am quite aware that there is a very wide-spread impression in Auckland that very improper dealings have taken place with regard to the confiscated lands'. Despite claiming 'to know something of the circumstances of this case', he refrained 'from making any remarks upon it', moving an amendment for a full parliamentary inquiry 'into all matters connected with the confiscated lands'; it was ruled out of order.²⁵⁶

In July 1882 Murray wrote to the Tauranga newspaper:

Surely ... the Government of New Zealand should lend its utmost aid to those who, in helping themselves, will convert the at present worthless fern lands into tax-bearing and wealth-creating cultivated farms from lying waste and worthless under the blighting influence of an obstruction, and an unimproving holding

²⁵³ William Archibald Murray to Sir George Grey, 15 May 1875, Auckland Provincial Government Papers, box 27, Session 30, MS 595, Auckland Public Library.

²⁵⁴ *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 17 (Wellington, 1875), pp. 161-162 (3 August 1875).

²⁵⁵ *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 17, pp. 323-324 (13 August 1875).

²⁵⁶ *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 17, pp. 336-337 (13 August 1875).

in vast areas by the Maori territorial aristocracy, it would become the homes of thousands of our own race.

He wanted ‘a short tunnel’ driven from the head of the Wairakau Stream for a railway line to Tauranga and on to Wellington, but complained that ‘powerful influence has got the Thames-Waikato survey diverted into the Maori township of Morgantown and Tipsytown’ [correctly Lipseytown], reputedly ‘to benefit a few shanty keepers, and some who have secret hopes or designs to secure the Maori lands’. This change to the survey would increase the distance to Thames by three miles and increase the cost of construction, ‘besides breaking faith with those who bought land then from Government (I am not one)’. The new route would increase the distance of the line from the large city that would arise at Waiorongomai, ‘but no doubt it may be considered desirable to bolster up a Maori township at any public cost or disadvantage, merely to secure the aggrandisement of speculators, pakeha-Maoris, and the least respectable members of society’.²⁵⁷

‘Snooks’ responded by attacking ‘the King of Piako’, whose letter had revealed him to be ‘a bright and shining light’ who had not learnt that ‘fools run in where angels fear to tread’.

“A great and mighty city, a second Babylon is to arise in our district, and I, W.A.M., am buying up all the school sections on which I can lay my hands, so that I may again repeat the compensating dodge of Waitehuna [receiving government money to compensate for a railway crossing his land], but the owners of Morgantown and Lipseyville must be removed out of my way. Great engineer am I. The distance from the Thames to Waiorongomai is less than to Morgantown. I can pierce the hill behind in a short tunnel; I can get from Hamilton to Tauranga in two and a half hours – but then I have the wings of a dove. Wretched localism I abhor.” Since when, dear boy? as you used to have the credit of not seeing beyond the Provincial District of Otago when residing there. By some piece of scoundrelism the route of the railway has been changes to suit affinities of the Ministers. I wonder who they are? The style of writing of W.A.M. is likely to do harm, as it would have outsiders believe that some great wrong was being done, while such is not the case, which can be easily proved.

²⁵⁷ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Bay of Plenty Times*, 24 July 1882, p. 2; reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 5 August 1882, pp. 2-3.

After explaining the route chosen for the line, 'Snooks' said that Murray's proposal to take it through the range to Tauranga was 'nonsense at the present time, owing to want of funds, and no short tunnel would do the work'. Unnamed people were 'trying to swallow streets, but it is to be hoped it will disagree with them'. No faith was broken with people who had bought land, as no government land was crossed until the 'proposed township at Waitoa', instead passing through several estates, including Murray's,

and others of a like kidney. Philanthropists all! – who, however, think more of themselves than all the rest of the human race. Is the society of Morgantown and Tipseyville so bad that W.A.M. should come among us, take up sections, build houses, and charge big rents, and he would not be guilty of buying cheap land – he would not lease native land at any price.²⁵⁸

This sarcastic response was followed by an anonymous broadsheet, which has not survived, published in Te Aroha. 'Miner', of Waiorongomai, defended Murray against its charges that he was 'going to make a fortune out of some small piece of land leased by him ... by getting the goldfields town to be built on other parts of the High School land, close to the mines and batteries'. 'Miner' was pleased that Murray had not condescended to notice this 'scurrilous effusion'.²⁵⁹ Murray had indeed acquired land for others to erect shops and houses on,²⁶⁰ and 'Miner's' apparent defence may have been designed to publicize his speculative hopes, although it was more likely that a Waiorongomai miner would have preferred a settlement close to his work. That Murray wanted to sell land for a profit rather than develop it himself was indicated in his complaint in 1883 that, whereas in the South Island the completed railways had produced 'prosperity, and a remarkable advancement in material wealth and value', in Piako 'property cannot be sold at much less than the values put on it for taxation purposes, if at all'.²⁶¹

When standing for the county council in 1884, Murray stated that he had 'a considerable stake in Te Aroha, as well as in other parts of the

²⁵⁸ 'The King of Piako. (Snooks, His Sentiments)', *Thames Star*, 9 August 1882, p. 3.

²⁵⁹ Letter from 'Miner', *Thames Advertiser*, 24 August 1882, p. 3.

²⁶⁰ For example, Thames High School Board, *Thames Advertiser*, 19 October 1882, p. 3.

²⁶¹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 1 March 1883, p. 2.

County'.²⁶² In February 1886, he wrote another long letter to the local newspaper:

A gentleman of notable shrewdness recently called on me after visiting Te Aroha, and his opinion was not complementary to the place. He said there seemed to be no homes being created, no gardens, no permanency. I explained that owing to a craze of some political empirics no land could be purchased but only leased, and *inferior though it is*, at an annual rent of £25 an acre in the towns of Te Aroha and Waiorongomai, and that all the surrounding land (thousands of acres) is Native reserve or Thames High School endowed reserves; the former the natives cannot use, the latter only serves to over-educate and impair for future usefulness a few boys and girls of the Thames. The Natives are legally prevented from disposing of their lands, and are unwillingly constrained to be “dogs in the manger,” while the actions of the Thames High School Board and the Government indicate a set purpose to obstruct the progress of settlement. My friend said, “This fully accounts for the dismal appearance of the place. The district never can prosper unless the people can secure permanent homes and homesteads on fair terms;” and certainly he is right.

He wanted the government to purchase ‘all the land except that which the Natives personally occupy at its value, and pay for it in Government debentures paying four per cent interest, the interest to be paid’ to Maori and the high school with the current occupants having ‘the option to buy at the valuation, and ten per cent more in cash’. Should this system be applied across New Zealand it would attract settlers and develop the colony. As parliament was soon to be dissolved, he suggested a committee ‘be appointed, and if public meetings are held I would gladly attend, hoping that before’ he left for Britain he ‘might be of some use to my fellow settlers’.²⁶³ The editor of the newspaper, John Ilott,²⁶⁴ seizing on this last comment, wondered whether Murray’s ‘sudden interest in Te Aroha and its *dismal!* appearance’ was due to parliamentary ambitions. He considered that Murray was ‘in ignorance of the great improvements made in Te Aroha of late’; as for residents paying an annual rent of £25, this was ‘certainly

²⁶² Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 23 August 1884, p. 2.

²⁶³ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1886, p. 7.

²⁶⁴ See paper on neighbourly and unneighbourly behaviour in the Te Aroha district.

news', for he had 'heard of no such instance at Te Aroha till now', and asked for the name of the person who had paid this amount.²⁶⁵

Murray did not produce the name of this mythical person, for the rents of business and residence sites were far less.²⁶⁶ In his reply to Ilott, he continued to argue that 'from the want of a freehold or a good copyhold tenure on fair terms' the progress of the two settlements was 'not more marked', and wanted either freehold 'or good copyhold tenure on fair terms'. He denied becoming interested in the welfare of the district only recently, 'and now that I am leaving the colony I scarcely deserve the imputation of selfish motives in trying to point out what is doubtless a great injury to progress'. The 'insinuation that I am angling for this constituency is quite out of place' because he supported the local member and was 'not now enthusiastic after parliamentary honours'.²⁶⁷ In response, Ilott pointed out that 'quite a number of town allotments are held by the Messrs Murray' at Waiorongomai and that Murray held over 100 acres there, which he had sublet; he would benefit by buying land on the easy terms he desired.²⁶⁸ Eight months later, another resident agreed with Murray that 'undoubtedly' the tenure was 'one reason for the slow progress of this district'; Ilott had 'immediately jumped on' Murray 'by denying that it was as he stated, and imputed personal motives to him'.²⁶⁹ Murray continued to complain about tenure, two years later informing a Waiorongomai meeting he was opposed to land being 'locked up' in Maori reserves and the high school endowment. He criticized the high school for ignoring 'their duties as land owners' by not even giving 'a small sum to improve the pathways to enable' children to attend school 'without extreme discomfort'. He wanted the government to 'resume all these lands, and regarding existing interests pay reasonable value for these in Government four per cent Treasury debentures' and the land 'opened for permanent settlement in suitable areas of moderate size. This would doubtless result in a large measure of increased prosperity'.²⁷⁰

In May 1888, Murray complained to the council that the valuation of part of his property, £390, was 'very excessive, as he had offered the land to

²⁶⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1886, p. 2.

²⁶⁶ See paper on Te Aroha: 1882-1889.

²⁶⁷ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1886, p. 7.

²⁶⁸ Editorial comment on letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1886, p. 7.

²⁶⁹ Letter from 'Alpha', *Waikato Times*, 21 October 1886, p. 3.

²⁷⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1888, p. 2.

the Government for £100, but could not find a purchaser'.²⁷¹ Four months later, in complaining about the 'great injustice' of the valuation, he gave details of his land dealings:

Number 1: 12,000 acres, at one time sold (but not paid for), for £2,300, valuation £8500. This has been pressed on me at £500, and declined. No. 2: Lots in the village of Waiorongomai valuations before the mining "boom" there £40 each; have been sold since the "boom" began at 40s each. No. 3: Valuation £390. I am out of pocket for improvements, &c, about that. I offered to the Government for a £100 4 per cent debenture, but my offer was declined. No. 4: Farm land, has cost me over £400 for outlay, &c; the valuation, £350. I gave this away for £96 thankfully.

His fifth example was Mount Pleasant, as outlined above, where he had lost 'about £1000 by the fall in values'.²⁷²

It seems, therefore, that Murray was not a very successful land shark in Piako, due to the decline of mining and general depression. He did have land elsewhere, but again did not make his fortune from it, for instance forfeiting a section in the Whakatane district in 1898 for not fulfilling the conditions.²⁷³

ASSISTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TE AROHA AND PIAKO DISTRICTS

Immediately after acquiring land in Piako, Murray asked the Premier to construct a road connecting the Waihou River with this district.²⁷⁴ Once settled on his estate, he actively assisted its development, hardly a disinterested cause, but his parliamentary experience made him an appropriate person to seek government assistance. In December 1878 he suggested the government should start its railway from Thames to Hamilton at Te Aroha, which would solve the unemployment problem at Thames, increase the value of the land recently acquired by the government, and, by enabling 500 Thames Volunteers to move quickly,

²⁷¹ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 12 May 1888, p. 2.

²⁷² Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 20 September 1888, p. 3.

²⁷³ Auckland Land Board, Minutes of Meeting of 27 May 1898, Minute Book 1894-1903, p. 329, BAAZ 4019, 12/5, ANZ-A.

²⁷⁴ *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 October 1874, p. 4.

mean no more 'Native troubles'.²⁷⁵ Early in 1880, he urged it to hasten the construction of the railway to the Waihou River.²⁷⁶ Murray wrote to the Premier, John Hall, in October because he had been 'asked by many settlers here what progress the Government intend to make with the railway'. He provided details of what work had been done, what needed to be done, and the cost, and recommended a route. 'I know of no railway in New Zealand which present such facilities for excellent and economical construction and at the same time opens for profitable and productive occupation a county of such vast capacity for supporting a great population'. As a further inducement, he again stressed that in the event of conflict it would be able to move Thames Volunteers to the King Country in a matter of hours.²⁷⁷

In 1882, he wrote a long letter to a Thames newspaper on 'the Claims of the Thames':

Those who have seen in Otago and Canterbury the wonderful improvements effected by railways in the value, wealth-producing and tax-bearing power of vast districts which at one time were only regarded as suited for pastoral solitude, will have some conception of the development of the abounding latent wealth of this noble plain and district, which would promptly follow its opening up by the extensive construction of railways with prudence and vigour.

Whilst agreeing with the estimate that a sixth or more of the spending on railways had 'been wasted by engineering and administrative incapacity, political jobs, and the improper purchase of railway material', he argued that railways paid 'directly for maintenance which roads never do, and while a great public convenience and handmaid to industrial progress' they cost 'a comparatively small and yearly decreasing amount, and will indeed soon be a source of profit'. Accordingly, he considered railways to be 'legitimate public works' that should not be expected 'to be charged with the loss on the whole £30,000,000 of public debt, much of which was wasted in war and misused by persons in high places' and spent in ways that were 'most unequal, partial, and unfair'.

²⁷⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 January 1880, pp. 2-3.

²⁷⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 1 March 1880, p. 3.

²⁷⁷ William Archibald Murray to John Hall, 18 October 1880, Sir John Hall Papers, Political Letters received in 1880, MSy 1100, p. 111, MS 1784, Alexander Turnbull Library.

While some districts have had great expenditure and substantial and permanent benefits, the Thames Valley has been beguiled by sops to please local magnates, or for local politicians to squander, with no adequate result or no benefit at all, and yet we residents of the Thames Valley have the same burdens to bear, unaided by railways made by public money, or by harbours endowed by the State.

Therefore they should ‘appeal to the justice of Parliament’ to complete the railway line in a valley that had great prospects (as predicted by Captain Cook) and would, a civil engineer had forecast, be the home of millions. Increasing numbers of settlers would mean more taxpayers reducing ‘the burden of the individual incidence of taxation’ and strengthen New Zealand. He believed the ‘jealous selfishness’ of Auckland businessmen was more of an obstacle than ‘Southern opposition’. Using a Thames railway line from a ‘good port’ would be cheaper and easier than using the ‘steep grades and triumphs of engineering tortuousness’ on the line to Auckland, a ‘fearfully and wonderfully made shoddy construction’. The new loan of £5,000,000, instead of being used as ‘a huge bribery fund’, should be allocated to ‘permanently remunerative and reproductive works only’, such as the Thames railway and harbour. He suggested parliament establish an endowment in the Piako swamp to make the Waihou and Piako rivers navigable in all seasons. He disagreed with the surveys for railway lines to Rotorua and Thames, for if the latter went from Te Aroha to Thames on the eastern side of the river this would break faith with those who had bought land from the government along the initially surveyed route. ‘That the line will be permitted to stop either at Aroha, or anywhere short of a deep water port, I think there is no one among us who will tamely submit to’.²⁷⁸

Although he constantly attacked excessive government spending, when breaking in his land Murray called for its assistance for drainage, indeed suggesting forming a Land Drainage Department.²⁷⁹ In February 1880 he sought the extension of the mail service from Hamilton to Morrinsville to the landing at Omahu pa at Te Aroha.²⁸⁰ He chaired a Waitoa meeting seeking an improved mail service.²⁸¹ In 1886 he wrote that he had always

²⁷⁸ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Thames Advertiser*, 24 April 1882, p. 3.

²⁷⁹ *Waikato Times*, 20 March 1880, p. 2.

²⁸⁰ *Waikato Times*, 17 February 1880, p. 2.

²⁸¹ *Waikato Times*, 24 February 1880, p. 3.

tried to assist Te Aroha, claiming it was his suggestion to the Premier that prevented the leasing of the hot springs and led to the establishment of a committee to manage the domain with government financial assistance.²⁸²

In February 1882 he was a spokesman for Te Aroha residents seeking a railway line, a bridge, improved drainage, a telegraph service, and other needs.²⁸³ Two years later he was elected to a committee seeking government assistance.²⁸⁴ He was unsuccessful in trying to replace a tri-weekly mail service between Te Aroha and Auckland via Hamilton with a daily one.²⁸⁵ He wanted a direct telegraph line between Morrinsville and Hamilton instead of one via Thames and Auckland.²⁸⁶ At Waiorongomai in July he seconded a motion to extend the railway line to there and on to the Rotorua and Tauranga lines.²⁸⁷ At Te Aroha the following month he wanted to hasten the completion of the line from Morrinsville.²⁸⁸ When the first train arrived in Morrinsville in October 1884, he chaired the celebration and was one of the three principal speakers.²⁸⁹ Three months later he protested at the delays in making a telegraph connection between these two settlements and in constructing the railway line to Te Aroha, asking ‘why in the new San Francisco mail contract the absurdity is perpetuated of having our mail to go out about two days before the mail arrives, losing us a month in replying to letters’.²⁹⁰

In seconding a motion at Waiorongomai in July 1884 wanting the land board to open up Maori land for settlement, Murray ‘threw some curious light upon the doing of the Board’. He suggested that relations between it and the government were ‘in a confused state’, and cited a letter he had received from Wellington stating that the school had not been granted title to their endowment.²⁹¹ The following month he spoke at Te Aroha in favour of freehold settlement on both Maori land and the endowment, and on his

²⁸² Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1886, p. 7.

²⁸³ *Thames Advertiser*, 24 February 1882, p. 3.

²⁸⁴ *Waikato Times*, 14 August 1884, p. 3.

²⁸⁵ *Waikato Times*, 28 June 1884, p. 2.

²⁸⁶ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 14 October 1884, p. 2.

²⁸⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1884, p. 2.

²⁸⁸ *Waikato Times*, 16 August 1884, p. 2.

²⁸⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 October 1884, p. 2.

²⁹⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 13 January 1885, p. 2.

²⁹¹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 15 July 1884, p. 4.

urging the meeting agreed to petition parliament.²⁹² In 1888 he advised a Waiorongomai meeting to delay deciding whether to join with Te Aroha in creating a borough so that the matter could be considered properly; the meeting agreed to adjourn the question for six months.²⁹³

In December 1884, Murray's offer to erect a pound for the district on his estate was declined because his tender was too high.²⁹⁴

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Murray had strong opinions about local government, like everything else. In 1884, at a Waiorongomai meeting his motions supporting local spending of local taxation and a simplified form of local government free of central control were carried.²⁹⁵ Four years later he gave residents there what the *Te Aroha News* described as an 'interesting and instructive lecture'.²⁹⁶ His 'broad principle' for local government was 'that every individual should have the utmost freedom to manage his own affairs that was consistent with the rights of others'. Ratepayers must have 'direct and effective control over the rate-spenders', and he opposed subsidies by central government because these gave it control over local government, making them the 'servile pensioners of centralism'; central government should only deal with central issues.²⁹⁷

Murray was a member of the first Waitoa Highway Board, and in 1878, although he was not its chairman, chaired its annual meeting.²⁹⁸ In 1882, in complaining about the state of the Waitoa roads, he claimed that only board members and their friends were provided with roads. 'I have had some experience in the South as chairman of road boards and otherwise, but have never seen such selfish cliquism - unthrift and pompous hair-splitting incapacity'.²⁹⁹ The following month he again complained about this board 'which bungles and neglects the roads'.³⁰⁰ In the following year another

²⁹² *Te Aroha News*, 16 August 1884, p. 2.

²⁹³ *Te Aroha News*, 18 July 1888, p. 2.

²⁹⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 20 December 1884, p. 2.

²⁹⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 12 July 1884, p. 7.

²⁹⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 18 July 1888, p. 2.

²⁹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1888, p. 2.

²⁹⁸ *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 August 1878, p. 20; Allen, p. 18.

²⁹⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 15 July 1882, p. 3.

³⁰⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 24 August 1882, p. 3.

letter complained about 'local taxation' being used 'here to render roads impassable'.³⁰¹ Standing for the board in 1885, he received 45 votes, insufficient to be elected.³⁰²

Murray unsuccessfully stood for the Waitoa Licensing Committee in 1882, receiving only 12 votes.³⁰³ Perhaps his disapproval of strong drink cost him support. The previous year he had told his constituents 'that as he did not drink beer, he would support the beer-tax'.³⁰⁴ In 1882, in writing about the death of one of his fencers from 'the accursed alcoholic poison' after he had warned him to stop drinking, Murray argued that the coroner's verdict of death from natural causes was inadequate; under Scottish practice it would have been death from excessive drinking.³⁰⁵

In August 1884, Murray decided to stand in a by-election for the Te Aroha Riding of the Piako County Council.³⁰⁶ He received only 13 votes compared to 91 and 68 for the other candidates, having taken 'no pains to secure his return', according to the Hamilton newspaper.³⁰⁷ Although he may not have canvassed the electorate, his advertisement made a strong pitch for support. 'Having a considerable stake in Te Aroha, as well as in other parts of the County, and your interests being mine, I offer you my services to secure just, prudent, and progressive administration and prosperity to the district'.³⁰⁸ He did not stand again, and generally ignored its work, apart from protesting in 1889 at its meeting at Cambridge instead of at Te Aroha, citing Bruce County for how it should be organized.³⁰⁹ His only other success in local government was to be elected to the Morrinsville school committee in 1885.³¹⁰

In 1891 Murray hoped that John Ballance, the Premier, would adopt his ideas as a 'fair and practical compromise of an unsatisfactory question'. He wanted 'true Home Rule', with ratepayers in full control of local matters. All the land tax should go to local committees, with 'Shire expenditure'

³⁰¹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 3 May 1883, p. 2.

³⁰² *Te Aroha News*, 9 May 1885, p. 2.

³⁰³ *Waikato Times*, 2 March 1882, p. 3.

³⁰⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 26 October 1881, p. 3.

³⁰⁵ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 16 December 1882, p. 2.

³⁰⁶ *Waikato Times*, 9 August 1884, p. 3.

³⁰⁷ *Waikato Times*, 26 August 1884, p. 2.

³⁰⁸ Advertisement, *Te Aroha News*, 23 August 1884, p. 2.

³⁰⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 7 December 1889, p. 2.

³¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1885, p. 2.

being 'raised by requisition from the Local Committees thereby giving direct & effective control of the Ratepayers over the Ratespenders'; having 'only one taxing body' would be the most economical use of public money, and give the people the right to 'manage their local affairs & to raise & to expend their own money. Local affairs shd be controlled & conducted by local knowledge with as little as possible dependence upon or interference by Orders in Council & Centralism'.³¹¹

AN INVENTOR

Murray spent much of his spare time on his inventions. In 1869 he was granted a patent for an 'Invention or Improvement for Straining Wire on Wire Fences, and also an Improved Method of Fixing the Wire'.³¹² Continuing to modify this invention, in 1877 he applied for a patent for an 'Improved Wire Strainer'.³¹³ In 1880 he complained to the Premier, John Hall, that when he received this patent and paid £20 he was told that no further payment was required, but had now found that the patent had lapsed because he had not paid another £15 after three years. His defence was that, as a member of a royal commission in early 1880, he had not been able to attend to this matter. By 'devoting myself to the public business I may have sacrificed a valuable invention which after much expense, thought & trouble was just ripening to profit me & become generally useful'. He urged Hall to improve the patent laws on Belgian or American models to encourage investors.³¹⁴ Hall was advised that the fee must be paid. As a parliamentarian, Murray should have looked up the law on patents, for it was 'entirely his own fault that his Patent has lapsed'. Although Murray claimed the cost was £35, it was £14, plus an advertising cost of £5. 'He states further that the N.Z. Patent laws seem solely designed to employ Government officials & bribe newspapers', but he should know there was only one official in the Patent office, and as patentee he only advertised in

³¹¹ William Archibald Murray to John Ballance, 20 July 1891, John Ballance Papers, MS-Copy-Micro-170-Reel 1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

³¹² *New Zealand Gazette*, 13 January 1869, p. 8.

³¹³ *New Zealand Gazette*, 19 April 1877, p. 439.

³¹⁴ William Archibald Murray to Sir John Hall, 27 December 1880, Sir John Hall Papers, Political Letters received in 1880, MSy 1100, p. 237, MS 1784, Alexander Turnbull Library.

newspapers in the chief towns, 'so there could be no bribery'.³¹⁵ Further modifications led to an 1884 application for a patent for 'an Invention for straining and securing the Wire in Wire Fences'.³¹⁶ The following year, the *Waikato Times* reported that amongst the exhibits that Fraser and Tinne's Foundry in Auckland³¹⁷ was making for the Wellington Industrial Exhibition was his wire strainer, 'a simple but effectual device for straining, tightening, and repairing wire fencing. It is an invention which no Waikato farmer should be without, as it is economical and effective, and within the means of every small farmer'.³¹⁸

In 1885, Murray responded to a report that the Pelton wheel was a new American patent with yet another letter to an editor:

Now, some fifteen years ago, I made at Fernley, Otago, a wheel upon identically the same principle as you described, and we used it for many years to drive a chaff-cutter, corn-crusher, etc. I had no proper tools, the wheel was roughly made with iron spindle, wood frame, and pulley, and sheet iron for buckets, but though so clumsily and roughly made, I could cut with a very inferior Scotch chaff-cutter at the rate of over a ton an hour; in fact, we could not stick the wheel up, but after the belts and pulleys got wet, the belt used to throw. The wheel was only about two feet in diameter, and the fall about fourteen feet. The wheel may still be there if not gone to decay.... Therefore, as to the first knowledge and use the so-called Pelton is no novelty, and no one need pay patent royalties to anyone.³¹⁹

Nobody paid any heed to his opinion. In 1872, two years after his construction of this prototype Pelton wheel, Murray responded to the government's promise of a bonus of £2,500 for the first 100 tons of paper to be manufactured in New Zealand by sending 'a sample of tussock grass from Otago to Melbourne, for the purpose of testing its qualities as a paper-

³¹⁵ Under-Secretary, Colonial Secretary Department, to Sir John Hall, 20 January 1881, Sir John Hall Papers, Political Letters received in 1880, MSy 1100, p. 238, MS 1784, Alexander Turnbull Library.

³¹⁶ *New Zealand Gazette*, 7 August 1884, p. 1230.

³¹⁷ For George Fraser and his foundry, see paper on the Waitoa Find: a fraudulent find near Te Aroha.

³¹⁸ *Waikato Times*, 9 July 1885, p. 2.

³¹⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *New Zealand Herald*, 8 July 1885, p. 3.

making material'. Initial tests were 'considered satisfactory',³²⁰ but did not lead to paper being produced from this source.

In 1883, a patent was granted for his 'Automatic Preventive to Railway Collisions', which even his critics considered was a good invention.³²¹ Late the following year the *New Zealand Herald* reminded its readers that, in association with Fraser, Murray had taken out a patent for it in both New Zealand and Australia.

In view of the recent collision on the Auckland and Onehunga line, we may draw attention to this invention, which is thought so highly of by experts as to entitle it to be taken up by the Government and made the subject of practical experiment with the view of adopting it on our railways. Mr Murray, who wrote about a year ago to the Government then in office asking for facilities for testing his automatic blocks and signal system, has again communicated with the Minister for Public Works, asking for facilities only to experiment with his invention. Messrs Murray and Fraser have determined to enter the invention for the forthcoming show at Ellerslie, under the auspices of the Agricultural and Pastoral Society, and to make a public trial of the machine. A model will be made at the foundry, and when exhibited working the criticism of the public will be invited. The inventor says that his machine provides – within all reasonable human means – against collisions, cheapens the working cost, and greatly extends the working facilities of a railway service. It provides for greater safety to the public at crossings, bridges, tunnels, and stations, &c, preventing trains, whether meeting or following, coming within any distance of each other which the management may determine. That it is equally effective by day and night, fog or clear, and acts whether the train conductors are careless or not, or even blind, asleep, or drunk, or if from any other mischance the train or trains should not be under proper control.

The only government assistance Murray and Fraser wanted was £200 to meet the cost of 'applying the invention to a section of the railway' along with 'reasonable facilities' for the trial. An 'eminent' American expert who had 'taken the matter up' in his country had written 'most favourably of the

³²⁰ *Otago Daily Times*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 20 February 1873, p. 3.

³²¹ *Otago Daily Times*, n.d., cited in *Te Aroha News*, 6 October 1883, p. 2; *New Zealand Gazette*, 11 October 1883, p. 1480; Petition no. 390, Public Petitions Committee, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1885/9, ANZ-W.

invention to the leading manufacturing firms in the States'.³²² In response to this report, Murray explained that only his 'patent stretcher and fasteners for wire fences' would be exhibited at the show, and complained about the government's response:

It seems remarkable that the New Zealand Government should try to discredit the invention of one of their own settlers and refuse to even try it, on the mistaken pretext "that it would be costly." The invention can be applied either continuously or at any part of a railway, and only when and where wanted; the cost will be, notwithstanding its superior advantages in securing increased safety, economy, and efficiency in the working of railways, not one-fourth that of any other system; while the working expenses will be only in proportion to the traffic, and is estimated at under 2s the 1000 train miles, and dispenses almost entirely with signalmen; and being exceedingly simple and entirely automatic, will prove a great economy in wages and maintenance. Probably the New Zealand Government will continue fettered by departmental inertia till some terrible railway disaster makes victims of many of our leading colonists, and destroys more railway material than would apply and work the system on all places of their railway for years, where the danger and traffic are greatest, and till too late public indignation awakens them to the great, almost criminal, responsibility of their neglect. I sincerely trust that vindictiveness of a former political opponent may not influence Ministers, to the danger and injury of the public.

He could not believe the government was 'so impecunious' that it could not provide £200. He had received 'most favourable communications from great firms and companies in Europe and America' showing that his invention was, 'in efficiency, simplicity, and first and subsequent cost, far and away superior to the best yet invented', far better even than the widely used Siemens system. He concluded by stating he was 'not at liberty to go into particulars as to my negotiations with eminent firms'.³²³

The following year, when this 'simple and inexpensive apparatus' received a patent in the United States, Murray gave the Auckland press the American opinion of it:

Our office, I suppose you know, is influenced considerably by the considerations of usefulness and importance. It is not alone on

³²² *New Zealand Herald*, 22 October 1884, p. 5.

³²³ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 October 1884, p. 3.

novelty that patents are granted. There must be triple qualities, - novelty, usefulness, and importance. I use the word “usefulness” here to mean that it shall be for a useful purpose, something not merely useful to the individual alone by making his goods look better than they are, so that they will sell better, but useful to the whole community considered as a unity.... Your devise has all the above.

Murray and Fraser had applied for permission to test it on a short section of railway line, at their expense; should the government approve it, they would charge ‘only the actual cost’. If used in other parts of the system, ‘the charge would have been extremely moderate’. The government responded that they had no funds available, ‘ignoring the fact’, as the *New Zealand Herald* pointed out, ‘that if the system did not please them the promoters would bear the costs, and the application would cost nothing to the government’.³²⁴

In September, Fraser, in petitioning parliament over the government’s response, stated that Murray had ‘invented an automatic block and signal service, to avert collisions on railways and accidents at level crossings; that he applied to the New Zealand Government for facilities to apply the invention to a short section of one of the railways, but the Government repeatedly refused permission’. The petitions committee declined to make any recommendation about using the patent.³²⁵ The Railways Department ‘considered that the apparatus is quite unsuitable for the purpose proposed, and that its application upon the Railways would not be conducive to public safety’.³²⁶ The Minister of Public Works believed ‘it would cost a very considerable sum to test it anywhere’, and ‘on the face of it’ there was no ‘reasonable ground for supposing that the money would be well spent’.³²⁷

In 1885, Murray applied for a patent for his ‘Triumph Hoe and Drill Cultivator’.³²⁸ Three months later, he sought a patent for an even more adventurous invention ‘for working Tramways, Fire-engines, Torpedo-boats, Tricycles, Aerial Machines, etc, by portable compressed gas, to be called

³²⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 19 May 1885, p. 4.

³²⁵ ‘Reports of Public Petitions Committee’, *AJHR*, 1885, I-1, p. 20.

³²⁶ General Manager, Railway Department, to Chairman, Public Petitions Committee, 31 August 1885, Petition no. 390, Legislative Department, LE 1, 1885/9, ANZ-W.

³²⁷ *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 49, p. 453 (15 October 1884).

³²⁸ *New Zealand Gazette*, 15 January 1885, p. 103.

“The Portable Explosive Motor”’.³²⁹ Probably fortunately, no experiments to test its effectiveness for tricycles or aerial machines were reported.

In 1888, Murray applied for two patents: ‘an improved fastening for bars, pipes, spars, rods, and wires, specially useful for shanks of coulters’, meaning iron blades fixed in front of plough shares,³³⁰ ‘wheel-fixing; and telegraph-poles cross-heads’, and ‘an invention for improvements in gates’.³³¹ He continued to work on the latter almost until his death, in November 1899 his complete specifications for ‘a new and useful improvement in gates’ being accepted.³³²

POLITICAL OPINIONS, 1880-1900

Murray was fundamentally opposed to too much involvement by the state in the affairs of its citizens, as he summarized in 1896:

It is a principle proved by long experience that the Government governs best which governs least. The object of government may be summed up: The preservation of liberty, so that each individual may freely receive and enjoy the fruits of his or her industry, skill, or genius. Liberty means patriotism and progress. State meddling means sinking to servility.³³³

In 1881 he wrote that ‘much better would it be were the people to depend less on Government and officialdom doing all for them, and trust more to themselves’.³³⁴ Two years later he wrote that ‘all we want is a sure and profitable market for produce, and less government and taxation to assure general prosperity and increased values for property’.³³⁵ In 1888 he declared that ‘he went upon the broad principle that every individual should have the utmost freedom to manage his own affairs that was consistent with the rights of others’.³³⁶

³²⁹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 2 April 1885, p. 389.

³³⁰ *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 1964), p. 278.

³³¹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 29 March 1888, p. 399.

³³² *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 November 1899, p. 2190.

³³³ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Observer*, 21 November 1896, p. 7.

³³⁴ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Thames Advertiser*, 12 May 1881, p. 3.

³³⁵ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 20 March 1883, p. 3.

³³⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1888, p. 2.

Local government should both simplified and strengthened. In 1881, he recalled that ‘many years’ previously he ‘was hooted by the admirers of provincialism for saying it had defects, and suggesting remedies’. Since the provinces were abolished, ‘a vast number of officials and politicians were created who, under the pretence of governing, lived off the colonists’, who were ‘over-governed’. The latest system of local government had ‘not realized the promises and hopes held out’ when provinces were abolished, for ‘conflicts of authority’ between governments, county councils, and road boards continued. ‘We have the cost of sixty mimic Governments instead of nine’ when the provinces existed. In 1875 he had recommended that road districts and county ridings should be identical, which gave ‘unvarying satisfaction’ in Bruce County.

The ratepayers in each riding to elect at their annual meeting one of their number as chairman or convener, and also, if they thought fit in the larger districts, a committee or board of assistance, this body to have the control of district roads, and such other works and duties as the County Council entrusted it to do; the chairman to represent the riding in the County Council, and the Chairmen of Counties, and the Mayors of the larger cities might, in conference, have a wider authority as to formation of new counties, alteration of the boundaries of existing counties, the construction and maintenance of works of common benefit, the settling of differences, &c. The same men would be the local and county government, thus there would be concord of opinion, and unity and promptitude of action. Perhaps the best form of decentralisation would be for settlers to depend less on Government aid in almost everything, and trust more to do their work themselves.³³⁷

His ‘simplified and consolidated’ local bodies would ‘be annually and more popularly elected, and therefore more under popular control’.

Their functions and finance would be as far as possible separate from and independent of centralism, without needing permission from the Governor-in-council to dot their i’s and stroke their t’s, or being forced by Statute to spend half their rates in printing, advertising Parliamentary returns and accounts, and unproductive officiating, but in exchange for these advantages the local bodies would have to assume increased responsibilities, amongst which, as in England, they would have to bear a percentage of the cost of erecting and maintaining public

³³⁷ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *New Zealand Herald*, 20 April 1881, p. 6.

buildings, schools, &c, which would then cease to be amongst the baits and bribes for which M.H.R.'s scramble in Wellington. This is the *right* way to accomplish *separation*, and on a broad, general principle confine the Central Government to its legitimate functions of protecting the lives, rights and property of the people.³³⁸

Murray fiercely criticized the existing local bodies, in 1885 using the Piako County Council as an example of 'arbitrary and eccentric' property valuations. 'The Thames Valley has been singularly unfortunate in its local government'.

If a system permits a powerful clique to arbitrarily inflict an injury on a large number of industrious settlers, if local government means that great powers given for the public good may be made subservient to personal ends, if government – general and local – means prodigal waste and reckless extravagance, everlasting and universal meddlesomeness, continued tinkering with public laws and tempering with private interests, multiplying government and officialism, burdening and strangling industry by every imaginable device, taxation and restriction, and sinking country and colonists over head in debt, it is clear that there must be some sweeping change, and that soon, if we are to remain here.

After complaining about 'heavy and increasing taxation' and other charges on farmers, he called on them to form a 'well organized Farmers' Alliance or Colonists' Union' to defend the interests of farmers, support suitable candidates in elections, and 'boil down the 1,700 local governments into 100 to 200'. Each rural and urban district would have only one local government, with, 'so far as possible, the absolute management of all local government business'. With central government 'restricted to legislation, and certain well-defined matters of colonial importance', and not permitted to levy more taxes than 'absolutely requisite to pay the charges on the public debt, and meet the most strictly economical and necessary expenditure for the public service', boards would be elected in provincial districts to manage railways, Crown lands, education, and charitable aid. Farmers must 'act if they would avert disaster'.³³⁹

³³⁸ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 22 July 1884, p. 2.

³³⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 22 October 1885, p. 3.

This letter provoked an editorial doubting that his system 'would have the immediate effect of making us richer', as claimed. 'When he strives to prove that reform in the machinery of government will fill our purses and cause us all to sing for joy, he, to our thinking, follows a will o' the wisp. Humanity is far too prone to lay the blame for everything on the shoulders of the Government'.³⁴⁰ Murray immediately responded with a long justification of his dislike of centralism and preference for provinces. Reform of the 'whole rotten fabric, built and sustained by borrowing and bribery', should not be gradual but 'sweeping and systematic'.³⁴¹ The *Waikato Times* remained cautious, deprecating his 'strength' of language.³⁴²

Three years later, Murray insisted central government should confine itself to national issues, for subsidizing local government made the latter 'servile pensioners of centralism'.³⁴³

In local government the colony does not require 1600 bodies. The individual being the [primary?] unit should have the utmost personal independence as consistent with the rights of others. Several ratepayers combining to form a township or highway district would annually elect their chairman, and, if they wished, a board and officers. Their chairman would be their county councillor. The joint yearly meetings of the councillors of several counties, or delegates appointed by them, would be the Provincial Council, to arrange business or differences between the subordinate bodies, and discharge such functions as might be by law conferred upon them. Thus all the branches of local government would become identified without the present multiplication, complication, and waste of power and means, and, generally speaking, one governing body should suffice for all local government purposes, but it is essential that the tax-payer should possess a direct and effective control over the tax-spender.³⁴⁴

'They must strive to obtain more local power, and let local knowledge have the control of local affairs', he told a Te Aroha meeting in 1890. Some years previously it had been discovered there were '1,600 governing bodies in New Zealand of one kind and another, requiring some 20,000 persons to run them', in a country with a total population less than Liverpool or

³⁴⁰ Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 22 October 1885, p. 2.

³⁴¹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 29 October 1885, p. 3.

³⁴² Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 29 October 1885, p. 2.

³⁴³ *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1888, p. 2.

³⁴⁴ Mangapai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 April 1888, p. 10.

Glasgow. 'This was a very unsatisfactory state of affairs, as with so many wheels it required too much power and too much grease to run the machinery'. He wanted 'all local affairs' managed 'by one local body having local knowledge' and 'under the direct and effective control of the taxpayers'. These new bodies 'should not be hampered by needless restrictions and parliamentary interference, but have the utmost internal freedom consistent with individual rights, and the rights of other districts'. They 'should have every freedom and facility to co-operate and combine with one another for purposes of common benefit and the public good, and to form District Councils'. These local bodies 'in combination in District Councils' should be able 'to tax real estate, either on the natural or improved value, as they prefer, and to remit or retain the gold duty'.³⁴⁵ Later that year he repeated his demand for a 'simple and popular system of local administration' in which 'the tax-payer would have a direct and effective control over the tax-spenders, and local knowledge' and local government would control local affairs instead of being 'servile pensioners of centralism', bribed with handouts.³⁴⁶ 'All real estate should be rated without exception, and whether Crown or native lands, but the land tax should go direct to the local governments'.³⁴⁷

One persistent theme was the need to reduce taxation.³⁴⁸

Government meddling usually means Government muddling, and much Government interference means multiplication of departments, and costly officialism, with the inevitable consequence of grievous taxation, without any adequate recompense. We are taxed by Road Boards, County Councils, &c, in towns. I know not how many other burdens are inflicted on us, and lastly, the general property tax; so that, what with trying to resist unjust imposition by the various taxing officials, and endeavouring to earn the means to pay their imposts, settlers can have little opportunity to lay past anything for themselves. So far as possible there should be one consolidated rate, so that the bleeding may be done at one operation. Not a penny more should be granted to the General Government than the legitimate purposes of Government absolutely demand.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

³⁴⁶ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 4 November 1890, p. 4.

³⁴⁷ Mangapai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 April 1888, p. 10.

³⁴⁸ For example, letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 20 March 1883, p. 2.

³⁴⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *New Zealand Herald*, 20 April 1881, p. 6.

In an 1889 letter demanding ‘government reform and practical thrift’, he described as a ‘crime’ the government’s ‘grinding taxation’ robbing ‘people of their hard-earned money which they need and can use to so much better advantage than the Government’.³⁵⁰ As by simplifying local government the central government would have ‘much less to do’, its need for revenue ‘would be greatly reduced’. Property tax, whereby the government took from settlers ‘means they required for their own works, only a very small proportion of which was returned to the settlers for their benefit’, could be abolished.³⁵¹ In a long letter about the single and property taxes, he argued that although the latter was bad a land tax was worse. Heavy taxation provided profligate politicians with too much money to waste and drove people off the land and into the towns. Most tax revenue should go to local government, and as little as possible to Wellington.³⁵² He wanted a smaller bureaucracy, writing in 1881 that ‘we have far too many tax-gatherers’.³⁵³ His plans to free central government ‘from local concerns’ meant that it ‘should greatly reduce its establishments’.³⁵⁴

One way to reduce the cost of central government was to prevent any increase in the number of parliamentarians.³⁵⁵ The House of Representatives should be reduced to 50 members. ‘The so-called Upper House would cease to be a refuge for the destitute, and called the Senate would consist of 25 members, one fifth retiring yearly, whose places would be filled on the first day of each Session sitting and voting together’. His slogan was ‘Reform and Retrenchment’.³⁵⁶ ‘It was imperative that they should shape their establishment to their means and absolute wants’. Members of the lower house should ‘receive only sufficient for reasonable expenses’, and those in the upper house should ‘receive nothing till the colony can afford to pay them’.³⁵⁷ Electorate sizes and boundaries to be determined ‘by an impartial non-political judicial commission every 10 years, according to affinity of interests, and according to natural boundaries

³⁵⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 30 July 1889, p. 3.

³⁵¹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

³⁵² Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 4 November 1890, p. 4.

³⁵³ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Thames Advertiser*, 12 May 1881, p. 3.

³⁵⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

³⁵⁵ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 May 1881, p. 3.

³⁵⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1888, p. 2.

³⁵⁷ Mangapai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 April 1888, p. 10.

and public convenience and advantage'.³⁵⁸ He wanted New Zealand saved from

the humiliating, immoral spectacle of aspirants to Parliamentary honour, forgetting their duty to New Zealand and public virtue, and flagrantly boasting as a claim, and a well recognised claim to public merit and confidence, their capacity or their cunning to steal for their constituents from the public treasury more than their fair share of the public plunder.

It was a 'debasement of a member's worth' that he was judged by 'what he has got for his district'.³⁵⁹ In 1888 he declared that

New Zealand was like a person who had been the victim of quacks and empirics, crafty schemers, and visionary theorists, who had dosed and drugged till the naturally robust constitution of the victim had been almost ruined. They were deluded and made to run and fly by "leaps and bounds" before they had first learned to creep, and taught that borrowing money was only a pleasant and ready way of earning it; that discounting the future and squandering the proceeds was but another name for hastening the prosperity of the colony. Now their posture before the world was a living and modernized representation of Aesop's fable of the bull and the frog. If conscientious and prudent, they would carefully and frankly investigate every circumstance, and thus be best prepared to consider and devise remedial measures. He pointed out that during the 18 years the colony had fallen under the baneful spell of professors of financial magic, the enormous increase of public and private debts to outside creditors nearly corresponded to the excess of their imports over exports, added to the interest and charges on their public and private debts, showing that they had been balancing their exchanges of borrowed money, and in fact largely living on loans. It was said there were to stop borrowing in London. They would then have to meet the outside debt charge of, it is said, £3,600,000, if it can be met, by correspondingly increasing their exports or decreasing their imports. The first would take time, the latter would cause the Customs revenue to collapse, and require other taxation in substitution; meanwhile by the early summoning of Parliament it would appear that by retrenchment the Ministry had failed to bridge over the yearly increasing deficit. What would they propose, "more taxation?" That simply meant that to enable the Government to keep up its establishment, and to pay its debt

³⁵⁸ Letter from William Archibald Murray, 29 October 1885, p. 3.

³⁵⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 22 July 1884, p. 2.

charges, it was going to rob the colonists of their only means of paying their private debts, so all who can will escape; those who cannot must be ruined. Individual ruin must inevitably and immediately be followed by colonial bankruptcy and unavoidable repudiation. Better that the Government, which so largely caused the difficulties, should itself breast the storm. The chief functions of the Government being taxation to pay foreign debt charges, these were something like what Curran said of Ireland, the instruments of Government “simplified to the sheriff officer and the tax collector.”³⁶⁰

Two years later he understood that over £4,000,000 annually was incurred in interest payments on borrowed capital, which had ‘much to do’ with creating a depression. The debt should be consolidated at a reduced rate of interest.³⁶¹ Six years later, he described borrowing as

a general failure of the Australian Colonies. Born of the necessity to purchase popularity and favour, which they could not get by taxation and yet retain public favour, aspiring politicians had resource to the easy and seductive practice of borrowing for every imaginable purpose. Forgetting that “those who borrow heap up sorrow,” Government and people thought it simpler to borrow money than to earn it by honest industry. They hastened to get rich by getting into debt.

In examining what had been obtained from the massive debt he could see some benefits, especially in local government spending. He considered it ‘somewhat difficult to understand why colonists cannot do their own labour themselves, or employ their neighbours, without having to rush to Rothschild first to get him to scratch his name on a bit of paper, by which they become his tributaries and bond slaves for ever’. Far too much had been spent paying interest on loans, which would continue to burden future generations.³⁶²

Allied with these concerns was Murray’s opposition to wasteful government expenditure.³⁶³ Advances for public works ‘could be made by the issue of Government interest bearing currency notes of £5 and upwards’;

³⁶⁰ Mangapai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 April 1888, p. 10.

³⁶¹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

³⁶² *Observer*, 28 November 1896, p. 21.

³⁶³ Letters from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 31 May 1884, p. 3, 22 October 1885, p. 3.

these notes would 'bear interest, payable by Government in gold or its equivalent, and be legal tenders except for Customs duties'.³⁶⁴

Murray, with personal interest in the outcome, had strong views on how to separate Maori from their land. In 1886 he wrote that there were thousands of acres around Te Aroha owned by Maori, which they could not use; being 'legally prevented from disposing of their lands', they were 'unwillingly constrained to be "dogs in the manger" '. The district could not prosper unless settlers could purchase land 'on fair terms'. He wondered whether the people were prepared 'to support politicians whose stock in trade is to prate about liberal land laws, and posture as public benefactors, while hypocritically they care only to serve their own selfish ends, gratify their personal ambition, and indulge their egotistical verbosity' (which he clearly did not imagine he did). The government should purchase all Maori land not personally occupied by its owners 'at its value, and pay for it in government debentures paying four per cent interest', held by trustees. Existing occupants would 'have the option to buy at the valuation, and ten per cent more in cash'. This ten per cent would go to local bodies to spend on development, the balance being 'an annual charge of five per cent for ever, and of this, four per cent would pay the Government interest, and one per cent redeem the principal'. Once the latter was redeemed, the five per cent 'would then be local revenue. New applications would be decided by lot and be subject to like conditions'. Should this 'simple system' be successful, by applying it to all Crown and Maori land New Zealand could be peopled 'on sound and successful economic principles', attracting more settlers and ending 'the chronic cry of the unemployed and use to the best purpose the noble heritage which Providence has given'.³⁶⁵

In 1890, he argued that, instead of the government borrowing money in London to purchase Maori land, it should lease unworked land to settlers

on fixed perpetual leases at fair values, much after the Scottish system of feus.

Had some such system been in operation from the first, instead of Government alternately swindling the Natives out of their lands or empowering private speculators to do so, the Native wars might have been averted and the Colony spared serious loss and disaster. By the adoption of some such plan as he suggested the interests of the Natives would have been identified with the progress of colonisation, and if adopted even now he believed it

³⁶⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

³⁶⁵ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1886, p. 7.

would lead to the early and successful settlement of all the Native lands between Waikato and Wanganui..... He was distressed to hear, and hoped it was not true, that Government by their vacillation had allowed 400,000 acres in King Country pass into the hands of private speculators.³⁶⁶

He wanted settlers to obtain freehold title.³⁶⁷ Opposed to ‘the land nationalisation fallacy’, he wanted ‘to nationalise the lands, Crown or native, into the simple freehold of the largest possible number of good and improving settlers. Though the price we might receive should be small’, it would reduce government indebtedness ‘and get rid of those costly white elephants, the Land and Survey Departments’. He wanted settlement of ‘vast areas of land, which unimproved are a useless wilderness’, by ‘a great class of small freeholders who would strive to conquer difficulties and build up a sure and lasting national record for industry and patriotism, which could not fail to ensure prosperity and true gladness’. Such settlers ‘would not flee from debt, taxation, and depression’ like those ‘only camped as leaseholders’.³⁶⁸

On other economic issues, Murray gained the support of a Te Aroha meeting in 1890 by asking whether they considered five per cent to be ‘a fair rate of interest on mortgages’. He even had views on postal rates, wanting to double the weight that could be posted for 2d: ‘This would not materially interfere with the revenue, whilst it would prove a great public convenience’.³⁶⁹ Individual enterprise should be supported and capital and labour should work together.³⁷⁰ He wanted new industries established, such as tobacco growing and distilling.³⁷¹

They should encourage the establishment of legitimate industries, and discarding the extreme theories of free-trade or protection, deal with questions on their merits. He would not recommend a bonus or protection to stimulate the growth of cotton and cocoanuts,³⁷² but such as a few years’ protection would

³⁶⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

³⁶⁷ *Observer*, 28 November 1896, p. 21.

³⁶⁸ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 22 July 1884, p. 2.

³⁶⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

³⁷⁰ *Observer*, 28 November 1896, p. 21.

³⁷¹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 5 August 1884, p. 3.

³⁷² Presumably cocoa beans, not a misspelling of coconut.

make self supporting should receive that temporary measure of protection.³⁷³

Private enterprise should be left alone:

Personal enterprise should be free and unfettered by Government interference, and business occupations, which pertain rather to private concerns, should not be forced by partial laws to be absorbed by Government departments. So far as is consistent with the rights and freedom of others there should be absolute freedom of action to each individual, and we should not be constrained to procure from some official a stamped permission to dot our "i's" and cross our "t's."³⁷⁴

State power was 'grossly perverted and abused to crush private competition with Government ventures, and to wrong private rights'. For instance, the Government Life Assurance Department was a 'huge incubus' which, like the Government Savings Bank, was 'useful in providing Government patronage and pocket-money'. This money was

virtually withdrawn from the trading capital of the farmers and small traders, who would use it usefully and reproductively; whereas, Government usually fools it away in officialism, for political if not corrupting purposes, and this is one cause of the scarcity of money amongst us for legitimate enterprises.

Nevertheless, he accepted that government must provide 'such things as are essential to our progress, but which are as yet beyond the power of private enterprise, and could only be undertaken by the Government'. In particular, railways should be 'prosecuted with vigour and prudence', paid by rating Crown and Maori land along with private land, a system he had tried to establish in 1880.³⁷⁵ Although in favour of railways and harbours being constructed to assist the development of West Coast coal mines, as his 'Colonial Industries Committee' had recommended, 'he regretted that Government had neglected another recommendation made at the same time to prevent the coal fields becoming monopolies'.³⁷⁶

³⁷³ Managapai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 April 1888, p. 10.

³⁷⁴ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *New Zealand Herald*, 20 April 1881, p. 6.

³⁷⁵ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 22 July 1884, p. 2.

³⁷⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

Murray considered it was 'a mistake to starve primary education by the multiplication of high schools and universities'. In 'outlying country areas' the school age should not be limited nor 'anything to place the families of pioneer settlers under educational disadvantages.... If we are to be governed by the people it must be by an educated democracy'.³⁷⁷ In 1881 he called for scholarships to enable children of the poor to get higher education, but five years later complained that the Thames High School 'only serves to over-educate and impair for future usefulness a few boys and girls'.³⁷⁸

In 1890, he described federation with Australia as

a question which could not be ignored, for New Zealand could neither afford to play a lone hand nor yet become the fag of the Australian Colonies. If New Zealand now held aloof until the other Colonies had banded together she would have to come in by and bye on their terms, but now she could combine with them in preserving the utmost freedom of internal autonomy. Freedom of Trade, Uniformity of Statutes, and National Defence were the most important considerations.³⁷⁹

NATIONAL POLITICS, 1880-1886

In 1881, when he was not standing for election, he advised electors to

take timely measures to secure the return of men to serve the interests of New Zealand, and discard those who may desire only to gratify personal vanity and ambition or their selfish personal aggrandisement, and strictly watch the actions rather than be deceived by the fluent utterances of designing men; that they will in the future avoid the apathy which has permitted the colony to be so burdened with debt with such entirely inadequate advantages from the expenditure, and by inspiring confidence in our future increase industrial production and the value and variety of our resources.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

³⁷⁸ *Thames Advertiser*, 12 May 1881, p. 3; letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1886, p. 7.

³⁷⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

³⁸⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *New Zealand Herald*, 20 April 1881, p. 6.

In 1883 there was stated to be a 'very general desire in the County of Bruce' for him to stand once more, but he was unlikely to agree because of his large farming interests in Piako.³⁸¹ Eight years later Murray claimed that his 'constituents were so pleased with me that they have been begging me to stand for their district ever since'.³⁸² If true, he did not act on their prompts. There was a rumour in 1883 that he would stand for the Waikato seat,³⁸³ but he did not.

In July 1884 Murray described the latest legislation as crushing private enterprise. The Government Life Assurance Department was a 'huge incubus'. Government 'patronage and pocket-money' took money from productive small traders and farmers and 'usually fools it away in officialism, for political if not corrupting purposes', one cause of a scarcity of money 'for legitimate enterprises'.³⁸⁴ The following month he commented on the fall of the Atkinson government:

The Government was defeated by a combination of malcontents, and Parliament was dissolved to the great public loss, because there were only a number of factions, each incapable of commanding even an approach to a majority, but powerful only for mischief when they were united. Of these factions that of the Ministry was undoubtedly the strongest, but analyzing the new Parliament, the question arises, Has the relative strength of parties materially altered? and the reply must be in the negative, and, therefore, the argument in favour of a dissolution remains with almost as equal force as before the election. The fact is, with factions, fads, fallacies, debt, centralism, extravagaries, officialism and over-government, we are becoming less capable of prudently governing ourselves.³⁸⁵

The following year he claimed industry was being strangled by taxes and restrictions at the same time as the government was 'tinkering with public laws and tampering with private interests'.³⁸⁶ He accused the 'corrupt Upas tree of centralism' of 'depraving Parliament and people, emasculating independence and self-reliance, and degrading local

³⁸¹ *Waikato Times*, 7 June 1883, p. 2.

³⁸² *Waikato Times*, 3 October 1891, p. 2.

³⁸³ *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 January 1883, p. 21.

³⁸⁴ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 22 July 1884, p. 2.

³⁸⁵ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 5 August 1884, p. 3.

³⁸⁶ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 22 October 1885, p. 3.

government into a multiplicity of selfish and servile pensioners, constrained by law to waste much of their means in needless expenses'. (As the upas tree was a 'Javanese tree yielding milky sap used as arrow-poison & held fatal to whatever came beneath its branches', its figurative meaning was 'pernicious influence'.)³⁸⁷ His solution was for farmers, 'the most important occupation', to organize a 'Farmers' Alliance or Colonists' Union' to defeat 'the power of the parasites who play on the credulity of the people and prey on their industries'.³⁸⁸

In February 1886, he wrote a long letter about the decayed state of Te Aroha and giving his views on how to purchase Maori land and encourage development on 'sound and successful economic principles'.

I need not now go into details, your readers can think over the matter as I have done and I believe that they will come to the same conclusion, that it might do good for New Zealand. Meanwhile they would do well to be up and doing, so that when a dissolution of Parliament restores the power to the people they will make their vote and influence felt in the government of the Colony. For this and other matters a committee should be appointed, and if public meetings are held I would gladly attend, hoping that before I leave [for Britain] I might be of some use to my fellow settlers.³⁸⁹

The *Te Aroha News* wondered why Murray had not come to Te Aroha's rescue before: 'Perhaps the impending dissolution of Parliament has something to do with the matter?'³⁹⁰ Murray rebutted its suggestion that he planned to stand for the Waikato seat:

First. I have no intention of opposing my friend Mr [John Blair] Whyte [who represented Waikato from 1879 to 1890],³⁹¹ whose views are usually in accord with mine. After serving about a dozen years in Parliament I am not now enthusiastic after parliamentary honours, nor under existing circumstances and in the complications of Government could I hope to do such public

³⁸⁷ *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 1964), p. 1430.

³⁸⁸ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 29 October 1885, p. 3.

³⁸⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1886, p. 7.

³⁹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 6 February 1886, p. 2.

³⁹¹ *New Zealand Parliamentary Record 1840-1949*, ed. Guy H. Scholefield (Wellington, 1950), p. 147.

services as would justify the personal disadvantages which my remaining here at present would involve.³⁹²

Also in that month he wrote to the Auckland press quoting from a letter he had received from former Premier Sir John Hall reflecting glory upon himself. Hall was 'sorry to find' from Murray's letter of the previous October that New Zealand was 'likely to lose you. I congratulate you, however, on having met with a purchaser for your property. It is a fine one'. Murray added:

Possibly I may accede to the wish of some of my friends, and give a public address, but it is not likely, in view of an early dissolution of the New Zealand Parliament, that I will relinquish my purpose of revisiting the home country, after an absence of 26 years, in order to re-enter the unsatisfactory arena of politics in New Zealand, at least for the present.³⁹³

One running battle during the 1880s was over the railway system, both because of general issues and because of how he was affected. In June 1882, in response to 'various complaints about the mismanagement of the Government railway', he provided details of the exorbitant cost of conveying a small steam engine to his estate.³⁹⁴ Two months later, he criticized the great waste of money in constructing the railway line to Hamilton. Instead of a bridge at Ngaruawahia, the line should have gone directly to Hamilton without the need of another bridge at Hamilton, instead crossing the Waikato River at Tamahere.³⁹⁵ In March 1883 he returned to the same theme:

One of the alleged advantages of direct taxation is that it stirs public opinion to look after expenditure, and this being about the time for the periodical plunder by the General Government for property tax, it may not be inopportune to take this, the only advantage we in the Thames Valley are favoured with, and ask when the railway will be completed from the Thames to Waikato. It is now nearly five years since the work received Parliamentary authority. In the United States or even elsewhere, private

³⁹² Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1886, p. 7.

³⁹³ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Auckland Weekly News*, 27 February 1886, p. 15.

³⁹⁴ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 29 June 1882, p. 3.

³⁹⁵ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 24 August 1882, p. 3.

enterprise would have made it in twelve months, but our Government has been dawdling on, getting no return for money already expended, retarding the progress of the country and ruining the settlers by taking their money and lands under false pretenses of giving them a railway.

After contrasting this situation with the prosperity brought to landowners in Otago and Canterbury when the government completed railway lines, he asked why the 'North Island Ministry' did not 'either finish the Hamilton railway bridge, if that huge blunder will be fit for traffic, or abandon it, and push on a line from Taupiri, saving many miles, and would cost less than the said bridge'.³⁹⁶ Two weeks later, he complained that the cost of the Rotorua Railway Company's line was likely 'to ultimately fall upon those beasts of every burden, the settlers of New Zealand, and in this case solely the settlers of the Thames Valley'. He asked why company tax should be 'inflicted on said settlers indirectly' through the company, and had protested, unsuccessfully, against this 'iniquity' in parliament, for it was

monstrous that rates and taxes are to be levied on such railways which must more or less directly be paid by the settlers who have tried to remedy the neglect of Government to do them justice in the matter of State railways. It tends to stop enterprise, and is alike unjust and unstatesman-like, but is characteristic of the policy of every New Zealand Government, irrespective of party, to borrow for bribery and political expediency rather than for useful reproductive public works, prudently constructed, and with an equitable regard to public requirements and present and prospective benefits. Votes and impotent political importunity are the most potent influences.³⁹⁷

In May, he again accused the railways of bungling, using the example of his difficulty in getting sheep transported from Hamilton to Auckland.³⁹⁸ In January 1885 he once more complained about the delay in constructing the line to Te Aroha, and gave considerable details of how charging for freight could be improved.³⁹⁹ In November, in a letter on railway reform he raised his personal problems once more:

³⁹⁶ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 1 March 1883, p. 2.

³⁹⁷ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 17 March 1883, p. 3.

³⁹⁸ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 3 May 1883, p. 2.

³⁹⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 13 January 1885, p. 2.

I had occasion to write and ask the Railway Department to allow trucks to come on here, 1 1/2 miles from Morrinsville, as the road in winter, besides being double the distance, had been made almost impassable from the cartage of Rotorua railway sleepers from Te Aroha to Morrinsville (while the Government was sending their railway sleepers from Morrinsville to Te Aroha and thus are the loans squandered). Instead of compliance with my civil request, the station-master received peremptory orders not to allow trucks with my coal, fencing material, &c, to come on for me.

In contrast, goods were carried on the private and equally un-ballasted Rotorua line, for the benefit of Josiah Clifton Firth⁴⁰⁰ in particular. He had 'condemned the railway management, and unlike some others have not cringed to flatter the Ministry; and it would seem that in railway management, as in government, partialities and prejudices are guiding principles'.⁴⁰¹ In an 1888 speech 'he expressed decided views. He thought the new brooms, or Commissioners, would be like Vogel's Captain Campbell-Walker, of forest notoriety, and they would probably have to pay to get rid of this, the most recent fad and floundering'.⁴⁰² Railway management was 'of very great importance to the well being of settlers and of the Colony as a whole', and 'should not be suffered to dominate or supersede political responsibility'. Whilst commending the zeal of Samuel Vaile to reform the system,⁴⁰³ Vaile 'ought to agitate for the reduction of freights as well as of fares'. By 1890 Murray did not want any new lines constructed, 'but gaps in existing lines ought to be completed, by a system of Government Treasury notes advanced to district Councils'.⁴⁰⁴ The following year he declared he was 'not in favour of Vaile's scheme, but would do away with much of the classification and make the matter as simple as possible', and cheaper.⁴⁰⁵

A TRIP 'HOME'

⁴⁰⁰ See paper on the Battery Company.

⁴⁰¹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Auckland Star*, 17 November 1885, p. 4.

⁴⁰² Mangapai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 April 1888, p. 10.

⁴⁰³ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 303-304; 'Report of Select Committee on Vaile's System of Railway Fares and Charges', *AJHR*, 1886, I-9.

⁴⁰⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁵ *Waikato Times*, 22 September 1891, p. 2.

In November 1886, the Hamilton newspaper reprinted a report of his being a guest at a luncheon at the Lammermoor Pastoral Society's Show in September. In reply to a toast in his honour,

Mr Murray, who was very cordially received, said that after 28 years' absence from Scotland it was difficult to express the feelings with which he revisited the scenes of his youth and the county of his birth. While Scotsmen were everywhere true to the land of their adoption, they never forgot their native place – (applause) – and therefore he had come there at some little inconvenience to be present at the annual meeting of the Lammermoor Pastoral Society, in the hope of being able to meet some of his old friends. (Applause.)

Although he had found that some had 'gone over to the great majority', he 'had been pleased to renew acquaintance with the sons of those departed friends, and with the few remaining friends of former years. Scotsman in the Colonies always talk of the old country as home', and the 'universal and unvarying kindness' he had received suggested that 'people wished to make him feel that this was still his home. (Applause.)' He regretted their agricultural depression, but stated that meat prices were far higher than in New Zealand, whereas prices for colonial grain were 'very little less'. After expanding on his views on prices and quality, he recommended that British farmers produce more meat and less grain. He concluded by thanking them 'all very cordially for the honour they had done him – kindness which was not due to him alone, but to pleasant memories which they entertained of his family. (Applause.)'⁴⁰⁶

Murray's reply to a letter received from Sir George Grey in January 1887 is published in full, as, not being intended for publication, it reveals his opinions more clearly than letters and speeches intended to gain public support for his political ambitions:

I was much pleased to receive your letter & to see that you are well. Your description of affairs in New Zealand is most interesting but it wd seem that the Stout-Vogel "variety troupe" is as I expected worse than a failure.

I regret to find that except through Mr Froude's book⁴⁰⁷ & that chiefly from your representations there seems to be no regular or

⁴⁰⁶ *Berwickshire News*, n.d., reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 18 November 1886, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁷ J.A. Froude, *Oceana, or, England and her Colonies* (London, 1886).

systematic official organisation to present New Zealand in its most just & desirable aspects to the best & most useful classes here, so as to secure the development of her resources by a legitimate employment of the surplus population by the surplus wealth of Britain to the benefit of both Britain & New Zealand. Unfortunately, & it is difficult with truth to contradict the statement, our Colony is now too notorious for wasted loans & it wd seem that the same pernicious influence that is responsible for so much of the mischief, is still working its evil way & almost makes one ashamed of what shd in its legitimate right be one of the greatest & most popular & prosperous of the Colonies - & with the depression, the want of confidence in the future in this country, under wiser counsels New Zealand wd have a splendid opportunity for securing her material progress & the welfare of thousands of people here.

It is deplorable to see the depths of destitution in this great country, to see the extremes of wealth & want, the luxurious expenditure or we might say profligate extravagance & the miserable poverty. It is hard to see how this may work out, society seems so artificial & guided by such false principles, but it is the social problem (& that has guided you in trying to avert likewise in younger countries). With the poor here also it is often difficult to say what is the result of misfortune & a hard lot or what the necessary consequence of intemperance & crime. I have been asked to speak at great Crofter & at the opposite extreme Conservative gatherings but it seems to me that the British Govt has great difficulties to grapple with; at "Home" depression, contentions & divisions – abroad, keen commercial competition increasing, with grave political complications & the ever present menace of disastrous war.

You say that I will be able to take an unprejudiced view. There are merits & faults on both sides & it wd be presumptive for me to commend or condemn even after a far longer experience & much greater ability than I possess & therefore I have abstained from taking any active part by press or platform.

The difference between patriotic liberals & patriotic conservatives is nominal but antiquated tory monopoly & radicalism with [uncertain reading, due to his handwriting] say the forces of anarchy are irreconcilable extremes.

Till true Local Government, more like that designed by you in the original New Zealand Constitution Bill – but not Dublin or Edinburgh Centralism under a guise of "Home Rule," is substituted for London Centralism it will be difficult to comprehensively reform internally or to deal with Imperial, colonial & foreign affairs with systematic wisdom.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁸ William Archibald Murray to Sir George Grey, 13 January 1887, Grey New Zealand Letters, vol. 25, pp. 35-39, Auckland Public Library.

The following month, extracts from another letter from abroad were published:

All speak fondly of New Zealand, but deplore your ruinous burden of debt and overgovernment, and when I urged the natural advantages of New Zealand, they say “All is true you say, but we fear to try taxation and undefined liability for the extravagances of men who are ruining the colony, and who seem to have no regard for the future or any idea of responsibility.”

Murray wrote that he might ‘visit the United States for a time, keeping in view, however, New Zealand as my home, for there is no place like it, if one has plenty of love for the beauties of unpolluted nature, and money to improve them’.⁴⁰⁹ In July, his brother John wrote to the *Te Aroha News* ‘requesting that the electors of Tauranga will not pledge themselves to any man as yet, as probably his brother’ might return ‘in time to contest the election’.⁴¹⁰ A week later, John wrote that ‘on several occasions lately’ he had been asked ‘if there was any prospect of’ Murray, who was ‘now likely to make his permanent home at Te Aroha’, returning ‘in time to offer himself as a candidate’. John said that he would arrive before the election, but too late to do any canvassing, and reminded readers that his brother sought economical government, opposed borrowing, and wanted the development of New Zealand’s natural resources and the promotion of new industries.⁴¹¹ The following month, Murray cabled that he would not stand against George Vesey Stewart for the Tauranga seat, as their political creeds were almost identical, and urged voters to support Stewart.⁴¹²

NATIONAL POLITICS, 1888-1890

In 1888, Murray addressed meetings about the condition of New Zealand and Britain. ‘New Zealand was like a person who had been the victim of quacks and empirics, crafty schemers, and visionary theorists, who had dosed and drugged until the naturally robust constitution of the victim

⁴⁰⁹ Extracts from letter from William Archibald Murray, *Auckland Weekly News*, 19 February 1887, p. 17.

⁴¹⁰ *Te Aroha News*, 23 July 1887, p. 2.

⁴¹¹ Letter from John Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 30 July 1887, p. 3.

⁴¹² *Te Aroha News*, 20 August 1887, p. 3.

had been almost ruined'. New Zealand politicians, 'like the Athenians of old, were never content unless they were theorizing'.⁴¹³ He recommended that the government appoint William Gisborne, a former minister then resident in London, as agent general. After praising Gisborne's skills, and how his appointment would be cheap, Murray concluded: 'We want no puffer or bogus schemer or professor of financial magic'.⁴¹⁴ When Francis Dillon Bell was chosen instead, Murray wrote to the press to justify his preference. Not only would Gisborne have saved £1,000 a year, he would treat visitors properly, 'not as at present', when they were 'simply tolerated politely as bores interfering with the reading of some recent and interesting book or periodical'. (Which was presumably how Murray had been treated when in London.) 'You see how these civil servants, officials, and ruling powers favour their class' by choosing Bell.⁴¹⁵

Also in 1888, a long letter on railway reform called for simplicity and economy, and opposed selling the lines to British speculators.⁴¹⁶ By restricting the central government to collecting only enough tax for 'purely general government purposes' and all land and other taxes being levied by local government, 'a vast wasteful expenditure' would be avoided, and local government would no longer be 'servile pensioners of centralism'. The cost of central government would accordingly be 'largely reduced', with a lower house of 50 members and the 'so-called Upper House would cease to be a refuge for the destitute, and called a Senate would consist of 25 members'.⁴¹⁷ He wanted a Constitutional Reform Association to achieve good and economical government by the people rather than by those who had 'no sympathy with the people' and had made it 'almost impossible to govern New Zealand by honest means'. The choice of governments had been between the 'scheming and adventurers', and he was especially opposed to any government formed by Richard Seddon.⁴¹⁸ A letter in the following year again urging constitutional reform listed the 'authorities' he had studied on the topic.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹³ Mangapai Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 April 1888, p. 10.

⁴¹⁴ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 30 June 1888, p. 2.

⁴¹⁵ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Te Aroha News*, 18 August 1888, p. 2.

⁴¹⁶ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 21 June 1888, p. 2.

⁴¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 21 July 1888, p. 2.

⁴¹⁸ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 2 October 1888, p. 2.

⁴¹⁹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 15 October 1889, p. 2.

In 1889, when again complaining that the railway system was being badly run, he stated that when in Britain he had investigated its system, to find they were the same; a cheaper and more convenient service was required.⁴²⁰ He wanted chambers of agriculture formed in all country districts to wield political power, for ‘the farmers are like sheep, shorn for the benefit of others’.⁴²¹ Late that year he supported Bryce for the Waipa seat: ‘For honesty and ability, I esteem my old friend and political ally’, who was ‘one of the most trustworthy and reliable of our prominent public men’.⁴²² Murray even intervened in Auckland issues by opposing the sale of the Waitakerei Falls to produce electricity for tramways; they should be retained for a water supply.⁴²³

In June 1890, Murray, as ‘Hon. Sec. pro. tem’, advertised a meeting in Te Aroha ‘to consider questions pertaining to the next general election and to elect a Reform Committee’. There was ‘a good attendance’, some people travelling 15 miles to attend. The chairman of the town board, Edward Gallagher,⁴²⁴ chaired it, but in introducing Murray said ‘he was not very well acquainted with the nature of the Reform League’. Murray began by regretting ‘the inclemency of the weather, which no doubt had deterred some from being present, who would otherwise have attended’. He explained that ‘several’ believed it ‘was desirable some general system of organisation should take place throughout the Colony, in order to secure the election of members pledged to introduce a more satisfactory condition of things’. His long speech explained his views on a wide range of topics; at its conclusion, he again ‘regretted to see that some who took a great interest in the establishment of a Reform League, and who would no doubt have been present but for the inclemency of the weather, were not at the meeting. Had they attended as he anticipated, they would have drawn up a list of resolutions’. In their absence, he had drawn up 12, which included all the topics he had discussed. The first question from the floor, from Clem Cornes, a Liberal supporter,⁴²⁵ was blunt:

⁴²⁰ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 28 May 1889, p. 2.

⁴²¹ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 24 August 1889, p. 3.

⁴²² Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 15 October 1889, p. 2.

⁴²³ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Auckland Weekly News*, 16 November 1889, p. 15.

⁴²⁴ See paper on his life.

⁴²⁵ See paper on Clement Augustus Cornes.

He wished to ask before any resolutions were put to the meeting, was Mr Murray a candidate for the Te Aroha Electorate.

Mr Murray: I have not decided to stand for any electorate as yet. I am here to-night as a New Zealand colonist, interested in the welfare of the Colony and its better government, to discuss with the other electors present matters of interest to us all. I may say Mr W[illiam] S[hepherd] Allen some time back spoke to me and asked me if I purposed standing for Parliament, stating at the same time that when he was at Tauranga he had heard my name frequently mentioned as a probable candidate.

Since then, he had been 'rather surprised' to learn that Allen intended to stand. Cornes then stated it was 'too early to form resolutions', and there being several candidates 'we want to hear what each of them has to say before we proceed to frame resolutions'. Francis Pavitt, a surveyor and civil engineer, and also a Liberal,⁴²⁶ was next to speak:

I think Mr Murray is going a little too fast. If it is desired that a Reform League be appointed he should move to that effect. I have listened with pleasure to Mr Murray's address, he has told us some things we did not know before, but if he or any other gentleman comes here and thinks he can cram things down our throat, until they have satisfied us as these things are for our good, they will find they have made a mistake. (Hear, hear). Mr Murray should move that a Reform League be appointed, if he so wishes, and then leave it to them to frame resolutions.

Accordingly, Murray moved 'That a Reform League be appointed, to take into consideration questions of importance, in view of the next general election'. With six votes in favour and none against, 'the resolution was declared carried unanimously'. When Murray moved to elect members, 'several' people were proposed 'but each declined to accept the position, and it was quite evident the majority of those present differed from Mr Murray with respect to the need for the immediate appointing of a Reform League'. Murray regretted that the meeting was 'not prepared to take action in this matter to-night'. As parliament would 'be very much what the electors make it', he considered there was 'no time to be lost in discussing matters of vast importance to us all, and in taking some practical steps in the direction of bringing about much needed reforms'. As the meeting appeared to have 'a

⁴²⁶ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 825; *Thames Advertiser*, 14 June 1892, p. 2, 28 November 1899, p. 4.

different opinion', he moved a vote of thanks to the chairman, but before this was voted on Cornes moved 'a hearty vote of thanks' to Murray. Because he had served for so long in parliament, 'we know he must be well up in electioneering matters', but electors 'should wait and see what all the candidates had to offer' before pledging themselves 'to any man or line of action'. The seconder described Murray's address as 'interesting', but noted that he was 'not consistent'. Having argued that control should be given to local bodies, he had supported money being granted to assist the Te Aroha Silver and Gold Mining Company 'if expended by Government, but not if it was to be expended by' the council; he thought Murray 'was very hard on' the council. After the motion was passed, unanimously, Murray explained that 'it was not to County Councils as now constituted, but to reformed local bodies he wished to see extension of powers granted'.⁴²⁷

A correspondent, who estimated 'about 70' attended, wrote that Murray 'without any reference to a Reform League proceeded to address the meeting as if he was a candidate for their votes at the next election'. This account added that Murray had stated that all these policies should be 'binding on the person they elected'. It cited Cornes stating he had 'thought the meeting had been called to consider the advisability of forming a Reform League, but it appeared to him that Mr Murray had taken advantage of the meeting to air his own particular views, and address them as if he were a candidate'.⁴²⁸ Another correspondent quoted Cornes as saying that 'in lieu of the 'important business' of forming a league they 'had been treated to an electioneering speech' from a probable candidate. 'There was no doubt Mr Murray was a great tactician in electioneering matters, but on this occasion he had overshot the mark'. In his account only four people voted for the formation of the league, and Gallagher was given credit for insisting 'that the names of the committee be proposed at once'.

Mr Murray explained that it had been arranged for several persons to meet prior to the public meeting to approve or otherwise a certain resolution that he had drafted, but the persons had failed to put in an appearance, and so he was compelled to move the resolution himself. After having read two of the resolutions it became apparent that the meeting was getting tired of the matter.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 4 June 1890, p. 2.

⁴²⁸ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Thames Advertiser*, 3 June 1890, p. 2.

⁴²⁹ Te Aroha Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 3 June 1890, p. 2.

Shortly after this fiasco, Hamilton members of the Waikato Farmers' Club were disappointed because Murray had postponed reading his paper, 'Some Causes of the Depression Considered'.⁴³⁰ Two months later he attended a meeting of the Waikato Reform League,⁴³¹ which supported the schemes proposed by Samuel Vaile.

In December, Murray wrote to the *Clutha Leader* and requested the *Te Aroha News* to reprint his letter. After praising the election of a 'good friend' for Bruce and expressing his continuing 'deep interest' in Otago, he referred to his own political future:

Surprise has been expressed and I have been blamed for not accepting valued and influential offers of political support from one of several electorates. On public grounds I feared that the action of the new parliament will be disappointing, and that I could not do the good which the kindly opinions of friends might lead them to expect from me; while privately my business requires my undivided attention on my new place.

Mr W.S. Allen, who bought Annandale from me, and has been elected for Te Aroha, wishes to go into our Parliament, and as he has been 22 years a member of the British Parliament, has a wide influential and wealthy acquaintance, and as he wished to identify himself and his large family with our interest, I would not stand in the way of his desire to do good to the colony as a member of our Parliament.

I understood that Mr Bryce would not stand for any other constituency than Waikato ... and if he is not elected for Waikato he stated his determination to finally retire from public life. As it meant either defeat for me or that the colony should lose Mr Bryce's services for ever, my course was clear in declining many urgent requests that I should come forward.

We miss here the high principles in the press which is characteristic of so many leading newspapers in the South. Some papers here, otherwise well conducted as business ventures, systematically suppress or distort the truth which they or their friends' interests differ from.⁴³²

STANDING FOR ELECTION IN 1891

⁴³⁰ *Waikato Times*, 10 June 1890, p. 2.

⁴³¹ *Waikato Times*, 28 August 1890, p. 3.

⁴³² Letter from William Archibald Murray, 9 December 1890, printed in *Clutha Leader*, n.d. [December 1890]; reprinted in *Te Aroha News*, n.d. [December 1890], and re-reprinted in *Waikato Times*, 26 March 1892, p. 2.

In April and May 1890 it was reported that Murray had 'received many pressing invitations' to stand for Te Aroha. Although he had not decided whether to stand, newspapers considered it likely that he would.⁴³³ In June the following year it was again reported that he was being urged to stand.⁴³⁴ The *Observer* understood Murray was 'not unwilling', and considered that he was better than the others on offer.⁴³⁵ In the middle of the month, Murray congratulated John Ballance on his 'able' statement, and sent him a copy of a letter to an elector who had urged him to stand for parliament, giving Ballance permission to publish it.⁴³⁶

To go into politics would cause me to neglect the large amount of work which I am carrying on for others and myself. I am also cautioned not to incur a second attack of bronchitis by contesting an election in midwinter. I therefore regret that more suitable men are not coming forward for this we are not free from blame as many good men shrink from being coarsely treated as legitimate objects to be unscrupulously plundered. I regret also that any obstacles prevent me from complying the wish of yourself and many esteemed friends, for I desire to do my duty and not to live for myself only, but to do all the good I can according to my opportunities. It is probable too that this Parliament will deal with matters of the most vast and far reaching importance, such as Government reform in the direction of decentralization and by giving to the people more ample powers to use their local knowledge to manage local affairs, secure greater economy, efficiency, simplicity and purity. Measures to reduce the disastrous drain of wealth from the colony to pay interest which makes our colonists the virtual slaves of absentees and usurers, so that our marvelous amount of exports, the products of our toil, leave little trace of wealth behind, demand earnest and immediate attention and remedial action. Federation for good or for evil cannot be ignored and any false steps we take therein may only be retraced through revolution but New Zealand cannot afford to play "a lone hand" or she may become "a lone hand." The federation scheme of the convention utterly fails to safeguard our rights and our local independence and soon we would suffer and deplore a wider and more

⁴³³ *Waikato Times*, 24 April 1890, p. 2; *Thames Advertiser*, 2 May 1890, p. 2.

⁴³⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 10 June 1891, p. 2.

⁴³⁵ *Observer*, 6 June 1891, p. 7.

⁴³⁶ William Archibald Murray to John Ballance, 18 June 1891, John Ballance Papers, MS-Copy-Micro-170-Reel 1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

disastrous “abolition” than we had in the abolition of our Provincial Governments. True Home Rule would only exist only in name and we would be oppressed by an arrogant, extravagant, and probably corrupt centralism in which the most distant district and especially New Zealand would be the most unfortunate sufferer. For the security of our state rights and local rights each state should be represented according to its population and each state should contribute to the Federal expenditure in proportion to its representative. All receipts from taxation and other sources of revenue, with some exceptions, to be “state” revenue. Amongst the exceptions may be postal and telegraphic, patent and receipt stamps, succession duties &c. There should be absolute freedom of trade and interchange within the federation and all to possess equal rights, immunities, and privileges. The share of each state from the customs duties to be in proportion to population.

Mr [Alfred Jerome] Cadman told me that the Government hoped to secure the Native Lands in perpetual fee and dispose of them on like terms to settlers, as suggested by me to the late and to the present Government. For this we want no more London loans and the interests of both Europeans and Maoris will be identical in securing the profitable occupation of millions of acres which are now unproductive. I would have pleasure in working with Mr Cadman and would willingly support the government in well-doing but would resent an imputation that we are a servile constituency, bound without question to elect any nominee. I think the proposal to make exception in the Land Tax unjust, unsound and an economic error. It is a dangerous and a wrong principle which invites one large class of men to impose upon a comparatively small class taxation from which they are exempted.

I agree with you that the stallion tax is unwarranted and is an interference by the state with individual rights, your instance of Maori stallions seems unanswerable.⁴³⁷

Murray also told Ballance that Sir William Buller, one of whose meetings he had chaired, had said he would support the government.⁴³⁸ In September, when Murray was requisitioned to stand in Waikato on behalf of the Opposition, the *Observer* considered he would be a ‘good, honest, and

⁴³⁷ William Archibald Murray to Captain Runciman, 19 June 1891, John Ballance Papers, MS-Copy-Micro-170-Reel 1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁴³⁸ William Archibald Murray to John Ballance, 20 July 1891, John Ballance Papers, MS-Copy-Micro-170-Reel 1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

able member'.⁴³⁹ Immediately afterwards, Murray announced that he would compete against Edward Lake,⁴⁴⁰ an opponent of the Liberal Government, for the Waikato seat.⁴⁴¹

Murray declared himself an independent who 'believed in actions that would live for ever, truth and justice, opposing the wrong and supporting the right'. The country's condition was 'unsatisfactory' partly because of the political parties, which were 'divided into three classes: Obstructives, destructives, and constructives', the latter creating its wealth. 'There was too much party government, and not enough attention paid to those great principles that would benefit all'. If elected, 'he would support principles not men, but if a good measure were brought forward by either side of the House he would support it'; he opposed 'many' government policies.⁴⁴² A reporter noting 'a conspicuous absence' in one speech of any reference to the 'socialistic and land nationalising policy' of the government deduced that he intended 'to keep his hand free to join either party'. Asked directly, Murray 'declined to be pledged to any party. On some points he was on a line with the Government, on others with the Opposition'.⁴⁴³ At another meeting he 'deplored the party strife there was now and always had been in the House. What the country wanted was statesmanship, not points of order, party strife and squabbles'. Asked whether he approved of 'the general policy' of the government, he responded: 'Only of their native policy, as it was I who suggested it to them'. Asked how, as an independent, he would have any influence, he replied that he had been one for 11 years 'and my constituents were so pleased with me that they have been begging me to stand for their district ever since'. He named leading members of both sides of the House whom he could work with; 'he wanted to see a good party formed of the best men ... who would work for the welfare of the country'.⁴⁴⁴

Murray claimed that Bryce had called him a most 'painstaking member' of parliament.⁴⁴⁵ Even after standing, he urged Bryce to contest the seat, promising to withdraw if he did so.⁴⁴⁶ He claimed to have refused

⁴³⁹ *Observer*, 12 September 1891, p. 7.

⁴⁴⁰ See *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 719-720.

⁴⁴¹ *Waikato Times*, 15 September 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁴² *Waikato Times*, 1 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁴³ *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁴ *Waikato Times*, 3 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁵ *Waikato Times*, 19 September 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁶ *Waikato Times*, 24 September 1891, p. 2.

to stand against Allen for Waikato because Allen was ‘a good man’ who had ‘wealth and position, and who had sat in the House of Commons’ for several years. Giving details of how he had been responsible for Bryce being appointed Native Minister, he was disappointed that Bryce was opposing his candidature.⁴⁴⁷ Bryce immediately denied Murray had had any role in his appointment.⁴⁴⁸ Because of Bryce’s opposition, by the end of the campaign Murray said he would ‘certainly not’ resign in his favour.⁴⁴⁹

By October, it was claimed the government was supporting Murray.⁴⁵⁰ Supporters of the government and members of the local Liberal Association backed him, for, ‘though in no way representing the party, or the Government views’, he was regarded ‘as being the more liberal in principles of the two candidates, and ... sound upon the education question’. Their backing was expected to ‘make a great difference in the probable result’, for while it might lose Murray ‘a few votes’ it would ‘add very considerably to the grand total’; it was also used by his opponents ‘to besmirch him as an open advocate of the present Government and its most objectionable Socialistic principles’. A correspondent pointed out that this could not be ‘further from the truth’; the contest was ‘being fought out with a great deal of acrimony’, reminding him ‘somewhat of the old electioneering battles before the days of the ballot’.⁴⁵¹ After polling day, Murray denied being a government candidate.⁴⁵²

His first election address, in Hamilton, which attracted only a small attendance, opposed more borrowing, wanted fewer Wellington bureaucrats, and called for a new system of local government. He considered the existing rate of interest, from eight to nine per cent, was too high and was ‘killing the yeoman class’; the state should fix it at five per cent. There should be free trade with Australia. Maori land should be purchased for settlement, ‘a portion of the rental being set aside for the natives’; he ‘would not like to see black landlords and white tenants’. After this racist statement, he expressed support for female suffrage.⁴⁵³ In another, later, illiberal statement, he wanted museums and libraries to check ‘the socialistic

⁴⁴⁷ *Waikato Times*, 1 October 1891, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 October 1891, p. 10.

⁴⁴⁸ Letter from John Bryce, *Waikato Times*, 6 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁹ *Waikato Times*, 3 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁰ *Waikato Times*, 1 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁵¹ Hamilton Correspondent, *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 October 1891, p. 10.

⁴⁵² *Waikato Times*, 13 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁵³ *Waikato Times*, 19 September 1891, p. 2; see also 29 September 1891, p. 2.

tendencies that were now undermining the moral health of the people’;⁴⁵⁴ presumably they would check these by censorship. On a rainy night at Cambridge he assured the few who attended that, if elected, ‘and anything he did displeased them, they had only to express their displeasure, and he should at once resign; he should try to do his duty irrespective of party or persons’. He ‘was very severe upon’ those parliamentarians who tried to increase ‘the honorarium and make it secure against creditors, which he said was tantamount to making the House an asylum for fraudulent debtors’.⁴⁵⁵ He told another meeting that, if elected, his constituents should ‘write to him for anything they required’.⁴⁵⁶

At subsequent meetings, he criticized the extent of borrowing, ‘the greater portion of which moneys were spent in luxuries, or in such matters as the colony herself could have produced’. He wanted taxes reduced and customs duties abolished on barbed wire and corrugated iron, an example of his support for farmers, and the establishment of local industries. Property tax was wrong because ‘the more a man improved his property, the larger the tax he is called to pay. This was clearly against the progress of the country’. He wanted an ‘entirely new form of taxation’, unspecified. Settlement should be encouraged so that no land lay idle, and costs for farmers such as transport reduced. ‘A fair rate of interest’ of five per cent was needed, and the powers of mortgagees restricted, citing his having to reduce interest from seven per cent to four, and wanted the government to cut interest rates similarly. Earlier views on the perpetual leasing of Maori land were repeated; all such land that was unimproved should be taxed. He continued to argue for more power to local bodies and less to the central government. He praised the American system of local government, and its smaller number of judges. Education should be improved, but spending on it should be reduced. He wanted to encourage what he continued to call the yeoman class, considering townspeople to be parasites on the farmers. Opposing protection, because it encouraged the growth of towns and ‘sweating in factories and other evils of town life’, he wanted people to move to the country. He expanded on how and why the British government would be willing to ‘consolidate’ New Zealand’s debt and so reduce its burden, and claimed to be the originator of a method supported by other politicians of speeding up the leasing of Maori land. ‘Being a bachelor, he was not in

⁴⁵⁴ *Waikato Times*, 3 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁵ *Waikato Times*, 22 September 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁶ *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1891, p. 2.

favour of taxing them, unless they were reckoned as luxuries, when he supposed they ought to be'. As always being concerned with fine details, he ended one meeting by wanting local bodies to assist with 'the gorse question'.⁴⁵⁷

At Whatawhata, he produced 'an elaborate scheme' to cure the colony's indebtedness, which did not impress the *Waikato Times* reporter:

This was to get the Imperial Government to take it over and issue consols at a low rate of interest in its place, and he also advocated the issue of treasury notes to our local bodies to pay their debts with. The whole thing is so utterly impracticable that one wonders at any one having the arrogance to suggest such tomfoolery, but it took immensely with a few electors.⁴⁵⁸

One elector, disguised as 'U.U.A. Murrain', meaning 'a plague on you',⁴⁵⁹ asked

Who's Murray? Is it he of Piako fame? Good Lord, deliver us. Who asked him to come forward? Where is his list of supporters? Echo answers, "Where? Nowhere, he axed hisself." Is not this the modest individual who at the last general elections wrote to our late honoured representative, Mr Bryce, requesting him to contest an electorate nearer home, and leave the Waikato to him – W.A. Murray Esq., the great "I am;" it do make me laff, it do; it's scrumptious; it's a screaming farce – talley-ho, yoiks forrard!!

Gae hang yerself, Murray,
Gang awa in a hurry,
In the "Screel o' the pipes" loose your wailings and woes;
Or o'er yer lang body
We'll tipple Scotch todday
And soon drooned in the Lake ye shall turn up yer toes.

A postscript added 'Eh, mon, he con just play the pipes – he's foo' o' wind'.⁴⁶⁰ 'Mary Ann' also mocked his pretensions. 'That dear Mr Murray and his wonderful stories about his own power and influence in the colony! I almost love him! How he does seem to control everybody and everything! How nice to be able to appoint Native Ministers and cause the defeat of objectionable measures'.

⁴⁵⁷ *Waikato Times*, 26 September 1891, p. 2, 3 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁸ *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁹ *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 5 ed. (Oxford, 1964), pp. 794-795.

⁴⁶⁰ Letter from 'U.U.A. Murrain', *Waikato Times*, 26 September 1891, p. 3.

I feel, my dear Mr Murray, that you are really nice, and I should dearly like you to think me nice (I was 31 last birthday, Mr Murray). But, oh Archibald! Archibald! don't ask me to believe too much! I am a lady, it is true, but not a child; and even a child could not accept your own valuation of your own consequences. No, indeed! We can believe a great deal, however, coming from you, Mr Murray. You may be able to make the money-lenders open their purses at five per cent, or even at one per cent (why not, my dear sir?); you may make the Imperial Government guarantee our loans to enable us to convert them (I think I see the Imperial Government doing it!); we can believe that you are even now in confidential communication with the members of that very Government in Wellington which Waikato thinks so highly of and loves so well, with such good cause; we can believe you mean to support it, or mean to oppose it (whichever you like to tell us, Archibald); we can believe that you play the fiddle or the bagpipes in the most graceful manner in tone and time; but, oh, Archie! dear Archie! don't go any further. Remember, pray remember, that there comes a limit to human faith – even to the faith of your fond admiring friend.⁴⁶¹

A Raglan correspondent wrote that, after Murray's address there, the 'general feeling' was that he

has been a much over-rated man. Coming to us with a record of having aforetime been a member of the House, we expected, perhaps, more than we had any right to, but I feel quite sure his utterly impracticable ideas as expressed in his speech will lose him a number of votes in this district which would have gone for him if he had stayed away and rested upon his reputation. The conclusion many have come to is that they must have been easily satisfied in Bruce.⁴⁶²

The *Waikato Times*, which strongly supported Lake's candidature, commented briefly that Murray had 'in effect declared himself an independent'.⁴⁶³ Murray claimed that this newspaper opposed his election because it 'had a grudge against him on account of a letter he wrote some time ago', and he had cancelled his subscription.⁴⁶⁴ The *Auckland Observer* backed him, describing him as 'the foremost candidate' and 'sound on

⁴⁶¹ Letter from 'Mary Ann', *Waikato Times*, 1 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁶² Raglan Correspondent, *Waikato Times*, 1 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁶³ Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 26 September 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁴ *Waikato Times*, 29 September 1891, p. 2.

financial questions. He would save a large sum of money by a loan consolidating operation, and he is also dead against the exorbitant rates of interest charged for borrowing money in the colony'.⁴⁶⁵ Whereas the Hamilton Assembly of the Knights of Labour supported him as a 'True Friend of the Farmer and the Working-man', others criticized him for not supporting the establishment of freezing works in Waikato and accused him for having been a moneylender.⁴⁶⁶

Murray's election meetings had their oddities. When he received 'a very good reception at Raglan', when a vote of confidence was moved it was declined, 'as is his custom', although he permitted 'one of thanks only'.⁴⁶⁷ His reasoning, as explained at Kihikihi, was that 'he did not wish any man to bind himself before the polling day'.⁴⁶⁸ At Te Awamutu, 'by racy anecdotes and quotations from well known poets he relieved the meeting from that dullness so usual at country election meetings'.⁴⁶⁹ About 60 people, mostly Maori, attended a memorable meeting at Te Kuiti:

Mr Murray's address was of a very statistical nature and in about half an hour his audience was reduced to about 20, the rest having gone to interview Mr Perry's hop beer barrel to take the dryness away. Like a boom of thunder there came to the ears of those left the shrill skirl of the Pilbroch [bagpipes], which caused a general stampede of the remainder, not excepting the Chairman. Mahuki [a 'prophet' just released from prison]⁴⁷⁰ having arrived during the day the natives thought it was some infernal machine he had brought to punish them for not sticking to him and allowing the police to take him to Mount Eden. However, when they found it did not go off, or attempt to bite, and that one man could hold it they took courage and returned. The gallant Murray could not resist the slogan, but left the hall, seized the pipes and in about five minutes he by vigorous walking and blowing round the hall soon had a crowded house, he threw politics to the dogs for the Bal(l)ance of the night. A violin having been produced he gave the pipes a rest and kindly played till the wee sma' hours to a very attentive party of 30 couples, and thus ended one of the most original political meetings on record.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁵ *Observer*, 26 September 1891, p. 7.

⁴⁶⁶ *Waikato Times*, 3 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁷ *Auckland Weekly News*, 3 October 1891, p. 10.

⁴⁶⁸ *Waikato Times*, 26 September 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁶⁹ *Waikato Times*, 3 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁰ See paper on William Morris Newsham.

⁴⁷¹ *Waikato Times*, 3 October 1891, p. 2.

The *Observer* later wrote that, whilst Murray was ‘about as Scotch as they make them’, he wasn’t a Highlander, and it doubted a mocking account in an Otago newspaper of his wearing a kilt and driving all bar a few Scots from the hall with ‘a wild screech on his instrument’.⁴⁷²

Lake defeated Murray by 235 votes, Murray polling slightly behind him in Hamilton and winning in Huntly and other smaller settlements but losing in country districts.⁴⁷³ In stating that he might stand again, Murray claimed that the *Waikato Times*, by ‘suppressing and distorting the truth’, had made his contest difficult. When the paper’s owner accused him of lying, Murray responded that it had twice got people imprisoned unjustly.⁴⁷⁴

A year after his defeat, a Morrinsville man wondered whether Murray would stand for the Bruce electorate once more, as it was vacant.⁴⁷⁵ He did not.

NATIONAL POLITICS DURING THE 1890s

In 1891, Murray urged the Native Minister to acquire 45,000 acres of Maori land at Raglan and lease them ‘on the Scotch system known as “perpetual feus”’.⁴⁷⁶ The following year he wrote that the Central Otago railway line had been constructed through the ‘united energy’ of his ‘old Otago friends’. After criticizing the ‘folly and child-like simplicity’ of North Island parliamentarians who had sanctioned yet another loan, he urged them to unite to construct the main trunk line. He preferred the Taranaki route, as the proposed central route would increase political centralization and the ‘artificial aggrandisement of the city and suburbs of Wellington’. If there were ‘traitors to our interests’ amongst these parliamentarians ‘it would be better to stonewall all railway expenditure than permit the perpetration of a great public injury’.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷² *Observer*, 7 November 1891, p. 6.

⁴⁷³ *Waikato Times*, 8 October 1891, p. 2, 13 October 1891, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 October 1891, p. 20.

⁴⁷⁴ *Waikato Times*, 13 October 1891, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁵ Letter from W.R.D., *Waikato Times*, 26 March 1892, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁶ *Observer*, 21 March 1891, p. 7.

⁴⁷⁷ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1892, p. 13.

In 1893 he was, according to the *Observer*, intending to stand for the Waipa seat as ‘a mild Government supporter’.⁴⁷⁸ The following year there was a poor attendance at his lecture on the currency question.

Mr Murray proceeded to explain bi-metallism and the cause of the present appreciation of gold and depreciation of silver, and their effect on the commerce of the world. Special allusion was made to the failure of the banks in Australia and the causes which led up to them. The lecturer had apparently thought out his subject carefully.⁴⁷⁹

In a speech given ‘by request’ to Waikato settlers in November 1896, he estimated the total debt, both public and private, of New Zealand, ‘perhaps more appropriately known as “Fadland”’, as a little over £80,000,000, and attacked ‘Seddonian Vogelism’, meaning excessive borrowing.

Mr Ballance admitted that New Zealand could not continue to permanently live on loans, but he knew that the fraud called party, and the delusion known as responsible government, could not exist without them. And the difficulty must have weighed heavily upon him, for he loved New Zealand. No such trouble seems to have concerned his successors, for with light hearts, audacious assumption, and reckless inveracity, they have increased the net public debt and liabilities by eight, nine, ten, and eleven millions sterling.

This debt, ‘which must, by the pernicious principle of monometalism, be paid in gold, makes it more and more difficult to pay either interest or principal’, and more and more exports were needed to pay it.

We are on the eve of grave difficulties between the users of money and the usurers – between the toilers and the spoilers. The age of miracles is past; now is the time for action. Our elections are near, and it is our duty and our interest to consider wisely and do well what is required of us. We must not make leading statesmen of social failures. Men proved incapable of managing their own affairs must not be regarded as specially competent to guide the destinies of the State. Anybody must not be considered good enough to manage everything for everybody.

⁴⁷⁸ *Observer*, 30 September 1893, p. 7.

⁴⁷⁹ *Auckland Weekly News*, 20 October 1894, p. 17.

We must be more careful as to the character and credentials of public men.

He concluded with a ten-point 'National Policy':

1. To educate the people in sound principles of political economy and social and political morality.
2. To encourage the patriotic and national aspirations of the people, and increase the number of freehold and happy homes.
3. To encourage the friendly co-operation of labour and capital, so that we as a community, united by kindly feelings and by a common interest, may work together to the best advantage to lighten our burdens and successfully meet the keen and ever increasing competition with which in all industrial occupations we must contest.
4. To encourage honest enterprise and industry, individually and collectively, by removing disabilities and impediments to success, and assure to every individual his or her just rights and recompenses.
5. To discourage the stirring up of class animosities, and expose the schemes of unprincipled political place hunters and social parasites who aim to divide and delude the people that they may plunder them under a pretence of governing them.
6. To insist on prudent economy and resist unnecessary taxation.
7. To resist further bartering of the people's liberty for borrowed money.
8. To secure the registration of electors.
9. To select for each Parliamentary constituency a candidate of proved integrity and ability.
10. That Cabinet Ministers should pass a standard examination in general knowledge and political economy.⁴⁸⁰

An obituary described him as 'a strong Conservative'.⁴⁸¹ Larney, in contrast, described him as having 'patriotic feelings of a high order, joined to an independence of character that totally annihilated "colour" as a factor in his politics'. That in recent years he had 'held aloof from politics altogether' was 'much to the loss of our district in particular, and to colony as a whole'.⁴⁸²

FARMING AT GLEN MURRAY

⁴⁸⁰ *Observer*, 28 November 1896, p. 21.

⁴⁸¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 27 June 1900, p. 6.

⁴⁸² *Waikato Argus*, 21 July 1900, p. 2.

In 1890, Murray was granted perpetual leases of Sections 2, 3, 4, 6, and 9 of Block VII of the Awaroa Survey District, all ‘unsurveyed land’.⁴⁸³ These leases, and others subsequently acquired by Murray and his relatives, were part of the Opuatia Block, across the river from Tuakau.⁴⁸⁴ A brother, James, acquired adjoining land and settled on it with his sons, Douglas and Bruce Stephen; the family held 6,000 acres of ‘fine bush country’ in total.⁴⁸⁵ Other relations leased large areas, and by the end of the nineteenth century transferred land between themselves or even sold some to others.⁴⁸⁶ Murray was known as ‘the Laird’, and the district was named after him.⁴⁸⁷ His brother Thomas did not acquire land, but he did live on Murray’s estate until his death in 1899, inflicting his political views and attempts at poetry on readers of the Auckland press.⁴⁸⁸

Murray’s estate was named Bothwell, and the district became known as Glen Murray after the brothers, James being the first to use this name for his own land.⁴⁸⁹ Murray was accused by the *Bulletin* of having such an

⁴⁸³ Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 17 May 1890, p. 10; Auckland Land Board, Minutes of Meeting of 3 September 1895, Minute Book 1894-1903, p. 134, BAAZ 4019, 12/5, ANZ-A.

⁴⁸⁴ Lands and Deeds Registry, Nominal Primary Index, vol. 3, folio 37, Land Information New Zealand, Auckland; Auckland Land Board, Minutes of Meetings of 30 July 1891, 20 August 1891, 22 October 1891, 12 February 1892, p. 143, 23 May 1893, Minute Book 1891-1893, pp. 46, 56, 103, 143, 307, BAAZ 4019, 12/4, ANZ-A; Crown Lands Board, *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 October 1891, p. 10; *New Zealand Herald*, 27 June 1900, p. 6.

⁴⁸⁵ C.W. Vennell and Susan Williams, *Raglan County: Hills and sea: A centennial history 1876-1976* (Auckland, 1976), p. 131; Alexander, p. 9.

⁴⁸⁶ Auckland Land Board, Minutes of Meeting of 16 April 1891, Minute Book 1887-1891, folio 371, BAAZ 4019/3; Minutes of Meeting of 23 May 1893, Minute Book 1891-1893, folios 306-307, BAAZ 4019/4; Minutes of Meetings of 26 November 1895, 25 January 1898, 27 September 1898, 25 April 1899, 19 December 1899, 28 May 1901, Minute Book 1894-1903, folios 162, 307, 353-354, 389, 438, 556, BAAZ 4019/5 ANZ-A.

⁴⁸⁷ Alexander, p. 9; Allen, p. 17.

⁴⁸⁸ *Waikato Argus*, 31 January 1899, p. 3, 12 August 1899, p. 2; *Observer*, 4 August 1894, p. 24, 18 May 1895, p. 24, 6 November 1897, p. 24, letter from Thomas Murray, 24 September 1898, p. 5; letter from Thomas Murray, *New Zealand Herald*, 4 October 1894, p. 3.

⁴⁸⁹ *New Zealand Gazette*, 23 November 1899, p. 2190; *New Zealand Herald*, 27 June 1900, p. 6; Vennell and Williams, p. 131.

unfairly large property that he got lost on it, living on roots, but the *Observer* denied that he was ever lost; it did not comment on whether the property was unfairly large.⁴⁹⁰ He had hoped to profit by selling land, but in 1893 the land board refused permission for him to subdivide his perpetual lease.⁴⁹¹ Five years later, some land was transferred to younger relatives.⁴⁹² Their marital status has not been traced, but, according to the *Observer*, in 1894 the Glen Murray settlers were ‘all bachelors’.⁴⁹³ As usual with this journal, this was an exaggeration; James Hunter had married Davina Walker in 1878 and George had married Elizabeth Mary Harrison in 1882.⁴⁹⁴

Inadequate or non-existent roads were a constant concern to all settlers.⁴⁹⁵ In February 1891 Murray complained to the county council that, although they were required to pay rates. They were ‘forced to make our own roads & clear & snag rivers at our sold expense while our money is applied to pay debts incurred by the County before we had anything to do with it & for purposes which do not benefit or concern us in any way’. The lack of roads ‘stops our operations or makes them far more difficult & costly’, and they wanted one make to Auckland via Tuakau. ‘Our best waterway will be the Opuatia stream which can be made at a small expense a valuable access to a great extent of excellent land’. Had the council spent the amount already received from him ‘& relatives’, this stream would have been snagged; both snags and willows were preventing him obtaining grass seed. ‘Last Friday an accident caused by a snag in the Opuatia ... nearly resulted in a serious loss of life & caused considerable loss to myself & others’. If they did not receive ‘just consideration’, he would push for a road board or separation ‘to prevent local government continuing an obstruction

⁴⁹⁰ *Observer*, 26 March 1892, p. 6, citing *Bulletin*, n.d.

⁴⁹¹ Auckland Land Board, Minutes of Meeting of 17 October 1893, Minute Book 1891-1893, p. 354, BAAZ 4019, 12/4, ANZ-A.

⁴⁹² Auckland Land Board, Minutes of Meeting of 25 January 1898, Minute Book 1894-1903, p. 307, BAAZ 4019, 12/5, ANZ-A.

⁴⁹³ *Observer*, 19 May 1894, p. 20.

⁴⁹⁴ Marriage Certificates of James Hunter Walker, 1878/938; George Murray, 1882/2566, BDM; *Waipa Electoral Rolls, 1893*, p. 37; 1894, p. 8; *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1896*, p. 40; Probate of Davina Murray, BCDG 4420, box 2 no. 31, ANZ-A.

⁴⁹⁵ For example, Vennell and Williams, p. 141.

instead of an aid to settlement'.⁴⁹⁶ In sending a copy of this letter to John Ballance to show 'the ineffectual control which the taxpayers have over the tax spenders', he asked that local government be simplified and reformed.⁴⁹⁷

In October Murray approached the land board about changes to reserves and the closing of roads, but the former was declined and he was told that the council dealt with the latter.⁴⁹⁸ Accordingly, he wrote to the Raglan County Council 'suggesting a considerable amount of work' should be done and asking for 'payment for work he had done on the road'; it agreed to do some of the former but denied liability for the latter.⁴⁹⁹ The following July, with the country chairman and a councillor, he received a sympathetic hearing from the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands for their request for roads to connect land near Tuakau and Mercer with Auckland.⁵⁰⁰ One month later he again sought compensation for doing 'necessary work in his district. He also pointed out a lot of work that wanted doing'. The council's response was to 'urge the Government to survey and define the roads from Opatia to Tuakau and Mercer'; it agreed to do the work requested once it had sufficient funds.⁵⁰¹ At the end of the year, Murray again complained about lack of access to his land, and the following May the council declined to pay him for 'unauthorized work'.⁵⁰² In 1896, he called a meeting of landowners that asked the government to erect a bridge at Tuakau to create a link with the railway.⁵⁰³

With his relatives, he ran a steadily increasing flock of sheep, the lowest number recorded being 530 and the highest 3,500.⁵⁰⁴ According to an

⁴⁹⁶ William Archibald Murray to Chairman, Raglan County Council, 11 February 1891, John Ballance Papers, MS-Copy-Micro-170-Reel 1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁴⁹⁷ William Archibald Murray to John Ballance, n.d., appended to William Archibald Murray to Chairman, Raglan County Council, 11 February 1891, John Ballance Papers, MS-Copy-Micro-179-Reel 1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁴⁹⁸ Auckland Land Board, Minutes of Meeting of 22 October 1891, Minute Book 1891-1893, folio 103, BAAZ 4019/4, ANZ-A.

⁴⁹⁹ Raglan County Council, *Waikato Times*, 28 November 1891, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁰ *Auckland Weekly News*, 30 July 1892, p. 38.

⁵⁰¹ Raglan County Council, *Waikato Times*, 20 August 1892, p. 2.

⁵⁰² Raglan County Council, *Waikato Times*, 1 December 1892, p. 2, 20 May 1893, p. 2.

⁵⁰³ *New Zealand Herald*, 22 June 1896, p. 6.

⁵⁰⁴ 'Annual Sheep Returns', *AJHR*, 1893, H-32, p. 23; 1894, H-17A, p. 23; 1895, H-23, p. 23; 1896, H-23, p. 25; 1897, H-23, p. 26; 1898, H-23, p. 24; 1899, H-23, p. 24; 1900, H-23, p. 24.

obituary, 'he succeeded after much expense and labor in establishing a good sheep-farm'.⁵⁰⁵

PERSONALITY

The *Waikato Times* correctly described Murray as a man of 'restless energy', and an obituary stated that he 'was a man of great activity of body and mind'.⁵⁰⁶ He always took the moral high ground in his stream of letters to the press whilst castigating his opponents in strong words. As an example of the latter, in 1889 the council discussed the problem caused by some settlers along the main road from Morrinsville to Te Aroha erecting fences on the road line. Murray had been 'one of the culprits, and years ago he was directed to move the fence back, but had not done so', the chairman reported.⁵⁰⁷ At the next meeting, Murray's 'somewhat fiery communication' caused 'great amusement'. Charging the chairman with calling him a 'culprit', he trusted that, if he had 'made such a gratuitous, unwarrantable and slanderous statement', he would 'at once make me a satisfactory public retraction and apology'. The chairman described this letter as 'a gratuitous piece of impertinence, to which he was not going to give the satisfaction of a reply', and a councillor said 'it was a regular coffee and pistol communication',⁵⁰⁸ meaning 'cheap' and 'second-rate'.⁵⁰⁹ Even as far back as 1864 a farmer objected to his rudeness in criticizing others.⁵¹⁰

As Murray was a compulsive self-promoter, his letters to several newspapers meant that his views on a range of topics, mostly related to farming and politics, were widely known. After his death, Larney praised him as being 'thoroughly practical' and having a strong 'independence of character'.

Strictly temperate, simple and frugal in his habits, he was opposed to all display of wealth or prerogative, of a deeply religious nature, typical of the times of the Covenanters, and possessing under a stern exterior as kind a heart as ever beat in

⁵⁰⁵ *Clutha Leader*, 13 July 1900, p. 3.

⁵⁰⁶ Editorial, *Waikato Times*, 29 October 1885, p. 2; *Clutha Leader*, 13 July 1900, p. 3.

⁵⁰⁷ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 15 October 1889, p. 3.

⁵⁰⁸ Piako County Council, *Waikato Times*, 30 November 1889, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁹ Jonathon Green, *The Cassell Dictionary of Slang* (London, 1998), p. 253.

⁵¹⁰ Letter from 'Scotch Farmer', *Otago Daily Times*, 10 February 1864, p. 5.

human breast, in fact he was a living justification of Aytoun's immortal couplet:

Nowhere beats the heart so kindly
As beneath the tartan plaid.⁵¹¹

Later report had him 'noted for his genial hospitality. His house was ever open, and his table was ever set for the weary traveller'.⁵¹² An obituary claimed he had 'many friends' throughout New Zealand.⁵¹³ And a 'parliamentary portrait' noted that he was 'unmarried, but not insensible to woman's charms';⁵¹⁴ if that was a hint at a relationship or relationships, it was the only hint ever recorded.

Murray, an active Presbyterian, praised its Morrinsville minister in 1884.⁵¹⁵ Five years later he informed the Auckland press that a Scottish friend ('a well-known man', he could not refrain from adding) had written to him that two leading Presbyterians were travelling to New Zealand for the Presbyterian Jubilee. He gave details of the life and splendid character of one of them, and hoped everyone from the Governor on down would welcome him fittingly. 'When recently in Scotland it was my privilege on two alternative Sunday nights' to hear him lecture on 'Britain's Heritage'. In another example of exalting himself, he wrote that he had 'heard many of the most eminent men of our time, in Church and State', but none had equalled this speaker.

He showed the advances of our race not only in our native isles, but in what he called the Greater Britain beyond the seas. He showed not merely the bright side of progress in wealth, culture, science, and greatness, but he also faithfully presented the dark side of the picture – poverty, misery, and crime. It was a vast collection of the most valuable information presented in the most instructive and attractive manner. He traced out leading causes, but he also pointed to consequences. To use his own words in opening the second half of the lecture, he said, "I have formerly spoken to you of Britain's privileges. I purpose to-night to speak to you of Britain's duties and responsibilities." The earnestness of that vast audience was something to remember. The sanctity of the place and the proverbial reverence with which the Scottish

⁵¹¹ *Waikato Argus*, 21 July 1900, p. 2.

⁵¹² *Te Aroha News*, 27 May 1936, p. 8.

⁵¹³ *Clutha Leader*, 13 July 1900, p. 3.

⁵¹⁴ *Wairarapa Standard*, 9 September 1880, p. 2.

⁵¹⁵ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Waikato Times*, 14 October 1884, p. 2.

people still regard the Lord's Day, scarcely restrained them from bursting into applause, but the suppressed murmurs of approval could not be misunderstood, and when the splendid choir led off the 100th psalm there seemed to be but one soul animating that mighty assembly. It was a thing that could not be forgotten.⁵¹⁶

Two years later, Murray chaired a Te Aroha lecture on London life by a visiting clergyman.⁵¹⁷ In contrast to these solemn occasions, at a meeting of the Morrinsville Band of Hope, a temperance body, the previous year he 'delighted the audience by his skillful rendering of a number of Irish and Scottish airs on the violin'.⁵¹⁸ In ecumenical spirit, at a Shaftesbury concert to raise money for the Church of England he 'played a selection on his bagpipes'.⁵¹⁹ In an election address, he stated his desire to give all schoolchildren 'that religion which exalted a nation'.⁵²⁰

And Murray had a sense of humour. For instance, when addressing a Huntly audience in the 1891 election, he was asked 'if he would support a bill to have the Huntly and Ngaruawahia Pahs fortified for fear of an invasion by Chinese or Russian Jews? Mr Murray replied that he did not think there was any money to spare for such works, but that as they were about to enfranchise the ladies, he thought they would really have to fortify the pas against the mas'.⁵²¹ But his usual response to problems was aggression, as when complaining in 1877 about customs duty of £2 15s 'for dies for coat of arms & crest' he was importing. 'This charge can only have been made under a misapprehension or is an instance of extremely sharp practice in your department'.⁵²²

DEATH

According to an obituary, 'the hardships and labours of the early settler had the effect of prematurely breaking up his constitution'.⁵²³ In

⁵¹⁶ Letter from William Archibald Murray, *Auckland Weekly News*, 15 June 1889, p. 14.

⁵¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 12 January 1890, p. 2.

⁵¹⁸ *Te Aroha News*, 27 March 1889, p. 2.

⁵¹⁹ *Te Aroha News*, 1 February 1890, p. 2.

⁵²⁰ *Waikato Times*, 3 October 1891, p. 2.

⁵²¹ *Observer*, 17 October 1891, p. 3.

⁵²² William Archibald Murray to Collector of Customs, Auckland, 4 May 1877, Customs Department, BBAO 5544, 1877/377, ANZ-A.

⁵²³ *Clutha Leader*, 13 July 1900, p. 3.

April 1892, Murray was seriously ill. 'He only lately recovered from a rather severe bout'.⁵²⁴ After being treated in the Waikato hospital, he was transferred to Auckland.⁵²⁵ Suffering from 'Enlarged prostate & detention', he would be 'relieved', not cured, after over two weeks in the latter hospital, and had to 'remain in Auckland for some time' after being released.⁵²⁶ He revisited Te Aroha in February 1900,⁵²⁷ possibly for his health, and early that year 'was recommended to go to Queensland, as his lungs were said to be affected'.⁵²⁸ In June he went to Auckland 'to obtain medical advice', but after 'lying dangerously ill' at the home of the mayor of Newmarket, he died.⁵²⁹ Aged 68, he died of gastritis, traumatic stricture, and chronic cystitis; lung trouble was not noted.⁵³⁰ He was buried in land he had given for a public cemetery, where his brother Thomas had been buried the previous year.⁵³¹

Murray's will, drawn up in May 1886, left annuities of £60 to each brother and smaller ones to other relatives.⁵³² Despite all his land dealings and many years of farming, his estate was worth only £2,301 13s 5d.⁵³³ His brothers, all farmers, were even less successful financially. After George died at Mangapai in 1889, aged 61, his widow and son and daughter moved to live with their relatives at Glen Murray. George died intestate, his estate being valued at under £50, so small that probate was not sought until 1903.⁵³⁴ Thomas, who died in 1899,⁵³⁵ left no will, and probate was never

⁵²⁴ *Waikato Times*, 23 April 1892, p. 2.

⁵²⁵ *Waikato Times*, 26 April 1892, p. 2.

⁵²⁶ Auckland Hospital, Register of Admissions 1884-1893, folio 209, ZAAP 15288/1a, ANZ-A; *Waikato Times*, 21 May 1892, p. 2; *Auckland Weekly News*, 28 May 1892, p. 10.

⁵²⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 27 February 1900, p. 2.

⁵²⁸ Auckland Correspondent, *Otago Daily Times*, 27 June 1900, p. 5.

⁵²⁹ *Waikato Argus*, 26 June 1900, p. 2, 27 June 1900, p. 2; Auckland Correspondent, *Otago Daily Times*, 27 June 1900, p. 5.

⁵³⁰ Death Certificate of William Archibald Murray, 26 June 1900, 1900/2299, BDM.

⁵³¹ Auckland Correspondent, *Otago Daily Times*, 27 June 1900, p. 5.

⁵³² Probate of William Archibald Murray, Probates, BBAE 1569/3691, ANZ-A.

⁵³³ Testamentary Register 1900-1902, folio 39, BBCB 4208/14, ANZ-A.

⁵³⁴ Death Certificate of George Murray, 1889/1830, BDM; Probates, BBAE 1569/4794, ANZ-A; *Waipa Electoral Rolls, 1893*, p. 37; *1894*, p. 8; *Waikato Electoral Roll, 1896*, p. 40.

⁵³⁵ Death Certificate of Thomas Murray, 9 August 1899, 1899/6748, BDM.

sought. James Hunter, who died, aged 78, in 1907, left an estate valued at under £100.⁵³⁶

CONCLUSION

Murray was a remarkably opinionated man who never ceased presenting his opinions on a wide variety of issues despite the notable lack of enthusiasm he roused. It was noted by many that his proposals, although presented as being for the good of the community, would also benefit him and his brothers in particular. When not promulgating his ideas on how to improve the world, he concentrated on developing new farms, successfully, with mining investment being a very minor interest that brought him no profit. Unavoidably one of the notable people in every district he lived in, he failed to charm most people.

Appendix

Figure 1: 'To New Zealand's Greatest Orator and Financier, Erected by his Parliamentary Admirers', 1877, Political Cartoons and Posters, copy negative c/nE5225/23, Hocken Collection, University of Otago, online.

⁵³⁶ Death Certificate of James Hunter Murray, 1907/3114, BDM: Probates, BBAE 1569/6296, ANZ-A.

