I accept Mr Campbell’s correction, in ‘The Working Class and the Liberal Party in 1890’, that all of the ‘radical Liberals’ elected in that year did not join the Liberals (Fish and Fisher threw in their fortunes with the Opposition and both suffered defeat in 1893). I also agree that skilled working men could and did often become masters but did not discuss this question in my article because it bore no relation to Professor Oliver’s osmotic trilogy, although I made a brief and general comment on the matter (p. 52, n. 33). Apart from these two points Mr Campbell appears to have deployed his knowledge of the politics of this period to no great end: first, he adds little to the debate (and much of that is suspect); second, he attributes to me views and statements that I never advanced (partly by confusing me with Sam Lister); and third, he advances points made by me in a manner which implies correction. Anybody interested can read my earlier article and keep Mr Campbell’s by their side (and, for that matter, Professor Oliver’s essay and his rejoinder to me).

Although Mr Campbell did not read carefully my remarks about the land issue in the nineteenth century his item of evidence, Sir Joseph Ward’s table, can only persuade those anxious for persuasion. There happen to be statistical methods for sampling and while historians must often make do with unsatisfactory evidence little weight can be placed on a sample ‘taken promiscuously from the records’. Moreover, the promiscuous sample was taken by a civil servant for a politician with an obvious interest in proving what, in this case, the figures purport to prove! Even if Ward’s claim is accepted pro forma, however, it scarcely proves what Mr Campbell claims, for on the basis of his own figures only 660 workingmen made it on to a farm between 1891 and 1894.1 It would be interesting to know how many of these 660 were urban, in terms of my earlier definition, but Mr Campbell has taken a figure that suits his purpose. The Surveyor General reported in 1898 that for the period 1892–97 only 697 selections had been taken up and occupied (roughly 140 a year).2 For the twelve years to

1904 there were 2745 selectors and 2076 residences (at most 229 a year).³ There
must have been a great strain on our education system.

When we turn to Mr Campbell’s demonstration that ‘many workingmen
looked to the schools and universities to provide entrees for their children into
the middle class’ (p. 44), we find he has virtually no evidence to offer. He cites
the testimony of one master tinsmith reminiscing in 1890 about conditions in
his youth and a clause from the 1893 platform of the Workers’ Political Com-
mittee. However, only five small craft unions were affiliated to this body and their
influence was not as great as that of two other affiliates, the National Liberal
Association and the Temperance Political League. The WPC’s objectives were,
in 1893, impeccably Liberal (‘the political and social welfare of the people’).⁴
And, as Professor Sinclair showed, urban Liberals in 1893 had different concerns
than in 1890.⁵ In any case, why does Mr Campbell ignore the demands of the
various Trades and Labour Councils throughout the last twenty years of the
century and the most obvious evidence of all, education statistics? In the period
1876-99 there was an average of 28 graduations a year (678 for the period) and
private schools, such as Wanganui Collegiate and Chrits College, almost
monopolized available scholarships.⁶ A table showing the occupations of the
fathers of scholarship winners in the Otago district puts the matter in more
detail. Over twelve years four children of labourers (3 per cent) won scholarships
(and not one came from Dunedin or Invercargill), and 41 (or 23 per cent) had
fathers who can be described as skilled.⁷ Admittedly the expectations and life
chances of the children of the skilled and the unskilled differed, and a detailed
study of those attending high school or obtaining a Proficiency Certificate would
doubtless reveal a more complex pattern. But we not only need to measure with
care but to establish the relationships between education, life chances, and the
stratification system.

My complaint against ‘Reeves, Sinclair and the Social Pattern’ was that
Professor Oliver assumed the presence of certain aspirations throughout our
history; he assumed that these aspirations could, with relative ease, be realized
and he inferred certain conclusions from his model of the social system. I
disputed the conclusions and then his model of the social system. I also argued
that Professor Oliver’s thesis was not true for urban New Zealand in 1890
(and I offered a definition of urban which Mr Campbell largely ignores). If, how-
ever, one argues with Mr Campbell that ‘class conflict’ can only occur between the
owners of the means of production and their employees (Campbell, p. 45), then,
of course, there is no debate (as I pointed out, p. 53). But this assumption seems
to me a superb example of ideological sclerosis (hence my reference to American
sociologists, more flexible methods of defining class and, thus, the meaning of
class conflict). But the meaning of class in New Zealand at different times is a
matter of investigation, not assertion. In trying to infer from political rhetoric
the aspirations of New Zealanders and the meaning of class Mr Campbell offers
little that is new. Understandably, however, he is reluctant to assert that upward
mobility occurred at the speed that Professor Oliver once appeared to claim,
but if people were so avid for success, had so few chances of obtaining it, and
did not complain about it, what is the basis for Mr Campbell’s faith?

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NOTES

1 Campbell, p. 43. His reference should have been to the Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives (AJHR), 1894, C-8, and not C-6.

2 'Report of the Surveyor General . . .', 6 June 1898, AJHR, 1898, C-5, p. 15.

3 'Summary of the Settlements Established upon Estates Acquired and Dealt with, up to the 31st March, 1904', AJHR, 1904, C-5, pp. 9–11.

4 R. Slater to J. T. Paul, November 1912, Paul Mss, Hocken Library. J. T. Paul, Trades Unionism in Otago; Its Rise and Progress, 1881–1912, Souvenir Catalogue: Industrial Exhibition and Art Union, Dunedin, [1912], pp. 88–89, points out that only seven unions were affiliated to the Trades and Labour Council in 1893, many having been destroyed since 1890 (although Mr Campbell would doubtless have us believe that their members were either at university or farming). 'Summary of the Settlements . . .', AJHR, 1904, C-5, pp. 9–11. Needless to say I accept Mr Campbell's assumption that urban workingmen did not obtain farms through the market although this was by far the most common method of obtaining a farm.


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