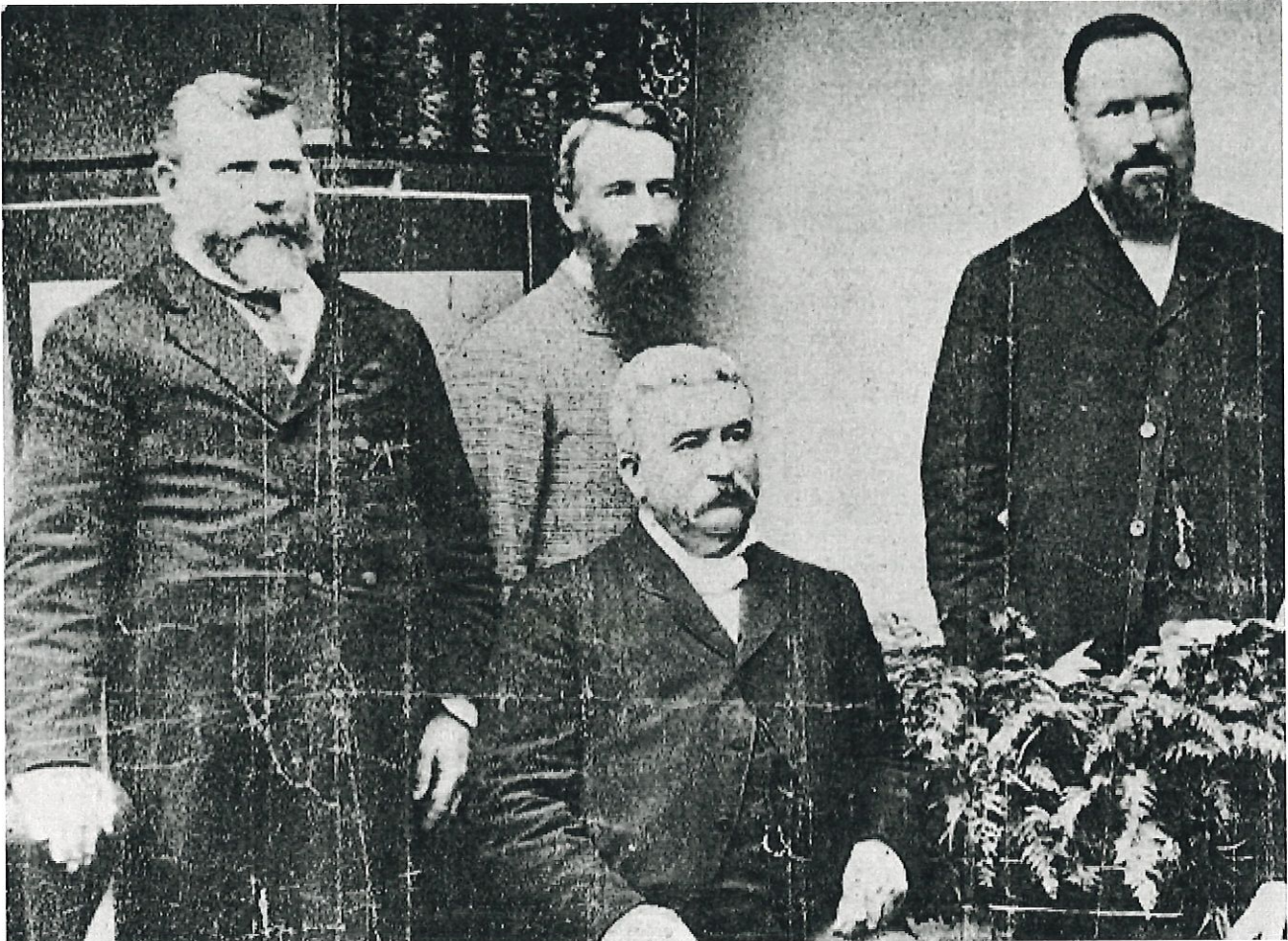


First 'one man one vote'

5 December 1890

MCH, 2020s



1890
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New Zealand's electoral law had been changed so that no one could vote in more than one general electoral district. This ended the long-standing practice of 'plural voting' by those who owned property in more than one electorate.

The 1890 election has long been seen as one of the most significant in New Zealand's history. Although the result was not clear until Parliament met in early 1891, the Liberal government that ultimately took power was to dominate the political landscape for the next two decades.

Electoral rights were still in transition. Property-owners could still enrol in each district in which they qualified, but on election day they had to choose where to cast their solitary vote. This 'plural registration', and a dual vote for Māori property-owners (which had existed since the Māori seats were introduced in 1867), were both abolished in 1893.

The introduction of New Zealand's landmark women's suffrage legislation that year (19 September) established the 'one person one vote' principle which was to become a fundamental feature of democratic electoral systems in the 20th century.

Image: The first Liberal Cabinet, January 1891. From left, standing: Richard Seddon, A.J. Cadman, John McKenzie, Joseph Ward, William Pember Reeves; seated: Patrick Buckley, John Ballance

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Cleaning up elections – Election Days

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The right to vote (Electoral Commission)

Voting rights (Te Ara)

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