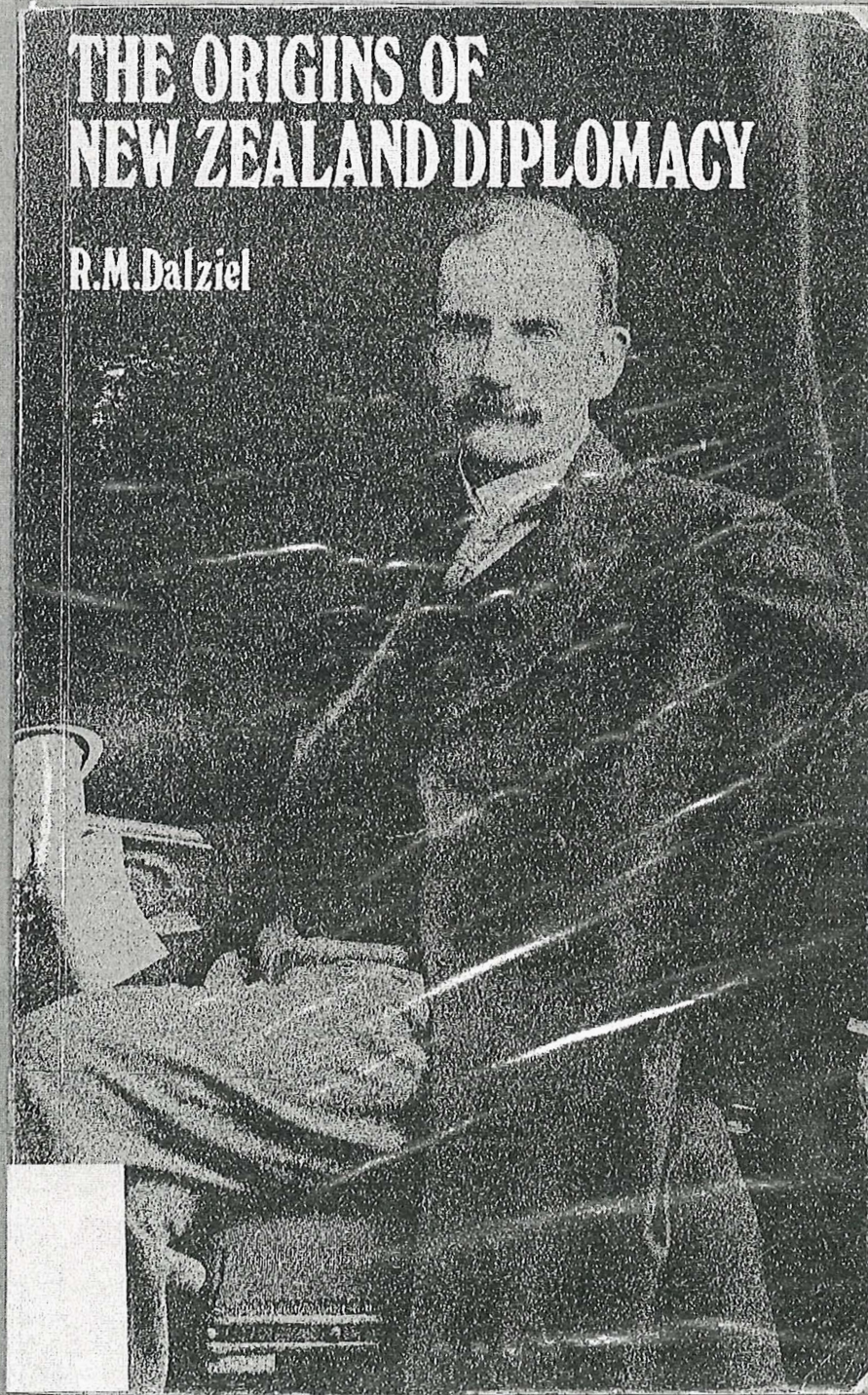


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New Zealand Representation in Great Britain 1840-1871

THE AGENT-GENERAL in London was the first permanent New Zealand representative overseas. From 1871 to 1905, when the more elevated title of High Commissioner was adopted in recognition of his importance, the post was held by five men of mark from the colony. They were Isaac Earl Featherston, Julius Vogel, Francis Dillon Bell, Westby Brook Perceval and William Pember Reeves. All had been politicians of some significance. With the exception of Perceval, all had served in the cabinet. One, Vogel, had been Prime Minister. As Agents-General they played an important role in the development of the New Zealand economy and the move towards autonomy. They acted as financial and business agents when the country depended heavily on Great Britain first for money, immigrants and materials, and later as a market for primary products. They were the main exponents in London of New Zealand policy at a time when policies specifically New Zealand in tone were first being formulated. In this way they contributed to the development of New Zealand towards nationhood and to a changed relationship with Great Britain. The development of their own role and status was a symbol of this change.

For New Zealand the appointment of an Agent-General was the end of a long period of experimentation in forms of representation in London. The problem of how best to present colonial views and protect colonial interests at home was not a new one. It had been apparent from the time the first small groups of colonists left England to establish themselves in the 'new world'. Politically and economically subordinate to Great Britain, the earliest colonists wanted some influence over legislation that affected them. They wanted to protect their liberties from the hands of a powerful King and Parliament, to secure the privileges they thought theirs by