

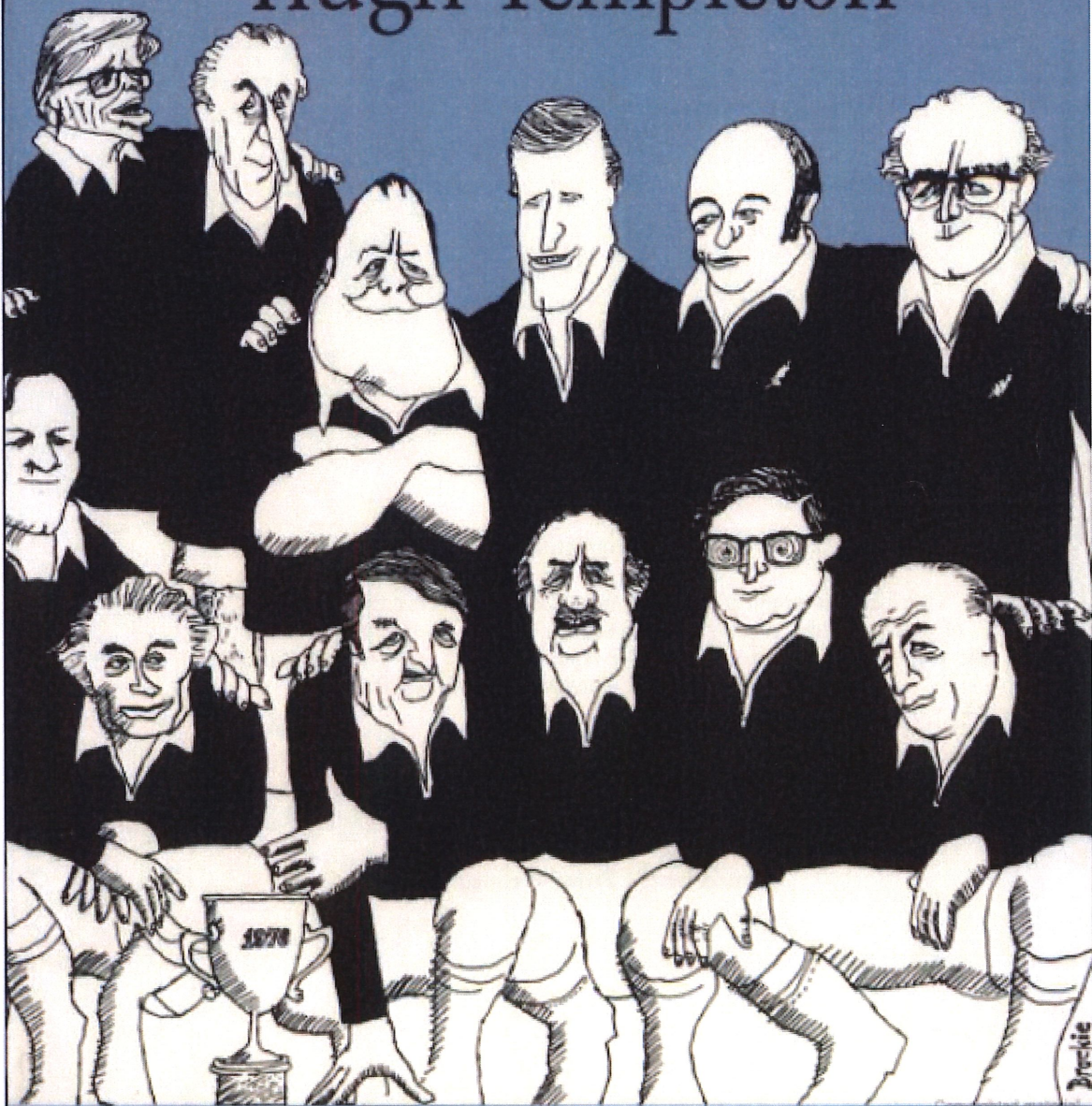
1972

(Templeton, H., 1995: 8)

All Honourable Men

INSIDE THE MULDOON
CABINET 1975 - 1984

Hugh Templeton



3rd

So there we were, 20 'Honourable men', taking our oaths of office. The photograph on Government House steps with the Governor General, Dennis Blundell, shows a cheerful team. Seen in repose, however, we were a stolid bunch, some of us jowly, and all portentous, as perhaps we thought ministers should be. The essential conservatism of the Muldoon cabinet was reflected not only in our expressions but also in our clothes. Muldoon's ministers did not go in for the then fashionable long hair or the coloured shirts worn by the previous Labour cabinet. That said something about our backgrounds.

Muldoon was 54, an accountant by profession, and sufficiently proud of that to reclaim Finance for himself. Other accountants in cabinet were Allan Highet, 62, who got Internal Affairs, and Bert Walker, 56, in Social Welfare.

By far the largest group were farmers. Brian Talboys, 54, was Foreign Minister as well as Muldoon's deputy; Duncan MacIntyre, 60, was given Agriculture; Peter Gordon, 54, Labour; David Thomson, 60, Justice; Les Gandar, 56, Education and Science; Keith Holyoake, 71, Minister of State; Alan McCready, 59, Defence and Police; Colin McLachlan, 51, Transport; and Venn Young, 46, had Lands and Forests. Frank Gill, 60, a retired air-force commodore, was a part-time farmer who bred donkeys; he got Health and Immigration.

A few were businessmen: Eric Holland, 54, was placed in the important Energy portfolio; Lance Adams-Schneider, 56, secured his heart's desire, Trade and Industry; Bill Young, 62, had the Ministry of Works; and Harry Lapwood, 60, an inexhaustible raconteur of the shaggy dog school of humour, was happy, as MP for Rotorua, in Tourism.

Three ministers came out of government agencies: George Gair, 49, took Deputy Finance and Housing; Peter Wilkinson, 41, a lawyer with departmental experience, was Attorney General, Customs and Associate Finance; and I, at 46, became Postmaster General and Minister of Broadcasting. With Venn Young, also in his forties, we were noticeably younger than the rest of cabinet.

More than half of the new ministers were ex-servicemen and the formative experience of World War II continued to influence their thinking. Apart from Frank Gill, however, who had fought in the Battle of France and worked with Bomber Harris, only MacIntyre and Thomson had achieved rank. The story went that MacIntyre, a brigadier, but a modest man, presented himself at a dress function at Government House without

Note that in this list of Cabinet Ministers, Minister of Island Affairs (or an equivalent) is not listed. Can infer from this, and source (Fraentel, 2012a) that the role was not filled.