

PREMIERS AND I OF NEW ZEALAND AND THEIR TERMS IN OFFICE

Henry Sewell		7 May 1856 – 20 May 1856
William Fox		20 May 1856 – 2 June 1856
Edward William Stafford		2 June 1856 – 12 July 1861
William Fox		12 July 1861 – 6 August 1862
Alfred Domett (CMG)		6 August 1862 – 30 October 1863
Frederick Whitaker MLC		30 October 1863 – 24 November 1864
Frederick Aloysius Weld (CMG KCMG, GCMG)		24 November 1864 – 16 October 1865
Edward William Stafford		16 October 1865 – 28 June 1869
William Fox		28 June 1869 – 10 September 1872
Edward William Stafford (KCMG)		10 September 1872 – 11 October 1872
George Marsden Waterhouse MLC		11 October 1872 – 3 March 1873
William Fox (KCMG)		3 March 1873 – 8 April 1873
Julius Vogel		8 April 1873 – 6 July 1875
Daniel Pollen MLC		6 July 1875 – 15 February 1876
Sir Julius Vogel KCMG		15 February 1876 – 1 September 1876
Harry Albert Atkinson		1 September 1876 – 13 September 1876
Harry Albert Atkinson (Ministry reconstructed)		13 September 1876 – 13 October 1877
Sir George Grey KCB (PC)		13 October 1877 – 8 October 1879
John Hall (KCMG)		8 October 1879 – 21 April 1882
Frederick Whitaker MLC (KCMG)		21 April 1882 – 25 September 1883
Harry Albert Atkinson		25 September 1883 – 16 August 1884
Robert Stout		16 August 1884 – 28 August 1884
Harry Albert Atkinson		28 August 1884 – 3 September 1884
Sir Robert Stout KCMG		3 September 1884 – 8 October 1887
Sir Harry Albert Atkinson KCMG		8 October 1887 – 24 January 1891
John Ballance	Liberal	24 January 1891 – 27 April 1893 (died)
The Rt Hon Richard John Seddon	Liberal	1 May 1893 – 10 June 1906 (died)
William Hall-Jones (KCMG)	Liberal	21 June 1906 – 6 August 1906
The Rt Hon Sir Joseph George Ward Bt, KCMG	Liberal	6 August 1906 – 28 March 1912
Thomas Noble Mackenzie (KCMG, GCMG)	Liberal	28 March 1912 – 10 July 1912
The Rt Hon William Ferguson Massey	Reform	10 July 1912 – 12 August 1915
The Rt Hon William Ferguson Massey	National	12 August 1915 – 25 August 1919
The Rt Hon William Ferguson Massey	Reform	25 August 1919 – 10 May 1925 (died)
Sir Francis Henry Dillon Bell GCMG, KC, MLC, (PC)	Reform	14 May 1925 – 30 May 1925
The Rt Hon Joseph Gordon Coates MC	Reform	30 May 1925 – 10 December 1928
The Rt Hon Sir Joseph George Ward Bt KCMG, GCMG	United	10 December 1928 – 28 May 1930
The Rt Hon George William Forbes	United	28 May 1930 – 22 September 1931
The Rt Hon George William Forbes	Coalition	22 September 1931 – 6 December 1935
The Rt Hon Michael Joseph Savage	Labour	6 December 1935 – 27 March 1940 (died)
The Rt Hon Peter Fraser CH	Labour	1 April 1940 – 13 December 1949
The Rt Hon Sidney George Holland CH, (GCB)	National	13 December 1949 – 20 September 1957
The Rt Hon Keith Jacka Holyoake	National	20 September 1957 – 12 December 1957
The Rt Hon Walter Nash CH, (GCMG)	Labour	12 December 1957 – 12 December 1960

PUBLIC LIVES

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Jacka Holyoake GCMG, CH (KG, QSO)	National	12 December 1960 – 7 February 1972
The Rt Hon John Ross Marshall CH, (GBE)	National	7 February 1972 – 8 December 1972
The Rt Hon Norman Eric Kirk	Labour	8 December 1972 – 31 August 1974 (died)
The Rt Hon Wallace Edward Rowling (KCMG)	Labour	6 September 1974 – 12 December 1975
The Rt Hon Sir Robert David Muldoon GCMG, CH	National	12 December 1975 – 26 July 1984
The Rt Hon David Russell Lange (ONZ, CH)	Labour	26 July 1984 – 8 August 1989
The Rt Hon Geoffrey Winston Palmer (KCMG, AC)	Labour	8 August 1989 – 4 September 1990
The Rt Hon Michael Moore (ONZ)	Labour	4 September 1990 – 2 November 1990
The Rt Hon James Brendan Bolger	National	2 November 1990 – 28 February 1996
The Rt Hon James Brendan Bolger	National	28 February 1996 – 16 December 1996
	United Coalition	
The Rt Hon James Brendan Bolger (ONZ)	National	16 December 1996 – 8 December 1997
	NZ First Coalition	
The Rt Hon Jennifer Mary Shipley	National	8 December 1997 - 26 August 1998
	NZ First Coalition	
The Rt Hon Jennifer Mary Shipley (DCNZM)	National-led minority	28 August 1998 – 10 December 1999
	Labour/ Alliance Coalition	10 December 1999 – 15 August 2002
The Rt Hon Helen Elizabeth Clark	Labour/ Progressive Coalition	15 August 2002 –

Note: Awards in brackets were received after the term(s) in office.

5th.

Auckland via Wellington, Nelson and New Plymouth for the General Assembly, he gave sustained thought to the future of responsible government, now imminent, and particularly the financial relationship between the centre and the provinces. Within a day of arriving in mid-April 1856, Sewell was asked by Gore Browne to form the first responsible ministry as FitzGerald remained in poor health. Sewell demurred then, in the absence of anyone better qualified, agreed. He announced the members of his ministry on May 7 – and resigned on May 20, after factions in the House had refused acceptance of parts of his Address in Reply that dealt with the relationship between the provinces and what was called the ‘general government’. His strong belief that, while they would be delegated powers in many areas and would control land policy, the provinces must be ultimately subordinate to the centre, but his cogent expression of these views did not convince a narrow majority of committed ‘provincialists’.

During a fortnight of attempted deals and brief, unlikely alliances that made the first attempts at MMP coalition-making in 1996 look very tame, Sewell continued, as a temporary colonial secretary, to conduct government business. When William Fox, a leading ‘provincialist’, became New Zealand’s second premier, in practice his policies differed very little from those proposed by Sewell. His first ministry was to be equally short lived.

William Gisborne, perceptive colonial official and politician observed of Sewell: “He was a man of culture and of considerable ability; and his conversation sparkled with cleverness and wit He was remarkably quick in seeing the points of a complicated subject, though in treating it he used too much the arts of the advocate. His speeches, though occasionally eloquent and effective, often had the flavour of forensic insincerity.... His nature was supple and pliant; it was not robust enough to stand alone, but clung to natures of stronger fibre and a firmer growth. His mind had breadth, but it was slippery, and unable to grasp great principles; its strength was dissipated on small things The political stage was to him what the warren is to the rabbit: he was ever dodging in and out of holes He was fond of office; and he was not exclusive in his political associations.”⁶

Henry Sewell was not premier again, but he sat in the General Assembly for a total of 11 years – four in the House of Representatives and a further seven in the nominated upper house, the Legislative Council. His durability and usefulness were remarkable.

Aside from his own brief ministry, he served in other ‘responsible’ ministries headed by Edward

Stafford, William Fox, Alfred Domett and Frederick Weld, usually as attorney general, before finally leaving politics in 1873.

As Scholefield commented: “Sewell always faced the rising sun. Each new premier as he took office seemed to him to be the only possible premier, and Sewell himself the only possible attorney-general.”⁷

He remained a ‘centralist’ at heart but, with the need to make a living more pressing than personal political beliefs, he served in the ministries of the most determined ‘provincialists’ with seeming equanimity. He also pioneered loan and shipping negotiations in Australia and England in 1857-58 and in fulfillment of his arcane passion for land title systems, became the country’s first registrar general of lands in 1860.

Henry and Elizabeth Sewell left New Zealand in 1876, and he died in England three years later.

W P Morrell wrote: “He was a good man of business and he had already shown in 1854 that besides his talent for administration he possessed unusual talent for debate. But there was something lacking in him too. It was found that, though fond of office, he had no fixity of purpose. A little too conscious, perhaps, of his abilities, he was yet not robust enough for leadership, and never really won the confidence either of the House or of the country.”⁸

David McIntyre has observed that Sewell was lonely, pessimistic and snobbish. He also wrote: “.... he was a tireless correspondent, negotiator and committee man, a great drafter of bills and resolutions. He was the chief ‘man of business’ in the first New Zealand Parliament.”⁹