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WAKEFIELD CHANGES HIS MIND ABOUT THE “SUFFICIENT PRICE”

INTRODUCTION

Edward Gibbon Wakefield was born in London in 1796. For part of his childhood his grandmother, Mrs. Priscilla Wakefield, was his guardian. She was a prominent Quaker, author of several books including *A Family Tour through the British Empire* (1814), an active social worker and founder of a savings bank. His father was also a philanthropist and author of *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political* (1812), but he does not appear to have been an active member of the Society of Friends.

Gibbon Wakefield seems to have been a wilful child. After three years at Westminster School, he refused to return there. He went next to Edinburgh High School but was expelled in 1812, apparently because of his love of playing practical jokes. In 1813 he was admitted to Gray's Inn to read for the Bar but he did not complete the necessary terms. In 1814 he became secretary to the British envoy at the Court of Turin and was used as a King's Messenger. In 1816, he eloped with Eliza Pattle. His wife was a ward in Chancery. He succeeded, however, in placating the Lord Chancellor and also in obtaining the income from a large trust fund created for her by her father. His wife died three years later in childbirth.

By 1823, Gibbon Wakefield was living in Paris and there his step-mother and a woman friend set to work to plan a political career for him. The scheme included finding him a rich wife and when the step-mother returned to Macclesfield where her own father lived, she took steps to obtain information about a wealthy silk-manufacturer, named Turner, who had a young daughter in a boarding school.

In 1826, Wakefield, helped by his brother William, abducted Ellen Turner from school and tricked her into marrying him at Gretna Green. The pair were overtaken at Calais by her relatives and in 1827 Gibbon Wakefield and his brother were each sentenced to three years' imprisonment and Miss Turner's marriage was annulled by Act of Parliament.

In prison, Gibbon Wakefield turned his attention to problems of

social and economic reform. He became an opponent of capital punishment and in 1831 published a small book, *Facts Relating to the Punishment of Death in the Metropolis*. His attention was attracted also to the subject of colonisation and this became the supreme interest of his life. In 1829, the *Morning Chronicle*, a London newspaper, published a series of letters written by an anonymous correspondent from Sydney. Towards the end of the year, these letters were issued in book form and entitled *A Letter from Sydney, the Principal Town of Australasia*. The book was written by Wakefield but did not bear his name.

A Letter from Sydney contains the essence of Wakefield's theories about colonisation. In an examination of New South Wales, Wakefield argued that the colony could not make progress because of the shortage of labour. Not only did he disapprove of transportation as a form of punishment but he felt that convict-labour was no effective substitute for free agricultural labourers. But free labourers were not prepared to work for wages so long as they could obtain free grants of land. Even when labourers from England were provided with free passage to Australia, on condition that on arrival they accepted paid employment, in fact when they got to the colonies they broke their contracts, speedily took possession of land and became farmers in their own right. Wakefield argued in his first book and in later publications including books and pamphlets, that the solution of the problem of acute shortage of labourers could be met only by what he named "the sufficient price", which meant that land was to be sold, not given away, at a price high enough to prevent labourers from becoming landowners too soon. The proceeds of the sale of land were to be used to pay for the passage of young married couples and by these means capitalists would be provided with an adequate supply of labour because labourers would be compelled to engage themselves as wage-labourers until they accumulated sufficient funds to purchase land.

In 1830, the National Colonisation Society was founded and on his release from gaol, Wakefield was actively engaged in promoting colonisation, first in Australia and later in New Zealand. The sale of land became accepted policy in both countries and funds acquired thereby paid for the removal of poor persons to colonies in Australasia. In 1833, Wakefield published *England and America*, (the title is misleading because its main importance lies in its elaboration of the views on "systematic colonisation" propounded in *A Letter from Sydney*). In 1835 Wakefield, who was greatly influenced by the Classical Economists, began the publication of an edition of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. He wrote notes for the first two Books only of that work and his comments were much on the same lines as the

views already expressed in England and America. Two years later, Wakefield published *Popular Politics* which is, also, largely a reproduction of his book of 1833.

In 1838 Wakefield accompanied Lord Durham, who had been appointed Governor, to Canada and he helped with the production of the famous Durham Report and, in fact, he is credited with the writing of *Appendix B* in that report by Charles Buller in his *Sketch of Lord Durham's Mission to Canada in 1838* (1840). Wakefield took an active part in Canadian politics from 1841 to 1843. He was elected Member of Parliament and for a time he acted as adviser to Sir Charles Metcalfe, Governor of Canada. He published in 1844 his *View of Metcalfe's Government of Canada*.

On his return to England Wakefield, who had been influential in the formation of the New Zealand Land Company, broke with the company and was instrumental in founding a Church of England colony at Canterbury. He suffered a severe breakdown for some months in 1846 but by 1849 was once more engaged in publishing his views and he produced his last book, *A View of the Art of Colonisation, in Letters between a Statesman and a Colonist*, which is to some extent a description of the conflicts which Wakefield himself experienced in his attempts to win over the Colonial Office to recognition of the value of colonies and his opinions with respect to their administration. This book, once again, records Wakefield's belief in "the sufficient price", the basis of systematic colonisation. About the same time, Wakefield helped to form the Colonial Reform Society, an organisation which advocated a large measure of self-government for the colonies. After a vigorous struggle in England in which Wakefield fought with others for a political constitution for New Zealand, he left in 1852 to take up residence in the colony which he had come to consider his own creation and he arrived there early in 1853. From 1853 to 1854, Wakefield took a very active part in New Zealand politics, serving as a member of the Wellington Provincial Council and of the General Assembly. He also repeated his Canadian role and acted for a time as an adviser to the New Zealand Acting-Governor Wynyard.

In December 1854, Wakefield was struck down by rheumatic fever and from that time to his death in 1862 he was a complete invalid and removed from active affairs.

But an account of his life from the early months of 1853 to his collapse in late 1854 is interesting not only for his lively participation in New Zealand politics but also for the change which appears to have taken place in an important element of his fundamental ideas – that is, the sufficient price for land.

PART ONE

As has been stated, during his imprisonment in England, Wakefield came to important conclusions about the way to people the colonies. He damned the system of transporting convicts as beneficial neither to the convicts nor to the employers forced to receive them. But he recognised that if convicts were not sent, colonies would rot for lack of labour because free labourers who migrated took advantage speedily of free grants of land to make themselves landowners. Both large and small landowners suffered from an acute shortage of labour and waste lands remained uncultivated.

In his numerous writings¹, Wakefield put forward new proposals for promoting prosperity in the colonies. He suggested that any government responsible for a new colony should grant just enough land for people to cultivate properly. The regulation of land so that it would be neither inadequate nor excessive could be effected by charging a price sufficient to prevent undue expansion and to encourage concentrated settlement. The labouring emigrant, unable to pay this high price, would be forced to work as a wage-labourer for some years before having enough money to purchase land. Capitalists, thus supplied with labour, could embark on production with confidence. Labourers would be content because they would obtain wages high enough to allow them in time to purchase land, even if its price was considerable. If, moreover, the money realised from land sales was, as Wakefield suggested, used to bring out more immigrants, labourers who had worked long enough to buy land would be replaced by fresh labourers who would, in their turn, work for high wages.²

Wakefield was confident that by these means the supply of labour would be adequate and constant. This was important because, as *pointed out*, most operations in industry took a long time for completion and were not worth starting unless there was a likelihood they could be carried on for several years. A large proportion of investment was fixed, durable and inconvertible so that a process halted might cause it to be lost.³

Wakefield was anxious to see not only a proper combination of land and capital but also that every colony should have, from the start,

¹ The author of this article is preparing for publication an edition of the Collected Works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, with an introduction summarising his contribution as an economist, political theorist, politician and empire builder.

² See *England and America*, 1833, Volume II, p. 192.

³ See *The Art of Colonisation*, 1849, p. 169.

a town population in due proportion to its agriculture, so that cultivators should not be too widely scattered as to be deprived by distance of the market which the towns would provide. He wished, therefore, for integrated settlement with town and country complementary to each other.¹

Wakefield did not specify what amount of land was to be made available, but in explaining the rate of profit argued that production was limited, not only by the quantity of capital and labour, but by the extent of employment. In a closed economy, the field of employment consisted simply of the land of the country. On a limited extent of land, only a limited amount of capital could find employment at a profit and, as the amount of available capital approached this limit, profit would fall. The field of employment should, therefore, expand to permit both rising profits and a high level of wages. Wakefield did not agree with those economists who argued that if profits were high, wages must be low or vice versa.²

Nor did Wakefield say precisely what price was to be fixed for new land. What he said was that it must be sufficient. The object of pricing was to give the cheapest land a market value that would compel labourers to work a considerable time before they could buy land. The price would depend on the rate of increase of population and therefore on migration which, in turn, would depend on many factors. It would also depend on the rate of accumulation which would depend on wages, the cost of living and the number of acres required to provide the labourer with a living. For these reasons Wakefield held that it was impossible to set a sufficient price which would be valid for all circumstances and places. But the legislator would always know whether or not labour for hire was too scarce or too plentiful in the colony. If it were too plentiful, he would know that the price of new land was more than sufficient; if it were hurtfully scarce, that the price of land was not sufficient. The legislator would lower or raise the price as circumstances demanded or leave the price alone if he judged that labour was not over-abundant.³

Wakefield thus assigned to government the important function of regulating the supply of land and migrants. The latter, he argued, ought to comprise equal numbers of men and women and, preferably, married people. He did not want either old people, who would be

¹ See Wakefield's edition of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, 1835, Volume I, Note on Chapter I, Book I, p. 26. The same point was made in *England and America*, Volume I, pp. 16ff, and in *The Art of Colonisation*, pp. 167ff.

² See *England and America*, Volume I, p. 120. See also Wakefield's edition of Adam Smith, Volume I, pp. 227-254.

³ See *The Art of Colonisation*, pp. 331-349.

weak and not readily adaptable to new employments, or children who would also be an encumbrance on the colony.¹

Wakefield was not prepared, however, to see migrants confined to paupers who were transported free. He hoped to see others joining the colony from a wide selection of employments – surveyors, builders, engineers, architects, mineralogists, botanists, chemists, printers, schoolteachers, booksellers, merchants, lawyers, milliners.² Such gentle folk might not preserve an equal sexual proportion but Wakefield believed that if too many gentlemen migrated, the consequent demand for females would lead to an influx over the bridge of charity.

Such, then, were Wakefield's proposals. All waste land was to be sold by public auction at a fixed upset price and the money devoted to bringing labourers to the colony; a preference being given always to young married couples. The price of land was to be sufficiently high to prevent labourers from becoming landowners too soon, but Wakefield hoped that wise economic administration, the right combination of labour and capital, correct settlement of land, would yield high profits for capitalists who would be attracted to the colony and high wages for labourers who would, in time, acquire the means to become landowners and employers.

PART TWO

A few months after leaving prison, Wakefield had the satisfaction of effecting, through the medium of the Colonisation Society, a change of policy regarding colonial lands. In January 1831, a uniform system of sale was imposed in New South Wales. The important feature of the Ripon regulations was not that the land was to be sold instead of being given away but that, as Professor Mills has indicated,³ a price was charged with the particular object of preventing labourers from becoming landowners too soon. Although a recent study⁴ indicates that the sales were, in fact, made to great landowners, this was not apparent in London where Wakefield and his friends approved the regulations.

¹ See A Letter from Sydney, 1829, p. 84. The same advice is repeated in *The New British Province of South Australia*, Appendix I, p. 147.

² He added that at least one good Political Economist would be welcome in each settlement to prevent the establishment of a tariff. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

³ See R. C. Mills, *The Colonisation of Australia*, 1915, p. 164. Before 1831, land had been sold.

⁴ See *The Economic Record*, April 1957: E. G. Wakefield and the Alienation of Crown Land in New South Wales to 1847, by K. Buckley.

Further expression was given to Wakefield's principles in South Australia, after which he turned to New Zealand, a country which he believed was the fittest in the world for colonisation. He was largely instrumental in forming the New Zealand Association which eventually became the New Zealand Land Company. Within two years, the Company's first ship, the *Tory*, was despatched to New Zealand. Other vessels followed and, in 1840, the Government gave formal approval to the Company as an agent for colonisation. Three settlements – Wellington, Nelson and New Plymouth – were formed directly by the Company and two other settlements – Canterbury and Otago – were influenced by Wakefield's principles.

Until Wakefield broke with the New Zealand Company, he was very active in directing its affairs, except for the period when he was out of England and when he was seriously ill in 1846. He was particularly associated with the Company in 1839 and 1840 when the first batch of migrants was departing and was linked to New Zealand throughout the 1840's by energetic work for its constitution. Wakefield felt himself peculiarly responsible for the country's progress and, of course, he was considered by many to be the new settlements' architect-in-chief.

From 1840 to 1848, the Company sent 9,859 persons¹ to New Zealand. They were not, as Wakefield prescribed, mainly young adults. In Wellington, for example, about 43 per cent of the settlers in 1843 were children under fourteen years (and of these about 22 per cent were under six years), 49 per cent were persons between fourteen and forty (of which 22 per cent were between twenty-one and thirty and 15 per cent between thirty and forty).²

The migrants were spread over many occupations. In the same year, of the occupied population of Wellington, 424 (or 33 per cent) were agriculturalists (80 farmers, 339 labourers and 5 stockmen and shepherds), 132 (10 per cent) were engaged in trade and commerce (42 merchants and auctioneers, 31 storekeepers and 18 publicans), 260 (20 per cent) were employed in building and joinery (109 carpenters and 44 brickmakers, masons, bricklayers and plasterers), 87 were professional men (6 per cent) of whom 12 were lawyers, 8 teachers, 13 doctors, 19 New Zealand Company officials. 19 were described as "gentlemen".³ 69 (5 per cent) were listed as domestic servants.

By 1848, the main change in these categories was an increase in stockmen and shepherds to 149 and in farm servants and husbandmen to 373, making a total of farm workers of 522 (farmers are excluded

¹ See Table 20, Statistics of New Zealand for the Crown Colony Period 1840-1852, Department of Economics, Auckland University College, 1954.

² See Table 13, Statistics of New Zealand.

³ See Table 18, *ibid.*

as they are counted with merchants in the 1848 list).¹ There was also, by 1848, a decline in the persons listed as professional and an increase in tradesmen, mariners, fishermen and domestic servants.

The first and major settlement of the New Zealand Company was, then, widely representative in 1843. It had a large base of farm labourers and building operatives, which was satisfactory from the point of view of development but, perhaps, the number engaged in commerce and trade was too high and the number of lawyers, doctors and Company officials was out of balance, particularly when the small number of teachers is noted (the number of children aged between six and fourteen was 754).²

Progress in the three settlements was not uniform, particularly between 1843 and 1848. Wellington's population moved from 3,808 in 1843 to 4,758 in 1848 and to 5,900 in 1852. Over the same period Nelson's population increased from 2,942 to 3,090 to 4,587 and New Plymouth's from 1,091 to 1,116 to 1,747. Agricultural statistics show that Wellington's acreage for sown grasses increased from 132 in 1843 to 1,318 in 1848 to 3,247 in 1852. Figures for 1843 for Nelson and New Plymouth are not available but in these settlements acreage rose in Nelson from 263 to 1,837 from 1848 to 1852 and in the same period in New Plymouth from 510 to 3,311. For field crops, Wellington's acreage moved from 450 in 1843 to 860 in 1848 to 1,380 in 1852; Nelson's acreage rose from 673 to 3,077 to 4,305 in the same period and New Plymouth's from 231 to 1,182 to 1,528.³

It is now accepted that the choice of Port Nicholson was ill-advised because of the small area of cultivable land and, in fact, what was cultivable varied in acreage year by year. The following figures indicate the variations.⁴

Year	Acres under cultivation
1842	512
1843	450
1844	806
1845	882
1846	925
1847	797
1848	860

¹ See Table 15, Statistics of New Zealand.

² Wakefield had expressed the hope, in A Letter from Sydney, that a system of universal education would speedily be put in operation.

³ See Tables 1, 31 and 32 of Statistics of New Zealand, *op. cit.*

⁴ See Table 32, Statistics of New Zealand, *op. cit.* Similar variations can be noted at Nelson and New Plymouth.

Year	Acres under cultivation
1849	683
1850	1489
1851	1046
1852	1380

The area for cultivation was small and the Wellington settlement suffered because surveying was slow and the survey staff inefficient. Development was halting and settlers' funds and time were wasted. Immigrants had not expected to have to spend large sums and time on clearing forests and since the native Maori population was difficult to deal with and frequently hostile, years passed before valid titles to land could be secured. Settlers blamed the Home Government for this unsatisfactory position.

But the greatest difficulty in all three settlements was absenteeism. When the New Zealand Company sold land, it could not ensure that the purchasers took physical possession. Wakefield had advanced ideal propositions for colonisation but the Company was interested in selling land and he had no real hold over its financial policy. In Wellington, 1,000 sections of 100 acres each were sold, of which 595 were bought by absentees and 405 by colonists. In Nelson, 432 sections of 150 acres each were sold, of which 352 were bought by absentees and 80 by colonists.¹ The story was repeated in New Plymouth where, in the countryside, of a total of 11,254 acres, nearly one-half went to absentees. It appears that, as late as 1851, 320,000 of the entire 440,000 acres held from the Company in Nelson were owned by absentees.²

The results of absenteeism were very harmful. Draining and fencing were delayed and made more expensive if neighbouring landlords were absent; unoccupied land was a continuing menace to progressive cultivation; roadmaking was obstructed and, gravest evil of all, labourers could not find employers. In Nelson and New Plymouth, labourers fell back on the Company for the means of subsistence. In time, the Company found that its agents in New Zealand were changing policy by leasing or selling to labourers small quantities of land to relieve unemployment. By the late 1840's, however, labour had become scarce and labourers still working for wages were clamouring for land. The land situation was further complicated in 1847 by the Company's decision to give compensation to settlers at the rate of 150 and 75 acres for every 100 originally purchased; the decision applied to resident and absentee landowners respectively. Compensa-

¹ See *The Colonisation of New Zealand* by J. S. Marais, 1927, p. 321, where Marais quotes Wakefield's enthusiastic comments on sales of land for the Canterbury settlement.

² *Ibid.*, p. 137.

tion was in the form of scrip which gave the holders a right of selection over a large area of the Company's surveyed land. Resident settlers at Wellington, Wanganui, Nelson and New Plymouth received in all 76,000 acres and absentees 121,000 acres.¹

PART THREE

When Wakefield reached New Zealand in February 1853, he found mounting difficulties in the settlements which were crowned in March by the issue of Sir George Grey's new land regulations. The Crown had assumed full control over waste land but because of the price, which moved between £1 to £3 an acre, sales were small. Grey decided to reduce the price by permitting land to be auctioned (outside Canterbury and Otago) in blocks between 80 and 640 acres at an upset price of 5/- per acre. Runholders were permitted to buy sections of 10 to 80 acres at 10/- or 5/- according to the quality of land and leased land was not to be sold except by auction after three months' notice.

The new regulations were received by many in New Zealand with enthusiasm, but Wakefield was dismayed and immediately started a campaign against them. Naturally, he was afraid of their effects on sales in Canterbury; he was angry with Grey for usurping a function which, he believed, belonged to the General Legislature and opposed to cheap land regulations as injurious to systematic colonisation.

Wakefield, with the help of Dr. William Dorset, a prominent member of the Wellington Constitutional Association, applied to the Supreme Court to restrain the Wellington Land Commissioner from selling land under the new regulations. The case was based on a land-order transferred to Dorset by Wakefield which entitled the former to fulfilment of the contract for which the Crown had become responsible in taking over the New Zealand Company lands in 1850. The terms of purchase included provisions for settling the price of land but this could not be reduced without the full agreement of the settlers or prior consultation with the British Government. It was also contended that no power had been given to the Government to dispose of waste lands.

The case petered out, however, in a couple of months when the plaintiff failed to set down the demurrer of the defendant within the prescribed time.

Wakefield thus lost the first round of a struggle to maintain his system. He was, of course, at a serious disadvantage not only because

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

the Company had mismanaged sales, but also because labourers were refusing to accept denial of speedy access to land. Moreover, gold discoveries in Australia were aggravating the shortage of labour. The N.Z. Spectator warned him that he was mistaken if he thought that the settlers sympathised with his views of the land regulations.¹

Having failed to get the regulations annulled, Wakefield tried through the Spectator to persuade settlers that his views on Grey's arrangements were in their interest. He asserted that they would ruin prospects of a public land revenue and that land would be bought up with such avidity as to leave workers no way of acquiring it except dearly from speculators.

He next invited settlers to confer with him on a plan for disposing both of land which he himself owned and of a large amount of absentee scrip, which he held. Small cultivators were to be given the chance to purchase on seven years' terms at 8 to 10 per cent interest. A small quantity of land was sold in this way.

His next move was to invite settlers to discuss the land question. In May 1853, notice was given of a meeting to be held at the Aglionby Arms, near the Hutt Bridge, Wellington. The agenda included the following topics: whether the permanent system should be administered by the General Assembly or Provincial Legislatures?; what were the right objects of a permanent system?; what future evils were to be averted and what present evils remedied?; the best means of accomplishing both permanent and present objects, independently of price and mode of sale (this to include surveys and native title); disposal whether by grant free of cost or by sale; sale whether at a fixed uniform price or at different fixed prices according to quality and situation; what price or prices if fixed; or what upset price or prices for auction?; cheap land and dear land.

A large number assembled to hear Wakefield speak and, according to the Wellington Independent (1.6.1853), the meeting lasted for seven hours.

Wakefield gave a full account of his views. First, he argued that waste land should be administered by the six Provincial Councils and not by the General Assembly, which was not competent because "distance alone would put real responsibility out of the question." Secondly, he answered the question – What are the right objects of a permanent system for the disposal of waste land? by asking – "What are the objects with which people leave their native country when they

¹ See N. Z. Spectator, 15.6.53, in which the editorial reminded Wakefield that he had written that if labour was hurtfully scarce the price of land was too low. In fact, however, the editor commented, labour was very scarce but land could not be sold because the price was too high.

go forth to subdue and replenish a wilderness?" He replied: "They are objects which may be expressed by one word – colonisation. The land is held by the Government as a trustee for the people. The people want to use the land and the most important business of a colonising government... is to open the land for use by the public and then to take good care that it be not locked up again." Wakefield asked: "Why do people emigrate?" and answered, as did members of the enthusiastic audience: "To get land: it is because the country of their birth is overcrowded, because the people are too many for the land. Therefore, the more adventurous go forth to look for land – to take possession of countries where the soil is unoccupied, to work out their own independence and happiness by acquiring property in land." Wakefield quoted a friend (Mr. Carter) who had said that "the darling object of almost every emigrant is to possess land in the country of his adoption." He went on: "If he is poor, as most emigrants are, he desires, of course, to work for wages until his savings provide him with the means of settling upon land; but when once he has turned this point in his career as a colonist, he longs to work for himself and not upon any other man's land as a tenant... in a new country, where there is plenty of unoccupied land, tenancy is as contrary to the nature of things as proprietorship is agreeable thereto. Freehold property is, at one and the same time, the great means, the chief incentive and the principal reward of colonial industry."

Wakefield then declared that "the main duty of a colonising government in disposing of the public wastes for the general good is to facilitate acquisition of freehold property by the industrious classes; not to place the emigrant upon land the moment he leaves his ship, without experience of the country, without money to support his family, without capital of his own, accumulated by working some time for high colonial wages." That, he insisted, would be the height of folly. "It is as good for newly arrived emigrants" as for those who have preceded them "that they should work for wages during a term." This view was applauded, and he proceeded: "All classes gain thereby; the new labourers who learn how to become employers of labour and 'the old hands' who formerly worked for wages but who, having got land of their own with capital to work it, are now in urgent need of the assistance of other labour." Wakefield added that the term of labour for hire should be as short as possible provided that it was consistent with those objects... but "the darling object" of the industrious classes was to be as easily attainable as possible.

But, he added, the Government must possess land before disposing of it. Wakefield told the audience that he had quarrelled with the New Zealand Company seven years previously because they continued to

offer freehold land for sale after it had become certain or probable that they would not be able to fulfil their engagements because the land remained under Native Title. He asserted that "extinction of Native Title was the indispensable first step in the work of laying open land for appropriation and use by the industrious settlers" and he called for the extinction of title in the Wairapa district which had the only available land, fertile, readily accessible and not densely timbered. He believed that the purchase money could be obtained in England or Australia and declared that he would join with others in a vigorous effort to obtain it.

Wakefield turned next to surveys, saying that "waste land not surveyed, is *not* land open for the people generally: it is only land open for... speculators and monopolists who... with plenty of time at their disposal can make their selections knowingly." Wakefield alleged that speculators and monopolists were opposed to surveys because, if these were made, a true picture of the country would be presented and the hard-working classes would get equality in the matter of selection. The surveys would, of course, cost money and funds for them would have to be borrowed.

He then tackled the question whether land should be disposed of by free grant or by sale. The granting of land free of cost had led to very mischievous consequences in the colonies, and he cited the famous case of Western Australia "where a cousin of a cabinet minister at home got 500,000 acres in a block." Huge grants to favourites locked up whole provinces against settlement and land was kept for years in a state of wilderness. Only monopolisers gained because they could exact tribute from people wanting land and, everywhere, they got "to be masters of the Government and tyrants over the people."

Wakefield said that he was proud to have got that monstrous system abolished. When free grants were ended, hundreds of thousands of industrious people had been able to obtain freehold property. He warned that if the old system was revived in New Zealand, a small minority would probably get large slices of land. He condemned those who called themselves "friends of the working man" but who were "grantees of Compensation Scrip and virtually grantors also (for they helped themselves); constant frequenters of the land office; laborious students of maps and plans and Land Proclamations and Official Notices about land; the very vermin of colonial life... whom Compensation Scrip has made what they are in the political sense... who have never, in all their dealings with land, taken care that the real wants of the working classes should be really supplied but have managed to divide amongst themselves a very large proportion... of land... since the first sales by the New Zealand Company."

Wakefield demonstrated that although those wanting land in the Wellington settlement constituted a majority of electors, they were in the minority as landowners. Of 279 electors in the Hutt Valley, less than 100 were freeholders. He blamed the Home Government for thwarting the Company; effete Governors; the non-extinction of Native Title; absentee landowning; monopoly of landowning and compensation measures of the New Zealand Company.

Wakefield insisted that the industrious working classes were entitled to compensation and should be given land before the Government disposed of it in any other way. He proposed a responsible Commission to ascertain who really wanted land and to award each of these a hundred acres, say, costfree. Recipients would make a free choice after accurate surveys had been made, and those wishing to join together in founding a Township should be allowed to choose their land in a block. The Government should grant a charter of incorporation and limited liability so that they might operate without the danger of individual responsibility for the acts of the corporation.

Wakefield admitted that people might accuse him of abandoning his principles in putting forward a plan of free grants, but he exclaimed: "Nonsense! the principles and opinions which I have formed in the abstract – that is, without relation to special circumstances – remain untouched by this proposal. Gross mismanagement and a wide departure from what I deem right principles have produced in this settlement an evil state of things which *must* be remedied somehow." He added that he believed that unless and until it were remedied, right principles would have no chance of a fair trial."

Wakefield examined next the question of price. Colonising authorities selling land had confounded their objects with those of a private seller, who sought only to sell at the highest possible price. But governments should be concerned with promoting colonisation which required not the sale of land at the highest price but the sale of the largest amount as quickly as possible. Competition was not necessary therefore because it would lead to smaller and slower sales. The quantity of land for sale must be unlimited and the price fixed.

His objections to sale by auction were that a prospective buyer might be outbid beyond his means or forced to take land which he did not want or for which he might pay more than he intended. He might be the victim of jobbery and roguery. Competition at an auction, moreover, created unneighbourly feelings amongst colonists.

Wakefield also objected to a varying price. "The only proper course is to put a fixed and uniform price per acre upon all the waste land" if the object of Government is to colonise. He then turned to the ques-

tion of "cheap land" and "dear land". In his view, cheap land was land which was cheap at the price – "not cheap in comparison with other land of more value in the market, but cheap in the sense of being worth more than its price." He wished the price to be such as would deter no true settler from buying, though it might deter speculators and monopolisers. He warned: "For mind, we are talking about a permanent system to be established according to my view, *after* justice shall have been satisfied – after present evils shall have been remedied – by a distribution of land cost free among present real wanters of land for use." The land was to be as cheap as possible for the people, and dear enough to keep the speculators "off the people's rightful domain."

Revenue from the sale of waste land was to be used to multiply the market value of every acre sold and when that effect was produced, then there was "cheap land for buyers from the Government." The money would pay not only for the extinction of Native Title, surveys, roads, etc., but would induce foreign capitalists to lend money on the security of further sales. Wakefield admitted that the gold discoveries in Australia made it idle to think of paying for migration from Britain but hoped that other means would be found of helping all true colonists who settled on land and avowed that he did not quite lose sight of migration as a means of prosperity.

Wakefield reaffirmed his view that the price of land should be high enough to provide revenue for purposes which would add to the value of land but he insisted that he was not and never had been prepared to name a definite price – only to indicate the considerations which should weigh in fixing it. He concluded that the immediate necessity was to provide land for real settlers. His final advice to his audience was that members should not buy an acre of Compensation Scrip or Compensation Land because it might be found that Crown grants had been made unlawfully. He assured them that they would "be served, and better served, in another way." He ended by saying that his plan had been put forward with a sense of deep responsibility since he had come to New Zealand fully resolved for his bones to be laid here and that he was, in truth, a New Zealand colonist.

Those who opposed him at this meeting were at a considerable disadvantage because of his proposal for free grants of land. In the following month, another large public meeting adopted a draft petition to the Governor framed by Wakefield; it called for compensation in land for hardship suffered through the New Zealand Company's failure to implement promises made to labourers it had brought to the country and asked the Governor to set aside a surveyed area of easily available land.

In March 1853, Wakefield wrote to Lord Lyttelton saying that he was being forced into politics to save what he had laboured for so long. In June he was selected as a candidate for the Provincial Council with two others who had actively supported his campaign for compensation. Wakefield also succeeded in the Hutt election for two members of the House of Representatives.

In the Wellington Provincial Council, Wakefield's period of service is of interest for his surprising statement in the debate on the Fencing Bill that he had no prejudices against the pastoral occupying class, believing them to be of the utmost importance to the colony and that he would go so far as to give them a pre-emptive right of purchase in their runs. This clearly was a recognition of the realities which had to be faced in a colony where the number of stockmen and shepherds and the acreage under grass had substantially increased from 1843, but in the light of Wakefield's views on large landholding and monopoly of land, his approval of pastoral farming reads strangely.

It was, however, in the General Assembly that the change in Wakefield's views became most apparent. In March 1854, at a public meeting in Wellington, he had stated that he would vote in the Assembly with the member who proposed the lowest minimum price for land. A listener accused him of ceasing to be a Wakefieldite, and asked if he supported a price of 10/- and 5/- an acre. Wakefield replied that he did, and he then asked the questioner when he had said these were not sufficient prices in the circumstances of the colony and, further, where had the poor man a chance of competing on equal terms with the rich speculator in acquiring land from the government.

In July, during the second reading of the Waste Lands Bill in the General Assembly, when it was proposed that no land was to be sold at less than 5/- an acre, Wakefield, with his son, Edward Jerningham, and others, opposed the Bill. Weld then asked Wakefield whether or not his sufficient price was the lowest that might be proposed by any member of the House. He quoted Wakefield's statement in the *Art of Colonisation* that the highest price ever asked for land in New Zealand was insufficient and that the sole object of a price of land should be to prevent labourers from becoming capitalists too soon. How, Weld asked, could Wakefield reconcile his pledge to vote for the lowest price with his view of the sufficient price – what, in fact, was the sufficient price?¹

Wakefield replied that Weld himself had said that the great question of the price at which land should be sold was foreign to the objects of the Bill. Later in the month he proposed amendments:

¹ N.Z. Parliamentary Debates, 11.7.1854, pp. 189-196.

- “1. That a certain portion of all waste lands should be set apart as working settlers’ land under terms of purchase to be specified.
2. That the land thus set apart should be at least one-third of the waste lands in each province, of average quality... in blocks not exceeding 5,000 acres... and to be disposed of exclusively to bona fide working settlers... in lots not exceeding 200 acres to any one person at the lowest price, either upset or fixed, required in the province at the time of sale.
3. Every applicant was to be permitted to delay payment for a term not exceeding five years, providing that interest was paid on the purchase-money at the rate of 5 per cent per annum.”¹

Further clauses proposed a Waste Lands Board in each of the provinces and suggested that more than the minimum price might be charged for land if the proceeds were devoted to special local works.

Speaking to the amendments, Wakefield said that his chief object was to save one-third of the waste lands of the colony from speculative monopoly. He would like to have taken all the land from speculators but feared there would be objections to reserving more than one-third. He then made a significant admission. He had come to the conclusion, since the gold discoveries in Australia and Sir George Grey’s proclamation, that it was no longer possible to restrict the sale of land by price alone. He wished his new proposals to be tried and, if he had shifted his ground, it was because he had to meet monopoly face to face.

Wakefield gave the House a long explanation of his original proposal for a sufficient price. He wanted people of all classes to be able to go to a new country but capitalists would not proceed there unless labour accompanied them. Putting a sufficient price on land would ensure both that the labourer would be prevented from becoming a land-owner too quickly and that funds would be provided to bring out further labourers who would replace those who had earned enough money to buy land. But, Wakefield added, because of the gold discoveries, labourers could not be persuaded to stay in New Zealand. They must be offered something more attractive than gold. Land, which satisfied the natural desire for independence, was the answer.

Wakefield’s opponents attacked the amendments on two grounds. Some accused him of trying to gain popularity among the working classes. Others argued that as all of them were working settlers, the whole of the waste land should be reserved.² The amendments were rejected by 21 votes to 10.

¹ N.Z. Parliamentary Debates, 18.7.1854.

² N.Z. Parliamentary Debates, 18.7.1854. See also the *New Zealander*, 22.7.1854, and the *Southern Cross*, 24.7.1854.

The Southern Cross commented that the term "working settler" was so ambiguous that it would have been better to refer to the working man. "The debate was signalled by what was far more remarkable than the definition of a word; the deliberate renunciation by Mr. Wakefield himself of what is called the Wakefield theory. The sufficient price is now consigned to the tomb of all the Capulets. The gold discoveries are the declared cause. Without admitting the force of the reason assigned... we tender our hearty congratulations to the Hon. Member for the Hutt upon having shaken at last from off his neck the weight that was bearing him down and preventing him from taking his true position in the colony."¹ His true position in the eyes of his opponents had become leader of the working class party, a prospect that frightened them.² They set out to consolidate their own position.

Wakefield continued to push his proposed working settler regulations to the end of his term in the House of Representatives. His opponents professed to find this concern for the working man remarkable and newly born, an ignoble attempt to curry favour with the working classes. That accusation cannot be sustained because, from the beginning of his political life, Wakefield expressed the desire (e.g. in his address to the Electors at Birmingham) to promote human well-being in a society which, combining high wages, high profits, high rents, would assure the workman as well as his master and the landlord, of the means of a happy existence. For these sentiments, he was rebuked by the *London Times* (10.2.1838) for trying to create a radical Utopia.

There is, then, nothing surprising about Wakefield's working settler regulations. They were in line with views expressed by him over a long period. They were not suddenly brought up, nor can he be accused of introducing them as a means of getting the nomination for the Hutt. It is apparent from the cordial reception which Wakefield received at the large public meeting already referred to that he would have got that in any case. The Chairman's remarks are a significant expression of respect and gratitude for Wakefield's work. "In struggling to obtain a Representative Constitution for this Colony, and in various other matters connected with it, Mr. Wakefield has perhaps done more for New Zealand than any other man living... he had been the means of bringing thousands of freemen into a position of independence and contentment."

What is remarkable is his change of attitude to land sales. Wakefield

¹ 28.7.1854.

² Later, it was said that the Legislative Council was giving favourable consideration to Wakefield's amendments. See *N.Z. Spectator*, 9.12.1854.

appears to have retained his belief in the importance of a fixed price for land (except for free grants to selected settlers), but the purpose in the use of the proceeds was now changed. The price was to be high enough to discourage speculators but low enough to attract the true settlers. This was the new "sufficient price" and now revenue from land sales was to be applied, not to bring more labourers to the colony – Wakefield thought this unworkable because of the lure of the gold-fields – but to improve the market value of land. Some other way, he suggested, had to be found to bring help to the true settler. Thus, Wakefield, abandoned the doctrine of the sufficient price as a mechanism to achieve a harmonious economic society in which the capitalist was provided with an adequate supply of labour and the labourer with an adequate supply of land. He was, it is clear, forced to change his mind by a realistic appraisal of developments in New Zealand where, he said, his system had not been given a fair chance or time to prove its value. Doubts remain, however, whether it would ever have worked except in an economy rigidly controlled, and there is no evidence to show that Wakefield was aware of or accepted the consequences of his essay in planning.