‘COINS OF THE PEOPLE’: THE 1967 NEW ZEALAND DECIMAL COIN REVERSES

MARK STOCKER

The designs of the 1967 New Zealand decimal coinage aroused intensely lively debate and controversy. They provide a rare instance of mass public interest in the visual arts and afford insights into New Zealand’s national identity in the 1960s. Indeed, a half-serious claim was made that New Zealanders were turning into ‘a nation of numismatists’. Questions were raised of the competence of the New Zealand government in its selection process. At one stage the Royal Mint found itself the unlikely recipient of deep gratitude from the media and public. Newspapers devoted dozens of editorials to the coinage issue and hundreds of letters were published under such pseudonyms as ‘Ready for Minting’, ‘Funny Mummy’ and ‘Don’t be Gutless’. In turn, thousands of votes were cast for prospective designs in newspaper polls that played a significant part in the eventual outcome. The controversy even briefly threatened the political future of Robert Muldoon, who recovered to become Prime Minister from 1975 to 1984. This article examines the complex and colourful history of New Zealand’s decimal coin reverse designs from the government’s announcement of the initial open competition in April 1964 to the choice of the coinage in its final form in June 1966.

First, though, it is necessary to outline the circumstances behind decimalisation. In 1933, the government-appointed Coinage Committee had only superficially addressed the issue. Widespread coin smuggling followed the depreciation of the New Zealand pound in relation to sterling and seriously depleted supplies in the process. The urgent need to create a new silver coinage thus took priority over the long-term benefits of decimalisation. Further delays ensued with World War Two, but even then Allan Sutherland could write in his Numismatic History of New Zealand ‘when peace returns the reform is not likely to be long delayed’.1 Although this proved premature, crucial blows for decimalisation were struck by the Labour MP, Rex Mason, who while in opposition introduced parliamentary bills in successive years from 1950–6. In 1959 the report by the Decimal Coinage Committee stressed the advantages of a change-over while recognising that initial costs were high. The Wellington Evening Post could claim in 1960: ‘Opinion is so strongly ranged on the side of the decimals that there seems little doubt that the change will eventually be made. It is a question of when.’2 In the 1960 general election, the Labour and National parties both supported decimalisation. Australia’s decision to adopt it, taking effect from 1966, acted as a crucial catalyst, and the Decimal Coinage Act was finally passed in 1964. The minister responsible for supervising the process was Robert Muldoon, Under-Secretary of Finance between 1964 and 1967 and a rising force in Keith Holyoake’s National Government.

New Zealand’s existing coinage dated mostly from 1933 (Pl. 15, 1). The reverses of the five silver denominations from the half-crown to the threepence were designed by George Kruger Gray, while the penny and half-penny of 1940 were the work of the New Zealand coin and stamp designer, L.C. Mitchell. In the course of its relatively short history, the coinage had earned the affection of collectors and public alike, with the shining reverse of an armed, crouching Maori warrior being especially popular.3 Indeed, there were calls for the retention of these designs and their redeployment as decimal coins, which intensified when their proposed replacements

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1 Allan Sutherland, Numismatic History of New Zealand: History Reflected in Money and Medals (Wellington, 1941), p. 286.
3 For the 1933–40 coinage, see Sutherland, Numismatic History, as in n. 1, pp. 266–79. Kruger Gray’s design was based on Allan Gairdner Wyon’s Sir James Hector Memorial Medal reverse. See Mark Stocker, Golden Atoms: The Ernest Rutherford Medals (Christchurch, 1999), pp. 35, 79.
appeared unsatisfactory. This was ruled out because conversion required coins of new value as well as denomination. Equally important was the perceived need for an entirely new coinage, suitable for a modern country in modern times. As the Treasury’s ‘Notes for Guidance’ to prospective designers stated: ‘It is hoped that designers will arrive at pleasing and attractive designs which will appeal to the public of New Zealand and at the same time help educate them in the use of the decimal system of currency ... The coins should be distinguished and worthy symbols of New Zealand.’

In April 1964, Muldoon announced an open competition for new designs for 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 cent coins with the closing date of 31 July. A commemorative dollar coin, to mark the changeover, was announced in August. The competition was for reverse designs only, as the Queen’s effigy for the obverse had already been commissioned from Arnold Machin and was published in October 1964. The only problem that arose in relation to Machin’s design was his initial opposition to the government’s request for the date to be inscribed on the obverse rather than the reverse as originally intended. This was soon resolved without attracting media attention. Lively debate over the name of the major unit of currency also occurred in 1964. Mason favoured the ‘double crown’, while the designers, Paul Beadle and James Berry, both supported the ‘zeal’; other suggestions included the ‘tui’ (parson-bird), the ‘fern’ and, an indication of his rising prominence, the ‘Muldoon’! Adoption of the dollar, resolved after a parliamentary vote in July 1964, was almost a foregone conclusion, given Australia’s decision to use the unit; moreover, a newspaper poll had shown overwhelming support for this option.

The decision to stage an open design competition had precedents in those for the crown pieces of 1949 and 1953; the concept also struck a populist note, with the Minister of Finance, Harry Lake, claiming that it would create ‘a great deal of public interest, as well as giving the public an opportunity to express its views on coin designs’. The competition for the new designs captured the public imagination, attracting over 600 designs from some 160 entrants. The Southland Times reported an ‘unending’ variety of designs, ranging from predictable images such as Captain James Cook’s barque, the Endeavour, and the tuatara (native lizard), to a schoolgirl’s image of ‘an elderly woman sitting in a chair knitting, the wool coming from a half-shorn sheep standing nearby’. The Matavera Ensign reported that among the most popular entries were ‘fern leaves – a sporting emblem – and Maori meeting houses. Even the shy kiwi has come in for support.’

Despite this enthusiasm, the sculptor and medallist, Paul Beadle, professor of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland, expressed strong personal and professional reservations in a letter to Keith Holyoake. In his capacity as president of the council of the New Zealand Society of Sculptors, Beadle told the prime minister that he was ‘profundely disturbed’ by the open competition, which compromised both sculptors and designers. They were expected ‘to set aside their practices in a totally unsuitable form on the chance that an unnamed Advisory Board may consider them worthy of a £50 prize’. Clearly, and indeed justifiably, Beadle considered the remuneration inadequate. In his reference to the ‘totally unsuitable form’, he was expressing misgivings over the stipulation that entries should be black and white drawings, five times the diameter of the actual coins. Relief models were not required, though the guidelines indicated that they could be used to supplement any drawings. Beadle concluded: ‘The introduction of an entirely new coinage ... is a rare moment in history ... and it is the occasion for New Zealand to stimulate the imagination and recognise the ability of her own specialists. Any denial of them makes a mockery of the University Schools in which they study and of ... the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Trust, the bodies responsible for the advancement of all the arts in New Zealand.’ He also advocated the establishment of a jury representing art and design interests to select the designers, following the Australian model.

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5 PRO MINT 20/3047, Cyril Hewertson to Alan Dowling, 29 July 1965.
8 Southland Times, 28 August 1964.
9 Matavera Ensign, 31 July 1964.
10 Paul Beadle Archive, Auckland, Paul Beadle to Keith Holyoake, 6 May 1964.
The Government independently began to think along similar lines. In May 1964, within weeks of the competition announcement, the Coinage Design Advisory Committee (hereafter CDAC) was appointed. Its members comprised the chairman, J.N.L. (Jack) Searle, secretary of the Decimal Currency Board, Stuart Maclennan, director of the National Art Gallery, A.H. McLintock, the parliamentary historian and former printmaker, John Simpson, professor and head of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury, Allan Sutherland, past president of the Royal Numismatic Society of New Zealand and a veteran of the 1933 coinage design committee and E.J. Walker, chief accountant of the National Bank. On paper, the committee was admirably qualified and it addressed its brief conscientiously, meeting seventeen times between June 1964 and June 1966. Tantalisingly, only the minutes of its first, anodyne, meeting were deposited with the Treasury papers in the National Archives in Wellington, and the rest are presumed destroyed. However, partial reconstruction has been possible following interviews with Simpson, the sole surviving committee member.

At its first meeting, in June 1964, the committee confirmed Beadle’s misgivings when it agreed that while the open competition had been ‘good for public relations …’, it was obvious from the entries received so far that artists would have to be invited.\(^\text{11}\) Approaches for nominations were made to bodies like the New Zealand Society of Sculptors and the Royal and Australian Mints. Stuart Devlin, designer of the well-received 1966 Australian decimal coinage, rejected his invitation because the £1.50 fee – later described by Beadle as ‘pitiful’ – was insufficient. However, the list of competitors as established by September 1964 was impressive. Three, J. Churchward, G. Norfolk and L.C. Mitchell, (designer of the 1940 penny and half-penny reverses), were the survivors of the initial competition. They were joined by Eric Fraser, William Gardner, Milner Gray, Michael Rizzello and Paul Vincze from Britain, and Maurice Askew, Paul Beadle, James Berry, James Johnstone, Francis Shurrock and F.C.W. Staub from New Zealand.

Simpson recollects that the CDAC set about its task with enthusiasm. However, the limitations of its powers were made clear by Searle at the third or fourth meeting, when he explained that it was not up to the committee to determine the designs, but to submit any findings to the government for consideration. In this, and in several other areas, Simpson detects Muldoon’s hand. The names of Harry Lake, the Royal Mint and even the Queen herself were all invoked to deem what was and what was not permissible.\(^\text{12}\) Lake, as Minister of Finance, was Muldoon’s nominal superior, while the Royal Mint would have final sanction in deeming the ‘coiningability’ of the submitted designs and would strike the new coinage. The CDAC was in no position to check the veracity of claims made on behalf of these venerable institutions, although the Queen’s alleged objections to the inscription of the date beneath her effigy proved unfounded, it having actually come only from Machin. Simpson believes that Muldoon’s role was central in determining the eventual designer of the coinage. Muldoon himself appeared to confirm this in his autobiography, \textit{The Rise and Fall of a Young Turk}, when he stated that he ‘assumed full responsibility’ for decimalisation, ‘working through Cabinet where appropriate and handling the day-to-day public relations problems personally’.\(^\text{13}\) Searle was also a significant player. Throughout the CDAC’s existence, he scrupulously followed civil service protocol in representing and, wherever possible, fulfilling the Under-Secretary’s wishes. He skilfully avoided being caught between the differing views of Muldoon on the one hand and the committee on the other.

Simpson remembers Maclennan and McLintock as the two dominant members of the committee. In 1964, both were in their early sixties, both senior public servants and both artists. Maclennan was a landscape painter specialising in water-colours while McLintock had exhibited etchings at the Royal Academy. The two men were both predisposed towards designs that were conservative in concept and execution. Until the CDAC’s final report, there seemed little to separate their views from those of Sutherland who, notwithstanding his impressive numismatic credentials, contributed relatively little at the meetings. Simpson, as a protegé of Herbert Read

\(^{11}\) National Archives, Treasury Series 79 T10/31, Minutes of the first meeting of the Coinage Design Advisory Committee, 5 June 1964.

\(^{12}\) John Simpson, Interview with the writer, 29 November 1999.

\(^{13}\) Muldoon, as in n. 6, \textit{Rise and Fall}, p. 75.
and an art educator, was ready to consider innovation, boldness and abstraction in designs. The youngest member of the committee, he repeatedly found himself ‘in a minority of one’.14 He admired the entries from the British artists, Eric Fraser, Milner Gray and William Gardner, but believes they laboured at a disadvantage. Although Simpson recalls suggestions being made for them to visit New Zealand to assist their depictions of ‘native or national emblems, flora, fauna, historical or geographical subjects’, this never materialised. In his view this was because of the Treasury’s legendary parsimony. Accordingly, Gardner’s highly refined designs, which were heraldically strong but indigenously weak, were admired but were not initially selected by the CDAC, while Fraser encountered considerable difficulties in rendering a design representing the native flax to the committee’s satisfaction.

Although members agreed that a set of coins designed by a single artist was the ideal option, none received the CDAC’s preference. In retrospect, one set does stand out, both for its numismatic and its artistic qualities. Paul Beadle’s designs are fresh, lively and yet immediately recognisable in their imagery (Pl. 15, 2). He produced them during six hectic weeks in August and September 1964. Besides his entry of forty-five highly finished drawings and pages of notes describing the technical processes of design and casting, he made over 200 further sketchbook drawings, which show how his ideas evolved. Carefully following the ‘Notes for guidance’ issued to competitors, he categorised his designs under headings of industry, sport, flora, fauna, Maori decorative arts and heraldry. In Beadle’s own short list, fauna predominated: the 1 cent rifleman; the 5 cent tuatara; the 10 cent dolphin (‘Pelorus Jack’) and rainbow trout; and the 20 cent white heron. Two coins represented other categories: the 2 cent New Zealand Christmas rose (pohutukawa) and the 50 cent half-length effigy of a Maori chief. The rifleman is an endearing, indigenous counterpart to the wren of Wilson Parker’s British farthing, the smallest bird representing the smallest denomination. The tuatara, which later emerged as one of the public’s favourite designs, wittily curls its tail in counterpoint to the curve of the ‘5’. ‘Pelorus Jack’ and the rainbow trout take liberties with scale but elegantly follow the curves of the coin. The white heron effectively displays its feathers to fill the coin, as does the flowering pohutukawa. Opinions would be divided over the Maori effigy and its success in relationship to the field of the proposed coin is questionable, yet Beadle’s double-headed concept shows audacity.

For all their impressiveness – and they have dated remarkably well – none of Beadle’s designs were recommended for adoption by the CDAC. Why was this so? Simpson personally supported Beadle, but was outvoted. The qualities that he admired in them, ‘their strength, simplicity, robustness and directness’, were considered ‘overstated, overpowering, even coarse’ by the other, more conservative members.15 According to Beadle himself, critics found his proposed coinage ‘too much like designs, not natural enough, impossible to strike, etc.’, though museum curatorial staff he consulted ‘expressed the view that I had achieved a happy marriage of design and naturalism’.16

In rejecting the Beadle designs, the CDAC appeared to have avoided a risky and politically unacceptable option. Instead, an uneasy compromise appears to have been struck, with the selection of cautiously modern designs for the lower denominations and a more pictorial conservatism for the higher value coins. By December 1964, three designers had been invited to submit further drawings and, in the following March, Simpson could write to Scarie: ‘I am looking forward to our next meeting ... The designers who have been commissioned are capable of producing the finest work.’17 For the 1 cent coin, Milner Gray’s simple but effective Southern Cross design (Pl. 16, 3) was initially favoured; for the 2 cent, Eric Fraser’s flax (Pl. 16, 4); and for the 5 cent, formalised geysers based on those of the Taupo Volcanic Zone by the same artist (Pl. 17, 5). For the higher denominations, designs by Francis Shurrock were selected: the 10 cent tekoteko (gable figure) motif, the 20 cent Rugby Union player and fern-leaf and the 50 cent high country musterer on horseback (Pls 17–18, 6–8).

16 Ibid., p. 89.
In his letter to Searle, Simpson qualified his optimism when he added 'I am not of course suggesting that there will not be many alterations and difficulties'. He was right. The only design which needed no modification other than the omission of the date was Gray's simple but effective 1 cent Southern Cross. Far greater difficulties arose over both Fraser's designs. After initially accepting his 2 cent flax design, the CDAC then had second thoughts. According to Sutherland, the design was botanically incorrect and there was 'too much distortion for artistic effect'.

Simpson defended the original design, claiming that a degree of abstraction was desirable but failed to convince his colleagues. The design was then modified, curiously not by Fraser but apparently by the Committee itself (Pl. 19, 9). According to some contested accounts, the design was actually handed over to Shurrock to make the necessary changes. By November 1965, when the designs were submitted to the Royal Mint for consideration, the situation was still unresolved.

Fraser telegraphed the CDAC to explain that his design was based on a central, straight form spreading horizontally, around which his other shapes were spread so as to complete it. In the committee's revised version, the central shapes 'had now been collapsed into a broken form and the mainstay of the design has been broken'. The centre needed strengthening: 'Straight lines now replace curves and the leaves as now drawn do NOT stabilise the centre. The result is NOT pleasing as design.' Fraser insisted that if the design was adopted in its revised form, he would not wish it to go under his name. He concluded by asserting that artistic licence should be allowed and that 'design is rarely exact reproduction of nature', just as Simpson had tried to tell his colleagues. Fraser then prepared a revised design, which, together with his original version and that of the CDAC, was submitted to the Royal Mint (Pl. 19, 10).

Fraser's 5 cent design posed even greater problems. It underwent at least four versions between late 1964 and mid 1965. Fraser was first asked to shift the date from the bottom of the design to the sides; then, in his next version, he omitted the date and enlarged the geysers and figure. This elegant, yet graphically powerful design (Pl. 17, 5) would have made an outstanding coin and reflects the disciplined vitality that characterises Fraser's art. When shown the design, the Cabinet thought otherwise, perhaps objecting to its modern semi-abstraction. Fraser was next asked to add the motif of a long, white cloud over the geysers, an allusion to Aotearoa, the Maori name for New Zealand (literally 'land of the long white cloud'). The revised design was also rejected and Fraser was then asked in September 1965 to concentrate on mountains and cloud, with the geysers omitted. It is hardly surprising that at this stage, he did not oblige. In October, with the time-table running some nine months late and with decimalisation only twenty months away, the CDAC itself assumed responsibility for the 5 cent reverse design. McLintock prepared a drawing depicting sunrise and long white clouds over Milford Sound which received tentative, last minute Cabinet approval (Pl. 20, 11). E.J. Walker told Simpson: 'I think it would be true to say that panic has been at the root of the trouble. The design was too big a subject for such a small coin, but overdue deadlines meant that such niceties were ignored.

Shurrock's 10 cent, 20 cent and 50 cent designs posed different problems. When he submitted his entries, he was in his late seventies and had behind him a distinguished career as a teacher at the Canterbury College School of Art and, though inactive in recent years, as a sculptor. Before emigrating to New Zealand in 1924, he had studied sculpture and medal design with Edward Lanteri at the Royal College of Art. Shurrock was a friend of McLintock and his careful

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18 Ibid., Allan Sutherland to J.N.L. Searle, 10 May 1965.
19 New Zealand Herald, 19 February 1966. In the Christchurch Press (24 February 1966), Shurrock denied that he had seen Fraser's designs until 22 February and claimed his flax drawing had been requested by the CDAC. This has been confirmed by John Simpson.
20 New Zealand Herald, 19 February 1966.
23 E.J. Walker to John Simpson, 28 October 1965.
24 For Shurrock, see Nick Stecker, Francis Shurrock: Shaping New Zealand Sculpture (Dunedin, 2000).
conservatism as well as his belief that the coins should reflect ‘New Zealand and New Zealanders’ met with approval from the CDAC. While he had some reservations about Shurrock’s suitability, Simpson, as a fellow Christchurch resident, liaised closely with him throughout 1965 and encouraged him, not always successfully, to modify his designs in accordance with the committee’s wishes. Simpson recalls how Shurrock was ‘really enthusiastic about the prospect … in some ways this would be the most public work that he would ever undertake and would be in everybody’s purse and pocket’.25

All three of Shurrock’s designs needed modification. The 10 cent reverse originally featured a full-length tekoteko figure (Pl. 21, 12) used in almost identical form in two of his earlier designs, an unadopted 1940 New Zealand centennial penny and in the 1949 Margaret Condliffe Memorial Award Medal. This recycling was evidence of the elderly artist’s waning powers of invention. In the course of its development, the figure was reduced to a head and two manaia (Maori canoe prow carvings) were added either side of it. The 20 cent rugby player appears to have been derived from another unadopted design for a 1940 penny, this time by the Anglo-New Zealand artist, Christopher Perkins. In the draft of a government press release intended to accompany the design’s announcement, Shurrock stated that this coin was intended to convey New Zealanders’ ‘natural ability and interest in sport’ and was influenced by recollections of his friend, Geoff Alley, the great All Black lock of 1926–8.26 Although he was asked to omit the fern-leaf motif from the design as early as November 1964, Shurrock’s failure to do so is evident in the design submitted to the Royal Mint a year later. He also ignored the CDAC’s suggestion that the player be given a ‘more active’ pose. Simpson’s patient support notwithstanding, Shurrock adopted, according to Sutherland, ‘a semi-dictatorial tone in his letters to the Committee. I look for improvements in the features of the musterer’.27 This last design, for the 50 cent reverse, is sparsely documented; originally Shurrock had intended the coin to bear an effigy of Cook but possibly as a result of Fraser’s stylised design of a musterer, Shurrock was asked to prepare a more conventional rendition of the same theme. It is clear that in the course of working on the design, Shurrock was troubled by the many minute details of sheep and blades of grass which would be invisible to the naked eye when reduced to coin size. In assessing Shurrock’s designs it is difficult to avoid being influenced by the outcry that they caused on their publication. The 10 cent tekoteko design is iconographically appropriate and has sufficient graphic qualities to make it a distinctive, yet serviceable coin and the 50 cent musterer possesses considerable nostalgic charm. Less can be said to defend the 20 cent rugby player. Simpson still considers Shurrock’s designs ‘beautifully worked out’, yet he concedes that ‘they would make New Zealand appear to be fossilised in the 1920s’.28

By July 1965, Searle could telegraph ‘six reverse designs virtually settled’ but it was another four months before the drawings were sent to London. In late November, Muldoon indicated that they needed to be viewed by the entire Royal Mint Advisory Committee and that its findings would be announced in the New Year. In words that would haunt him, he asserted that ‘we have no reason to believe that any substantial alteration to the designs will be suggested’.29 None of Fraser’s geysers were included; instead McLintock’s landscape design was submitted, as were all three versions of the flax. When he received the drawings from Arthur Ashley-Jones of the New Zealand High Commission, Cyril Hewerton, Chief Clerk of the Royal Mint, immediately suggested that further alternatives should be made available ‘as it was difficult to comment satisfactorily on the basis of the one selected set’. They were not forthcoming. Ashley-Jones told Hewerton that the CDAC was ‘quite firm in not wanting to show any alternatives to the Advisory Committee. The particular designs submitted appear to have been chosen from a wide selection and the New Zealand authorities appear to have committed themselves to their acceptance’. In turn, Hewerton left Ashley-Jones ‘in no doubt that in my opinion the Advisory Committee’s views might be critical of the

25 Ibid., p. 86.
26 National Archives Treasury Series 79 T10/64, v. 2, n.d.
27 Allan Sutherland to John Simpson, 24 October 1965.
28 Stocker, Francis Shurrock, as in n. 24, p. 87
29 Evening Post, 26 November 1965.
particular designs’.\(^{30}\) While its role was, as its name implies, to give advice, the Committee’s influence – reflected in the prestige of its membership and its experience – was considerable. Certainly the New Zealand government had no wish to be on a collision course with the Royal Mint and, at this stage, none was anticipated.

The Advisory Committee confirmed Hewertson’s misgivings. In his minutes of its meeting, he noted: ‘Members were unanimous that apart from those for the 1 and 2 cents, the reverse designs were extremely poor and most members were inclined to doubt whether the artist concerned was likely to produce acceptable alternatives even in the light of the Committee’s comments.’ The Committee felt that ‘too much had been attempted’ in the 50 cent design. The denominational value would be lost in the foreground at coin size and even the sheep would be unrecognisable, while the horse and rider were ‘poorly drawn’. The 20 cent design was also ‘badly drawn’ and the fern motif would not be recognised at coin size. The 10 cent design ‘would not succeed unless considerably modified. The words were too small and so were the manaia heads’. The verdict on the 5 cent design was even more damning: ‘altogether unsuitable for a coin design … impossible to model it in a way that would make the various features identifiable at coin size’. Fraser received scant consolation for his flax designs, which were considered ‘undistinguished’ though ‘just acceptable as coin designs’.\(^{31}\) No comment was made on the 1 cent design though its ‘comability’ was confirmed.

Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, wrote in his capacity as President of the Advisory Committee to Thomas Macdonald, the High Commissioner, explaining the details, ‘in case the New Zealand Government feel that the Committee have been a trifle rough in rejecting the designs’. He attached his own terse comments, which stated of the 50 cent design ‘I am afraid that any rider would find a lot to criticise’ and of the 20 cent ‘I can’t believe even Rugby footballers would like to see this on a coin’. Prince Philip added: ‘I quite appreciate that the New Zealanders would like their coins to be designed by a New Zealand artist’ and tactfully suggested that Shurrock might visit London ‘to work up another set of designs in conjunction with the Mint technicians’.\(^{32}\) Given Shurrock’s age and health there was no question of this and the damage, moreover, had been done.

Remarkably, Simpson claims that the CDAC was not properly informed of the Advisory Committee’s decision and neither was Shurrock, who was allowed to continue working on the plaster models based on his designs for another six weeks. Perhaps in Muldoon’s eyes, the CDAC and Shurrock alike had largely ceased to count. A precaution was, however, taken in late December when five artists, Eileen Mayo, Juliet Cowan, T.V. Johnston, T.J. Taylor and, for a second time, James Berry, were invited to submit further designs. Sutherland was privy to this decision and drafted guidelines for the designers. He told Searle in tones of some urgency: ‘The average user of the coins will wish to be able to look at a New Zealand coin and say “This is New Zealand”’. Bold simplicity is preferable with coin design … Subjects not wanted – trees, clouds or stream, wheat, crown, Maori only.\(^{33}\) Eileen Mayo’s diary entry for 31 December 1965 vividly recounts the reaction of this distinguished Anglo-New Zealand artist and designer to her involvement: ‘A letter from Wellington (must be Income Tax I thought) from the Treasury, asking me to submit designs for some of the coins they haven’t got designs for yet – by the end of January! Why do they leave things till the last minute! Main thing is they suggest a trip to Wellington, which will be fun. But even more imp. is what this has done to my morale. Instead of being a hollow shell, I have some heart in me again.’\(^{34}\)

On 28 January 1966, the *Evening Post* hinted that the coinage might be redrawn. Its well-informed sources indicated that the submitted designs, apart from the 1 cent and 2 cent coins, were considered ‘inartistic and inappropriate’ by the Royal Mint. ‘One design in particular, if allowed to go through, would be likely to cause a loud groan – it illustrates a certain national sport (amazingly there are no intentions to make the coin oval) …’. It warned that ‘consideration might
be given towards completely redesigning the coins', otherwise the Treasury might face an outcry.\textsuperscript{35} Three days later, the newspaper went on to praise 'the vigilance and good sense of the Royal Mint committee' for its verdict on the designs, and lambasted the government for its 'lofty indifference to public opinion' over the issue.\textsuperscript{36} Then, on 2 February, the drama broke out in full force.

'Thumbs down from the Royal Mint' read the \textit{Evening Post} headline on that day. 'Thank God for the Royal Mint' was how Searle - a devout Baptist - later remembered it.\textsuperscript{37} Crude versions of several drawings considered by the Mint were leaked to the press by an unknown source, probably within the Treasury, but which has never been disclosed. A public outcry ensued, as predicted, but of a magnitude that even the \textit{Evening Post} underestimated. Headlines and editorials over the next ten days blared: 'Those Coins: They Should be Scrapped' (Star), 'Defacing the Coinage' (\textit{Otago Daily Times}) and 'Raspberries for those Cents' (\textit{Bay of Plenty Times}). By the 7 February, the \textit{Evening Post} had received so many letters about the designs that it was 'impossible to print them all'. Readers referred to the 'abysmal standard' of the designs and, less elegantly, their being 'b- terrible' and 'just rubbish'. Norman Kirk, leader of the Labour Opposition, called the proposed coins 'as unimaginative as the Cabinet which approved them'. Hamish Keith, Keeper at the Auckland City Art Gallery, asserted that 'the people of New Zealand are mature enough to want something better than Mickey Mouse fun money'.\textsuperscript{38} Numismatists were no kinder. 'The selected drawings were of no artistic merit,' claimed B.R. Williams, president of the Auckland Numismatic Society, while the vice-president, L.K. Gluckman, called them 'unbelievable, devoid of artistic merit and an insult to our national heritage ... If you are going to show a player clutching a football to his chest as a national symbol, you might as well include the six o'clock swill or a bottle of Hokonui whisky.'\textsuperscript{39} The designs were a gift for cartoonists. (\textit{Pl. 20, 13}) In Gordon Minninnick's version of the 10 cent coin, the Maori motifs were amusingly replaced with the Kiwi family car and boat. While invective and facetiousness set the dominant tone, M.H. Holcroft, in an editorial in the \textit{New Zealand Listener}, was a little more constructive in his criticism. He condemned 'the clutter of detail around the man on the horse, the woodenness of the footballer', the 'banality' of the Maori mask, flanked by the \textit{manaia}, 'looking rather like mice' and the 'scenic congestion' of the five cent piece.\textsuperscript{40}

Beadle himself entered the fray by leaking his designs to the \textit{Auckland Star}, which published them on 3 February. He told Mayo 'I was one of the twelve invited to submit designs. I was thanked profusely and paid pitifully ... I realised that my designs were thrown in the direction of the W.P.B. Then the leakage of the rubbish ... Your news that five people - I don't know if within or without the original twelve - have been so recently been briefed ... confirm my worst thoughts about the Treasury and its bunch of nincompoops ... and prostitutes of the arts that I owed them nothing and had nothing to lose by publishing my designs.' He reserved special abuse for Muldoon, whom he called 'a flabby, putty like slob'.\textsuperscript{41} Beadle's fellow designer, Fraser, was also uncomplimentary: 'They do look like illustrations from a children's colouring book, don't they?'\textsuperscript{42}

For once, as Muldoon later admitted, 'I was at a loss to know what to do'. His annoyance over the leak and his initial attempts to defuse the controversy by defending the designs were badly received by the press, which till then had praised his acuity and energy. In a leader, the \textit{Evening Post} thundered: 'The Under-Secretary is clearly piqued that the public should get to know anything at all about what his own Minister of Finance [Lake] described some time ago as a matter of great public interest. The cavalier attitude adopted over the decimal coins ... cannot do other than

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Evening Post}, 28 January 1966.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 31 January 1966.
\textsuperscript{38} Stocker, \textit{Francis Shurrock}, as in n. 24, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid. Until 1967, New Zealand public houses served their last orders at 6 p.m.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{New Zealand Listener}, 25 February 1966.
\textsuperscript{41} Eileen Mayo Archive, Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Paul Beadle to Eileen Mayo, 3 February 1966.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{New Zealand Herald}, 19 February 1966.
infuriate people. Does not Mr Muldoon realise that this is the sort of attitude which, if persisted in, can bring a government down? Somebody ... will have to make it plain that there must be no further attempts to foist these pathetic designs, or anything resembling them, upon the community.\textsuperscript{43}

Initially the government refused to reconsider the designs but by 5 February it yielded to pressure, when Muldoon conceded that changes could be made if the Cabinet agreed. He stressed that 'the designs are being reconsidered now and have been under reconsideration for some weeks' and added 'there will be no difficulty if we do decide to change any design'.\textsuperscript{44} This did not satisfy his critics, Kirk noting that 'Much of the bother could probably have been avoided had the government taken the public into its confidence on this question'.\textsuperscript{45} 1966 was an election year and any perceived governmental arrogance was a liability. With Muldoon temporarily sidetracked, on 8 February the more conciliatory Lake released photographs of the entries though none of the leaked designs were included. Lake claimed that the Government was now 'quite prepared' to change the designs and 'welcomed more public reaction on the coins because we want to produce something that is widely acceptable'.\textsuperscript{46}

A personal letter from Holyoake to Shurrock, apologising for the 'unofficial release' of the drawings and thanking him for his work on the designs, was scant consolation for the artist. Shurrock's attitude, amidst the outcry, was restrained. However, he felt compelled to tell his version of the story in the form of an article in the \textit{New Zealand Weekly News}, under the headline 'Sculptor Hits Back in Battle of the Coins'. In it, he explained that the leaked drawings were intended 'merely for publicity purposes' and went on to discuss the careful work that went into his range of designs. He defended his artistic integrity, he asserted that 'public opinion, unless informed, is merely that of "likes and dislikes" and he condemned the press for pandering to popular prejudice'.\textsuperscript{47} In a letter to the \textit{Otago Daily Times}, he ruefully observed that 'When one considers ... the dangers that will threaten New Zealand should the French carry out their experiment with the atom bomb, it would appear that never has so small a matter over small things cost so much or caused such a furore'.\textsuperscript{48}

To the government, the coinage was no small matter. In mid-February, the National Party Caucus, comprising MPs outside Cabinet, participated in a poll to choose their preferred designs. Not one of the initial leaked designs was chosen and nor was there any support for Beadle's designs, which were attracting considerable media admiration. No single designer or design received unanimous support: indeed, Mitchell's and Berry's faunial designs were joint favourites for the 1 cent. Other Caucus 'winners' comprised Mitchell's 5 cent tui and 20 cent kiwi, Norfolk's 5 cent fern-leaf and Rizzello's 50 cent map and Southern Cross. For the 10 cent coin, the Caucus wanted to retain Kruger Gray's shilling design. According to Holyoake, the poll was intended to show that it was 'impracticable to achieve unanimity or even general agreement on a full set of designs from a representative group of New Zealanders'.\textsuperscript{49} This disingenuous move backfired, provoking immediate accusations that 22 National Party MPs did not constitute a properly representative group.

At the same time as the publication of the Caucus poll, Muldoon compounded the government's problems while on a visit to Melbourne, to observe Australia's change-over day at first hand. He remarked to a journalist that some people would say that 'it doesn't matter what's on the coins so long as you have enough of them'.\textsuperscript{50} The comment was intended as a throwaway line and reflected Muldoon's barbed wit. In the circumstances - and with comparisons being made between Devlin's impressive Australian designs and their New Zealand counterparts - it was remarkably ill-judged. In response the Labour MP, Colin Moyle, dubbed Muldoon 'the 10 cent Mussolini'. An embar...
rassed Holyoake publically criticised Muldoon, saying 'Known public opinion does not support such a statement'. Privately, he warned Muldoon that 'the press would ruin me if I could not get out of this'. Muldoon realised that he was only 'mildly exaggerating. We were all worried stiff'.

'Get out of this', Muldoon did. On 11 March he announced that any future designs selected for sending to the Royal Mint would be publicised. The CDAC held a meeting on 15 March when, in crisis mode, it chose 26 designs. Of those originally leaked, only the 1 cent, 2 cent, 5 cent and 10 cent designs remained and, with the exception of Shurrock's 10 cent tekoteko, these received little public support. Fraser's 5 cent geysers spouted forth once more, despite their earlier rejection by the Cabinet. The selection also included entries from the second tier of competitors, with Berry and Mayo being chosen. Muldoon explained that 'some of the designs released received only minority support but the committee kept in mind the fact that birds and flowers will appear on the decimal banknotes and have appeared on postage stamps'. Photographs of the designs were released to the press and, for the first time, the government's move was described as a 'step in the right direction'. One question remained. Who would decide the outcome? Should it be the CDAC, which was discredited in the public eye? Or the Royal Mint, whose role was invaluable but primarily technical? Or the Government, which had bungled the affair? Or should responsibility lie with the people of New Zealand?

With the government's blessing, voting forms were published in leading newspapers in late March. 'Democracy at work!' Muldoon later crowed. The level of public interest in the proposed designs was indicated when the Evening Post alone estimated receiving 'about 27,000 votes from 4500 readers who were definite about the designs that they wanted to jingle in their pockets'. Prior to the polling, Beadle's designs had monopolised acclaim, particularly from within his Auckland base, where he enjoyed youthful and vociferous support. A petition organised by three teenagers calling for the adoption of his designs attracted over 3000 signatures. However, in the subsequent newspaper polling, although Beadle retained strong Auckland support, a new favourite now appeared in Berry. The Auckland Star carried the headline: 'Public Quick to Choose Its Favourites: Berry in Front with 1c, 2c and 20c.' Even Beadle's much admired 5 cent tuatara design was eclipsed in popularity by Berry's 20 cent kiwi, which received 78% support. (Pl. 21, 14) When votes were aggregated nationally, Berry was the leading designer for four coins, although the margin between his 50 cent Endeavour design (Pl. 21, 15) and Beadle's Maori chief was extremely narrow. The 'Beadles' had been replaced by 'The Rocking Berries' at the top of the numismatic hit parade!

James Berry was New Zealand's best-known medallist, coinage and stamp designer of the twentieth century. (Pl. 21, 16) He was a self-made phenomenon: a hyperactive and competitive but highly likeable designer, artist, dealer, collector and family man. He was experienced in the coinage field, having designed reverses for the New Zealand crows of 1935 and 1949, the 1947 Fiji threepence reverse and numerous commemorative and institutional medals. Of all the competitors, he was the most prominent in numismatic circles, having served as secretary of the Royal Numismatic Society of New Zealand in 1946-7 and president in 1961-2. Berry's story is sympathetically told in J.R. Tye's The Image Maker: The Art of James Berry (1984), which contains

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51 Dominion, 18 February 1966.
52 Muldoon, Rise and Fall, as in n. 6, p. 77.
53 New Zealand Herald, 23 March 1966.
54 Evening Post, 15 June 1966.
56 The full results, published in the Auckland Star on 9 April 1966 were as follows:
One cent: Fernleaf (Berry), 66%; Southern Cross (Gray), 16%; rifleman bird (Beadle), 14%; mountain daisies (Mayo), 4%.
Two cent: Kowhai (Berry), 72%; flaxbush (Fraser), 13%; pohutukawa (Beadle), 13%.
Five cent: Tuatara (Beadle), 63%; thermal activity (Fraser), 20%; wheat sheaf (Gray), 13%; blue ced (Shurrock), 4%.
Ten cent: Maori mask (Shurrock), 48%; dolphin and trout (Beadle), 30%; tuatara (Berry), 22%.
Twenty cent: Kiwi (Berry), 78%; swordfish (Mayo), 13%; white heron (Beadle), 7%; athletics (Mayo), 2%.
Fifty cent: Endeavour (Berry) 42%; Maori chief (Beadle) 38%; crown (Gray), 11%; seagull (Mayo), 9%.
Commemorative dollar: Coat of Arms (Gardner) 47%; punga fern (Mayo), 29%; mace (Berry), 18%; heraldic ship (Gray) 6%.
Searle’s careful and circumspect essay on his role in the coinage.\textsuperscript{57} At the committee stage, Berry’s only apparent supporter had been Searle, whom Simpson recalls seeking favourable comments for his designs. In Simpson’s view, they did not merit serious consideration and were ‘best passed over in silence’\textsuperscript{58} While there is no suggestion that Searle exercised any improper influence, he had opposed drawing up a short-list of entries, which meant that Berry was still in the running in February 1966. The invitation to Berry to submit a further set of designs in late 1965 further improved his chances. Sutherland also discreetly supported Berry. At one stage he told Simpson that five of Berry’s designs should be considered for the problematic 5 cent coin; he also approved of ‘Berry’s idea’ for coinage themes in a letter to Searle in January 1966.\textsuperscript{59}

Further factors favoured Berry’s designs. Although his unadopted lamb, cattle and racehorse designs (Pl. 22, 17–18) are hardly more convincing than Shurrock’s rugby-player and musterer, at his best Berry’s competence, though conservative, is indisputable. His pictorial techniques and careful realism impressed the public, who failed to realise that attractive drawings do not necessarily translate into outstanding coins. Berry’s clever strategy of drawing the series in white on a black background enhanced their appearance to the public (Pl. 22, 19–21). Very few observers noted this: Kenneth Clark later did so, as did one J.L. Hector-Barry of Auckland, who said ‘the coins would not appear this way. Professor Beadle’s flat relief presentation enabled a fairer comparison to be made’.\textsuperscript{60} Berry was also fortunate in the themes of his shortlisted coins: fern leaves were more familiar than riflemen, and kiwis were more appealing and distinctively ‘New Zealand’ than swordfish. Commenting on the selection process, the sculptor, Molly Macalister, stated ‘It was a pity the public were not able first to choose the symbols they want. Then the government could get the designers to work on them.’\textsuperscript{61} By March 1966, this option was far too late to consider.

Beadle’s eclipse caused some distress to his admirers, especially other artists. The Auckland painter and photographer Eric Lee-Johnson condemned the polling method as ‘worthless’. Voting would only have any meaning if confined to ‘sculptors and designers whose judgments are based upon special knowledge and a high level of aesthetic appreciation’.\textsuperscript{62} Lee-Johnson believed that his view was confirmed by the interior of the home of an average New Zealander, ‘with its preference for the mediocre and undistinguished’. His opinions clashed with New Zealand’s proud self-image as an egalitarian, participatory democracy and few dared support him. Lee-Johnson’s comments inspired an Auckland Star cartoon in which a bearded and unkempt modernistic artist tells his friend ‘Pity they haven’t got our taste!’ Berry, by contrast, claimed that the polls reflected ‘a healthy interest in design work’.\textsuperscript{63} When he later heard of Operation ‘Coin Poll’, Prince Philip commented with amused scepticism: ‘I must say it is quite a novel idea to put the designs to the test of public opinion polls. It’s reasonably easy to do this in a relatively small country such as New Zealand. I fancy we would be in some trouble if we tried it here!’\textsuperscript{64}

In April 1966, the Royal Mint received thirty photographs of prospective designs from the New Zealand government for circulation to the Advisory Committee. They comprised the 26 that featured in the poll, together with four further designs, all of which were by Berry. The additional designs were of an alternative 5 cent coin to Shurrock’s original tekoteko; a 5 cent huia based on the existing sixpence; a similar modification of the existing shilling for the 10 cent; and a second version of the 20 cent design, representing a South Island kiwi. The government made it clear that it preferred Shurrock’s version of the tekoteko. It also stressed that the submissions based on the sixpence and shilling coins ‘illustrate the difficulties that would be involved in the use of the existing designs with decimal values’.\textsuperscript{65} Though at pains to appear even-handed, the government had

\textsuperscript{57} Searle, ‘The Money in Our Pockets’, as in n. 37, pp. 143–57.
\textsuperscript{58} John Simpson interview, 29 November 1999.
\textsuperscript{59} National Archives, Treasure Series 79 T10/32, Allan Sutherland to J.N.L. Searle, 7 January 1966.
\textsuperscript{60} New Zealand Herald, 26 March 1966.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 30 March 1966.
\textsuperscript{62} Auckland Star, 30 March 1966.\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} PRO MINT 247/9. Prince Philip to Jack James, n.d. [May 1966].
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., Alan Dowling, Draft memorandum to Royal Mint Advisory Committee, n.d. [April 1966].
submitted ten designs by Berry. Beadle was represented with his set of six, Mayo by five designs, Grey by four, Shurrock and Fraser by two and Gardner by one. In his briefing to committee members, Alan Dowling, head of the Royal Mint general section, told them: ‘The New Zealand Government has expressed no preferences among the designs except in relation to those by Professor Beadle.’ In Beadle’s case, the designs were ‘submitted at public request but they are not necessarily favoured by the New Zealand government’.66 Although this was expressed cautiously, as a civil service euphemism its underlying meaning was unequivocal. Beadle had probably paid the price for his outspoken opposition to the original competition and for leaking his designs to the press without seeking prior clearance. The government also stipulated its wish to include at least one design related to Maori culture. This was consistent with the Treasury’s original ‘Notes for Guidance’ to designers, which had recommended ‘the inclusion of native or national emblems’. The national results of the polling were also forwarded to the Advisory Committee, citing public preference for four Berry designs, and one apiece for Beadle, Gardner and Shurrock.

The findings of the Advisory Committee were never made public. In his report to the New Zealand High Commission, Dowling noted: ‘There remain considerable differences of opinion and although in respect of some denominations there is clear support for the designs preferred in New Zealand, in some others it is difficult to offer any clear-cut lead.’67 While the Advisory Committee ‘on the whole remained unenthusiastic’ about what they saw, members agreed that ‘many of the designs represented a marked improvement over the earlier selection and ... a tolerable coinage could result’.68 The more conservative members – Prince Philip, Robin Mackworth-Young, the royal librarian, and James Woodford, the academic sculptor – in varying degrees gave Berry their preference. Prince Philip strongly favoured the choice of a single designer for the sake of visual consistency and commented somewhat lukewarmly of Berry’s set: ‘His designs are straightforward and look as if they would translate into coins quite well.’69 His opinion was not shared by Kenneth Clark, who deplored Berry’s ‘faked’ black skies and shaded backgrounds, likening them to ‘the kind of ceramic ornaments that people hang on to their walls’.70 John Betjeman agreed, commenting ‘I should have thought Berry was the worst, with Fraser the next worse.’71 Most members preferred Berry’s iekoteko design to Shurrock’s, though four of them voted for Beadle’s 50 cent Maori chief. Indeed, Clark and Betjeman, undeterred by the government’s coded discouragement, both preferred Beadle’s designs as a set, Betjeman commending them for their ‘New Zealand look’. Gray’s designs also received some support for their straightforward, uncluttered appearance, though surprisingly Fraser’s received no votes. The Advisory Committee was split over its choice for the dollar coin. Gardner’s heraldic design, (Pl. 22, 22) which had led the New Zealand polls, had some support, with Clark calling it a ‘handsome coin’, though the alternatives by Berry and Mayo were also admired. It is clear that Mayo’s designs (Pls 22–4, 23–6) came as a revelation to the more artistically minded members of the Advisory Committee. Kenneth Clark described her 50 cent sheep-shearer and dollar punga-fern designs as ‘outstandingly good’ and regretted their incompatibility with the Beadle series. Betjeman agreed that Mayo’s designs showed ‘a certain charm’ and Prince Philip believed they had ‘some merit’.72 It is possible that Mayo was let down by her unfortunate 20-cent runners which, in her diary, she recognised was ‘not a good design but want to show I can do figures (I can’t really)’.73

Due to the committee’s ‘diversity of opinion’, Dowling told Prince Philip that he believed ‘no useful purpose would be served by further deliberation here’ and proposed releasing a summary of

66 Ibid., Alan Dowling, Memorandum to Royal Mint Advisory Committee, 21 April 1966.
67 PRO MINT 20/3047, Alan Dowling to F. Calman, 27 May 1966.
68 Ibid., Alan Dowling to N.E.A. Moore, 28 June 1966.
69 PRO MINT 2479, Prince Philip to Jack Jones, n.d. [May 1966].
70 Ibid., Kenneth Clark to Alan Dowling, 19 May 1966.
71 Ibid., John Betjeman to Alan Dowling, 26 April 1966. Betjeman then added ‘No, on second thoughts I think Fraser is the worst of the lot.’ He also disliked Beadle’s 50 cent Maori chief design.
72 Ibid., Prince Philip to Jack Jones, n.d. [May 1966]. See also Kenneth Clark to Alan Dowling 19 May 1966 and John Betjeman to Alan Dowling, 26 April 1966.
the Advisory Committee’s findings, ‘suitably modified to omit members’ names. In spite of no clear-cut opinion it is after all for New Zealand to decide finally and there is nothing now that is intolerably bad.’74 Notwithstanding Clark’s strong personal misgivings over Berry’s designs, this course of action was taken and the matter referred to the government.

In the meantime, the CDAC continued to convene in Wellington, but it was by this stage a spent force. In late May it proposed ‘to submit a number of points, setting out the unreliable nature of public opinion polls’ and stated that it was paying close attention to the Royal Mint Advisory Committee’s comments.75 Early in the following month, it produced two sets of recommendations. The majority, comprising Maclellan, McLintock, Simpson and Walker favoured designs by Gray and Fraser for the lower denominations (the Southern Cross, flax and geysers respectively) Shurrock’s tekoteko for the 10 cent and Mayo for the higher denominations (her swordfish, shearer and punga-fern designs respectively). The two other members, Searle and Sutherland, recommended Berry as designer for all denominations except for the dollar, preferring Mayo’s version for this. Simpson recalls his surprise and ‘dismay’ at Sutherland’s support for Berry.76 In retrospect, he attributes it to Sutherland’s closeness to the political establishment in Wellington and to his frequent and friendly contacts with Berry through the Royal Numismatic Society of New Zealand.

The government took little over ten days to consider the views of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee and the CDAC. Searle telegraphed Ashley-Jones on 10 June to outline the situation. Shurrock’s tekoteko was still being considered alongside Berry’s, but the Mint’s ‘strong preference’ for the latter proved decisive. Despite its overwhelming popularity in the newspaper poll, Berry’s 20 cent kiwi design had received little Mint support, and the government was not quite ready to approve it. Searle noted, however, that ‘comments from the Mint and by the public generally showed a set of designs by one designer was favoured and that there was a tendency to prefer Mr Berry’s designs’.77 On 14 June the government announced its decision. The minority report of the CDAC, supporting Berry’s designs, was accepted; but Mayo’s design for the commemorative dollar, favoured by the entire committee, was rejected in favour of Gardner’s heraldic coin. (Pl. 24, 27) For the sake of stylistic consistency, Berry’s tuatara design, which was less popular with the public than Beadle’s, was adopted for the 5 cent coin.

The Dominion of that morning had it almost right, reporting that ‘uncertainty surrounds the dollar coin’ and reproducing the Mint’s version as the more likely choice. Muldoon explained the reasons for Gardner’s design taking preference: ‘By preserving in our coins the New Zealand coat of arms which appeared on the half crown withdrawn in 1965 this commemorative dollar is a link with the designs of the coinage which is being replaced.’78 This makes a telling contrast with Mayo’s motive for depicting a punga-fern: ‘What about a frond (or two) unfolding, to suggest a growing country with a future?’79 Though inevitably disappointed that none of her designs were chosen, Mayo took the news phlegmatically and her admiration for Gardner’s design was genuine. An entry in her diary of 23 June deserves quotation: ‘read “Press” cutting (a fuss abt. choice of coins, 3 of mine were chosen) ... did some bra mending in the good, warm sitting room, in a contented frame of mind.’80

‘Contented’ would be an apt description of the common reaction to the chosen designs. Surprisingly, no-one appears to have differentiated between the serviceable but unremarkable designs of Berry and the conspicuous dignity and elegance of Gardner’s commemorative dollar. The popular verdict was one of relief, echoing the Royal Mint Advisory Committee’s view of the coins representing a considerable improvement on their proposed predecessors. A Dannevirke housewife commented ‘I haven’t studied them, very nice’. Not everyone agreed. The sculptor,
Greer Twiss, a colleague of Beadle's, later described the outcome as 'one of the calamities of New Zealand art politics'. The editorial in the Christchurch Press was somewhat kinder: 'Experts abroad may judge them to be pleasant but trite. Some may feel that this, after all, comes fairly close to expressing the New Zealand character.' The regional standpoints of newspapers were reflected in their editorials. The Auckland Star speculated: 'It would be interesting to know the Royal Mint's opinion of the set submitted by Professor Paul Beadle which some who have made a deeper study of art may feel was bolder and less old-fashioned in its choice and modelling of symbols'. The most it could say in Berry's favour was that his designs were 'neat and effective'. The Evening Post was more favourable in its verdict, probably because Berry, a Londoner by origin, was a Wellingtonian by adoption. In its editorial, entitled 'Coins Of The People', it claimed of the designs: 'They are pleasingly New Zealand in their conception and have the added quality of being uniform in their theme ... Mr Berry put it simply yesterday: "I guess you could call this democracy at work in the coin designing world". It certainly refutes any idea that the public have no knowledge or ideas about art.'

Simpson continues to disagree with this last assertion. For him, vox kiwi was most certainly not vox dei, and he looks back upon his experience on the CDAC as a painful disappointment. Beadle, understandably, felt even more disenchanted; indeed, he told Gardner when the latter visited New Zealand in 1966–7 that at one point he had been close to suffering a nervous breakdown. He was unable to offer Berry his congratulations, which Mayo had done. In retrospect, his experience, however disappointing, had a highly beneficial impact on his medal design, bringing about a liberating effect both on his imagination and on his technique. The elderly Shurrock never recovered from his rejection: 'frustration is a bitter pill & believe me I have had some', he commented. Berry, naturally, felt differently. Declared '1966 Man of the Year' by the Dominion Sunday Times, and awarded the OBE in 1968, the adoption of his designs represented the climax of his career. The Royal Numismatic Society of New Zealand saluted his success as 'a fitting climax to his efforts and one of which the Society can take pride in its association'. The Society went on to commission a commemorative decimal coinage medal, designed of course by Berry. And on Lady's Night in December 1966, he was presented with a mahogany rocking chair to mark his 'outstanding designs'. Searle later wrote of Berry: 'To him the reward for his effort was not so much remuneration or the Queen's honour, but that his accepted designs finally reposed in the pockets and purses of New Zealand and Pacific Island people in the shape of millions of coins bearing the initials "JB"'. On Berry's death in 1979, Muldoon paid warm tribute to his 'feeling for New Zealand flora, fauna and wild life ... reflected in his designs [which] gave the people of this country a complete sense of identification' with its decimal currency. Muldoon himself fared equally well, being part of the winning team in the 1966 General Election and succeeding Harry Lake as Finance Minister following the latter's death in February 1967. On 10 July of that year, he took credit for supervising a triumphant transition to decimalisation with considerable — and largely unacknowledged — assistance from Searle. Muldoon later described the experience as fascinating and wearing, 'and throughout I knew that it was make or break as far as my political reputation was concerned'. For a few weeks in February and March 1966, following the leak of the first set of coinage designs, it looked like 'break', but by invoking 'democracy' the fortunes of this formidable New Zealand politician turned around.

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81. Stocker, 'Pomme-Aussie-Kiwi', as in n. 15, p. 86.
85. William Gardner, interview with the writer, 23 August 1996.
86. Stocker, Francis Shurrock, p. 92.
88. Ibid., 12, 1968, p. 116. For the Decimal Coinage Medal, see ibid., pp. 100–2.
90. Tye, The Image Maker, as in n. 37, p. 119.
91. Muldoon, Rise and Fall, as in n. 6, p. 75.
Key to Plates 15–24

1. New Zealand reverses: George Kruger Gray, half-crown, florin, shilling, sixpence and threepence, 1933; L.C. Mitchell, penny and halfpenny, 1940.
3. Milner Gray, 1 cent reverse design, 1964. (PRO)
4. Eric Fraser, 2 cent reverse design, 1964. (PRO)
5. Eric Fraser, 5 cent reverse design, 1964–5. (PRO)
6. Francis Shurrock, 10 cent reverse design, 1964–5. (PRO)
7. Francis Shurrock, 20 cent reverse design, 1964–5. (PRO)
8. Francis Shurrock, 50 cent reverse design, 1964–5. (PRO)
9. Coinage Design Advisory Committee. Amended version of Eric Fraser, 2 cent reverse design, 1965. (PRO)
10. Eric Fraser, revised 2 cent reverse design, 1965. (PRO)
11. A.H. Mcintosh, 5 cent reverse design, 1965. (PRO)
12. Francis Shurrock, original 10 cent reverse design, plaster, 275 X 150 mm. (University of Canterbury, Christchurch)
15. James Berry, 50 cent reverse design, 1966. (Joy Searle)
17. James Berry, 20 cent reverse design, 1964. (Joy Searle)
18. James Berry, 2 cent reverse design, 1964. (Joy Searle)
19. James Berry, 10 cent reverse design, 1964–6. (Joy Searle)
20. James Berry, 5 cent reverse design, 1964–6. (Joy Searle)
22. William Gardner, Commemorative dollar reverse design, 1964. (PRO)
23. Eileen Mayo, Commemorative dollar reverse design, 1966. (PRO)
24. Eileen Mayo, 50 cent reverse design, 1966. (PRO)
25. Eileen Mayo, 20 cent reverse design, 1966. (PRO)
26. Eileen Mayo, 2 cent reverse design, 1966. (PRO)
STOCKER: DECIMAL COIN REVERSES (2)
STOCKER: DECIMAL COIN REVERSES (3)
STOCKER: DECIMAL COIN REVERSES (5)
A FEW HELPFUL THOUGHTS ON THE NEW COIN DESIGNS, OR, LET'S GET IN FIRST!

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT TO HORSE DESIGN

50-1

FOOTBALL, BY ALL MEANS, BUT SO IS A SCORE

20-NIL

AS A CHANGE FROM THE
MACRO MOTIF, HOW ABOUT THE
FAMILY CAR AND BOAT LEADING
THE QUEUE?

10 (MPH)

FINE DAY AT MILFORD
(DRAWN FROM LIFE)

2

FLAX? WHY NOT HOPS?

NEW VISUAL MATHEMATICS
TO CONFUSE THE CHILDREN
OR, $A = 1$

STOCKER: DECIMAL COIN REVERSES (6)
STOCKER: DECIMAL COIN REVERSES (7)
STOCKER: DECIMAL COIN REVERSES (8)
STOCKER: DECIMAL COIN REVERSES (9)