

## William Colenso at Waitangi

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*This script has been taken from William Colenso's **The Authentic and Genuine History of the Signing of the Treaty of Waitangi**. Colenso had been in the Bay of Islands since 1834 as the Paihia mission printer and was present at Waitangi on the 5th and 6th of February 1840. His account was written from his notes and was first published in 1890. The text was checked by James Busby and his notes are footnoted in Colenso's book.*

*Colenso's punctuation has been kept and, although condensed, the words are still authentic to those as translated and reported by him.*

### 5th February 1840

On 30 January 1840 Hobson issued an invitation through Busby to local Maori to 'see the Chief of the Queen' at Waitangi on the 5th February 1840. The Maori chiefs began gathering at Te Tii on the southern edge of the Waitangi River on the 4th February and came across to meet Hobson and Busby in front of the former British Residency on the morning of the 5th February.

Governor Hobson began by speaking first to the whites (Colenso's term) saying 'that the meeting was convened for the purpose of informing the Native chiefs of Her Majesty's intentions towards them, and of gaining their public consent to a treaty now about to be proposed to them.' He then addressed the chiefs with Reverend Henry Williams acting as interpreter.

**Hobson:** *Her Majesty Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, wishing to do good to the chiefs and people of New Zealand, and for the welfare of her subjects living among you, has sent me to this place as Governor.*

*But, as the law of England gives no civil powers to Her Majesty out of her dominions, her efforts to do you good will be futile unless you consent. Her Majesty has commanded me to explain these matters to you, that you may understand them.*

*The people of Great Britain are, thank God! free; and, so long as they do not transgress the laws, they can go where they please, and their sovereign has not power to restrain them. You have sold them lands here and encouraged them to come here. Her Majesty, always ready to protect her subjects, is also always ready to restrain them.*

*Her Majesty the Queen asks you to sign this treaty and so give her that power which shall enable her to restrain them.*

*I ask you for this publicly: I do not go from one chief to another. I will give you time to consider of the proposal I shall now offer you. What I wish you to do is expressly for your own good, as you will soon see by this treaty.*

*You yourselves have often asked the King of England to extend his protection unto you. Her Majesty now offers you that protection in the treaty.*

*I think it not necessary to say any more about it. I will therefore read the treaty.*



Hobson read out the Treaty in English and Williams read the Maori. Then Busby spoke about the issue of land. His words are not recorded but he said that the Governor had not come to take away their land but to 'secure them in possession of what they had not sold; and that land not duly acquired from them would not be confirmed to the purchaser; but would be returned to the Natives, to whom it of right belonged; that this the Governor would be prepared to do.' (Colenso, p 17)

**Te Kemara:** *Health to thee, O Governor! I will not consent to thy remaining here in this country. I shall never say 'yes' to your staying. Were all to be on an equality, then, perhaps, Te Kemara would say, 'Yes'; but for the Governor to be up and Te Kemara down low, small, a worm, a crawler—No, no, no. O Governor! My land has gone. The inheritances of my ancestors, fathers, relatives, all gone, stolen, gone with the missionaries. That man there, Busby, and that man there, Williams, they have my land. The land on which we are now standing this day is mine. This land, even this under my feet, return it to me. O Governor, return me my lands. Say to Williams, 'Return to Te Kemara his land.' O Governor! I do not wish thee to stay. And Te Kemara says to thee, go back, leave to Busby and to Williams to arrange and to settle matters for us natives as heretofore.*

**Rewa:** *How d'ye do, Mr Governor? Let the Governor return to his own country. Let my lands be returned to me which have been taken by the missionaries—by Davis and by Clarke, and by who and who besides. I have no lands now—only a name.*

*What do Native men want of a Governor? We are not whites, nor foreigners. This country is ours, but the land is gone. Nevertheless we are the Governor—we, the chiefs of this our fathers' land. I will not say 'Yes' to the Governor remaining. No. No, return. I, Rewa, say to thee, O Governor! Go back.*

**Moka:** *Let the Governor return to his own country: let us remain as we were. Let my lands be returned to me—all of them—those that are gone with Baker. Do not say, 'The lands will be returned to you.' Who will listen to thee, O Governor? Who will obey thee? Where is Clendon? Where is Mair? Gone to buy our lands notwithstanding one word the book [Proclamation] of the Governor.*

**Hobson:** *All lands unjustly held will be returned and all claims to land, however purchased, after the date of the proclamation would not be held to be lawful.*

**Moka:** *That is good, O Governor! That is straight. But stay, let me see. Where is Baker, where is the fellow? Ah, there he is—there, standing. (points to Baker) Come, and return to me my lands. (Moka addresses this to Baker)*

**Baker:** *Will it indeed return?*

**Moka:** *There! Yes, that is as I said. No, all false, all false alike. The lands will not return to me.*

At this point an unnamed Pakeha stepped forward and expressed concern at Henry Williams's translation into English of the Native speeches and questioned the translation of Hobson's remarks into Maori. He then recommended a Mr Johnson who could 'interpret well'.

**Hobson:** *Then, pray, Mr Johnson, do me this great favour and come forward and interpret for me. I am anxious that the Natives should know what I say, and also that I should know what they say. Mr Johnson, do you fully understand their Native language?*

**Johnson:** *Why, I can't say I do, but I know how to speak to them and know also what they say when they speak to me; and—*

**Hobson:** *Then pray tell me what has not been interpreted.*



**Johnson:** *No, Sir, I beg to be excused. The gentlemen of the mission ought to be able to do it, and can do it very well; only let Mr Williams speak out loud that we may hear—we here in the back part of the tent; and let all that the natives say be interpreted to the Governor. They say a great deal about land and missionaries, which Mr Williams does not translate to you, Sir.*

**Williams:** *A great deal has been said about the missionaries holding land, and their farming, and what not; but the Commissioners who are about to sit will examine into the lands held by the missionaries, and their titles thereto, as strictly as into any other. People should recollect that were it not for the missionaries they would not be here this day, nor be in possession of a foot of land in New Zealand. If any one person has a prior claim to land in this country, that person must be the missionary who had laboured for so many years in this land when others were afraid to show their nose. I have a large family and what are they to do when I am taken from them if they are not to have some land? All I shall say at present is, I hope that all who hold lands obtained from the Natives will be able to show as good and as honest titles to the same as the missionaries can do to theirs.*

**Busby:** *I deny that the term 'robbed' has been used by the chiefs Te Kemara and Rewa with reference to my purchase of land, as indicated by the white man who spoke. I never bought any land but what the natives pressed me to buy for which I always paid them liberally. In all my purchases, also, I have reconveyed to the Natives both habitations and cultivations, by an unalienable deed of gift, according to the number of persons thereon.*

**Pukututu:** *This is mine to thee O Governor! Sit, Governor, a Governor for us—for me, for all, that our land may remain with us—that those fellows and creatures who sneak about, sticking to rocks and to the side of brooks and gullies, may not have it all. These chiefs say, 'Don't sit', because they have sold all their possessions, they are filled with foreign property, and they have also no more to sell. You two stay here, you and Busby—you two, and they also, the missionaries.*

This speech by Pukututu was supported by Matiu, a chief from Uri-o-ngogno.

**Kawiti:** *No, no. Go back. What dost thou want here? We Native men do not wish thee to stay. We do not want to be tied up and trodden on. We are free. Let the missionaries remain, but, as for thee, return to thine own country. (Indicates to Hobson) What! To be fired at when quietly paddling our canoes by night! I, even I, Kawiti, must not paddle this way, nor paddle that way, because the Governor said 'No'—because of the Governor, the soldiers, and his guns! No. Go back, go back there's no place here for the Governor.*

**Wai:** *To thee, oh Governor! this. Will you remedy the selling, the exchanging, the cheating, the lying, the stealing of the whites? O Governor! Yesterday I was cursed by a white man. Is that straight? The white gives us Natives a pound for a pig; but he gives a white four pounds for such a pig. Is that straight? The white gives us a shilling for a basket of potatoes; but to a white he gives four shillings for a basket like that one of ours. Is that straight? No, no; they will not listen to thee: so go back. If they would listen and obey, ah! Yes, good that; but have they ever listened to Busby? And will they listen to thee, a stranger, a man of yesterday? Sit, indeed! What for? Wilt thou make dealing straight?*

Colenso records that the meeting was interrupted again by three men, one of them called Jones—'a hawker and pedlar of Kororareka'—who again queried the translation of what the chiefs were saying. Johnson was again asked for his opinion and translated the last speech by Wai. Jones remarked that 'it was great lies'.

**Pumuka:** *Stay, Governor; remain for me. Hear, all of you. I will have this man a foster-father for me. Stay, Governor. Listen to my words. I wish to have two fathers—thou and Busby, and the missionaries.*



**Warerahi:** *Yes! What else? Stay, sit; if not, what? Is it not good to be in peace? We will have this man as our Governor. What! Turn him away! Say to this man of the Queen, go back! No, no.*

**Hakiro:** *Hear me O Governor! I say, no, no. Sit indeed! Go back. What wilt thou sit here for? We are not thy people. We are free. We will not have a Governor. Return, return; leave us. The missionaries and Busby are our fathers. We do not want thee; so go back, return, walk away.*

**Tareha:** *No Governor for me—for us native men. We, we only are the chiefs, rulers. We will not be ruled over. What thou, a foreigner, up, and I down! Thou high, and I, Tareha, the great chief of the Ngapuhi tribes, low! No, no; I will never say 'Yes'. Our lands are already all gone. If all were to be alike, all equal in rank with thee—but thou, the Governor up high— up, up, as this tall paddle and down, under, beneath! No, no. No. I will never say, Yes, stay. Go back, make haste away.<sup>1</sup>*

**Rawiri:** *Good morning Mr Governor! Our Father! Sit, that we may be in peace. A good thing this for us—yes, for us, my friends, Native men. Stay, do thou remain O Governor! To be a Governor for us.*

**Hoani<sup>2</sup> Heke:** *To rise up, or to bring down? Which? Who knows? Sit, Governor, sit. If thou shouldst return, we Natives are gone, utterly gone, nothinged, extinct. What, then, shall we do? Who are we? Remain, Governor, a father for us. This, my friends, is a good thing. It is even as the word of God. (Heke flourishes a copy of the New Testament) Thou to go away! No! For then the French people or the rum sellers will have us Natives. Remain, you with the missionaries, all as one. But we Natives are children. It is not for us, but for you, our fathers—you missionaries—it is for you to decide, what it shall be. I say, Governor, sit! a father, a Governor for us.*

Colenso recorded that because of a number of people talking Hakitara's speech at this time was difficult to hear but that he spoke in favour of the Governor remaining.

**Waka Nene:** *(addressing the chiefs) What do you say? The Governor to return? What then, shall we do? Say here to me, oh ye chiefs of the tribes of the northern part of New Zealand! What we, how we? Is not the land already gone? Is it not covered, all covered, with men, with strangers, foreigners—over whom we have no power? We, the chiefs and Natives of this land, are down low; they are up high, exalted.*

*The Governor to go back? I am sick, I am dead, killed by you. Had you spoken thus in the old time, when the traders and the grog sellers came, then you could well say to the Governor, go back. But now, as things are, no! no! (addressing Hobson) O Governor! Sit. I, Tamati Waka, say to thee, sit. Do not thou go away from us. Remain for us—a father, a judge, a peacemaker. Sit thou here; dwell in our midst. Remain; do not go away. Stay thou, our friend, our father, our Governor.*

**Patuone<sup>3</sup>:** *What shall I say on this great occasion, in the presence of all those great chiefs of both countries? This is my word to thee, O Governor! Remain here with us to be a father for us, that the French have us not, that Pikopo<sup>4</sup>, that bad man have us not. Remain, Governor. Sit, our friend.*

<sup>1</sup> Busby notes here that Rewa, Moka, Tareha and Hakiro were all from Kororareka and lived close to the Catholic Bishop Pompallier.

<sup>2</sup> Hone Heke is the more common spelling now.

<sup>3</sup> Patuone was the elder brother of Waka Nene.

<sup>4</sup> Bishop Pompallier



**Te Kemara:** *No, who says stay? Go away; return to thine own land. I want my lands returned to me. Let us all be alike then O Governor, remain. But the Governor up! Te Kemara down, low, flat! No, no, no. Besides, where art thou to stay, to dwell. There is no place left for thee. (Te Kemara faces Hobson with his wrists cross imitating a man handcuffed) Shall I be thus, thus? Speak, Governor. (He then grasps Hobson's hand and shakes it most heartily, repeating) How d'ye do, Mister Governor?*

According to Colenso 'the Governor evidently taking it in good part, the whole assembly of whites and browns, chiefs and slaves, Governor, missionaries, officers of the man-o'-war, and, indeed 'all hands', being convulsed with laughter.' (Colenso, p28) Apparently this ended the day's meeting. Hobson then gave public notice that on Friday the 7th the meeting would be reassembled.

## 6th February 1840

Despite Hobson announcing that the next meeting would be held on the 7th, the chiefs decided at the meeting at Te Tii that it would be better to conclude treaty business so that they could return home<sup>5</sup>. Somehow the message regarding the change of plan did not reach Hobson and as Colenso records: 'On our arrival we found that the natives were already there—not, however, such a large party as was present the day before ... Nevertheless, there were several present—not less than 300, or even 400—scattered in small parties according to their tribes, talking about the Treaty but evidently clearly not understanding it.' (Colenso, p 30)

As Orange notes, 'Hobson, taken by surprise, had come ashore in plain clothes except for his hat and unaccompanied by any of the officers from the Herald. Apart from Busby and several English missionaries, only about a dozen other Pakeha were present.'

Hobson was reluctant to have the meeting that morning due to his statement regarding a meeting on the 7th but was persuaded to be take signatures of those chiefs who wanted to sign that day.

After declaring that he could only receive signatures and not allow discussion because it was not a regular public meeting Hobson was interrupted by Pompallier's request for an addition to the treaty ensuring that all religions be protected under the treaty. This was added.

The chiefs were asked to sign and needed to be called up by Busby one by one. The first called was Hone Heke. At this point Colenso, addressing Hobson, interrupted.

**Colenso:** *Will your Excellency allow me to make a remark or two before that chief signs the treaty?*

**Hobson:** *Certainly Sir.*

**Colenso:** *May I ask your Excellency whether it is your opinion that these Natives understand the articles of the treaty which they are so called upon to sign. I this morning—*

**Hobson:** *If the Native chiefs do not know the contents of this treaty it is no fault of mine. I wish them fully to understand it. I have done all that I could do make them understand the same, and I really don't know how I shall be enabled to get them to do so. They have heard the treaty read by Mr Williams.*

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<sup>5</sup> Orange, p51



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**Colenso:** *True, your Excellency; but the Natives are quite children in their ideas. It is no easy matter, I well know, to get them to understand—fully to comprehend a document of this kind; still, I think they ought to know somewhat of it to constitute legality. I speak under correction, your Excellency. I have spoken to some chiefs concerning it, who had no idea what ever as to the purport of the treaty.*

**Busby:** *The best answer that could be given to that observation would be found in that speech made yesterday by the very chief about to sign, Hoani Heke, who said, 'The Native could not comprehend these things: they must trust to the advice of their missionaries.'*

**Colenso:** *Yes; in that is the very thing to which I was going to allude. The missionaries should do so; but at the same time the missionaries should explain the thing in all its bearings to the Natives, so that it should be their own very act and deed. Then, in case of a reaction taking place, the natives could not turn round on the missionaries and say, 'You advised me to sign that paper, but never told me what were the contents thereof.'*

**Hobson:** *I am in hopes that no such reaction will take place. I think that the people under your care will be peaceable enough: I am sure that you will endeavour to make them so. And as to those that are without, why we must endeavour to do the best we can with them.*

**Colenso:** *I thank your Excellency for the patient hearing you have given me. What I had to say arose from a conscientious feeling on the subject. Having said what I have I consider that I have discharged my duty.*

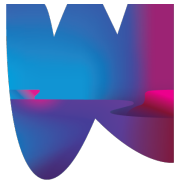
At this point Heke and others came forward to sign. Even as this was happening two chiefs Marupo and Ruhe were speaking against the signing. However, both subsequently signed that day. Colenso notes that chiefs were still arriving and signing the treaty even though they had not been present for the discussions the day before.

Orange notes that 'As each Maori signed, he shook hands with Hobson (and with the other members of the official party), the Lieutenant Governor repeating, "He iwi tahi tatou" – which Colenso translated as "We are now one people." The ceremony closed with "three thundering cheer" from the assembled Maori and Patuone's presentation to Hobson of a mere (club) for Queen Victoria. As Hobson retired to the *Herald*, taking with him Patuone to dine, Colenso was left to attend to the customary distribution of gifts. In this instance, there were two blankets and a small quantity of tobacco for each signatory to the treaty, a detail which Colenso recorded with the wry comment: "Sic transit gloria Nova Zealandia!"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Orange, p55





## List of speakers

**Baker:** CMS missionary

**Busby, James:** British Resident in the Bay of Islands from 1833 to Hobson's appointment

**Hobson, William:** sent by British Colonial Office to organise a treaty with the Maori

**Te Kemara:** chief of Ngāti Kawa, Te Tii, Waitangi

**Rewa:** chief of Ngāi Tawake, Kororareka

**Moka:** chief of Patueka tribe, Kororareka

**Hakiro:** son of Tareha, but speaking on behalf of Titore, from Kororareka

**Hoani Heke:** chief of Matarahurahu tribe

**Johnson:** an old resident of Kororareka, a dealer in spirits

**Kawiti:** chief of Ngāti Hine

**Patuone, Eruera Maihi:** elder brother of Waka Nene, now living in Hauraki Gulf

**Pukututu, Tamati:** chief of Te Uri-o-te-hawato Pumuka: chief of the Roroa tribe

**Rawiri:** chief of Ngāti Tautahi

**Tareha:** chief of the Ngāti Rēhia tribe, Kororareka

**Wai:** chief of Ngāi Tawake

**Waka Nene:** chief of Ngāti Hao

**Warerahi:** chief of Ngāi Tawake

**Williams, Henry:** head of the CMS mission at Paihia

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