

Hansard, 1876

NEW ZEALAND.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

First Session of the Sixth Parliament.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Twenty-second Volume.

COMPRISING THE PERIOD FROM THE

FOURTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER TO THE THIRD DAY OF OCTOBER, 1876.



WELLINGTON:

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1876.

Mr. Gibbs,
Mr. Harper,
Mr. Henry,
Mr. Kennedy,
Mr. Macfarlane,
Sir D. McLean,
Mr. G. McLean,
Captain Morris,
Mr. Murray-Aynsley,
Mr. Ormond,
Mr. Richardson,

Mr. Seymour,
Mr. Stafford,
Mr. Stevens,
Mr. Wakefield,
Mr. Whitaker,
Mr. Williams,
Mr. Woolcock.

Tellers.

Mr. Burns,
Mr. Reynolds.

For. Mr. Lusk. Against. Sir R. Douglas.

The amendment was consequently negatived, and the Bill read a second time.

MAORI REPRESENTATION BILL.

Mr. TAIAROA, in moving the second reading of this Bill, said it was not a new measure, as it had been introduced before, and its object urged upon the House for several years past. As this was a new Parliament, he thought it was well that it should give careful consideration to the subject. The Bill had been printed and circulated, and he would not take up much time in explaining it, as, no doubt, honorable members had made themselves acquainted with its provisions. He thought it would be a very good thing if the House were to consent to the request made by the Maoris that their representation in the House should be increased on account of the tribes, their families and individuals being so numerous. He considered that the Maori population of the North Island amounted to about 42,000 or 43,000 souls, but they were only represented in the House by three individuals. Therefore, he thought it would be a just thing for the House to consent that there should be five members to represent the Natives in the North Island. He also asked the House to agree to give two members to the Middle Island. The Maori population of the Middle Island numbered about 2,000 or over, and the Natives of that island paid exactly the same duties as the Europeans did. He asked for an additional member for the Middle Island, because he was its only Maori representative, and it was impossible for him to go over the whole district and ascertain the views of the different hapus and tribes. He urged this strongly upon the House, because there were three Maori members in the House representing the North Island, and there were two in another place also belonging to the North Island, making in all five, while there was only one member from the Middle Island in the House, and none in the Legislative Council. It would only be fair, therefore, for the House to consent to what he asked for. The districts were given in the Bill. He asked for one member for the Northern District, one for Waikato, one for the Bay of Plenty, one for the West Coast District, one for the Eastern District, a new member for the northern part of the Middle Island, and one for the Southern District. He would not waste the time of the House by going further into the Bill. He trusted that those members present

who supported it last year would support it again. The measure was lost last session by only three votes. The Minister for Native Affairs said he would be very glad to have a member elected to represent the Waikato District. He hoped the House would not reject his Bill at this stage, but allow it to go into Committee and there fight out the question about the members, so that they might ascertain what members out of the seven would be approved of. He of course advocated the whole seven being agreed to. If justice was to be done to the Natives, the proper way was to give them more representatives. If the House rejected the proposition to have seven members and still limited the number to four, that would not be justice towards the Natives. This request was not for himself individually. There were many petitions that came in every year to that House asking for a very large increase of Maori representation, but nothing had been done yet towards granting the prayer of those petitions. He thought he was right in saying that, if Europeans had sent in those petitions, their prayer would have been granted. He begged to move the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. WHITAKER did not oppose the second reading of the Bill, and would offer no objection to its introduction into Committee, but he thought it would be injudicious to pass the Bill this session. The Act on the subject which at present existed would remain in operation until the 10th October, 1877. It was the intention of the Government during the recess to consider the question of representation generally—to consider all those laws which had reference to the representation of the people, amongst which would be the electoral law; and he believed they required careful consideration. He thought that the Maori representation had never been upon a fair and proper basis, but that the present was an inopportune time to increase the number of members, because it might hamper the Assembly next session in dealing with the subject. Therefore, when the honorable gentleman had got his Bill into Committee, he would suggest that it should be withdrawn, on the understanding that the Government would next session fairly and fully consider the question of representation as affecting the Native people. As he had already said, he felt it was in a very unsatisfactory state, and that the subject required great consideration. That consideration the Government were prepared to give it, and next session they would bring down a Bill adjusting that and all other matters in reference to representation and the regulation of elections that required amendment.

Captain RUSSELL could not see what possible good would be done by allowing the Bill to go into Committee with the avowed intention of throwing it out on the third reading. That was a bad principle to establish at any time, and would be particularly undesirable at the present period of the session, when they had a great deal more work before them than there was any possibility of their being able to pay proper attention to. He did not all approve of the principle laid down in this Bill, and could see no possible reason for increasing the number of Native repre-

representatives from four, as fixed in 1867, to seven in the year 1877. Looking also at the preamble of the Act of 1867, he saw that the circumstances were now considerably modified. The preamble stated,—

"It is expedient, for the better protection of the interests of Her Majesty's subjects of the Native race, that temporary provision should be made for the special representation of such Her Majesty's Native subjects in the House of Representatives and the Provincial Councils of the said colony."

If the Native people of the colony had had ten years' representation, it might very fairly be said that the temporary measure which was passed in 1867 had become something more than temporary in its operation. The causes which operated in 1867 might have been such as to require that the Natives should have special representation in the House. He himself would very much prefer to see that special representation wiped away altogether, rather than that the number of members should be increased to seven. He did not see what claim there could be for special representation on the part of the Natives. It had been distinctly stated in the House during the present session that it was very inexpedient to raise direct taxation in many parts of the colony. If there was any man in this colony from whom it was inexpedient or impossible to raise taxation, that man had no right whatever to come and express his views in any shape, either as a member of the House or as an elector who had a voice in sending members to the House. They knew that since 1862 the Native Land Acts had been in operation in the colony. There was no reason why any Native should not place himself in the same position as the European residents in the colony; and, such being the case, he did not see why they should be given special representation, or even allowed to return members at all. He believed that by the end of the next five years it would be in the power of the Natives to control the election of the European members of that House, as far as the country districts were concerned at all events; and under those circumstances they would not be doing justice to the people if they placed Maoris in a position both to send their own members to the House and to control the election of European members. Considering these things, he thought it was their duty to throw this Bill out on its second reading, and not allow it to go into Committee at all. There was one clause in the Act—clause 6—which provided that, though the seats of the Maori members lapsed in October, 1877, those honorable gentlemen should have, by the authority of the House, power to sit in the House for three years afterwards, and to bring in three other Natives as members of the House. It might be in the power of the House to authorize this; but he did not think it would be at all proper that they should, by a vote of theirs, prolong the seats of the four members of the House for three years over the time during which it was originally intended they should hold their seats. There was another reason why he thought it inadvisable to continue Maori representation. In previous

Parliaments they had seen two Native members sitting on the Treasury benches; but he did not believe that the advice of those honorable members was taken on any subject whatever, except, perhaps, some few points connected with Native affairs; and he thought that the sooner the House took away the power of appointing Maori Ministers the better. Another reason, and he believed it was one of the main reasons why the Bill should not be passed, was this, that the greatest blessing they could confer upon the Native race would be to place them as far as possible on the same footing as Europeans. He would be happy at any time to assist in assimilating the position of the Natives with that of the Europeans. He had lived for many years in the colony, and had seen a great deal of the Natives, and he had a strong regard for them. Any action he might take with regard to this Bill was not prompted by any ill-feeling towards the Natives. He believed the best thing they could do was to place them in exactly the same position as Europeans; to confer the same responsibilities and the same privileges upon them as Europeans had. If they did that, the desire which every member of the House had, even including the Maori members themselves—namely, that the two races should become one people—would be to some extent accomplished. For that reason principally he objected to the Bill.

Mr. ANDREW concurred altogether with what the Postmaster-General had said, and also with what the honorable member for Napier, Captain Russell, said; but he thought neither of those gentlemen had carried their principles to their logical conclusion. He would do so by moving, That the Bill be read a second time that day six months.

Mr. HAMLIN said it was his intention to support the second reading of the Bill; and more than that, he would support its passing through Committee, in order that it might become law. The honorable member for Napier told the House it was his wish to see the Natives placed on the same footing as Europeans; but the whole of the arguments which he had used went to show that he was desirous of doing away with the Native representation altogether. Instead of the honorable gentleman who introduced the Bill only asking for seven Maori members, he should have asked for twelve or fourteen, when probably the Maori representation would be placed on an equal footing with the European representation in the House. There had been Maori representation in this House for some years, and it was now time that that representation should be continued and increased, or abolished altogether. In that case, the question to be considered would be this: Has the Maori representation been of good service, or productive of bad results? He thought it would be agreed that the very fact of allowing Natives to take part in the business of that House, and assisting in the good government of the colony, had been of very great importance indeed; and he was very sorry that the honorable gentleman who brought forward the Bill did not ask for eight members, instead of seven. He would point out where