

(Burdon, R. M., 1955:  
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rail, on horseback and sometimes on foot, he traversed the North Island from end to end, making speeches by the score, answering questions by the thousand, and, incidentally, enduring many hardships. At every meeting he explained the Act in simple terms, often using household proverbs to convey his meaning. While protesting his government's love for the Maori people he warned them against the consequences of trying to keep their land locked up. 'The European population was like a lake constantly rising with no outlet. The natives were like the banks of the lake, and if no outlet was provided for the banked-up waters the time would come when they would break down their banks and sweep everything before them. The flow of water could not be arrested, but the banks could be preserved if the Natives would listen and act according to wise counsels.'<sup>5</sup> To an accompaniment of threats, reassurances, and offers of protection, he poured forth good advice on every question concerning native economy and social welfare. 'As the world progresses, if you maintain your isolated position—if you allow your children to grow up in ignorance—they will turn round and curse the parents who gave them birth. . . . Civilization oftentimes brings with it evils, but the real safeguard to a noble race . . . is to have its people educated.'<sup>6</sup> Wherever a school was asked for he promised that the request should be granted and foretold the many advantages likely to accompany its establishment. Wherever traces of sullenness appeared he rallied the hostile section of his audience with good-humoured chaff, and left broad grins on faces that had once frowned. The *mana* of a Premier was safe in his keeping. He was never bested in argument or at a loss for a reply when questioned. Nor did he allow the impression to go abroad that he came in any other capacity than that of a ruler to whom every respect was due. When Tawhiao, king of the Waikato, failed to arrive in time for an appointment he found Seddon gone, and a message saying that if he wished to see the Premier he must follow him to Auckland.

<sup>5</sup> *Pakeha and Maori, A Narrative of the Premier's Trip through the Native Districts of the North Island of New Zealand, 1895, p. 13.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 95.

The Maoris were delighted with the visit of this burly, genial, formidable person who rated them for their faults, sympathized with their wrongs, and explained the mysterious ways of *pakeha* governments in terms they could understand. His coming had been an event in their lives; his words had been, on the whole comforting, and his presence reassuring. The newspapers, even those that were normally hostile, had nothing but praise for the Premier's conduct of his mission, though some of them added a warning that he would not easily devise a policy for land settlement mutually acceptable to Europeans and Maoris. This was an anticipation of events that called for no special gift of prescience.

Seddon returned from his tour in the happy position of being able to speak with authority of native affairs, and to controvert the views of alleged experts with whom he could now claim equality of experience. He had learnt that each Maori district had its own peculiar problems and that no solution would apply generally. At the same time he had formed a decided opinion that the existing deadlock would never have arisen if the State had not long previously renounced its monopoly of land purchase. "The Legislature would act wisely in saying that there should be only one means by which natives can dispose of their land—namely, through the Government."<sup>7</sup> By no other course could Maoris who sold and Europeans who bought be preserved from the trials and adversities inseparable from attendance on the Native Land Court.

During the session of 1894, however, when at Seddon's behest all private purchase of native lands was made illegal, the strongest objections were raised by two Maori members—the same two who had been foremost in criticizing the Native Land Purchase Act of 1893. Both Wi Pere and Hone Heke complained bitterly of their countrymen being denied reasonable participation in the management of their own lands. Both men had drawn up Bills for amending a state of affairs they deplored—that of Hone Heke providing for an innovation no less drastic than the creation of a separate parliament and

<sup>7</sup> *Hansard*, Vol. 86, p. 373.

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