

(King, M., 2007)

# Michael King The Penguin History of New Zealand Illustrated

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haeata had moved his forces up the Horokiri Valley and there, at what is now called Battle Hill, in August 1846 they stopped the advance of the government troops, with casualties on both sides. Rangihaeata was eventually allowed to retreat to the Horowhenua district, where he was left unmolested and died during a measles epidemic nine years later. Te Rauparaha, meanwhile, had been held by Grey without charge for 10 months and then returned to his people at Otaki, where it became apparent that, because of his arrest, his mana and therefore his influence had waned. Like Te Rangihaeata, he began to attend church services but declined to convert to Christianity. He died in 1849 and was buried first near the Anglican church Rangiatea, and then on Kapiti Island, his old stronghold.

While tension had been mounting in Wellington in 1844, more serious and extensive conflict had broken out in the far north. Hone Heke of Ngapuhi, the first chief to sign the Treaty of Waitangi, had become disenchanted with the effects of European colonisation. He lamented the shift of the capital from Kororareka to Auckland, which had reduced the importance of the Bay of Islands, removed many of its former economic benefits and, in conjunction with the introduction of customs duties and shipping levies, contributed to a depression. Heke was further incensed by a government ban on the felling of kauri trees and by the hanging of Maketu, son of the Ngapuhi chief Ruhi, for the murder of a European family. To Heke, it seemed that the rangatira-tanga promised to the chiefs in the Treaty had been usurped, and he decided to strike at British authority.

On 8 July 1844, Te Haratua, Heke's second-in-command, cut down the flagstaff at Kororareka. This had originally been a gift to the district from Heke, for the purpose of flying a Maori flag. Instead, it had been used by British forces to fly the Union Jack. Worried about the implications of this gesture, Governor FitzRoy requested additional troops from New South Wales but took no other immediate action. On 10 January the following year Heke cut down the replacement flagpole, and another on 19 January. FitzRoy then offered a reward for Heke's capture and established a military presence in Kororareka. Meanwhile Heke gained the support of his fellow Treaty-signatory Kawiti of Ngati Hine and together they attacked Kororareka on 10 March 1845. After one day's fighting – 600 Maori against 250 armed defenders – the Maori forces withdrew, leaving 20 Europeans dead and having lost somewhat more of their own fighters. In their wake a powder magazine exploded and set fire to much of the town. Maori and Pakeha joined in subsequent looting.

Two wars were waged in the months that followed, sometimes separately and sometimes simultaneously. Tamati Waka Nene and most Hokianga Ngapuhi chiefs attacked Heke and his allies in a revival of earlier tribal conflict. Then these kupapa or 'friendly' Maori (meaning friendly to the Crown) joined the imperial forces for joint action on

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But we're not  
11 March  
Maketu, 2000 etc.



Unemployed workers at the Cenotaph in Wellington before they rioted along Lambton Quay.

[But] the authorities refused them. So they got permission from a private property owner to use a big vacant section somewhere up . . . Cuba Street way, and they were all peaceably having their meeting there when without warning the police rushed them. They came charging through the gates, over the fences and belted hell out of them . . . and of course the crowd scattered. Well, that incensed the people of Wellington and that night they started to flock in the thousands . . .

Several nights later, near the Cenotaph,

I heard a voice cry out, 'Let's smash the bloody town up' . . . [They] started to advance up Lambton Quay belting windows with oranges or bananas and as they broke the windows, particularly of hardware shops, they'd pick up spanners and iron bars and different gear like big tools . . . **And as they went up Lambton Quay you could hear the windows crashing, it was a horrible sound . . .** and if you wanted to go against the crowd you just couldn't. They just surged right up behind those rioters, right up through the Quay.

And as they went up Lambton Quay you could hear the windows crashing, it was a horrible sound . . .

Although in every instance the number of people responsible for damage was small compared with the number of onlookers, many New Zealanders feared at this time that the country was on the brink of anarchy. Expressions of contempt and even hate for politicians were widespread: it was said of Gordon Coates, for example – untruthfully – that he was drinking heavily and had told a deputation of unemployed workers to 'eat grass'. The Government passed the Public Safety and Conservation Act which gave the police draconian powers to detain people. But there was no further violence. It was as if the country had looked over an abyss and then decided by common consent to draw back.

Just how bad, though, did living conditions become over this period? Tony Simpson has described the Depression as 'a grey and ill-defined monster, an unspeakable disaster' that 'cast a long shadow, a blight on everything it touched . . .' After 1933, when the Government required at first single and then married men to go into rural work camps to qualify for relief payment, those workers often found themselves in extraordinarily unpleasant places. One such was Aka Aka, south-east of Waiuku, where the *Auckland Weekly News* reported:

The floors of the tent are earthen, uncovered by boarding, and on Wednesday many of them were dampened by rain soakage. The surroundings . . . were very muddy. The men bathe in the drains, wash in a horse trough, and if it rains have to don wet clothing the next day, for there is no drying room. Men recently arrived at the camp and unused to navvying may earn only five shillings a week . . . Nearly always they are ankle-deep and knee-deep in water, and often waist-deep.

And, of course, life was difficult for dependants living on reduced incomes. '[Wives] had to make do as best they could,' wrote Erik Olssen, 'improvising clothing out of sugar sacks, trying to feed their families, scrounging and begging. They also had to keep their homes clean and tidy to impress the voluntary inspectors who checked to make sure that families really needed assistance.' While there was help for the poor, again they had to be the *deserving* poor.

The Depression was not an unmitigated disaster for all New Zealanders, however. There were some who, because of their occupations or private means, scarcely noticed its passage. And there were others who succeeded in making the experience positive, a source of adventure and spiritual or cultural enrichment. On the whole these were single men with minimal responsibilities, but not always. When Fred Miller, a South Island journalist, was laid off by his newspaper, he took his family to Central Otago for three years where he panned for gold (and, for part of that time, housed his wife

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