

NEW ZEALAND

FRONTIER OF DREAMS

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91)

The Story of New Zealand



FROM TREATY TO NATIONHOOD
1830 - 1913

PARKER

SCHOLASTIC

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1893

First Maori elected to a European seat

Parker, J., 2005

Seddon became such a powerful figure – both in politics and in appearance – that his nickname was 'King Dick'.

But Seddon was more than tough and wily. He worked very hard, had a very good memory for names and faces, was clever in political tactics and was a convincing speaker. He was popular both in New Zealand and in Britain. He was proud of his part in setting up measures such as pensions, cheap housing, maternity hospitals, the public holiday on Labour Day – things that made life better for the workers or the elderly. He thought of New Zealand as 'God's Own Country'; a new land showing the way to Britain, the 'Old Country'.

Seddon had his faults. He opposed votes for women and he was racist. For example, he made it hard for Chinese immigrants to become full New Zealand citizens. He also criticised the Dalmatians – immigrants from Croatia in Europe – when they began to arrive and settle in the north of New Zealand in 1898-99.

By 1896, Seddon was not only Premier but also Treasurer, Minister of Defence, Education, and Immigration – a huge workload. He appointed James Carroll as Minister of Maori Affairs in 1899. The first Maori to hold this position, Carroll was a big, athletic man, half Irish and half Ngati Kahungunu, who liked horse-racing, gambling and beer. A fine speaker of both Maori and English, he moved easily between both cultures. He managed to slow down the rate of Maori land loss and set up with the Tuhoe tribe a treaty to protect their lands in the Urewera Forest.

Maori

In the 1890s
– met r
wanted

the Liberal Government. In spite of a petition with over 35,000 Maori signing, the movement was unsuccessful, though it did influence the Government's decision to make changes to land purchasing methods.



The Kauri Museum, Matakohe

A Dalmatian gumdigger. Many Dalmatians came to work in New Zealand's northern gumfields.

With Carroll's help, Seddon established himself with Maori as a rangatira, or person with chiefly status. But, when immigration increased in the 1890s and some 100,000 South Islanders moved to the North Island, Maori still lost their land under the Liberal Government. Barely 200,000 hectares remained in traditional or customary Maori ownership by the end of the Liberal period. Though Seddon had some regrets over this, he saw it as a necessary part of colonisation.

(Parker, 2005: 92)

1893 Women given the same voting rights as men

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Ethel Benjamin (1875-1943) was New Zealand's first woman lawyer, graduating from Otago University in 1897. Though she was an outstanding student and successful lawyer, the Otago District Law Society gave her a hard time, barring her, for example, from the annual Society dinner. She did much good work for the New Zealand

Society for the Protection of Women and Children. Ethel was well ahead of her time – the next woman lawyer did not graduate until 1911. She died in England in 1943 after being knocked down by a motor vehicle.

An outdoor sewing class. Women like Ethel Benjamin and Emily Seideberg showed that women could be lawyers and doctors as well as learning to sew.

In the early years of women married and became full-time mothers of large families, or else worked as domestics doing housework. But by the 1880s, many women wanted more choices.

They were helped by the 1884 Married Women's Property Act, which allowed women to keep their own property, and the 1898 Divorce Act, which gave women the same rights as her husband for divorce. These laws – plus the 1893 right to vote – gave New Zealand women much more freedom.

Many thousands of women worked in factories in the 1880s. But in the 1890s increasing numbers worked as secretaries and shorthand typists in offices, or as teachers and nurses. Between 1881 and 1911, the number of women in professions grew five times. More women enrolled at university. In the mid-1880s, for example, there were 100 women studying at Canterbury University College alone.

Women also started to have fewer children. In just 25 years between 1886 and 1901, the average number of live births per Pakeha woman halved from 7 to 3.5.

Woman artists like Frances Hodgkins, and writers like Katherine Mansfield reflected the New Zealand woman's wish for choice and freedom. Mansfield, the famous New Zealand short-story writer, was born in Wellington in 1888.



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