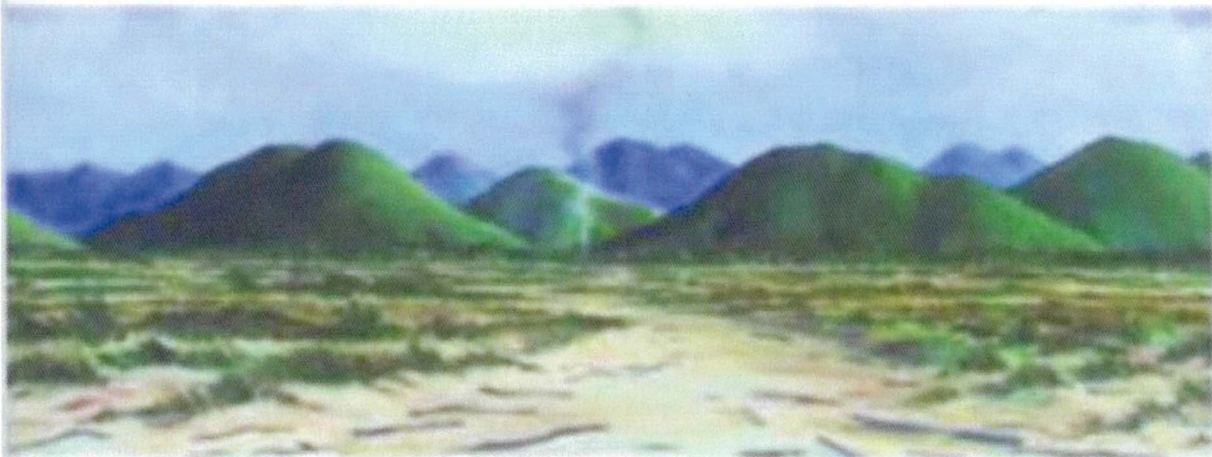


(King, M., 2003: 18, 32, 34,  
35, 90-92, 102-105,  
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**THE PENGUIN**  
**HISTORY OF**  
**NEW ZEALAND**



**MICHAEL KING**

*'By far the best general history of New Zealand to be published in a generation.'*

*Kerry Howell, NZ Herald*

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PENGUIN BOOKS

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# .3 The Great New Zealand Myth

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If popular mythology is to be believed, the discoverer of New Zealand was a Polynesian voyager named Kupe. Oddly, this myth was Pakeha in origin rather than Maori. Maori came to embrace it solely as a result of its widespread publication and dissemination in New Zealand primary schools between the 1910s and the 1970s.

One version of the narrative sequence that David Simmons characterised as 'the Great New Zealand Myth' went like this:

950 AD: the Polynesian navigator Kupe discovers New Zealand.

Between 950 and 1150 AD: Moriori people arrive in New Zealand.

1150 AD: the voyages of Toi and Whatonga lead to first Maori settlement.

1350 AD: the 'Great Fleet' of seven canoes arrives in New Zealand from Island Polynesia.

After the fleet came, fighting ensued between Maori and Moriori. Some Moriori were killed, some intermarried with Maori, and the remnants escaped to the Chatham Islands.

The Kupe part of this sequence was told as follows in the Department of Education's *School Journal* in February 1916.

volcanic phenomena originated. Nor can we be sure that there were witnesses to the cataclysm in the land of its occurrence – no evidence of occupation, in other words, nor stories based on it.

One other piece of evidence relating to this period intrigues by its ambiguity. Carbon dating of the bones of kiore, the Polynesian rat, suggests that the creature may have become established in New Zealand as long as 2000 years ago. The contemporary decline of birds – the owlette-nightjar, for example, and one species of duck – appears to support the presence of rats at that time. Should these dates be confirmed and the supporting evidence verified, they would support an irrefutable argument in favour of an early Polynesian landing on the coast of New Zealand.

The only means of transport available to kiore was Polynesian vessels. The rats' presence in the country so far ahead of organised human settlement, for which there is as yet no evidence, suggests that a discovering canoe landed in both the North and South Islands around 2000 years ago and then headed back to Island Polynesia, or that the occupants of a canoe remained somewhere in New Zealand at that time but failed, because of low numbers, single gender or lack of adequate resources, to establish a continuing colonising population. A third possibility is that a small founding group abandoned the country or was wiped out because of some unexpected natural disaster, such as the catastrophic effects of the Taupo eruption.

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The inescapable fact remains, however, that to date no direct evidence has been found of a human occupation of New Zealand – no hearth fires, no tools, no human remains or the remains of creatures butchered by humans – earlier than the thirteenth century AD. And it is in the latter period, when occupation and evidence coincide, making it possible to build narratives, that

It was as 'Aotea' that New Zealand became known those long centuries ago. Kupe called the . . . North Island 'Aotearoa' – the Long White Cloud; and today Europeans who love to keep alive the old names will call New Zealand Aotearoa.

It is not difficult to see why the story was embraced with enthusiasm by those very Europeans directly appealed to in the *School Journal* story. It was an inspirational account of the discovery of New Zealand. It gave names, Kupe and Ngahue, to Polynesian navigators who would otherwise be nameless. In its full elaboration through a series of adventures around the New Zealand coast involving moa, greenstone and a fight with a giant octopus, the saga gifts New Zealand a founding myth every bit as majestic as the stories that Pakeha settlers carried with them from Europe (Jason and the Argonauts, the labours of Hercules). Its telling was part of a process that fitted Maori tradition into the cultural patterns of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Pakeha New Zealand, which was looking for stories of resonance and nobility to make the human occupation of the country seem more deeply rooted and worthy of pride than it might by virtue of its (at that time) rather thin European heritage.

All that is understandable and excusable. And, one might add, that same account became a source of pride for Maori and an antidote to the concurrent and widespread view that Tasman and Cook 'discovered' New Zealand. As myth, then, the Kupe story worked well and had much to commend it.

The problem that late twentieth-century scholars had with it, Maori and Pakeha, is that, as told here and as compiled by its progenitor, amateur ethnologist Stephenson Percy Smith, the story had no sound basis in Maori tradition. About half the tribes in New Zealand have Kupe stories, but they are by no means congruent and can, in fact, be divided quite distinctly into east and west coast versions. In areas where he *does* figure, Kupe is a contemporary of the ancestors of the major canoes and located about twenty-one generations ago or in the fourteenth century AD. The Kupe of authentic mythology was not always associated with the name Aotearoa, and in more than one version of the story Aotearoa was given as the name of his canoe.

The Smith version of the Kupe story and its dissemination in the *School Journal* and other literature, and the title of the first widely read general history of New Zealand, William Pember Reeves's *The Long White Cloud* (1898), all popularised and entrenched the notion that the Maori name for New Zealand had been and still was Aotearoa. After decades of repetition, Maori themselves came to believe that this was so. And, because shared mythology is ultimately more pervasive and more powerful than history, it became so.

In fact, in the pre-European era, Maori had no name for the country as a whole. Polynesian ancestors came from motu or islands, and it

In fact, in the pre-European era, Maori had no name for the country as a whole.

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was to islands that they gave names. The North Island was known to them principally as Te Ika a Maui, the Fish of Maui, in recognition of the widely accepted belief that the land had been fished from the depths of the ocean by Maui-tikitiki-a-Taranga. A smaller number of tribes knew the island as Aotea (though this was also the name given to Great Barrier Island) and as Aotearoa, most commonly translated, as in the Kupe story, as Land of the Long White Cloud, but perhaps more properly rendered as Land of the Long Clear Day or the Long White World. The second Maori King, Tawhiao, from Tainui, called his Kingitanga bank Te Peeke o Aotearoa, thus favouring Aotearoa as his preferred name for the North Island.

The South Island was known variously as Te Waka-a-Aoraki, the canoe of Aoraki (the ancestor frozen in stone and ice as the highest peak in the Southern Alps), and as Te Wahi Pounamu (the place of greenstone) and Te Wai Pounamu. Stewart Island to the south was Rakiura.

... it is highly likely that there was a Maori ancestor called Kupe who sailed to New Zealand from Island Polynesia. But he certainly did not travel at the early date specified in the Smith story.

In the Maori world all these names would persist in simultaneous usage until around the middle of the nineteenth century. From that time, some Maori and Maori publications began to favour Nu Tirani and its variants, transliterations of the words New Zealand and conveniently applying to all the islands that would make up the modern nation state of New Zealand (the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840 and its 1835 predecessor, A Declaration of the Independence of New Zealand, used these forms). Apart from Tawhiao's bank, operating in Waikato in the 1880s and 1890s, few Maori opted for Aotearoa. In the early years of the twentieth century, however, with the growing circulation and popularity of Stephenson Percy Smith's version of the Kupe story, Maori use of the term Aotearoa to refer to New Zealand as a whole increased, especially in oral culture. By the twenty-first century it was entrenched as the Maori name for New Zealand, though many South Island Maori, favouring Te Wai Pounamu as the name for their own island, recognised Aotearoa as a name for the North Island only.

An examination of Smith's sources in the twentieth century revealed that the story was not derived from Maori traditions.

The conclusion that a historian might draw from the foregoing is that it is highly likely that there was a Maori ancestor called Kupe who sailed to New Zealand from Island Polynesia. But he certainly did not travel at the early date specified in the Smith story. It is also unlikely that he was the 'discoverer' of the country, but the number of place-names associated with him – particularly in the Hokianga, Mercury Bay and Cook Strait regions – make it probable that he was one of the earliest ancestors of the Maori to leave descendants and therefore memories in those parts of the country. And, finally, New Zealand was certainly not known to Maori as Aotearoa in the pre-European times. Just as certainly, it is called that now by most Maori of the modern era.

The story of Toi and Whatonga, also compiled by Stephenson Percy Smith, concerns a Tahitian chief and his daughter's husband who, in

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New Zealand would be left to its isolation by the envoys of Europe for more than a century – though Tasman’s map of the country’s west coast, bearing, as one historian put it, some resemblance to a ragged question mark, would now appear on charts of the world.

desert-like west coast of the North Island, sighting nowhere safe enough to risk a landing. There were harbours, including two major ones, the Manukau and the Kaipara. But Tasman was too far out to sea to recognise the entrances. Much of his map of this coast was reconstructed from sightings north and south of the features marked. Because of cloud cover, they missed Mount Taranaki, but did see Karioi south of Raglan. Gilsemans’s coastal profile drawings which accompanied the ship’s journal show that the crews did sight the opening of Kawhia Harbour, but failed to investigate it as a potential entrance to sheltered waters. They did see Maori again, 30 to 35 of them on the ridge of Great King Island off the northern tip of the North Island. The reported gigantic size of these figures may have resulted from the use of early Dutch telescopes, which were insufficiently refined to give an undistorted view. Again crew members were unable to land, partly because of surf and currents and partly, perhaps, because the now-gigantic inhabitants, throwing stones and shouting at the Dutchmen, had become demonised in their European imaginations.

And so they abandoned the country on 6 January 1643 without having once set foot on it. Tasman took his expedition north and ‘discovered’ some of the islands in the Tonga group and others in the northern sector of Fiji. He eventually returned to Batavia via the northern coast of New Guinea. Having failed to step ashore on New Zealand, Tasman had no reason to suppose that it was the cornucopia of spices, precious metals and cloths that his principals in the Dutch East India Company had been seeking. Because of the supposed absence of exploitable and tradable resources, and the apparently intransigent character of the inhabitants, New Zealand would be left to its isolation by the envoys of Europe for more than a century – though Tasman’s map of the country’s west coast, bearing, as one historian put it, some resemblance to a ragged question mark, would now appear on charts of the world. Its location there would tantalise navigators of the future and leave open the possibility that Terra Australis Incognita spread further east and inland from the littoral the Dutchman had traced.

Tasman called the new country **Staten Land**, because he speculated that it might be the western extremity of the Staten Land off the south-west coast of South America named by his countryman Jacob Le Maire in 1616. When late in 1643 this was perceived to be impossible – the South American location having been identified by Hendrik Brouwer as an island – an anonymous cartographer in the Dutch East India Company renamed Tasman’s line of coast ‘Nieuw Zeeland’ or, in Latin, ‘Zelandia Nova’. This was clearly intended as a matching name for ‘Hollandia Nova’, by which the western coast of Australia was at that time known (Holland and Zeeland being neighbouring Dutch maritime provinces).\* It was over the name Zelandia Nova that the newly recognised country appeared on European charts of the Pacific

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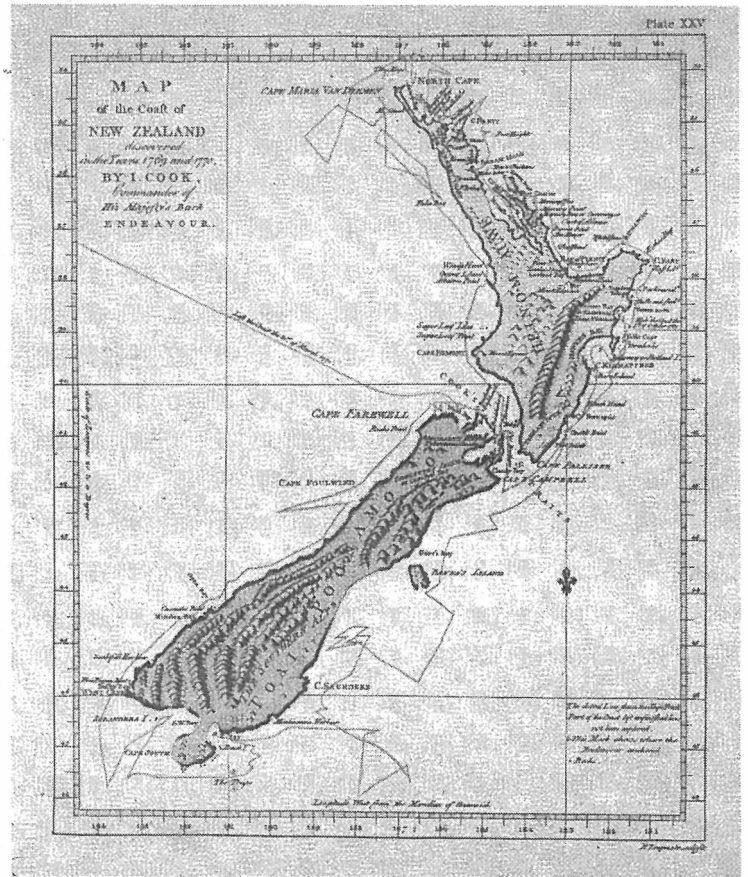
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With Banks and the ship's artists, Cook began the process of documenting the language and material culture of Maori in the eighteenth century. The corpus of knowledge which he and his men assembled on all his visits to New Zealand would be a boon to scientists, historians and anthropologists for the next 200 years. Cook's sober but positive reports on the resources of the country, especially its timber and flax, its seals in the south-west and the quantity of whales in the surrounding seas, led directly to a quickening of British interest in New Zealand and to the establishment of extractive industries there in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In the course of his three voyages and four visits to the country (two in 1773-74), Cook spent a total of 328 days off or on the coast of New Zealand. For Maori, the consequences were far-reaching, although they did not immediately change the cultural pattern or the quality of day-to-day Maori life. The bartering introduced Maori to metals, especially in the form of nails, which were immediately sought after for their efficacy and long life in the form of chisels, gouges and fishhooks. Sexual encounters brought the unpleasant phenomenon of venereal disease to communities where Cook's crews stayed for longer periods, particularly in Queen Charlotte Sound. The Englishmen left vegetables, especially potatoes and turnips, which would become



James Cook was not only a master mariner, but also an expert map maker. This is his map of New Zealand, including the track of the *Endeavour* around the country. It was very accurate, apart from mistaking Banks Peninsula for an island and Stewart Island for a possible peninsula.

With Banks and the ship's artists, Cook began the process of documenting the language and material culture of Maori in the eighteenth century.

(King 2003)

Introduction

1769

1801

1867

1916

8

*The Arrival of Europe*

Like a meteorite which appears, flares and disappears, Abel Tasman's short encounter with New Zealand and its inhabitants in the summer of 1642–43 left no lasting imprint. For the Maori of Golden Bay and the Three Kings Islands, Tasman's ships and men constituted a brief exotic vision of unrecognisable people and incomprehensible technologies that were, literally, visible one day and gone the next.

More than 126 years later, however, there was an umbilically linked sequel. In Tahiti in July 1769, Lieutenant James Cook of the British Royal Navy completed his observation of the transit of the planet Venus across the face of the sun. He then opened secret Admiralty instructions to sail south until he either discovered Terra Australis Incognita or else 'fall in with the Eastern side of the Land discover'd by Tasman and now called New Zealand'. Cook carried out these instructions. And his rediscovery of New Zealand was an encounter of a very different order from Tasman's.

In a six-month-long circumnavigation of the country in the barque *Endeavour*, a converted North Sea collier, James Cook met with Maori on dozens of occasions, on board ship and in their settlements ashore. He even sailed 20 km up the Waihou River at the head of the Hauraki Gulf and into the interior of the country. Thanks to the presence of the Tahitian ariki Tupaiia, who had boarded the *Endeavour* at Raiatea and learned sufficient English to communicate with the ship's master and crew, Cook was also able to communicate with the New Zealanders and thus allow a transfer of information in both directions across the same cultural divide that Tasman, with disastrous consequences, had been unable to bridge. As Anne Salmond has noted, 'not only did the Europeans have extensive opportunities to observe Maori life in different parts of the country, Maori people of various tribes had the first opportunity to examine Europeans at close quarters – to trade with them, to fight with them, to become infected with European diseases and to work out strategies for dealing with [them]'.

The first New Zealanders compelled to devise such strategies were Rongowhakaata people of the East Coast of the North Island. Some of them, when they saw the *Endeavour* in Poverty Bay on 8 October 1769, believed it to be a floating island; others suspected it was a giant bird. Both phenomena, floating islands and birds, featured in their mythology and such identifications fitted what they saw into the cosmography with which they were familiar. Like the Ngati Tumatakokiri people of Golden Bay, however, Poverty Bay Maori paid a price for confronting the unknown visitors. When a Maori party approached the *Endeavour's* pinnace ashore on the bank of the Turanganui River and ceremonially challenged the crew, a sailor judged their intention to be hostile and shot one man dead. The following day another local was killed for snatching a sword

3rd

from an Englishman and brandishing it menacingly.

Cook, son of a humble farm labourer and a plain Yorkshireman of modest learning but considerable humanity, regretted these casualties, neither of which he had ordered. He was carrying instructions from the Earl of Morton, President of the Royal Society, which had described native populations of the places he might visit as 'human creatures, the work of the same omnipotent Author, equally under his care with the most polished European . . . No European nation has the right to occupy any part of their country . . . without their voluntary consent.' After only a fortnight off the New Zealand coast, Cook's naturalist Joseph Banks noted that a canoe-load of potential aggressors had dropped astern after the Englishmen had fired over their heads: 'not I believe at all frightened,' Banks said, 'but content with having shewed their courage by twice insulting us. We now begin to know these people and are much less afraid . . .' Unlike Tasman, Banks and Cook recognised that bravado was an inherent element in Maori competitiveness and capacity for survival. After such exchanges, assured of both their own courage and their own safety, New Zealanders were often willing to accept offers of friendship and to settle down to bartering, a process close to the Maori custom of reciprocity and recognised in most parts of the country that the Englishmen visited.

Cook's circumnavigation and mapping of New Zealand – 'precise, comprehensive and consistent', in the later words of one Cook scholar – represented an expert feat of seamanship and cartography. He determined the proportions and shape of the country with considerable accuracy, mistaking only Banks Peninsula for an island and Stewart Island for a possible peninsula. In this manner, alongside his immediately subsequent mapping of the east coast of Australia, Cook largely disposed of the myth of Terra Australis Incognita and established that

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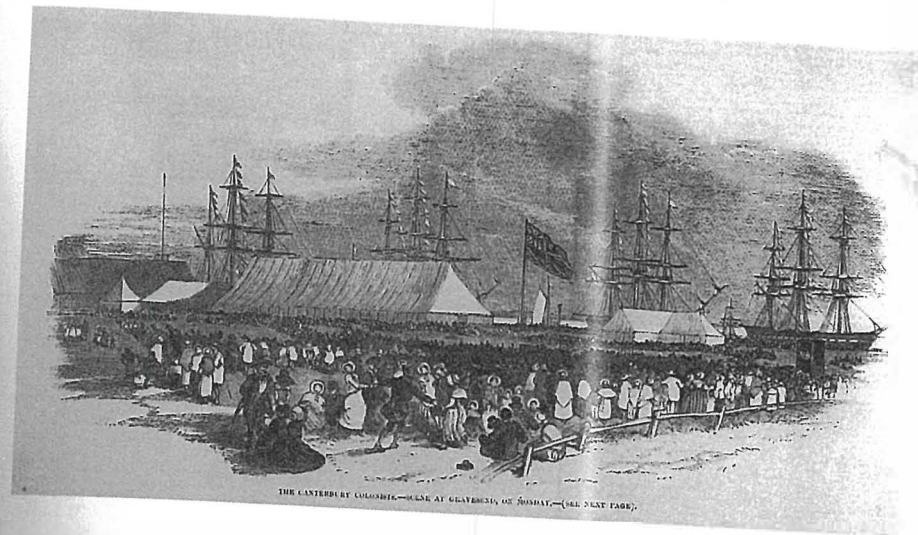
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# .12 Tangata Tiriti

While most Europeans in the first half of the nineteenth century referred to the native inhabitants of New Zealand as 'New Zealanders', the Maori text of the Treaty of Waitangi used the expression 'tangata maori' – ordinary people – to denote them. This indicates how Maori were referring to themselves by that time – and, indeed, recorded evidence of that expression goes back as far as 1801, to the journal of the ship *Royal Admiral* in the Firth of Thames. By the 1830s the word Maori on its own was in widespread use among Maori. And by 1860 Renata Tamakihikurangi of Ngati Kahungunu would go so far as to say to the European settlers of Hawke's Bay: 'Just as you are all English . . . so we (Natives) are all one: Maori is my name.' In official usage, however, the word 'Native' was employed to describe the cabinet minister and government department responsible for Maori matters, and the Land Court until 1946.

The Treaty also employed the term 'pakeha' to refer to Queen Victoria's non-Maori subjects in New Zealand. Use of this word in Maori to



English emigrants at Gravesend in 1850, prior to their departure to New Zealand.

denote Europeans was current in the Bay of Islands by at least 1814, when the missionary William Hall reported that he had been referred to at Te Puna pa as a 'rungateeda pakehaa' (rangatira pakeha: a European gentleman). There is no evidence in this or any other instance in early literature that the term was derogatory. It was simply a necessary descriptive word to distinguish European from Maori, and it probably came from the pre-European word *pākepakeha*, denoting mythical light-skinned beings. It may not have been universally popular in Maori from the beginning of Maori-Pakeha contact – some early references note the term *tangata tipua* and, in the far south, *tangata pora* to describe Europeans. But use of the word *pakeha* was widespread among Maori by the 1830s.

The main reason for its spread, of course, was the growth of the settler population and the increase in the proportion of Maori who would have direct contact with Europeans. The number of Pakeha living in New Zealand in 1830 had been just over 300. Most of these settlers had come from Australia, some of them ex-convicts seeking to escape their penal pasts and some traders working for Australian-based timber and flax operations. A smaller percentage included those who had jumped ship from vessels originating in Britain, the United States and France. The population of missionaries and their families came largely from England (the Anglicans and Wesleyans) or from France (the Catholics). The total number of Pakeha settlers in 1840 was a little over 2000. By 1858 they would outnumber Maori by approximately 3000: 59,000 to 56,000. And by 1881 there would be around 500,000 of them. What caused this massive removal of population from one side of the world to the other?

What caused this massive removal of population from one side of the world to the other?



THE FUNERAL SERVICE STILLWATER

THE MINING DISASTER AT BRUNNERTON.

This last element was the weakest in the system, particularly in rural areas where communities were often scattered and communications still primitive. Secondary education, which would not be free until the election of the first Labour Government in the 1930s, was provided by high schools established under separate Acts of Parliament.

Maori children could, if they or their parents so wished, attend local board schools, but they were already catered for by the 1867 Native Schools Act, which enabled primary schools to be established at the request of Maori communities under the supervision of the Native Department. At the specific request of Maori parents, the medium of instruction in these schools was to be English. Most of those parents who expressed a view on this issue in the 1860s thought that Maori was best learnt at home and English in the schools, to give pupils access to a wider world of knowledge. This policy was sometimes taken to extremes in the years that followed, with many children reporting that they had been punished for speaking Maori within school boundaries.

The Atkinson premierships – five of them between 1876 and 1891 – coincided with what came to be called the ‘Long Depression’. It began with falling wool prices in 1877 and merged into a period of worldwide recession in which the New Zealand economy did not grow for around sixteen years. It led to regional unemployment, a deterioration in

Milling and mining were dangerous jobs. The burial of some of the 65 men killed in an explosion in the Brunner coal mine in 1896.

At the specific request of Maori parents, the medium of instruction in these schools was to be English.