

The Signing of the Treaty of Waitangi

Waitangi, Bay of Islands Wednesday, 5 February - the discussion			
Narrator William Colenso William Hobson	Henry Williams Hakiro Kawiti	Rewa Tareha Moka	Rawiri Hone Heke Te Kemara
Narrator	<p>From early morning that day Māori groups had been arriving at Waitangi. The bay was alive with canoes, converging from all directions, each with thirty or more rowers keeping time to the stroke. Settlers' boats were joining the stream and ships had all their flags flying. The day was brilliantly fine - cicadas shrilled noisily.</p> <p>Outside Busby's grounds, stalls were being set up to sell refreshments - pork, cold roasts, pie, baskets of bread, and stout, ale, brandy, and rum.</p> <p>Special provisions were ready for Māori guests - a half-ton of flour, five tons of potatoes, thirty pigs and other goods.</p> <p>On the Waitangi lawn the officers of the Herald had erected an enormous marquee. About forty to fifty metres in length, it was made of ships' sails and was decorated with flags. Three or four Sydney mounted police, who had arrived on the Herald, paraded in their scarlet uniforms. Hundreds of Māori were sitting in their tribal groups, smoking and talking. Some had come long distances and carried guns. Little parties of Europeans were strolling up and down - the Herald's officers, missionaries, traders, and sailors. The crowd buzzed with excitement.</p> <p>At about nine o'clock Hobson stepped ashore on the Waitangi beach. With the captain of the Herald, Joseph Nias, he walked up the hill to Busby's home. He then went into the room with Busby and Henry Williams to look over the translated treaty. However as Hobson did not know any Māori, he could not tell if the translation was accurate.</p> <p>Late in the morning the official party moved in procession from Busby's house to the marquee. On a raised platform at one end Hobson sat down at a table covered with the Union Jack. Others took up positions wherever they could. William Colenso, the printer at the nearby Paihia mission station, looked over the scene.</p>		
William Colenso	<p>In front of the platform, in the foreground, were the principal chiefs of several tribes, some clothed with black and white striped dogskin mats, others in new woollen cloaks of crimson, blue, brown, and tartan, and indeed, of every shade of striking colour. Some were dressed in plain European clothes and some in common Native dresses, here and there a taiaha, a chief's staff of rank, was seen erected, adorned with the long flowing white hair of the tails of the New Zealand dog and crimson cloth and red feathers.</p>		
Narrator	<p>A hush fell as Hobson began. He first spoke to the Europeans, telling them briefly what he was about to do. Then he turned to the Māori people to talk about the treaty. He spoke in English with Williams translating into Māori.</p>		

Hobson	<p>This is Queen Victoria's act of love for you. She wants to ensure that you keep what is yours, your property, your rights and your privileges, and those things you value. Who knows when a foreign power, perhaps the French, might try to take this country? The treaty is really like a fortress to you.</p> <p>The British people here were free to go wherever they chose, and the Queen was always ready to protect them. She is also ready to restrain them, but her efforts are futile outside British territory, as she has no authority to do so.</p> <p>Her Majesty the Queen asks you to sign this treaty, and so give her that power which will enable her to restrain them. I'll give you time to consider the proposal I now offer you. What I want to do is expressly for your own good as you will soon see by the treaty. You yourselves have often asked the king to extend his protection to you. Her Majesty Queen Victoria now offers that protection in this treaty.</p>
Narrator	<p>He finished by reading the treaty in English. Then Williams read the Māori text. He said later that he told the chiefs to listen carefully and he explained each part to them. He warned them not to be in a hurry.....</p> <p>For over five hours through the heat of the day, chiefs spoke for and against the proposal. Their main concerns were about their authority, their land, and trade dealings.</p>
Rewa	<p>The Māori people don't want a governor! We aren't European. It's true that we've sold some of our lands. But this country is still ours! We chiefs govern this land of our ancestors.</p>
Kawiti	<p>Go back. What do you want here? We do not wish you to stay. We do not want to be tied up and trodden down. We are free. Let the missionaries remain, but as for you, return to your own country. I will not say yes to your remaining here.</p>
Hakiro	<p>Governor, some might tell you to stay here, but I say that this is not the place for you. We are not your people. We are free. We don't need you and we don't want you.</p>
Tareha	<p>We chiefs are the rulers and we won't be ruled over. If we were all to have a rank equal to you that might be acceptable. But if we are going to be subordinate to you, then I say get back to your ship and sail away.</p>
Hobson	<p>I promise that all land that has been unjustly purchased will be returned to you.</p>
Moka	<p>That's good. That's as it should be. But we'll see what happens. Who will really listen to you? Who's going to obey you? The lands won't be returned. Can the Queen really control Pākehā purchases of our land?</p>

Henry Williams (turning to the Europeans)	All land sales before 1840 will be investigated.
Narrator	Hobson could see that the feeling of the meeting was running against him. Only a few chiefs had welcomed him. Rawiri Taiwhanga was one.
Rawiri	It's a good thing that you have come to be a governor for us. If you stay we will have peace.
Rewa	What do we want of a governor? We are not white or foreigners, we, the chiefs of this land of our ancestors. I will not say yes to the Governor's remaining. What! Is this land to become like Port Jackson and all the other lands the English have come to? No! Return! Governor, I, Rewa, say to you, go back.
Hone Heke	Governor, you should stay with us and be like a father. If you go away, then the French or the rum sellers will take us Māori over. How can we know what the future will bring? If you stay we can be 'all as one' with you and the missionaries.
Te Kemara (Leaping up and crying out)	No! Go back to your own land will we end up like this?" (And he crossed his hands as if handcuffed. Then suddenly he seized Hobson's hand, shaking it over and over, and roaring out in English.....) How d'ye do eh, Governor? How d'ye do, eh, Mr Governor?
Narrator	Everyone - Māori and Pākehā - was convulsed with laughter, and Hobson decided if was a good time to adjourn the meeting. They would meet again on the Friday. That evening Māori groups camped on the flat land near the Waitangi river mouth. Talk centred on the Treaty. No one knows what else was said in the discussions that night, but by Thursday morning most chiefs were keen to get the Treaty signed immediately so they could go home. Some had already gone. Food was running short. Some of the missionaries, afraid that the chiefs would leave without signing, probably suggested another meeting with Hobson that day. William Colenso suspected that someone had recalled the saying "Strike while the iron's hot."
Thursday, 6 February - the signing	
Narrator	The change of plan caught Hobson by surprise. He was summoned ashore late in the morning, arriving in plain clothes, having hastily snatched up his plumed hat. Several hundred Māori were waiting for him in the marquee and more stood around outside. Only Busby and a few Europeans had turned up, among them the Catholic Bishop Pompallier. Hobson was nervous and uneasy.

Hobson:	I will only accept signatures today. I can't allow discussion because this morning hasn't been publicly announced.
Narrator	Then just as Hone Heke was about to sign ...
Colenso	Your Excellency, do you think the chiefs really understand all aspects of the treaty?
Hobson	If they don't, it's not my fault. I've done all I can. Williams has read it to them in Māori.
Narrator	The signing went ahead. Busby called each chief by name from a list he had. When each chief had signed, Hobson shook hands with him and said:
Hobson	He iwi tahi tatou.

Sources

Orange, Claudia (1987) *The Story of a Treaty* Bridget Williams Books: Wellington

Orange, Claudia (1987) *The Treaty of Waitangi* Allen and Unwin: Wellington