

The Chief's Speeches

These are the words spoken by 14 Chiefs immediately following the reading the Tiriti o Waitangi by Rev Henry Williams 5th of February 1840 recorded by William Colenso. This was followed by hours of discussion and clause by clause explanation from Rev Williams and Governor Hobson. The remarkable feature of these speeches is that everyone, both for and against, had a clear understanding that this agreement would place them as well as the pakeha under the rule of the Queen and the Governor, William Hobson.

The first speaker was Te Kemara, chief of the Ngati Kawa tribe.

Health to thee, O Governor. This is mine to thee. I am not pleased toward thee. I will not consent to thy remaining here in this country. If thou stayest as Governor, then perhaps Te Kemara will be judged and condemned. Yes indeed, and more than that- even hung by the neck. No no no, I shall never say yes to your staying. Were we to be an equality, then perhaps Te Kemara would say yes. But for the Governor to be up and Te Kemara to be down - Governor high up up up, and Te Kemara down low, small, a worm, a crawler. No no no, O Governor. This is mine to thee. O Governor, my land is gone, gone, all gone. The inheritances of my ancestors, fathers, relatives, all gone, stolen, gone with the missionaries. Yes, they have it all, all, all. That man there, the Busby, the Williams, they have my land. The land on which we are now standing this day is mine. This land even under my feet, return this to me. O Governor, return me my lands. Say to Williams. 'Return to Te Kemara his land'. Thou thou thou, thou baldheaded man, thou hast got my lands. O Governor, I do not wish you to stay. You English are not kind to us like other foreigners. You do not give us good things. I say, go back Governo; we do not want thee here in this country. And Te Kemara says to thee, go back, leave to Busby and to Williams to arrange and settle matters for us natives as heretofore.

Te Kemara later admitted the French Bishop Pompallier had told him, 'Not to write on the paper, for if he did, he would be made a slave' Te Kemara had already sold most of his land.

The next speaker was Rewa, chief of the Ngati Taweke tribe.

How d'ye do, Mr Governor. This is mine to thee, O Governor. Go back; let the Governor return to his own country. Let my lands be returned to me which have been taken by the missionaries - by Davis and Clarke and by who and who beside. I have no lands now - only my name. Foreigners come, they know Mr. Rewa, but this is all I have left - a name. What do native men want of a Governor? We are not white or foreigners. This country is ours, but the land is gone. Nevertheless, we are the Governor - we the chiefs of this our father's land. I will not say 'Yes' to the Governor remaining. No no no, return. What! This land become like Port Jackson, and all the lands seen by the English. No no no, return. I, Rewa say to thee, O Governor go back. Send the man away. Do not sign the paper. If you do you will be reduced to the condition of slaves, and be compelled to break stones on the roads. Your land will be taken from you and your dignity as chief will be destroyed.

The next speaker was Moka, chief of the Patukeha tribe.

Let the governor return to his own country. Let us remain where we are. Let my lands be returned to me – all of them – those that are gone with Baker. Do not say ‘the lands will be returned to you’. Who will listen to thee, O governor? Who will obey thee? Where is Clendon? Where is Mair? Gone to buy, buy our land, notwithstanding the book. (Proclamation) of the Governor. Hobson interrupted the speaker saying any lands illegally taken would be returned. ‘That is good. O Governor. That is straight. But stay, let me see. Yes yes indeed. Where is Baker? Where is the fellow. Ah, there he is – there standing. Come return to me my lands. To this Mr Baker. We shall see whether they shall return. Moka continued. There, there, that is as I said. No no no, all false, all false, all false, alike. The lands will not be returned to me.

Tamati Pukututu, chief of Te Uri-o-te-hawato Tribe, rose and said, “This is mine to thee, O Governor! Sit, Governor, sit, a Governor for us—for me, for all, that our lands may remain with us — that those fellows and creatures who sneak about, sticking to rocks and to the sides of brooks and gullies, may not have it all. Sit, Governor, sit, for me, for us. Remain here, a father for us, &c. These chiefs say, ‘Don’t sit,’ because they have sold all their possessions, and they are filled with foreign property, and they have also no more to sell. But I say, what of that? Sit, Governor, sit. You two stay here, you and Busby—you two, and they also, the missionaries.”

Matiu, a chief of the Uri-o-ngongo Tribe, rose and said, “O Governor! sit, stay, remain—you as one with the missionaries, a Governor for us. Do not go back, but sit here, a Governor, a father for us, that good may increase, may become large to us. This is my word to thee: do thou sit here, a father for us.”

Kawiti, chief of the Ngatihine Tribe, rose and said, “No, no. Go back, go back. What dost thou want here? We Native men do not wish thee to stay. We do not want to be tied up and trodden down. We are free. Let the missionaries remain, but, as for thee, return to thine own country. I will not say ‘Yes’ to thy sitting here. What! to be fired at in our boats and canoes by night! What! to be fired at when quietly paddling our canoes by night! I, even I, Kawiti, must not paddle this way, nor paddle that way, because the Governor said ‘No’—because of the Governor, his soldiers, and his guns! No, no, no. Go back, go back; there is no place here for the Governor.”

Wai, a chief of the Ngaitawake Tribe, rose and said, “To thee, O Governor! this. Will you remedy the selling, the exchanging, the cheating, the lying, the-stealing of the whites? O Governor! yesterday I was cursed by a white man. Is that straight? The white gives us Natives a pound for a pig; but he gives a white four pounds for such a pig. Is that straight? The white gives us a shilling for a basket of potatoes but to a white he gives four shillings for a basket like that one of ours. Is that straight? No, no; they will not listen to thee: so go back, go back. If they would listen and obey, ah! yes, good that; but have they ever listened to Busby? And will they listen to thee, a stranger, a man of yesterday? Sit, indeed! what for? Wilt thou make dealing straight?”

Here there was an interruption by a white man named Jones (a hawker and pedlar of Kororareka), and by the white man who had previously addressed the Governor, and also by another young white man, who all three spoke to the Governor at one time from different parts of the tent, calling on His Excellency to have the speeches interpreted for the whites to hear, and also to have them interpreted correctly. Johnson was again called for to come forward, who, on the Governor desiring

him to do so, interpreted the speech of the last speaker, Wai, commenting on the same, after first remarking that "it was great lies."

Pumuka, chief of the Roroa Tribe, rose and said, "Stay, remain, Governor; remain for me. Hear, all of you. I will have this man a foster-father for me. Stay, sit, Governor. Listen to my words, O Governor! Do not go away; remain. Sit, Governor, sit. I wish to have two fathers-thou and Busby, and the missionaries."

Warerahi (George King), a chief of the Ngaitawake Tribe, rose and said, "Yes! What else? Stay, sit; if not, what? Sit; if not, how? Is it not good to be in peace? We will have this man as our Governor. What! turn him away! Say to this man of the Queen, Go back! No, no."

Here a commotion and bustle took place among the Natives, who were sitting closely packed, in consequence of a lane or open space being made in front of the platform for Tareha, and for Hakiro, and for other chiefs to make their running speeches in, a la Nouvelle-Zelande .

Hakiro (son of Tareha, but who on this occasion appeared and spoke on behalf of Titore, 13 deceased, principal chief of the Ngatinanene Tribe) arose and said, "To thee, O Governor! this. Who says 'Sit'? Who? Hear me, O Governor! I say, no, no. Sit, indeed! Who says 'Sit'? Go back, go back; do not thou sit here. What wilt thou sit here for? We are not thy people. We are free. We will not have a Governor. Return, return; leave us. The missionaries and Busby are our fathers. We do not want thee; so go back, return, walk away."

Tareha, chief of the Ngatirehia Tribe, rose, and, with much of their usual national gesticulation, said, "No Governor for me-for us Native men. We, we only are the chiefs, rulers. We will not be ruled over. What! thou, a foreigner, up, and I down! Thou high, and I, Tareha, the great chief of the Ngapuhi tribes, low! No, no; never, never. I am jealous of thee; I am, and shall be, until thou and thy ship go away. Go back, go back; thou shalt not stay here. No, no; I will never say 'Yes.' Stay! Alas! what for? why? What is there here for thee? Our lands are already all gone. Yes, it is so, but our names remain. Never mind; what of that-the lands of our fathers alienated? Dost thou think we are poor, indigent, poverty-stricken-that we really need thy foreign garments, thy food? Lo! note this." (Here he held up high a bundle of fern-roots he carried in his hand, displaying it.) "See, this is my food, the food of my ancestors, the food of the Native people. Pshaw, Governor! To think of tempting men-us Natives-with baits of clothing and of food! Yes, I say we are the chiefs. If all were to be alike, all equal in rank with thee-but thou, the Governor up high-up, up, as this tall paddle" (here he held up a common canoe-paddle), "and I down, under, beneath! No, no, no. I will never say, 'Yes, stay.' Go back, return; make haste away. Let me see you [all] go, thee and thy ship. Go, go; return, return."

Tareha was clothed with a filthy piece of coarse old floor-matting, loosely tied round him, such as is used by the commonest Natives merely as a floor-mat under their bedding. He was evidently dressed up in this fashion in order the more effectually to ridicule the supposition of the New-Zealanders being in want of any extraneous aid of clothing, &c., from foreign nations. He also carried in his hand, by a string, a bunch of dried fern-root, formerly their common vegetable food, as bread with us. His habit, his immense size-tall and very robust (being by far the biggest Native of the whole district)-and his deep sepulchral voice, conspired to give him peculiar prominence, and his words striking effect: this last was unmistakably visible on the whole audience of Natives.

Rawiri, a chief of the Ngatitautahi Tribe, arose and said (first sentence in English) Good morning, Mr. Governor! very good you! Our Governor, our Father! Stay here, O Governor! Sit, that we may be in peace. A good thing this for us—yes, for us, my friends, Native men. Stay, sit. Do thou remain, O Governor! to be a Governor for us.”

Hoani Heke, a chief of the Matarahurahu Tribe, arose and said, “To raise up, or to bring down? to raise up, or to bring down? Which? which? Who knows? Sit, Governor, sit. If thou shouldst return, we Natives are gone, utterly gone, nothinged, extinct. What, then, shall we do? Who are we? Remain, Governor, a father for us. If thou goest away, what then? We do not know. This, my friends,” addressing the Natives around him, “is a good thing. It is even as the word of God” (the New Testament, lately printed in Maori at Paihia, and circulated among the Natives). “Thou to go away! No, no, no! For then the French people or the rum-sellers will have us Natives. Remain, remain; sit, sit here; you with the missionaries, all as one. But we Natives are children—yes, mere children. Yes; it is not for us, but for you, our fathers—you missionaries—it is for you to say, to decide, what it shall be. It is for you to choose. For we are only Natives. Who and what are we? Children—yes, children solely. We do not know: do you then choose for us. You, our fathers—you missionaries. Sit, I say, Governor, sit! a father, a Governor for us.” (Pronounced with remarkably strong and solemn emphasis, well supported both by gesture and manner.)

Hakitara, a chief of the Rarawa Tribe, rose and said a few words; but, in consequence of several talking (both whites and Natives) the one to the other at this moment, remarking on Hoani Heke’s speech and manner, and from Hakitara speaking low, what he said was not plainly heard. He spoke, however, in favour of the Governor’s remaining.

Tamati Waka Nene, chief of the Ngatihao Tribe, rose and said, “I shall speak first to us, to ourselves, Natives” (addressing them). “What do you say? The Governor to return? What, then, shall we do? Say here to me, O ye chiefs of the tribes of the northern part of New Zealand! what we, how we?” (Meaning, how, in such a case, are we henceforward to act?) “Is not the land already gone? is it not covered, all covered, with men, with strangers, foreigners—even as the grass and herbage—over whom we have no power? We, the chiefs and Natives of this land, are down low; they arc up high, exalted. What, what do you say? The Governor to go back? I am sick, I am dead, killed by you. Had you spoken thus in the old time, when the traders and grog-sellers came—had you turned them away, then you could well say to the Governor, ‘Go back,’ and it would have been correct, straight; and I would also have said with you, ‘Go back;’—yes, we together as one; man, one voice. But now, as things are, no, no, no.” Turning to His Excellency, he resumed, “O Governor! sit. I, Tamati Waka, say to thee, sit. Do not thou go away from us; remain for us—a father, a judge, a peacemaker. Yes, it is good, it is straight. Sit thou here; dwell in our midst. Remain; do not go away. Do not thou listen to what [the chiefs of] Ngapuhi say. Stay thou, our friend, our father, our Governor.”

Eruera Maehe Patuone (the elder brother of Tamati Waka Nene, who has for some time been living in the island of Waiheke, in the Thames, and who only came up from thence a few weeks back) rose and said, “What shall I say on this great occasion, in the presence of all those great chiefs of both countries? Here, then, this is my word to thee, O Governor! Sit, stay—thou, and the missionaries, and the Word of God. Remain here with us, to be a father for us, that the French have us not, that Pikopo, that bad man, have us not. Remain, Governor Sit, stay, our friend.”

Te Kemara (who had spoken the first) here jumped up, and, in his usual excitable, lively,

and flourishing manner, said, “No, no. Who says ‘Stay’? Go away; return to thine own land. I want my lands returned to me. If thou wilt say, ‘Return to that man Te Kemara his land,’ then it would be good. Let us all be alike [in rank, in power]. Then, O Governor! remain. But, the Governor up! Te Kemara down, low, flat! No, no, no. Besides, where art thou to stay, to dwell? There is no place left for thee.” Here Te Kemara ran up to the Governor, and, crossing his wrists, imitating a man handcuffed, loudly vociferated, with fiery flashing eyes, “Shall I be thus, thus? Say to me, Governor, speak. Like this, eh? like this? Come, come, speak, Governor. Like this, eh?” He then seized hold of the Governor’s hand with both his and shook it most heartily, roaring out with additional grimace and gesture (in broken English), “How d’ye do, eh, Governor? How d’ye do, eh, Mister Governor?”

This he did over, and over, and over again, the Governor evidently taking it in good part, the whole assembly of whites and browns, chief and slave, Governor, missionaries, officers of the man-o’-war, and, indeed, “all hands,” being convulsed with laughter. This incident ended this day’s meeting.