

(vii) Henry Williams' Understanding of the Treaty

[wwbar.gif]

As a result of the issues raised by the Charter of 1846, Henry Williams is requested by Bishop Selwyn to reply to the following letter, written 30th June 1847:

"My dear Archdeacon [Williams], A letter from Lord Grey.. ...distinctly denies the right of the New Zealanders to their unoccupied lands, in entire violation, as I conceive of the Treaty of Waitangi. As you were commissioned by Captain Hobson to interpret and explain the treaty to the natives, both in the North and the South, and were expressly directed by him in his official letter, not to allow any one to sign till he finally understood it, I hereby request you to inform me in writing what you explained to the natives, and how they understood it.."

In reply, Henry Williams writes from Paihia 12th July 1847:

"...As I did explain the nature of the treaty in 1840, I must continue to explain, in self defence; for I must not be accessory to such deception, but continue to stand upon the treaty alone.

...My view of the Treaty of Waitangi is, as it ever was, that it was the Magna Charta of the aborigines of New Zealand. Your Lordship has requested information in writing of what I explained to the natives, and how they understood it. I confined myself solely to the tenor of the treaty:

That the Queen had kind wishes towards the chiefs and people of New Zealand, And was desirous to protect them in their rights as chiefs, and rights of property, And that the Queen was desirous that a lasting peace and good understanding should be preserved with them.

That the Queen had thought it desirable to send a Chief as a regulator of affairs with the natives of New Zealand.

That the native chiefs should admit the Government of the Queen throughout the country, from the circumstance that numbers of her subjects are residing in the country, and are coming hither from Europe and New South Wales.

That the Queen is desirous to establish a settled government, to prevent evil occurring to the natives and Europeans who are now residing in New Zealand without law.

That the Queen therefore proposes to the chiefs these following articles. **o Firstly, - The chiefs shall surrender to the Queen for ever the Government of the country, for the preservation of order and peace.**

o Secondly, - The Queen of England confirms and guarantees to the chiefs and tribes, and to each individual native, their full rights as chiefs, their rights of possession of their lands, and all their other property of every kind and degree. The chiefs wishing to sell any portion of their lands, shall give to the Queen the right of pre-emption of their lands.

o Thirdly - That the Queen, in consideration of the above, will protect the natives of New Zealand, and will impart to them all the rights and privileges of British subjects.

The instruction of Captain Hobson was, "not to allow any one to sign the treaty till he fully understood it;" to which instruction I did most strictly attend. I explained the treaty clause by clause at the signing of the same, and again to all the natives in this part of the island previously to the destruction of Kororareka, on March 11, 1845; I maintained the faith of the treaty and the integrity of the British Government, and that the word of Her Majesty was sacred, and could not be violated. That the natives to whom I explained the treaty understood the nature of the same, there can be no doubt; ..."

The extracts above were taken from between pages 153 and 157 of Volume II of "The Life of HENRY WILLIAMS, Archdeacon of Waimate," by Hugh Carleton, published 1877 by Wilson & Horton, Auckland. The two volumes are probably not uncommon, and should be found in the historical section of most main libraries. They offer very interesting and accurate reading, and should be consulted if greater in depth circumstances around the Waitangi issue is required to be known.

[BACK] [HOME]

© G.S. Williams 1999 All Rights Reserved