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## Chapter 3

### The Kohimarama Conference

During the winter of 1860 while the staff and scholars of St. Andrew's College were in Melanesia, the Mission buildings were lent to the Governor, Colonel Thomas Gore Browne, as the venue of the historic "Kohimarama Conference". This was an assembly of native chiefs of New Zealand convened by the Governor for the purpose of discussing with him various matters connected with the welfare and advancement of the two races in this colony. The Conference was unique in that it was the first opportunity the Maoris had been given of holding a "runanga" with pakeha officials - their first step towards representation in the Government.

In March, four months prior to the opening of the Conference, the Taranaki War had broken out as the result of a dispute over the sale of the Waitara block north-east of New Plymouth and it was feared by the Government that the trouble would spread to the Waikato, the centre of the "King movement"; hence the Governor's decision to try to come to an understanding with the natives over land and other matters which led to disputes. The measure was severely criticised by many who thought that the calling of such a Conference after hostilities had broken out would be construed by the natives as a confession of weakness; moreover it was thought unlikely that the chiefs of hostile tribes would accept the Governor's invitation. Press comments of July 6th and 10th were that, with the continuance of the Taranaki War, every chance of the Conference's usefulness was extinguished but the main object now was "to prevent it becoming worse than useless."

The populace of Auckland, and of Tamaki in particular, were becoming very alarmed at having such a large gathering of chiefs in their district and prevailed upon the Governor to fortify the area in case of treachery. The following is an outline of the precautionary measures taken:-

"The town", stated the Governor, "is divided into five districts, each of which is to furnish a company of militia. Those who have arms of their own will form an inlying picket, and the remainder will be required to ballot for such arms as the Government is able to supply. At the present we can furnish sixty stand of arms to each company.... In addition to the militia, a volunteer force of nearly 400 men, a mounted volunteer troop of about 43 men, 110 (men) of the 65th Regiment and 40 marines will form the garrison of the town. Blockhouses, or houses rendered musket-proof, will be established round the town... and H.M. frigate Iris is now anchored in the harbour. The outer defences are as follows: - H.M. steam frigate Niger, attended by a gunboat furnished by the local government, is anchored in the Manukau. Lieutenant-Colonel Kenny... has been placed in command of the settlement of Onehunga, and has been directed to protect the Whau portage and river.... At the portage itself a blockhouse is in course of erection... Lieutenant-Colonel Nixon...has been placed in command of the pensioner settlement of Otahuhu, Panmure and Howick, and has been directed to protect the line of the Tamaki from the Waitemata to the Manukau. A blockhouse is in course of

erection on the narrow neck of land leading to the village of Otahuhu. Five hundred stand of arms... have been supplied to this outpost and three hundred to the outpost on the west...."

At Mission Bay two new buildings, about 100 feet by 16 feet, were erected and were to become the property of the builder after a lapse of two months - a kitchen of corrugated iron and a wooden store for supplies. Provisions, mattresses and other articles of necessity were ordered and a cook and steward were engaged.

To cater for the transport of spectators, arrangements were made with the owners of the steamer "Emu", to make two trips daily from Auckland to Mission Bay for the duration of the Conference. She left the Queen Street Wharf at 10 a.m., the Wynyard Pier at 10.30 a.m. and 1.30 p.m., and departed from Mission Bay at 3 p.m. The fare was two shillings.

On Monday July 9th the "Emu" made two trips taking down 108 visiting chiefs who were to be billeted in the Mission buildings. The total number who assembled at the bay for the official opening was 111 but 43 arrived during the following week. The attendance was poorer than had been anticipated as 250 had been invited. Some of these were unable to attend as they were suffering from a serious form of influenza then prevalent throughout the country; others had declined as they would not leave their tribes while the country was in such an unsettled condition; and others did not wish to attend as they lacked confidence in the Governor or were actively hostile to him. The Chiefs in the last category were either supporters of the King movement or those taking part in the Taranaki War. The districts most fully represented were the Bay of Islands, Kaipara, Auckland, the Bay of Plenty, Wairarapa and the west coast between Wanganui and Wellington; the Thames, Waikato, Taupo and Upper Wanganui tribes had some representation but Taranaki none.

His Excellency, the Governor, officially opened the Conference on Tuesday July 10th. He arrived at Mission Bay in the pinnace of H.M.S. "Iris" at about 12 o'clock and was accompanied by Mr. Donald McLean, the Native Secretary, who was to act as president of the Conference; Chief Justice Arney; the Premier, Mr. Stafford; Mr. Richmond, Native Minister; Mr. Whitaker, Attorney-General; Mr. Tancred, Postmaster General; Mr. Williamson, Superintendent of the Province of Auckland; Colonel Mould, who was in command of the forces at Auckland, and his Private Secretary, Captain Steward; Colonel Sillery; Mrs. Gore Browne; Mrs. Tancred; Mr. T.H. Smith, assistant Native Secretary; Mr. Halse; Mr. Walter Buller, secretary to the Conference; Majors Stack, Salmon and Peacock; Captain W. Field. Porter; Messrs. Kemp, Clarke, Baker, Sinclair, A. Clarke, T.C. law, R. Graham and C.H. Browne (Canterbury); Revs. Burrow, Buddle, Garavel, Lloyd and Kingdon and some of the officers of the "Iris".

The following extracts are from the account of the opening ceremony as published in the "Southern Cross" on July 11th, 1860;

The proceedings were opened in the large schoolroom of the Melanesian Mission. The governor having taken his seat, Mr. McLean announced to the chiefs present that His Excellency would now proceed to address them. This the governor did by reading the following address in English, which was subsequently translated by Mr. McLean.

"My Friends, - Chiefs of New Zealand, I have invited you to meet me on the present occasion that we may have an opportunity of discussing matters connected with the welfare and advancement of the two Races dwelling in New Zealand."

The Governor then referred to the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi and assured the chiefs of its inviolability saying that Her Majesty had instructed her successive representatives to maintain the

stipulations of the treaty and "to watch over the interests and promote the advancement of her subjects without distinction of Race." His Excellency continued:

"Having renewed these assurances in the name of our Gracious Sovereign, I now ask you to confer with me frankly and without reserve. If you have grievances make them known to me and, if they are real, I will try to redress them. Her Majesty's wish is that all her subjects should be happy, prosperous and contented. If therefore you can make any suggestions for the better protection of property, the punishment of offenders, the settlement of disputes or the preservation of peace, I shall gladly hear them and will give them the most favourable consideration."

The speaker then commented on the King movement, the supporters of which desired that the Maori tribes of New Zealand should unite under a Maori king and throw off their allegiance to the Sovereign. He said:

"It is unnecessary for me to remind you that Her Majesty's engagements to Her Native subjects in New Zealand have been faithfully observed. No foreign enemy has visited your Shores. Your lands have remained in your possession or have been bought by the Government at your own desire. Your people have availed themselves of their privileges as British subjects, seeking and obtaining in the Courts of Law that protection and redress which they afford to all Her Majesty's subjects. But it is right you should know and understand that in return for these advantages you must prove yourselves to be loyal and faithful subjects, and that the establishment of a Maori King would be an act of disobedience and defiance to Her Majesty which cannot be tolerated. It is necessary for the preservation of peace in every part should acknowledge one country that the inhabit Head."

The Governor then told the assembly that New Zealand was the only colony in which the natives had been invited to unite with the colonists as one people under one law. He told them, too, of systems in other colonies which had resulted in warfare and often in the extinction of the aborigines. He said:

"I will not now detain you by alluding to other matters of great importance, but will communicate with you from time to time and call your attention to them before you separate." He then congratulated the Maori race on their vast progress in civilisation since they had been taken under the protection of the Queen and farewelled them thus:

"Earnestly praying that God may grant His blessing on your deliberations and guide you in the right path, I leave you to the free discussion of the subjects I have indicated and of any others you may think likely to promote the welfare of your race."

At the conclusion of this address two chiefs Mete Kingi and Kawana Paipai of Wanganui stepped forward and, in the name of the tribes of their district presented the Governor with two beautifully embroidered kaitakas (fine flax mantles) and a taiaha (carved staff) as a pledge of loyalty and peace.

His Excellency and suite then adjourned to an adjoining hall, probably the refectory, to hold a levee. This was attended by all the chiefs who were formally introduced to the Governor by Mr. McLean. During this ceremony Te Whikiriwhi of the Ngatiporou, an East Cape tribe, presented to His Excellency as a token of his allegiance a curious whalebone taukari (club). After the reception, the Governor took his departure and the chiefs reassembled in the conference hall. The president then addressed the assembly stating briefly the objects of the meeting and calling attention to the various subjects mentioned in the Governor's address. He then invited the chiefs to give a full and candid expression of their opinions.

The first to rise was Tamati Waka Nene, the loyal Ngapuhi chief who had influenced his fellow countrymen to support the Treaty of Waitangi and had fought against the rebels in "Hone Heke's War" at Kororareka. He said:

"Hearken, O ye people, Hearken! This is a Council to discuss the affairs of the people. I have come forward first; but you are the head so I leave the speaking for you."

The last sentence was addressed to Paora Tuhaere of Orakei who, as the local chief, was regarded as the host and had the right to speak first. Tamati Waka Nene continued:

"I shall afterwards express

my sentiments that you may hear them, that all may know them, both Pakeha and Maori. I sit down."

Then Paora arose and addressed the gathering thus:

"Now Listen ye people listen! Listen, both Pakeha and Maori. This property (the Pakeha) belongs to me: therefore I say let me have the first speech in this meeting: Hearken, all ye people to my words! These were my words to the first Governor, to the second Governor and to the third Governor: I want the Laws of England. Hearken, ye people, two things commend themselves to my mind - the Governor and the Queen. For thereby do we, both Pakeha and Maori, reap good. This is my speech. The best riches for us are the Laws of England. In my opinion the greatest of all evils is War. But we are all in the wrong. When a Maori kills a Pakeha the Pakeha says Let us fight; and when a Pakeha kills a Maori then the Maori says Let us fight. For example - if I should be killed by a Pakeha, my tribe would say, Let us fight with the Pakeha; and on the other hand were I to kill a Pakeha, even though he be a slave, the Pakeha would demand me as payment. These are my words. I entertained the Pakeha a long time ago and I found him good. Hence I say I shall always remember the Pakeha; and I shall always remember too, with affection, the Governor who was sent here to protect us. The benefits which we received from him are - Christianity and the Laws. Now listen! My affections at the present time lie between these two blessings. Listen again! My heart is satisfied. All that the Laws keep from us is Guns, Powder and Brandy. Another subject comes under my attention. It is the misunderstanding between the Pakeha and the Maori, about land. The Pakeha has his mode of selling land and the Maori has his mode. O people hearken! The Pakeha came to New Zealand to protect the Maori. As to talk about Waitangi (treaty) that is Ngapuhi's affair."

The Ngapuhi, Tamati Waka Nene then explained his reasons for advocating Maori support of the Treaty of Waitangi. He said:

"O people listen: These are my words for ourselves to speak about the Governor and about the Pakehas. I am not accepting the Pakeha for myself alone but for the whole of us. My desire when Governor Hobson arrived here was to take him as our Governor in order that we might have his protection. Who knows the mind of the the Americans or that of the French? Therefore I say let us have the English to protect us. Therefore my friends, do I say, let this Governor be our Governor and this Queen our Queen. Let us accept this Governor, as a Governor for the whole of us. Let me tell you, ye assembled tribes, I have but one Governor. Let this Governor be a King to us. Listen again, ye people! When the Governor came here he brought with him the Word of God by which we live; and it is through the teaching of that Word that we are able to meet together this day under one roof. Therefore I say, I know no King but the, Queen and I never shall know any other. I am walking by the side of the Pakeha. Mr. McLean, this is all I have to say. People of the Runanga I have finished." Paora and Tamati were followed that day by eight other speakers who in various ways expressed

their loyalty to the Queen, their appreciation of the benefits of civilisation and their dislike of war; and the next two days brought forth similar orations all in the same quaint picturesque language reminiscent of the Bible. The last to speak was the revered Orakei chief Apihai Te Kawau, an old man of seventy or more who had been unable to attend the Conference during the first two days owing to influenza.

On the Friday Mr. McLean read and explained the various clauses of the Governor's speech and further messages which had since been received from His Excellency. One of these was a request to consider a suggested code of rules for the administration of justice in native districts and by natives. This code had been prepared by the Maoris' friend, Sir William Martin, the late Chief Justice of New Zealand. A second message invited the assembly to give their opinions on the introduction of mixed juries in cases of murder where persons of the Maori race were concerned; while a third asked the chiefs to consider the difficulties and complications attending the ownership of land and asked for suggestions for removing or simplifying them so that, in future, disputes might be avoided. submitted were: that a clear definition of tribal boundaries should be made; that a committee of about 5 disinterested chiefs should be chosen to settle boundary disputes; that, as in accordance with English law, possession of land, for a fixed period, e.g. twenty years, should give the possessor a good title; and that the English law of succession to property should be adopted.

His Excellency had been greatly assisted in the drawing up of his suggestions, not only by Sir William Martin, but also by Bishop Selwyn and the Attorney-General Mr Swainson, to all of whom he had written some months before asking for their opinions as to suitable topics of discussion. In response, they had sent him individual papers on certain points and a joint one on others on which they all agreed.

The next four weeks were occupied with discussions on the above subjects; on the clauses of the Governor's speech; on the causes of the Taranaki war; and on other proposals put forward by the chiefs, such as their inclusion in Government councils.

During the third week, however, the daily routine was varied by a most welcome action on the part of His Excellency - he and his wife dined with the chiefs in the mission hall. to do so resulted, no doubt, from expressions of regret made by some of the chiefs that they saw much less of their present Governor than of his predecessors.

On Friday, 10th August, after the conclusion of their discussions, the chiefs carried the following resolutions:—

1. That this Conference takes cognizance of the fact that, the several Chiefs, members thereof, are pledged to each other to do nothing inconsistent with their declared recognition of the Queen's sovereignty and of the union of the two races; also to discountenance all proceedings tending to a breach of the covenant here solemnly entered into by them.
2. That this Conference is of the opinion that the project of setting up a Maori King in New Zealand is a cause of strife and division and is fraught with danger to the country.
3. That this Conference, having heard explained the circumstances which led to the war at Taranaki, is of the opinion that the Governor was justified in the course taken by him; that Wiremu Kingi provoked the quarrel; and that the proceedings of the latter are wholly indefensible.
4. That this Conference deprecates in the strongest manner the murders of unarmed Europeans committed by the natives now fighting at Taranaki.

5. That this Conference desires to thank the Bishop of New Zealand for his kindness in allowing them the use of the buildings at Kohimarama. (Mission Bay).
6. That this Conference desires to thank his Excellency the Governor for his goodness to the Maori people; that is for his constant kindness and love to them; and also for granting them this great boon, the Runanga, whereby they are enabled to express their views and to propose measures for the settlement of the difficulties which arise among the Native people.
7. That this Conference desires to thank their friend, Mr. McLean, for his great exertions on their behalf and for his kindness to the Natives of this Island of New Zealand.

Resolutions (2) and (3) were not carried unanimously. Only ten chiefs were against (2), the condemnation of the King movement, but the majority were against (3) which put the onus of the Taranaki War on Wiremu Kingi. However, after further explanation by the President and further discussion amongst themselves that evening, all but three agreed to sign the resolutions. The dissenting three signed their names after a statement that they agreed with all resolutions except (3).

On Saturday the 11th, in the pinnace of H.M.S. "Niger" the governor proceeded to Mission Bay to dissolve the Conference, On landing he was formally welcomed by the assembled chiefs headed by Paora Tuhaere who carried the British Ensign and who escorted the Governor to the conference had 1. In his farewell address His Excellency listed the various subjects discussed by the Conference and then continued thus:

"Nothing affecting the interests and welfare of your race has been concealed from you and I doubt not you are quite sincere in the sentiments of loyalty to Her Majesty and friendship to the Europeans which you have so generally expressed.

I trust therefore that this Conference will prove to have been the means of restoring and strengthening confidence between the two races. Convinced of Her Majesty's desire that her subjects should live in peace, you will return to your homes reassured and enabled to correct any false impressions which may still linger in the thoughts of your people.

The education of your children, greater attention to the cultivation of the soil, the erection of better homes to live in, and the requisition of European property will, I sincerely trust, claim your chief attention when you return to your people.

I shall have great pleasure in reporting to our most gracious Sovereign that her Maori subjects (in whose welfare she takes so deep an interest) have conducted their first Conference in the most orderly and creditable manner and that they have given ample proof that they are wanting in neither intelligence nor good feeling - information which will be very gratifying to her, and scarcely less so to her Pakeha subjects in England as well as in New Zealand.

A faithful record of the Conference will be preserved by the Government and I am sure that hereafter your children will peruse it with much satisfaction as a history of the first step towards that self-government which I trust they will comprehend and enjoy. to

It now only remains for me to inform you that the Conference will be convened again next year and that the Assembly will assist me in devising measures for the establishment of order and for the good of your race generally.

In the interval between the present time and the next Conference, I trust you will carefully consider the subjects to which your attention has been directed, in order that you may come prepared to express matured opinions, and to recommend measures for giving practical effect to your wishes.

"Farewell, my Friends! and may God protect you and guide you in the ways of wisdom and the paths of peace."

Then, in the name of her Majesty the Queen, His Excellency presented to Hori Kingi Te Anana, a Wanganui chief, some handsome silver mounted staffs, one for himself personally and the others for some of the southern chiefs who were unable to attend. After receiving them, Hori Kingi turned towards the Conference, then towards the Governor, and spoke toward thus:

"Hearken, O Governor: Hearken also chiefs of this Runanga. I have received the Queen's pledge - a - pledge of Her regard for Her Maori subjects. Now hear ye! This shall also be a pledge of my allegiance to the Queen's authority. I shall be firm in my adherence to the Queen even unto death, and when I die my son shall take this staff and follow in the steps of his father. So shall it be an heirloom in my family and a pledge of our loyalty for ever, ever, ever."

Thus closed the Kohimarama Conference.

The Governor and his attendants departed and the chiefs returned to their tribal lands apparently happy and satisfied. But, though the Governor was hopeful that the Conference would have an influence in pacifying the country, popular opinion was not so optimistic and the Auckland daily papers two months later declared it to be almost barren of result except for some amelioration of feeling among non-combatants. The main cause of failure was attributed of course to the Taranaki War which resulted in loss of confidence in the Governor and in non-representation of the Taranaki Province. But another factor which was said to have stirred up ill feeling and caused offence was the Governor's method of issuing invitations. Printed forms were filled in at the discretion of Commissioners, without any set rule of guidance; consequently, there were many omissions and many mistakes in regard to rank. It was said, too, that the chiefs who came from the south did so because they wished to gain favour; because they heard they were to be well paid for attendance\* or because they wished to meet the chiefs of the north with whom they wanted to discuss the King movement and Many, too, criticised the Governor for the Taranaki War. taking so small a part in the proceedings. One settler wrote:

"The display of royalty on such an occasion may be all very well but it will require some more to regain the respect and confidence of the Maori race: mixing often with them and taking an active part in their Conference, His Excellency would have found to be a more potent lever. Some of us can call to mind numerous instances when we have seen His Excellency's predecessors, in the dress of private gentlemen, mixing with the Maoris, winning their confidence without compromising royalty or losing any of their dignity as the representatives of Her Majesty.

Future events soon proved that the Conference had had little effect in keeping the peace; for the Taranaki War continued until 1861 and was followed by a series of outbreaks in the centre and east of the island which did not terminate until 1871.

However, the Conference could not be truthfully described as a complete failure or as "worse than useless" amount for the chiefs who attended it received a considerable amount of enlightenment on a wide variety of topics from their very understanding and painstaking president, Mr. Donald McLean, a man who not only understood the Maori mind and language, but who possessed infinite tact, wisdom and patience. That the assembled chiefs were very impressed with the way in which

the proceedings were conducted and the assurances given them was evidenced nineteen years later when a similar but larger gathering was held at Okahu Bay under the chairmanship of Paora Tuhaere. At this "Maori Parliament" frequent references were made to the Kohimarama gathering which came to be regarded as a second "Waitangi"; and Governor Gore Browne's entire speech was read by Paora in his opening presidential address. Moreover, the new Orakei hall which was built by Paora specially for the occasion was named "Kohimarama" to commemorate the earlier historic gathering.