

could not agree that some of the properties should be sold as he was not convinced that the sums that would be offered for them would be enough to place the other blocks on a sound financial basis.

He argued that if he had not adopted obstructive tactics in the past all of the blocks would have been taken over by the banks and land Companies. The Natives, he said, would not tolerate a system of 'Pakeha Landlordism'. In Ireland the people had had to shoot some landlords and if it became necessary, he might have to instruct the Maoris to

ding further extensive settlement, be required to find at least £ 60,000 per annum towards the cost of operating it.

Wi Pere's response was that the Stout Government was adopting a selfish attitude. Any benefits arising from the building of the railway line should, he said, go to the Native owners of the adjoining land. Pointing towards the Premier, he remarked "Are you afraid of the Maoris becoming prosperous?"

#### Driven to the sea

During a sitting of the General Assembly in 1909, whilst Wi Pere was discussing a Native Land Bill. He complained that the Maoris had been forced to alienate far too much of their land, adding that he would personally like to see all Pakeha's driven into the sea. Some of the other Members who understood Maori displayed impatience when the official interpreter proved hesitant about translating the indiscreet remark. However, Mr Ormond, who appeared to have some comprehension on what was said, repeated to Mr Speaker as to what had transpired.

Wi Pere left the Chamber whilst the Speaker intimated that he would emphasize his own and other Member's displeasure over the incident.

Often Wi Pere's interpreter used to ask him why he often said unkind things about the Pakeha and so became unpopular. Wi Pere's response was, "I cannot say I am sorry, for what I have uttered I cannot put back".

Wi Pere lived during the 'transition period of the Maori'. He was an eye witness to the most turbulent incidents of Maori-Pakeha relationships. He had witnessed some of the worst land legislation affecting the Maoris which included the land wars, the confiscation of Maori land by successive Governments, the rise of Maori Nationalism, Te Kooti conflicts the 1867 Maori Representation Act, also the break down of traditional Maori institutions and customs by the Pakeha in their efforts to assimilate the Maori into the wider context of British type Society.

#### Cultural Conflict

A clash of cultural conflict took place in what seemed to have been an unseemly incident in which Wi Pere was the principal actor and marred Lord Plunket's visit to Te Karaka on 21 May, 1907, to open the railway extension to Puha. Some of the Maoris in the area led by Wi Pere did a haka which added to the general reception and goodwill of the tangata-whenua.

Wi Pere took off a Maori cloak which he was wearing and offered it to the Vice-Regal visitor.

Politely but firmly His Excellency declined the gift which he said, when Wi Pere persisted, he could not accept

even to hand it to some museum. In full anger Wi Pere then threw it down and threatened to trample it in the mud. To humour him, Lord Plunkett offered to accept a feather as an emblem of his loyalty. Wi Pere said he would offer a feather the next day if the Governor agreed to accept the mat. Amid cheering, John Townley (Mayor of Gisborne) picked up the mat and handed it to an Aide de Camp.

On the death of Wi Pere, December 9th, 1915, Judge Jones of the Gisborne Native Land Court, made reference as follows:

"A great Chief and one whose name was a household word among the Maoris. No one loved the Maori people more than he did. With great foresight and a keen eye to the future, he early saw that if the Maori was to be protected, he must be adjusted somewhat to the newer conditions. With this object he encouraged the education and advancement of the younger generation, and at the same time embarked on schemes having for their object the utilising of Maori lands by the aid of Europeans and their capital for the mutual advantage of both."

The local newspaper highlighted Wi's death with such headings as "Champion of the Maori Race", "A Link with the Past", "The Last of the Great Chiefs".

Apirana Ngata stated: "Wi Pere was one of the great chiefs of the East-Coast. No man ever did more for his people. The mistakes which he made were big mistakes — the mistakes a big man would make and they owed their origin to the fact that, under economic conditions of his day, he had, to a great extent, to place reliance upon others.... Essentially a Maori, Wi Pere's pride in being a Maori led him sometimes to make impolite remarks that were tinged with contempt for the Pakeha. Never was there a greater fighter for his race than Wi Pere."

Right Hon. W.F. Massey, Prime Minister — "Regret to hear the death of Wi Pere. My sincere sympathy to family and relatives, a sad loss".

Hon. W.H. Harries (Tauranga) "Both Pakeha and Maori mourn the loss they have sustained. One of the Dominion's best known citizens is now passed away".

The Native people and Government of New Zealand, as a final tribute to Wi Pere erected a fine monument along Read Quay in Gisborne in 1919.

Sir James Carroll at the unveiling stated, "I knew him well as a friend knows a friend. Wi Pere had done great service to the Dominion. It is only fitting that the Government and Native People of New Zealand should acknowledge and recognise this service."

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Te Ihi,  
Te Mana,  
Te Wehi,  
O Turanga-nui-a-Kiwa

#### The Hon. Wi Pere (1837-1915)

(Eastern Maori)

M.H.R. 1884-1887  
1894-1905

M.L.C. 1907-1912

- Rangatira
- Soldier
- Politician
- Land Court Conductor
- Legislator and Historian.

#### Tribal Kinship

Kahungunu

Rongowhakaata — Te Aitanga  
a Mahaki

Sub-tribe — Whanau-a-Kai

#### Whakapapa

Tukai = Kawewai

Kapiere = Parakau

Riria = Halbert

Wi Pere

do likewise. However, he finally agreed that they should have the power to sell as well as to lease.

Another example of Wi Pere's endeavour to prevent further alienation of Maori land.

In 1885, after a year in the House of Representatives, Wi Pere listened to the question as to whether the construction of the North Island main trunk railway should be deferred until 500,000 acres of Native owned land lying close to the route should be required for settlement purposes. It was estimated that the line would cost £ 1,500,000, a huge sum in those days, and that when it was completed the taxpayers would for some years pen-