

resolved. He was therefore in the capital at the time of the meeting of New Zealand's first Parliament with, it is fair to say, some time on his hands once the latest ten-page letter to his Auckland colleagues had been penned.

The situation which prompted him to compile and have printed what was seen as a noxious and inflammatory document—and most recipients or interceptors quickly proved it flammable—arose from a speech by the able if somewhat flighty and irresponsible first 'Premier' James Edward FitzGerald. In a lengthy statement to the House of Representatives on 15 June, immediately after his Ministry had taken office, FitzGerald discussed the need to acquire millions of acres of Maori land as soon as possible. When he claimed that there was 'no question which occupies so large a space in the consideration of the future progress of the colony' he was not merely indulging in Auckland-orientated rhetoric. He proposed the raising of a massive loan to secure 'between eleven and twelve millions of acres . . . in a very few years'. He did concede that some areas might be 'thickly peopled by the Natives, who would not dispose of it at all' but the balance should be acquired except for areas comprising mountains and rocks or dense forests in the interior.³ It was FitzGerald's casual disregard of Maori interests, particularly the suggestion that they would be satisfied with the unwanted, literally waste, lands, which aroused Grace's concern. After discussion with at least one fellow-missionary he went ahead with the preparation of his counterblast.

Land purchases in the Waikato had made little real progress for some time despite Donald McLean's spectacular successes in Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa. Recent confirmation of his appointment as Chief Land Purchase Commissioner⁴ had sharpened official resolution. John Morgan, for fifteen years the C.M.S. missionary at Otawhao near Te Awamutu, was most active in the cause and a regular correspondent of McLean's. Morgan had undoubtedly done a great deal for Maori agriculture in his district through instructors at his Rangiaowhia Industrial School, more perhaps than he is currently given credit for by those critical of his role in encouraging land purchases. His equally strong support of Grey's wish for a road through the Centre, over a century before the construction of State Highway 32 from Te Awamutu to Mangakino and Taupo, was seen by some of his Maori friends as much less desirable.

In September 1854 Morgan thought that the time was now ripe for McLean to visit the district and effect purchases from those who were ready to sell:

I strongly recommend you to strike while the iron is hot and use every exertion to open up this fine district to European settlers. I feel particularly anxious to see you