

sufficient even to pay Maori informants. Te Wheoro suggested that Maori themselves did not care much for the history as they had not asked for it. Such protests did not prevent them subsequently becoming acknowledged sources of information for the history.

Government speakers, perhaps swayed by the project's defenders, now amended the original Cabinet proposals and instead extended the project's life to four years. The Premier made it clear such a deadline was intended to bring about as speedy a conclusion to the work as possible.¹³ On 27 July 1880, White was officially informed that from 1 September his salary would be reduced to £200, to be paid for three or at most four years. In addition, a £500 bonus was to be paid if the work was completed to the satisfaction either of the government or any person they appointed to report on the matter.¹⁴ After a fairly token protest White acquiesced. He at least had a job, and one beneficial side effect was his exemption from the further indignity of the general civil service salary reduction ordered that year.¹⁵ Privately White complained that 'so vast a history' could not be compiled and translated in the allotted space of four years.¹⁶

Having instituted a new, stricter regimen, government officials requested that White submit annual reports. These reports clearly charted his progress, and the problems he was increasingly to face as the cut-off date loomed and the collection was found to be nowhere near complete. White had quickly begun to copy manuscripts, intending to translate these once the copying was completed. In 1884 he proudly reported a total of 4,348 pages of Maori manuscripts copied. Unfortunately matters were not straightforward. In 1882 more time than anticipated had to be devoted to copying 'a mythological and genealogical tree' for the 'Takitumu' migration, and some manuscripts that had to be returned to their owners.¹⁷ Aware of his difficulties, White twice warned the government that the four year term would be fully taken up copying Maori manuscripts; he would not be able to undertake their translation as well. When he asked for advice on this difficulty the government simply instructed him to translate the material once the copying had been completed. It seemed no one realised that this was impossible given the four year time frame imposed.¹⁸

In 1884, following the terms of the 1879 agreement, the government had two officials inspect White's papers. The officials concerned were G. T. Wilkinson, a Native Agent in Alexandra in the Waikato, and W. J. Butler, a Wellington based interpreter.¹⁹ They were instructed to ascertain whether the work had been done satisfactorily and whether 'judicious selections' of Maori tradition had been made.²⁰ Within a few days of receiving their instructions they had submitted their reports, suggesting a rather cursory reading of the material.

The officials, while praising the work's historical value and White's scholarship, suggested various rearrangements of material. Butler queried the reliability of the early mythological content, and both