

the 'roar of retrenchment'. One columnist suggested the government could do well to arrange with White's widow for the 'valuable papers' to be worked on by a competent scholar to complete the Maori history.⁶³

Another supporter of the project's continuation proved to be the Native Department. Proposals were put forward by Lewis to the Cabinet late in 1890 to continue paying White's salary for two years. However, White's death in January 1891 saw the matter put aside, only to be re-submitted by the department to the new Liberal government which decided to wait until contacted by his widow or executors.⁶⁴ A curious case of a reformist government being more cautious than a previous conservative government.

Events now forced the reluctant government to take the matter in hand finally. Shortly after her husband's death Mary White pursued his claim for compensation but was politely fobbed off.⁶⁵ A few days later the Government Printer enquired about the government's plans for the outstanding history material set in type by his office. The government decided to issue the seventh volume and asked Tregear to revise it for publication. However, this was abandoned when it was learnt that the Maori manuscripts for it were thought not to exist. Instead 300 copies of the illustrations to *The Ancient History* comprising 120 plates were issued in the same general format as the earlier volumes.⁶⁶

Meanwhile the Native Department seems to have approached the Government Printer and Mrs White about the missing Maori papers.⁶⁷ Mary White, taking up an offer of help from A. S. Atkinson, a solicitor, sought advice on her position. He advised her not to part with any manuscripts until the question of the £500 bonus was settled.⁶⁸ The needs of the government and the hopes of Mary White were soon joined. In exchange for the manuscripts sought by the government she was to seek compensation for the arbitrary stoppage of the history project and for the costs of the passage for her and her family back to Auckland, as set out in the 1885 agreement. Her claim was strongly supported by officials of the Native Department.⁶⁹

As a result on 8 September 1891 Tregear was instructed to assess the value of the manuscripts in the White family's possession, with a view to arriving at an equitable amount of compensation. Following his recommendation the Government paid Mary White the bonus and took possession of White's papers in Wellington and Auckland. Tregear had expressed the hope that the papers would be placed in the hands of a scholar (presumably himself) 'to thoroughly sift and digest', but nothing came of it. Nor was the government's acquiring of papers very thorough-going, at least in Auckland. In 1919 George Graham was to write to Percy Smith that he had spent some pleasurable hours perusing manuscripts in the White's old family home. Judging from his description of the papers they included some of those deposited by the family in the Auckland Public Library in 1926.⁷⁰