

The directors now realized that their only hope lay in an appeal to Parliament, and on the 30th April, 1844, on the motion of Mr. Aglionby, M.P., one of their members, a Select Committee was appointed to inquire into the state of the Colony of New Zealand, and into the proceedings of the New Zealand Company. "Yesterday," wrote Gibbon Wakefield to his sister, "we declared war to the knife with the Colonial Office." In July the Committee brought out their great report of 1844, which, with minutes of evidence, correspondence, and appendices, ran into a thousand pages of small print, and was in fact a complete history of the Company's operations to date. Although ten out of the fifteen members of the Committee were supporters of the Government, the result of their deliberations was a victory for the Company. The Committee, although it did not approve of the conduct of the directors in sending out settlers to New Zealand in direct defiance of the authority of the Crown, found that the Company had a right to expect to be put in possession by the Government, with the least possible delay, of the number of acres awarded to it by Mr. Pennington, without reference to the validity or otherwise of its supposed purchases from the Natives. The Company's system of Native reserves was praised, and the Government was recommended to apply it throughout the colony.⁽¹⁾

The publication of the report created a sensation, and the press was practically unanimous in condemning the policy of the Colonial Office.

Lord Stanley refused to accept the verdict of the Select Committee. While agreeing with such non-contentious resolutions as the creation of reserves for the Maoris, and the necessity for a tax on unimproved lands, he declined to yield on the main questions. The parliamentary war was continued, and on the 17th June, 1845, the House of Commons, on the motion of Charles Buller, "That this House will resolve itself into a Committee to consider the state of the Colony and the case of the New Zealand Company," commenced a debate on New Zealand which lasted three days. In a powerful speech reviewing the affairs of New Zealand, Buller accused the Colonial Office of being "animated by unrelenting animosity to a colonization begun in opposition to its narrow views, and effecting its purpose by a Commissioner of Land Claims, a rival seat of Government, and a reckless tampering with the wild passions of a savage race."⁽²⁾ The motion was lost on party grounds, but the Company gained its objective in directing public attention to its affairs.

Relations between the Company and the Colonial Office now gradually improved, and the latter agreed to consider the Pennington awards. Major McCleverty, of the 48th Regiment, was sent out to New Zealand by Lord Stanley "to give his best assistance to the Company in the selection of their land"⁽³⁾, Governor FitzRoy had already been recalled and Captain George Grey appointed in his stead, and the directors with renewed hopes laid plans, which were not, however, destined to be fulfilled.

It is unnecessary to deal further with the history of the Company. Its Native reserves had now passed into the hands of the Government, its land troubles were gradually settled by Sir George Grey, and its doings in New Zealand are related elsewhere. Its final years were devoted principally to a series of negotiations with the British Government on matters of finance, and, although it continued for a time to despatch an occasional vessel to the Colony and gave aid to the Otago and Canterbury Associations, its colonizing energies were now expended. In 1846 Gibbon Wakefield suffered a breakdown and was no longer able to direct its affairs. He recovered, however, and after writing his "Art of Colonization" came to New Zealand in 1852, and shortly afterwards entered Parliament.

In 1850 the New Zealand Company surrendered its charter and its property to the Crown. As compensation for the property a lien of 5s. an acre was imposed by the Imperial Parliament on all Crown grants sold in the colony, and was made payable to the Company up to the amount of £268,370. The directors afterwards offered to commute the amount on the immediate payment of £200,000 and by virtue of the New Zealand Loan Act, 1856, this sum was paid in liquidation and full discharge of the debt due to the Company.

In 1858, after nearly twenty years of warfare with the Colonial Office in England and the Government in New Zealand, the Company closed its doors. Attacked by the press and no longer in sympathy with its settlers, its demise caused no regrets. Its policy during its declining years had changed, and its very founder now charged those responsible for its direction with having sold its honour and the interests of the colony for money. Its obituary notice was written by the Attorney-General for New Zealand, William Swainson, who in caustic tones spoke of it as a colonizing association ending its career without giving a single legal title to a single individual of a single piece of land.

With the passing of years a more impartial survey is possible, and it is well to record the views of Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe, who in his introduction to Dr. Harrop's recent work, "England and New Zealand," says that—

"In spite of errors of administration and other grave mistakes, the New Zealand Company is justly entitled to the gratitude of New Zealand for the great care exercised in its selection of the right type of emigrant, and for its strong advocacy of self-government. The methods of colonization adopted by the Company and the high ideals animating the directors were based upon the desire to introduce into the colony men and women who in their persons would continue the traditions and the institutions of the Mother-country. They were not considering colonization so much from the commercial standpoint as from a desire to see New Zealand settled by a people who would be worthy and fitting founders of a new and virile community."

(1) Great Britain—Report on New Zealand, 1844.

(2) *Hansard*, 3rd Series, Vol. 81.

(3) Lord Stanley to Governor Grey: Great Britain—Papers relating to New Zealand, 1846.