

## **To what extent could it be argued that Governor FitzRoy (1843-1845) and Governor Grey (1845-1853) made a serious impact on the major problems of New Zealand?**

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Almost without exception historians have recognised the impact made by Sir George Grey on the major problems of New Zealand during his first term of governorship. Less often has Robert FitzRoy been acknowledged as having a significant effect on those problems. This essay will argue that in proportion to his length of term in office, and constrained to follow a parsimonious and short sighted policy, FitzRoy nevertheless exerted a significant influence.

The problems to be faced were the need eventually to bring Maori under the control of the governor to protect the settlements, and provide the colonists with land for their needs, whilst at the same time honouring the Crown's obligation to the Maori under the Treaty of Waitangi. Unlike Grey, FitzRoy had to cope with an insolvent administration and a grossly inadequate military resource.

British policy for New Zealand in 1843 as had been the case in 1840 was to incur 'no unnecessary expense'.<sup>1</sup> As Ian Wards put it 'there was no long or medium term plan, merely one of "wait and see"'.<sup>1</sup> With official salaries nearly a year in arrears, no naval vessel on station and equipped with only one company of soldiers, FitzRoy was faced with Maori unrest, Company settlers greedy for land but fearful of their Maori neighbours, and an economy in which revenue fell far below expenditure. Yet his instructions obliged him to govern by 'moral suasion',<sup>2</sup> without further help from Britain.

Six months before FitzRoy arrived in New Zealand there had occurred at Wairau the affray in which several Europeans lost their lives at the hands of Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata. A posse of settlers led by a police magistrate attempted the arrest of the two chiefs on what was later found to be a trumped-up charge. The British were out manoeuvred, and several who surrendered were killed by Te Rangihaeata as utu<sup>3</sup> for his wife Rongo, who died from a British bullet. FitzRoy's finding of fault on the part of the posse, and his recognition of the Maori custom of utu enraged the colonists, but earned the governor the trust

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