

Wakefield's New Zealand Company, Wentworth's powerful squatter holdings, Governor Gipps, and Treaty of Waitangi 26 March 2026

The connection between **Wakefield's New Zealand Company, Wentworth's land claims, and Governor Gipps**

was a central driver for the British Crown's decision to sign the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.

1. Wakefield's New Zealand Company

- **Mission:** Founded by [Edward Gibbon Wakefield](#), the company aimed to carry out "systematic colonisation" of New Zealand through large-scale land purchases and planned settlements.
- **The "Race" to Sovereignty:** In 1839, the company dispatched the ship *Tory* to buy land before the British government could establish formal control.
- **Impact:** Their aggressive, often legally dubious claims to millions of acres forced the British Colonial Office to act quickly to protect Māori from unregulated private colonisation.

2. Wentworth's Powerful Squatter Holdings

- **The Claim:** [William Charles Wentworth](#), a leading Australian "squatter" and politician, attempted to buy nearly the entire South Island (roughly 20 million acres) from a group of Māori chiefs visiting Sydney in early 1840.
- **The "Squattocracy":** Wentworth represented the powerful landed interests in New South Wales who sought to expand their influence into New Zealand.
- **Conflict:** His massive land grab was viewed by the government as a "monstrous" fraud that threatened both Māori rights and future Crown revenue.

3. Governor George Gipps

- **Role:** As the Governor of New South Wales, Sir George Gipps had jurisdiction over New Zealand before it became a separate colony in 1841.
- **Intervention:** To stop speculators like Wentworth and the New Zealand Company, Gipps issued a proclamation in January 1840 declaring that **no private land purchases** from Māori would be recognised unless confirmed by the Crown.
- **Enmity:** This move created a lifelong rivalry with Wentworth, who swore "eternal vengeance" against Gipps for interfering with his land deals.

4. The Treaty of Waitangi (1840)

- **Pre-emption Clause:** The [Treaty of Waitangi](#) was the ultimate legal tool used to resolve these conflicts. Article 2 gave the British Crown the exclusive right to purchase land from Māori (pre-emption).
- **Outcome:** This invalidated the private "purchases" made by Wakefield's company and Wentworth, requiring all prior claims to be investigated by a Land Commission.

- **Sovereignty:** While the New Zealand Company pushed for settlement, the Treaty provided the formal framework for British sovereignty while promising to protect Māori "rangatiratanga" (chieftainship) over their lands.

**** End of notes**