CHAPTER FIVE

The empire comes home: colonial subjects and the appeal for imperial justice

During the second half of the nineteenth century, imperial activists and intellectuals in Britain struggled to redefine the ideological apparatus of British imperialism, to push back against the shifting winds of colonial politics and the widespread failures of imperial governance: rebellions in Canada (1837–38), India (1857–58), and Jamaica (1865); growing agitation for increased local governance in the colonies of settlement and India; and the declining value of an ‘empire of free trade’ in a world where Britain’s unilateral dominance was threatened by the growing political, economic, and military potency of the United States and Germany. In response, imperial stakeholders sought to cement the importance of the empire to British subjects at home and abroad. The development of responsible government in the colonies of settlement, the imperial federation movement, empire exhibitions, Empire Day, the education system, and the royal tours were part of this apparatus.¹

Prince Albert’s efforts in 1860 to promote imperial unity and to make an imperial culture through the invention of the royal tour reflect an early attempt to cement the fragile pieces of empire, which became largely defunct in the monarchy as an institution with the death of Albert in 1861. Benjamin Disraeli’s often-quoted Crystal Palace speech (1872) conceptually linked modern Toryism and the fate of Britain to empire in a way that suggested a new importance of empire in British political culture.² Sir John Seeley’s The Expansion of England (1883) proposed, in support of greater imperial political and cultural unity, an understanding of British history that emphasised the expansion of England, first in the British Isles then overseas to the neo-Britains of America, Africa, and the Pacific, as the defining attribute of Britain’s past, present, and future.³ Advocates of imperial federation at the turn of the century, most notably the former Birmingham radical Joseph Chamberlain, agitated for a global political union of British states in order to maintain Britain’s relevance in a changing world and to
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preserve the political, cultural, and economic unity of the ‘British world’. Others, such as Charles Dilke and even Cecil Rhodes, imagined a ‘Greater Britain’ of English-speaking peoples including the United States, a ‘utopian dream’ of Anglo-Saxon global hegemony and peace. All of these intellectual movements reflected a profound uncertainty about the future of Britain and its empire as well as a desire to educate the public at home and abroad about the importance of imperial relationship.

During the same period, colonial subjects of colour sought inclusion in the political, legal, and cultural community of empire. Through what Alan Lester and Elizabeth Elbourne term ‘imperial networks’, circuits of culture, ideas, trade, and politics both between metropole and colony and across the British world, these activists, intellectuals, and politicians sought to engage with and appeal to the British people, the government, and the monarchy. As they discovered, however, these cultural and political networks were not open, democratic, or evenly distributed. These ‘webs of trade, knowledge, migration, military power, and political intervention’, as Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton argue, ‘allowed certain communities to assert their influence and sovereignty over other groups’. In the British Empire, information itself, neither free nor evenly distributed, was regulated and controlled by the growing cultural resonance of racialised settler discourses, recently empowered both by the delegitimisation of the humanitarian mission and by the advent of responsible government in the colonies of settlement. In other words, these networks were ‘governed’ by modalities of power.

This chapter explores the visits of two delegations to Britain, the first a group led in 1884 by the Kingitanga leader Tawhiao to petition Queen Victoria and the imperial government for intervention against the New Zealand government’s violations of the Waitangi treaty, the second a 1909 delegation of white, African, and Coloured activists who sought parliamentary amendments to the proposed Union of South Africa Act that would protect British subjects of colour in the Cape Colony and beyond. While these episodes may seem far removed from one another, they both represent moments when colonial subjects touched by the royal tours brought their claims to the imperial metropole.

None of the historical actors mentioned in this chapter explicitly articulated any connection between the royal tour and their journeys to the heart of empire, but they were clearly inspired by the notion of the Queen (in Tawhiao’s case) and Britain as sources of justice in the face of settler aggression. They, too, represent different archetypes of colonial subjects, a chief in the case of Tawhiao (though his entourage was more diverse) and respectables of colour (with the exception of
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William Schreiner) in the case of the South African delegation. Both, however, were subject to the evolution, or devolution, of an imperial culture that increasingly privileged the concerns of colonial settlers over those of other subjects. By 1909, of course, white solidarity had crystallised, and British concerns over the drift of the white colonies of settlement away from the metropolitan sphere of influence had only heightened. In both cases, the networks of empire were short-circuited when colonial subjects of empire brought their concerns home.

How empire informed the political, cultural, and social lives of Britons was a contentious debate for contemporary observers of British society – and has continued to be for modern historians. The social history of British imperialism produced a rich historical conversation that explored the intersection between class, imperial consciousness, and popular politics. More recent historians of British imperialism, among them New Imperial historians, have searched British domestic culture to find consciousness or sub-consciousness of empire and the construction of racial and gender difference throughout British society over time. Against this literature, the historian Bernard Porter has challenged its historical foundations in a more empirical way, searching carefully through the dusty archives, through school lesson books, the popular press, memoirs, and other sources to find what he sees as limited evidence of empire outside of governing elites.

These competing visions of Britain’s imperial past speak conceptually and theoretically ‘over and under’ one another rather than seriously engaging with one another. Duncan Bell has very ably critiqued this ‘either/or’ approach to understanding the role of empire in British society:

Arguments about the lack of an imperial national identity set the bar very high, demanding that in order to classify an identity as imperial there has to exist pervasive and explicit (hence empirically demonstrable) support for the empire. Arguments about the imperialism of British culture tend to be based on far less stringent criteria, and thus on a different account of identity construction. Here a collective identity is regarded as imperial if the material and discursive contexts in which people are embedded are permeated with imperial themes and imagery. In such a society, individuals cannot easily escape being imperial – they are inflected, inscribed, interpellated, constituted, by the imperial encounter.... The former eschews the role of the empire in shaping non-measurable, sometimes subconscious, perceptions and understandings of the self and world. The latter is based on a set of generalisations that are often unwarranted, and, as Porter highlights, often mines a shallow evidentiary seam.

Following Bell’s line of thought, this chapter tries to understand British culture as an imperial culture through a more nuanced lens by tracing
the projection and reception of visits by colonial delegations to the metropole. The chapter concludes that the visits, and empire itself, were both celebrated and ignored, contested and domesticated in a way that does not conceptually square with the conceptual polarities of either historiographical camp. The tours often piqued the interest of the British press and public and garnered support in certain political circles. At the same time, they were largely ignored or dismissed by the metropolitan stakeholders who were, in other moments, most likely to leap to the defence of the empire project.

While the events described herein were ‘small events’ in the context of domestic British history, given attention in Britain for only fleeting moments, their narratives were disseminated to the British public in different forms and elicited specific responses and reactions from the press, MPs in the Houses of Parliament, and fascinated crowds on the streets. These visits did not create the same outpouring of responses as did imperial crises such as the sieges of Khartoum (1884–85) or Mafeking (1901), or the carefully crafted celebrations of Queen Victoria’s Golden (1887) and Diamond (1896) Jubilees, which were arguably imperial in the ways that they were received. These visits reflect how the British public responded to the more subtle waves of imperial culture. Like the royals of the book’s first chapters, the British people domesticated empire, a usually unsaid and often unnoticed part of metropolitan British culture. As Bill Schwarz argues (describing Stanley Baldwin’s imperial consciousness), ‘[The empire] was simply there, like God or Shakespeare, testament to civilisation of the English, a matter not of passion but of faith.’10

Petitioning the monarchy for justice and bringing claims of injustice to the metropole were an important tradition of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century empire. The records of the Colonial Office and Royal Archives are filled with numerous petitions from colonised subjects, for instance. As Duncan Bell’s work demonstrates, Queen Victoria – ‘or at least an idealised representation of her – acted as the linchpin for a sense of global national identity’.11 The construction of the royal tours centred on projecting the idea of an ‘imperial matriarch, presiding with maternal devotion over the greater British family spread around the globe’.12 The tours were, of course, a component of a broader, if often piecemeal and unsustained, cultural and ideological project that was designed to inspire obedience and loyalty among colonial subjects through the imagery of the Great (White) Queen – a brand of imperial propaganda. This conception of the Queen (and King) as a fount of justice was also a logical consequence of Anglicisation and the promises of the liberal empire. As Macaulay put it, ‘having becoming instructed in European knowledge, [our subjects] may, in some future
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Age demand European institutions,... Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history. As the previous chapters demonstrate, however, colonial subjects demanded ‘European institutions’ within the empire rather than independent from it. Moreover, while Douglas Lortimer and others have suggested that such visits must be read as performances meant to appeal to Britishers’ preconceptions of colonial people of colour, I argue below and elsewhere in the book that these historical actors were not simply playacting their Britishness.

Queen Victoria received countless petitions and delegations over her reign. The Maori King movement was, for instance, consciously modelled after Queen Victoria, the story goes, inspired by the 1852 encounter of Tamihana Te Rauparaha, the son of chief Te Rauparaha, with Queen Victoria during a visit to Britain. The visit of Tawhiao was inspired by that of the Zulu chief Cetshwayo in 1882, which resulted in similarly limited gains for the petitioner. Neil Parsons argues for the significance of King Khama’s later (1895) tour of the imperial metropole, against claims that the Jameson Raid and its consequences preserved what remained of the Tswana kingdoms; for Parsons this ‘half a loaf’ was secured by the visit. Of course, delegations and petitions rarely achieve even half a loaf. In most cases, Queen Victoria willingly acted as little more than a mouthpiece for the Colonial Office and the government. Petitions that she received were forwarded on to the Colonial Office, and her meetings with colonial subjects relayed the government’s decisions. While colonial subjects might have imagined the Great [White] Queen as a mediator between themselves and the imperial government, a notion that itself was reinforced by the mythology and propaganda of British imperialism, the monarchy functioned by and large as an extension of the government’s will.

As the sight of colonial subjects became more common in Britain, they became increasing domesticated by British society. As royal visitors often viewed the presence of empire as a banality – it simply was so colonial visitors in Britain became less exotic and newsworthy over time. As the London Morning Advertiser explained – with some exaggeration – in 1884:

Black kings and princes are no longer the *rarae aves* [rare birds] that they were when his swarthy Majesty King Cetewayo first dawned upon an astounded London drawing room. Now an African of noble birth is to be met with at most fashionable receptions during the season, and black bishops talk theology with British deans at garden parties.

Of course – as the crowds who gathered around Tawhiao in the streets in 1884 demonstrate, colonial ‘others’ remained a curiosity, albeit one that was to be expected in the metropole of the British Empire. This

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sense of banality was, in a sense, an important ideological component of British-imperial culture.

Curiously (or not), the imperial stakeholders who were most likely to pound the drums for empire at home, a discourse represented by the imperial federation movement and later the Round Table and imperial preference movements, were the least likely to come to the defence of non-white colonial subjects. Politically, this makes sense of course, but it also demonstrates a dissonance in British-imperial culture. Those most likely to defend British subjects of colour represented the liberal-humanitarian discourse of the Aborigines’ Protection Society (which had a hand in both visits described in this chapter), missionaries, the humanitarian lobby, and the so-called pro-Boers. But, as this work and others demonstrate, the ideology of the liberal empire – prop-age
ted by a complex constellation of political, intellectual, and cultural movements during the nineteenth century – was on the wane. Stakeholders of empire, and therefore British policy, demonstrated a preference for the white empire. This empire was drifting away from the metropole’s orbit, with colonial subjects of colour persuasively but unsuccessfully arguing for renewed bonds of empire. Their voices, while sympathetically received in Britain, were drowned out by proponents of the white empire and ignored by a British society with an unsustained and sometimes fleeting interest in empire.

The Maori King in London

In 1883, the Kingitanga leader Tawhiao abandoned his policy of iso-
lation and ventured out of King country in an effort to reinvigor-
ate the Maori cause. In 1881, Tawhiao and his people ‘symbolically laid down their weapons before the RM at Alexandra [Pirongia] and returned to the Waikato’, with the king allegedly declaring, ‘this is the end of warfare in this land’. Inspired by the 1882 visit of the Zulu king Cetshwayo to London – which resulted in a limited restoration of his authority in South Africa – Tawhiao decided to take his case to his treaty partner, Queen Victoria. The chief Tawhanga had visited London in the same year as the Zulu king as well but was rebuffed by Lord Kimberley, the Colonial Secretary. By demonstrating his loyalty to the Queen and explaining the injustices that his people had experi-
enced under the government of New Zealand, he hoped that she would intervene to restore the agreements of the Treaty of Waitangi.

In July 1883, the Maori MPs Wi Te Wheoro, Hone Mohi Tawhai, Henare Tomoana, and H. R. Taioa informed F. W. Chesson of the Aborigines’ Protection Society (APS) in London that ‘it is the inten-
tion of Tawhiao whom we recognise as the head of our race, to visit
your world shortly for the purpose of petitioning Her Majesty on these things’.20 The APS served as Tawhiao’s point of contact with the British government for the duration of his travels. Tawhiao’s party included Major Wiremu Te Wheoro, a Maori MP and loyalist major during the Waikato wars; Patara Te Tuhi, the king’s second cousin and secretary as well as former editor of the King newspaper Te Hokioi e Rere Atu Na; the wealthy Whanganui chief Topia Turoa; Hori Ropihana; and an interpreter, ‘a half-caste named George Skidmore’.21 Before departing for Britain, he travelled around the North Island, mustering support and fundraising. The party also met with Sir George Grey, who told them that ‘if their object was to see famous places, and persons they would be kindly entertained by the English people’ but ‘if they were going to urge any political object, in all probability the Imperial Government would decline to interfere’.22

At the departure ceremony in April 1884, Tawhiao wore an ‘extraordinary head-dress, in the shape of an imperial Crown … constructed of wire, covered with brilliantly coloured flax to imitate gold and gems’.23 The group travelled from Auckland to Sydney and on to Melbourne, arriving at Plymouth on 31 May 1884 aboard the Orient steamer Sorata. They intended to stay two months, but – waiting hopefully for an audience with Queen Victoria – they stayed eighty-one days (Te Wheoro and Skidmore stayed on longer). They took up residence with a Mrs Saintsbury at Demeter House, near Russell Square. It was there that Tawhiao and his entourage held court every day, where it was understood by the press, politicians, and other people of interest that the King would be ‘on view’ and available for introductions and business.24

Tawhiao was greeted with fascination by the British press, and he was frequently hounded by crowds seeking to catch a glimpse of the Maori King. As a kind of living exhibition, the Maori delegation was portrayed as strange and exotic – there was much obsessing over Tawhiao’s facial tattoos – but also domesticated, because the Maori had been both ‘tamed’ by British civilisation and broken by British conquest. There also existed some sense that it was somewhat normal, in the imperial metropole, to witness on occasion the presence of a colonial subject. While the press and politicians expressed some sympathy with Tawhiao’s complaints in principle, few suggested any sort of imperial intervention. Interest in Tawhiao’s cause, too, dissipated in all but humanitarian circles and the minds of a few close allies as soon as he departed for New Zealand. While Tawhiao came to London with a political purpose in mind, metropolitan Britons treated his visit largely as a colonial spectacle, reflecting a limited interest in the politics and policies of Britain’s empire.
The press lavished much attention on Tawhiao’s behaviour and appearance, focusing on the perceived shabbiness of his dress, bringing to mind Homi Bhabha’s failed mimicry of ‘almost the same, but not quite’.25 He could style himself in European ways and reject alcohol, but his tattoos and manners revealed him as the unredeemed savage that he was. The Illustrated London News described him as:

Dressed plainly in the European fashion, and his shark’s tooth suspended by a black ribbon from his right ear, and a bunch of fish-bones hanging from his buttonhole, are his only distinguishing ornaments. He is a man of middle height, fairly robust, and with a face deeply scarred with tattoo marks in a minute scroll-pattern, which covers the entire forehead and features except just below the eyes.26

The Colonies and India focused more on his physical features; he was ‘a man of middle height, fairly robust, and with a face deeply scarred with tattoo-marks in a minute scroll-pattern. He has a large, intelligent head, and a mild aspect, and has been described as the most uncommunicative of men.’27 Perhaps channelling settler efforts to discredit his legitimacy, the Pall Mall Gazette described his dress as decidedly unkingly: ‘Old frieze coat reaching down to his ankles, and comforter round his neck, a very bad hat, an old pair of shoes, and yellow stockings. A dirty handkerchief was stuffed into the bosom of his shirt. The clothes did not make the King – that was evident.’28

In the manner of amateur anthropologists, the London press sought to make sense of the Maori King by observing his dress and manner, demonstrating the supremacy of British civilisation and culture in New Zealand. Despite the decidedly modern nature and method of Tawhiao’s claims, he could only be understood as an exotic exhibition or relic of the past rather than a vehicle of modern politics.

The Maori delegation engaged with London and Londoners in ways that did not neatly align with the ‘othering’ propagated by the British press. They attended the theatre a number of times and were invited onstage at the Victoria to ‘cheering, clapping, yelling, hooting, stamping, and catcalling’.29 Tawhiao shopped for shawls, for his wives, and the press found much humour in Tawhiao’s frequent visits to the shop of a tailor named Young on Oxford Street.30 On one occasion, Tawhiao fled an ensuing mob and protested on a couch in the tailor’s shop, the crowd’s ‘noses against the windowpanes’.31 The delegation took in the sights: the British Museum (according to press accounts, Tawhiao fled in fear of the Egyptian mummies after fifteen minutes), St Paul’s, the Strangers’ Gallery of the Commons (the press reported that one member of the delegation nodded off), the Tower of London, the Royal Colonial Institute at South Kensington Museum, Windsor Castle, and

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Westminster Abbey (where they apparently experienced some trouble gaining entrance). At one point, the Maori participated in a cleansing ritual in the Thames. By one account, Tawhiao was visited by a sculptor but could not sit long enough. He accepted gifts of bon-bons and prayer books and apparently demonstrated his ‘regard for full-bodied charms’ on more than one occasion. While the New Zealand papers, which were far more likely to publish embarrassing or bizarre episodes, found comedic value in the Maori visit, the imperial capital would be an intimidating and foreign encounter for the overwhelming majority of colonial subjects.

The delegation also made the political rounds, seeking political support for the Maori cause in the Houses of Parliament. They politicians and socialised with the social and political elites of London. In his speeches, Tawhiao emphasised loyalty to and the supremacy of the Queen. He visited the National Temperance League at Crystal Palace, had lunch with the Lord Mayor, and attended soirées planned to celebrate his visit and provide him with access to important people. On 4 July, the Liberal MP Theodore Fry organised a reception for the delegation at his residence, and on 8 July Tawhiao met with dignitaries in a conference at the Salisbury Hotel. He met with press and other guests during his daily sessions at the Russell Square house of Mrs Saintsbury. According to the Auckland Star, Tawhiao would send his translator away when he was done with any given interview. During these times, the delegation would have some cigars and play cribbage.

Despite the party’s dedication to temperance (George Grey had warned them about the perils of ‘the drink’ before their departure), the Star reported that the group (except Te Wheoro) took to drinking champagne and claret cup.

The delegation briefed the Colonial Secretary, Lord Derby, on their intentions through a memorial submitted on their behalf by the APS:

We, the Maori Chiefs of New Zealand, have come to this distant land into your presence, on account of the great disaster which has overtaken your Maori race, which is beloved by the Queen and the people of England. Accordingly we have now swum the ocean of Kiwa which lies between us, and have reached England in safety, the source and fountain of authority, to the place where the Queen lives, that she may redress the ills of the Maori race inflicted on them by the Government of New Zealand.

In their memorial, they asked that the imperial government arrange ‘that they may have power to make laws regarding their own lands and race’; the ‘appointment of a Maori Commissioner, appointed by the Queen’; that ‘the greater portion of the taxes levied on your Maori
subjects to be returned to them’; ‘that the European Judges in the Native Land Court be superseded, and that your Maori race be then permitted to direct their own affairs in that court’; and that ‘the lands wrongly obtained by the Government be returned to us’.38 Appealing to the ‘tender regard displayed by the Queen to Her Maori race, as show in the treaty of Waitangi’, they laid out a detailed list of grievances that they asserted were committed against them by the government of New Zealand against the Treaty of Waitangi.39 They focused on land and, in particular, the injustices of the Native Land Courts, and their requests sought to alleviate the worst excesses of colonisation, not to roll back European settlement. But before their steamer arrived at Portsmouth, the deck had already been stacked against Tawhiao’s mission by the New Zealand settler lobby.

The New Zealand press presented Tawhiao as an imposter, and worse. In March, the Wairarapa Daily Times on the North Island condemned Tawhiao’s mission, his character, and those who sympathised with him in Britain:

[Tawhiao] is a fair spoken, well meaning man, but a sot and a libertine. His determination to proceed to England has naturally caused some consternation among Maori sympathisers. What would the Exeter Hall party, which believes in the noble Maori, and almost canonised a year or two ago one of our worst native specimens, do if Tawhiao cuts capers in London after the style which has been recorded at each point of his late pilgrimage through the North Island.40

More damning, however, was the political work done by William Jervois, Governor of New Zealand, and Dillon Bell, an old ally of George Grey and former Minister of Native Affairs. In April 1884, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, John Bramston, wrote to Bell inquiring about the ‘specific objects of Tawhiao’s visit’ and the views of the New Zealand government.41 Bell responded, in one of his more diplomatic letters of the visit, advising Bramston that:

I entertain no doubt that Tawhiao intends to approach Her Majesty’s Government with representations upon political questions, which he will claim to make on behalf of all Her Majesty’s Native subjects in New Zealand. The position of the Maori King among the tribes is, I need hardly say, very different from the one held by the so-called chiefs who came to England in 1882; and Lord Derby may perhaps consider how far it would be expedient to recognise him as being entitled to speak for the tribes.42

He also expressed his ‘confidence that the Imperial Government would not desire to embarrass your Government ... referring all political questions for settlement in New Zealand’.43 Elsewhere, he dismissed
their claims as ‘sheer nonsense’. Jervois similarly emphasised that Tawhiao hardly represented the Maori and that his following had ‘dwindled down to about two thousand including women and children’. He complained that the Minister of Native Affairs had offered him lands, a seat in the legislature, a pension among other benefits, without success, and that European advisers and stories of Cetshwayo’s visit were giving the Maori King false hope.

Despite the outward face of the government, William Gladstone’s Colonial Secretary Lord Derby did consider – it seems – Tawhiao’s appeal for imperial intervention. In this context, he sought Jervois’ opinion on the powers granted to Queen Victoria by Section 71 of the New Zealand Constitution Act to ‘provide by Letters Patent that the laws enacted by the Legislature of the Colony should not extend to the Native Territory, and that the native laws, customs, and usages, modified as might be thought desirable, should prevail therein to the exclusion of all other law’. Jervois contended that Section 71 was not intended to be permanent stipulation hanging over the head of New Zealand. Moreover, the government indicated that the land courts were necessary and that protections were provided to avoid injustice, providing policy and legal documents that served to sanction the legal processes of dispossession. Jervois argued that, with Maori scattered across the islands, there existed no practical way to grant them self-governance and that there was ‘no ground for the statement that the Maoris are oppressed’. Responding to the governor’s request for information, the John Bryce, Minister of Native Affairs, complained of the ‘inconvenience in being required to make an official memorandum … for it appears to be an admission, that a defence on the part of the New Zealand Government is necessary in response to an attack made from an irresponsible quarter in London, prompted, there is little doubt, by some tenth-rate politician in New Zealand’. Blaming Europeans in Britain and New Zealand was a common theme of the campaign against Tawhiao. The Minister of Native Affairs, John Ballance, condemned those in Britain who sought to take issue with the treatment of indigenous peoples: ‘There is a demand in England for Native grievances.’

With the government of New Zealand and the New Zealand press doing everything in their power to undermine Tawhiao’s goals and legitimacy, the Colonial Office lost interest in Tawhiao’s mission by the middle of summer. By July, the Star reported that ‘the Colonial Office has put an effectual extinguisher on the social prestige of our native visitors by sending round to the newspapers, and other interested parties, a private memo, stating that neither in New Zealand, nor anywhere else, is Tawhiao recognised as “King” of the Maoris’.

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As a result, the goal of a grand reception planned at Mrs Saintsbury’s house was stifled by the government’s efforts to delegitimise the Maori King’s mission. Invited MPs and ‘literary “swells”’ who had accepted later reported that they could no longer attend because of ‘business engagements or ill-health’. Ultimately, the delegation was informed that the Queen was sick and could not meet with them, but they did secure a meeting with Lord Derby. According to *The Times*, Derby informed them that, ‘New Zealand is very far off…. It is for us, as I am sure the members of this deputation are fully aware, a very difficult and complicated matter to interfere in questions which we have practically, whether legally or not, handed over for many years past to be dealt with by local authority.’

At their departure, they received from the Colonial Office a framed portrait of the Queen. Tawhiao and the other Maori took away from this meeting an understanding of certain promises from Lord Derby, though it is unclear from the record what if anything Lord Derby promised them. Te Whero would later complain, for instance, that ‘the word that the Government of New Zealand said to Lord Derby, that they would allow more native members in the Parliament of New Zealand, they have not carried out’. While Lord Derby did in fact urge the government of New Zealand to ‘not fail to protect and to promote the welfare of the Native by just administration and the law and by a generous consideration of all their reasonable representations’, little came of this encouragement. For Bell, the lesson of Tawhiao’s visit was clear:

The whole thing from first to last has been a sham. Everybody knew perfectly well that the control of Native Affairs had long ago passed away from the Imperial Government, and nobody imagined that Lord Derby had the least intention of interfering now. The preposterous notion of creating a Maori District under section 71 of the Constitution Act, was only part of the make-believe that has been going on…. [The chiefs] will go back to their homes having learnt the lesson that for any purpose of Imperial interference in the politics of New Zealand, their visit to this country has been a waste of time.

On the other hand, Tawhiao returned to New Zealand expecting some form of imperial intervention. John Gorst wrote to Derby in May 1885, complaining that the Maori, while ‘waiting anxiously [for] the reply to the appeal which has been made to the British Government’, had been victimised by the ‘continued mistaken action of the New Zealand Government’. Robert G. W. Herbert of the Colonial Office wrote back to Gorst, indicating that his letter and the Maori signatures that he enclosed would be added to ‘the papers about to be presented to Parliament in connexion with that memorial’. Finally, in 1885, Derby...
told Jervois to inform Tawhiao of the government’s decision, one that had been established, seemingly, before the delegation ever met with the Colonial Secretary:

The questions to which the Memorial relates have also been discussed in the House of Commons with many expressions of sympathy for the Maori race, and of the belief that their interests and their customs would be guarded and respected by the Government of New Zealand. The feeling at the same appeared to be general that while the Government of the Queen in this country has no longer its former power and responsibility in regard to the internal affairs of New Zealand, it should use its good offices with the Colonial Government with the view of obtaining for the Natives all of the consideration which can be given to them.60

For Tawhiao, the promise of imperial justice – of the Great White Queen – went unredeemed. According to the Otago Daily Times, ‘the chiefs composed and sang a song, expressing their regret at only having seen the “shadow of the Queen”’.61 It would seem the Tawhiao never gave up on his hope that one day that justice would come to his people, and to the British:

God has been gracious to me wherever I have been, in turning the hearts of the English people toward me. I have met with nothing but kindness and consideration, and not a single bad word has been said to me…. Be strong, be strong…. When the obstacles are removed we shall be one again, and peace and justice and righteousness shall flow like a river through the island from end to end, and also extend to Australia and England.62

Despite his seeming lack of disillusionment, Tawhiao faced a Britain that valued him as an exhibition of exoticness, or savagery – of the local flavour expected of the imperial metropole – not for the political message of loyalism and injustice that he brought. Those imperial networks were uneven and unfair, they favoured the flow of information from settlers, even as those societies drifted away from imperial influence. Imperial whiteness trumped loyalty to Queen and Empire. In Tawhiao’s case, the empire was out of sight and out of mind, and most of the coverage reflects a general lack of seriousness about his claims.

South Africans against Union

Sol Plaatje described the Act of Union in 1910 in terms of loss:

With the formation of the Union, the Imperial Government, for reasons which have never been satisfactorily explained, unreservedly handed over the Natives to the colonists, and these colonists, as a rule, are dominated
by the Dutch Republican spirit. Thus the suzerainty of Great Britain, which under the reign of Her late Majesty Victoria, of blessed memory, was the Natives’ only bulwark, has now apparently been withdrawn or relaxed, and the Republicans like a lot of bloodhounds long held in the leash, use the free hand given by the Imperial Government not only to guard against a possible supersession of Cape ideas of toleration, but to effectively extend through the Union the drastic native policy pursued by the Province which is misnamed ‘Free’ State, and enforce it with the utmost rigour.63

The Union of South Africa [1910] created a unitary state (unlike Australia and Canada) that abandoned the enfranchisement of non-whites in the name of white unity and reconciliation. It failed to extend the non-racial franchise of the Cape Colony and limited membership in the Union Parliament to people ‘of European descent’. The Union itself represented a long-term effort by colonial administrators and politicians to unify the Cape, Natal, the Orange Free State, and the Transvaal under British rule and represented a logical consequence of British strategic goals during the South African War. The South Africa Act that went before and was passed by the British parliament in 1909 was a direct result of a 1908–09 National Convention. The principal concern for the African and Coloured populations of South Africa was that the Cape’s non-racial franchise was not protected or extended and that the connection between British subjects of colour and the mother country would be broken, effectively abandoning them to deal with the white settlers of South Africa on their own.64 As Sol Plaatje complained, the majority of South Africans, most of whom wished to retain British sovereignty over local affairs, would be left without the vote.65

In 1908, Cape Prime Minister John X. Merriman suggested in a letter to General Jan Smuts of the Transvaal a high educational requirement to prevent non-white voters from outnumbering white ones.66 Merriman and Smuts agreed before the convention that the individual states would retain their franchises but that the European population would determine representation.67 The Governor of the Transvaal, Lord Selbourne, proposed a ‘civilisation qualification’ whereby a non-European man who committed to monogamy, spoke a European language, met property or income requirements, ‘habitually’ wore clothing, and lived in a house would secure a ninth of a vote (his children an eighth, etc.).68 At the convention, Colonel Sanford, former chief magistrate in Transkei, advocated that Africans should be allowed to prove themselves as ‘good and worthy citizens and able to bear their full share of the burden of citizenship’.69 Afrikaner Cape liberal J. W. Sauer echoed Sanford’s comments although he qualified the Cape delegation’s advocacy for political equality, indicating that they
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were not advocating for social equality, which could not be legislated.70 Like Sanford, he argued that, whatever ‘civilisation test’ was chosen, it should be applied consistently across the Union. Moreover, the Cape’s non-white voters, he contended, were the ‘most contented group in the British Empire’.71 With a bit of political manoeuvring by Merriman, by appointing Sauer to the relevant sub-committee, the Cape’s franchise was protected but not extended, and the convention delegates agreed that only a two-thirds majority in the Union parliament could tamper with it. Non-whites were barred from sitting in parliament without contest. Clause 26 of the Act [Qualifications of Senators] required any senator elected to the Union Parliament to ‘be a British subject of European descent’.72

The Act thus established a colour bar for election to the new Union parliament and the possibility that what remained of the non-racial franchise could be ‘taken away’ by a two-thirds vote in the same legislative body.73 In the Cape parliament, the former Prime Minister of the Cape, W. P. Schreiner [who made sixty-four speeches], and others introduced amendments to the Cape’s bill on the draft constitution [as a ‘recommendation for the Convention to consider’] that condemned potential disenfranchisement of non-white voters and the colour bar, but all were voted down.74 As John Tengo Jabavu assessed in a letter to Theo Schreiner [brother of W. P.], ‘there seems no help for it but to appeal to the British Government and the House of Commons and the British public’.75

From early on, black liberals and ‘friends of the native’ appealed to – or threatened to appeal to – the imperial government. During the debates in the Cape legislature, when ‘one member [Cartwright] stated that a gentleman of high position [presumably Schreiner] was ready to proceed to England to advocate for the cause of the natives’, David Graaff ‘denounced such a course as handicapping the efforts of the best friends of the natives [in South Africa]’.76 Abdullah Abdurahman’s African Political Organisation promised on 16 April: ‘in the event of no redress being obtained from the National Convention, a delegation will be sent to England to interview the Imperial Government’.77 A committee appointed by the Transkeian Territories General Council, which included ‘representatives of nearly all the Native Tribes resident in the Native Territories of His Majesty’s Colony of the Cape of Good Hope’, petitioned the British government to consider the ‘effects on the political status of His Majesty’s subjects of African descent … 1. By the deletion from Clause [d] Section 25 of the words “of European descent”. 2. By the deletion from Clause 1, Section 33, of the word “European”. 3. By the deletion from Clause [c], Section 44, of the words “of European descent”.’78

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The Transkei natives continued, appealing to their loyalty to the Crown and to empire and their rights as British subjects:

[T]o express to Your Excellency the devotion and loyalty of themselves and the people whom they represent ... [who] under the benign and fostering rule of the British government [have] acquired rights and privileges of subjects of the British Crown which to them are of inestimable value and that foremost among these are that equality ... conferred upon all British subjects, and the possession of the franchise.79

Funded by African subscriptions and at a political dead end in South Africa, a group that included Schreiner, the Cape Coloured politician and doctor Abdullah Abdurahman, and the African newspaper editors, activists, and intellectuals John Tengo Jabavu and Walter Rubusana took their concerns to London in order to submit their protest at the South Africa Act to the imperial government in person. Pressured by the government of Natal to avoid political entanglements, John Dube travelled to London under the guise of a fundraising trip for his school, Ohlange, and left after Schreiner's delegation had already departed.80 He attended events and provided support without offering the appearance of active campaigning.81 They were also joined by Pixely kalsaka Seme, who was at Oxford, and Alfred Mangena, a South African lawyer working in London.82 Their strategy sought to appeal to an imperial constitution from which the South African draft constitution diverged, taking advantage of the legal ambiguities that existed in a South Africa still within the orbit of British influence. Before leaving, Abdurahman collected resolutions passed by local branches of the African Political Organisation, participating in a long tradition of petitioning the British government.83 In advance of their arrival, Schreiner received letters of support from Ramsay MacDonald, Charles Dilke, and W. T. Stead, among others.84

The delegation met with the Colonial Secretary, the Earl of Crewe, on 22 July, who expressed sympathy but made no promises and brought the South Africa Act to the floor of the House that afternoon.85 Travers Buxton of the Aborigines’ Protection Society, through Dilke, arranged for Schreiner to meet with members of the APS during a breakfast at the Westminster Palace Hotel on 27 July.86 Dilke, as well as the official members of the delegation [i.e. not Dube], spoke. Despite the sympathy of certain political circles, their arguments were not seriously considered by the Asquith government.

The metropolitan response to the delegation focused almost entirely on Schreiner, despite the fact that Abdurahman, Jabavu, Rubusana, and Dube were important political figures in their own right. While the press paid some attention to their plight, but also
emphasised the importance of the Union to peace and stability in South Africa, it was a different kind of attention than that given to Tawhiao. As respectables, the African members of the delegation lacked the exoticism and cultural difference imposed on Tawhiao (some of which was exaggerated and unfair). In the mirror of empire, they were ‘almost but not quite’, yet ‘almost’ enough and a common enough sight in the imperial metropole by the twentieth century not to elicit attention. In fact, beyond the rhetoric of a few Liberal, Radical, and Labour MPs, they were virtually invisible to the political establishment and the press.

British policy toward the white colonies of settlement had also crystallised over the past three decades. While Tawhiao had come decades after the advent of responsible government in New Zealand (1852), there was some reason for Tawhiao, the APS, and other ‘friends of the native’, to hope for imperial intervention against the perceived violations of the Treaty of Waitangi. Although Lord Derby had publicly toed the line, he had asked for the consideration of the government of New Zealand and even inquired about the relevance of Section 71 of the New Zealand constitution. By 1909, British policy had hardened across the empire and particularly in South Africa, where British geostrategic goals and a desire to placate the previously rebellious Afrikaners outweighed the political and constitutional objections expressed by Schreiner’s delegation. Arthur Balfour, former Conservative Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, demonstrating a consensus across party lines, argued that the Union fulfilled the ‘dream of successive statesmen belonging to all parties, and belonging to the different white races in South Africa, a dream which has been indulged for more than a generation, and which now, I hope, is going to receive its final consummation’. While the rhetoric of liberal empire, its heyday having passed, remained compelling to British subjects in the empire, it was stillborn at home.

The South African delegation smartly framed the issue of ‘native rights’ as not a uniquely South African problem but an empire problem. For Jabavu, the South Africa Act would undermine the bonds of unity between Britain and its subjects of colour across the empire. As he argued, metropolitan intervention in the South African case was the only way for Britain to ‘retain the confidence of its coloured subjects of the King across the Empire’. In a letter to The Times, Abdurahman appealed directly to the people of Great Britain in the name of ‘the millions of loyal British subjects whom we have been delegated to represent’ to challenge the act’s clauses barring non-whites from election to the Union parliament on grounds that:
(a) They are illiberal, unjust, and unreasonably offensive to the King’s subjects.

(b) They deprive the coloured people and the natives of the Cape Colony of existing rights granted them in 1852 and embodied in the Cape Constitution … rights of every duly qualified civilised British subject in a self-governing colony.

(c) They originate for South Africa a disqualification based upon colour which has never yet been embodied in any Imperial Act of Parliament, and they reverse the principle of equal rights for all qualified civilised men … affirmed by the late Hon. Cecil Rhodes.89

A few weeks later, Jabavu wrote to The Times arguing that ‘the native races abroad, though far away from England, are attached to British rule by strong cords of loyalty; and delight and pride themselves on having a great King who rules in equity from this the centre of the Empire’.90

Contextualising the motions approved by Abdurahman’s African Political Organisation, Walter Hely-Hutchinson, the Governor at the Cape, explained to the Colonial Office that, while he ‘wished … that the provisions of the draft Constitution, as regards the Native Franchise, had been somewhat different from what they are’, efforts to impose better terms on the convention would have ‘wreck[ed]’ the Union.91 This became a common thread in his letters to the home government. The arguments against the draft constitution, ‘the only possible compromise’, were ‘overstated and exaggerated’.92 Moreover, he argued that, by requiring a two-thirds majority of both houses to dismantle the non-racial franchise, the new constitution provided greater protections to the King’s subjects of colour and that no person of colour had ever been elected to the Cape parliament anyway. He also condemned Schreiner, arguing that he had opposed in the past John Merriman’s work, ‘for more than a generation, defend[ing] the reasonable rights of the Natives in the Cape Parliament’.93 The Times echoed this sentiment, arguing that:

A large section of the coloured people definitely repudiate [Schreiner]. If the state of the natives is one of alarm – of which there is no evidence whatever – this is largely due to the alarmist statements made by Mr. Schreiner himself. His denial that there is danger to the Union in his proposals must proceed either from blindness or from wilful misrepresentation…. [Imperial intervention] would itself be the greatest blow ever struck at the Empire.94

In a series of letters to The Times, Schreiner defended his mission, arguing that the requested changes would not impose the ‘Cape system’ on Transvaal and the Orange Free State but would simply protect
the rights of British subjects in the Cape Colony. He contested
that, ‘it is frankly inconceivable that either those colonies or Natal
would refuse to enter the Union because of the contingency that a
man not of European descent might at some time be elected for the
Province of the Cape of Good Hope as a member of the Senate or the
House of Assembly’. During the parliamentary debates, Asquith's
Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Colonel John Seeley, ref-
erencing Schreiner's letter, argued that such an intervention would
be ‘entirely unprecedented and so obviously unreasonable…. What he
wants to ensure is that the Government of this country shall have a
say in the matter under all circumstances.’

During the debate, some MPs expressed sympathy with the delega-
tion's plight. In order to avoid stamping a ‘seal of racial inferiority upon
the masses of the people of South Africa’ and committing Britain ‘to
a new principle in local government and human rights’, Ellis Griffith,
a Liberal MP and future Under-Secretary for the Colonies under
Asquith, contended that ‘we are not asking for what we think the col-
oured and native men are entitled to; we are only asking for them to
retain that which they are entitled to now’. He contended that any
amendment to protect the native franchise did not represent ‘a new
departure in British statesmanship’ (as some MPs had characterised
such an intervention) but merely protected the status quo. Scottish MP
George N. Barnes mocked the practicality of barring non-Europeans
from the rolls:

Is the man in South Africa who aspires to a position in an assembly of
this character to be armed with a certificate with a sort of genealogical
tree in his pocket? If so, how far is he to go back?… I believe there are
one or two who are Members of it now, who are quite good enough for
the Mother of Parliaments, but who, forsooth, would not be sufficiently
high in the scale of the human family, and not sufficiently good for the
people out in South Africa.

The African and Coloured delegates received mention during the par-
liamentary debates. The MP Charles Dilke argued that:

Mr. Rhodes's civilised coloured man should be let in.... We were told
that one of the main objects of the war, and one of the dominating fac-
tors in any peace that could be made, would be the assertion of the Cape
principle as against the Boer principle. In the two Colonies we gave
up the Cape principle for the Boer principle. I will mention the case of
Dr. Abdurahman, who was a supporter of the war, and who was one of
those who supported vehemently Mr. Rhodes's view, and who, like many
others who are doubtful about this ineligibility, supports the Cape ideal,
although he does not want to go into Parliament himself, and never did.
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In the Transvaal they have been, I know, rather easygoing in this matter, but by this Bill you are taking a man like Dr. Abdurahman, who was three times elected chairman of the most important municipal committee of Cape Town, and saying to him, ‘You shall never be a member of Parliament’. Are you going to pass an Act of Parliament containing these ill-chosen words under which you do not know whether you are going to exclude such men as Dr. Abdurahman?¹⁰⁰

The former pro-Boer and Liberal MP William Byles appealed to the example of John Tengo Jabavu:

The natives of South Africa have put together their money in order to send over this delegation, and one of them, Mr. J. Tengo Jabavu, the editor of a newspaper at the Cape, is as cultivated a man and as capable a citizen as any white man there is, but his skin is as black as a hat, and that is the only thing against him. He has written an article which I regard as of some importance, as bringing before the country rather emphatically the views of the natives themselves – the opinions they hold with regard to the proposals under our consideration. He says the proposals have occasioned deep and widespread alarm and anxiety among the natives from one end of South Africa to the other. He continues: – Civilised and uncivilised, black and coloured [half-castes]; partisans of opposing parties in politics; men women and children – in a word, elements that have never worked together – have been united in a manner they have never been before by a common grievance; the attack on their colour, qua colour. Mr. Tengo Jabavu leaves that point, and goes on to another, in which he argues that to take away the native franchise and to deprive the Cape native of it would be a flagrant breach of faith. He adds: – Many of those represented by the native delegation came voluntarily under British rule, and not by conquest. They were assured by governors, governors’ agents, officials, and missionaries of the absolute justice, freedom, and liberty, without discrimination of colour, they would enjoy under the British Government. Treaties exist which promised them just and even-handed treatment if they did not rebel. These engagements have been observed by them in letter and spirit.... A breach of faith is a very serious matter to charge against the British Parliament.¹⁰¹

As the work of the last decade has demonstrated, the liberal-humanitarian discourse of Dilke and Byles – an extension of nineteenth-century abolitionism and missionary work, Macaulayism and Anglicisation efforts, and even the anti-war sentiment of ‘pro-Boerism’ – had been long on the wane by 1909, transcended by the rise of the settler lobby, imperial preference for the white empire, and racialist discourse. Schreiner, Jabavu, Rubusana, Dilke, and Byles were all appealing to idioms of the liberal empire that were past their sell-by date in the mainstream of imperial culture. In this, the government’s geopolitical agenda and
concerns about losing the white empire neatly coincided with the larger currents of imperial thought.

For Lord Asquith, the act represented a practical compromise that resolved the tensions between the British colonies and the former Boer republics over African voting rights. The government was advised by the governor at the Cape, Walter Hely-Hutchinson, that while he wished that ‘provisions, as regards the Native Franchise, had been somewhat different and that the words “European descent” ... had never been introduced’, the new constitution provided greater protections to the franchise by requiring a two-thirds vote by the Union parliament to abolish it.102 During the Commons debates, Asquith warned: ‘[Y]ou plunge into the crucible for refashioning or possible destruction this carefully contrived and most delicately balanced arrangement, which represents the deliberate opinion of the four separately consulted Legislatures, and in the case of Natal of the electorate themselves.’103 Both Asquith and the former Colonial Secretary Alfred Lyttelton provided support with a staged conception of civilisation, one that was perhaps had more in common with the abolitionist mind than twentieth-century racial theory. Asquith justified the proposed Union as a solution to ‘this problem of how you are to adapt and to evolve free institutions in a community where two different races in totally different stages of civilisation find themselves sitting side by side and intermixed’.104 According to Lyttelton, ‘neither the prudence nor the elementary common-sense of the Empire can possibly admit the claim that blacks, very likely hundreds and thousands of years behind the whites in civilisation, are to be admitted to the same suffrage with them’.105 As Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds argue, the South African War had ‘cause[d] English officials to “come out” as “white men”’.106

There was another delegation in London during the summer of 1909. John X. Merriman, Henry de Villiers, Louis Botha, Leander Starr Jameson, Jan Hofmeyr, and Jan Smuts travelled to Britain to lobby the British government and parliament to pass the bill as received. De Villiers argued that he had, as president of the Convention, consulted with the British High Commissioner Lord Selborne ‘at every stage’ and that the Colonial Office provided input along the way.107 For the British parliament to refuse it would amount to a rejection of responsible government. Further, he argued that, ‘racialism ... is fast dying, and the effect of the Union will undoubtedly be to kill it altogether’.108 This, the claim that the provisions of the Union provided more protection to non-white South Africans than the present arrangements, was a standard line among proponents of the Union.

On both sides of the issue, supporters and opponents of the Union Bill appealed to the needs and health of the greater empire. Lake and
Reynolds argue that proponents of the non-racial franchise faced the opposition of inter-empire and international ‘racial solidarity’, with settlers across the empire prepared to protest or rebel against imperial intervention. In the Lords, the former colonial official Lord Northcote appealed to the examples of Canada and Australia to assert the principle of ‘white rule and white responsibility for the conduct of public affairs’ in the empire. Former British Resident and administrator in India John Rees argued that the real ‘imperial danger [was of] of self-governing Colonies being coerced by this Parliament into doing that which they do not want to do’.

On the other hand, critics of the bill used, in particular, changes requested by the British government to the Australian Federation Bill, passed in 1900, as a precedent for imperial intervention in the South African case. Similarly, Liberal MP George Cox asserted that he would ‘throw back the Union’ rather than ‘do something which is a violation of the traditions of the British Empire’. Ryland Adkins claimed that there was ‘no precedent for the Imperial Parliament consenting to any Act which will take away existing rights and existing securities from fellow subjects of ours over whom this Parliament has responsibility’. Keir Hardie, appealing to Dilke, argued that the consequences of the Act would felt far outside of South Africa:

An Indian in this country may sit in this House. In South Africa there are Indians of various races and creeds, and a large number of them have been brought there as indentured labourers. Others have gone to Natal as traders. They are already smarting keenly under the treatment which is being meted out to them in some of the Colonies of South Africa. When their compatriots at home learn further that the House of Commons has deliberately set up this colour bar which prevents those men from being returned to the South African Parliament, is that going to increase their sense of loyalty or their faith in the justice of British rule? Therefore the House of Commons in this respect has a direct responsibility, and if acts of this kind lead to a combined native rising in South Africa Imperial troops will be called in, and, in spite of what fell from some hon. Members opposite, the cost will not be wholly borne by South Africa.

The Act overwhelmingly passed the votes that it faced in the Houses of Parliament, and King Edward VII gave the royal assent on 20 September 1909.

Despite this imperial betrayal, the loyalist South African Native National Congress, co-founded by Sol Plaatje, John Dube, and others in 1912 as a response to the political and social order of the Union, continued to agitate the British government – the monarchy, in particular – to redeem the promises of imperial citizenship. The fears of African intellectuals and activists were quickly realised in the Natives
Land Act of 1913, which limited Africans’ ability to own land by establishing reserves and prohibited them from buying land outside of these reserves (some 13 per cent of the Union’s territory). For Plaatje, this affront denied Africans ‘the bare human right to which every man born into the world is entitled, namely the right to occupy and live by tilling the land’. While the Union had denied the most basic right of citizenship, the vote, the newly empowered Union parliament’s first significant act of ‘native policy’ was to institutionalise physical segregation and begin the processes of establishing native reserves.

For those who had fought against the Union (with the exception of Jabavu, who supported it), the Lands Act represented the realisation of their worst nightmares. Plaatje, Dube, and Rubusana led another deputation to London to protest against the Act, having exhausted any means for change within South Africa and wishing to avoid violence in the countryside. Plaatje reported that they encountered sympathy from British politicians, the press, and the public. Asquith’s Colonial Secretary, Viscount Harcourt, indicated that his hands were tied but that Louis Botha had assured him that the Act was merely temporary. Plaatje complained, ‘The Imperial Government, which went to war against Oom Paul [Krüger] to secure justice for whites, tell us they cannot interfere to secure justice for blacks.’ The trip’s purpose was suspended with the outbreak of the Great War, after which the delegation determined that their ‘duty as British subjects, was to present a united front to the enemies of their King-Emperor’.

Mohandas Gandhi was also in London in 1909. Gandhi argued to Merriman, who was in Britain in support of the Union Act, that Smuts could repeal the Asiatic Act and apply a civilisation test to allow a number of educated Indians into the Transvaal. Gandhi met with the India Secretary, Lord Morley, and the Colonial Secretary, Lord Crewe. Through Crewe, Smuts proposed that six educated Indians could enter Transvaal every year. He would not, however, agree to the principle of equality, giving Gandhi little motivation to offer concessions. For Gandhi, the visit represented a turning point, as he increasingly realised the futility of appealing to the imperial government for justice.

On his way back to South Africa aboard the SS Kildonan Castle, in 1909, he would write Hind Swaraj (Indian Home Rule), a rejection of the British liberal empire and European civilisation. In it, he rejects the very core of the kind of respectability and loyalism that in an earlier incarnation he had embraced: ‘In effect it means this: that we want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger’s nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan. This is not the Swaraj that I want.’
To sweeten the pill of Union, the Colonial Office proposed that the Prince of Wales go to South Africa and inaugurate the Union by opening the parliament for the first time, as he had done in Australia in 1910. Edward VII would die in May of 1910, and South Africa was instead visited by Arthur, Duke of Connaught, his wife, and their daughter Princess Patricia in November of the same year. He would perform the ritual tasks expected of every royal tourist since 1860, receiving dignitaries, giving speeches, and inspecting troops. The crowning achievement of his visit was the inauguration of the Union parliament. In Cape Town, the duke shared news of the King’s joy that ‘the auspicious union of the South African dominions has already made for the social and material progress of his people, and he feels assured that all South Africans will work steadfastly and honourably for the welfare of their great and beautiful country’. As usual, the tour sought to please and appease colonial subjects with the presence of royalty, while ignoring the politics that were afoot in South Asian and African communities. The British Indian Association used the arrival of the duke as an opportunity to ‘urge the Union Government to close this painful struggle’, following the death of a deported Indian who attempted to return to South Africa in an act of passive resistance, only to die at sea after being refused entrance at several ports. African papers expressed joy about the arrival of the prince but also sought – in the words of Illanga Lase Natal – Britain’s ‘trust’.

While there exist many explanations of the disillusionment of colonial subjects with Britain and the empire – above all that the British establishment increasingly and consistently allied itself with white settler populations in opposition, proving the ideological and cultural work of the nineteenth-century liberal empire a false promise – certainly the loss of the Great Queen, too, had something to do with the decline of these discourses. Nonetheless, the legacy of imperial citizenship survived. In his 1994 autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom, Nelson Mandela, one of the world’s most famous anti-colonial nationalists, ‘confess[es] to being somewhat of an Anglophile’. He continues:

When I thought of Western democracy and freedom, I thought of the British parliamentary system. In so many ways, the very model of the gentleman for me was an Englishman. Despite Britain being the home of parliamentary democracy, it was that democracy that had helped inflict a pernicious system of inequality on my people. While I abhorred the notion of British imperialism, I never rejected the trappings of British styles and manners.

Mandela recognised, of course, that his case of Anglophilia reflected the complex legacies of imperialism and its ‘colonisation of
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consciousness’. At the same time, Mandela’s sentiments are cultural artefacts of imperial citizenship as an idea, of the unredeemed promises of British political traditions in South Africa. The fact that these discourses, or their remnants, have little resonance in the modern world demonstrates one of the fundamental lessons of history: that the past is a strange and incomprehensible place, where we should resist the urge to impose our own values and sensibilities.

While the period between and including the two World Wars was characterised by a growing disillusionment with the promises of British rule, a recognition that the equality of all British subjects would never be realised, colonial subjects continued to take their grievances to Britain and to the monarch. European empires continued to ‘come home’ as growing and increasingly connected anti-colonial movements fuelled by the failures of the Versailles Conference convened in Brussels, London, and Berlin, among other metropoles, during the 1920s and 30s. Conversely, royal tours continued to be employed well into the post-colonial age, even as policy-makers professed unrealistic expectations of the magic that they could do and failed to understand the complexities of colonial (and post-colonial) politics and identities. This disconnect, between the promises and realities of colonial rule, as well as the disconnect between the fantasies of colonial administrators and the conceptual depth of empire loyalty and imperial politics, had as much to do with the end of empire as violence, warfare, and inequality.

Notes

2 T. E. Kebbel, ed., Selected Speeches of the Earl of Beaconsfield, vol. 2 (London, 1882), 529–34. The links between the monarchy and empire in Disraeli’s speech were actually quite fragile. It also must be considered to be a response to Charles Dilke’s controversial speech on the ‘Costs of the Crown’ (London, 1871).
4 For the later debate over tariff reform and imperial preference, which itself was an intellectual successor of these nineteenth-century movements, see Frank Trentman, Free Trade Nation: Consumption, Commerce, and Civil Society in Modern Britain (Oxford, 2008) and E. H. H. Green, The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the Conservative Party, 1880–1914 (New York, 1996). Tariff reform as a platform proved to be an absolutely disastrous electoral strategy for the Conservative Party, which lost the 1906 election in a massive landslide.
6 Alan Lester, Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain (New York, 2001); Elizabeth Elbourne, ‘Indigenous People and


See Kathleen Wilson, ed. *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire* [Cambridge, 2004].


David Cannadine, *History in Our Time* [New York, 2000], 43.


*Morning Advertiser*, 7 September 1895, quoted in Parsons, ‘“No Longer Rare Birds”’, 110.

Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* [Manchester, 2006].


Carmen Kirkwood, *Tawhiao, King or Prophet* [Hamilton, 2000], 162. Patara Te Tuhi had travelled to Europe before; he was trained in the use of the printing press in Austria.

*Hawke’s Bay Herald*, 20 March 1884.


*Te Aroha News*, 30 August 1884.

Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* [New York, 1994], 85–92.


*Colonies and India*, quoted in *The Graphic*, 14 June 1884.


[Auckland] Star, 8 September 1884.

He apparently visited as many as half a dozen times per day.

[Auckland] Star, 2 September 1884.

*Nelson Evening Mail*, 11 September 1884, quoting *Pall Mall Gazette*. [187]
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33 Neil Parsons argues that the visits of African envoys were carefully orchestrated by Colonial Officials to strike awe in the minds of colonial subjects [as was the purpose of the royal tour]. This was not the case in either of the visits under examination here. Parsons, “‘No Longer Rare Birds in London’”, 113.

34 [Auckland] Star, 8 September 1884.
35 [Auckland] Star, 8 September 1884.
36 [Auckland] Star, 8 September 1884.

37 Memorial of the Maori Chiefs, Tawhiao, Wiremu Te Wheoro, Patara Te Tuhi, Topia Tuoro, and Hori Ropihana, no. 1, in Correspondence Respecting a Memorial Brought to this Country by Certain Maori Chiefs in 1884, Parliamentary Papers [London, 1885].

38 Memorial of the Maori Chiefs.
39 Memorial of the Maori Chiefs.

40 Wairarapa Daily Times, 21 March 1884.
41 John Bramston to Gov. F. D. Bell, 8 April 1884, Archives New Zealand [henceforth ANZ], MA 23-4A/NO 84/2310.
42 J. D. Bell to John Bramston, 9 April 1884, ANZ MA 23-4A/NO 84/2310.
43 J. D. Bell to Premier of New Zealand, 27 May 1884, ANZ MA 23-4A/NO 84/2302 No. 269.
44 J. D. Bell to Premier of New Zealand, 28 July 1884, ANZ MA 23-4A/NO 84/3057 No. 352.
45 Gov. F. D. Jervois to Earl of Derby, 1 April 1884, NA CO 209/243/69–73.
46 Earl of Derby to Gov. F. D. Jervois, no. 3, in Correspondence Respecting a Memorial Brought to this Country by Certain Maori Chiefs in 1884.
47 Gov. W. F. D. Jervois to Earl of Derby, Appendix no. 3, in Correspondence Respecting a Memorial Brought to this Country by Certain Maori Chiefs in 1884.
48 No. 3, in Correspondence Respecting a Memorial Brought to this Country by Certain Maori Chiefs in 1884.
49 John Bryce [Native Minister], Memorandum for His Excellency the Governor, Enclosure I in Appendix No. 3, in Correspondence Respecting a Memorial Brought to this Country by Certain Maori Chiefs in 1884.
51 [Auckland] Star, 1 September 1884.
52 [Auckland] Star, 2 September 1884.
54 Otago Daily Times, 7 October 1884.
55 Te Whero, 6 January 1887, ANZ MA 23-4A.
56 Earl of Derby to Gov. W. F. D. Jervois, in Further Correspondence Respecting a Memorial Brought to this Country by Certain Maori Chiefs in 1884, Parliamentary Papers [London, 1885].
57 J. D. Bell to Premier of NZ, 24 July 1884, ANZ MA 23-4A/NO 34 No. 347.
58 J. E. Gorst to the Colonial Office, no. 9, in Correspondence Respecting a Memorial Brought to this Country by Certain Maori Chiefs in 1884.
59 Colonial Office to J. E. Gorst, no. 10, in Correspondence Respecting a Memorial Brought to this Country by Certain Maori Chiefs in 1884.
60 Earl of Derby to Gov. W. F. D. Jervois, in Further Correspondence Respecting a Memorial brought to this Country by Certain Maori Chiefs in 1884.
61 Otago Daily Times, 7 October 1884.
62 F. W. Chesson to the Editor, The Times, 26 December 1884.
64 The Colonial Office was actually relieved that the proposal did not restrict the franchise further. Hyam and Henshaw, The Lion and the Springbok, 82.
65 Sol Plaatje, ‘An Appeal to the British Brotherhoods’, Ilanga Lase Natal, 28 August 1914. Plaatje mocked the idea that this somehow represented local autonomy. By
his estimates, 1 million South Africans would be eligible to vote; 6 million would be ineligible.


72 HC Deb. 19 August 1909 vol. 9 c1553.


75 John Tengo Jabavu to Theo Schreiner, 12 June 1909, BC 112/D3.1/file 12 [6.2], Schreiner Papers, University of Cape Town Archives.

76 Cape Times, 17 April 1909.

77 Hely-Hutchinson to Crewe, 19 April 1909, NA.

78 Petition from the Transkeian Territories General Council, NA CO 48/602/286–94.

79 Petition from the Transkeian Territories General Council, NA.

80 Heather Hughes, The First President: A Life of John L. Dube, Founding President of the ANC (Auckland Park, 2011), 149–51.

81 Hughes, First President, 152.

82 Hughes, First President, 151.

83 Memo from African Political Organisation General Executive, 11 June 1909, BC 112/D3.1, Schreiner Papers, University of Cape Town Archives.

84 Ramsay MacDonald to W. P. Schreiner, 18 June 1909, BC 112/D3.1/File 12 [10.1], Schreiner Papers, University of Cape Town Archives; Charles Dilke to W. P. Schreiner, 6 July 1909, BC 112/D3.1, Schreiner Papers, University of Cape Town Archives; W. T. Stead to W. P. Schreiner, 10 July 1909, BC 112/D3.1/File 12 [19.1], Schreiner Papers, University of Cape Town Archives.


86 Travers Buxton to Charles Dilke, 8 July 1909, BC 112/D.3, Schreiner Papers, University of Cape Town Archives; Hughes, First President, 152.

87 HC Deb. 16 August 1909 vol. 9 c1000.


93 Hely-Hutchinson to Crewe, 16 June 1909, NA.

94 The Times, 8 July 1909. Here, The Times repeats the claim that, if Schreiner succeeded, he would ‘wreck’ the Union.

95 W. Schreiner, ‘South Africa Bill and the Native Question’, The Times, 2 August 1909.

96 Schreiner, ‘South Africa Bill and the Native Question’.

97 HC Deb. 9 August 1909 vol 9 c1638.

98 HC Deb. 19 August 1909 vol. 9 c1580.

99 HC Deb. 19 August 1909 vol. 9 c1555.

100 HC Deb. 16 August 1909 vol. 9 cc975–81.

101 HC Deb. 16 August 1909 vol. 9 cc1029–30.


103 HC Deb. 19 August 1909 vol. 9 cc1561–4.
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104 HC Deb. 16 August 1909 vol. 9 c1009.
105 HC Deb. 19 August 1909 vol. 9 c1584.
106 Lake and Reynolds, Drawing the Global Colour Line, 231. See also Schwarz, White Man’s World, 208–76.
107 Courier [Dundee], 5 July 1909.
108 Courier [Dundee], 5 July 1909.
109 Lake and Reynolds, Drawing the Global Colour Line, 221.
110 HL Deb. 27 July 1909 vol. 2 c770.
111 HC Deb. 19 Aug 1909 vol. 9 cc1569–70.
112 HC Deb. 19 August 1909 vol. 9 cc1630–1.
113 HC Deb. 19 August 1909 vol. 9 c1573.
115 Plaatje, ‘An Appeal to the British Brotherhoods’.
116 Plaatje, ‘An Appeal to the British Brotherhoods’.
118 Guha, India before Gandhi, 335–6.
119 Lake and Reynolds, Drawing the Global Colour Line, 228; Guha, India before Gandhi, 335–6.
121 Mohandas Gandhi, ‘What is Swaraj?’ (ch. 3), in Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule (Madras, 1921).
126 See, in particular, Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom, 96–7.