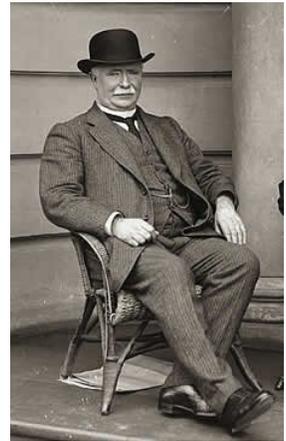


## MASSEY NEW ZEALAND'S WAR PRIME MINISTER

William Ferguson Massey (1856-1925) served as New Zealand's Prime Minister from 1912-25 and therefore led his country's participation throughout the First World War.

Born on 26 March 1856 in Limavady, Ireland, Massey's family immigrated to New Zealand in 1862, with Massey remaining behind to complete his studies, moving to New Zealand in December 1870.

He worked with his father until he was 17 and thereafter leased a farm of 100 acres in Mangere. He married in 1882 to Christina Allen Paul, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer.



In 1890 Massey stood for the seat at Franklin but was narrowly beaten. Within weeks he contested the vacant seat at Waitemata and was this time elected. He once again challenged for the seat at Franklin at the next election in 1896, and held it until his death.

Massey was elected leader of the opposition Conservative (later Reform) Party in September 1903. His was the first Conservative administration in New Zealand for 22 years when he set about establishing a Cabinet in the wake of electoral victory in 1912.

He nevertheless remained in place at the head of New Zealand government for the following 13 years until his death.

Massey's incoming administration brought to an end that of Sir Joseph Ward (Prime Minister from 1906-12). However Massey continued Ward's policies of increased defence expenditure, a strategy Massey wholeheartedly endorsed during Ward's tenure in power despite the latter's status as a liberal and Massey's reputation as an imperialist.

The 1909 Defence Act had introduced compulsory military service (overseen by Alexander Godley); its effect was to bolster the development of New Zealand's military presence and efficiency. It was therefore well placed to lend assistance to Britain upon the latter's declaration of war with Germany on 4 August 1914.

Massey was determined to ensure that his country provided full assistance to Britain, although he nevertheless continued to propound a view independent to that of the British government. In each of these he was given firm support by former premier Ward who served as Deputy Prime Minister.

August 1915 brought about a National Government under Massey. Along with defence minister James Allen Massey introduced a policy of conscription, further boosting the resources of the already-renowned New Zealand division, which ultimately saw hard service in Gallipoli in addition to France.

Following the armistice Massey travelled to Paris to attend the ensuing peace conference and was a signatory of the Versailles Treaty, a notable event in the progression of New Zealand governmental independence. When subsequently New Zealand was invited to join the League of Nations, Massey spoke of how New Zealand had joined as "a self-governing nation within the empire".

He died while still in office on 10 May 1925.