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MAORI CONFERENCE AT PUTIKI.

REPORT ON CONFERENCE OF MAORI REPRESENTATIVES HELD AT PUTIKI, WANGANUI,
DURING EASTER WEEK, 1927.

Presented to the House of Representatives by leave.

Parliament Buildings, Wellington, 12th September, 1928.

The Right Hon. J. G. COATES, Prime Minister and Native Minister, Wellington.

DEAR SIR,—

We have the honour to submit for your consideration a report on the conference of Maori representatives held at Putiki, Wanganui, during Easter week, 1927. We recommend that the report be made a parliamentary paper during the present session.

Yours faithfully,
A. T. NGATA.
M. POMARE.

REPORT

OF WANGANUI MAORI CONFERENCE HELD AT PUTIKI, WANGANUI,
EASTER WEEK, 1927.

THE opportunity offered by the annual tournament of the newly affiliated New Zealand Maori Lawn-tennis Association held at Wanganui during the Easter week of 1927 was seized by the Young Maori Party, in co-operation with the organizers of the tournament, to hold a conference on matters affecting the Maori race generally. A full generation had elapsed since the party, then organized as the Te Aute Students' Association, held its conference at Putiki in 1900. In the interval the former leaders of Maori thought had passed away. Few opportunities had occurred of inter-tribal meetings; the younger men had lost touch with one another; other movements of a political and religious character had arisen and crossed the path of progress. There was need for establishing new lines of communication between those interested in the welfare of the race and of organizing and co-ordinating all progressive movements.

The Maori tennis tournament held at Rotorua during the Easter of 1926 brought together some of the finest representatives of the race—men and women who had made their mark in the Civil Service, in commerce, in farming, in health service, in the Church, and in other professions. There was remarked, as at the Tikitiki meeting a month earlier, a physical vigour and mental alertness, a greater ease in the modern environment, that betokened the immense progress made by the race in the last generation.

For those who attended the Rotorua meeting the Wanganui fixture was a pleasant and instructive reunion. A conference of young Maori representatives was made a special feature, so that the twofold appeal of sport and the conference on racial questions brought together some of the most progressive elements in the race.

At the opening of the tennis tournament on the morning of Saturday, the 16th April, and at the formal reception to the visitors the same evening welcoming addresses given by Mr. Pownall (president of the Wanganui Lawn-tennis Association), Mr. Veitch, M.P., the Rev. Mr. Patterson, Mr. Gibbons (then Mayor of Wanganui), and Mr. Barton, S.M., and replies by the Hon. Sir Maui Pomare and the Hon. A. T. Ngata sounded notes of seriousness and appreciation of the importance of the gathering of the youth of the tribes. The feature emphasized was that such meetings would tend to break down tribal barriers, and promote healthy, social, and intellectual intercourse between the young leaders of the various tribes. The race had reached a stage in its development now when young men, not soured by past tribal grievances, must get together and gather into a coherent, conscious organization the fragmentary progressive attempts made by the Maori to fit himself into his present environment. Sir Maui Pomare and Mr. Ngata defined the present position of the Maori people and recounted the successive steps that had been adopted for its betterment. The leaven of progress had been steadily at work, and, when reviewed along all lines, the development had been remarkable. Physically there was abundant evidence of a wonderful improvement. Apart from the statistics of the last census, no

visitor to any representative Maori meeting could fail to observe the health and vigour of the young generation, its poise and its self-possessed confident bearing, the full cradles, and the greater care of infant-life. The latter-day Maori is throwing off the shackles of the past, looking little, if at all, over his shoulder, and interesting himself in the activities and pastimes of his pakeha fellow-citizen. Socially he is rapidly fitting himself into the life of the country, where for a time he found himself in bewilderment. His deportment on the tennis-lawns of Rotorua and Wanganui, where good behaviour, sportsmanlike qualities, and control are part of the players' equipment, was favourably commented on by visitors from other lands. The communal Maori has become an individualist in proprietorship and in his home life. His womankind, as with other races, is speeding up the process of Europeanization in the home life and surroundings, so that the pakeha ideal of "home" is being gradually realized in the Maori villages throughout the Dominion. And the culture complex that centres round the term "home" (in its English significance) has with native modification been adopted. Economically and commercially the influence of four generations of civilization could not fail to affect the Maori extensively. With the loss of the greater part of their landed inheritance, the increase in population, the increased cost of living, the raising of the standard of life, and the weakening of the protective elements of the old-time communism, the Maoris of to-day were feeling the economic pressure with progressive severity. The feature of the day was, perhaps, the desire of the young people to work for themselves rather than be casual employees of others. Much of the pioneering work in the backblocks—bush-felling, fencing, roadmaking, shearing, draining and stumping, and such like—had been done and was still being done by the Maoris. That stage was almost passed in the industrial development of the Dominion. The younger Maoris were reacting on the already complicated Maori-land problem and were demanding individualization, consolidation, readjustment of occupation conditions, and financial assistance. Their attitude towards the balance of their landed inheritance was much the same as that of Europeans towards the unoccupied Crown lands and the large estates of the Dominion. They were also compelled to look beyond casual employment in unskilled trades and on public works to the skilled trades, and, with that in mind, to regard education and training in a new light. Intellectually the attitude of the race towards education was a revelation of the accumulated effects of civilizing influences. School attendance readily became one of the stages of the life of the Maori youth. Naturally well endowed with brains, the discipline of the schools fostered with each successive generation the faculty of application, while the success of a few of their kind in the highest schools supplied fresh incentive and the motive of emulation. To-day no movement is capturing the mind of the best-thinking of the Maori youth so forcibly as that which aims, through the most suitable education, at preparing the Maori to take a fitting place in the life of the Dominion.

Finally, in his attitude towards moral and religious problems the Maori is assuming an independence of judgment that signifies a fair knowledge of present-day facts. He is demanding more allowance for his racial peculiarities, and a deeper appreciation by the pakeha missionary of the *ngakau Maori*, the Maori heart, and its gropings. Here and there his excursions in religious organization are amazing, prodigal, and tending towards disaster. But these are passing phases of a genuine desire that the moral and religious code of the pakeha, the manner of its inculcation and maintenance, shall be translated into forms, words, and works easily understood by the comparatively simple Maori folk.

In short, the time is at an end when the Maori will be satisfied merely to ape the pakeha. He knows enough now of the pakeha and his ways to see that the end aimed at may be reached by other paths, even by the old tracks, with less raising of dust, less bustle and wasteful hurry and unhappiness.

It was with something of this in their hearts and minds that the Young Maori representatives forgathered at Putiki, Wanganui, last Easter. The brief conference offered the opportunity of reviewing the progress of the last few years. The resolutions passed were framed to indicate what had been achieved and to suggest where further progress might be made.

Quite appropriately the proceedings opened with the reading of a memorandum from the Right Hon. J. G. Coates, Prime Minister and Native Minister, which was conveyed to the meeting by his Private Secretary, Mr. H. R. H. Balneavis.

Text of Memorandum from Prime Minister.

"The occasion, however, which this tournament has provided of gathering together influential representatives of various Native tribes throughout New Zealand should not be allowed to pass without some attempt being made, as was done at the great Tikitiki meeting in Waiapu last year, to discuss questions affecting the welfare of the Maori race. There are several questions of moment to the race which should exercise your minds at the present time, such as matters affecting education, sanitation, Native rates, and the profitable utilization of your remaining lands. The presence of the Hon. Mr. Ngata and other representatives from the East Coast district and of Maori farmers from other districts, who possess the necessary experience in communal and individual farming, should be made use of. An interchange of ideas and experiences in regard to the steps which must be taken to obtain registrable and negotiable titles and loans on the security of such titles from State lending institutions, the breaking-in, handling, stocking, and development of Native lands, would be of advantage to all parties concerned. Discussions in connection with these matters are very helpful, but the knowledge gleaned should not be allowed to remain there; it should be put to practical use. Unless the experience thus gained is availed of, and the necessary details as to the perfecting of the titles are attended to, it is quite apparent that nothing can be done to make your lands produce sufficient, at all events, for your maintenance and the payment of rates and other liabilities which year by year are being piled up on the titles to such lands.

"I must here strike a note of warning that no good can result by turning to movements having as one of their objects the wholesale collection of money from the misguided ones among you, aided by rosy promises of high rates of interest and financial assistance with which to farm their lands. Past experience goes to show that no good ever accrues from such movements: If you require money

to farm your lands, see to it that your titles are perfected and made negotiable securities for loans from State lending Departments. If you have money to invest, put it in the Post Office Savings-bank or other properly conducted banking institution, where the money will be safely kept for you and from which you will derive interest.

“Your ancestors shed their blood in the effort to retain these lands for the benefit of their descendants. Let the spirit, therefore, which moved them in the past to make great sacrifices move you to-day to use every effort to retain what little is left of the patrimony which they bequeathed to you. But the only way by which you can retain them is to utilize them in such a way as will enable you to profitably hold them. Such a struggle you will find, if you make the attempt, is worth while. Your great ancestors left behind them the saying, ‘*Me mate te tangata, me mate mo te whenua.*’ They put this saying to the test and into practice in their day. Let you, their descendants, therefore use every effort to retain what still remains of the once vast domains for the possession and retention of which they fought and died. *Tena koutou katoa. Kia ora.*”

The meeting read a challenge in the Minister’s injunction that “the occasion . . . should not be allowed to pass without some attempt being made, as was done at the great Tikitiki meeting in Waiapu last year, to discuss questions affecting the welfare of the Maori race.”

The Conference passed the resolutions which are set out hereunder with brief explanatory notes.

1. *Thanks.*—That the Conference tenders its thanks to the Right Hon. the Native Minister for his inspiring memorandum, and requests that the same be translated into Maori, printed, and circulated.

2. *Education.*—In regard to education (a) The Conference expresses gratification that the Government recognizes the prime importance of education to the Maori race, as evidenced by the increased assistance rendered by the Education Department, by the legislation which constituted the Maori Purposes Fund and the Board controlling the same, and by the grant two sessions ago to that Board of the sum of £15,000 from the Consolidated Fund to assist the education of the Maori people.

(b) The Conference desires, however, to point out to the Government the need for improvement in the following respects:—

- (i) The adjustment of the allocation of free places or Government scholarships tenable at Maori secondary schools, so as to assure a fairer distribution between pupils from Native schools and public schools. Under the present system a disproportionately large number of such scholarships is secured by pupils of Native schools.

(NOTE.—In 1925, out of 150 free places thirteen were held by Maori pupils from public schools, although more than half of the Maori and half-caste children receiving primary education attended such schools. The other free places were held by pupils from Native schools. The latter enjoyed the advantage that they were directly controlled by the Education Department, whose special staff of Native School Inspectors kept that Department in touch with the best material in those schools. In the public schools organized in districts under Education Boards the Maori talent was not in direct touch with the Department, on the recommendation of whose expert staff free places in Maori secondary schools were secured. The result was a hardship to the Maori children of Hawke’s Bay, Wairarapa, and the West Coast, where very few Native schools were established. Yet more than one-half of the Maori Purposes Fund was contributed by the Maori Land Boards administering Native lands in these handicapped areas.)

- (ii) The provision by the Education Department of continuation scholarships supplementary to those instituted this year by the Maori Purposes Board.

(NOTE.—The Maori Purposes Board has provided twenty-five of these scholarships, of the value of £40, tenable for one year at a Maori secondary school. The holders are selected by the Education Department from pupils recommended by the principals of these secondary schools, who are supposed to select from free-place holders in their second year. The idea is to ensure by this process of selection that the most promising material obtains the advantage of an extra year’s tuition. Incidentally, the system of extended education should raise the standard of work in all Maori secondary schools.)

- (iii) The raising of the value of the Government scholarship or free place from £30 to £40 a year in recognition of the increased cost of maintenance at the Maori secondary schools.

(NOTE.—The Conference was advised that the Maori Purposes Board had made strong representations on this point to the Education Department, which had not seen fit to accede to the request. The cost to the Department would be £1,500 a year, but this expenditure would be amply repaid by the increased efficiency of the Maori secondary schools. Te Aute College, though built to accommodate up to 140 students, can maintain only ninety.)

- (iv) The teaching of the Maori *poi* dance in the Native public and secondary schools as one of the exercises, if so recommended by the teaching staff. Instructors are available.

(NOTE.—The Conference thought that, as physical-drilling systems introduced from other countries found a place in the school curriculum, the Department might look for a form of drill which was at once physically advantageous, graceful, and attractive, and native to the country. A short course under itinerant instructors was sufficient, and, once mastered by the elder pupils, its knowledge would be transmitted from year to year.)

- (v) The institution of continuation nursing scholarships.

(NOTE.—Selection to be made from senior girls showing a desire and an aptitude for nursing to take a year’s elementary course and training. Further selection then to be made of those who are fitted to take up nursing as a career.)

3. *Industrial.*—(a) The Conference expresses pleasure at the increasing interest taken by the Government in the encouragement of industrial pursuits by Maoris, especially farming, as evidenced by the legislation and administration of recent years, notably by the undertaking of schemes for the consolidation of scattered interests in Native lands, and by the provision of funds, through the Native Trust Office and the Maori Land Boards, for assisting Maoris desirous of farming their lands.

(b) The Conference, however, desires to emphasize the need for improvement and extension in the following directions :—

- (i) The increased employment of Maoris on public works in what may be termed Maori districts ;
- (ii) The application to other districts of the " Parenga scheme."

(NOTE.—The " Parenga scheme," now being carried out under the supervision of the Tokerau Maori Land Board, makes use of funds held by the Board on behalf of the owners of lands at Parengarenga for preparing some of the land for subdivision into family and individual farms. The labour of the owners is used and paid for at a moderate rate to execute a drainage scheme, preparatory to laying down in pasture and the establishment of dairying.)

- (iii) The supervision, co-ordination, and organization of existing scattered and ill-organized Maori attempts in industrial and farming pursuits.

(NOTE.—These attempts may be found up and down the country, but for want of organization and support some of them become half-hearted and fail. A civilization which came with a deliberate mission to convert the Maori to the ways of the pakeha should now produce an organization to link up worthy attempts to respond to its demands, to foster and assist them to the point of success.)

- (iv) The more extended training of Maori youths in normal, technical, and engineering schools and establishments.

(NOTE.—The mechanical ability of the Maori, as evidenced by his past history and achievements, has not perhaps been sufficiently emphasized and developed in his school career. Some of the Maori secondary schools are remedying this by the institution of an agricultural and farming side. Other schools should specialize in technical education.)

4. *Maori Arts and Crafts, and Ethnological and Historical Research.*—(a) The Conference is gratified to know that Parliament has, by the establishment of the Board of Maori Ethnological Research and the Board of Maori Arts and Crafts, and by sundry votes by way of financial assistance, whole-heartedly recognized the need of recording the history and traditions of the Maori branch of the Polynesian race, and of perpetuating, with modifications and adaptations, the arts and crafts of the Maori people. It congratulates the Government on these acts, and also on the results of the Commission of Inquiry into the Ohinemutu and Whakarewarewa Native Villages.

(b) The Conference desires to make the following recommendations in this connection :—

- (i) That increased assistance be given by the State towards the finance of the Board of Maori Ethnological Research. American activities in regard to general Polynesian research have been lavishly financed.
- (ii) That an organized attempt be made to preserve, or reacquire with a view to preservation of, ancient Maori-pa sites.
- (iii) That a certain amount of work be taught in the Maori secondary schools and approved Native and public schools preparatory to the special course in the School of Maori Arts and Crafts.
- (iv) That it is desirable that each tribe establish an organization for the collection of data relating to its history, tradition, arts and crafts, and especially for the compilation of genealogical records, songs, and incantations, the collection of objects illustrating its material culture, and the recording, with explanatory notes, of historic place-names.
- (v) That periodical exhibitions of objects of Maori manufacture be promoted.

5. *The Settlement of Old-standing Grievances.*—The Conference desires to place on record its appreciation of the opportunity afforded by the Government, through the setting-up of Commissions of Inquiry into alleged Native grievances relating to confiscated lands, early land-sales, and the like, of dispelling many misunderstandings which for a long time have alienated the sympathies of sections of the Maori people from progressive movements, and of remedying such grievances as inquiry may find to be justified. The psychological effect on the Maori people of this belated but laudable act of justice must be immense.

6. *Health and Social.*—(a) The Conference desires to express its appreciation of the work of the Department of Health in the special branch of Maori hygiene since its inauguration on modern lines in 1900. The pioneering work of the Maori Councils then constituted under the Maori Councils Act made possible, when these institutions became defunct or lax, their practical supersession by the Department, with which they became associated in an advisory capacity.

(b) The Conference thinks it is a matter for sincere congratulation that the statistics of the last census, borne out by the figures of school attendance and by observation in several Maori districts, show that the decline of the Maori population has not only been arrested but converted into a steady increase. This is the best evidence that the work of the Department, together with the influence of education and of the partial solutions of Native-land difficulties, have combined with other beneficent civilizing factors to improve the physical and social condition of the Maori people.

(c) The Conference makes the following recommendations :—

- (i) That, wherever practicable, expert officers of the Department make health surveys of the pas in the more thickly populated Maori districts, and advise as to the best method of securing or improving the water-supply, as to drainage, disposal of rubbish and nuisances, and as to the preventive measures against typhoid and such epidemics.
- (ii) That the system of inspecting and attending to the teeth of school-children be extended as soon as possible to the Native schools, especially in the backblocks.
- (iii) That as some of the outbreaks of typhoid in Maori districts in recent years have been traced to polluted water-supplies, costing the Department and Hospital Boards large sums of money, the Department should, as a preventive measure, grant large sums to subsidize suitable water-supply schemes.

(d) The Conference desires to place on record its sincere regret that Dr. P. H. Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa) is severing his connection with the Department of Health, and its hearty appreciation of the splendid work he has done for the health of the Maori race. The Conference congratulates him on his appointment to carry on research work in Polynesia under the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, of Honolulu, and hopes that he and Mrs. Buck may have health, happiness, and success in their new sphere, and be spared to return as soon as this special mission is ended.

7. *Native Lands*.—In this connection the Hon. A. T. Ngata, M.P. for the Eastern Maori Electoral District, explained the legislation in regard to consolidation of interests, temporary advances by the Maori Land Board on incomplete titles, secured by a charge on the lands, pending survey and other essentials to registration under the Land Transfer Act; also the law in regard to incorporation. The question of rating on Native lands was also discussed and recent legislation explained.

The Conference registered the following resolutions :—

- (a) That the Native land-laws be consolidated, as so many amending measures have been passed since the comprehensive overhaul of the old legislation in 1909.
- (b) That the system of consolidating interests in Native land be actively extended to other parts of the Dominion. So far it has been in operation only in portions of the Eastern Maori Electorate, and, as it has proved successful there in bringing Native titles up to date and solving numerous problems relating to Native lands, it should be extended where circumstances permitted.
- (c) That so far the finance provided to assist Maori farming came entirely from funds arising out of revenues of Native lands, without State subvention. It seemed desirable that these funds be supplemented from sources such as those available to the State Advances Department or from special loans arranged by the Government for the Native Trustee.

8. *Future Conference*.—During the discussions it was suggested that at a future conference, which in accordance with the practice of the New Zealand Maori Lawn-tennis Association, will be held next Easter, the formation, constitution, and organization of a Young Maori Party (whether it was to be officially so called or otherwise would rest with such future conference) should be undertaken.

It was also suggested that encouragement should be given for public debate of special questions, or for the writing of competitive essays on Maori subjects, the reward for which should be some notable prize on the lines of, say, the Nobel Prize. (It is suggested that the Maori Purposes Board offer the prize.)

The resolutions indicate the wide scope of the discussions. The range was justified by the fact that they contain a survey of the progress made up to the period of the meeting, as well as suggestions for further progress and improvement.

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