

TARANAKI UNDER THREAT



Taranaki, the scene of so much strife in the past, is again in turmoil. The New Plymouth City Council plans to dispose of the city's domestic sewerage and industrial waste through a long sea outfall which would go over the Rewarewa reef at the mouth of the Waiwakaiho River. The big developments in Taranaki today all too often appear to be leaving the people behind, but a group of Maori people have got together to make sure that their voice is heard.

The Taranaki Clean Sea Action Group was formed in 1979, shortly after a Planning Tribunal hearing of water rights was held in the Bell Block Hotel, New Plymouth. Although uninvited, a group of Taranaki Maori attended. The group included Percy Tamati (Chairman of the Taranaki Trust Board) Sally Karena, Neta Wharehoka, Majorie Rau (Parihaka), Ivy Papakura, Tuti Wetere (Waiwakaiho), Alia Taylor, Teddy Tamati, Kath Rangi, May Oorthius (Puketapu), Maria Tippins (Maori Affairs), Charles Bailey (Maori Council), Vera Bezems (Otaraoa), and the Rev. Moke Couch. As they had not made a formal submission the lawyer acting for the city council asked that they be removed. The chairman felt, however, that they had a perfect right to be there and on the last day of the hearing they were permitted to make submissions.

They felt that the effect of the pollution from the outfall concerned not only the Rewarewa area but also the whole of the Taranaki coastline. With on-shore winds and currents the

sea will inevitably return to the land what was dumped into it, and a whole series of traditional kawa will be jeopardised by the proposed outfall.

The Rewarewa reef at the mouth of the Waiwakaiho River has long been an important kawa. At one time the Rewarewa Pa is said to have had a population of two and a half thousand people. The kawa provides crayfish, pipi, paua, pupu, edible seaweed, rorei, wheke, kotoretore, as well as the green-lipped mussel used for medicinal purposes. The Waiwakaiho River has whitebait, lamprey, eels, crayfish, mountain trout, mullet and herring.

The land surrounding and including the Rewarewa Pa was taken under proclamation in 1905, for defence purposes. It is now used as a rifle range and as part of a golf course.

As well as the Waiwakaiho reef and the larger Rewarewa reef used by the Ngati Te Whiti hapu, other areas threatened are the Mangati reef and the Waiongona reef to the north. The Puketapu reef, the Kunene reef and the Otira reef are all within the Waionga area and traditionally the kawa of the Puketapu hapu. Further along the coast are the Tuaranga reef and the Orapapa reef, the kawa of the Ngati Kura hapu, and so to the mouth of the Waitara River. North of this is the Taioma reef used by the Manukorihi and Otaraoa hapu. Next is the Titirangi reef associated with part of the Ngati Rahiri hapu. Along the coast is the Waiau reef and the Onaero reef, the area of Ngati Tu. (The coastline in this area is the likely site of the Mobil synthetic fuel plant.) From Onaero through to Urenui and the white cliffs is the area of the Ngati Tama and the Ngati Timutu hapu. All these "well-stocked storehouses" are threatened.

The effects of an outfall have already been experienced

Above Ivy Papakura with Ina Okeroa (right) and Emma White (standing) at Waipapa, where Mobil proposes to build. When younger they lived and fished here by Taioma kawa