

TU TANGATA WANANGA WHAKATAUIRA 1980

National Maori Policy Planning Conference

October saw a unique gathering in Wellington as over 120 leaders of Maoridom assembled for a two-day hui at the old Legislative Chamber of Parliament. What for?

In 1979 the Department of Maori Affairs initiated its regional planning conferences. The intention was to meet the people on their own ground, and on their own terms, to hear their hopes, complaints and ideas as a more realistic basis for policy than trying to decide what was best for them without consultation. The idea worked.

So the next step was a national meeting of "the brains of Maoridom" to try to decide on policy directions for the coming year. Already in the regional planning conferences four main issues had come to the fore, and these formed the focal points for discussion. These were: 1. Maori language; 2. youth development; 3. economic development; 4. Maori crime. The convenors for the workshops appointed to discuss each issue were Sir James Henare on language, Mrs Hine Potaka on youth development, Sir Graham Latimer on economic development and Mrs Violet Pou on crime.

Following karakia and the formal opening of the conference by the Hon. Ben Couch, Minister of Maori Affairs, the assembly split up into its constituent groups — to the amusement or consternation of parliamentary staff, who had never seen so many Maori wandering the corridors of power. Each group was to report back to the full assembly the following day with its chief proposals. These are outlined below (a full report of proceedings with recommendations to government has yet to be published).

Delegates to the hui were chosen from a wide field of talent and experience. Some came from obvious areas — leaders of the Department of Maori Affairs, the New Zealand Maori Council and the Maori Women's Welfare League, for example, together with representatives from the tribal trust boards, the churches and the professions. Others were selected for their work and leadership in other spheres such as education and community development. Inevitably, some wondered why they had been chosen, why they had *not* been chosen, or why they found themselves in a particular discussion workshop. But overall the attempt was made to draw from a cross-section of Maoridom's considerable pool of ability and wisdom.

Pakeha observers from other government departments were also in attendance. Many expressed enthusiasm and even surprise at the high level of debate, and also at the humour or anger which was occasionally revealed.

Maori language

The group adopted this whakatauiaki as its guiding principle: "Ko te reo te tuahu o te mana Maori". The group insisted on Maori control, commitment and leadership and on Maori utilisation of technology, investment and resources. It was emphasised that commitment was necessary at all levels: individual, community, tribal and national. Dr Tamati Reedy put forward proposals to secure individual commitment, while at the community level unanimous support was given to Katerina Mataira's tutor-training programme (already in effect). At tribal level it was unanimously agreed that tribal language boards be set up, while at the national level the group called for the official recognition of Maori, i.e. that Maori should command equal constitutional and legal status with English.

Maori crime

This group's first resolution was that their workshop's name should be changed: it was a stereotype label suggesting that one crime was committed solely by Maori people, or that Maori generally were criminally inclined. A very full list of proposals boiled down to three basic strategies. Individual and community strategies meant the promotion of Maori commitment, skills and control of programmes to reduce crime among Maori. Organisational strategies demanded changes within government and Maori organisations to move personnel and financial resources to the areas of greatest need. The third strategic imperative was ideological: to promote a new thinking, wider than Tu Tangata, to create stability and pride for every Maori.

Youth development

The strategy statement from this workshop consisted of five major points. The first was that family education programmes should be biculturally based, with emphasis on Maoritanga and whanau values in pre-school education. Secondly, youth development programmes inside and outside school should be a medium not only for nurturing the leadership potential of Maori youth but also for encouraging the greater participation of parents within the schools.

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