



"NO ONE CAN CHANGE YOU BUT YOURSELVES"

Message to the Maori People

TWO months ago, in the Memorial Meeting House at Ohinemutu, the Arawa Confederation gave a ceremonial welcome to the United Kingdom and Canadian delegations of the Empire Parliamentary Association then visiting New Zealand. Replying on behalf of the United Kingdom delegates, the Earl of Listowel, deputy leader (whose photograph appears on the left), gave an address which so impressed all his listeners, Maori and pakeha, that the Department of Internal Affairs has had it printed as a booklet in Maori and in English. We have not the space to quote it in full, but reproduce about two-thirds of the English section. The translation into Maori was done by Sir Apirana Ngata.

LET me first say how much we appreciate the wonderful reception you have given us at Rotorua, and the delightful entertainment you have provided for our benefit, a welcome that typifies the traditional spirit of Maori hospitality.

We come to you as messengers from the far-off Mother country, from the people of Britain, from the two Houses of the most ancient Parliament in the Empire, and from my Royal cousin and Sovereign, His Majesty King George, your King and ours, who cares just as deeply about your welfare as he does about the welfare of his subjects in the British Isles.

And the message we bring you is a message of heartfelt thanks for your magnificent contribution to the war effort of the United Nations, both in the fields and factories of New Zealand, and on the battlefronts wherever you have engaged the enemy.

Without a moment's doubt or hesitation, in spite of the momentous choice before you, you decided to send your young men to fight beside us in far-distant Europe. It was only two days after our declaration of war on Germany that your four representatives in the New Zealand Parliament asked the Government to allow the Maori to volunteer for military service. Your response to this call to the colours was so immediate that by spring of 1940 a Maori Battalion was ready to sail, fully trained, and fully equipped, from Wellington. Every man who left his home to serve overseas went out of his own free will. You accepted unanimously and without constraint what, from the days of the Greeks and Romans to the present time, has always been regarded as the highest obligation of citizenship. There were no laggards among the Maori race. No other people engaged in this world-wide conflict has been able to mobilise its men and women for an all-out military and industrial war effort without resort to compulsion in one form or another.

I HOPE that this wartime comradeship between Maori and pakeha may lead to even greater mutual understanding, appreciation, and esteem when the war is over. Both peoples have their own part to play, and their own contribution to make, to stability and progress in the post-war world. You Maoris have a different history, a different culture, a different language and different

traditional customs from the pakeha. And you will be contributing your share to this partnership, not by allowing these vital differences to be ironed out by European influences, but by jealously preserving the best that is in your own traditions, and supplementing them with whatever you can gain from the methods and habits of the West. In the application of science to life, whether it be in matters of animal husbandry and the cultivation of crops on the farm, or in saving the lives and safeguarding the health of mothers and infants, of growing children and adult persons, there is a great deal you can usefully pick up from the scientific discoveries and the skilled technicians we have brought with us from Europe.

But do not forget that our system of mass production in factories has killed the artistic instincts of the craftsman, and that an all-enveloping and standardised ugliness is the price we have paid for our lace curtains and plush carpets and luxury hotels. It would be a tragic loss if your wonderful artistic talents were submerged by the advancing tide of cheap industrial products.

Your language is an instrument that lends itself naturally to the music of poetry and the spoken word. The rhythmic sense and grace of movement which animate your poi and haka dances are as beautiful and inevitable as a bird in flight, and your mastery of intricate pattern and balanced design have left an indelible imprint on woven flax, carved wood and polished greenstone. I beg you to cherish this precious talent you have inherited from your ancestors, to preserve it from the vulgarity of European and American commercialism, and to remember, above all, that no one can take it from you but yourselves.

It is not only by this inherent power of imagination and aptitude for art that you can enrich the New Zealand of tomorrow. Pakeha society is built on a foundation of extreme individualism which encourages each man to pursue his own advantage with little regard for others, and spreads the sociable qualities like a thin veneer on the surface of a harsh and universal struggle. This has led to many grave evils and injustices, which are still far from being remedied.

But you are accustomed by tradition to habits of friendly co-operation. You are brought up to share your possessions, you learn to live for each other and not for yourselves alone. This keen sense of social solidarity and the courtesy,

neighbourliness and hospitable kindness that go with it, derive from the ancient traditions you have inherited from your forefathers. Thence also proceed those martial qualities which have always distinguished the young Maori. Judging from past history over many hundreds of years, there is real danger that a society of which the idols are comfort and more comfort may in the course of time grow decadent and soft. Women may refuse increasingly to bear children and to make the sacrifices which their education and upbringing entail, and men may neglect to prepare themselves in days of peace for the hardships and perils of the battlefield. There can be no better antidote than the qualities you have inherited from the brave men who challenged the Pacific in their canoes 600 years ago. The marvellous powers of endurance, the high courage and the spirit of chivalry you have shown in the course of the war will be just as valuable to New Zealand, to the British Empire and to the world, in the years of peace that lie ahead.

I BEG you, therefore, to honour the traditions that have been handed down to you, to supplement them by whatever they may require to adapt your way of life to a competitive and individualistic society, and to form from this blending process a modern code of behaviour that will be as valuable to your children as your fathers' was to you.

The nineteenth century was a time of rapid change, of great hardship, and profound tribulation for the Maori people. For many years your very existence trembled in the balance. But the long and bitter conflict has ended in reconciliation, and friendship and mutual respect between the Maori and pakeha. I believe you are emerging from the valley of shadow into the sunlight of a new and brighter era in Maori history. Your spirit has revived, your numbers are increasing, and you have shown your entire fitness, in peace and war alike, to enjoy the rights and to discharge the duties of free and equal citizens in a modern democracy. You deserve the very best the future can give. And I do wish you, from the bottom of my heart, the utmost success in the difficult but not impossible task of marrying your ancient and splendid traditions to the inescapable demands of a dominating white civilisation. Kia Ora.