

Letters to editor

Reply to: Henry BIRD, Chairman, Southern Tuhoe Executive. (Article in Tu Tangata issue 15 Dec/Jan 1984 p20; Letters to the Editor.)

Dear Phillip,

Kia ora e hoa. Kei te tino koa ke taku ngakau i to koutou mahi tuhituhi a te Tu Tangata. Kia kaha; kia kaha.

I am glad that someone has taken the time to comment on my views as unfortunately written in your magazine some time ago. I say unfortunately because what was written was not entirely accurate. I am also very pleased that it was Henry Bird, a man very much respected and known to me, who has challenged and commented on what was written.

First of all: I am very proud to be a Maori. I speak the language and I keep myself well informed as to what is happening in the Maori world today. I am also teaching my children to speak the language as well. Perhaps Mr Bird's comments referred to my statement about "am I proud to be a Maori" to which I replied, well when I see the number of Maori people involved in crime, patronizing the pubs, in prisons — no I'm not very proud at all. Unfortunately what was NOT written was — "I am proud of my own Maoritanga as, what I have, has been passed down to me from my own people. Especially the spiritual qualities unique to our Maori people — the Tuhoe. There is such a depth and understanding and respect for life in the Maoritanga I have been taught that I am very pleased to have been given that little I have been. I know within my heart that I will be told more and more as I mature and as my elders decide when it is right to do so. I respect this. Kei te mohio au nga tikanga o nga taonga o o tatou whanau. So in no way at all do I down grade my Maoritanga. Let me be absolutely clear on that point. Neither can I claim ignorance.

Secondly: I know that I and my other colleagues who are Maori; are JUST AS GOOD AS ANYONE ELSE IN ALL MATTERS IN TODAY'S SOCIETY. So, WHY TREAT US SO DIFFERENT& WHY DO WE NEED A SEPARATE RUGBY TEAM& WHY DO WE NEED SEPARATE ORGANISATIONS TO HANDLE OUR HOUSING, OUR POLITICS& This does not make sense to me. I know what I am and I am trying my best to develop what I have in terms of abilities and talents; be they what they are at this stage in my life.

I am aware of the historical sig-

nificance of rugby when the first Maori team toured BUT THAT DOES NOT DETRACT FROM THE FACT THAT TO GET INTO THE TEAM YOU HAVE TO BE A MAORI. Now to bring that into it's proper perspective; "ANYONE, NO MATTER WHAT RACE COLOUR OR CREED, PROVIDING THEY CAN PLAY TOP QUALITY RUGBY, CAN PLAY IN THE ALL BLACKS". This is not the case for the Maori All Blacks and to me that is straight out RACIST. History has got nothing to do with it. A Maori person can enter either but a non Maori cannot.

I visit prisons from time to time and I am very much aware of the number of my people in them. In almost every case that I have come into contact with "proper parenting was very much lacking." I make this point because I am very much concerned that young people today need to be proud of their heritage and I have only seen confusion and a poor sense of self esteem.

I am pleased and proud that we, the Maori people in our own way, have begun to DO THINGS FOR OURSELVES. We've stopped whinging and whining that it was the Pakehas fault etc. It is so good to meet young children undergoing tuition in Te Kohanga Reo and it's marvellous to read about what's happening in other spheres such as those mentioned by Mr Bird.

My own contribution has been to introduce the first television programme which has Maori content — KUPU dealing with the correct way to pronounce Maori names plus a little historical background. The public response to this has been very encouraging indeed but it has been given NO recognition at all by the media — not that I'm duly concerned. KUPU began two years ago.

Wherever I can, I encourage young people to be proud of who they are and what they are. I travel very extensively throughout New Zealand and I always take my Maoritanga with me. I am Tuhoe, I am Ringatu, I am Maori — Tihei Mauri Ora!!!

Na reira e hoa Philip, I hope this letter explains some misunderstandings for my kaumatua Henry Bird and perhaps others who have wanted to comment.

Ma te Atua koutou e manaaki i tenei wa, a i nga wa e haere mai nei.

Te Hata (Olly) OHLSON

Kia ora.

Congratulations on the latest issue of Tu Tangata which maintains its very high standard and gives a vivid picture

of Maori life, both today and in the past. The December/January issue is fascinating, from the brilliant cover picture of Maui (in a space waka?) to the photos and news of many contemporary Maori people like Dalvanus, the Maori singer, Georgina Kirby, President of the Maori Women's Welfare League, Tama Takao, new Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand, kaumatua, kuia, artists, writers, all the splendid variety of Maori society.

There are some Pakehas — few, we hope — who question what is the "use" of the Maori language and culture today, and ask why it should have an equal place with English in Aotearoa. Presumably they wish to raise their children as little money-making computers unaware of the poetry and emotional richness which makes human life worth living. These people are not enthusiastic about a bicultural New Zealand nor the timid steps which have been taken towards this, and they push the claims of all the other nationalities in our New Zealand society. They are either ignorant of or unwilling to admit the fact that the Maori people are the only tangata whenua and this is the only place on earth where this language and culture exists.

We Pakehas are lucky to be offered the chance to share this Maori heritage, to have a glimpse of this taonga tuku iho no nga tupuna, which opens a door into a world of beauty and spiritual power.

This privilege carries the obligation on our part to look at ourselves and our institutions; to try and understand why Maori land has almost vanished, and why the language is in such peril and therefore the culture too.

Tu Tangata is a superb medium to enlighten and interest Pakehas as well as Maoris. It's easy to read, and because it's a magazine which appears at frequent intervals, the information is constantly up-dated and later developments in a story are unfolded, unlike a book which is limited to what has happened already.

I am sure that reading Tu Tangata regularly would be for most people the rich experience it has been for me and I am suggesting this to a number of people and organisations concerned about the future. What book, what course of lectures, would cost so little and do so much?

Kia u, kia kaha, kia manawanui.

Peggy Ashton
Devonport