

Waitangi Tribunal

By Hiria Rakete

Government departments were fully defensive in their right of reply to the Waitangi Tribunal. The challenge from Kaiwhakapumau i te Reo a month earlier was that the Maori Language Board was denied rights in respect of the use of Maori language as guaranteed in the Treaty of Waitangi.

Secretary of Justice, Mr Stanley Callaghan, responded to Mr Paul Temm's question about whether it would be possible to integrate the Maori language into the court system. "It's quite practical, but we haven't got the staff to handle the paperwork," he said. Otherwise, interpreters and fluent Maori speakers would have to be employed to carry out this work. But he admitted that there is an understanding of the lack of Maori language in the Justice department.

Judge Durie said that if the language of the person standing in the dock is not recognised in court, neither is their status, to which there was no reply.

The Education Department said it had been involved in Maori studies, language and culture, which showed its support of *taha Maori*. At the moment, the department is carrying out a Ministerial Curriculum Review for Maori language in schools. Mr Cyril Bryce, Assistant Secretary of Schools and Development, said that the response to this from the Maori community was low. He rhetorically asked whether this was the fault of the department or the community. Mr Bryce said that there was no set policy for Maori language in the education department.

The publications section in the department has been putting out Maori publications since the 1960s. The number of itinerant Maori teachers has increased and the amount of Maori in schools is steadily increasing as well, said the department.

Wiremu Kaa spoke as Director of Maori and Pacific education. He said that progress and awareness within the department concerning Maori is rising. However he said giving evidence before the tribunal put him in two minds, because on the one hand he was Maori and the other, a representative of the Education department.

Broadcasting presented a day long submission. It was represented by Beverley Wakem, Director General of Radio New Zealand, Hugh Rennie,



Chairperson of the Broadcasting Corporation, and Allan Martin, Director General of Television New Zealand.

Ms Wakem said that Radio New Zealand had met the needs of Maori and Pacific Island listeners through the history of Maori involvement in radio. She said that radio had always been conscious of its obligations toward that segment of listeners. However, she admitted that it may not be fulfilling their needs and demands and that catering for minority interests was a responsibility that the Corporation bears alone.

She said that the reason for the slow growth was that the Corporation had not been able to recruit appropriate personnel. As at November 1985, it was indicated that the Broadcasting Corporation employed 47 Maoris and 18 Pacific Islanders.

Mr Rennie went on to list his involvements in promoting Maori within the Corporation. He explained the lack of Maori people on the Broadcasting Board. Appointments to the Board are made by the Governor-General who acts on the advice of the Minister of Broadcasting. Of the eight members on the Board, at least two are of Maori descent.

He said that the Board has adopted plans for a Maori radio network. Also under consideration was the establishment of a Maori production unit in Television New Zealand. Both possibilities could be funded by the Corporation. However he said the Maori initiative, Aotearoa Broadcasting Service, could not be funded by the Corporation. Sir Graham Latimer said if the Corporation could spend money in the production of the health series 'Waiora', would it not be possible to fund ABS? There was no reply.

Mr Martin said he was confident that Television presented fair coverage of Maori things.

"For instance, over 25 years of television in New Zealand, we now have Koha and Te Karere screening in every household. Added to this is the number of Maori people in programmes such as Close to Home, Sea Urchins and Children of the Dog Star. The Children's and Young People's department has deliberately included a high number of Maori presenters in its programmes. For instance, Olly Ohlsen in After School. Even Sesame Street has replaced Puerto Rican language segments with Maori inserts.

"The Maori presence in television probably reaches its highest profile in entertainment programmes where Maori personalities are almost the mainstay of the talent resource," he said.

Mr Paul Temm asked Mr Martin if there had been a backlash from viewers about Maori programming on television.

Mr Martin said they didn't really get many complaints in this vein. He said most complaints came in about lack of English sub-titles during Te Karere. His answer was that Maori people didn't want this.

The three sections of the Broadcasting Corporation felt they had done enough to reflect Maori presence in the media. Ms Wakem felt that the Maori people have to be able to help themselves by ... "roping in trust boards and other Maori resources".

She gave an example of the cooperation between Radio New Zealand and the Te Arawa Trust Board.

"The local radio station in Rotorua provided technical expertise and professional advice while the Trust Board provided the funding."

State Services Commission representative, Mr Peter Boag, also defended the Commission's track record as far as recognising Maori language as a criterion in employing civil servants. However, he admitted that not enough had been done in this regard but pointed to some steps that had been taken.

He mentioned marae courses that are being run for Maori and Pakeha civil servants. A notice had also been sent to permanent heads of government departments to identify positions where knowledge of the Maori language would be a definite help.