

Mana Motuhake: The Nature of its Business

Introduction

Mauri tu, mauri ora — Act and live
Mauri noho, mauri mate — Sit still and die (1)

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The current decade represents a period of strained race relations between the Maori and the Pakeha. Rather than continue to tacitly accept and become totally over-run by and immersed in the political, economic and social framework created by the dominant Pakeha, segments of the Maori population such as Mana Motuhake have said "enough!". The Maori has instead chosen to act now to gain acceptance and recognition of their unique identity and values by the Pakeha majority and ensure the preservation and sustenance of Maori language and culture. Groups such as Mana Motuhake have become openly critical of the status quo of the Maori and vow that there will not be a return to the previous farcical situation where a so-called "consensus" permitted Maori aspirations to remain invisible to Pakeha decision-makers and contributed to the fallacy that New Zealand race relations could be held up as a model to the rest of the world.

Socio-Economic Problems

On one side of the coin, continuing problems over land and the widening economic and social gap between the Maori and the Pakeha provide a focal point for Maori grievances and concerns. Recently released socio-economic statistics (2) reveal a grim and disturbing reality, for instance:

"in education some 60 percent of Maori youth leave the education system without a formal education — and that is after 12 years in the system; in street gangs, institutional care and prisons the Maori is over-represented, half the prison population is Maori;

in the area of housing only 42 percent of Maori people own their own home as compared with 72 percent of the non-Maori population;

in the employment field a 20 percent disparity between the two groups exists;

in the area of health the mortality rate has some ten years difference between the two groups and in the case of incidence of occurrence of lung cancer, Maori women have the dubious distinction of leading the world!"

Such focal points of tension are not eased by claims that "other New Zealanders can cope and since we are all one people — New Zealanders, there is no valid excuse for the Maori to lag behind." However, the fact of the matter is that the Maori and the Pakeha do not feel "alike" and in truth do not classify themselves together, no matter what some people may believe they should feel or think! Dr Tamati Reedy, Secretary of Maori Affairs recently commented (3) "that when Maori

people behaved according to the normal (predominantly Pakeha) values of society they were accepted and congratulated as New Zealanders — especially when they performed well in education, the workforce, housing and other socio-economic areas. But when Maori behaviour is seen as somewhat 'deviant' they are told in no uncertain terms that they are Maori — and reminded not to forget it!"

The classification of the Maori people themselves as one homogeneous group is another commonly made mistake. Bob Mahuta of the Tainui tribe has commented (4) that, "The perception that all Maori people are part of a single homogeneous group with the same attitudes and views is not so. Maori people belong to tribal groups which each have unique historical experiences and distinct cultural practices and perceptions of the contemporary world."

On the other side of the coin, many people claim that the existence of Maori institutions and special concessions such as the Maori parliamentary seats, Maori Affairs Department, Maori All-Black team, loan concessions and protective land laws constitutes undeniable proof that the Maori in fact enjoys a very privileged status in New Zealand. So does the caged kiwi in the zoo! Everyone tells the Maori what is good for him. But surely only the wearer of a shoe can tell where it pinches the most? One could argue that if it was not for the existence of these concessions, the poor socio-economic position of the Maori would be far worse!

In the light of the above issues it is not

surprising that Maori dissatisfaction continues to be voiced publicly and loudly.

Mana Motuhake

The challenge of Maori impatience was felt by the Labour Party in 1979, when Matiu Rata, one of its own members of Parliament and a former Minister of Maori Affairs, resigned from the Party. Rata became totally disillusioned with Labour and claimed that the Party was indifferent to the urgent and pressing needs of Maoridom in the interests of overall efficiency and unity and had for far too long taken the four Maori seats for granted. The following year, as proof of his convictions, Matiu resigned from his prestigious position of Member of Parliament for Northern Maori. He unsuccessfully contested the consequent by-election as an independent, polling within 1,000 votes of Labour's winning candidate Dr Bruce Gregory and at the same time gave Labour the first real fright they had ever experienced over a Maori seat!

Following his defeat Matiu agreed to head a fledgling Mana Motuhake Party, which, although having never contested a general election before, could in fact trace its roots back to 1858 and the kotahitanga (unity) movement. Prior to Matiu's joining the Party, Mana Motuhake, under Amster Reedy, had been evaluating certain socio-economic statistics relating to the Maori people.

Aims and Objectives

The name "Mana Motuhake" means distinct/discrete power. Another definition is the autonomy of things Maori. The movement is keenly aware that politics is about power and who gets what, when and how and is dedicated to a philosophy of self-help for the Maori people. It pledges to advance the Maori from a state of dependence to one of self-reliance and self-determination. The Party believes that the Maori are the best people to represent their own interests and destiny.

The primary objective of the Party is to transform New Zealand and its active practices and laws to reflect the true nature of a bi-cultural society rather than the largely mono-cultural society based on the values of the Pakeha majority.

Mana Motuhake has strong indigen-