

# The Festival, the Pope and the Media Battle

**T**his issue of Tu Tangata spotlights two special events — the Polynesian festival at Labour Weekend and the visit to Aotearoa a few weeks later of Pope John Paul II.

We have a 13 page section on the festival to reflect the colour, vitality and growing importance of that occasion.

And, although the papal visit came uncomfortably close to our publication deadline, we've been able to record something of the Pope's contact with Maoridom during his two-day stay.

But the prime focus of this issue is the struggle by the Maori people for a fair share in the country's news media.

We highlight the struggle because, as more and more of our leaders now recognise, it's one which the Maori people can't afford to keep on losing.

Not unless we intend to lose everything.

The news media can make or break any venture whether it's in education, justice, land, health, religion, sport or politics.

Misleading publicity (or none at all) can turn public opinion against a project.

And where public opinion goes, official support is apt to follow. Likewise, if there's informed and intelligent publicity, it can generate enthusiasm through the community and through government agencies too.

Any successful strategy to promote Maori causes must acknowledge the

central role of the media and must ensure it is responsive to more than Pakeha thinking and Pakeha influence.

A strategy that neglects the news media invites, and probably guarantees, failure.

So far, the New Zealand news media has a sorry record in presenting Maori news.

To watch television, listen to the radio or read the papers, you'd assume the Maori people didn't matter much.

You'd conclude, for instance, that the Hawaiiiki Nui was infinitely less important than KZ7, that te reo Maori scarcely existed, and that taha Maori was safe and well — maybe even overdone — in our schools.

Certainly, it's not a totally bleak scene. There has been some action within TVNZ and Radio New Zealand, more papers are giving more space to Maori news, and the trickle of Maori trainee journalists has built up into a steady stream.

But the response from those who call the shots within the media is still much too faint (and faint-hearted), too grudging, too naive and too clumsy for us to believe that a fair and professional job will soon be done.

In these pages a number of writers (Maori and Pakeha) outline the personalities and the steps in the struggle to develop a news media system that's right for Aotearoa, that reflects the whole community, not just the dominant culture.