

## Bishop Vercoe

# Bound for the boardroom?

**W**hakahuihui Vercoe, the Anglican Bishop of Aotearoa, is the man tipped to head the Maori Radio Board.

"I haven't heard anything absolutely specific on the chairmanship. All I've heard is the rumours," Bishop Vercoe said shortly after attending the BCNZ hui at the Takapuahia marae in November.

"From what's being said it looks as if it could be me."

He said he had been approached about two months earlier by the broadcasting corporation to head the board.

"But I know they came to see me for their own reasons.

"I told them then I couldn't consider doing anything until I had something (a mandate) from the Maori people.

"The whole kaupapa of what was being talked about had to go before a hui — a forum — of Maori people to make the choice. That was a priority of the hui."

Bishop Vercoe said that, apart from some technical detail of the proposed Maori network he was satisfied that the opinion — which was eventually taken up by hui-goers — had been satisfactorily aired.

A weakness of the hui, it has been suggested, was the presence of so few Maori broadcasters.

But Bishop Vercoe said: "BCNZ had to present their case and the Maori people were able to tear it down and challenge it when and where they saw fit. That's pretty much what happened."

He believed it was possible to develop other options (three were offered at the hui) once the Maori board was in place and on its feet.

"I hope we're not just satisfying the Pakeha.

"I think the board would act as the taniwha in this case by simply deciding to go out and fulfill what the Maori are after.

"That's my ambition."

He said the members of the board —



Bishop Vercoe speaking at the BCNZ hui.

which is expected to be named before the end of the year — would have to have expertise in business, as a first priority.

"There must be hard-nosed businessmen and women who can look at the overall picture and put the policies into place so that the network is successful.

"There has to be expertise in business and commercial areas as well as management and investment.

"There also has to be expertise in the media area. We need a person who knows the radio background, the ins and outs of programming and the technical side.

"There has to be someone who knows what's wanted out there in Maoridom."

Although he wasn't in a position to name names, he was confident that people with all that expertise would be found. While there would be some attempt to ensure members represented a wide area geographically, "the main thing will be the personal ability of each member."

Bishop Vercoe believed the two single biggest issues from the BCNZ proposal were the guarantee of a continued funding source and regional and tribal radio coverage. The current proposal involves setting up four stations which at certain times would network a common programme which may inhibit local programmes.

"There's room for change in all this. Probably the biggest issue with the proposal in the networking.

"I believe we can get around it so that given several years to establish ourselves properly we could be looking at setting up stations in North Auckland, Hawkes Bay and Taranaki just to name a few examples.

"They'll be like ribs feeding into the main centre."

He said that if he was chairman of the board he would bring the wairua "into the business side".

"I would be reminding people that we are working for the Maori people and not for profits or some grand structure."