

# Real story should be told

**A**s a Maori and a social worker, I would like to draw to your attention, and perhaps through your magazine, the attention of the Maori people, a situation which disturbs me deeply.

At a recent sitting of the Children and Young Persons' Court in Wanganui, 27 out of 29 defendants were Maori. This is not a new or unique situation and I know many people have commented on the disproportionate number of Maori in court and in prisons and institutions. What really concerns me is that the justice system seems to see nothing amiss and carries on with its day to day work as if these figures are quite normal. Social workers too, turn up regularly at Court and seem to have no concern for these figures, which indicate to me that something is dreadfully wrong. It seems to me we are waiting at the end of an assembly line which is turning out flawed products and instead of going back down the line to see why, we wait at the end and try to repair them. One could ask why these two large institutions are not questioning the situation. Perhaps they are afraid of redundancy or perhaps they are so entrenched in their monocultural system that they can not see the tragedy before them. How long are we, the Maori people, going to allow this to go on.

I believe this situation has arisen because our society has become so engrossed in the scramble for the mighty dollar that they just don't care. Many people have become "surplus" to the needs of society and are therefore cast aside and given minimum support. Unfortunately the Maori make up a large proportion of these

"surplus people, who because of this greedy capitalist system, are not able to partake of the many wonderful products paraded before them.

It is my belief that if we can not give these people jobs, we should at least give them a decent standard of living. I am told that society can't afford this, that the economic situation couldn't support a good wage for the unemployed. I can't believe this. When at one end of the scale we have people who can pay 3 million dollars for a horse, or spend God knows how much trying to bring home the America's Cup, to say that there is no money around is ridiculous. Our Maori ancestors were told to give up their heathen ways and join the Pakeha, going forward into a bright new world. "Kei whea tenei ao hou?"

From a fiercely proud and independent people, what have we become? While some individuals have done very well and many Maori people are quite happy with the world in which we live today, these statistics can not be ignored. Are we to believe that we are at fault as a race, or that the Maori is somehow inferior to the Pakeha, and that this is the cause. Many Pakeha are saying these things. This could be part of the reason many of our young people are beginning to believe them.

I believe that a large part of the cause is the lack of identity and purpose our children have. The fact that Maori history and tradition is submerged beneath a vast sea of Pakehatanga. All our young people see of their heritage is what is convenient for the Pakeha, i.e. concert parties etc. While Kohanga Reo is making great inroads into this situation and there are many Maori

language classes and programmes going on, this still does not fill the gap. Our Polynesian history has been put into a nice little package which can be brushed over lightly in schools and gives very little indication of the real achievements of our ancestors in crossing "Te Moana nui a Kiwa". The fact that they did this at will, and even returned to Hawaiki on occasions, has been dismissed as fiction, in spite of archaeological evidence to the contrary.

Post-European history has also been distorted to make the Maori look like an ignorant savage when in fact he was probably more intelligent than the average Pakeha of the same period. What fragments of real history are left to us strongly indicate this. I am sure that when our history is eventually rewritten from an unbiased perspective, it will be found to be a story which will give our young people a very strong foundation on which to build their identity.

Therefore my contention is, that as well as Maori language being taught in schools, we should be demanding that the real history of the Maori people should also be taught. How many of our children have heard of Titokowaru, who taught the Pakeha a lesson in military strategies, or Te Whiti and Tohu of Parihaka, who led the world in passive resistance and were imprisoned without trial?

Ka mutu iho i konei, Kahuri,  
Potonga.

G. P. Neilson  
Maatua Whangai  
Social Welfare  
Wanganui