

followers of the faith founded last century by an earlier warrior prophet, Te Kooti Rikirangi. The legacy left by the unscrupulous land sharks and the continued dwindling of Maori land give the church its soul. It is no wonder they are enthusiastic supporters of Matiu Rata's Mana Motuhake Party.

The group is highly honoured, their leader Haare Reneti being asked to participate in many of the formal aspects of the hui.

Later, Matiu Rata arrives flanked on all sides by defiant kaumatua from the north. With Mana Motuhake black and gold rosettes and ribbons ablaze in the Aotea sun, their mission is obvious: to give support to their man of the hour, Matiu Rata. (A northern hardcore kaumatua: "What do you think of Rata's football team?") Anyway, many belong to the Who's Who of Ngapuhi: Kawiti, Parangi, Hei Hei Maihi, they're all here. For many, the life-long fight for Maori rights has taken its toll. Fragility of body and feebleness of voice struggle in vain to exhort the pain of a people fast becoming landless in their own land.

Impromptu sparring in the evening against northern counterpart Dr Bruce Gregory and other Labour stalwarts, we're told, showed Rata in top form. He threw left jabs, right hooks, and counter-punched effortlessly. Before the end of the final round, he threw two finely executed uppercuts, leaving half a dozen opponents dazed and flabbergasted.

An over-confident Rata however fails later to draw the church hierarchy into an open-slathe punch-up on the marae. Their reply is terse and to the point: "This is a church hui; boxing is not on the agenda".

So far the hui has had its ups and downs for Matiu Rata. He'd earlier received a drubbing at the hands of the Katipa (church wardens) at the gates. Rata's standing as a politician and also his position as apostle of the Ratana Church adds to nothing with the katipa. He's unable to satisfy them fully as to his real reasons for being at the Pa. Finally however the silver-tongued politician succeeds with the katipa and is quickly snapped up by a television news team standing by.

As we saw with the treatment of Matiu Rata, crowd control is super-efficient. The katipa, both male and female, resplendent in heavy black caps and uniforms, appear rather ludicrous in the sweltering summer sun. They're everywhere. It seems every second Maori is a katipa. Armed with walkie talkies, they're forever muttering, "Charlie Brown to base, what can we do about so and so?" Then the fun begins. There are so many Charlie Browns contacting base, a simple statement takes at least a quarter of an hour to sort out.

Our film crew cops it with both barrels. "You can wait here all day 'til base gives clearance", quip the S.S. Katipa.

"Hey, I spent three days last week talking to the presidente. Permission was granted. We know the tapu areas". . . A Charlie Brown finally makes contact with presidente and we're allowed in.

At dusk each evening, we witness Ratana interdenominational open-air services. Ministers from other churches are given a prominent part. Perhaps here lies the answer to the vexed question of church union that religious leaders have tried to resolve over the years.

No sooner are the final "Amens" expressed, they're quickly lost in the swirl of live reggae and pop music where the solemn service has just been conducted. Candidates are quickly enlisted for the night's impromptu concert and talent quest. Self-consciousness is non-existent here. Young and old throw their names into the hat. An elderly entertainer comes each year to perform on his concertina and mouth organ popular ditties of the thirties. Deep into the night the sounds and voices reverberate around the plaza until the announcement of semi-finalists that takes them to the grand-slam final evening. These music festivals predate even Woodstock. At Nambassa we hear of arrests being made by the police for violence and other crimes. There isn't one policeman at Ratana Pa. Ratana's dictum prevails: Kia tau tonu te rangimarie; let there always be peace.



With a few hours to sun up, there is still a lot of hooting and laughter erupting from all around. The multitudes retreat to their marquees, tents and caravans to catch a few winks. The new Manuafo with its tapu lifted happily embraces a large chunk of the humanity that travelled the furthest. For many the pilgrimage to the Pa is not a time to sleep. Rather it's time for reminiscing and seeing whether the "Dad's" teachings are still being followed.

We're awakened very early by a booming stentorian voice reminding all, "Breakfast is served, closes in fifteen minutes", followed by a brief summary of the day's activities. Is there a Big Brother watching? One sheepishly wipes away remaining sleep from tired eyes wondering whether the Orwellian vision had enroached into the Pa. I pinch my face awake ... it is still three years to 1984. Later, the human mass arrows towards the marae. I do a spotting game. I see Rua Rakena, a high priest of the Methodists. There is Te Mara of the Maori Presbyterian Synod and Sid and Hana Jackson and many many more prominent folk. An assortment of Pakeha academics are also present. We're told one joined the Ratana movement recently having roamed the world in

