

**Right** The new Manuao building. In front is a notice board which advertises the achievement far more effectively than any photocaption could!



search of spiritual fulfilment. And now another ope is arriving. It is being piped on to the marae by one of the Ratana brass bands. It is Opposition leader Bill Rowling accompanied by a gaggle of Labour MPs and party faithfuls.

Not naturally endowed with the orator's thrust and parry, Rowling's utterances are lost in the dust of the marae as it spirals skywards. I catch his pleas for Ratana and Labour to continue the partnership forged over forty years ago. That Labour will continue to champion Maori needs.

At this point, a Mana Motuhake kaumatua grunts his disapproval. "If he listened to Matiu Rata, he wouldn't be crawling to us today. They helped create Mana Motuhake. They don't give a hoot about the Maori people." To add further contempt to his words, he walks away while Rowling is still on his feet.

Soon the band strikes up again. Significant arrivals are led to the marae at a snappy military pace. The incongruity of the ecclesiastical and the military overlapping has long been an accepted tradition of the Pa. It is impossible to imagine any other way of moving large groups of people from one area to another. The band is almost up to the marae. Behind them is Bishop Manuhia Bennett's ope. It is the last of the élites. The retiring Bishop of Aotearoa is cloaked with a human korowai of all denominations symbolic of the enormous mana that his Maori kin have heaped on him during his twelve years as their Bishop.

As eulogies pour forth he sits by capturing every twist and turn of the mihi booming across the marae. With the wisdom of two cultures, Manuhia has helped fashion a new ethos for our nation. A few days earlier, he said in the press: "Sometimes I've had to choose between the church's official attitude to the Ratana Church that it is here and my own attitude to the Ratana people, who are my own relatives. I've generally chosen my own relatives." He believes the old Anglican attitudes to the Ratana Church are meaningless and will be allowed to die a natural death.

The Tangatawhenua have spoken. The Bishop will not speak. His uncle Te Hemana Pokiha, paramount chief of Ngati Pikiao, rises to give tongue to the manuhiri.

The main service later in the temple, which brings the Ratana multitudes to the Pa each year, sees the Bishop preaching the main sermon. It is a superb exposé on the virtues of church unity being epitomised at the hui. I'm tempted later to rib the Bishop and say to him: "How does it feel preaching to a real congregation of thousands?" But I'm

scared off. He looks too awesome in his God squad gear!

The main service over, the combined brass bands snake the multitudes back to the marae.

Mrs Reo Hura, the Church's President, delivers a moving mihi and blessing to all those assembled. She's the last surviving member of Ratana's children and exudes the spirituality of her father and prophets before him; Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu-kakahi.

Mihi and whaikorero over, long queues scramble into the dining room for hakari. Service inside is super-efficient, but catering for a hui of this magnitude is a test even to those accustomed to large crowds. The massive conveyor belt servery gradually whittles down the human mass until, late in the afternoon, all have eaten. It's time to set the tables again for dinner. An army of cooks and waitresses, all on a voluntary basis, work around the clock to keep the dining room "Ki Koopu", which literally means "full stomach", functioning. Many veterans come to the Pa with everything but the kitchen sink and prepare their own meals to avoid endless queuing at the dining room. Feasting over, there is much nose rubbing, kissing and hugging followed by departing convoys spiritually cleansed and prepared for the joys, sorrows and social upheavals of 1981.

As the Ratana village slowly disappears behind Whangaehu's rolling farmlands, certain things prod the mind.

The missionary fathers on arrival to these shores claimed that the devil was in the Pa and had to be driven out. In their zeal to drive it out they became intent also on sweeping away hundreds of years of custom and tradition. If they came humbly and crowned the old religion with the new, they would probably have succeeded. Ratana obviously did it the other way around, he crowned the new with the old making religion comprehensible to the Maori mind. This is probably the main reason for its continued success and why Ratana Pa has become the Vatican of the Maori people.

Ko ta te rino i tukituki ai  
Ma te rino ano hei honohono;  
Ko ta te kakaka i haehae  
Ma te kaka ano hei tuitui.  
What the Pakeha sought to disrupt  
The pakeha will seek to restore  
What the Maori has lost  
The Maori will strive to regain.