

# HE RERENGA KORERO/Social Comment

## A case for more Maori on radio

By Haare Williams

**There has always existed in this country an incomparable opportunity for New Zealanders to see themselves in a growing bicultural society. But the majority of non-Maori people are still unaware of the vitality and profusion with which Maori life and Maori language continue to step into their lives.**

**Indeed, the belief is still widely held that some aspects of Maori culture continues largely as an adjunct of the tourist industry and is little more than a debased copying of forms from earlier times. I believe that New Zealand has the unique opportunity to present itself as a distinctive society, as one which can be identified from every other society in the world. And that can best be done by the promotion of our indigenous culture — Maoritanga.**

It is not a simple matter to step outside the parameters of one's own perception of the world, and see that world from other eyes. In the context of a continuing review of Maori broadcasting needs, the initiative has been taken by Professor Whatarangi Winiata on how the BCNZ can promote the New Zealand culture and identity and 'reflect a cultural mosaic'. How that can be achieved depends on financial and human resources. And as well, it will need a firm commitment, and push from the Maori people themselves, and Maori organisations.

We continue to make pretensions about a multicultural society. The Maori population of New Zealand is 10% of the whole, yet up to only ten years ago, it was possible to live here and know nothing of the language, literature, traditions or culture of these or any other Polynesian people.

New Zealand must now take stock of its racial and cultural dimensions. It must shake off the colonial skirts and realise that it has little to do with England as 'Home'. The matrix of its own distinctiveness in the world is here, in New Zealand — the land, its peoples, and its languages.

### NATIONAL IDENTITY

The search for a national identity, until quite recently, has been a Pakeha search. When Maori people talk about identity, they mean tribal identity — not national identity as implicit in the word Maori.

Today, there is a vigorous search amongst New Zealanders for symbols

of authentic identity. That word, identity has importance for Maori and for Pakeha people. It is easier to talk about a multicultural society than to practice it. Whatever our pretensions are, we are still a long way from being a bicultural society.

Since 1975, New Zealand's racial harmony, has been at an all time low. We have seen a growing number of physically violent confrontations between Maori and Pakeha, culminating in 1978 in the removal by Police of Ngati Whatua people (and their supporters) from Bastion Point, where they had been protesting over the continuing take-over of land.

The question of random checks on overstayers, and in more recent times the extreme results of Maori and Pakeha confrontations in all parts of New Zealand, rural and urban, of the gang sub-culture.

Of all the outbreaks of violence none has been more stunning than the rampages triggered off by the controversial Springbok Tour of 1981.

These incidents do not add up to the racial harmonious pretensions our politicians have carefully alluded to.

### THE MEDIA

New Zealand prides itself on being a multicultural society, but as yet there is little provision made for minority groups to be heard as a legitimate voice through the mass media of communications.

While there have been significant developments over the past two years, especially in radio, the crop of ethnic material of radio and tele-

vision is still socially and culturally insignificant.

A regular broadcasting feature through the national and community networks, can do much to reflect back to minority groups, the validity and relevance of their languages and lifestyles. It can also help other New Zealanders increase their awareness of the presence of other cultural groups and their contribution to art, music, literature, politics, economics and life generally.

In addition, ethnic broadcasts can have a salutary effect on meaningful race relations. Education is a part of the philosophy of broadcasting.

The Maori population is on the whole, younger than their European counterpart, and young people are inclined to favour private stations or the ZM formats. Audience research surveys have indicated that age is more influential than cultural background in determining broadcasting taste.

Surveys on ethnic listening patterns indicate that Maori listening audiences are young and urbanised. However cynical we might be about the results of such surveys, we can still extrapolate a number of definable trends and preferences.

### MINORITIES' RIGHTS

All Radio New Zealand stations have an obligation to reflect a New Zealand identity and culture to promote community and national identity, and directing attention to the activities and promoting participation in them.

The vernacular broadcasts at the present time recognises some rights of minorities to use the public mass media for group communication, image building, and cultural development.

There is a need to expose young audiences to Maori values and culture. This is perhaps the most important task facing radio and television, given its acceptance of the predominant place of Maori in New Zealand's 'cultural mosaic'.

While many today have not had an adequate opportunity to learn Maori — whether it be language; song and dance; carvings and crafts; history or legends — and it should be all these things, our children and their children must not be denied that opportunity.