



# Guest Editorial

**Rt. Rev. Manu Bennett**

**Before stepping down from his office of Bishop of Aotearoa earlier this year, the Rt. Rev. Manu Bennett had a final pastoral letter he wished to address to his flock. He considered it extremely urgent that the Maori people should be encouraged to vote in the 81 election.**

**To this end Tu Tangata publishes the Bishop's message.**

"It would seem that if the percentage of Maoris going to the polls at the last few elections continues its downward trend we could, by poor response and poor participation on election day, lose the present arrangement of special representation by our own defaulting. It may be that a new form of representation should be introduced but it is of great importance that we retain what we have got until we have strengthened our position and can talk about other alternatives from a position of strength rather than one which comes by default.

It was to this end that people from all our Maori Churches together with the Secretariat for Evangelism, Justice and Development and the help of the Secretary of Maori Affairs held their Tu Tangata Wananaga from the 27th to 29th March at Te Unga Waka in Auckland. The seminar itself turned out to be a gathering of great importance. One of the introductory papers was given by Dr Mahuta and unfortunately, was the only thing reported in the media, and caused quite a stir amongst those present.\* But nevertheless it was one of many points of view which the seminar discussed but in the end the bulk of those present were firmly against such a measure at this present point in time and felt that we should strongly advocate to our people the retention of the present pattern while at the same time keeping our options open for the future.

However there were matters which we felt that the Churches in Maoridom should be encouraged to pursue and foster particularly

amongst our own congregations and the following are a summary of points approved for a basis of immediate action by the member Churches of the group at the meeting of the Tu Tangata Whanau Wananga o Nga Hahi Maori:

That throughout the whole whakaminenga network system of our various Churches, we should:

— Encourage all our people to vote at the coming election.

— We should assist them where necessary to understand the voting procedures.

— We should encourage all our people to make sure that they are on the electoral roll and to assist them to find out.

— We must ensure from the authorities that the rolls are available at Post Offices, Maori Affairs offices, Citizens Advice Bureaux and where necessary even at schools.

— That the appropriate Department be asked for an increase in the number of Maori polling booths but especially in urban areas and that a Maori returning officer be present at every general polling booth in order to assist the Maori voter.

— That scrutineers be asked to make wider use of their forms of identification.

— That the Department of Maori Affairs be invited to help in this educational programme through their Tu Tangata scheme and the network of their community officers."

\* Dr Mahuta's paper is reprinted in this Tu Tangata 81 election edition — *The Maori Seats, the case for/against.*

# Politicians

**Electoral apartheid?**

**Or a necessary and unique part of New Zealand's political system?**

**The three major political parties don't agree on which view to take of the Maori seats.**

"The Maori seats have a special significance in our Parliament," says Justice Minister Jim McLay.

"The Maori have historically been guaranteed 4 seats in Parliament, and those guarantees are as relevant today as when they were first given more than a hundred years ago."

Labour's shadow Maori Affairs Minister, Koro Wetere, agrees.

"Maori opinion has hardened over the retention of the seats. There would be very few people talking about the abolition of them now.

"Maoris look upon these seats as a way of airing their views, and to try to rectify the wrongs of yesterday. It's going to be some years before that process is finished."

## Seats unnecessary

But Social Credit advocates eliminating the Maori seats altogether.

Socred leader Bruce Beetham says the Maori seats would be unnecessary under proportional representation — which would be introduced if Social Credit becomes the government.

Beetham advocates larger electorates — with more than one Member of Parliament per electorate.

"We believe," says Beetham, "that proportional representation would provide the Maori people with an end to the discrimination which is involved in separate representation.

"Yet they could have their group interest represented if that's what they wish — because under proportional representation any significant interest group will be proportionally represented."

## Maori option

Even National and Labour, which agree the Maori seats should con-