

1982 National M.W.W.L. Conference

Official Opening of Conference by Dame Te Atairangi Kaahu

Monday 10 May 1982 at Huria Marae, Tauranga

On occasions of jubilation, praise or prayer, the citizens of this country sing the nation's anthem, "God Defend New Zealand."

I will recite the opening stanzas, but not in jubilation nor in praise; I speak these in prayer, not to God but to the peoples of Aotearoa, that they might fulfil the intent, the promise which they themselves have made, whenever they have sung our New Zealand hymn.

God of Nations at thy feet, In the bonds of love we meet.

Hear our voices we entreat.

Men of every creed and race, Gather here before thy face.

Asking thee to bless this place.

From dissension, envy, hate, And corruption guard our State.

Make our country good and great, GOD DEFEND NEW ZEALAND.

During the last hundred years, our country (blessedly) has seen little of those ills — dissensions, envy, hate and corruption — that have ravaged so many nations. But New Zealand is not immune from dissension, discord and strife, and its trailing afflictions.

Secret springs

Disharmony, dissatisfaction and discontent are the secret springs of actions that lie beneath a decade of protest.

This jewel of the South Pacific has been found flawed, and not to be God's Own Country, but ours alone, the province of people fallible and uncertain in their trusteeship.

Even now, disquiet lies across the nation that found the 1840 declaration of "One People, One Nation" never was and could never be, and the 1934 proclamation "Two Peoples, One Nation" remaining a dream, the baseless fabric of a vision.

Each noble phrase has been worn like an amulet, a charm, to ward off evil, the evil of truth that our country too has knowledge of racial prejudice and cultural bias.

Civilisation is still on the road from intolerance to tolerance, and New Zealand is striving to pass beyond tolerance to a state of equality for its disadvantaged.

Without suspicion

Equality must view without suspicion, and tolerance without disfavour, the flowering of each culture that is the identity of New Zealand. Each is a lifestyle to a person of creed and race, an ordinary person, engaged in the everyday problems of living and life.

Each race is as a tribe. Each has its own ways. Each has an in-ness that binds a tribe together and an other-ness



Dame Te Atairangi Kaahu

that slows the footsteps of a stranger who would enter ... and yet be accommodated. To be different, to think differently, to dissent, is the heritage of our Freeland, but corruption is not.

An excess of racial pride, a belligerent show of racial chauvinism and envy spawn dissension and hate that corrupt the state.

On the common ground of New Zealand living, each race may walk, meeting, mingling, contributing, taking, sharing and learning.

There, one might gain a new perspective and from that a wider vision — that to help each other will help our country be good and great.

Presidents address

We have entered into the 1980's with eighteen more years to the year 2,000. God willing, most of us will still be here. We need to be watchful and protective of our organisation. The age of technology will be part of us — but no computer can ever project the love, dedication and spiritual beliefs that has guided us throughout our 31 years of existence.

Struggling people

Our motto is TATOU TATOU and in that spirit we do our best to work

together. But do we include all our Maori women in this sense of belonging, of oneness? I think of some of the Maori women I have seen in the course of our Auckland survey. I think of those who are struggling to bring up families. I think of their loneliness, their depression, how can we do something effective for them?

It would be idle to suggest that simply by enrolling them in a branch of our League we would solve their problems. Most of the free time of working mothers must be taken up looking after their homes and families.

Of course I hear of those who spend too much time elsewhere. But sometimes I wonder who can blame them. Their lives lack so many of the good things you and I take for granted that my heart goes out to them and I long to find a way of helping them. And what about their families? We hear and read of some of them every day and the news is not always good.

Turning back

In our TU TANGATA programmes we are turning back to our cultural strengths as a base for growth, we should try to find a base in Maoritanga for these lonely families to recreate a sense of whanaungatanga in the cities.

Perhaps a few places could be found to house a group of related families in a close community, pensioner flats for the aged, the beginnings of a marae, at least a big room with a kitchen where a small hui could held, where the old folk could impart their knowledge, the children do their homework under supervision, the school-leavers could learn work skills.

This would be a solution, it would give these young mothers and their families back their heritage. I suppose I will be accused of separatism, of apartheid, but I am talking about simple freedom. This would be an exercise of free choice, the right to live in one's own style. I want to see the whanau claim its own and bring them back into the atmosphere of TATOU TATOU.

Many of our families and friends have moved to town and made good lives for themselves there. Many of us are ourselves town dwellers but how grateful we should be that we have had the breaks as well as the capacity to fend for ourselves in this situation. So let's use our strength to get out and help, to support job creation schemes, work-skill programmes and all the other projects that can help our people to advance.

Let's include everyone in the warmth, the aroha, of TATOU TATOU.