

unthinkingly, chose this sad occasion to tell Nepia that it had become the policy of the Rugby Council to phase out Maori Rugby as such, he was unfortunate. Nepia reacted for two reasons. He felt sorrow for the loss of Porter. As a great player, a great Maori player, a Ngati-Porou, he had unfathomable pride in Maori Rugby. As Nepia afterwards recounted this experience in 1976, he made it plain that he had violently opposed any idea, as was implicit in Sullivan's statement, that Maori Rugby should lose that special identity which had been established when Warbrick's team, which contained 22 Maoris and four Pakehas and which played 107 matches around the world in 11 months, became the vast and immovable foundation-stone of all of New Zealand Rugby.

But there was no question that, during the 1970s, perhaps later, certainly before, members of the Rugby Council were opposed to Maori Rugby as a special part of New Zealand Rugby. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to discover the reasons for this attitude.

Certainly there were embarrassments when at McLean Park in 1921 the Maoris were beaten by the first Springboks to tour New Zealand by 9 points to 8. The game was bitter. A refereeing decision which yielded the winning South African try was claimed to be a blunder. Within a day or two, a sensation was caused by the publication of the contents of a cable despatched by a South African journalist named Blackett to newspapers in his homeland. His report that it was "bad enough Springboks having to play a team officially designated New Zealand natives but spectacle thousands of Europeans frantically cheering on a band of coloured men to defeat members of own race was too much for Springboks who (were) frankly disgusted" was taken up in Parliament and in the editorial columns of newspapers. Many years later, a petition was lodged by the Arawa that no match be arranged between the Maoris and the Springboks of 1937. For the first but absurdly not the last time in New Zealand Rugby, New Zealanders, Maori and pakeha, became vividly aware of the problems of racism.

publicity unprecedented

When the third Springboks toured, in 1956, the Maoris were included in the itinerary. The match was played at Eden Park. Publicity was unprecedented. It was said that haka parties, thousands strong, intended to converge on the park to cheer on the Maoris. Since this was the year in which New Zealand Rugby was determined to *avenge* the defeat of Fred's All Blacks, four tests to nil, in 1949, it also said that the Maoris would make mincemeat — long pig perhaps? — of the Springboks.

In the event, the match was a disaster. The Maoris were beaten by 37 to nil. No side representing the race had ever before played so badly. In the dressing-room after the game, the captain of the team, Stanley, or "Tiny", Hill, an All Black from Canterbury, said to an All Black selector, Aurthur Marslin: "There were a lot of frightened Maori forwards out there today". Never a man to waste words, Marslin snapped back: "Yes, 'Tiny', all eight of them".

That fixture undoubtedly was a generating cause of a growing belief among councillors that New Zealand Rugby would be better, or improved, or made more easily manageable, if Maori Rugby as such was phased from the game. The belief insidiously spread, councillor to councillor, province to province. When, in most years, the annual Prince of Wales Cup fixtures yielded financial losses, pakehas tended to say that New Zealand Rugby couldn't continue to shoulder the financial burdens of Maori Rugby. When a famous Maori halfback, Manahi Paewai, whose mana had been extended when he qualified for a medical degree, said in 1971, about the time that the Maoris played the British Lions at Eden Park, that the time had come for Maori Rugby to give up its identity, pakeha administrators said to each other: "We told you so." The resistance to a large-scale tour by a Maori team to elsewhere than the Pacific or, perhaps Australia, strengthened.

To do them justice, senior pakeha administrators appreciated the importance of the Maoris to New Zealand Rugby. As will be well remembered, resentment had developed among both Maoris and pakehas at the exclusion of Maoris from All Black teams chosen for tours of South Africa. When Allen's team set off, Johnnie Smith, the greatest Maori player of the time — Paewai, given the opportunity, may have proved even greater — spoke for many Maoris when he said he did not resent the exclusion of his people from the team. South Africans, Smith implied, were entitled to set their own qualifying standards.

bitterly disputed

Within ten years, such a view was being bitterly disputed. On the eve of an All Black South African tour of 1960 which was captained by Wilson Whinerary and coached by none other than Jack Sullivan, a Wellington surgeon, Rolland O'Regan set going a campaign, "No Maoris, No Tour". Thousands tumbled to join in. Maoris and pakehas marched side by side, in protest at the exclusion of members of their race. The campaign was unsuccessful, at least in the public eye. But in Johannesburg during the tour, a dramatic meeting was staged between, on the one hand, the South African Rugby Board led by Dr Danie Craven



Waka Nathan 1965, Manager 1982 Team

and, on the other, by representatives of the Dominions — Cuthbert Hogg and Tom Pearce of New Zealand, Wylie Breckenridge of Australia — supported by the all-powerful figure of British Rugby, Bill (later Sir William) Ramsay. Bluntly were the South Africans told: "Never again will All Black teams tour South Africa unless Maoris are leigible for places in the side."

As a point of interest, Mr O'Regan never again took part in anti-South Africa movements. He had a short answer for questioners. He had set out, he said, to break down apartheid in New Zealand Rugby. His movement had succeeded. It was not its business to tell other countries how to run their affairs. All too seldom has the wisdom of this statement been appreciated.

Meanwhile, it was clear that politics of a sort were the cause of the decline in the prestige of Maori Rugby as this was appreciated by the New Zealand Rugby Union. A momentous event occurred in the early 1970s. For many years before and during World War Two, the representative of the Maori Advisory Board on the union had been Mr Kingi Tahiwai, a respected figure. Ralph Love, who succeeded him, was a warm-hearted enthusiast who sometimes let his heart rule his head. As preparations were being made for the 1960 All Blacks' tour, Love told a meeting of the Rugby Council that in effect, he was in favour of apartheid. Perhaps he was misreported. Perhaps what was printed did not quite get the gist of his remarks. But it was not an easy remark to stomach; and may have been held against Ralph, who in his time was elected Mayor of that passionate place of Rugby, Petone, when a contender appeared for the appointment of Maori Advisory Board representative on the Rugby Council. In the voting, Love was defeated and a 1947-49 All Black five-eights, Ben Couch, succeeded him.