



Aila Taylor holding Kina at Epiha Beach, site of proposed Motunui outfall. (Photo: Fiona Clark)

ordinating and funding such developments, and the side effects they have on local communities.

In that respect the tribunal recommends a small, expert task force to set out medium term plans for North Taranaki and how things like waste disposal will be dealt with.

But the recommendation which really sparked nationwide controversy related to the waste outfall from the Synthetic Fuel Plant at Motunui just north of Waitara.

The plant has a water right to build its own waste pipeline to sea. But the construction insults Maori cultural and spiritual beliefs and threatens physical pollution of an unpolluted seafood gathering area.

The tribunal recommends that outfall be stopped, and the waste discharged through the Waitara Borough outfall.

It recommends further that a new regional outfall should be built to take Waitara's existing effluent, and all the local Think big projects. The waste discharged to sea should first be highly treated in land-based plants.

When the tribunal's findings became public it appeared as a triumph for Te Atiawa. Then victory turned sour.

Almost immediately Prime Minister Mr Muldoon announced the separate Motunui outfall would go ahead regardless. Worse still, he made the announcement even before he was aware that it went directly against the tri-

bunal's recommendation. It looked as if the Government was going to dismiss the tribunal's report without even bothering to study it.

Then the fuss started. New Zealand Maori Council figures, the Maori Warden's Association, Te Atiawa and a host of supporters individually, and collectively, at a hui on the Manukorihi Marae, cried foul.

The strength of the opposition clearly bothered the Government. Works Minister Tony Friedlander for example, quickly entered the arena to say the Government had only rejected two of the tribunal's four major recommendations. When the anger intensified he issued another statement saying the Government had in fact only rejected one of the recommendations.

Other Cabinet Ministers involved went to ground.

Maori Affairs Minister Ben Couch was in a difficult spot. When the report was first issued he said "the important point now is that action should follow discussions as swiftly as possible, to show reasoned discussion of the problems is still better than confrontation when it comes to solving practical problems effectively and with good will".

Following the Prime Minister's announcement Mr Couch adopted a "no comment" stance.

What followed is history. The political heat intensified, spearheaded by two meetings between the Prime

Minister and Te Atiawa representatives in Wellington. Te Atiawa stood their ground and drew support from a meeting of all Taranaki tribes at Parihaka.

Opposition came from another area. Engineers raised concerns about the possibility of building the Motunui outfall.

Finally the Prime Minister backed down. The Motunui outfall was stopped and special legislation was introduced into Parliament with the blessing of the Labour Opposition.

At the time of going to press the legislation was under scrutiny by a Parliamentary committee. The end result,

