



FINDING A PATHWAY TO THE FUTURE

HE ARA KI TE AOMAARAMA

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Abridged version of this paper is published

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According to myth, the old sun, Tama-nui-te-raa, traversed the sky in too big a hurry and he gave out more energy than mankind needed or appreciated. So Maui-tikitiki-a-Taranga, the planner supreme of Polynesian mythology held a one-man meeting and decided on a plan by which order could be brought into the lives of long suffering mortals. His plan required imagination, cunning and drastic action which like other revolutionaries he felt was entirely justified because of the benefits it brought to mankind. Out of the pain suffered by Tama-nui-te-raa was born a world of order and certainty, or so the myth would have us believe.

Today as our ancestor looks down at us, he must shake his head in disbelief. Now it is mankind that is throwing confusion into the world. Man is using up the resources of the earth at too fast a rate. He is building a technology of war which is becoming too hot to handle and a microprocessing technology which is making man redundant. Now it is possible to visualise the total destruction of human civilisation. In addition, mankind is in a financial turmoil with the prospect now of a country such as ours becoming bankrupt. Order has been lost and there is little that is certain. It is time for Maui to come again into the world and bring a plan that would give us a new sense of direction.

Most commentators on the state of New Zealand today would agree that our society is reeling under the impact of economic and social forces which occupy most of our thinking today. The actions of our politicians clearly indicate a deep concern, a frustration at their inability to improve conditions for the people, an impatience with those who dare to differ with them. There is a frantic search for scapegoats on the one hand, and for recipes of improvement on the other. But the experts speak without confidence and their recipes, made to conform to the interest of the cooks, fail. What the people see and feel are continually rising prices, higher and higher costs for energy, more people unemployed and a downward turn in the standard of living. The social costs are also increasing as manifest in broken homes, a high divorce rate, increasing crime and more violence in our society.

In such conditions, the Maori people are probably worse off economically, socially, politically and morally than the Pakeha of New Zealand. The fact that ours is a youthful population, bubbling with undirected energy, probably exacerbates the problem. We were not prepared to meet an emergency such as this. Moreover, no one thought that we would need to some day. Now that the unplanned moment has arrived, we are not in a strong position to even defend ourselves against competition for employment or for finance. Our failure as a nation to face up honestly to the problems of Maori-Pakeha relations is catching up on us. Their effects show up in sharp relief and sometimes almost as a caricature of our condition today. The behaviour of "Maori gangs" probably best exemplify this.

As a direct reflection of the fact that the Maori population is now predominantly urban, the so-called "Maori problem" is mainly an urban one. It is in the streets and alleys of the cities where the youth of Maoridom struggle to find a new order in the best way they can. They comprise probably the only section of the Maori population which is making an honest and full-scale attempt to come to terms with the realities and the contradictions of the times in which we live.

A good number of our urban Maori youth reject the ideals of New Zealand society; nor do they accept what Maori society stands for today. Among them are people who are unable to tolerate what they see as the glibness and shallowness of our cultural institutions. There is, of course, a dysfunction between the practices of our institutions and the present conditions of life in New Zealand. The gangs seem to be at the very frontiers of changing circumstances. They react to changes about which the majority of the population is hardly aware. Yet we call the members of these groups "drop-outs", social "misfits", the "dregs of society", "yesterday's mistakes".

The urban "Maori" gangs actually deserve close study because the human values on which they place great emphasis are often values which are 'lacking' or in attenuated form in their home communities. Initiative, imagination and a disciplined way of life are examples. In the very act of manifesting these values the youth groups point out some of the glaring faults in our society. There seems to be little room in New Zealand for the exercise of real Maori initiatives, let alone Pakeha ones. Every move runs up against "unforseeable" barriers, for example various acts of Parliament, whose main effects are to stifle all New Zealanders and annoy Maoris in particular.

The great value placed on internal law and order alerts us to the fact that these conditions are sadly lacking in some Maori communities which appear to have been thoroughly subverted in many cases, by the Western notion of the sanctity of the individual. The chief, that grand figure from our romantic past, who is capable of exercising influence and power upon the community, has become almost extinct. Instead, the land is full of pretending chiefs of little or no influence, bent on personal aggrandisement. Every man wants to be his own chief and his own spokesman and to be simultaneously Maori and Pakeha. The result is the leaderless drifting community from which many of the gang members have come.

It is perhaps ironical that the adult members of the community seem hardly aware that such ideas as "Maori aroha" and "aroha ki te tangata" (love to all men) hardly exist in the rough and tumble of life. These are notions which are spoken about in ritual contexts and which are often regarded quite seriously in ceremonial life. But in real life the words have a hollow sound and we are found wanting.

A sad fact of life is that the foundations of Maoritanga are slipping away before our eyes. Consider the plight of the Maori language which according to Benton's (1978, 1979) researches is in danger of being lost as a living spoken language. Already, the results of the decline in the use of the language can be seen at various marae around the country and can be heard at numerous urban hui. Yet though evidence of the problem can be plainly seen, the people seem not to know how to cope with it and appear not to care.

All of the problems which we are facing today and which are certainly not new to Maori society are making life very difficult. However, whereas Maori society over the years withstood with amazing resilience wave after wave of social and economic change, today the Maori part of Maori society is at its weakest and we can no longer leave to chance decisions which are vitally important to us in the next few decades. We need a Maui-like plan to help guide us into the twenty-first century, and we need to begin the search for such a plan now. It would be unrealistic to merely wait and hope that something from heaven will drop into our laps.

As a beginning I will attempt to set out the requirements of a desirable plan, that is, one which takes cognisance of Maori aspirations and which best allows the people to live a life that is satisfying and dignified. The 'shopping list' described here is a first effort at trying to articulate Maori aspirations as manifest in the words both written and spoken of various Maori spokespersons. Not everyone will be satisfied with the list nor agree with each item on it. But it is useful to say what people want and then try to find the political arrangement or idea which can best accommodate them.

A desirable plan is one which, with economy of effort and finance, makes it possible for the Maori people to:

1. Retain and develop Maoritanga in order to maintain a continuity with the past and provide a foundation for life in the twenty-first century.
2. Establish Maori as an official language of New Zealand, develop it and use it more widely in contexts other than the marae.
3. Develop a bilingual education programme where Maori is given a value equal to English and with the possibility of development from primary to tertiary levels.
4. Have control over a bilingual television channel, a bilingual national radio network and some newspapers and magazines.
5. Develop a banking system perhaps based on the office of the Maori Trustee, and obtain finance, from overseas if necessary, to help Maori individuals or groups establish business enterprises.
6. Exercise a greater degree of control over decisions and enterprises which affect the lives of the Maori minority.
7. Establish a modern leadership system that is based partly on achieved and partly on ascribed status and which is founded upon Herbert Spencer's dictum that 'Society exists for the benefit of its members, not the members for the benefit of society!'
8. Have control over some units of the Police Force and of the Armed Services.
9. Prevent the export of "Maori foods" such as paaupa, pipi, toheroa, karengo, mutton birds and crayfish.
10. Allow for the development of a separate court system to handle all cases involving Maori and New Zealand Polynesian offenders.
11. Return all uneconomic shares in land to hapu ownership and re-establish the mana of the hapu.
12. Change the status of the Minister of Maori Affairs to that of Chief Minister of Maori Affairs and make his position subject to the Maori vote.
13. Establish a Maori and Polynesian unit within the Department of Health and so assume greater control over the health of the Maori people.

14. Reorganise Maori participation in national politics: change the basis of representation to a tribal one rather than geographic and increase the number of seats.
15. Along with all citizens of New Zealand to enjoy an ordered and meaningful life, to respect cultural differences among the population, to help protect the heritage of the nation and to pass it on to the next generation: and, if necessary, to play our part in defending that heritage.

It should be observed that certain accommodating arrangements are already in place in New Zealand. Examples are the Maori Affairs Department, the Maori Land Court, the Maori Trustee, various Maori parliamentary seats, the Kingitanga at Waikato, and so on. There was also a fairly efficient Maori School system which was dismantled only recently and a form of which we might well consider re-establishing.

Among nationwide organisations are the Maori Women's Welfare League, the Maori Wardens Association and the New Zealand Maori Council. The Ratana and Ringatu Churches are, theoretically, also nationwide in their coverage but their actual strength may be limited to fairly well-known districts. A new national organisation established only in 1978 is the Bishopric of Aotearoa, with the Bishop of Aotearoa at its head and a Council made up of representatives from around New Zealand its main administrative and decision-making body.

Another new arrangement worth looking at is the Maori and Pacific Island Radio Unit, established at Papatoetoe. In this arrangement, as in the case of the Bishopric of Aotearoa, a parallel Maori structure is established within a larger New Zealand structure. What is interesting in both cases is that a major battle had to be won for their acceptance. But once this was accomplished, there was relatively little further difficulty in making the organisations work: only the usual ones of quality of mind, vision, dedication to the task and adequate finance.

An interesting question is why these parallel structures are being requested by the people now and in the past. I believe the most frequently quoted reason is the desire to have greater control and participation in the decision-making which concerns the Maori. Another face of the same concern is the expression of initiative which underlies the Tuu-Tangata programme initiated by the Maori Affairs Department. Yet another concern has to do with the quality of presentation of Maori events - proper reporting, respect for Maori customs and institutions, and "proper" behaviour on the marae. Underlying the facade of goodwill towards the Pakeha is a dissatisfaction and resentment against a sort of imprisonment of Maoritanga within the institutions of New Zealand.

A question which we should ask quite broadly is, what are the alternatives before us? For many New Zealanders this is a dangerous question which was not asked seriously before because to deal with it honestly is to invite the ire of an indignant population. There is likely to be talk of treason and urgent pleas of "please do not rock the canoe". Some will declare that we have the best race relations in the world; why then, should we change anything? Yet, we must consider the matter and try to find a solution which will help us to survive as a cultural entity into the next century and beyond. In saying this, you need to note that I am now thinking particularly of the survival of Maoritanga.

One obvious alternative is to opt for more of the same, that is, more of the "one people, one nation" concept which the Pakeha New Zealanders have pursued with single-minded purpose since Governor Hobson enunciated it in 1840. The policy worked out over a period of 139 years and with a determination hard to match has been so "successful: that today we contemplate the possibility of the Maori language becoming extinct, of there being no such things as Maori culture, or Maori art and of the startling fact that choosing to be a Maori or not has become a matter of individual conscience. Yes, the shot-gun wedding demanded of us by the Pakeha people has been much too effective in alienating us from our own culture.

One can argue, however, that despite all the shortcomings of the policy of assimilation or integration, many good things were accomplished, such as the fact that generally speaking, Maori and Pakeha have lived together in relative harmony. For a while, the thing seemed to work, even though it was largely based on a myth. Under the present system, we were able to establish the Bishopric of Aotearoa and this, as well as the example of the radio unit, demonstrates that we can achieve a greater degree of self-government than would appear at first glance under the present arrangement.

But there are many things wrong with this arrangement. The biggest single fault with the present system is that the Maori people find it difficult to initiate any important moves without the prior approval of the Pakeha voters. It is this unfair and undemocratic burden which is placed upon the Maori and which puts us in the position of having to persuade the voters of the dominant society first before any initiative can be launched which is so frustrating. What this arrangement does is to keep real power firmly in the hands of the Pakeha majority. There seems little doubt of this when looked at from a Maori point of view. For example, during the moments of great stress and anxiety associated with Bastion Point, we seemed unable to get our point of view published in the newspapers, heard on radio, or shown on television: the mass media was very firmly controlled by the Pakeha. More recently, the case for making Maori an official language seems to be foundering on the issue of whether Maori parents can force Pakeha children to become bilingual, that is, it is a matter of who has power.

Bastion Point demonstrated clearly our lack of political power and our vulnerability in the face of a determined, unscrupulous, and no-aro-ha Government. Of course, it showed up other things, such as the fragmented and still suspicious attitudes we have to other tribes. It revealed the readiness of some of our people to betray any cause that might be seen as Maori; this, in turn, pointing to the embarrassing weakness among some of us of wanting to ingratiate ourselves to the Pakeha. We are so hungry for praise and so scared of displeasing the Pakeha that we appear to be a little too willing to turn a blind eye to what is happening to our own people or to our culture. We have been rather too eager to take a hand in our own destruction as an ethnic group and too ready when political pressure is applied to denounce our own people. This sort of Iscariot-like behaviour must cease if we are to make any real changes to our present condition.

Recent evidence indicates that the leaders of New Zealand are more ready now than ever before in our history to allow to the Maori people more say both in the decisions which affect them and in the manner of putting these decisions into practice. The reorganisation of the Maori Affairs Department and the various programmes put into operation since 1978 by it, provide evidence of this. There is hope in the present political arrangement. For many of our people, however, the openness of the system has come rather

too late. Faith in the system has already been lost and the most telling evidence of the loss is the apathy of the Maori people, their increasing disenchantment with the Pakeha way, and the absence of the happy sparkle in the eye.

A Maui would reject this alternative as lacking in imagination, too frustrating, too cumbersome to accommodate readily to Maori aspirations and as being too slow to remedy the ills which face us now. It is worth pointing out, however, that many of our present leaders are not at all like Maui and would prefer more of the same. This is an easy way out for them, a way of avoiding unpleasant decisions, a way of not becoming responsible for our future. I should also point out that many Pakeha elders would applaud them for that attitude and offer them a Queen's honour badge.

A second alternative is to opt for full autonomy following the example of Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands. With this plan, we envisage being given the machinery required for self-government so that we would have our own Chief Minister, our own parliament, court system, police and army. We would then be able to have most of the items mentioned in the shopping list of Maori aspirations and, even more, through this plan our political status would change from that of being a member of the Fourth World to that of the Third World. We would then be equal with the Tongas, the Samoans and the Cook Islanders, and be no longer pitied because of our subject condition. In many ways, being equal to other Polynesian nations is far more important and significant than being equal to the Pakeha. But the importance of this fact has not yet entered the awareness of most Maori leaders.

At this point in the essay, a thousand people are ready to shout that there are major problems with this wonderful idea. On one side is the fact that our Pakeha voters who believe strongly in the "one people, one nation" policy, understanding of course what that really means in practice, will have none of it. Even the most persuasive oratory we can muster will do nothing to change anything. On the other hand is the ambiguous position of the Maori. Despite all that has happened since 1840, a lot of Maori people would not agree to driving the Pakeha out to sea nor of creating a state without them. To a very large extent, our lives have become enmeshed and our kinship system and our social, economic, political and religious networks crisscross one another and overlap at many points. It is perhaps ironic that the Maori is more enmeshed in the Pakeha world than the other way round - the Pakeha can get by without us but we have become a dependent child unable to contemplate a future without the Pakeha. This, it is sad to reflect, is an expected result of the colonial experience.

One cannot see full autonomy being granted to us by the New Zealand Pakeha without a battle. Personally, I cannot see the North Island being partitioned so that we can have say, the Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty or East Coast-Poverty Bay regions as our territory, there to establish a Maori province. Nor do I see the Maori people being ready for a confrontation of the type necessary to make partition of the land an attractive solution. The action called for is too drastic at this point of time and too much like Maui's final exploit when he sought immortality for man. Notwithstanding the difficulties, there are nonetheless many Maori people who are attracted to this solution.

A third plan, is a modification of the notion of full autonomy towards the idea of 'two people, one nation', an idea Hohepa discussed in detail in 1978. A name for it is 'limited autonomy' and it implies settling for an arrangement that is less than full self government but which might be just as effective or even better given the economic difficulties facing the world today. Under this plan we capitalise on what is already happening in New Zealand and we explore the possibilities of a suitable accommodation with the Pakeha population.

There are two kinds of limited autonomy, the "soft" and the "hard". The soft version seeks to introduce the notion with as little change as possible and relies on a great deal of infiltration of the present structures and organisations with the "right" personnel. In this case, the aim would be to Maorify the institutions of New Zealand and set up Maori and Pacific Island units within them. The soft limited autonomists would argue that in the end you achieve what you want and you do so with little disruption to the system. The trouble with it is that we might never get to eat the carrot and that it takes too long to find out.

The hard version calls for more drastic reorganisation and demands some real changes. For example, the creation of a new position, Chief Minister of Maori Affairs, the setting up of a Council with the functions of a Parliament. This would be made up of representatives from the main tribes of New Zealand and could include 7 representatives from other Polynesians living here. The Department of Maori Affairs might be re-organised into providing all of the services needed by a modern civil service. As part of the package, a hard limited autonomist will ask for a parallel court structure to deal with Maori and Polynesian offending and a parallel Police Force to enforce the law and, in fact, all of the items listed in this essay can be included in the package.

It is clearly recognised by the United Nations and its various agencies and committees such as UNESCO and the Decolonisation Committee that ethnic groups such as the Maori have a right to determine their own future. They have a clear right and indeed an obligation on behalf of the communities of the world to maintain and develop their cultural institutions consonant with their values and wishes. The Maori people have so far not exercised their rights, and have, in fact, fallen behind other ethnic groups such as the Eskimos and the North American Indians in re-asserting and developing their culture. We have been Pakeha watching for so long and so busy defending our culture from one crisis to another, that we no longer know how to grasp the initiative. As a people, we are even scared to do so: defence has become a way of life.

Now we must rise from our despondency and lethargy and take the initiative by demanding limited autonomy for our people. I believe that we must commit ourselves to this ideal in a way that leaves no doubts as to our desire to grasp our destiny. I have said publicly that the sort of commitment we need is that of the religious convert who is prepared to suffer and even die for the faith. The task before us is to develop that sort of commitment as quickly as possible for, without it, we will never be able to achieve the goal of a fully-functioning Maori parliament by the year 2000 A.D.

Our priorities are first to gain acceptance of the notion that we want limited autonomy or mana motuhake for our people. Then we need to define more precisely what we mean by the notion of 'two people, one nation' which is implied in the notion of 'limited autonomy'. Finally, there is the task of filling in the details and giving form to the idea so that we can actually live and experience limited autonomy. These are important tasks which have barely begun and which deserve our serious attention during the next few years.

Underlying the quest for a pathway to the future (he ara ki te ao maarama) is the belief that what we are doing now is not really satisfactory from a Maori point of view. The responsibility for the future of Maoritanga and Maori culture is really ours and has always been so. Our history and our very existence and identity as a people are bonded in Maoritanga. The fact that the Pakeha population sees its identity as being closely linked to Maoritanga as well should not side-track us. Nor should we wait any longer for the dominant population to sort out its problems.

In the end, because it involves our destiny and future in a world that is full of uncertainties, we are the people who must make the decision about whether we want limited autonomy or not. It is our decision and not that of the Pakeha population; which is of importance to us and to the world community. We are not in a position to negotiate with the others in New Zealand until we have made up our own minds without the interference of, but rather with the co-operation of the mass media, and with the understanding of the Pakeha population. This is the ultimate test of just how good we are as a nation and of whether our reputation for good race relations was deserved or not.

Many of our leaders longed for this day, for example, King Tawhiao, Te Ua Haumeene, Te Whiti, Tohu, Te Kooti, Rua Kenana and Aperehama Taonui and Te Heuheu Iwikau. This was the pathway on which they longed to tread but could not achieve. Today it is possible to walk that path to the world of light that our ancestors dreamed of. It is up to us who walk on the breast of Papatuanuku to carry this cause through to its realisation. My hope is that by the year 2000 we are at long last equal in a political sense to the Pakeha New Zealander and that we live together as one nation.

Tuia te kawē;	Make the shoulder pack,
Tairanga te kawē	Take up the shoulder pack,
Ko te kawē o te haere!	And let us undertake the journey

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