

An address to the Wanganui South Rotary Club by Reverend Bob Scott of the National Council of Churches' Programme on Racism.

The address is entitled "The urgency of the campaign against racism"

It includes an analysis of what institutional racism is; how it has operated in this country; the need for Pakeha education and a response to the recent remarks by Hobson MP Ross Meurant.

Prepared for delivery in Wanganui , Tuesday 13th October at 7pm.

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ADDRESS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY TO THE WANGANUI SOUTH ROTARY CLUB

Tuesday. October 13th 1987 at 7pm.

Purnell House, Purnell St Wanganui.

By the Reverend Bob Scott of the National Council of Churches'
Programme on Racism.

THE URGENCY OF THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACISM

Let me first be clear what I mean by racism.

I am NOT referring to a campaign against prejudice. I recognise that everyone has prejudices, about something; hang ups or attitudes we have formed, usually on the basis of very little information. For some people, those prejudices extend to people of other races. But prejudices can be dealt with by education, and its important that they should be.

Nor am I speaking about a campaign for better race relations, important though that is. All parts of the community must be involved in that; learning how to be sensitive and just in dealings with people of other races. Its particularly important for the people of any dominant culture.

When referring to RACISM we are called to focus on something much deeper than merely prejudice or race relations.

We are required to focus on the behaviour and attitudes of the dominant group (in this country the Pakeha). How it thinks and acts in such a way that it regards itself as the NORM; that we regard how we do things and what we want as more important , better

than or merely the "right way". If it stopped there it could probably be described as prejudice. But it goes deeper. That dominant group, the Pakeha, has established and maintains the institutions which organise the resources of our country-education, welfare, justice and so on. And they are therefore able to require or insist that other people ~~conform~~^{Conform} to their way of doing things.

So it is POWER we are talking about. One group with the power to insist that others conform to it; to its view of health, of how justice should be dispensed, how education should be conducted, what spirituality is.

It is something that happens COLLECTIVELY. Its not necessarily individuals; its institutions, working collectively on behalf of the dominant group. So the key words in understanding racism are POWER, INSTITUTIONS and COLLECTIVE.

The history of Aotearoa since the arrival of the white settlers in the mid 1800s is that a number of institutional structures were established. These supplanted to indigenous ways of doing things. The new institutions were based on European cultural and political concepts and assumptions.

Those institutions, 150 years later, are producing statistics which indicate that those who belong to the racial group who set up those institutions have better access and receive advantage from those institutions. The indigenous people of Aotearoa, whose own institutions were replaced by the European ones, emerge from the statistics as being disadvantaged by those institutions, dropping out of them or, in the case of the justice system, being over-represented.

That is racism at work. One group, intentionally or unintentionally using its power in such a way that the EFFECT is of disadvantage to people from the other groups, those who do not hold the same cultural assumptions.

The evidence for this is overwhelming.

Welfare, education, justice, housing, employment-all freely admit their anxiety at their failure to properly address the needs of Polynesian people.

The evidence for this comes from :

The statistics-freely provided by government depts.

The voices - both of pain and anger, of Maori people as they describe the effect on their people.

There are different Maori voices, coming from different experiences, even different parts of the country. But altogether they make up a strong Maori voice which must be listened to

If we want to combat the disease of racism then we, the dominant group have to LISTEN.

LISTEN historically, by which I mean we have to learn and understand the history of our country since 1840 ; how the institutions were created , the assumptions which were entrenched in them.

LISTEN to what our partner under the Treaty of Waitangi, is saying.

Unfortunately many Pakeha people have adopted the practice of ignoring or denying that voice.

LISTEN carefully to the myths which are perpetuated and which serve to encourage fear and distrust.

New Zealand has long harboured an international reputation for harmonious race relations. I believe that reputation was possible because of the generosity and patience of Maori people,

Ever since 1843 Maori people have been telling us patiently, what is happening to them They have been doing so politely and using Pakeha constitutional processes,

Hone Heke chopped down the flagpole because " it could shed no blood and feel no pain" , It was his protest that we were not honouring our part of the Treaty.

The establishment of the King Movement was an attempt to achieve a tribal united front to stop the passage of yet more Maori land into Pakeha hands.

There have been three Maori deputations to the Queen in England. The Kotahitanga Movement, whose first meeting was held in 1892, and which is still in existence today, focussed on the Treaty of Waitangi and how it has deprived Maori people of their mana. The many parliamentary speeches of Maori MPs, especially those by Tirikatene in the last 1930s.

Unfortunately (for non-Maori speaking Pakeha people) much of the pain , anger and protest has been expressed in Maori and , most often on the marae.

But it has had a public face; yet we have not heard it.

How many of you recall the 1975 Land March, involving 30,000 Maori as they moved through the North Island? What was its slogan?

"NOT ONE ACRE MORE!"

Can you recall what has been said by the protestors at Waitangi each year -or can you only recall HOW they said it?

In 1984 the media gave reasonable coverage to national hui held at Turangawaewae. It was the most widely representative meeting of tribal elders to be held, up to that time. It resolved :

- * The Treaty of Waitangi is the document which articulates the status of the Maori as tangata whenua of Aotearoa.
- * the Treaty of Waitangi shall be the basis of claims in respect to the land, forests, waters, fisheries and human rights of the Maori people.

The hui also called for the celebrations at Waitangi the next year to be stopped.

But Pakeha people largely ignored both the status of that meeting and the importance of their resolutions.

Maori people have used patient and legal processes, often at enormous cost. We are currently seeing that in the presentation of claims before the Waitangi Tribunal. We have seen it in the

Maori Council's appeal over the passage of Maori land into the hands of the State Owned Enterprises.

Maori pain and anger has been expressed in all manner of ways, most often through legal and institutional avenues--making submissions and so on. But I ~~believe~~ ^{believe} there are signs that Maori patience and generosity is coming to an end. Not simply switching off. But , faced with mounting statistics of what is happening, especially to their young people, they understand that the quiet, conciliatory voice has been too easy for the Pakeha to ignore. And I am not thinking only of the so-called Maori activists when I say this. I have in mind Sir Graham Latimer's comments as he waited for the Court of Appeal decision. He spoke of his anxiety that the Court would do the right thing and his frustration if they did not.

Not too many years ago Professor Sid Mead used his Turnbull Winter Lecture at Victoria University to outline what he sees as Pakeha strategies of AVOIDANCE , which interfere with Maori-Pakeha relationships and negotiations.

The Maori ecumenical body, Te Runanga Whakawhanaunga I Nga Hahi O Aotearoa, is clearly telling the soon-to-be operating Pakeha Conference of Churches in Aotearoa-New Zealand that if it does not have a commitment to bicultural ~~commitment~~ ^{development} then there is little possibility for ecumenical sharing between Maori and Pakeha.

The Maori are waiting for the Pakeha response.

Fortunately it is beginning to come. There are signs of hope.

The Court of Appeal decision about the S.O.E. land question;

Mr Justice Cooke's opinion included :

" ..the prosaic language of the Court's formal orders should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the Maori people have succeeded in this case..."

With that Court of Appeal , and the signal it sends to the lower courts, the Treaty of Waitangi moves back into NZ's legal system as a document to be relied upon for redress. A position it was removed from by Prendergast's decision in 1877 that the Treaty was a nullity.

Although the Waitangi Tribunal has only the power to recommend, its Reports have unfolded aspects of history since 1840 which as been hidden from many Pakeha people. And the Tribunal has proposed fair and reasonable remedies.

I was interested to read recently a media report of Dr Mason Durie, a member of the Royal Commission on Social Policy. He said that during the hearing of submissions the Treaty emerges with a major social role.

There are cynical views to all this. And I also know there are Pakeha people dedicated to damaging or disrupting this growing awareness.

The task is urgent.

For Pakeha people to:

- * read the history
- * understand the present statistics.
- * move beyond merely 'blaming the victim'
- * focus on the assumptions of the institutions and how they have been entrenched to the disadvantage of many.
- * adopt strategies which promote serious dialogue between Maori and Pakeha--the primary and important FIRST relationship in this land: between the Tangata Whenua and the Pakeha

Because of this urgency and the rightness of these steps last week's attack on so-called Maori activists by Hobson MP Ross Meurant can only be seen as both unhelpful and damaging.

His accusations are ridiculous and, thankfully, have been answered by appropriate public figures. Auckland Hospital Board Chairman Sir Frank Rutter quite clearly repudiated the accusations made about the Maori unit at Carrington Hospital. So ~~have~~^{has} the newly appointed Medical Superintendent.

But his unsubstantiated accusations have caused harm. A few days ago I had to write to the Danish Peace Foundation, whom we have close and friendly links with, with my apology and regret at Mr Meurant's insinuation that they are "Communist-backed". He referred to the 1987 Peace Prize that Foundation awarded to Hilda-Halkyard-Harawira as being "Communist-backed". He omitted to say also that Helen Clark, a parliamentary colleague of his was the other

recipient and that she travelled to Copenhagen with Hilda to receive the award.

His reference to the secret meeting with a PLO representative omitted to say that the man is a North American academic who, while in this country also had a private meeting with Sir Robert Muldoon.

But there is more to merely answering each one of Mr Meurant's accusations; wildly inaccurate as they are.

It is the effect they have which is distressing. Whether he knows it or not (and I suspect he does) they have the effect of severely damaging the climate for dialogue. There are deeper issues at stake than his ~~accusations~~ ^{accusations}.

From the Wanganui Computer, or somewhere, he claims to have information which enables him to characterise certain Maori opinion as "terrorist". He will not produce that information, claiming that should be done at an enquiry. But he continues to offer his innuendo, as he did for three hours on radio talk-back last Friday in Auckland. Continuing to feed Pakeha paranoia and fear about Maori nationalism.

The questions Mr Meurant asks about Maori protest have been around for years and have been answered over and over again.

The character of Maori protest is that it HAS been out in the open. It has not been secretive. It has been vocal.

The only thing that Mr Meurant has done is to help bring about

the very thing he complains of : distrust and fear.

I wish we could dismiss his remarks. He shows , quite clearly that his understanding of race relations is immature and his awareness of racism is nil. And he has indicated that the thing he really understands are the bullying tactics of power --evidenced by this time in the Red Squad and his reported remarks in this weekend's Sunday papers.

I do not enjoy pandering to his apparent need for notoriety by even referring to him in this address. But he indicates that he intends to press on. So we must recognise him for what he is: someone with very little social analysis, little understanding of history, who is going to use his public office to confuse and frighten. He will undoubtedly do little else but harm race relations, do nothing to combat racism and eventually promote violence himself.

It disturbed me last week to hear caller after caller to the talk-back programme, congratulate him, for his courage and foresight.

As each caller piled myth on myth the urgency for education was very clear .

The need is urgent. The time is short. It is short, not because Maori people will rise in violence but because Pakeha people will use our power once again to suppress and silence---once again ~~repeating~~ ^{repeating} the patterns of racism.

ENDS.