

Open Letter To Sir David Conveys Regret, Gratitude, Hope

Events at Waitangi on February 6, 1984, are said to have signified an important moment in the history of New Zealand.

None, it was stated yesterday, are more aware of this significance than members of Kotahitanga, the group which undertook a 10-day march to Waitangi to put before the Governor-General submissions that were intended to give the Treaty of Waitangi relevance in the 1980s.

The Governor-General, Sir David Beattie, made provision for 100 members of the hikoi (peace walk) to present the submissions — but the meeting did not take place.

The president of Kotahitanga, Mrs Eva Rickard, said yesterday that there was agreement among the group on the eve of Waitangi Day that this great moment in history should be shared by all and not just an exclusive group.

In full knowledge of the conditions set down by Sir David, Mrs Rickard said, Kotahitanga continued to Waitangi. As the 2 pm meeting drew closer, a request was made to delay the meeting for two hours to allow time for negotiations for the whole hikoi to go to the Treaty House.

Leadership

Because of the excitement and tension which mounted as the deadline approached, the situation in the eyes of the leaders became unpredictable, Mrs Rickard said.

"As strong leadership was needed, the leaders remained with the hikoi to ensure its commitment to peace. At the same time, the issue of the submissions was not lost and an ad-

vance party of elders went ahead to show their sincerity and support for the joint meeting."

Time, however, won the race. But Mrs Rickard believes that such great opportunities cannot be lost forever.

She has written an open letter to Sir David expressing regret over what occurred at Waitangi and voicing a hope that the doors of history will not be shut.

Peace

On behalf of Kotahitanga she writes:

"There will always be times in the history of any nation which present occasions and opportunities for change and new directions.

"Your offer to meet with a delegation from Kotahitanga on Waitangi was one such occasion. In fact, to many, it was the most significant historical initiative in Maori-Pakeha relations since the signing of the treaty.

"That our delegation did not meet with you is indeed regrettable. It is also regrettable that many are saying a great opportunity has been lost forever.

"Great moments in history can never be lost. Your offer has created a unique moment in our history and Kotahitanga believes the spirit of that offer is still with us.

"If the hikoi had disrupted the celebrations, then we would have relegated the hikoi and the spirit of your offer to the dustbin of history. However, Kotahitanga came in



Mrs Rickard

peace, it left in peace and continues to seek solutions through peace.

"It is because both parties have acted in good faith, we believe the door of history which you helped to open has not and must not be allowed to shut.

"This letter then has a number of purposes. In part, it is to express our regrets that the meeting did not take place and to convey our sincere appreciation of your efforts.

"However, most of all, it is to express a hope that your efforts and those of the hikoi do not go in vain.

"As president of Kotahi-

tanga, I feel the most appropriate action I can take is to make public the simple message that the hikoi carried to Waitangi ... in doing this we leave it to you and the nation to judge our case ...

"In closing, I would like it to be appreciated that the events of the past couple of weeks result from the efforts of many people. For the hikoi members, they knew they walked with the blessing of their people and the support of many Maori and Pakeha organisations across the nation.

"Kotahitanga is also conscious that the meeting you worked so hard to bring about involved the efforts of a number of people. In particular, we extend our thanks to Sir James Henare and Sir Hepi Te Heu Heu for their efforts to make the meeting a reality.

"Surely the hopes, desires and efforts of so many cannot be allowed to go in vain ..."

Car Plant Row Resolved

NZPA Wellington
The dispute at the Petone plant of General Motors involving a quality control inspector has been resolved and normal work resumed.