

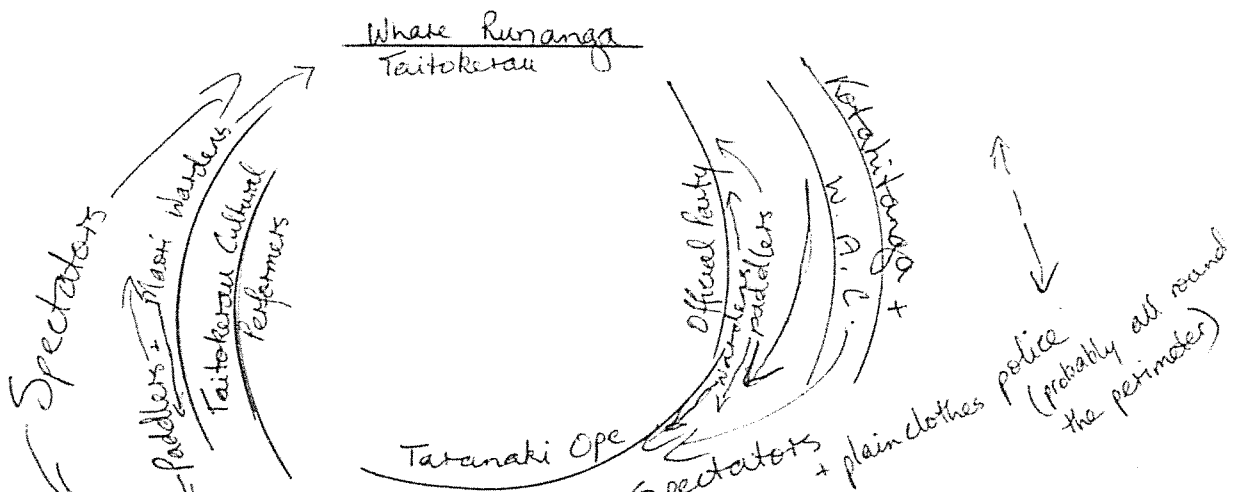
A Reflection on Events at Waitangi, Feb 6th 1987

We (Joan Cook, Dorreen Hatch, Barbara Menzies & Russell Cook) drove to Waitangi from Whangarei Heads on the morning of Feb 6th, arriving in time for the Powhiri at 9:30 am, when the Governor General and other manuhiri of the Official Party arrived in the grounds of the Treaty House.

The first thing we noticed on arrival was the absence of Police at the bridge and approaches to the grounds ...so that we and numerous other (predominantly pakeha) visitors were able to park much closer to the Treaty House than in the past. When we reached the entrance to the grounds where the ceremonies were to take place, we found Maori Wardens there waiting for the arrival of the Official Party. The Police presence was doing its best to be 'unobtrusive'...there were a number of 'tourists' (both Maori and Pakeha) in shorts and tropical shirts, carrying and using radio-telephones. It seemed, from what we could see and hear, that they were keeping tabs on the positions of the members of Kotahitanga and W.A.C. who were engaged in loud verbal protest. This did contribute to tension. Although there were few (probably no more than a dozen) uniformed police present, and they kept well back, we were told that there had been 400 Police in the area on Thursday night, and that they had been 'called off' by the Governor General.

While the crowd waited for the coming of the Official Party, the paddlers of the waka Ngatokimatawhaorua were challenged by Hone Harawira, who stood at the edge of the crowd and kept up a constant, direct address to them, speaking of the violence of racism in the reality inherited by the descendants of those who signed the Treaty of Waitangi. When the Official Party came into view, the focus for challenge switched to Sir Paul and Koro Wetere. Paul was hailed as the Queen's man, and exhorted to go back to Taranaki and to remember Motunui, and Koro Wetere was told that if he lost his job trying to get money for Maori people, then so be it.

The paddlers (some of whom were pakeha) formed a bodyguard which eventually made a double circle (along with the Maori Wardens) between the marae area, the manuhiri and the onlookers and protestors.



Seated on the Paepae were Maori leaders and dignitaries..and at some point we realised that there were also pakeha (who later took part in the Church service) on the Paepae as well. Behind the front row...Sir James Henare,Lady Henare, Sir Graeme and Lady Latimer, Dame Whina Cooper, Mira Szasy and others, there were both Maori and Pakeha, musicians and ,it seemed to us, evangelicals, who led the singing during the service later.

During the Mihi, the protestors maintained a constant response - heckling and verbal harrassment which was clearly very closely related to both who was speaking and what was being said. The volume and energy intensified for:

- a) Sir James Henare, when he began to switch from Maori to English
- b) Koro Wetere,throughout his speech
- c) Jim Bolger, who was almost completely drowned out from where we were standing
- d) Sir Paul Reeves

Bolger made some statements that we had never heard before from a leader of the National Party, conceding that the Treaty has not always been honoured, but the tenor of his speech seemed to be mainly that it was 'the Spirit and the Hope' of the Treaty with which he was concerned, rather than real, concrete justice or injustice. He claimed to be honoured to be the only pakeha to speak on 'this historic marae'... at which point the applause of the Taitokerau hosts and the pakeha spectators was drowned out by boing and derision from Kotahitanga and W.A.C. He then went on to request the Taitokerau cultural performers, who were seated opposite him, to' ".honour me with a waiata"...and when they stood to do so, he walked across the front of the marae, stood beside them with hands folded and mouth closed for the duration of the waiata, and then clapped, before resuming his seat without further concluding speech.

When Sir Paul Reeves rose to speak, the banners of W.A.C. and Kotahitanga were ranged behind him, so that for those facing toward him, and the media, there was no way to avoid their message. The G-G's speech was delivered in a shout, which may have indicated nervousness, although he was let off more lightly by the young people than either of the previous speakers had been. In his speech he laid claim to both Maori and Pakeha ancestry, which should have given him the opportunity to say some very strong things, which, because of his position, would have to have been heard. But instead he retreated into an almost wishy-washy series of vague general statements about 'bad land deals' and 'occasionally' injustice occurring 'when one cultural group tries to run the affairs of another cultural group'. He even flipped into being the Archbishop, reminding his audience (congregation?) that Jesus had told us '..give and it will be given unto you " which seemed inappropriate to the point of insult, in the circumstances.

Throughout this time, the protestors remained stationary, and were, it seemed to us,

very restrained.

It had been clear from the moment of our arrival that it was quite inappropriate for any pakeha, including us, to be present in that place...but it was also increasingly clear that there were a number of pakeha present who were there to get a buzz out of Maori pain, and the prospect of fighting-Maori with Maori. The total inappropriateness of our presence came home even more forcibly in the so-called Ecumenical Service.

There was no Ecumenical Service. The whole format and tenor of the 'worship' was Evangelical. The Rev Muri Thompson began by announcing that he was having a wonderful time, enjoying 'every minute of it' and would give as good as he got... this directed to the protestors. He went on to say that he was only sorry not to have been able to bring 'some of our black brothers...Martin Luther King's children' to be here with us today, to 'help us really get down and praise the Lord!'

After that, the service began with the singing of "God Save the Queen"..at which Kotahitanga and WAC furled their flags and sat on the ground...an action which was lost on most of the pakeha present, it seemed to us...and which was repeated at the end when we were exhorted to join in the singing of "God Defend New Zealand".

The Order of Service, copies of which had been printed and distributed around the grounds, included "Prayers of Exultation and honouring all authorities". The reading from the Old Testament was from Ezekiel 37:1 - 10, and was read first in Maori by a Ratana priest, then in English by a pakeha, Rev David Jenkins.

The prayers of intercession were led by a pakeha man, a youngish pakeha woman, an older Maori woman and an older pakeha man...in that order. The Rev Thompson introduced the first (leading) pakeha man...a schoolteacher...but not the others. When the pakeha woman began her prayer she was completely drowned out, and as the volume of noise increased she put her arm round the shoulders of the Maori woman.. in some ways a clear statement of the cooption that was going on. The outrage that she was there at all, especially speaking before a Maori woman, was expressed directly to the Governor-General. There was a very clear message that all that was happening was his responsibility.

As if what had already happened wasn't bad enough, the prayer which the Maori woman prayed was for God's forgiveness for 'our' sins and unrighteousness.

Immediately after her, the pakeha man prayed 'for the Pakeha people". Was the preceding prayer then intended 'for the Maori people'? Throughout the prayers, cries of "Bible and Guns" were repeated, along with outrage at the presence of pakeha (especially the pakeha woman) on the marae.

The Gospel was Matthew 5: 21 - 24, which seemed even more extraordinarily pointed than anything preceding it had been.

The sermon was extremely long and completely appalling

Much of it was directed at the protestors. The preacher spoke at length about pieces of paper, covenants, drivers' licences marriage licences (divorcees have more rights than they used to/should have?). Much of what he said was lost because of greatly intensified protest combined with evangelical fervour (Praise the Lord/ Amen, against Up the Lord/Jesus is a Rapist) from all round the perimeter of the marae.

The impression of the entire thing was that it was a circus. The 'service' lost all dignity...and the inappropriateness of what was happening as well as of the pakeha presence there was painfully evident.

By the end of the sermon, and for the rest of the service WAC and Kotahitanga were singing their own songs as a way of drowning out what was happening..and as a distraction this was quite successful.

This account is a collection of impressions that the day left us with, rather than a systematic attempt to give an eye-witness report of events as they occurred. There were things that were done and said that we were unable to see, hear or understand and some of us noticed some things that the others missed. The presence of Winston Peters was one such 'interesting' detail...he was with the Official Party, as *were* Peter Tapsell, and Russell Marshall, as well as the Race Relations Conciliator, Wally Hirsch.

* Appendix, after talking with Joan Cook:

The type of Service conducted by Muri Thompson enabled those of a Charismatic persuasion, who were numerous, to use the .."Love the Lord Jesus" approach as a counter to any objection to what the service was in effect saying. There was a continuous chanting of " Bless them/ Oh Jesus/ Praise You, Lord" from both Maori and Pakeha around the perimeter of the crowd.

At one point a Maori man moved to just behind Titewhai Harawira to "cover" her with his prayer, and also a Pakeha woman approached Titewhai with "love in her heart" to remonstrate with her. The kind of religion evident in all of this was extremely disturbing in its fundamentalism and its disregard for the occasion and the questions at issue there, as well as in the assumptions made about God and Spirituality being white.

Additional reflection after talking with Bill Law - Anglican Vicar of Keri-Keri

The only local clergyperson to take part in the Service was Rev David Jenkins, the Baptist at Paihia.

Maori Affairs Department in Kaikohe told Bill that BpWhakahuihui Vercoe, Revs Taki Marsden and Sam Toia had all been approached, but had refused their invitations because of ..."..letters they had received from the N.C.C..."

Rev Henare Tait had also been invited, as it was "the Catholics' turn", but had turned it down, as 1988 is the 150th Anniversary of Pampallier, and the Roman Catholics would like to organise the service on that occasion.

Muri Thompson is quoted in the local Northland paper as saying that "...other Church leaders wouldn't take part because they were frightened of the protestors."

Bill expressed concern that no local clergy had received an invitation this year - for the first time in the seven years he has been in the north. Local Maori people had expressed concern to him that no local clergy had taken part - everyone had been imported with Muri Thompson, from Auckland, with the exception of Rev Jenkins. It was Bill's impression that he was a last-minute ring-in.

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