

5. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

5.1 The Crown's National Archives

In the introduction, I commented on the extensive nature of the research commission for this report. The topics addressed concern Maori historical and contemporary knowledge systems, Crown actions or inactions that affected Maori culture knowledge systems, and Maori responses to Crown policies. The period to be surveyed was the whole period that a Crown administration has been in place in Aotearoa/New Zealand – from 1840 to the present. Providing context for the report required some acknowledgment of the fact that Maori cultural knowledge systems already had been interacting with European influences for a number of decades prior to 1840. Necessarily, the report has been able to consider only a limited number of the possible avenues of inquiry into such a major and important area of research. Some topics have been mentioned only in order to highlight the need for further research. Only a few topics have been inquired into in any depth. In these concluding remarks I focus on those few topics in order to highlight some key issues for the consideration of the Waitangi Tribunal.

Before venturing into these concluding comments, I must stress the limitations of the resources researched to provide information for this report. The main body of the report draws almost exclusively on primary unpublished sources stored in the National Archives and primary published sources contained in the British Parliamentary Papers, the New Zealand Parliamentary Debates and the Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives. All of these sources comprise information that Crown policy at some point in the past has dictated should be retained for future reference. Almost all the information was generated by politicians and officials who knew that what they had written or spoken could well be the subject of critical scrutiny in the future. There are limits to the candour one might expect to find in such sources. There are also distinct limits to the objectivity one might expect to find, for example, when officials are dealing with Maori responses to Crown policies. The broad denunciations of Hauhauism and tohungaism, the intense dislike displayed towards Kingites and rebel Natives, the abhorrence of Maori communalism – all these, and many more examples one could mention, must lead

one to be extremely cautious when writing up an assessment of Maori responses to Crown policies on matauranga Maori that is derived from Crown archives and primary published Governmental sources. The difficulty of assessing the real facts on punishing children for speaking Maori in Native schools, if the school log books were one's only source, is a clear example of the problems faced by research of the sort carried out for this commission. Further remarks on this specific issue will be covered shortly.

Speaking more generally, it is always important for the author of a research report to remind readers that any account of history will not necessarily inform us about exactly what has happened in the past. Rather, the account will rehearse what is recorded about what happened in the past, and it will select some information as more important for present purposes than other available information. On the other hand, as the main focus of the report is on Crown actions and inactions and on Crown policies, one presumes that Crown sources will give a tolerably clear picture both of what ministers and officials intended their policies to be, and of what outcomes they expected to follow from implementation of their policies.

5.2 Different Perspectives on Assimilationist Policies

As a means of giving context to the Crown policies on Maori cultural knowledge systems, a significant portion of this report seeks to describe the main lines of general Government policies on race relations and Maori affairs. With the benefit of twenty-first century hindsight, there is much to feel uncomfortable about when assessing nineteenth and early twentieth century policies on amalgamation or assimilation of the races. At the time it was widely assumed by Europeans that the survival of people of the Maori race was problematic. Maori people were either doomed to outright extinction or, at best, they would be severely decimated by the 'fatal impact' of European civilisation. The response of the colonial authorities and settler Governments to fears for the future of the Maori peoples was to insist that they must imbibe the virtues of British civilisation. They must be forced for their own good to advance and to progress. They must put aside the evils of their communistic way of life and learn to honour individual property rights. In all things they must be required

to learn to follow British cultural knowledge systems and in particular to ensure that they were educated in the English language. The arrogance of colonialism was such that no attempt was made in Crown policy-making to ensure that Maori cultural knowledge was transmitted to future generations. The only concern with Maori cultural knowledge was to preserve, in a museum curiosity category, any information and art forms that were believed to be derived from the ancient Maori tribes prior to their contact with Europeans. It is this arrogance, this insistence on the superiority of the English language and all things British, this denigration of Maori cultural knowledge that has led some Maori today to describe the Crown's policies as cultural genocide and a metaphorical 'holocaust' that incinerated Maori historical cultural knowledge systems. The amalgamation and assimilation policies were promoted vigorously by successive Governments over so many decades that it is difficult now to find any Maori cultural practices that have not been seriously affected by those imposed policies. The fact that policy-makers who promoted assimilation may have been well intentioned from their own point of view, based on their belief in the fatal impact of colonisation on indigenous peoples, does not alter the fact that Maori cultural knowledge systems were deliberately undermined by assimilationism.

This report also discusses Maori responses to Crown policies that included welcoming the institutions and public facilities established by the Government. To cooperate in the establishment of Native schools and to petition for the provision of a Native Medical Officer in the district, for example, did not entail necessarily endorsing the Crown's policies on assimilation. For the leaders of many Maori communities the best option for their hapu was to embrace and work with the triple impact of commerce, Christianity and colonisation. They sought to move their people towards engaging with the Pakeha in a constructive fashion. They did not seek to cocoon Maori cultural knowledge but were willing to encourage evolution and reform of many Maori cultural practices. At the leading ideological edge of this Maori response were the Te Aute College old boys who formed the Young Maori Party. Leaders such as Dr Pomare conducted a zealous mission to eradicate the deeply rooted superstitions of the ages gone by and to eliminate the strongholds of tohungaism from Maori society. It might be said that the Young Maori Party reformers figure more largely in this report than their numbers deserve. Yet so many of them became ministers of the Crown and senior civil servants that an

account cannot be given of Crown policy on health, education, preserving Maori arts and crafts and the like, without highlighting the roles they played.

An unfortunate feature of public discourse on race relations issues in New Zealand is the implicit assumption made by many observers that there should be a single Maori viewpoint on issues critical to Maori. It is appropriate, therefore, to reiterate comments made in this report on the diversity of Maori responses to Crown policies affecting Maori cultural knowledge. There is a continuum on which various Maori responses may be plotted. At one end of the continuum are rangatira such as Taraia Ngakuti of Ngati Tamatera, mentioned in chapter 4, who fiercely rejected British cultural impositions in the early years of colonial rule. There were obviously a number of Maori who took a staunch rejectionist line and retreated into remote tribal territories in an attempt to retain Maori cultural knowledge and social systems as distinct and as separate as possible from Pakeha intrusions and dislocations. Someone like the Tuhoe tohunga Te Pairi Tuterangi retained the vitality of the older cultural norms, learned in whare wananga of the past, right through a very long life until his death in 1954. To this day there are Tuhoe and other Maori who insist on seeking cultural knowledge and following cultural practices that are 'tuturu Maori'. There are organisations such as Te Huiarau that do not attempt to engage in mainstream political and social discourse.

Chapter 4 also refers to a number of independent Maori politico-religious movements and churches. They were firmly committed to enhancing Maori values and rejecting many or all aspects of colonial rule. Yet these movements and churches also drew substantially for their inspiration upon non-Maori sources such as the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, and the apocalyptic literature of both the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible. Many of these Maori viewed themselves as spiritual descendants of the Jews, or even as the actual descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. There are a number of independent Maori churches that continue to flourish to this day. Among them, the Ringatu church retains a strongly independent line. The Ratana church, on the other hand, has engaged more vigorously in the politics of the State, in the election of Maori MPs and in an alliance with the New Zealand Labour Party. Kingitanga petitioned for recognition of Rohepotae/King Country to be a Native District under the New Zealand Constitution Act 1852 wherein

the laws of the Kaunihera and Maori custom law would apply. Te Kotahitanga was a political movement primarily responsible for establishing the Maori Parliaments. More recently, Tino Rangatiratanga advocates have argued for constitutional reform based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and separate institutions governed by tikanga Maori.

At the other end of the continuum, there was the Young Maori Party that actively promoted absorption of Maori into the mainstream culture of New Zealand. In more recent times, Couch, Minister of Maori Affairs from 1979 to 1984, represented a general seat in Parliament and refused to countenance policies that might separate Maori out as other than one of many cultures in New Zealand. For him, all minority cultures were entitled to respect and none should claim preferential treatment by the teaching of their language in schools. In 2001, the ACT list MP, Donna Awatere-Huata, criticised principals and teachers for setting the sights of Maori students too low by pushing te reo Maori and tikanga ahead of the three 'Rs'.¹

Depending on where Maori stood on this continuum, it is obvious that there would be a range of attitudes on the importance for them of Maori cultural knowledge systems as a distinctive and unique cultural heritage. It bears repetition, though, that those Maori who favoured the development of independent or separate Maori political institutions did not necessarily reject participation in the education and health

systems established by the colonial State. The fact that the overall goal of Crown policy was to assimilate Maori did not persuade all Maori to have nothing to do with the work of Native schools and Native medical officers. Many Maori chose to engage with the State's institutions for their own reasons, without having to accept the assimilationist goal lock, stock and barrel.

The establishment of Native schools was the most obvious example of an eager Maori response in some, but not all, parts of the country to accept a system of instruction and education organised by the colonial State. The material in this report gives attention to the English-only policy pursued by the Native schools' inspectors, teachers and administrators throughout the whole period of the existence of those schools from 1867 to 1969. Crown policy was clearly intended to promote English as the language of national unity, and in time, to suppress Maori as the ordinary language of communication in Maori communities. On the other hand, Maori communities with Native schools could embrace the

1. D Awatere-Huata, 'Education', *Nga Korero o te Wa*, vol 14, No 4, 30 April 2001, p 2

goal of learning fluency in English as a reason to send children to those schools, without having to accept the demise of te reo Maori and the undermining of Maori cultural knowledge systems as inevitable or desirable.

In chapter 3, I referred to the fact that in 1856 and 1857 it was the English missionary Hadfield who was reluctant to move away from Maori language as the medium of instruction at the mission's Otaki industrial school. Matene Te Whiwhi, on the other hand, spoke in support of the Government commissioners who wished to lay stress on the importance of Maori children being taught in English. From 1853 to 1858, Te Whiwhi and Tamihana Te Rauparaha were the leading figures at a series of hui where they urged upon tribes the idea of establishing a Maori king and at the same time imposing a ban on the sale of any further tribal land to the Government.² As a major figure in the formation of Kingitanga, it is self-evident that Te Whiwhi was not endorsing the Crown's assimilationist objectives when he supported the idea of English as the medium of instruction in schools for Maori. It is also worth pointing out that, although no Native school was built at Maungapohatu, yet in 1914 – at the height of Rua Kenana's influence there – there was a ten acre site set aside for a Native school on land immediately adjacent to the wahi tapu where the houses Hiruharama Hou (New Jerusalem) and Hiona (Zion) had been built.³ In a world increasingly dominated by Europeans, it is not surprising, as noted in chapter 3, that Maori of diverse outlooks in less remote locations than Maungapohatu would wish, as Parore Te Awha did in 1873, 'that our children may be taught the English language and other branches of education'.

By way of a footnote comment on the establishment of Native schools, it should be pointed out that the Department of Education built ordinary public schools as the need arose on Crown land purchased or designated for that purpose. Maori living a subsistence lifestyle in remote rural communities may have contributed little to the State's tax revenues, yet it is rather extraordinary that they should have to gift land to the Crown in order for a school to be built in their area. The Crown wished to advance the civilising mission of colonial rule and Maori were convinced of the need to contribute from their dwindling land resources to assist in this project. Still, it cannot be denied that in many regions there was an enthusiasm to promote the English education of Maori children. Indeed, this

2. W H Oliver, 'Te Whiwhi, Henare Matene: Ngati Raukawa and Ngati Toa leader, missionary, assessor', DNZB, vol 1, pp 528–529

3. J Binney and others, *Mihaia*, Wellington, Oxford University Press, 1979, p 76

was most marked in the regions of the north and east of the North Island that are the tribal origins for most of the Wai 262 claimants.

5.3 The Crucial Importance of the Post-1945 Period

At the outset of this research commission I was aware of the views of those such as Professor Biggs, quoted in chapter 3, who asserted that the Native Schools Acts of 1867 and 1871 'declared total war on the Maori language'. Given the importance of language as the fundamental basis of cultural knowledge systems, I anticipated that the crux of this report would be a discussion of the Crown policies implemented by Pope, Bird, Porteous and Ball as Native school inspectors from the 1870s to the 1940s. As a result of the research, it now seems to me that the crucial period for the negative impact of Crown policies on Maori cultural knowledge systems was the period from 1945 to the early 1970s. Prior to 1930, the vast majority of Maori spoke in Maori as their first language and maintained fluency in it throughout their lives. The situation was different in the South Island and there was a minority among Maori school entrants of some 20 percent who were not conversant with Maori language. There was as yet no clear indication that there would soon be a dramatic loss of Maori language skills that might endanger the transmission of Maori cultural knowledge and significantly affect Maori cultural practices. Ngata continued to insist on English as the first, the second, and the third most important subject for Maori children in schools.

By 1945 the situation was very different and Ngata had changed his mind. It was now clear that the survival of the Maori language as the cultural norm of Maori communication and social practices was in serious danger. Ngata called for the teaching of Maori to begin at standard one in primary schools. Bird, on the other hand, as quoted in chapter 3, was not perturbed if the result of the school system 'has been to make the Maori lose his language, don't forget that in its place he has the finest language in the world and that the retention of Maori is after all largely a matter of sentiment'. If Ngata's recommendations in the late 1940s had become Crown policy at that time then the decline of the language may well have been arrested. The Department of Education conducted a survey in 1950 that confirmed the worst fears of those who had argued since the Maori

Congress in 1908 that teachers should be trained in teaching Maori and students at school should learn it there as well as in their homes. As noted in chapter 3, by 1950 only 54 percent of Maori school entrants were speaking Maori at home and approximately 21 percent did not speak or understand Maori at all. However, the official responses, from Parsonage in the Department and from Algie as Minister of Education, were to reject 'bilingualism' as undesirable and impractical. They were firmly committed to a continued insistence on the English-only policy in all State schools.

Whilst the Government was deliberately inactive in respect of Maori language teacher training and teaching, it was vigorously pro-active in a number of policies to encourage Maori to leave rural areas and to relocate in urban areas. Considerable effort was put into an Operation Relocation and large budget allocations were spent on housing for Maori in urban centres. The building of these houses was arranged in a 'pepperpotting' fashion so as to avoid the possibility of racial segregation in our cities at a time when decolonisation and desegregation were leading issues in the United Nations and in the United States of America. The Crown policies developed by ministers such as Algie, Corbett and Nash in the 1950s were crystallised into the integration philosophy espoused by the Hunn Report in 1960. It was Nash's initiative to commission Hunn, then it became the work of Hanan as Minister and Hunn as Secretary of Maori Affairs to implement the report in the ensuing decade. Whilst all this effort went into the economic, social and political integration of Maori, there was no effort to build urban Maori cultural centres, or to put in place any protection of Maori cultural knowledge systems as a component of Maori life in urban environments.

Meanwhile, the Maori language competence of Maori pupils entering school plummeted to less than five percent. This was foreseen in 1951 as a possible outcome of Crown policies. It was an outcome that did not disturb Crown officials and ministers at that time. Rather, they put all their efforts into relocation and integration policies that could only serve to hasten the decline of Maori as a living language and indigenous culture. The cultural damage to Maori knowledge systems was well and truly obvious in the national life of 'integrated' New Zealand by the 1970s. Crown policy then began to be reoriented, prodded by petitions and protests from Maori activist political movements. Biculturalism and then honouring the Treaty of Waitangi began to be spoken of. Eventually

Maori initiatives to conserve and enhance cultural knowledge by the creation of kohanga reo, kura kaupapa Maori, and independent whare wananga began to receive modest Government funding. The Maori Language Commission was established and Maori broadcasting began to receive state resources. How different might the situation now be, if the Labour and National Governments from 1945 to 1955 had responded positively to the various requests of Ngata and the Maori Women's Welfare League actively to promote Maori language and cultural values? Having stressed the importance of Crown policy on integration in the post-1945 period, I conclude this chapter with brief comments on two particular issues that deserve to be highlighted.

5.4 Indirect Impact of Tohunga Suppression Laws

The passage by Parliament of tohunga suppression laws is the first of those issues that, in my opinion, need to be given particular attention. This report indicates that the direct impact of those laws, in terms of the number of prosecutions and police inquiries, may be a little greater than the figures given by Hanan in 1962, or arrived at by Voyce in his 1989 research. Nevertheless it still remains true that very few tohunga were actually stigmatised by criminal convictions and the imposition of gaol sentences or fines. Even those convicted were not necessarily stigmatised in the eyes of their own Maori community. On the contrary, they received support, not only from their followers, but also from some members of the Maori councils who were supposed to be at the forefront of the campaign to eradicate tohungaism. The real problem with the tohunga suppression laws was that they were such a blunt instrument of state coercion aimed at all tohunga. None of the Acts that dealt with tohunga attempted to define which types of tohunga were the object of the drive for suppression. Best identified the range of expertise included in the term tohunga. His views, as quoted in chapter 4, distinguished between 'the higher class of priests' and those involved in what he called 'shamanistic humbug'. His research was published by the Dominion Museum in 1924. However, the Crown's policy never made such a differentiation. The Young Maori Party leadership, many of whom held Government positions, was determined to condemn all forms of 'tohungaism'. Most European politicians were more concerned with the political threat of Maori prophetic movements

than anything else. Nevertheless, the suppression of all forms of 'tohungaism' was consistent with the general Government policy to attack all expressions of Maori communalism. The Quackery Prevention Act 1908 was directed specifically at false statements in order to promote the sale of alleged medicinal preparations. The Tohunga Suppression Act 1907 did not distinguish, however, between 'shamanistic humbug', 'quackery' and the 'tohunga ahurewa' or 'tohunga tuahu' whom Best called the 'higher class of priests'. The law condemned all tohunga.

Perhaps the most telling comments on the indirect influence of the tohunga suppression laws were the remarks of Te Puea noted in chapter 4. She was a woman of mana in Kingitanga and a person of great influence in Government circles as well. The Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, was one of many people who would welcome her opinions on many matters. Yet she feared disclosing the nature of her Pai Marire beliefs to all but a very few Pakeha confidants. She feared misrepresentation and she feared being accused of 'tohungaism'. The fact that a person of her prestige was not willing to speak openly of her religious beliefs and Maori cultural practices must indicate that the suppression laws did indeed have a dramatic impact upon Maori cultural knowledge systems. No system of cultural knowledge can flourish in a climate of fear and ill will. Traditional cultural knowledge must have passed away with the death of many cultural custodians who feared to hand on the wisdom they had received from their ancestors. It will not be possible for the Tribunal to document fully the nature or extent of knowledge lost for this reason. What is undeniable is that if custodians of an oral culture do not transmit their knowledge, then the knowledge is lost forever. The repeal of the tohunga suppression laws in 1962, and the more recent toleration or even acceptance of tohunga as alternative healthcare providers, cannot revive knowledge that has already been lost irretrievably. With some aspects of Maori cultural knowledge, as with many of the endangered indigenous species of flora and fauna – 'extinction is forever'.

5.5 When Oral and Written Records Conflict

The final topic that needs to be adverted to in these concluding comments concerns the discrepancy between oral and written records of punishments for speaking Maori at school. The discrepancy was the sub-

ject of careful inquiry in the Waitangi Tribunal's 1985 investigations into claims concerning the status of te reo Maori. Since then the conflict of evidence has not been resolved. On the contrary, further research has served to render more extreme the conflicts between the two sources of the same history. Since 1985 further oral history research, especially that conducted by the International Research Institute for Maori and Indigenous Education at the University of Auckland, has confirmed from the memories of numerous teachers and pupils at Native schools that corporal punishment was frequently resorted to for infringement of the English-only policy in those schools. Further research into the written records of corporal punishment inflicted on pupils confirms the Department of Education's line in 1985 that corporal punishment never was used just for speaking Maori in school. All the available logbooks, including those for the period from Bird's 1906 memorandum 'encouraging the children to talk English on the playground' until Ball began to apply Ngata's adaptation policy after 1930, disclose a nil return when thoroughly searched for mention of the strap or cane to punish those speaking Maori when at school.

If it is indeed true that teachers did use corporal punishment to reinforce the English-only school policy, then what are the implications for the veracity of other records held in the National Archives on a whole range of Crown policies? Is it proper to assume that written records of history are usually more reliable than oral accounts? Is it reasonable to assume that the Crown's archives have not been selectively compiled by officials depositing spent files in the archives? There may be a number of similar questions that ought to be asked. There is no information available to me as the report writer for this report that enables me to answer any such questions. History is never as tidy as some who search for 'objective truth' might desire. On some matters a commission of inquiry, such as the Waitangi Tribunal, just has to make a judgment call as to which evidence it finds to be compelling and which evidence appears to be less convincing.

