

Puao-Te-Ata-Tu

A brief history and reflection

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IN JULY, 1986, a Ministerial Advisory Committee presented the report *Puao-Te-Ata-Tu (daybreak)* to the then Minister of Social Welfare, Ann Hercus. The purpose of this paper is to reflect on how that important document might be seen in the context of its time. By way of contrast, the report is also located within a broad view of the Maaori past.

Puao-Te-Ata-Tu grew out of a long series of earlier hui convened by the Department all over the country. The hui were called to discuss the concern, felt by most Maaori, that Social Welfare had ceased to function as a neutral focus for Maaori aspirations where access to State Welfare and income support resources were concerned. Put another way, the Department was a racist and hierarchical institution which reflected the values of the dominant Pakeha society of New Zealand. This was certainly the view of a group of Auckland staff established in 1985 as the Women's Anti-Racist Action Group.

Views like these were strong stuff, conveyed at a time when the Department of Social Welfare, like all Departments, was learning to live with Roger Douglas, no small feat. Social Welfare soon found itself riding unwittingly in the vanguard of change forced onto it by Maaori people. These were people greatly emboldened in their dealings with central Government by the much understated Tu Tangata ideas and programmes instigated by Kara Puketapu in the late 1970's.

Direct and extended consultation with Maaori communities was substantially uncharted territory for State agencies, even as late as the 1980's. The Department of Maaori Affairs was really the only other player on that field, one onto which all Departments would ultimately be compelled to run, or walk.

The Advisory Committee which entered into these direct consultations was headed by the much-respected Tuhoe kaumatua, John Rangihau. Other members included

John Grant, probably the last of the self-made Social Welfare Directors-General. Also pressed for service was Dr Tamati Reedy of Maaori Affairs though much of the onerous travel fell to his Director of Community Services, Doug Hauraki. Other Maaori members included Lena Manuel, Hori Brennan and Maaori Affairs Deputy-Secretary, Neville Baker. Maaori staff assembled to support the consultations included Moana Herewini, Kim Workman and Social Welfare solicitor Donna Hall.

John Rangihau's recruitment was a coup for Social Welfare. He was a popular figure in social service agency circles in Wellington at the time, and was much applauded for his masterminding of a *Maatua Whangai* comeback. This involved an inter-Departmental attempt to revive that floundering but innovative programme which placed funding into whanau hands for the care of their young. *Maatua Whangai* was however at the time regarded by Maaori communities with some hostility (see report, page 34). While on the road with *Puao-Te-Ata-Tu*, Rangihau frequently acknowledged that hostility in a broader context, an hostility directed at his team by Maaori who put the view that radically different approaches and structures would be needed if the Department and its programmes were ever to address the needs of its Maaori client group. This was a group disproportionately represented in national welfare statistics, and in front of District Office counters.

The Advisory Committee's consultations were in the end an enormous undertaking, comprising some 60 hui. They were overtaken for sheer size only by the immense *He Tirohanga Rangapu* consultations of Koro Wetere and Maaori Affairs, two years later.

Puao-Te-Ata-Tu was a complex report, couched in unequivocal language. It contained commentary, statistics and thirteen recommendations which at heart sought a commitment from Social Welfare to a programme of reform founded on partnership

principles as validated by the Treaty of Waitangi. That the Treaty was the driving force behind contemporary Maaori protest, said the report, could not be overemphasised. As a consequence, the report argued for significant procedural and legislative change. It especially argued for a greater recognition of Maaori customary support networks as conduit for State assistance to Maaori communities. It also sought an end to racism, pure and simple.

One of the most compelling parts of the report was its historical appendix. This appendix provided in robust style a basis in history for the report's essential representation of Maaori people as colonised, or 'domesticated', before a Pakeha ethos of conquest and subjugation. Recurring cycles of conflict and tension were said to have 'drained the Maaori, spiritually and physically'. Deprivation and ongoing material vulnerability were seen as the 'taproot' of a modern Maaori dependency on the State.

The report's Maaori writers were not wrong to advance this representation of the Maaori past since the connections between colonisation and adverse levels of social dependency are difficult to deny. In context, *Puao-Te-Ata-Tu* appeared at a time when Maaori all over were increasingly preparing such representations of the past from their own perspectives. Forums like the Waitangi Tribunal provided opportunities for Maaori to present specific accounts of their histories in the context of seeking redress for believed past breaches of the Treaty. The Treaty of Waitangi became the driving force behind contemporary Maaori resistance to the Crown. As a consequence, the writers of *Puao-Te-Ata-Tu* confidently tapped into the Treaty polemics as valid basis for its particular construction of the Maaori past, and present.

As Keith Sorrenson has suggested, these new Maaori histories generated a 'radical re-interpretation of New Zealand history'. Mainstream histories, and historians, were compelled to acknowledge the breadth and extent of these many tribal accounts of the last century, especially as New Zealand approached the great 1990 watershed.

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Traditionalist thinking.

On the other hand those who defend the return to Tribalism, believe it to be the basis of true Sovereignty for Maori People. It provides one with a unique identity based on the re-claiming of a birthright as the basis of a self concept. The contrasting assertion to assimilationist thinking is that Maori were on a journey towards tribal genocide, being forced to give up Rangatiratanga (chiefly status) and all become one people, like the perception colonial legislation presumes. A characteristic of this perspective is learning Maori language as a second language, teaching it to our children as being their first language and growing alongside them.

Styles of Working with Maori Whanau

The basis of this next section of the article was drawn from a Maatua Whangai Kaimahi Hui held in Horowhenua in 1986 and outlines what was seen as the conflicting demands on the role of Maori Social and Community workers at the time. The demands were described as "Mahi-a-Iwi, Mahi-a-Takiwa, Mahi-a-Kaupapa, and Mahi-a-Tari."

Conclusion

Maori whanau are dynamic and will continue to change over time. What has been

provided in this article is a focus some of the characteristics of an average modern day whanau. When the characteristics are viewed overall one may gain the sense of standing back and looking at a mosaic of a whanau. Two things are important to remember about the information presented in this article.

Firstly, it is presented in a compartmentalised form. However, each part overlaps the others to the extent that while each of the whanau members are ideologically different - they are none the less a whanau.

Secondly, while qualified non-Maori are able to provide good quality social work to Maori whanau - whanau overall prefer qualified Maori social workers. It is nothing personal folks. It's just

that if you're going to tango with our whanau, as mentioned in the title, you have to know what makes us tick.

Apology

The Department of Justice has concluded a settlement with Mrs Margaret Anne Craig, Counsellor and Addictions Specialist of Rotorua following her complaint made to the Ombudsman in January 1991 that she had been unjustifiably removed from the list of authorised counsellors used by the Family Court at Rotorua.

The Department acknowledges that the removal of Mrs Craig's name from the list was improper and without foundation.

Mrs Craig's professional competence and performance of her counselling duties has never been in question.

The Department sincerely apologises for any damage which may have occurred to Mrs Craig's professional reputation due to the actions of the Department and the Department's failure to remedy the matter promptly.

Procedures have now been implemented by the Department of Justice to prevent a similar occurrence in the future.

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For some Maaori historians, however, the issue was not so clear; and remains so. Maaori historiography generally operates from the basis of kinship group (iwi, hapu or whanau) as centre of past and present. Inherent structures like whakapapa organised all Maaori knowledge, including knowledge of the past, with mana serving as primary organising principle.

For the Maaori of old, mana was everything. The Treaty of Waitangi was not the driving force here; it could not and did not validate mana. Whakapapa was the key, with kinship groups continuing to mediate their knowledge into histories of mana. These mana histories rendered their descent as authentic, validated their occupation of the land and, even across the colonial era, validated their particular social and political strategies and choices.

John Rangihau possibly had such thinking in mind when he repudiated 'Maaoritanga' in preference to his own 'Tuhoe-tanga' as source of his mana. However, as he also knew, the story of Maaori interface

with settlers and the State was quite another history, one of colonisation and continuing conflict within which *Puao-Te-Ata-Tu* needed to be located. Perhaps Rangihau was alluding to a useful theoretical cross-over between the two histories when he wrote that future planning in all areas needed to show awareness of all people and their shared interests. Such awareness for Maaori first involved the harnessing of values, identity and mana history.

Much of the substance and spirit of the report, these days, is not in dispute. The case for structural reform, changed attitudes and a shifting of resources to Maaori communities was well argued. Generally speaking, Social Welfare responded constructively to the report, though opinions of course will vary. *The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act (1989)*, for example, was substantially developed out of the report with Recommendation 4 proposing the reform of existing legislation to include, among other things, a greater recognition of customary Maaori support structures, and a closer adherence to customary iwi forms of conflict resolution.

However such responses as were made by Social Welfare were significantly offset by the new constraints imposed by wholesale economic and Public Service reform. As Jane Kelsey has argued, these reforms have effectively resulted in a greater centralising of State functions, accompanied by an increasing withdrawal from social services delivery.

For Maaori people, *Puao-Te-Ata-Tu* was an important report. It was one of a host of reports and papers produced in Wellington at the time, all seeking to inform from the flaxroots an evolving Maaori public policy. However, given that in the end public policy is not generated by the flaxroots but is mediated to Government through its Departments and Agencies, it was appropriate that, for the purpose of the report at least, *Puao-Te-Ata-Tu* would turn for its historical basis to New Zealand's history of Government - Maaori relations. This was, after all, as much as history of Social Welfare and its antecedents as it was a history of the Maaori people.

