

Comment

DAME MIRA SZASZY

E nga maunga, e nga moana, e nga iwi e tau nei, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa. Ki te taumata, tena koutou.

Before I launch into my korero, I must inform you that it is not my personal kaupapa that I'm going to present. It belongs to the past and the present Presidents of the Maori Women's Welfare League.

The kaupapa that's been given to me is what is the role of Maori women in the negotiation and settlement of Treaty claims? Such a question implies another question. The answer could be, the hour of this day given to us. So because the question has been a long time coming, I feel the need first to validate the status of Maori women within Maoridom. To do so I also need to go back in time to the beginning, back in time to our cosmogony and creation myths, beginning from Papatuanuku.

In doing so I will use some of Ngapo and Nan Wehi's waiata based upon our Maori goddesses:

He mana tuku iho

No Papatuanuku toku mana e,
 No Hineahuone toku mana e,
 No Hinetitama toku mana e,
 No Hine-nui-te-po toku mana e,
 No Hine mahuika toku mana e,
 No Hine-iwaiwa toku mana e.

Ko te karanga tenei a te wahine. Ko matou nga whaea o te motu o te ropu Wahine Maori Toko i te Ora.

Our voice represents many Maori women. In the case of the Treaty claims, we sincerely hope that our voice will touch all Maori and all Pakeha.

As Maori women we are deeply concerned about the direction Treaty claims are going. Our concerns are for the same reasons that the Maori Women's Welfare League originally was established i.e. to address the desperate needs of many of our families. The needs of our mothers and children. Their needs, their welfare being fundamental and all embracing. These needs are the reason we are assuming an active role in negotiating an alternative Treaty resolution process.

Maori women have allowed themselves to be marginalised and excluded from the Treaty resolution process for too long. Perhaps we have assumed our quiet persistent voices will be heard. They have not been. Late November 1994, as nga whaea o te motu, we met to discuss our deep concern at the way the Treaty resolution process was going. Our concern at the little, if any, likely benefit, flowing on to Maori families, women and children.

Nationally and internationally there are groups of indigenous elites, as I think Tipene mentioned as a comment, which have emerged to capture and control the benefits of indigenous development. This seems to be the likely result if the present course of the resolution process was to continue. Sorry, Tipene. The real glue of our society, of any society, is the family. It is from this level we need to rebuild. This is where the real need is.

It is our hope that, in the Treaty resolution process, ownership is restored to our whanau, our hapu and our Iwi. We see hope for the spiritual, social and economic development of our people in securing the true position and status of the Treaty of Waitangi. In the Treaty also we see hope for the restoration of spiritual, social and economic ownership, ownership which has been lost over the decades since the Treaty was signed by our forefathers and mothers, ownership which has been removed and continues to be denied. The restoration of our ownership to Maori is a far greater issue than just returning a few hectares of land. The loss of ownership has and continues to be a crushing loss to Maori. It is also a heavy social and economic liability being borne by the nation.

It has been estimated that this economic burden is between \$1.2 billion and \$1.7 billion per year. If it was possible to measure the social burden in dollar terms it would be far greater. There are clearly many benefits to reducing the nation of this liability. The way to do this is to restore Maori ownership. It is clearly in the interest of all New Zealanders to see Maori ownership restored and this burden lifted.

At this point I would like to define our position on the Treaty. When our Maori ancestors signed the Treaty, it was with the clear intent to preserve ownership. The decision by Maori chiefs, both men and women, to sign the Treaty became in itself the most significant political action taken by our people. The Treaty became the charter of our existence as two peoples.

The Crown has a moral and legal obligation under the Treaty to protect and preserve Maori ownership. Clearly this did not happen. In essence the Treaty of Waitangi is a social contract which has not been honoured. Resolving outstanding Treaty issues begins with restoring the status of the social contract, the restoration of Maori ownership. A Treaty resolution process cannot be circumscribed by fiscal or time caps, or political expediency pushed by either Pakeha or Maori organisations.

We see three very fundamental problems with the Government's proposed resolution process:

- 1 It narrows the status and relevance of the Treaty.
- 2 It was created outside the spirit of the Treaty, the spirit of partnership.
- 3 It will not restore Maori spiritual, social and economic ownership.

A major hindrance to the Treaty resolution process is the lack of genuine communication effort by all parties. The whole process has excluded major stakeholders in the process, Maori women and a large section of the Pakeha community. In fact, if there has been any communication effort it has been in creating zones of exclusivity. The non-Maori community have become excluded from the issues because they are told they are guilty of perpetrating the injustices of which the Maori are victims etc, etc.

Maori groups and individuals are seeking to create exclusive zones to keep out other Maori, to attempt to achieve their own agendas ahead of others. This situation is in contradiction to the purpose and the spirit of the Treaty - the spirit of partnership. There seems to be no attempt by any party to pro-actively deal with the Treaty issues in a positive and consensual way. The present Government deal may take some offence at that statement. We can see there are individuals on the Treasury bench with good intentions. Nevertheless the Government has constructed a process which excludes major stakeholders and has contributed to increasing confrontation. It is now time we all face some of the realities affecting the resolution of outstanding Treaty issues.

The Treaty resolution process is trading on two currencies:

- 1 Resources to pay, money, land etc.
- 2 Goodwill.

The two are linked. The term currency is the implicit message that it must be earned before it is expended. If we continue to assume outstanding Treaty issues are going to be resolved by legal and political machinations alone, we will fail. We cannot continue operating with this wrong assumption. If we do, we are all going to be in for a very rude awakening some day.

Political parties stay on the Treasury bench by the goodwill of the majority of the public, the majority being non-Maori. They are voted into Government to manage the legal and legislative framework. They will do that in a way that will best keep sufficient goodwill to keep them in power. Which Government would not change the legal and legislative framework relating to Treaty issues if it was going to lose them the goodwill of the majority?

In fact, we can note they have already started with the process to reverse some claim tags, the memorials on Government SOEs and other assets. The currency of goodwill is quickly being expended by all parties, including Maori. There has been little effort made to replace what has been expended. Being intangible and subjective, goodwill is difficult to quantify. How much goodwill is left? Not much, judging by the signals of worsening racial tensions. May be that's only in the North, who knows.

There are many Maori and non-Maori organisations and individuals who have and continue to squander the currency of goodwill. They are putting in real jeopardy the resolution of the issues they presume to represent. The nature of our confrontation form of government has also contributed to the squandering of goodwill. The majority of New Zealanders have appreciated that the Treaty issues cannot be ignored and that they

need to be dealt with. However, as they look on from the sidelines to where they have been excluded, they see little evidence that there is any real benefit coming out of attempts on their behalf in resolving outstanding Treaty issues.

There is an increasing resistance to what seems to them to be constant demand for confrontation from the Maori side and weak political initiative from the Government side. As this situation spirals down, we run the risk of extremists on both sides taking more ground. We run the risk of this spiralling down into violence and further splintering our society.

The events of Waitangi Day have further eroded goodwill. I hope this is not 100% true. It has left a bad taste in the mouths of the Government and many of our own people are in disarray. Are these events the symptom of a deeper malaise? A malaise that has manifested itself in other chaotic events in recent years. Is the leadership crisis a symptom of a deeper problem? Is there a crisis of values and ethics? The Waitangi farce has further exposed the leadership vacuum. The Government and our people are searching for a way forward.

Nga whaea o te motu, the mothers of the nation are stepping forward. We have prepared a strategic plan to negotiate an alternative resolution process. We do wish to bring some enduring cohesion to the resolution process and offer an olive branch in this time of turmoil to the Government - like it or not. And to our own people. And to our Treaty partners to participate and resolve a Treaty resolution process.

The following resolutions we have passed. To prepare an alternative Treaty resolution process. To present this alternative resolution process to the community of New Zealand and the Government. To ensure the Treaty resolution process is an inclusive process which is negotiated in the true spirit of the Treaty.

And I conclude as Te Paea, one of our tuahine, said at the time of the first settlement payments to Waikato in 1947:

Money can never wipe away the blood that has been shed. No settlement can ever efface the tears that have fallen. And those that have suffered most are no longer with us. No, money is not everything.

Kua mutu ake te kaupapa i konei. Na reira, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.