

Presentation by Rev Bob Scott
At the “State of the Nation” addresses at Te Tii Marae
Waitangi, 6th February 2006

Rev Bob Scott is a retired Anglican priest; formerly staff member of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, working in the Programme to Combat Racism; before that coordinator of the Churches Programme on Racism in Aotearoa-New Zealand; before that NGO consultant at the United Nations, New York; Executive Secretary of the International Coalition for Development Action, based in London; before that director of the Inner City Ministry (now Downtown Ministry) in Wellington.

Greetings to this house and those who have passed before.

Especially I want to pay my respects to those who have, in many different ways, continued the debate about the place of the Treaty of Waitangi in our society. This marae has been a source of inspiration for many of us who have been here for hui of one kind or another.

I particularly recall one visit. The National Council of Churches, of which I was a staff member, was summoned by the elders here to explain the church's attitude to the Treaty. I think the elders were concerned at the Council's apparently radical stance. It was in 1981 – 25 years ago this year. We travelled here for the hui. The discussions were long and difficult and we shifted uncomfortably as we tried to explain that, as church members, we felt some responsibility for what happened at the signing of the treaty. But the elders were still not sure about us.

But then one of our staff spoke. The Rev Dr Alan Brash, father of someone who has become quite well-known around here. Dr Brash spoke of the outrage he and other Pakeha felt, at being denied the true stories of our country; of his shame at the treatment accorded the Ngati Poneke by the settlers in the Wellington area, and his Christian conviction, not of guilt for what had happened but of the need to address what had happened in the past. So, if you will allow me, I would like to honour that man today, the father of the present leader of the Opposition, and whose words were so vastly different from what we hear from his son in these days.

I was away from Aotearoa during the 90s, returning for holidays each year but also keeping my eye, though the Internet, on what was happening in this country. I was and am proud to be a New Zealander – proud of the high regard Aotearoa is held in most parts of the world – because of our anti-nuclear stance, because of our environmental consciousness and because of what people perceive as our relaxed and safe lifestyle in a significantly beautiful part of Creation.

I rejoiced at the improvements there were being made in the whole spectrum of relations between Tangata Whenua and Pakeha. The superb work of the Waitangi Tribunal, through the submissions it receives and the research it does, virtually re-writing the history of this country. Satisfaction at the succession of compensation claims that have been resolved; admiration for increasing Maori entrepreneurship; absolute delight at the strengthening of Te Reo and the rich renaissance of Maori literature, art and music.

But that was balanced by something else. As a staff member of the World Council, of Churches in Geneva I was a regular participant, for 14 years, in the annual sessions of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, at which Tangata Whenua were always represented. Indeed I felt one of my responsibilities in Geneva was to provide support and nurture for those Maori delegations.

Each session was an opportunity to see the Treaty of Waitangi in action. On one side of the huge conference hall would be the NZ Government delegation. On the other side, the other partner of the Treaty, the Maori delegation. Each year the Maori delegation brought the stories, statistics and analysis of the other side of the coin. You know them well. The prison, crime, education and poverty statistics, the denial of rights, disputes over land, and rejection of the principles enshrined in the Treaty.

No-one could attend those sessions without grieving – while at the same time filled with admiration at the mana carried by the Maori who attended.

After 14 years I have returned home. What have I found? The statistics are correct. There have been some improvements, but the basic indices remain negative. Despite all that governments say “is being done for Maori” the character of the relationship between Maori and Pakeha is still largely a history of poverty, marginalisation, imprisonment and ill-health (each of them recognisable characteristics of an oppressed people) for most Maori and, in comparison, privilege for most Pakeha. A situation used as a political football by some; rejected on many talk back programmes; and sneered at by many of the elderly, certainly at one meeting of Grey Power I attended in Auckland;

I am prepared to say that, despite all the community education that has been done in the last 20 years, bi-cultural and treaty workshops and department staff training, there are still huge gaps in the confidence and strength of relationship between Maori and Pakeha, at all levels.

A breakdown in effective consultation has brought about the need for the Maori Party and some actions of the present government have reinforced confusion, animosity and confrontation.

Despite the so-called successes; despite the protestations about sensitive consultations, despite the fact that Tikanga Maori has emerged so strongly in many aspects of our society, such as in the Anglican Church. what is it that is still missing?

I would now like to re-name this presentation; to change it from the “State of the Nation” to the “State of the Nation’s Mindset”

I begin with something which is startlingly obvious but has to be repeated over and over again. In this country we have two cultures which view history in entirely different ways. In my predominantly Western culture we describe the future as being in front of us, which we are moving towards. Our language is: “You cannot go back”; “What is done is done” “You must always move forward never look back”; “The future is what it is all about”; and you can probably think of other such phrases you might have used yourself.

Whereas my experience in working with Indigenous Peoples in various parts of the world is that when they speak about the future they will pass their hand backward over their shoulder. Because the future is what you cannot see. What you CAN see is the past. THAT is what you face – not the future. The future is unknown and only has meaning if you face the past.

Isn’t that obvious? But it highlights fundamentally different ways we look at history. Among Pakeha there is far less willingness to face the past. The language used is “I am not responsible for what my forbears did”. “We are not responsible for the sins of the fathers”. “They (the Maori) are always going on about the past”.

This is a very powerful image for me. Two peoples each regarding history in as different way. The Western view of the future pervades a lot of our general community thinking about Maori related issues and does not provide a good environment in which to consider the injustices of the past.

The only exception I have seen to this general inability to face the past is the annual outpourings of history and resolutions on Anzac Day – then we DO go on about the past.

Let us remember that injustice has no cut off point – especially if your culture has a strong oral tradition. The “forget it and move on” theory does not work when one’s history includes massacre, alienation from the very source of spirituality – the land; and countless discriminatory and divisive actions.

I know we have made some progress in Pakeha attitude change. But let not any of we Pakeha exclude ourselves from the challenge to review our mindset about these things. Are we really addressing the past or merely trying to tidy up a troublesome political issue? Have we merely calculated the COST of putting it

right and how long that might take, so we can at last “consign it to history”? Are we like Cornwall the wealthy settler who gifted that great park in the centre of Auckland, prepared to smooth the pillow of what we perceive to be a dying race ?

The gravity of the relationship between Maori and Pakeha – a gravity given it by the Treaty itself – demands that we think much more deeply.

And to reinforce that I wish to speak about redeeming history.

I suppose you might have thought an Anglican priest would get on to a religious concept at some stage and the atheists here will be ready to press the “cut off” switch. But please bear with me.

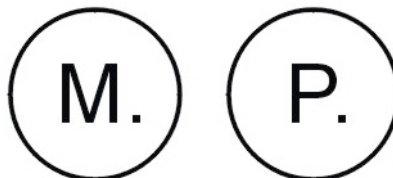
What does redeeming mean? “Make amends, recover. deliver from damnation, save oneself from blame, save from a defect” and so the Oxford Dictionary goes on.

Think of the pawnbroker – I go to redeem my goods – to recover what was mine and restore it to me. History can be like that – we can recover it and restore it.

Answer the question: why was there a Treaty of Waitangi at all? Why did the British, who were not known for their willingness to enter into treaties with the “native peoples” in their empire building (although they did sign a few), agree to negotiate a treaty in this case. Why was Hobson instructed to treat with the Maori in as much as he could recognise them as a sovereign people. Was it because they had declared their sovereignty in their Declaration on Independence in 1835? (which most Pakeha do not know about by the way) ; Was it because the British Resident James Busby had urged them of the dignity or mana of this people?

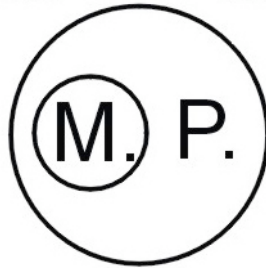
Whatever it was the fact is that two peoples discussed a treaty. Forget for a moment the many different motives among the assembly at Waitangi in those days. Merely recognise the fact that a treaty implies two distinct peoples. Each willing to regard the other as a partner in the treaty. Each willing to trust the other.

That position can be described thus:



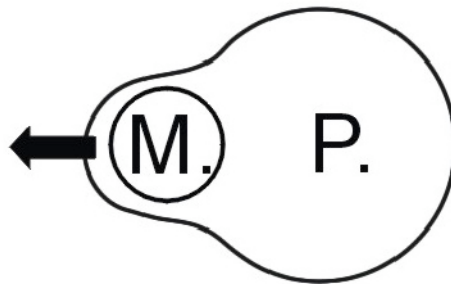
Now we have to face what happened; Maori, unable to control the flow of immigration were soon overwhelmed and the passage of land into Pakeha hands had begun.

Described thus:

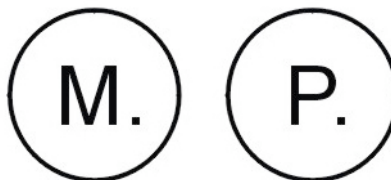


All of us here will know that the protest movement within Maoridom has been continuous from the late 1840s. Each step of Pakeha legislative action in this country was accompanied by a Maori reaction. The King Movement, the Land Marches are examples of the persistent protest by Maori trying to escape the cultural, spiritual and social domination of the Pakeha.

That can be described thus.



The logical conclusion of that movement is this:



I know some people will immediately claim that represents apartheid. Not so. There is nothing wrong with such a definition. Apartheid, on the other hand, was a legislative framework to ensure privilege for the Whites in South Africa. That privilege was maintained by the philosophy of 'separate development' which effectively denied basic human rights to the majority. Being separate is not a problem. It is when the separation brings privilege to the one and not the other that it is a travesty of justice.

Two clear circles recognises the integrity of each and provides a framework for what? Perhaps to go back to 1840? Have we come full circle?

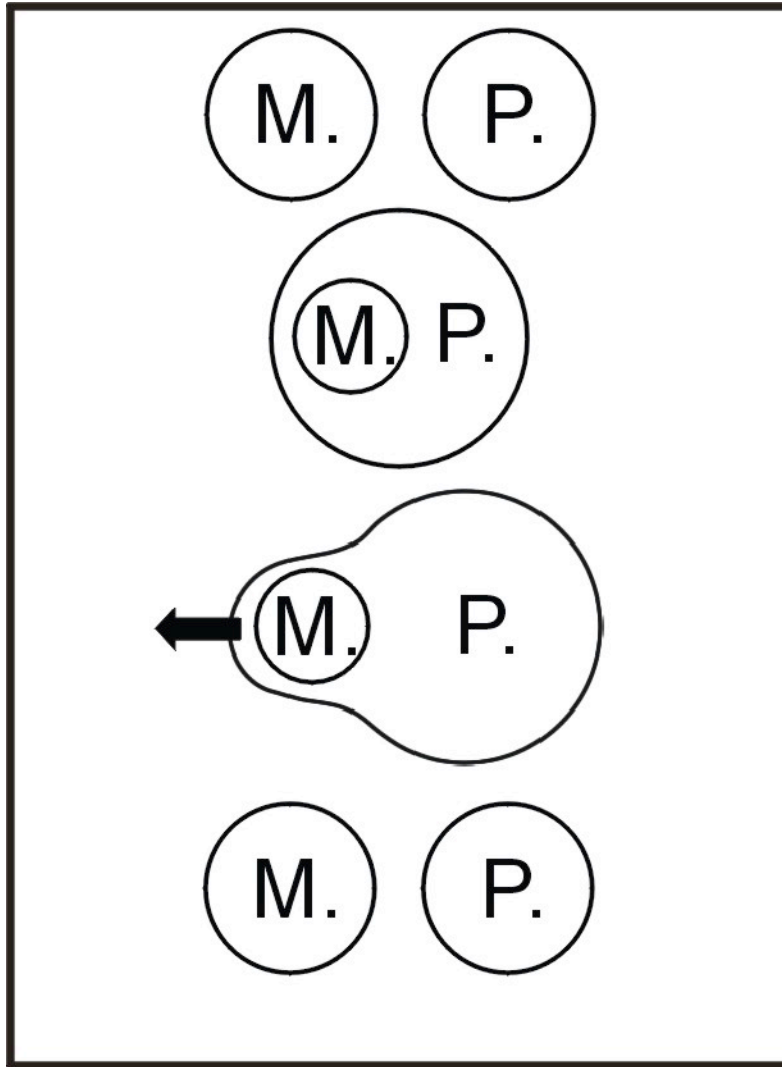
If we Pakeha had the mindset to see ourselves as part of that diagram we would be in a position to understand and pursue the redeeming of all that went on after 1840: to recover, to restore.

Back to the situation in the 1840s, as far as the dynamics of the meeting is concerned: two peoples deciding a treaty between them. In 2006, two peoples deciding the meaning of the treaty for these days.

It would require significant expansion of hitherto narrow attitudes; it would require respect and honour which has not always been forthcoming; it would give the term 'partnership' a new and vigorous meaning and it would certainly provide the basis for a much more enlightened and creative dialogue about the future.

The mindset is fundamental. That is, regarding Maori not as a problem to be dealt with, nor even a challenge to be faced (although it is certainly that). not a political football to be kicked around in Parliamentary caucuses, but the engagement of the first people of this nation with those who came later. An engagement between an Indigenous nation, with all the dignity and stature that embodies, with another people, living in the same land; an engagement between two peoples who realise they must and can live together; an engagement which has the desire to promote and support each other; an engagement which no longer requires the endless patience and generosity towards the Pakeha which Maori have had to use for so many years.

I am speaking about a mindset – what goes on in the head of each person involved in these engagements, at all levels. In theological terms it is called Metanoia, a Greek word meaning a change of mind; a radical revision and transformation of our whole mental process. Metanoia means a new mind. It could be said that metanoia speaks of the need for conversion.



Is this too difficult? Is it too much to ask of our politicians and community leaders? Is too much to ask them to ditch their reliance on the versions of NZ history they learned at school, which were almost certainly sanitised? For them to regard their encounters with Maori on the same level and with the same attitude as if they were meeting official representatives from nations overseas?

I wonder if many of you know the history of the relationship between the Ratana Movement and the Labour Party – of the significant encounter between the Mangai T. W. Ratana and Michael Joseph Savage on April 22nd 1936. The Mangai offered the Prime Minister some articles “for his study and observance” and as a memorial of their meeting.

The articles are interesting. I won't go into them in detail - the fact they were presented is the significant point. The first article was Nga Hou Huia – or huia feathers. The feathers are a taonga of deep meaning for the Maori. But these

ones were pierced into a peeled potato. The feathers clearly stand for Maoridom and the potato was said to represent the kumara because “the only time we see them is when we have to purchase them; the confiscation of Maori lands has left us landless and we have no place to grow the potatoes”.

The second item was a piece of pounamu (greenstone) - representing the authority and nobility of the Maori people.

The third article was a tewatikoura – a gold watch owned by Ratana’s grandfather. But the watch was broken. The glass was broken and, as the Mangai said “my father had no money to repair this watch and neither do I”.

The fourth was a Tohu o te Maramatanga –or badge of the Ratana Movement.

This meeting sealed a bond between the Ratana Movement and the Labour Party. It became an important political alliance – one of respect and political agreement. I have never seen the word ‘covenant’ used to characterise that relationship but the behaviour of both parties subsequently seems to suggest that it was.

Why do I refer to this now? Because I believe that relationship, or the original intention of that relationship, is something near to what I am speaking of in the State of the Nation’s Mindset. Not just meetings – but covenants; with a changed mindset; with metanoia.

Before I complete this I must make a few remarks. I know there will be people who hear what I have said and will instantly feel offended or hard done by. The local Member of Parliament and the corner shop-keeper, the school-teacher and the bus-driver, those who hold authority in high places, the ministers and the priests, the Grey Power members and the local Mayor will recoil at my analysis and assure me that they DO understand the Maori, they DO understand there are many wrongs to be righted, that it is a major issue we must face and I must not be so general in my remarks.

They will quickly refer to all the sensitive treaty compensations discussions and countless other encounters; they will remind me who it was set up the Waitangi Tribunal; they will point to their own efforts and their admiration and respect for Maori. They will feel I have got it wrong or that I am generalising.

Let me be clear. I DO admire the sensitive work that has been done in many dialogues.

What I am asking for, and I believe the healthy state of the nation is dependent on a NEW sense of purpose and commitment; a new mindset that moves into even deeper waters and is committed to even deeper understandings - in ways that will continue to change Pakeha in how we think, feel and govern. It will take

time but it will indeed prepare the way for a great nation in which the wisdom and skills of two peoples work together to enhance the whole nation.